

Executive Summary

Looking forward to 2036

In 2036, Fort Nisqually will have recently celebrated its bicentennial, marking 200 years after the Hudson Bay Company arrived at the mouth of Sequelitchew Creek and construction began on what was to be the first European settlement on Puget Sound. Though it ceased operation in 1869, the rich legacy of the people who worked and lived at and near Fort Nisqually, as well as in the sprawling Fort hinterland, lives on as the Fort Nisqually Living History Museum (FNLHM).

Guiding Content Messages

The capital development and program planning process led by WEATHERHEAD Experience Design was steeped in the history and culture of Fort Nisqually. Three content messages guided this process. These messages can and should be at the foundation of the interpretation and work that will take place during the next 20 years.

Fort Nisqually was a workplace.

Fort Nisqually was a node on a network.

Fort Nisqually was a mixed world.

These messages should also be used to evaluate and refine current programming and exhibits at the Fort. They succinctly capture the essence of Fort Nisqually and provide a way to share that essence with the public.

The next 20 years, present the opportunity to rejuvenate this legacy through a series of enhancements and improvements throughout FNLHM, inside and outside the Fort walls. It is an ideal time to celebrate the work the museum has been doing and set a new vision in time for the Bicentennial. This Capital Development and Program Plan provides recommendations that move Fort Nisqually Living History Museum toward providing a rich educational and history-based experience.

New Audiences

When planning for the next 20 years at Fort Nisqually Living History Museum, one of the most important things to consider is the need to diversify and expand the audience of the museum. The Fort staff determined to target audiences they would like to see more involved at the Fort, as visitors, program participants, docents, and potentially donors. At the core are a more racially diverse and inclusive audience, particularly those with families with young children and people who have ties to the Fort's history. The enhancements planned over the next 20 years will also enable the Fort to attract general park visitors and bus tour groups. In addition to attracting these three key new audiences, it is important to continue to serve the current audience.

Core: More diverse audiences; families with young children and/or ties to the Fort's history

Secondary: General park visitors – the “drive-bys”

Tertiary: Bus tour groups



Recommendations

The enhancements to the Fort over the next 20 years are planned for both the Fort site and the Fort interior.

The most significant changes to the site are the development of a new entrance experience that includes a brand-new Visitor Center, with a Café, Retail Store, new exhibits, and a new Volunteer Space; a building dedicated to Native American interpretation; an enlarged Agricultural and Prairie area; and a new Barn and Laborers' Dwellings in the meadow.

Significant changes to the interior of the Fort including renovations of the Kitchen, Wash House, and Sale Shop; rebuilding of the Clerk's House 1 and the Tyee House; and the addition of alternative interpretive techniques to supplement the living history experience.