



executive summary

Imagine a dynamic living river minutes from Downtown, through the Gorge area and onto the 10,000-acre Riverside State Park. An eleven-mile river corridor accessible to all people in kayaks, canoes, rafts and inner-tubes; birdwatcher and Frisbee golf enthusiasts; mountain bikers, hikers and trail runners; campers (in Riverside State Park); and walkers. Think about the opportunities for new school field trips about the local environment; university student learning expeditions; multiple connections to adjacent neighborhoods; fantastic views within a natural, protected, accessible and urban river corridor. This will change the self-image of the Spokane region. An enhanced river corridor loved and cared for by the citizens of Spokane will increase their enjoyment and its health for generations to come. An active, beautiful and accessible river corridor will fill people in Spokane with pride and reinforce a sense of place as it dramatically demonstrates Spokane: Near nature. Near perfect.

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the strategic master plan

The Great Spokane River Gorge Strategic Master Plan was initiated by the Friends of the Falls at the completion of the conceptual planning process. To transform the concepts and visions generated during the conceptual planning process into real, implementable projects, the Strategic Master Planning process began.

This Master Plan identifies guidelines, projects and strategies to activate the River and Gorge to benefit all 500,000 citizens of Spokane County by providing enhanced educational, recreational, cultural, and aesthetic opportunities, increased environmental awareness, and by serving as a driver for regional economic development.

The Master Plan reflects broad community input gathered over nine months in three open public workshops and five “stakeholder” meetings of representatives from neighborhood groups and other organizations most directly affected by the Plan. This is an extremely diverse constituency which includes the Spokane Tribes, neighborhood groups, environmental and recreational enthusiasts of all ages, and business leaders who understand that the River and its Falls are a defining feature giving the region a unique identity and amenities that play a vital role in economic development.

plan objectives

The project area of the Great Spokane River Gorge Strategic Master Plan includes both sides of the Spokane River from the Lower Falls to the confluence of Hangman Creek, including High Bridge Park.

The projects identified in the Strategic Master Plan will have a dramatic positive impact on the project area, as well as the surrounding neighborhoods. The Plan provides a compelling opportunity to break the cycle of

disinvestment plaguing these areas. Public and private investment to activate the Spokane River corridor (i.e., trail connections to neighborhoods, a white water park, boat launches, interpretive signage, increased investment in safety, a tribal cultural center) creates a dramatic 400-acre amenity that will significantly increase property values, drive new investment opportunities and stimulate new neighborhood business opportunities tailored to these River and Gorge area experiences.

The adjacent neighborhoods will enjoy new opportunities to grow and prosper as these neighborhoods and the entire region rediscovers the beautiful Spokane River and Gorge. Some new investment has already begun with new single-family houses being built in Peaceful Valley and recent investment in the 80-acre Summit Site, in part because of the mere idea of the Spokane River and Gorge project. These projects and the new investment generated by them will impact the way in which residents and others view the Spokane region and enhance the image of Spokane as a place to visit, go to college, relocate a business, work and live.

Spokane residents are not the only ones who will benefit. This Plan will provide opportunities to attract visitors. Once activated, tourists or business travelers will take a four-hour “Pacific Northwest” rafting trip from Peaceful Valley to Pease Flats and return to the Davenport Hotel...soaking wet. Weekend visitors will come to Spokane to stay in the new Montvale Hotel, visit the new tribal cultural center, play on the new Spokane white water park, and then bicycle miles of glorious trails along the Spokane River.

An activated river corridor will establish Spokane as the regional destination for outdoor recreation, driving increased hotel-motel occupancy, food and beverage spending, drive equipment and recreational service businesses, and

improve the perception of Spokane as a very active, healthy, exciting and fun community.

plan organization

The Strategic Master Plan is comprised of five chapters: 1) Introduction to the Plan and the process; 2) Review of the Gorge area’s existing conditions, including natural and cultural resources, land uses, circulation and access, and economic conditions; 3) Overview of the planning vision, project goals and the 15 priority projects determined to be catalytic in activating the Gorge area; 4) Overview of the 7 planning elements and the projects that can help improve them; and 5) Detailed strategies towards implementing the Gorge vision and the Plan.

next steps

A coalition of interested parties is moving forward to implement the 15 priority projects recommended by the Strategic Master Plan (see following list). The coalition currently includes Friends of the Falls (FOF), the Spokane Canoe and Kayak Club, Northwest Whitewater Association, Park Board, Eastern Washington University (EWU), Peaceful Valley, Avista, Inland Northwest Trails, West Central, Spokane Convention and Visitors Bureau, City of Spokane, Spokane Tribe, Downtown Spokane Ventures Associates and possible others. This coalition, led by FOF, will utilize the financing sources and strategies described in Chapter 5 to achieve funding for the various projects. These efforts will be coordinated with the Spokane Park Board, and City of Spokane to ensure all projects are consistent.

priority projects

- 1 Interpretive and Wayfinding Signage Program
- 2 Spokane Gorge Boulevard
- 3 North Point Overlook
- 4 Confluence Area Visitor Arrival Point
- 5 Confluence Area Restoration
- 6 North Point Overlook Restoration
- 7 Great Spokane River Gorge Loop Trail
- 8 Centennial Trail Completion throughout the Gorge area
- 9 Southern Gateway Development Area
- 10 Peaceful Valley Boat Launch
- 11 Whitewater Park
- 12 Tribal Cultural Center
- 13 Huntington Park Improvements
- 14 Monroe Street Bridge South Undercrossing
- 15 High Bridge Park Master Plan Development

