
Cultural Exhibit at Mogan Cultural Center



MISSION AND PURPOSE

“The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and world.” – National Park Service Mission Statement

“Lowell National Historical Park preserves and interprets the historic structures and stories of the Industrial Revolution and its legacies in Lowell, serving as a catalyst for revitalization of the city’s physical and economic environment and promoting cultural heritage and community programming.” – Lowell NHP Park Purpose

During 2017-2018, Lowell National Historical Park engaged in strategic planning process to ensure that our practices are forward-looking and well aligned with our Mission. The staff created six strategic goals that provide a framework for this project.

Those strategic goals are:

1. Create a conservation community by working with partners, preserve, develop, and provide access to the park’s historic structures, canals and walkways, and collections;
2. Build greater relevance by working with partners and neighbors, developing content that broadens understanding of Lowell’s history and reflects the experience of its diverse communities;
3. Craft engaging experiences by reimagining the visitor experience to be more engaging, enjoyable, inclusive and accessible;
4. Contribute to positive change, by promoting civic engagement and resource stewardship;
5. Employ technology effectively, by using current and emerging technologies to improve communication, the visitor experience, and Park impact.
6. Create a culture of collaboration and inclusion, by embracing collaboration and recognizing expertise across the Park, among partners in the community, and with audiences and visitors;

A key interpretive theme for LNHP is “Lowell is a microcosm of the historical and contemporary shifting of cultural identities and tensions brought about by broader social changes such as industrialization, urbanization, and globalization.”

PROJECT RATIONALE

Thirty years ago, the park represented this idea by creating an exhibit about immigrants to the city, presented in the newly created Mogan Cultural Center. The current exhibition has become outdated as the city’s population demographics have changed. Also, the cultural practices of residents have changed across successive generations, and once separate populations have become close neighbors and now directly influence each other.

Even prior to the settlement of East Chelmsford, later known as Lowell, native people called the land around the Merrimack River their home. The growth of the textile industry in America is based on cross-culturalism. Since its founding as a textile town, Lowell has been a multicultural city. From the young women moving from farm to factory; enslaved African

cotton producers supplying the textile mills; successive in-migrations during the 1800s of workers from various European nations and Canada; and more recent immigrants from elsewhere in the Americas, Africa and Asia. All of these population groups have woven themselves and their cultures into the fabric of Lowell, creating a diverse and vibrant city.

The project approaches cultural diversity as the spectrum of human activity. This is informed by ancestries, social histories, belief systems, languages, and other specifics. Those qualities shape the activities and traditions of particular population groups, but they also interact with other individuals and population groups at a distance and over time.

This proposed exhibit project will:

- Tell the stories of diverse cultures and cultural changes that have found their place(s) in Lowell and give it its distinctive urban composition.
- Replace the current, outdated exhibit on immigration installed in 1988.
- Provide a safe, accessible, and high-quality, visitor experience that is audience-centered and relevant to 21st-century visitors, including presently underserved audiences.



Crowd gathered in front of Lowell City Hall during a flag raising ceremony.

Cultural expression and diversity is a significant part of Lowell's social history. These concepts continue to be part of the social landscape of the city today. Teaching empathy through raised awareness of cultural diversity and commonality is a compelling need in the world today. Lowell is an ideal location for exploring cultural expression and advocating empathy because it is historically and presently a gateway city for immigrants and refugees whose demographics continue to change. The goal of this project is for visitors to see themselves and better understand others through an interactive, self-directed experience at the park.

PROJECT APPROACH

For this project, the Park is defining "community" in a multiple ways. In the current Immigrants exhibit, several "ethnic" populations are described. In addition, the exhibit includes a display devoted to recent refugee youth from a variety of backgrounds. However, there are many voices - even within the populations described - still absent. With this project, the Park seeks to provide a more comprehensive and contemporary presentation about the people of Lowell and its cultural diversity.

LNHP will listen to and collaborate with various stakeholders who are knowledgeable of the culturally diverse population of Lowell.

The Park recognizes that the stories we will be presenting are the stories of the people of Lowell and, in order to have accurate representation, those persons are essential in helping us identify the themes, stories, and presentation of the exhibit. Through inclusive roundtable discussion, some twenty-five persons from various walks of life are collaborating with the park to plan and guide this project.

Roundtable discussants share perspectives on the themes of the exhibit. During the pre-design stage, those discussion have informed the selection of stories for the exhibit. As the process moves forward, roundtable discussion will also inform planning and design. Participants also serve as ambassadors throughout the city and connect this project with people, their stories, and objects that may convey the themes of the project. The roundtable includes persons with a range of experiences and backgrounds, including scholars of immigration history, civic, and community leaders, and others. The roundtable discussion process enables the Park to direct this exhibit as a community-engaged project.



Community roundtable members sharing perspectives on the direction of the exhibit.

AUDIENCE

Specific visitor types to be served by this project include:

- Local cross-generational groups
- Primary and secondary school students and their teachers from the local region
- Heritage tourists (national and international) visiting the region

The current visitor to LNHP is typically a national or international heritage tourist visiting the region or a primary or secondary school student from the local region. The Park intends this project to engage currently underserved audiences, particularly non-English speakers, local family and other cross-generational groups, and students from outside Lowell. According to the 2010 US Census, 27% of Lowell's population identified as foreign-born and 44% of Lowell's population speak a language other than English.

Based on current visitation statistics, over ten years we expect that at least 1,440,000 visitors will visit the exhibit, including approximately 450,000 youth and students.

EXPERIENCE OUTCOMES

Lowell NHP also engages more than 300,000 virtual visitors annually through its website and social media. This project will provide ways for visitors to engage virtually and encourage them to curate and co-create content online before, during, and after their park visits.

The overarching goal for this project is for visitors to see themselves and better understand others through an interactive, self-directed experience at the Park. Rather than confine the concept of 'culture' to the unique or exotic practices of 'others', the experience of this exhibit will emphasize the importance of cultural diversity. Lowell will be the example of how cultural diversity sustains a lively society that is welcoming and forward-thinking, rather than insular or regressive.

We intend for audiences to:

- Learn about Lowell's historical development and its present reality.
- Reflect upon their own cultural practices as being a part of the tapestry of human culture as a whole.
- Better comprehend the practices and beliefs of those who may appear to be otherwise 'different' from themselves.

In addition, members of the community roundtable have identified the following lessons that the new exhibit could illuminate for visitors. These include:

- Fostering and building greater empathy
- Creating a definition of a more inclusive "Us"
- Increasing respect and understanding toward various populations
- Creating a welcoming space for all in the community
- Uniting the community by presenting both the historical context and modern relevance
- Dispelling myths around immigration
- Addressing the problem of stereotyping in our society

We will reinforce an inclusive concept of 'us' – specifically in the contexts of industrialization, urbanization, and globalization. Additionally, we will investigate the intersections of class, race, sex and gender expression in the cultural experiences of Lowell residents. We intend to use these concepts to explore the distinct voices as well as the commonalities of lived experiences, and to shine a light on the cultural diversity present in the city.

It is also essential to consider how people from various cultures and communities have interacted with one another throughout history and today. The exhibit will address how the specific, universal, and cross-cultural experiences of people define the Lowell cultural landscape.

Exhibit displays will facilitate dialogic, object-centered, self-directed and mediated experiences. Specifically, the exhibit will be designed in alignment with the PISEC Exhibit Characteristics that are conducive for multi-generational groups (Borun and Ditsas, 1997).

- Multi-sided-family can cluster around exhibit.
- Multi-user-interaction allows for several sets of hands (or bodies)
- Accessible-comfortably used by children and adults.
- Multi-outcome-observation and interaction are sufficiently complex to foster group discussion
- Multi-modal-appeals to different learning styles and levels of knowledge.
- Readable-text is arranged in easily understood segments.
- Relevant-provides cognitive links to visitors' existing knowledge and experience.

The new exhibit will employ visually accessible and cognitively engaging labels, audio descriptions, and open captioned videos. Exhibit text will be multi-lingual and representative of the languages spoken in Lowell. The current intent is to translate all exhibit materials into Spanish and Khmer.



Ranger and child at an interactive exhibit.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

LNHP receives more than 40,000 primary and secondary grade student visitors annually and anticipates vigorous use of this exhibition. LNHP requires that this exhibition align with learning objectives identified in state and national curricular standards for civics, social studies, history, and STEM, for grades 2, 4, 6 and 8.

Currently, the Tsongas Industrial History Center (LNHP's education partnership with the College of Education at UMass Lowell) uses the exhibition to teach its Yankees and Immigrants program, which is aligned with state curricular standards for the fourth grade. That audience will expand to include second graders in the near future.

Consequently, the exhibition is being developed to address a progression of curricular-centered learning objectives, and be mindful of the cognitive and physical requirements of youth at several stages of their own development. Specific Massachusetts Standards are listed in Appendix A. The complete Massachusetts History and Social Science Frameworks, may be referenced at: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>.



A group of students in the Tsongas Industrial History Center.

INTERPRETIVE DIRECTION

Thematic Concepts

These thematic concepts, threads, and modes were synthesized from our community roundtable meetings as well as staff feedback. These concepts are thematic in nature, but there is a narrative flow that is emerging. There are many interlocking pieces between these concepts that will need to be addressed. We phrased the descriptions of these concepts as questions. Primarily, these are questions that visitors might have coming into the space, or as they move through the space. We hope that these internal questions can become springboards towards conversations and dialogic learning. The themes are also in question form so that stakeholders, including Park staff, roundtable participants, and the planning and design contractor, can explore these ideas together.

1. Mobility and Transition

What are key factors that compel or encourage persons to relocate from their family or place of birth? What are the experiences and perspectives that newly arrived persons engage upon their arrival in new and perhaps very different cities such as Lowell? What struggles did people face when arriving and adjusting to life in a new place? How are these experiences echoed/paralleled throughout history?

2. Building Community

What brings a community together? How do people find a sense of belonging and familiarity? How has the definition of community changed over time? How do issues that communities face (inter- and intra-) impact individuals, the community and city?

3. Cultural Diversities and Commonalities

What are the social qualities of a multicultural city such as Lowell? How have people come together - through time and across great distances - to interact, share experiences, and redefine concepts of 'us' and of belonging? How do the specific, universal, and cross-cultural experiences define the Lowell cultural landscape? How are cultural traditions and practices maintained, transformed or abandoned over time?

Threads

Threads are the ideas that run through many of the roundtable participants' and park staffs' comments. Some of the roundtable participants said explicitly and others are inferred based on the conversations from the roundtable meetings. These threads should be revisited consistently throughout the exhibit planning and design processes and woven throughout the 3 thematic concepts.

- Intergenerational: We hope that many of the stories and examples will highlight how the cultural experiences in Lowell span across several generations.
- Race: a social distinction and power relationship that divides and ranks persons by certain physical characteristics.
- Class: a social distinction and power relationship that divides and ranks persons according to socio-economics.
- Gender: a social distinction and power relationship that assigns 'narrowly prescribed' behaviors based on the anatomy and physiology of sex.
- Resiliency: There are many examples of people persevering through difficult situations and we want to highlight this.
- Multiculturalism: Lowell has many distinct ethnic or cultural groups all present within the city. This is to be celebrated and acknowledged.
- Cultural transmission: How cultural practices and expressions are passed onto and taught to individuals and groups.
- Hard and challenging stories: telling not just the good and heartfelt stories
- Ongoing, not static- thread or mode? Both
- Why Lowell?: Although relocating, building communities, and cultural traditions are universal, examples and stories will be grounded in the city of Lowell
- Stereotyping: The stories and examples presented will debunk stereotypes regarding immigrants, migrants, refugees, and ethnic groups.
- Repetition across cultures and time: Illustrate that the stories are similar regardless of cultural group or time frame.
- Multivocality & Representation: Stories are being told directly from people, not the NPS and a conscious effort is made to represent as many viewpoints as possible

Modes

These are some of the ways roundtable participants have identified that the content exhibit might be presented.

- sound (music, poetry, prose)
- story telling
- video (oral histories)
- interactive software (geo-spatial movement of people, multi-lingual interpretive graphics)
- objects
- events (collective agency)
- places (sites, structures, landscapes)

METRICS AND EVALUATION

Planning this project in collaboration with the Park's many communities will make it more successful. During the planning and design process, there will be "user testing" or "prototyping" of proposed displays and text to enable an exhibition that prompts and enables conversational interaction among visitors. Additional, qualitative front-end research of audience attitudes and understandings and formative evaluation of proposed text, graphics and other display elements will take place to actively investigate the opinions shared with us by our visitors and other stakeholders, and consider the ways in which those attitudes and understandings should inform the exhibition project. That process will include conversations with and observations of current gallery visitors; visitor comment books in each of the Park's public spaces; and the circulation of questionnaires to Tsongas Industrial History Center users.

Illustrative examples of some visitor comments from our Visitor Center are included below. Visitors were responding to the prompt, "Please share with us your thoughts about cultural diversity and how the Park should celebrate it."

"Diversity is beautiful, wonderful and very amazing thing. I love the idea of all people being different in their own way and how there are so many different people of color here. People in Lowell could celebrate it by getting together and celebrate their differences, and enjoy themselves.

-6th grader, Lowell Community Charter Public School-6th grader, 2019"

"Celebrate what each culture has in common, as well as each culture's uniqueness 2019"

"I'm 60, have lived in Lowell my entire life and love Lowell. My father was of Irish-Norwegian descent and my mother of french, english, and cherokee. I love (underlined) Lowell's diversity. I love the flag-raising and festivals. One event I've dreamt of for years is a multi-cultural food festival with all kinds of ethnic food stands and some lessons on how to make a traditional dish. I know the Folk Fest offers a lot in the way of ethnic food, but a) it's very hot for some of us oldsters in July and 2) this would all be food (and traditional costume) focused. I'd love it! Also love the lantern celebration."



*Angkor Dance Troupe performing at the Southeast Asian Water Festival.
photo credit: Jim Higgins*

TIMELINE

Fall 2018 Pre-design Stage	Winter 2019 Planning and Design Stage	Fall 2019- Spring 2021	Spring-Summer 2021 Fabrication Stage	Fall 2022
Roundtable participants selected, themes and messaging determined with and by the community, determine the scope of work in conjunction with the National Park Service's Harper's Ferry Center	Scope of work and contracting package for planning and design is prepared and awarded	Roundtable participants and LNHP staff work with the contractors for the exhibit plan and design	Scope of work and contracting package for fabrication and installation of the exhibit is prepared and awarded	The Exhibit will be completely fabricated, installed, and opened to the public

See Appendix D for more details

PROJECT TEAM If you have any questions about the Cultural Exhibit, please reach out to a member of the project team.

Project Managers

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Rountable Participants

Analise Saab • Anthony Nganga • Beth Brassel • Bob Farrant • Darmery Montoya • David McKean • Diego Leonardo • Gordon Halm • Janelle Diaz • Jody Goldstein • Laura Lamarre-Anderson • Maria Clark • Mark Van Der Hyde • Masada Jones • Pauline Golec • Phala Chea • Richard Makokha • Rogers Muyanja • Ruth K. Ogembo • Sebastian Cardona • Sue Kim • Szifra Birke • Thomas Eagle Rising Libby • Tooch Van

APPENDIX A Specific Massachusetts learning standards aligned with this project.

Grade 2 Content Standards

Topic 2. Geography and its effects on people [2.T2] Supporting Question: How do people adapt to or change their environment?

Topic 3. History: migrations and cultures [2.T3] Supporting Question: What are the different reasons people choose to settle in a community?

Topic 5. Economics: resources and choices (shared with grade 1) [2.T5] Supporting Question: How do the resources of an area affect its industries and jobs?

Grade 4 Content Standards

Topic 4. The expansion of the United States over time and its regions today 28 [4.T4]

Supporting Question: How has the environment shaped the development of each region?

Grade 6 Content Standards

Topic 1: Studying complex societies, past and present [6.T1] Supporting question: What do the social sciences contribute to our understanding of the world?

Grade 8 Content Standards

Topic 1. The philosophical foundations of the United States political system [8.T1]

Supporting Question: What were the roots of the ideas that influenced the development of the United States political system?

Topic 4. Rights and responsibilities of citizens [8.T4] Supporting Question: What is the role of the individual in maintaining a healthy democracy?

Topic 6. The structure of Massachusetts state and local government⁴⁸ [8.T6] Supporting Question: What is the role of state and local government in the U.S. political system?

High School – US History I Content Standards

Topic 3. Economic growth in the North, South, and West [USI.T3] Supporting Question: How were the North, South, and West interdependent in the antebellum period?

Topic 4. Social, political, and religious change [USI.T4] Supporting Question: How did religious and ethical beliefs shape American reform movements?

Topic 6. Rebuilding the United States: industry and immigration [USI.T6] Supporting Question: Industrialists have been called “Captains of Industry” and “Robber Barons.” Which title is more appropriate for them and why?

High School – US History II Content Standards

Topic 1. The role of economics in modern United States history [USII.T1] Supporting Question: How do individuals and corporations make choices about saving or spending?

Topic 2. Modernity in the United States: ideologies and economies [USII.T2] Supporting Question: How did the United States respond to new ideas about society?

Topic 5. United States and globalization [USII.T5] Supporting Questions: How does globalization affect the United States? How can Americans use the Constitution to unite the nation?

High School – World History II Content Standards

Topic 2. The Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions in Europe and social and political reactions in Europe [WHII.T2] Supporting Question: In what ways did the Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions bring improvements as well as new challenges in Europe and the United States?

Topic 6. The era of globalization 1991–present [WHII.T6] Supporting Question: What are the factors that brought about globalization in the 21st century?

APPENDIX B Mogan Cultural Center- Floor Plan 1st Floor



APPENDIX C Photos of Current Space



APPENDIX D Project Schedule

Project Phase	Date(s)
Introductions	
1-hour post-award teleconference	September 16, 2019
3B. Pre-Design	September–December 2019
At-park design charrette & stakeholder meetings	November 5-7
Resource Package Abstract & Project Brief	November 20
Park comments due to The Design Minds	December 18 (28 days)
3C. Schematic Design 1	January–February 2020
At-park SD1 presentation (including stakeholder presentation)	January 27–30, 2020
At-park Value Analysis	January 28-29, in conjunction with SD1 presentation
Park comments due to The Design Minds	February 27 (28 days)
Conference call to discuss comments	Within one week of comments
3D. Schematic Design 2	March–April 2020
At-park SD2 presentation (including stakeholder presentation)	April 1
Park comments due to The Design Minds	April 29 (28 days)
Conference call to discuss comments	Within one week of comments
3E. Design Development 1	April–June 2020
At-park DD1 presentation (including stakeholder presentation)	June 3
Park Comments due to The Design Minds	July 1 (28 days)
Conference call to discuss comments	Within one week of comments
3F. Design Development 2	July–September 2020
Web submittal of DD2 and conference call (including stakeholder web presentation)	August 19
Park comments due to The Design Minds	September 16 (28 days)
Conference call to discuss comments	Within one week of comments
3G. Design Development 3	September–October 2020
At-Park DD3 Presentation (including stakeholder presentation)	October 7
Park comments due to The Design Minds	October 21 (28 days)
Conference call to discuss comments	Within one week of comments
3H. Production Design 1	October–December 2020
Web submittal of PD1 and conference call (including stakeholder web presentation)	November 23
Park comments due to The Design Minds	December 21 (28 days)
Conference call to discuss comments	Within one week of comments

3I. Production Design 2	January–March 2021
Web submittal of PD2 and conference Call (including stakeholder web presentation)	January 27, 2021
Park Comments due to The Design Minds	February 24 (28 days)
Conference call to discuss comments	Within one week of comments
Project Completion	On or before March 12, 2021

1. Mobility and Transition

What are key factors that compel or encourage persons to relocate from their family or place of birth?

- Have policies at national and local levels impacted the movement of people both historically and presently? How might present-day or even future/potential policies have an impact on movement of people in the future?
- Digging deeper into the reasons and factors for movement of people from one place to Lowell.
- What are the specific reasons why people move, including environmental, economic, cultural and socio-political factors? Push factors represent the reasons for leaving a certain place, while pull factors are what attract people to certain places.
- Why Lowell?
- Why do people choose Lowell specifically as their new home?
- An important consideration is that some people choose to move to Lowell for very specific reasons, while others (specifically in the case of refugees) aren't given a choice of where they settle. In these cases, it is important to ask: Why is Lowell the place that these people are moved to?

What are the experiences and perspectives that newly arrived persons engage upon their arrival in a new and perhaps very different cities such as Lowell?

- What are the initial impressions of the city as people arrive?
- What were the successes and challenges that newly arrived people faced when they came to Lowell?
- How are people able or not able to change or maintain the Mobility with respect to class

What struggles did people face when arriving and adjusting to life in a new place? How are these experiences echoed/paralleled throughout history?

- How did people's expectations of what life would be like for them in a new place such as Lowell compare to the realities of their individual situations?
- How is US is portrayed in popular culture, literature, film, etc. vs the reality of life in the US?
- How do/did people approach the idea of integrating into society?
- How do people maintain/retain their connections with their place of origin? (transnationalism)
- What are the ways that the experiences of integrating into society have been similar over time? (e.g. housing, religion, welcoming, neighborhood, language, work)

2. Building Community

What brings a community together? How do people find a sense of belonging and familiarity? How has the definition of community changed over time?

- How do people's basic human needs factor into how communities are built/formed?
- What are the commonalities of communities forming?
- Communities are based on many factors, some appear as site-specific, while others appear as practice-centered or belief-centered.
- Where do people feel physically and emotionally welcome?

- Intersectionality of life: A person might belong to multiple communities at once.
- How do the different types of communities overlap and intersect as well as what are the specific characteristics of different kinds of communities?
- How do current residents treat newly arrived people? Are they accepting, do they make them feel welcome, or are they rejected?
- Does discrimination take place? In what forms?
- What type of welcoming efforts are put forth by existing communities?
- What other ways do people from various communities interact with one another and how do these interactions influence the ways that communities are built and sustained?

How do issues that communities face (inter- and intra-) impact individuals, the community and city?

- How do power structures and issues of representation/lack thereof impact communities at different points in history?
- Are there examples of conflict between groups within the same cultural background?
- How are affiliations from people's places of origins manifested in their new home?

3. Cultural Diversities and Commonalities

What are the social qualities of a multicultural city such as Lowell? How have people come together - through time and across great distances - to interact, share experiences, and redefine concepts of 'us' and of belonging? How do the specific, universal, and cross-cultural experiences define the Lowell cultural landscape? How are cultural traditions and practices maintained, transformed or abandoned over time?

- Forms of cultural expression (music, food, dance, religion, etc.)
- How are cultural expressions and practices similar across time and various groups of people?
- How does cultural transmission (the process through which cultural elements, in the form of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behavioral scripts, are passed onto and taught to individuals and groups.) occur between different groups of people?
- What are the merits of a multicultural city?
- What are the challenges of a multicultural city?
- Cultural traditions and practices over the course of subsequent generations
- How are they maintained?
- How are they transformed?
- Are they forgotten?

Threads

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- Stereotyping: The stories and examples presented will debunk stereotypes regarding immigrants, migrants, refugees, and ethnic groups.
- Repetition across cultures and time: Illustrate that the stories are similar regardless of cultural group or time frame.
- Multivocality & Representation: Stories are being told directly from people, not the NPS and a conscious effort is made to represent as many viewpoints as possible
- What is American?

Lessons

Lessons Community members identified what they want people to feel/learn when they leave the exhibit.

- Empathy
- "Us"
- Respect
- Understand
- Welcome
- Learn
- Unite
- Dispelling myths around immigration
- Addressing the problem of stereotyping

Modes

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- interactive software (geo-spatial movement of people, multi-lingual interpretive graphics)
- objects
- events (collective agency)
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