

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site Accessibility Assessment

Summary Report Findings and Recommendations

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National Park Service
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Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

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Table of contents

I. Assessment Team 4

II. Final Locations as Identified in FMSS..... 4

III. Park Purpose, History and Themes..... 5

IV. The National Center on Accessibility Assessment Approach..... 5

V. Referenced Standards and Guidelines..... 6

VI. Key Findings and Recommendations..... 8

 1. VISITOR INFORMATION.....8

 2. VISITOR ORIENTATION9

 3. PUBLICATIONS9

 4. INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS10

 5. AUDIO/VISUAL PROGRAMS.....11

 6. TALKS AND TOURS.....11

 7. PARKING12

 8. RESTROOMS.....13

 9. ACCESSIBLE ROUTES13

 10. TRAILS13

 11. SCENIC VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES.....14

 12. PICNIC AREAS.....14

 13. GARDEN14

 14. PEARSON AIR FIELD HANGER AND MUSEUM15

VII. Action Planning..... 16

**Fort Vancouver National Historic Site
Accessibility Assessment
Summary Report of Findings and Recommendations
Assessment Date: June 21-23, 2010**

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II. Final Locations as Identified in FMSS

105004	PRKG Center Waterfront Parking Lot Paved RT#0903B
105007	PRKG Waterfront Parking Lot Paved RT#0903C
109004	BLDG South Engage House #1
115660	BLDG South Engage House #2
116536	PRKG Pearson Paved Parking
80491	TRLS Waterfront Trail
80494	PRKG West Waterfront Parking Lot Paved RT#0903A
80504	PRKG North-Visitor Center Paved Parking RT0900
80506	BLDG North Visitor Center
80522	BLDG North Bandstand
80528	BLDG North Picnic Shelter
80559	GRND South Grounds
80568	PRKG South - Unpaved Parking RT#0902
80569	TRLS South Paved Trail
80578	BLDG South Kitchen
80579	BLDG South Wash House
80580	BLDG South Chief Factors House
80581	BLDG South Blacksmith Shop
80582	BLDG South Indian Trade Store

80584	BLDG South Fur Warehouse
80586	BLDG South Jail
80587	BLDG South Bastion
80588	BLDG South Carpenter Shop
80593	BLDG South Contact Station
86805	BLDG McLoughlin House
86808	BLDG Barclay House
86813	BLDG South Counting House
97643	BLDG Pearson Field Museum
97645	BLDG Pearson Field Hanger

III. Park Purpose, History and Themes

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site preserves and interprets the significance of the area as it relates to the development of the Pacific Northwest. Serving as a headquarters for the Hudson's Bay Company's fur trading operations from 1825 to 1849, Fort Vancouver was the supply depot for a thriving, diverse community. It was a major influence on the economic, political, social, and cultural activities of an area that now spans more than three states and part of Canada.

In 1849, Fort Vancouver became home to the first military post developed in the Pacific Northwest. Known as Vancouver Barracks, it served as headquarters for the U.S. Army operations into the twentieth century. Fort Vancouver was first established as a national monument in 1948 to preserve the historic stockade and historic parade ground. In 1961, the boundaries of the monument were expanded and the land was re-designated as a national historic site.

According to the Long Range Interpretive Plan for the Park, primary interpretive themes include conservation of cultural and natural resources; the interaction between land, water, humans and wildlife along the Columbia River; reasons people have chosen to explore this area; and factors that have attracted and supported human settlement in the area and contributed to the development of expanded thriving communities.

IV. The National Center on Accessibility Assessment Approach

The National Center on Accessibility assessment process is designed to identify barriers to participation for people with disabilities, make recommendations for barrier removal and improved access, and develop associated work orders and cost estimates to assist Park personnel in long-term planning. The NCA assessment team utilizes the federal standard for program access, Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act, as a guiding principle for viewing the programs, activities and services of the National Park or Historic Site in its entirety for consideration of barrier removal. The assessment team looks critically at the programs that make up the visitor experience from the point of view of persons who have impairments to vision, hearing, mobility, or cognitive processes. This approach focuses the assessment process and outcomes on the visitor experience and beyond the realm of solely the physical environment. The NCA assessment team views the physical environment as a catalyst for program access and thus forms recommendations for barrier removal with program access at the forefront of the investigative and reporting processes.

At Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, the assessment team from the National Center on Accessibility performed an accessibility assessment of the physical aspects and programmatic elements conducted within the Park. The team also interviewed key Park personnel, collecting information in order to provide a broad range of recommendations for improving access for visitors with disabilities.

V. Referenced Standards and Guidelines

The National Park Service is legislatively mandated to provide accessible facilities and programs for their visitors with disabilities. Based on these mandates, the National Center on Accessibility utilizes the following accessibility standards and guidelines for their assessment:

Architectural Barriers Act of 1968, as amended (U.S. Access Board, 2004; General Services Administration, effective date May 8, 2006)

This document contains scoping and technical requirements for accessibility to sites, facilities, buildings, and elements by individuals with disabilities. The requirements are to be applied during the design, construction, addition to, alteration, and lease of sites, facilities, buildings, and elements to the extent required by regulations issued by Federal agencies under the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA).

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1978, Section 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) reads, "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall solely by reason of his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance, or under any program or activity conducted by an Executive Agency."

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 508

This section, amended in 2000, requires access to electronic and information technology provided by the Federal government. The law applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. Federal agencies must ensure that this technology is accessible to employees and members of the public with disabilities to the extent it does not pose an "undue burden."

NPS Director's Order #42: Accessibility for Visitors with Disabilities in National Park Service Programs and Service

This NPS Director's Order reiterates the NPS goal to ensure that all people, including the estimated 54 million citizens with disabilities, have the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable to their programs, facilities and services in conformance with applicable regulations and standards. Five objectives are outlined including: incorporation of the highest level of accessibility as a long range goal; implementation through daily operation, policies, organizational relationships and strategies; provision of guidance and direction regarding the NPS interpretation of laws and policies; establishment of a framework for effective implementation; and ensuring the implementation of "universal design" principles within the national park system.

Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines for National Park Service Interpretive Media (August 2009) *Note there is a 2012 version now that the park should referenc.e*

These NPS Guidelines combine laws, policies, and best practices for interpretive media. The guidelines acknowledge that no interpretive media product works alone. Media products are interdependent and

each has inherent strengths and weaknesses. Park visitors sample and benefit from an array of interpretive media. These guidelines describe design and presentation solutions that are acceptable in most interpretive media situations. It should be noted however that these guidelines present highlights only and are not comprehensive.

Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas (U.S. Access Board, October 19, 2009)

Achieving accessibility in outdoor environments has long been a source of inquiry due to challenges and constraints posed by terrain, the degree of development, construction practices and materials, and other factors. These guidelines are proposed by the U.S. Access Board as new scoping and technical requirements for outdoor developed areas covered by the Architectural Barriers Act. The guidelines will cover new and altered trails, beaches, picnic and camping facilities and viewing areas. While these guidelines are not yet enforceable as requirements for Federal entities, they should be integrated into the planning, construction, and renovation of outdoor recreation areas and facilities and in the provision of programs and services provided to the public as best practice guidelines.

In addition to legislative mandates and proposed rulemaking, the NCA assessment team has made recommendations based on best practices in the field in order to create greater opportunities for participation and benefit among visitors with disabilities.

Principles of Universal Design

Universal Design is the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. The intent of Universal Design is to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal Design benefits people of all ages and abilities.

There are times when NCA may use the concept of Universal Design for recommendations that are not requirements but are seen as “best practices”. An example would be providing recommendations for benches in the outdoor environment, installing power assisted exterior doors, marking parking spaces uniformly at 11 feet wide, and/or utilizing the advisories in ABAAS when appropriate due to accessibility issues that contribute to safety risks.

Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design

The Smithsonian Guidelines is one of the very first and most formidable resources addressing exhibit design considerations for museum patrons with disabilities. The Smithsonian Guidelines are referenced as best practice for designing to various learning styles and functional abilities in the interpretive environment and especially in situations where the accessibility standards do not fully transfer to unique exhibition designs.

NPS Audio-Visual Accessibility Initiative for Visitors with Disabilities D24 (2420) (October 20, 2006)

A series of official disability rights complaints and testimony received at a Congressional oversight hearing on disability access revealed that the NPS has many audiovisual programs that are not captioned or audio-described; assembly areas that are not equipped with assistive listening systems; and in some cases, captioning systems that are broken and have not been repaired. This initiative established the

fundamental goal that the films and audio-visual programs presented in parks provide three basic services: open captions, audio-description, and assistive listening devices for those with hearing loss.

Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board Revised Draft Guidelines for Accessible Public Rights-of-Way (November 23, 2005)

Sidewalks, street crossings, and other elements of the public rights-of-ways present unique challenges to accessibility for which specific guidance is considered essential. These proposed guidelines for public rights-of-way address various issues, including access for blind pedestrians at street crossings, wheelchair access to on-street parking, and various constraints posed by space limitations, roadway design practices, slope, and terrain. The new guidelines will cover pedestrian access to sidewalks and streets, including crosswalks, curb ramps, street furnishings, pedestrian signals, parking, and other components of public rights-of-way.

VI. Key Findings and Recommendations

Physical barriers to the environment and communication barriers to information impede visitors with disabilities from gaining the total Park experience and benefitting from the Park story and major interpretive themes. It is critical that people with disabilities are able to participate and benefit from the same information, experiences and opportunities – of the same quality – as other visitors without disabilities.

The following sections highlight the most significant barriers to accessibility identified by the NCA assessment team at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. More complete details of findings, recommendations for corrective actions and cost estimates are available through FMSS and CESS. Within these detail systems, the deficiencies are categorized by criticality to assist with prioritization for transition planning. The NPS defines these priorities as:

Critical - A critical priority would be given to those deficiencies that occur in an asset or facility that is utilized by a significantly high number of people (visitors or employees); or "prohibits" or seriously inhibits people with disabilities from utilizing the facility.

Serious - A serious priority would be given to those deficiencies that occur in an asset or facility but only modestly inhibit an individual with a disability from utilizing the facility.

Minor - A minor priority would be given to those deficiencies that occur in any asset or facility but only slightly inhibit an individual with a disability from utilizing the facility. Minor classifications can also signify that the deficiency can be easily corrected with maintenance and/or minor adjustments or that correction might take more time and money but only needs to be corrected when renovations/replacements are scheduled.

1. Visitor Information

The Park web site is often the first point of contact for people planning their visit to a National Park or tourism destination. While the Fort Vancouver web site is abundant with general visitor information, it lacks specifics on accessibility for people with disabilities such as physical access features, procedures to request accommodations (i.e. sign language interpreters), and availability of publications in alternate

formats. Clear information as to whom or how to contact the Park for accommodations shall be provided.

Update the Park web site to include the NPS template accessibility web page under Plan Your Visit > Accessibility. Provide specific, objective information about accessible routes, accessible features such as viewing opportunities, trails, auxiliary aids and services to enable prospective visitors to plan accordingly. Be sure to include information, not only for people with physical disabilities, but also accessibility information for people with sensory and cognitive disabilities. Accessibility information should also be included in the Park uni-grid brochure and developed into a Park accessibility brochure for more details and specifics.

2. Visitor Orientation

The facilities and features of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site are communicated through signage, maps, and publications designed to welcome and orient the visitor to the Park. A simple graphical map located in a vertical information kiosk is provided at main points of entry such as the parking lot at the Fort. No maps of the Park are provided in electronic, large print, or tactile formats for people with low vision or who are blind. There is also no tactile model of the Fort, showing its layout, the adjacent Village Houses, or the proximity to the Columbia River. While accessibility standards do not address visitor orientation and way-finding, visitor orientation signage and topographical/tactile maps should be provided at the Visitor Center and at the historic Fort, allowing individuals with low vision or who are blind to orient themselves to the surroundings in the Park. These provide the equal opportunity to benefit from the Park experience as required in Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act.

Develop a three-dimensional model of the Fort that can be replicated for installation at the Visitor Center and entrance to the Fort. The model material should be able to withstand high visitor traffic and temperature extremes. Variety in textures should be used to distinguish between features on the model like differences in ground surfaces and water on a topographic landscape. The tactile model should include components such as raised lines and scale orientation options to distinguish the various accessible routes, trails, facilities, and significant natural surroundings. An audio program describing the model with the location of the Fort and surrounding facilities should either be developed for use independently at the models or incorporated into the audio tour program as it is reproduced to include audio description for visitors with visual impairments.

3. Publications

The primary Park publications include the uni-grid brochure and area map. The uni-grid brochure, which includes basic visitor information, is not available in alternate formats such as large print, Braille, audio or electronic format for visitors to take with them. One Braille copy and one large print copy of the main brochure is available at the Fort's Contact Station, but a visitor with a disability is unable to take and keep the copy, as others are able to do with theirs. The area map is not available in a tactual format. Thus, written information provided to visitors is not readily available for individuals who cannot access traditional written text due to a disability. Staff stated that several park publications are available in pdf formats and are being translated to audio formats for the website.

The Fort Vancouver uni-grid brochure and other primary visitor publications should be converted to Braille, designed for large print, and formatted for audio and electronic distribution. Utilize the Harpers Ferry Center large print brochure template to adapt all primary standard Park brochures to large print. In addition, translate the content for the primary standard Park brochures to Braille, electronic text file

(.txt, .rtf, .doc), and audio (cassette, CD, mp3). Maintain the alternate formats of all primary standard Park brochures in stock for random visitor requests, and provide signage at the Visitor Center and Fort Contact Station reception areas stating that the information is available. Develop a procedure for translating content of secondary brochures, and insert a statement in those publications indicating “alternate formats of this publication are available upon request.”

Add a section to the primary Park brochures explaining services for visitors with disabilities including procedures for requesting a sign language interpreter, availability of an assistive listening system, alternate formats, and the contact information for the Park’s accessibility coordinator. Ensure that the same information is added to the Park’s website.

4. Interpretive Exhibits

Exhibits that are presented only in print, graphic or visual formats are not accessible to people who are blind. Textual and graphic information that is presented should have sufficient font sizes, contrast and lighting to be the most accessible to people with low vision. At Fort Vancouver, people who are blind experience barriers to accessing exhibits due to limited tactile opportunities in some exhibit areas, and an absence of audio description. People with low vision have barriers to accessing programs through insufficient font size and type and lack of contrast between background and foreground colors in exhibit graphic design.

The exhibit space within the Visitor Center is not accessible to people with low vision or who are blind. The lighting levels are too low to read many of the exhibit labels, especially those utilizing a small font size. Many of the exhibits are behind glass and lack a tactile experience. At the time of the assessment, the Park was working with Harpers Ferry Center to redesign the entire exhibit space.

There are seven exhibit panels in the Contact Station in the Fort. Each panel has a significant amount of copy; the font is small relative to reading distance and often in italics. Some of the copy is red on a cream or white background, providing limited contrast. All create barriers to effective communication for individuals who have low vision.

The exhibits within the Barclay and McLoughlin Houses are primarily behind glass with no opportunity for visitor interaction. Visitors who are blind do not receive an equivalent experience by just hearing descriptions of the rooms on exhibit or stories of the events that took place in these homes. Opportunities for tactile experiences or interactive exhibits are necessary for their benefit.

Park management shall work with design services to create an exhibit design and replacement plan for the Visitor Center, the Fort and the two historic homes. When exhibit panels are replaced, ensure that the information is presented in a way that is accessible to the widest range of visitors. Things to consider in interpretive design include the use of sans serif or simple serif fonts, minimal use of italics, size of font relative to reading distance, contrast between text and background of 70-95 percent, and the incorporation of audio and tactile elements. Tactile elements should be items that are central to the stories of Fort Vancouver National Historic Site and are necessary for an equivalent experience. These exhibits should be included in the audio described tour.

All of the interpretive wayside exhibits provide information using graphics and text – formats that are not always accessible for people with visual and cognitive impairments. The interpretive program content should be designed to communicate as effectively to people with disabilities as it does to people

without disabilities. As such, the interpretive wayside program throughout the Park should be evaluated and redesigned to provide interpretive information in multiple modes of delivery including graphic, textual, audio, and tactile presentations. Include elements such as accessible fonts, text size and contrast. Develop a comprehensive plan for the use of an audio component and its delivery system at waysides. An audio described program of the interpretive content should be included in the overall audio described tour. As a best practice consideration, the Park should consider including tactile indicators in the pathway surface system (where appropriate or feasible) to indicate to visitors that they are approaching a wayside with interpretive information. The design requirements for physical accessibility of the interpretive panels include panel viewing height and viewing angles. Where exhibits are placed at inaccessible locations, such as the top of the Bastion, and cannot be relocated, consider posting the interpretive content on the Park website. Wayside exhibits shall be regularly maintained to ensure accessibility of information for all visitors.

There are no tactile representations of the historic homes owned by the Park, the McLoughlin House and Barclay House, to provide equal access for visitors who are blind. Provide a tactile model of the property that includes the two homes and the location of the gravesite and fountain. The model should depict the architecture of each structure.

5. Audio/Visual Programs

Two video programs are shown at the Visitor Center. While Park personnel report the videos to be closed captioned and audio described, volunteers at the Visitor Center were unable to activate the captioning and unaware of audio description at the time of the assessment. Thus, the information in the videos is not effectively communicated to people with sensory impairments including hearing and vision loss. Staff indicated that funding has been requested to update the Visitor Center films. All new films shall include open captioning and audio description. There are also plans to renovate the Visitor Center whereby the theater will double in size to accommodate 80 people. The new theater should be designed with an assistive listening system integrated into the audio system to accommodate visitors with hearing impairments. It is critical that all staff with visitor contact responsibilities is fully trained in the accessibility features offered by the Park and the equipment necessary to facilitate access.

All new media productions shall be open captioned and audio described per Section 508 and the NPS Audio-Visual Accessibility Initiative. All existing media shall be captioned, audio described and available for use with an assistive listening system. The accessible features of the audio/visual programs such as assistive listening, audio description and open captioning shall be maintained through periodic testing and staff training.

6. Talks and Tours

An audio tour is provided as a means to acquaint visitors with the historic significance of the Fort and trading company. The script for the audio tour is in booklet form and provided upon request for visitors who are deaf or have hearing loss. Single copies are available in Braille and large print but must be returned to the contact station. The scripts should be developed in alternate formats. The current audio program offers two tour options, one for adults and one geared towards children. Neither includes an adaptation with audio description of the physical features of the setting for people who are blind or who have low vision. Park interpretive personnel regard the audio program as nearing the end of its life cycle, especially with concerns of failing headsets. Considerations to produce a new audio tour program should also include options for audio description for visitors with visual impairments.

Hire a consultant to develop a comprehensive audio described tour and script that will provide visitors with a sequential experience throughout the Fort and through the Village. In addition this consultant shall determine what equipment would be most appropriate for the site's specific audio description needs. Upon selection of the audio description equipment, ensure that units are hands-free or have a hands-free option (so that visitors can explore their surroundings by means of tactile exhibits), able to be independently operated, and hearing-aid compatible. Consider multi-channel receivers as it may be possible to combine both assistive listening and audio description into one system and to have the ability to provide the tour in multiple languages to visitors who may have English as a second language.

Park personnel expressed an interest in the development of a cell phone tour to either supplement or replace the existing audio tour program. While specific cell phone tour programs were not discussed during the site visit, it should be noted that the development of any type of new interpretive program should meet the minimum requirements of Section 508 for electronic and information technology, and the program access standard mandated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Wherever communication is made with visitors, the communication should be as effective for people with disabilities as it is for people without disabilities. Use of new technology, such as cell phones, smart phones, MP3 players, and portable GPS should include purposeful planning to accommodate the range of needs of people with hearing loss, people with visual impairments, people with mobility impairments, and people with cognitive impairments. Consideration should also be given to the diversity of the Park visitor population including those traveling with children, older adults, large groups, and individuals who may not own or have access to such devices or those who do not want to use their time allotments or battery power.

No portable assistive listening system is available for visitors participating in guided tours, interpretive talks or cultural demonstrations at the Visitor Center, historic Fort or at the Barclay/McLoughlin Houses. The Park was in the process of acquiring a system for the Fort at the time of the assessment. There are no scoping requirements established for portable systems; therefore, the Park should determine the number of receivers it needs at each site based on typical visitor traffic. Work with a consultant to choose equipment that is independently useable and operable without tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist to operate. Assistive listening units shall incorporate volume control. The Park should display signage at each reception area indicating that the assistive listening system is available and market its availability through brochures, program announcements and the Park website.

While the Park has utilized the services of sign language interpreters in the past, no formal policy or procedure to acquire interpretive services is in place. A procedure to request sign language interpretation should be developed including advance notice, Park point of contact for accommodation requests, and identification of referral agencies. This information shall be included in the Accessibility section of the Park website.

7. Parking

Parking lots are provided at the Visitor Center, the historic Fort and along the Waterfront Trail. Signage for the accessible parking spaces in all of these parking lots does not meet minimum height requirements. All parking signs shall be installed at 60 inches minimum above the ground surface to the bottom of the lowest sign. Deficiencies with slope were found at the accessible parking spaces at the Fort and the Waterfront. Grading and resurfacing are required to correct the slope issues.

8. Restrooms

Where restrooms are provided for visitor use, they must be accessible for persons with disabilities. Multiple deficiencies to the accessible features of the Visitor Center restrooms were noted, including the positioning of grab bars and toilet paper dispensers, insufficient clear ground space, lavatory pipes that were not insulated and lavatory controls that exceeded maximum operating force requirements. Modifications to these restrooms were begun soon after the assessment was completed and were based on recommendations given to correct those deficiencies.

In the Wash Room of the historic Fort, barriers include, but are not limited to: signage; inaccessible door hardware, height and centerline of water closets; length and style of grab bars; inaccessible location of urinal; pipes beneath lavatories that are not insulated; and excessive reach range for hooks. The recommended corrective actions are identified in the FMSS work orders.

The single-user restroom provided for public use in the Barclay House is not on an accessible route and has no accessibility features. A design study should be conducted to determine if the existing facility can be remodeled for accessibility. If no options for renovation are feasible and the addition of equitable accessible restroom facilities cannot be provided, the existing restroom should not be available for public use.

9. Accessible Routes

Accessible routes provide people with physical disabilities a means of approach from accessible parking areas to Visitor Centers, restrooms, and other significant interpretation locations throughout a Park. At Fort Vancouver, the most significant deficiency concerning accessible routes is the excessive running slope of the ramp from the parking lot to the Visitor Center. A design study is necessary to draft a new plan for a fully accessible route to this primary visitor attraction. In the Fort area, the surface material of the accessible route from the parking lot to the Fort entrance has begun to deteriorate, resulting in loose fines that are not slip resistant. It is recommended that this portion of the route be replaced. There is no accessible route to the small assembly area located behind the Contact Station. An accessible route shall be created. Within the Fort, lack of access to the Well Spring platform and the privies and the excessive slope along the route to the Bakehouse entrance will require a landscape study to determine new accessible routes in the northeast corner. The route to the Jail entrance, which presents excessive running slope shall be graded and replaced. The recommended corrective actions for specific locations are identified in the FMSS work orders.

10. Trails

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site encompasses space along the Columbia River where a shared-use path is available for recreational users such as bicyclists, runners, walkers, rollerbladers, etc. Although labeled as the Waterfront Trail, it does not meet the definition of a trail as written in the Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas, published by the U.S. Access Board. A trail is defined as, “a pedestrian route developed primarily for outdoor recreational purposes. A pedestrian route developed primarily to connect elements, spaces, or facilities within a site is not a trail.” Currently the accessibility standards do not specifically contain scoping requirements for paths used by more than pedestrians (hikers, walkers, runners). Standards for shared-use paths are now being developed by the U.S. Access Board. In the interim, concentration should be on making corrective actions that most closely comply with the existing standards and proposed guidelines.

11. Scenic Viewing Opportunities

During certain hours of operation, visitors are able to climb the stairs to gain a panoramic view from the Bastion that includes the interior of the Fort, the adjacent Village and the Columbia River. Currently there is no vertical access to the top of the Bastion to accommodate people with mobility impairments. Considering the unique viewing opportunity, Park personnel are encouraged to conduct a value analysis to determine the most effective method for giving people with mobility impairments equal opportunity to participate and benefit from the elevated view. A feasibility study should be conducted to determine the various design means for vertical access and to support the value analysis process. Until then, as a programmatic alternative, create a video of a 360 degree view from the top of the Bastion. This can be displayed on the first level of the Bastion or in the Contact Station or Visitor Center. If audio is provided, the video shall have open captions. The film should also include an audio description component.

12. Picnic Areas

According to the Draft Final-Outdoor Guidelines, a picnic facility is defined as, “a site, or portion of a site, developed for outdoor recreational purposes that contains picnic units.” A picnic unit is “an outdoor space in a picnic facility used for picnicking that contains outdoor constructed features.” In this document they will be referred to as picnic facilities and picnic units, based on the language used in the Draft Final-Outdoor Guidelines.

The picnic shelter near the Visitor Center is considered a picnic facility. Four of the eight non-fixed picnic tables are accessible units; however, the recommended clear ground space around the accessible tables is not provided due to limited space. When the existing fire ring within the shelter is removed, as the Park plans, reconfigure the tables to ensure the necessary clear ground space is afforded around the accessible units. Because these are non-fixed tables, the Park has a responsibility to ensure that clear ground space is provided through routine maintenance and monitoring, or the accessible units can be fixed so that they cannot be relocated.

Of the existing individual picnic units (tables) scattered throughout the picnic facility grounds, it is recommended that 20 percent of them be accessible units. These units should be dispersed throughout the grounds to provide choices of units comparable to, and integrated with, those available to others (i.e., in the shade, in the sun, in proximity to services or attractions, etc.). Consider the varying experiences offered, and disperse the accessible units so that visitors with disabilities are offered equivalent experiences as visitors without disabilities.

Outdoor recreation access routes should connect the accessible picnic facility (shelter) and the individual accessible units (tables) with other accessible elements, spaces and facilities such as accessible parking and accessible restrooms.

13. Garden

The garden provides a route through its center with several branches for visitors to view the variety of plants on display. Although the branches provide the required clear width, there is no area wide enough for visitors who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices to turn around without going off the path. The center path does not provide the required minimum passing space. None of the existing benches in the Garden provide adjacent clear ground space for companion seating. Visitors who use wheelchairs would, in several cases, block access routes if they wanted to join their family or friends near the benches.

Conduct a landscape design study to provide adequate passing space and turning space for visitors with physical disabilities to allow them full access to the Garden. Provide clear ground space adjacent to at least 20 percent of the benches.

The Garden provides a unique sensory experience. To better accommodate visitor orientation and education, a three-dimensional model or raised line map of the site layout is recommended. In addition, plant labels are recommended to be made accessible so that visitors can easily read the text without stooping over. Labels should provide the necessary contrast and font type/size relative to the reading distance. Provide the same information in alternative formats (Braille and large print) and as part of the audio description tour. Interpretive elements should be provided in multiple modes including a combination of text and audio.

14. Pearson Air Field Hanger and Museum

A physical assessment of the Pearson Air Field Hanger and Museum was conducted with primary focus on the physical access to the facilities, which were identified as NPS assets. Minor corrective actions were noted for inclusion in FMSS. The interpretive programs and experiences were not assessed since these are presented by the Museum and its affiliates. Training and resources regarding accessibility should be made available to the Museum and affiliates to support continued education on the methods to make the interpretive programs accessible to people with disabilities. Consideration should also be focused on any cooperative agreements or contracts to ensure Park partners are aware of and in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, since programs are offered in NPS spaces.

15. Barclay House

The threshold at the entrance into the Barclay House and two interior doorway thresholds have changes in level that exceed requirements. It is recommended that the three wood thresholds be removed and replaced to reduce or eliminate the change in level. Two doorknobs shall be replaced with accessible hardware, and the service counter in the gift shop shall be replaced with a unit that does not exceed height requirements. The accessibility issues with the public single-user restroom were addressed above in Section 8.

16. McLoughlin House

There is no accessible entrance into the McLoughlin House. The east door has a two-step stone terrace and a vertical change in level over the metal threshold plate that exceeds height requirements. A design study is recommended to develop a ramped accessible route up to and through the main entrance of the McLoughlin House. The route should end at a level landing at the door, flush with the threshold.

The carpet used throughout the McLoughlin House has a thick pile which can significantly increase the amount of force (roll resistance) needed to propel a wheelchair over a surface. The carpeting along the visitor circulation paths shall be replaced with a lower pile carpet and, if provided, a firm cushion, pad or backing.

A staircase provides the only vertical access to the second floor of the McLoughlin House, prohibiting visitors with mobility impairments from experiencing the bedroom exhibits in the historic home. Create a video or virtual tour of the second floor that can be viewed on the first floor of the McLoughlin House by visitors unable to climb the stairs. If there is an audio component, open captions shall be provided.

Audio description shall be provided for visitors with low vision or who are blind. Provide a television and video player equipment in the McLoughlin House.

VII.Action Planning

Upon receipt of the assessment data, it will be critical for Park personnel to review and embark on a series of actions to continue planning for improved access to the programs and facilities throughout Fort Vancouver National Historic Site.

Accessibility improvements to the Park were, at one time, initiated by one individual through the park maintenance division. The individual has since retired and, at the time of the assessment, oversight of the Park's accessibility management program had not been formally assigned. As noted in Director's Order #42, it is highly recommended that a park accessibility coordinator be assigned and a core accessibility management team be developed with representation from various divisions including interpretation, maintenance, administration, concessions and senior management. Representation should include individuals with decision-making authority in order to appropriately prioritize funds while assuming responsibilities for compliance oversight in those key areas.

A process to review and prioritize corrective actions to improve Park access for visitors with disabilities should be developed. In addition, a strategy and timeline should be outlined to conduct accessibility assessments of facilities and programs as they are changed or updated so that any deficiencies may be entered into FMSS, and proposed corrective actions can be cost estimated to serve future planning and budget requests.

A process to review all new construction and renovation plans or designs should be implemented to ensure the minimum accessibility standards and guidelines are appropriately applied and opportunities for the application of universal design are seized. In addition, a process to inspect all construction projects for compliance with the minimum accessibility standards and guidelines should be established.

Provide staff training for full-time staff, seasonal staff and volunteers on select topics including the application of the accessibility standards and guidelines for Park maintenance; the principles of universal design; program access; methods for developing accessible interpretive programs; the accommodation process; techniques for interacting with people with disabilities and the use of people-first language. Interpretive staff should receive more specific training on the provision of audio description for people with visual impairments and tailoring talks for people with cognitive impairments. Frontline customer service staff should also receive a seasonal update on accessibility improvements in order to field and/or refer questions on accessibility from the public. Staff training on the use of the available auxiliary aids such as the assistive listening systems, as well as the development of a routine maintenance program to ensure they are operable should be instituted.

An ongoing evaluation of programs, services and activities should be instituted to ensure the Park is meeting the needs of visitors with disabilities.