Interpretive Plan

for the

Douglas County Virtual Museum

DOUGLAS COUNTY COLORADO

Prepared for the Douglas County History Repository by:

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Douglas County Staff:

Brittany Cassell – Curator, Douglas County History Repository
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Douglas County History Repository Volunteers:

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Table of contents

Introduction

Artifacts from Rueter-Hess Reservoir

The Douglas County History Repository traces its roots to the former non-profit Douglas County Historical Society. In 1981, the Historic Preservation Board, created by Douglas County government inherited all the artifacts of the Society. Initially all the artifacts were stored in a warehouse at the Public Works facility. The paper-based archive materials from the Society were donated to the Douglas County Libraries and now are a part of the Douglas County Library Archives and Local History.

In 2007 all the artifacts were moved to a rented facility on Sixth Street in Castle Rock. The Repository's scope of collections grew to include artifacts used by County government up to the 1960s, farm and ranch artifacts, prehistoric and historic artifacts from professional archaeological excavations, early railroad era materials and artifacts from the early settlement of the County. Since its establishment the Repository has been an official State-Approved Repository for archaeological and paleontological materials as recognized by History Colorado's Office of the State Archaeologist.

The County soon found that the rented space on Sixth Street was not adequate for the growing needs of the County and in the year 2020, the County purchased new space at 2801 N US Highway 85. While collection space and office's Repository doubled, the County expects future growth and a need for higher environmental controls so they will expand the Repository by securing adjoining space after an existing lease terminates in the year 2025.

The County has planned well for future collection care needs and to be effective in providing public and researchers access, The Repository also established a public web presence known as the "Virtual Museum" since the year 2013. The Virtual Museum serves as the main public access point for the collection, allowing researchers and the general public to see a select number of artifacts from the collection. In the past this presence was created with the help of Past Perfect museum collection software and hard-coded static HTML web pages. Recently the Repository purchased and migrated its collection cataloging to the Lucidea's Argus museum management system, with a goal of utilizing the Argus public portal software module. The Argus pubic portal module allows for dynamic

(real-time) listing and public query of the collection thus eliminating the need to update the Virtual Museum through static labor-intensive update processes.

The "out-of the-box" Argus public portal module however does have some limitations. Therefore the web site that links the Argus public portal may need to add areas that allow space for more exhibit narratives to create in-depth visitor experiences based on themes, audiences or educational lesson plans (or K-12 resource/teacher/student tie-ins). Interpret Site L.L.C. was contracted with the County to help update the Virtual Museum while creating a five year Interpretive Plan to assist with the execution of effective on-line exhibitions using best-practice interpretive communication techniques.

A definition of interpretation

Interpreters connect visitors to important natural, cultural, and historical resources at parks, nature centers, historical sites, aquariums, zoos, and anywhere that people come to learn about places. NAI (the National Association for Interpretation) defines interpretation as "a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us."

Why do interpretive planning as part of this process?

Good interpretive planning ensures that essential Repository collections are accessible to researchers and educators, and that the collection and media are designed to accomplish researcher/visitor use, collection preservation and access goals.

Interpretive planning as part of this effort helps staff (and committed volunteers) to:

> develop consensus on a long-range vision for the interpretation/visitor experience that utilizes the collection

> provides key visitor experiences while protecting the collection and enhancing stewardship values for the collection

> develops the most cost-effective and sustainable solutions to visitor and resource issues

> effectively uses interpretation and education to meet management goals (outputs and outcomes)

> fulfills mandates to serve the public, protect the collection and historic resources where the collections originate (relaying a message of historic preservation for the places where the artifacts and objects originate)

Good interpretive planning also ensures that essential values and experiences are accessible to all visitors. This Interpretive Plan was developed to guide the design of the interpretive opportunities within the Virtual Museum and a plan to guide and enhance the museum over time.

To that end it includes the following:

• Goals and the desired outcomes from a visitor experience with the interpretive network

• Themes (messages) to be communicated within the network

• Prescription for communicating those messages in a way to achieve desired outcomes

Although the goals and desired outcomes and the themes are essentially set, the prescription is intended to provide direction, but with flexibility to take advantage of the creativity of new "Story Points" (exhibit content) over time.

Goals and vision

The goals/aims and vision are detailed below. Goals are highlighted in relation to management goals and derived interpretive goals. The vision is detailed in the proposed initial themes matched by the different targeted audiences. Two models for the enhanced vision for the Virtual Museum are the New York City Landmark Preservation Commission Repository and the City of Woodstock Museum, Canada.

Plan goal structure:

The goal hierarchy contained in this section reflects the following structure:

Douglas County management purposes/goals

Interpretive goals

Objectives (Outcomes)

The hierarchy is developed in this manner to clearly show the link between the purposes for which the Douglas County Virtual Museum is managed and the recommended actions associated with developing a network of orientation, interpretive opportunities and extended actions.

Goals

Management goals:

An important component of Douglas County's sense of place is its historic legacy. This legacy is evident in our heritage of agriculture, mining, industry, and transportation and in our cultural resources. Cultural resources include historic roads, buildings, structures, sites, districts, landscapes, archaeological sites, as well as cultural practices.

Taken from: *Douglas County 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan*

Goal 5-A

Preserve Douglas County's cultural resources for future generations.

Objective 5-8A

Support the preservation and protection of cultural resources.

Policy 5-8A.1

Encourage partnerships and community-based efforts to plan for the preservation of cultural resources.

Policy 5-8A.2

Identify and support the preservation of sites and artifacts with historic, prehistoric, or cultural significance.

Policy 5-8A.3

Encourage the incorporation of historical and cultural resources into development plans.

Policy 5-8A.4

Cooperate with the Historic Preservation Board, historical societies, and archaeological organizations to promote the preservation of cultural resources.

Interpretive goal 1:

We want all visitors to the Virtual Museum to have a better understanding of our legacy and demonstrate growing support for the historic preservation of our sites and our County's artifacts.

Objective: Visitors to the Virtual Museum will understand the full historic time-frame of occupation from notable paleontological sites to contemporary (modern or just-turning 50 year old) County historic landmarks.

Indicator: The Virtual Museum will include a quiz area or have a feedback questionnaire that shows an increased number of participants knowing about key sites and the ages of those sites.*

Objective: Participants using the Virtual Museum will participate and support key historic preservation events and provide a basis to recruit new volunteers/supporters for historic preservation activities and the Repository.*

Indicator: Visitors to the Virtual Museum will be tracked to show a 5% increase in attendance/volunteer/support of the County's Historic preservation program and/or the Repository within two years of the re-launch of the website.*

Management goal:

Through the Virtual Museum, Douglas County provides a virtual tour of paleontological or historic properties and artifacts/fossils that may not be accessible to the public providing an opportunity to promote cultural tourism.

From: *Douglas County Recreation and Tourism Plan 2035*

Interpretive goal 2 and 3:

Users of the Virtual Museum will be able to experience a tour of the sites and artifacts/fossils that <u>can not</u> be accessed as well as those that <u>can</u> be accessed.

Objective: Users of the Virtual Museum will allow users to experience sites and artifacts/fossils that do not allow easy public access.

Indicator: Use of the virtual museum for non-accessible sites will increase over time, (5% growth within two years).*

Objective: Re-launch of the Virtual Museum will create a pathway for those seeking to know more about designated and County manged historic sites and associated collections and ways to access those places for in-person visitation/access.

Indicator: Sites open to the public will show increased visitation by 5% after re-launch of the website with publicly accessible sites highlighted.*

Management goals:

Conservation of Natural Resources – Preservation of agricultural, range, forest and aquifer recharge areas support productive and important uses on properties while preserving their natural character. As an example, preservation of agricultural land retains the historic heritage of the County, while supporting other open space criteria including preservation of wildlife habitat, archaeological and cultural sites, aquifer recharge areas, and scenic vistas.

Historical, Archaeological and Paleontological Sites – Protection of important historic sites preserves a sense of life in Douglas County in the early 1900s, the 1800s, and before. Archaeological and paleontological sites also provide excellent educational and scientific research opportunities.

From: *Douglas County 2030 Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan*

Objective OS 1B

Identify and preserve important landmarks and features that contribute to the natural and built environment of the County, including water bodies, agricultural lands, forest lands, cultural and historic resources, and scenic vistas as viewed from the major road network and key public places.

Objective OS 3F

Identify, monitor, and manage activities that impact wildlife, and natural and cultural resources on open space lands.

Interpretive goal 4:

Users of the Virtual Museum will understand that the County seeks to preserve paleontological, cultural and historic resources as part of the efforts to conserve rural areas of the County.

Objective: Users of the Virtual Museum will be given corresponding information (Open Space program information) about the County's efforts to preserve rural open space areas that includes significant paleontological, cultural and historic sites.

Indicator: After re-launch of the Virtual Museum, Douglas County government will see a 5% increased participation and inquiry of the Parks, Trails and Open Space conservation programs withing two years.*

Management goals:

The Douglas County History Repository operates for research, education, and curation to preserve in perpetuity, for the public benefit, the history of the community from the time of the earliest human inhabitants to the present. Douglas County History Repository Collections Management Plan.

From: *Douglas County History Repository Collections Management Policy and Procedures Plan 2020*

> **Interpretive goal 5:**
>
> We want users of the Virtual Museum to know of and be curious about the full historic time-frame of human occupation in the County.

Objective: Users of the Virtual Museum will see a full time-line of human occupation along with collections from the Paleo-Indian time period to the Modern.*

Indicator: Virtual-Museum users will be quizzed about different time frames of human occupation (with at least 75% success on the first try) and/or increased use of the these collections over time (5% increased use within two years).*

***Note:** These objectives and tracking indicators are parameters that must be developed if feasible within the existing web site architecture and hosting (if possible).

Themes

Themes (messages) are the main way to effectively communicate interpretive experiences. Themes are not topics. A topic is a subject, such as "The Archaic Period in Douglas County". A theme is a statement or message about the subject. It is the "take-home" message that you want the audiences to know. The theme expresses an overriding conclusion you hope your audience will draw. Interpretation should also always have a purpose and help meet (relate back to) your organization's goals and objectives (plan, or mission (see above)). For the purposes of this plan the themes outlined below help to establish part of the vision for the Virtual Museum.

Why be thematic?

> If you want to make a difference in what people think and feel with respect to a place.
>
> • People will forget isolated facts, but they'll remember aspects of a strong theme.
>
> • The media content will then be more focused.
>
> • It makes your audience's job easier.

• By communicating strong themes, you're planting seeds (beliefs) that can ultimately influence how people think, feel and behave with respect to the things you're interpreting for them.

Themes are the core of the stories that are told; stories are selected in order to communicate themes. Consequently, themes are determined before selecting and developing the interpretive strategies.

The elements in this theme hierarchy include:

🕐 Time period and historic site

The targeted time period and representative historic site in Douglas County

🧍 Themes

These are the key ideas or concepts that should be communicated.

Sub-themes

These are the concepts that support a theme.

Themes are derived from goals and objectives by determining the concept a visitor needs to understand in order for them to respond in a way that helps achieve the goals and objectives. The supporting stories then must support that concept.

Proposed Initial Time Periods and Themes

A. 🕐 **Paleo-Indian Time Period – 5DA120 Scott Spring site**

Main theme:

More research opportunities exist at this site.

Sub-theme:

Sub-theme 1: How old is this site?

Sub-themes 2: Getting food 8,000- 13,000 years ago was much different than today

B.   🕐   **Archaic Time Period – Rueter-Hess area and Blackfoot Cave sites**

Main theme:

Recent research shows that Douglas County had areas of long term occupation during ancient Pre-Contact drought times after the last Ice Age.

Sub-theme:

Sub-theme 1: Some of the first long-term built homes in Douglas County were found at the Rueter-Hess area.

Sub-themes 2: Inhabitants at Blackfoot cave site took advantage of its location (2 environmental zones).(Location, Location, Location!)

C.   🕐   **Late Prehistoric Time Period – Bayou Gulch**

Main theme:

The Bayou Gulch site was a place with significant long-term occupation and domestication.

Sub-theme:

Sub-theme 1: Ceramics and possibly growing *Zea Mays* points to the Eastern Plains Woodland Culture connections.

D.   **Early Euroamerican Time Period – Russellville site**

Main theme:

Russellville was Douglas County's first Euroamerican settlement.

<u>Sub-theme:</u>

Sub-theme 1: Russellville was a Gold camp, then a Calvary camp during the Civil War.

E.   **Settlement, Industry and Recreation Time Period– Town of Louviers**

Main theme:

Louviers was a company town built to foster community.

<u>Sub-theme:</u>

Sub-theme 1: Du Pont's clubhouse was the Town of Louviers' finest asset.

F.   **Douglas County History as seen through the Repository's artifacts**

Main theme:

Douglas County's history can be learned in artifacts small and large.

Sub-theme:

Sub-theme 1: The Douglas County History Repository is the County's official institution curating significant objects and artifacts of historical importance.

Next story points:

After the basic timeline subjects listed above are developed staff and volunteers suggested the following sites and collections should be developed:

Allis Ranch Greenland Colorado – Settlement, Industry and Recreation town site

Historic Collection – Brandebery Collection Music and Instruments

Other possible theme subjects/story points that may be developed next:

To be developed within the next phases (in no particular order) include:

5DA3991 – multi-component Archaic – Late Prehistoric, not accessible

Must include consultation/collaboration

5DA1001 Cherokee Ranch – Archaic/Late Prehistoric Shoshonean ceramics

Site not accessible, controlled by Cherokee Ranch Foundation. Artifacts not at the Repository currently.

5DA1000 Ridge Gate site – Late Prehistoric game drive?

Site destroyed, not accessible

Highlands Ranch Pre-Contact sites – multi-component, surface survey

Sites may be in danger if locations are known

Hidden Mesa Open Space – Early Euroamerican ranching/farming

Cheese Farm – Early Euroamerican ranching/farming

Site area accessible

Ivan Cranmer's Blacksmith shop (typical tools) – site destroyed

Typical historic trade tools

South Platte fishing, Deckers Resort - Settlement, Industry and Recreation, recreation

Cool fish art, recreation ties to current public access and use.

Historic Collection – Larkspur Bottle Collection

Must be careful to not encourage or endorse bottle collecting.

5DA29 Dancing Pants Shelter – Archaic and Late Prehistoric Site

Stone structure inside a rock shelter may provide some interesting collection of materials.

Prescriptions and audiences

Overview:

The visitor flow in the information network for each targeted audience type reflects the typical sequence of information desired by the visitors. Basic orientation and virtual way-finding are key to direct visitors to on-line exhibits of interest.

The interpretive experiences are layered, reflecting the need to serve different audiences. The layers are designed to stand alone, but also to pique interest in other interpretive opportunities that one may visit in-person on site or by conducting more research (with steps on how to make a research inquiry).

The prescriptions are presented to reflect the sequence of the desired visitor experience with a specific site virtual exhibit. That experience is broken down into the following segments:

  • Awareness experience: How that audience is informed to come to the Virtual Museum

  • Pre-Trip (trip planning) experience: navigation to the Virtual Museum on the internet

  • Navigation experience: Introduction to County goals and aims

  • Arrival experience: General introduction to the history of Douglas County

- Primary experience: The primary Story Point (exhibit message(s))

- Departure experience: Link to the full catalog of artifacts (encouraging further inquiry)

- Return visit: Quiz section, collect email (encourage involvement)

- Post-trip experience: Link to historic landmarks, site to visit, (partner links)

- Potential extended experience: Information on repository access, Historic Preservation Board events, volunteer information, etc.

Branding and wayfinding

Wayfinding is an important part of a comprehensive strategy to guide visitors to places where they can lean more information. Wayfinding is the user experience of orientation and choosing a path within the built environment. Signage is a major component of all wayfinding, placemaking and identity systems, and exhibitions. To aid the ease of finding the Virtual Museum it is highly recommended that the website have a definitive logo image so visitors can connect the museum with Douglas County's website as well as to be used in any on-site wayfinding signage or phone applications. Development of these items will need to be done in consultation with the County's Public Affairs Department.

Some possible logo design suggestions:

Historic Preservation Board Logo. Oversees Virtual Museum:

Audiences

While it is difficult to segment or control audiences on an internet platform like the Virtual Museum three main groups were identified and are targeted with this Plan and the progress in developing this Plan.

Targeted audiences – General public

One key audience is the general public. The general public here is identified as all adults that are either residents or non-residents of Douglas County. It is assumed that they have some interest in the history of the County however they know little to no details. This group (both residents and non-residents) will find the Virtual Museum as a way to learn more or find a QR code, social or media link pointing to the Virtual Museum as a place to learn more. It is important to try to capture interested individuals for the Virtual Museum and other historic preservation related public programs. This becomes an excellent way then to recruit and maintain interest in the programs and support for the Virtual Museum. It is also possible this group may advance interest to become "heritage enthusiasts".

Characteristics and implications:

Characteristics: County and Non-County Residents
Implications: Need web access to see the Virtual Museum.

Characteristics: County and Non-County Residents
Implications: Make sure there is a support network to direct and advertise the Virtual Museum site from re-launch to continued use.

Characteristic: Some needing ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) access
Implications: Make sure the site is accessibility compliant (see Accessibility needs section below).

Target audiences 1 (General public)

Trip Stage	Information	Delivery Strategy/Comments
Awareness	Know about the Virtual Museum	Social media, blogs, stories, & links on the County websites (tourism?), Douglas County TV, Develop Virtual Museum brand identity (logo and QR code) for advertising and tie-in to on-s0te signage.
Pre-trip (trip planning)	Navigate to find the Virtual Museum website via the County's web site.	Make sure the links are easy to find and logical.
Navigation	Introduce the County aims goals	Open Space program, protect cultural, paleontological resources, collections.
Arrival experience	Timeline of Human Occupation	Geologic (pre-human) to the Modern era (must be visually stimulating).
Primary experience	Scott Springs Site Rueter-Hess Blackfoot Cave Bayou Gulch Russellville Louviers Link to all the County Landmarks	Participants will be encouraged to explore the different time periods by the exhibited sites. Information on all Historic Landmarks program, sites and

		their locations.
Departure experience	see more artifacts (Pose questions)	Site catalog and the Virtual Museum's entire collection listed (create a simple scavenger hunt game)
Return visit	Quiz and collect email (voluntary).	Capture email to promote and encourage volunteers. Call to Take Action in H.P. and museum, open space events as well as, repository access procedures.
Post-trip	Link sites/museums, open space,	In-person visit to the repository or open space program participation or site or museum visit (link to partner organizations), etc.
Potential extended experiences	In-person visit to the repository or historic site/events	Participation in the Landmark board or other HP commission, volunteer, etc. Motivated action.

Target audiences – Heritage enthusiasts

Characteristics and Implications:

> **Characteristics: Like to know about detailed history, specific artifacts, analysis reports, etc.**
> **Implications: Provide redacted reports/public research papers**
>
> **Characteristics: Like to visit sites**
> **Implications: Provide a section with a *maps to sites/collections* that the public can visit.**
>
> **Characteristics: Like to get involved**
> **Implications: Provide links and calendar of HP, repository events, etc.**

www.douglas.co.us

Target audiences 2 (Heritage enthusiasts)

Trip Stage	Information	Delivery Strategy/Comments
Awareness	Know about the Virtual Museum	Social media, blogs, stories, & links on the County websites (tourism?) Douglas County TV, Develop Virtual Museum brand identity (logo and QR code) for advertising and tie-in to on-s0te signage.
Pre-trip (trip planning)	Navigate to find the Virtual Museum website via the County's web site.	Make sure the links are easy to find and logical.
Navigation	Introduce the County aims goals	Open Space program, protect cultural, paleontological resources, collections.
Arrival Experience	Time Line of Human Occupation	Geologic (pre-human) to the Modern era (must be visually stimulating).
Primary Experience	Scott Springs Site Rueter-Hess Blackfoot Cave Bayou Gulch Russellville Louviers Link to all the County Landmarks	Participants will be encouraged to explore the different time periods by the exhibited sites. Information on all Historic Landmarks program, sites and

		their locations.
Departure Experience	see more artifacts (Pose questions	Site catalog and the Virtual Museum's entire collection listed (create a simple scavenger hunt game) More stories – detailed information, artifact catalog, links to library, etc. Archive links, Archaeology reports, oral histories, articles etc. (public accessible).
Return Visit	Quiz and collect email (voluntary).	Capture email to promote and encourage volunteers. Call to Take Action in H.P. and museum, open space events as well as, repository access procedures.
Post-trip	Link sites/museums, open space,	in-person visit to the repository or open space program participation or site or museum visit (link to partner organizations), etc.
Potential Extended Experiences	In-person visit to the repository or historic site/events	Participation in the Landmark board or other HP commission, volunteer, etc. Motivated action.

Target audiences – Students and educators

Characteristics and Implications:

> **Characteristics: Captive Learners (Students)**
> **Implications: Need lesson plans and direction to learning points**

> **Characteristics: Like to be creative (Students)**
> **Implications: Have creative aspects to learning about the past.**

> **Characteristics: Needs assessment (Educators)**
> **Implications: Have fun quizzes for assessment purposes**

Target Audiences 3 (Students and educators)

Trip Stage	Information	Delivery Strategy/Comments
Awareness	Know about the Virtual Museum	<u>Outreach to schools (social media, events and brochures), table at the Douglas County Career Fair, etc.</u>
Pre-trip (trip planning)	Navigate to find the Virtual Museum website via the County's web site.	Make sure the links are easy to find and logical.
Navigation	Introduce the County's aims and goals	Open Space program, protect cultural, paleontological resources, collections.
Arrival Experience	Time Line of Human Occupation	Geologic (pre-human) to the Modern era (must be visually stimulating).
Primary Experience	Scott Springs Site Rueter-Hess Blackfoot Cave Bayou Gulch Russellville Louviers Link to all the County Landmarks	Participants will be encouraged to explore the different time periods by the exhibited sites, Information on all Historic Landmarks program, sites and their locations. Archaeology periods may be

	<u>Lesson Plans for the groups and meeting Colorado standards.</u>	developed from Project Archaeology models.
Departure Experience	See more artifacts (pose questions).	Site catalog and the Virtual Museum's entire collection listed (create a simple scavenger hunt game).
Return Visit	Quiz and collect email (voluntary).	Capture email to promote and encourage volunteers. <u>Call to Take Action</u> in H.P. and museum, open space events as well as, repository access procedures.
Post-trip	Link sites/museums, open space.	In-person visit to the repository or open space program, participation or site or museum visit (link to partner organizations), etc.
Potential Extended Experiences	In-person visit to the repository or historic site/events.	Participation in the Landmark board or other HP commission, volunteer etc. Motivated action.

Key theme parameters and implications

Introduction

Parameters are those conditions under which an interpretive program must be developed, such as monetary constraints, and under which it must function, such as climate. Identifying parameters ensures selection and development of interpretive and wayfinding strategies and infrastructure that are effective and realistic, not idealistic. The following section contains key parameters that could affect the interpretive program for the Virtual Museum. In reviewing the parameters, it is important to remember that they represent what is, not what should be or what is desired.

Parameter: Location, access and vandalism for the Scott Springs site
Implication: Do not discuss the exact location and try to include Native American perspectives.

Parameters: Location, access and vandalism for the Rueter-Hess, Blackfoot, 5DA3991
Implication: Rueter-Hess, Blackfoot, 5DA3991 access must be protected. Do not discuss the exact location. Must include Native American Collaboration.

Parameter: Location, access and vandalism Cherokee Ranch, Franktown Cave, Ridge Gate, Bayou Gulch
Implication: Do not discuss the exact location. Try to include Native American Collaboration.

Parameter: Location, access and vandalism Highlands Ranch Archaeological Sites
Implication: Do not discuss the exact locations. Try to include Native American perspectives.

Parameter: Location, access and vandalism – Russellville Gulch, Hidden Mesa homestead
Implication: Emphasize that the Russellville site is on private land. Do not discuss the exact location and the Hidden Mesa sites are limited in access.

Parameter: Knowledge Base public unfamiliar with Pre-Contact History and archaeology methods or terminology
Implication: Provide basic understanding, glossary of terms and link familiar to unfamiliar.

Parameter: Knowledge Base public unfamiliar with the Cheese Farm and Historical Archaeology methods or terminology
Implication: Provide background on how and why historical archaeology is done and photos of the site during historic use.

Parameter: Knowledge Base public unfamiliar with the Town of Louviers history
Implication: Provide background on the Town and on company towns in general.

Deepen engagement with new and repeat visitation

A key formula to the success of the Virtual Museum will be to offer engaging interactive content that may promote repeat or self-promoted repeated visitation.

One strategy that will help promote this effort is to offer new and changing visitor experiences. This could also include new virtual exhibitions and new embedded or linked content.

Quiz sections

One content item that would help with encouraging engagement as well as assist with educational use of the website is the incorporation of quizzes such as those the New York Landmark Repository has incorporated.
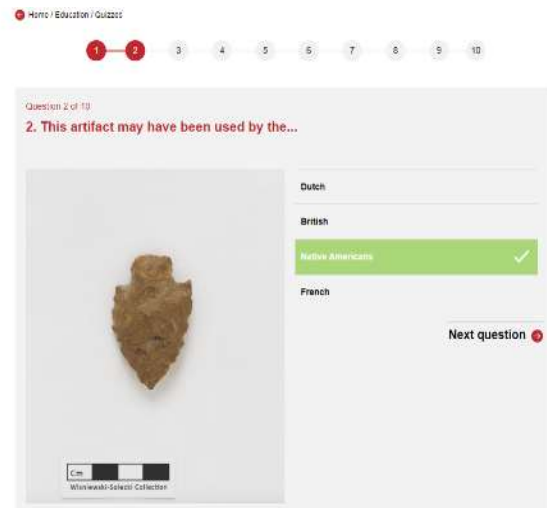
New York City Landmark Repository Quiz Sections
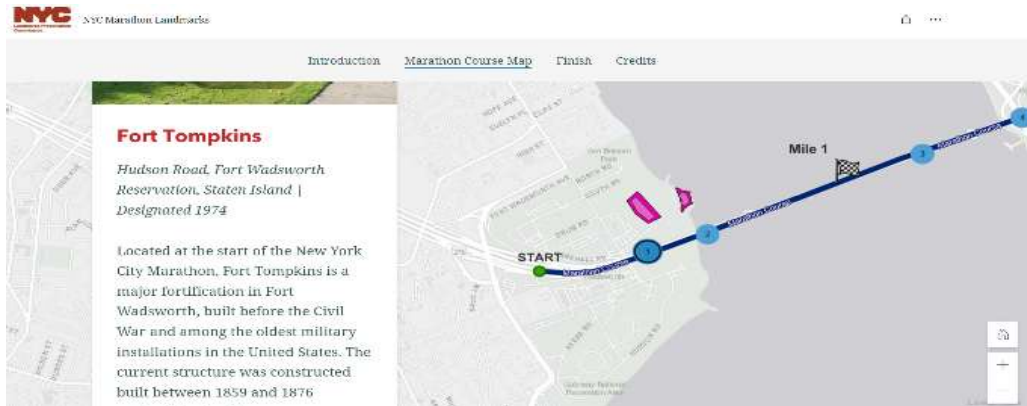
ESRI ArcGIS StoryMaps are a way to present engaging maps, artifacts and text.

Time-line "exhibits"

Another possibility is to incorporate a scrolling interactive timeline for a specific site or collection/story point theme such as at the City of Woodstock Canada has done utilizing the Lucidea Argus product called "Showcase" within the public portal. feature.

A time-line example from the City of Woodstock, Canada's Lucidia Argus museum software.

Puzzles

The City of Woodstock in Ontario Canada also created a fun jigsaw puzzle embed link which also could be added to the Douglas County Virtual Museum:


Historic Images turned into electronic jigsaw puzzle pieces.

Virtual spaces and artifacts

Finally the Virtual Museum website should also be able to link virtual reality elements such as virtual exhibit galleries and 3-D artifacts especially since these tools are increasingly becoming affordable. It appears any hosted 3D object could be linked to an Argus "Showcase" and ESRI ArcGIS StoryMaps which could be used for the Virtual Museum.

Examples of a virtual exhibit gallery from ArtSteps.com and a Pre-Contact projectile point 3D scan in SketchUp.
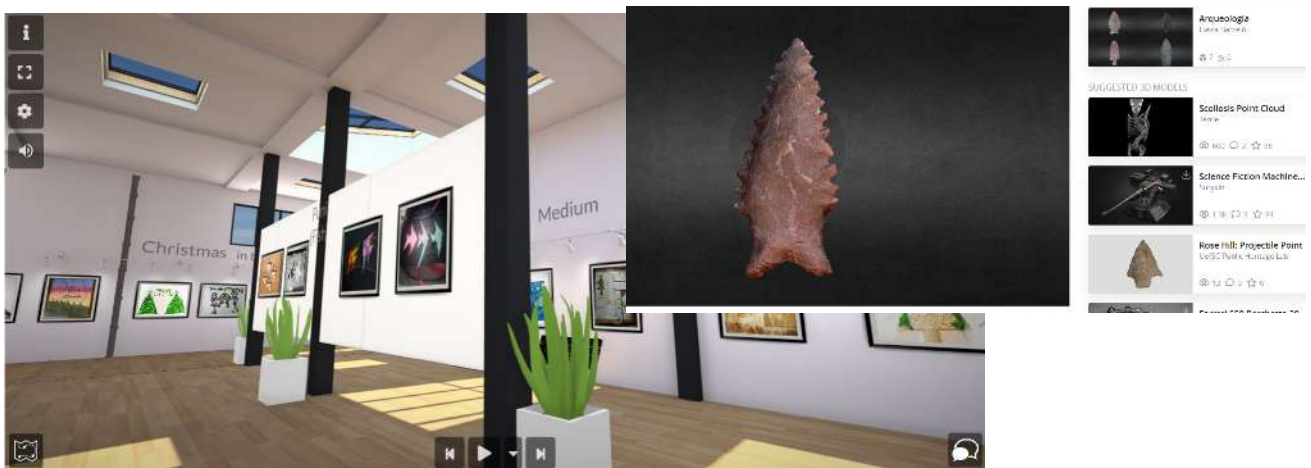
Educational resources

To reach the targeted students and teachers of all ages who make use of the Virtual Museum, the main website must include at a minimum links and suggestions on how to use the Virtual Museum for educational purposes (linking to lesson plans made by other government and non-profit partners). Preferably more lesson plans and educational tools specific to Douglas County (its sites and history) for educators (and those interested in Douglas County history) would be ideal. This area could expand over time with the development of County specific content through monetary gifts, grants, fundraisers and educational partnerships. Such partnerships could include, for example, the Douglas County Public School District and the Douglas County Libraries' Archives and Local History department.
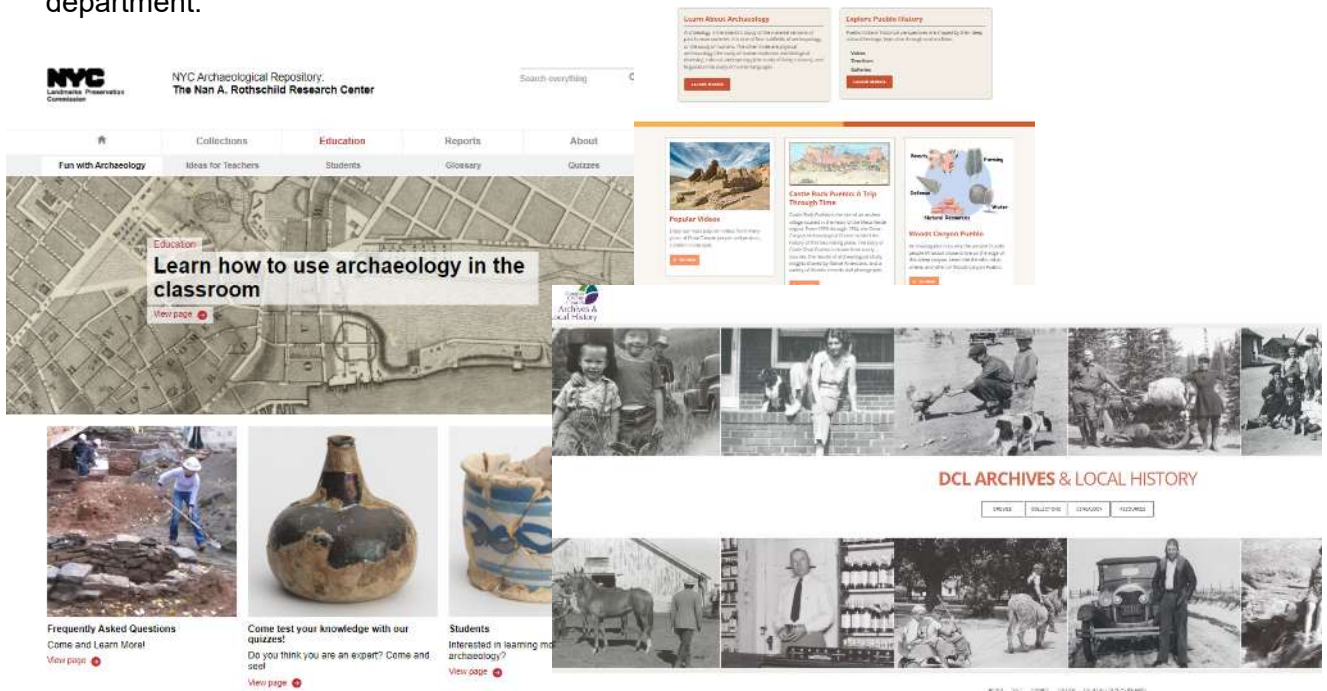

Educational uses highlighted on the NYC Landmark Repository website. The Crow Canyon Archaeological Center educational resources (above), The Douglas County Archives and Local History website is also shown.

Capturing new audiences

The Douglas County Virtual Museum should also consider capturing email and contact information for future programming promotion, newsletters or just as a RSS (Really Simple Syndication) capture method.
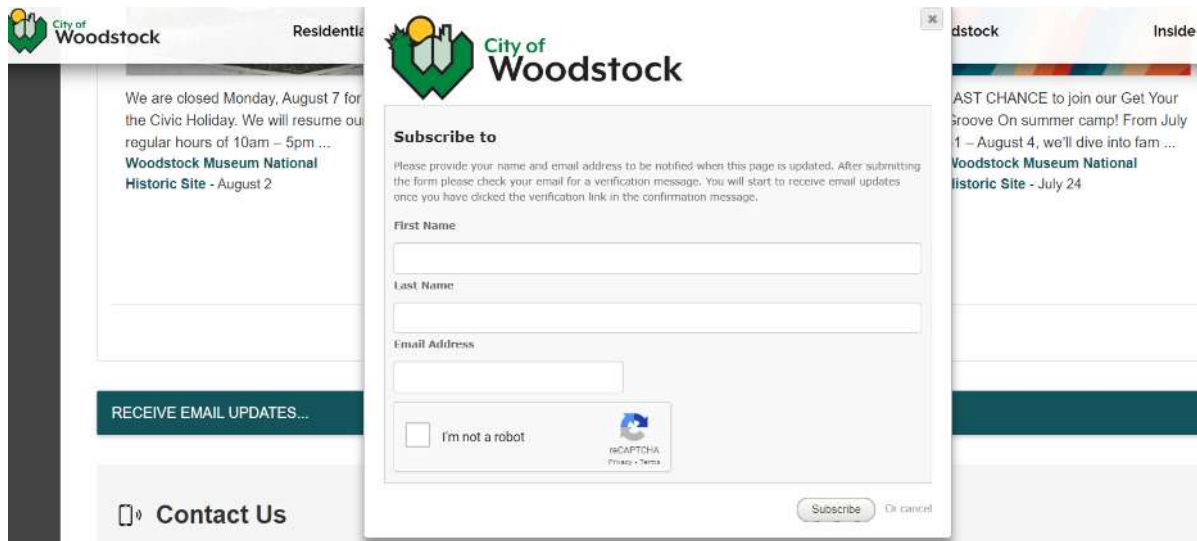
An example of capture audience interest in more information, updated websites or activism.

Implications and parameters for all content media

Connectivity access

According to the State of Colorado's Broadband Office as of August 2023, Douglas County is the fifth highest county with broadband internet access (96.6% of the residents have fast 100/20 Mbps coverage). Also, according to bestneighborhood.org, a nonprofit website that maps wireless and cell phone coverage across the Nation, 99.4% of Douglas County's land area is covered by some kind of wireless service and almost all (99.38%) have access to 5G cell phone data speeds. These parameters imply that the Virtual Museum today is ideally suited to reach and be accessed by more than the majority of the Douglas County residents.

Direct personnel management

The above suggested strategies and products imply that there is someone (personnel) who will maintain and update this information. Not maintaining this information regularly can be detrimental to the program as a whole and could lead to an erosion of the validity of the Virtual Museum since it may not reach any of its affiliated management goals. While these enhancements can initially be absorbed within existing personnel and existing departments, the County should consider either creating new content management positions or outsourcing the care/maintenance/upgrades. If volunteers or interns are used, website training and protocols must be developed and followed.

Coordination across departments

The Virtual Museum should be optimized across all County departments and not compartmentalized to just the Planning Services department. As shown with the County Comprehensive Master Plan, the Recreation and Tourism Plan and the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan the Virtual Museum is specified or related partially to the success of these plan's aims and goals.

The Philip S. Miller Building, Castle Rock

In order to achieve maximum success of the Virtual Museum, the Planning Services department must not only inform the Historic Preservation Board of its use but the Museum's existence and promotion must be integrated with the Community Development department, the Open Space & Natural Resources department, the Parks, Trails and Building Grounds department and the Communications/Public Affairs office.

Suggested actions:

- create inter-departmental one-sheet information sheets on the Virtual Museum and how it supports different County aims and goals

- hold inter-departmental informational open houses on the Virtual Museum and the History Repository

- schedule meetings with Departmental representatives to encourage cross promotion of the Virtual Museum resources

Accessibility needs

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

Douglas County's main website is committed to complying with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) (currently in compliance with WCAG 2.1). These guidelines not only help make web content accessible to users with sensory, cognitive, and mobility disabilities but ultimately to all users, regardless of ability. Douglas County currently also uses the UserWay Website Accessibility Widget to enable users to hear website content through a screen reader, change font type, color saturation, etc. By State law HB21-1110 the Virtual Museum as a product of local government must comply with these standards by July 1,2024 to facilitate audiences needs and extend the reach of the museum's management goals or risk law suits. All wayside exhibits (signs at historic sites and trails), smart phone apps and tours using the Virtual Museum tie-in should all be in compliance with these accessibility standards and requirements.

Note: After speaking to Lucidea software contact Ms. Reese Irwin, the Argus museum management software used by Douglas County, and the "public portal" feature that is projected to implement the new enhancements to the Virtual Museum is not currently WCAG compliant however there may be a way to enable some degree of compliance however the design elements may be very limited. It is not clear currently what deficiencies or style changes that may need to be corrected by special customization from Lucidea. Douglas County currently also uses the UserWay widget on all public websites, it is not clear too if this tool can be embedded with Lucidea's product or with other third-party hosted applications (i.e. ESRI StoryMaps). This is major parameter that needs be addressed in the implementation (see the Plan for implementation section below)

Historic site tie-in's

QR codes with wayside exhibits, trails and indoor signs have proliferated in use recently. More web browsers, tablets and smartphones with QR readers have made the use of QR bar coding very routine in museum and interpretive practice. This creates the opportunity for visitors to not only experience a historic site in person but also to tie that site to a virtual exhibit and the artifacts found through archaeological excavations and stored at the Repository. The tie-in through virtual means is also a way to facilitate accessibility requirements something the National Park Service had started to implement..

➔ All future historic site wayside exhibits within the County should try to tie-in the Virtual Museum collections using this QR technology and the Virtual Museum's logo for visual association.

Wayside interpretive sign with QR code, example from the US Fish and Wildlife.

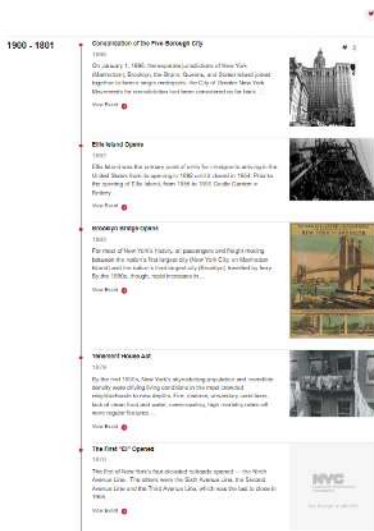*A National Park Service ADA QR code for an interpretive sign.*

QR codes above items on an interpretive sign. This could be done to link artifacts, too.
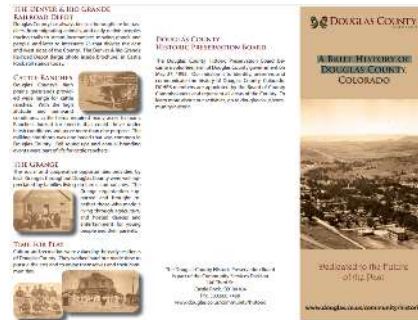
33

Design concept

Ideally the Douglas County Virtual Museum should have a timeline of Douglas County (artist rendering) showing major points of Douglas County's history. If an artistic rendering can not be commissioned a timeline such as that found on the New York repository website or a simple timeline like that found on the City of Woodstock, Canada using the Argus "Showcase" function would suffice. Two sources that could aid in the development of this are a brochure published by the Douglas County Historic Preservation Board titled "A Brief History of Douglas County, Colorado", and a Douglas County, Colorado Timeline published by the Douglas County Libraries and Local History.

A Brief History...Brochure published by the Douglas Co. Historic Preservation Board

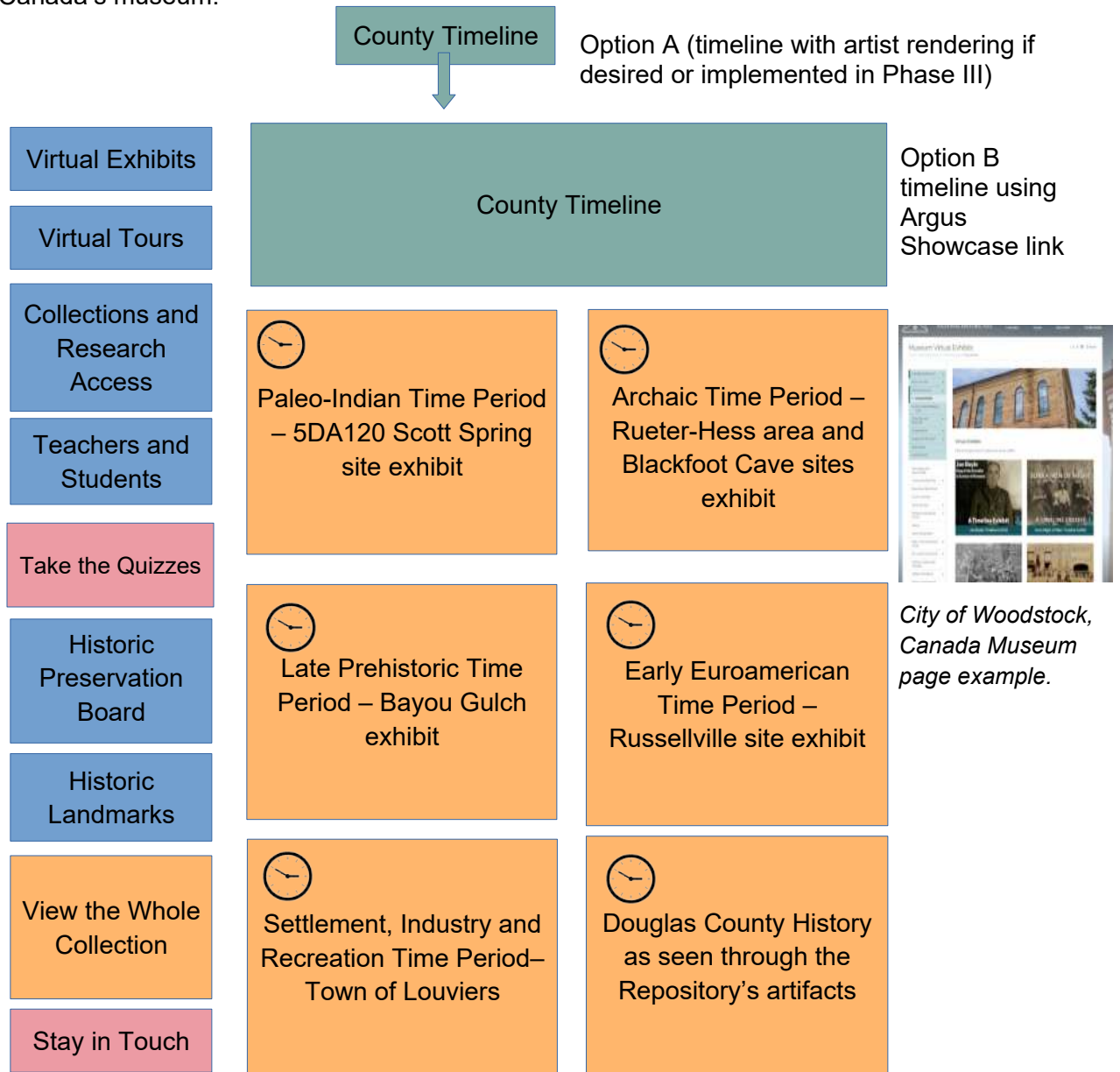*New York City Repository Timeline*
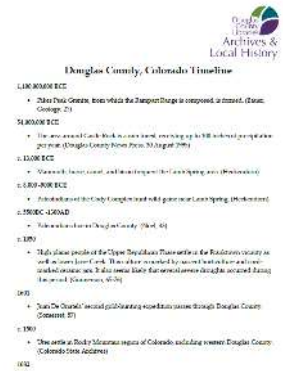
Douglas Co. Timeline. Published by the Douglas Co Libraries

Web site infrastructure (design concept)

The design layout of the Virtual Museum website could take use of sidebar menus and main exhibit link "Showcase" features, similar to the structure of the City of Woodstock, Canada's museum.

County Timeline

Option A (timeline with artist rendering if desired or implemented in Phase III)

Virtual Exhibits

Virtual Tours

County Timeline

Option B timeline using Argus Showcase link

Collections and Research Access

Paleo-Indian Time Period – 5DA120 Scott Spring site exhibit

Archaic Time Period – Rueter-Hess area and Blackfoot Cave sites exhibit

Teachers and Students

Take the Quizzes

Historic Preservation Board

Late Prehistoric Time Period – Bayou Gulch exhibit

Early Euroamerican Time Period – Russellville site exhibit

City of Woodstock, Canada Museum page example.

Historic Landmarks

View the Whole Collection

Settlement, Industry and Recreation Time Period– Town of Louviers

Douglas County History as seen through the Repository's artifacts

Stay in Touch

Cost range estimates

Introduction

Estimating costs is always calculated relative to the design details and the parameters/limitations that can make the visitor experiences possible. Interpretive Plans generally do not include specific design plans but instead design concepts which are developed from interpretive strategies rather than infrastructure. Consequently, it is not possible to develop specific estimates. However it is possible to make assumptions for interpretive media to develop cost range estimates that can be useful for budgeting.

Douglas County Virtual Museum cost range estimates			
Strategy	**Cost range**	**Total Committed**	**Comments**
Phase I – Adopt Interpretive Plan	$4,000*	$4,000*	*budgeted and under contract with Interpret Site LLC
Phase II –Adopt Logo	$50 - $1,500		Could be done in-house or with purchase of icon logo rights
Phase II - Build out new website architecture	$8,000*	$12,000*	*budgeted and under contract with Interpret Site LLC
Phase II – Build Showcases and Time period exhibits content with Argus	(initial six included in above cost range)		(initial six included in above cost range)
Phase II – Include interactive quiz sections	?		will try to include a couple of quizzes if feasible under existing contract with Interpret Site LLC

Phase II – Develop virtual tour or exhibit using ESRI ArcGIS StoryMaps	(possibly at least one example under current development)		will try to include one example if feasible with existing contract to Interpret Site LLC
Phase II - Have suggestions for use by Teachers and Students	Initial suggestions included in initial contract		If time allows, develop a sample lesson plan using parts of the collection and a Project Archaeology model under current Interpret Site LLC contract.
Phase II – include "Stay In Touch" capture for newsletters/volunteers etc.	$0 - $1,500		Requires IT approval and management and implies use of this collected data.
Phase II – plan time frame for Phase III	$500*	$12,500	*budgeted and under contract with Interpret Site LLC
Phase III – Make Argus or any third-party lined sources WCAG (accessible) by July 1, 2024	Est. $3,00 - $50,000 very rough		This is **Critical Parameter** that must addressed as soon as possible. Must be budgeted by Douglas County IT department under contract with Lucidea and/other website vendors
Phase III – additional site	Est. $200 - $5,000 each		Possible grant or built in as part of

exhibits/StoryMaps (computer time)			NHPA Section 106 mitigation
Phase III – Native American consultation	Est. $1,500 - $10,000		*budgeted and under contract with Interpret Site LLC
Phase III – Teacher lesson plans and resources	Est. $1,500 - $40,000 (depending on size etc.)		*budgeted and under contract with Interpret Site LLC
Phase III – artists rendering for a County timeline	$1,500 - $5,000		Possible grant or built in as part of NHPA Section 106 mitigation
Phase III – Wayside Signage Historic site tie-ins			Possible grant or built in as part of NHPA Section 106 mitigation
Phase III – 3D objects integration	$1,000 - $50,000 very rough est.		Possible grant or built in as part of NHPA Section 106 mitigation

Note: The above cost estimates were calculated based on rough estimates for similar projects across the Country and were calculated at a time without knowing the full capabilities and limitations of the Douglas County IT department or its budget.

Plan for implementation

Phase I

The suggested time line for implementing this plan is to be done in three phases. Phase I involved the development and adoption of this very Interpretive Plan. This provided the direction and the rough "blueprint" for the enhanced Virtual Museum to be completed within the next five years. This plan sets out the interpretive goals, subject time lines and themes that will be constructed in Phase II. Phase I will be completed by August 2023.

Phase II

Phase II consists of building the basic architecture to implement the Plan. The Douglas County History Repository utilizes the Lucidea Argus museum collections software which provides an opportunity to highlight exhibits utilizing the public portal and the "Showcase" feature as well as provide access to the entire collection for researchers and scholars to make in-person requests. Phase II actions of implementation are scheduled to be initialed in September through October of 2023. However, the WCAG accessibility issues for Argus and any third-party applications must comply with State law HB21-1110 to avoid any lawsuits especially by July 1, 2024. It is with this understanding that the implementation of Phase II and all of the Virtual Museum content using Douglas County's current platform, that it may need to be adjusted to meet the State's ADA compliance once further direction is received from the County's IT Department.

Other actions needed:

➔ Develop and adopt a Virtual Museum logo

➔ Determine if the website can track usage statistics

➔ Determine if the website can host or have quiz or interactive sections (see WCAG concerns above)

➔ Determine if the website can capture audience interest through email entry (see WCAG issues above and the projected use of this information)

➜ Determine how to integrate the promotion and use of the Virtual Museum inter-departmentally and with the public (see suggestions above)

➜ If quiz sections or web user tracking are not available other outcome measures should be developed

Phase III

Phase III will be implemented over four-five years through the robust development of new (most likely with WCAG compliant) content, the inclusion of Native American and other ethnic community input. Additional teacher education materials should also be developed in coordination with the Douglas County School District teachers and other educational partners. Funding for Phase III enhancement could come from varied sources as increases in department budgets, inter-department cost sharing, State Historical Fund and other Federal and State grants as well as the possibility of having some funding coming from National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 creative mitigation compensation.

Beyond phase III

It is the duty of the Douglas County History Repository to re-evaluate this Plan after five years of use to amend or recommission a new Plan based on the usefulness of this one. Like all good planning, the success of the Plan is only as good as measuring the results at the end of the period for which it was designed.

Appendix A: Methodology

The planning process began with a solicited proposal to Interpret Site LLC by the Douglas County History Repository in early June of 2023. The proposal and cost estimate was developed after an initial conversation with Ms. Brittany Casell on June 7th aimed at understanding the goals and vision of the proposed work. Interpret Site LLC's proposal was accepted on June 21st along with a timeline to implement Phase I and Phase II. A final draft of the plan was submitted on August 16, 2023. The time frame was much shorter than is typical due to time constraints and plans to move forward with the preliminary implementation of the plan in time for its soft public debut for International Archaeology Day 2023.

The process for developing the Plan occurred with the following scope of work:

The proposed process involves three basic steps or phases. Phases I and Phase II are outlined below while the framework for Phase III will be very limited in outline form as details will come after the completion and evaluation of Phase I and II.

The structure of the long-range plan will include the following elements:

1. Interpretation Goals and Objectives

2. Profiles of Targeted Audiences

3. Parameters (limitations, constraints and conditions under which an information network must be developed and must function (including implications))

4. Inventory of Interpretive Opportunities (sites, themes and artifacts, objects to highlight)

5. Theme Hierarchy (themes, sub-themes) a statement or message about a subject

6. Desired Visitor Experiences

7. Media Prescription (strategies (types)) to be developed or to be considered in Phase III

8. Cost Range Estimates

9. Plan for implementation

The order of developing the interpretative plan

Phase I: Establish Direction

1. Pre-work session to review and identify key stakeholders (administration, educators, students, researchers etc.)
   a) review the Douglas County History Repository Management Plan
   b) review the existing list of artifacts collections on the current Virtual Museum platform
   c) establish priorities for collections to add to the Argus public portal

2. Held a work planning meeting with the Douglas County History Repository staff/volunteers/administration
   a) explanation of the interpretation process
   b) identify key long-range goals and desired outcomes
   c) identify potential themes (take home messages) (thematic message-driven communication) for this long-range Interpretive Plan

3. Develop Interpretative Program Goals and Objectives
   a) connect with the management goals of the Douglas County History Repository
   b) lay out the framework to implement Phase II and Phase III work
   c) progress report reviewed/approved by management staff

Phase I: Develop the Plan

1. Identify and profile target audiences (public that would likely be engaged)
   a) understand the cost and benefits for the audiences to engage with these sites or the themes through the Virtual Museum
   b) develop an interpretive prescription to engage the targeted audience(s)

2. Inventory the key tangibles (e.g. sites, artifacts/reports, lessons, etc.) and the stories that can be told
   a) get input from repository staff on the artifacts to highlight in virtual exhibit collection

areas on the Argus public portal platform
    b) develop the content for interpretive visitor experiences

3. Define the visitor experiences that would be offered
    a) incorporate the Theme Hierarchy into the experience(s) within the constraints of the Argus public portal
    b) identify the information network (e.g. pre-trip info, departure from the experience, post-trip/ extended experience) necessary to support the experience(s)

4. Delivery of the final long-rage interpretive plan for the Virtual Museum for approval

Phase II Build out the Argus public portal

1. Using the adopted Interpretive Plan for the Douglas County History Repository Virtual Museum will focus on content related to the collection and key sites or exhibit themes in side-bar collection sets.

2. Each collection set (i.e a specific site or theme) will have an introductory narrative plus a collection of artifacts that support or are relevant to that collection set (specific site or theme).

3. Set a goal for completion and launch of the public portal (i.e. October 2023) for initial public access – continuing updates by staff and volunteers

Phase III Enhance the public portal with Enhanced Storytelling

Building on the completion of Phase I and Phase II, Phase III will enhance the exhibit storytelling with more media and enhanced visitor content (i.e. ESRI StoryMaps, video, document and educational lesson plans etc.) to match targeted audience profiles. This will be done after an evaluation of the current state of the public portal, its limitations and possibilities for enhanced visitor content matching the vision outlined in Phase I.

All work, including review and approval, shall be completed on or before

Action	Date (Not Later Than)	Review & Approval Time
Phase I		
A. Retainer for services and initial background (mission and agency priorities) review	July 1, 2023	N/A
B. Submission of interpretive plan progress report with approved goals and vision	July 30, 2023	4 days
C. Delivery of the final long-rage interpretive plan for the Virtual Museum for the Repository for approval	August 16, 2023	7 days
Phase II		
D. Develop the Argus public portal with existing constraints	October 21, 2023	N/A
E. Submission of all production	November 1,	7 days

documents, related materials and outline for initiative Phase III	2023	
Phase III		
Future implementation after review of Phase II (identify parameters to include funding)		

Appendix B: Information sources

Numerous websites and other sources of information were used during the development of this plan, but the following were the primary sources of information:

Documents

Douglas County 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan

Douglas County Recreation and Tourism Plan 2035

Douglas County 2030 Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan

Douglas County History Repository Collections Management Policy and Procedures Plan 2020

Websites

Accessibility law for State and local government: https://oit.colorado.gov/accessibility-law

ArtSteps.com VR exhibitions: https://www.artsteps.com

City of Woodstock Museum Virtual Resources https://www.cityofwoodstock.ca/en/live-and-play/museum-virtual-resources.aspx

Lucidea Argus Collections Management System: https://lucidea.com/argus/

National Association for Interpretation: https://www.interpnet.com

New York City Archaeological Repository: The Nan A. Rothschild Research Center: https://archaeology.cityofnewyork.us

SketchUp 3D models:.https://www.sketchup.com