



106GROUP

Connecting People + Place + Time

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REVISED CONCEPT PLAN

Interpretive Loop

Dakota County Historical Society

11/22/24



Dakota County Historical Society
REVISED CONCEPT PLAN: Interpretive Loop

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Submitted by:

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Project Overview

Background

The Dakota County Historical Society (DCHS), in collaboration with Dakota County Parks, the Dakota County Board of Commissioners, and 106 Group, is guiding the planning and future development of a self-guided interpretive experience within Dakota County, Minnesota. The pilot tour, currently entitled the “Interpretive Loop,” proposes to create a series of interpretive clusters or nodes within northern Dakota County. Each cluster will be organized by a theme and highlight local history stories, with the goal of creating a cohesive interpretive narrative that connects visitors with the rich history of the county. Testing and refinement of this concept, supported by historical research, onsite analysis, and community engagement, is underway. This contract includes preliminary concepts for the proposed waysides, but not production-ready files, fabrication, or installation.

Deliverable Summary

To begin this project, 106 Group researched 23 pre-selected topics. For the Research Summary (submitted October 1, 2024), historian Laura Sadowsky reviewed the proposed topics, gathered key content points, and identified potential images—primarily through onsite research at Dakota County Historical Society as well as online research. From here, interpretive planner Maggie Schmidt evaluated the topics, analyzed proposed sites in Dakota County with the project team, and made preliminary recommendations through a draft interpretive framework. Building upon comments received on the Draft Concept Plan, we’re pleased to submit a **Revised Concept Plan** for the Interpretive Loop that includes the following:

- Revised foundations (themes, goals, objectives, audience profiles, and interpretive approach)
- Revised topic list
- Style guide (font, color palette, exhibit base inspiration images)
- Design typical with “lorem ipsum” placeholder text, including color palette and dimensions
- Updated bubble map with general locations
- Site photos
 - *Please note: General locations only. It is recommended that an additional site visit is planned during the production phase to assess exact locations for accessibility.*
- Draft production budget

Final Plan (December 13, 2024) to include:

- First draft text for up to 23 interpretive panels with image thumbnails if applicable (no graphic layouts).

Review considerations:

To follow the project schedule, please provide consolidated feedback by **December 2, 2024**.

106 Group is looking for feedback on the following:

- *Please approve and/or revise the sub-themes, alternative topics, and suggested locations for clusters.*
- *Would you prefer custom bases with a unique design or more standardized bases (like the National Park Service)?*

Schedule

Dakota Co. Interpretive Bike Trails			
Task	Subtask	Review	Deadline
Startup	Kickoff call		Aug 10, 2024
			Aug 15, 2024
Discovery	Research summaries		Oct 1, 2024
	Site Visit		Oct 4, 2024
		Review 14	Oct 14, 2025
Draft Plan	Draft Plan		Oct 28, 2024
		Review 8	Nov 5, 2024
	Revised Plan		Nov 22, 2024
Final Plan		Review 10	Dec 2, 2024
	County Board update		Dec 3, 2024
	Community Engagement		Dec 5, 2024
	Final Plan/Draft Text		Dec 13, 2024
		Review 6	Dec 19, 2024
Closeout			Dec 31, 2024

Foundations

Why are we doing this project?

At its core, wayside planning is about creating a strategy to tell meaningful stories. An interpretive framework, which includes a mission, goals, and objectives, defines the parameters of the experience or storytelling and makes audience-focused recommendations that deeply engage visitors of all backgrounds. The Revised Concept Plan for the Interpretive Loop experience includes a theme and subthemes to connect visitors to places that hold historical significance in Dakota County.

Interpretive Framework

A theme provides structure and clarity to the message that visitors encounter when they visit the site. After their experience, visitors should be able to summarize the main point of interpretation in one sentence.

Big Idea

Everyday people shaped the history of Dakota County.

Subthemes

1. River Highway
2. Civil Rights and Civic Life
3. Cultural Roots
4. Serving the Community

Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives

DCHS Mission

To preserve, interpret and promote the history of Dakota County.

DCHS Vision

We make Dakota County history available and accessible to all.

Interpretive Loop Goals

These goals articulate what the organization wants to accomplish with this project:

- The new waysides in Dakota County will keep local history alive for future generations.
- The Interpretive Loop interpretive approach and style guide will serve as a pilot project for other local history experiences aimed at recreational trail users.

Visitor Experience Goals

Visitor Experience Goals summarize meaningful experiences that the institution wishes to foster for its visitors:

- Visitors to the Interpretive Loop will feel inspired to learn more about the history presented along the Trail.
- Visitors to the Interpretive Loop will feel motivated to visit other historic sites within Dakota County and participate in other interpretive opportunities, such as public tours or exhibits.

Objectives are measurable actions with a set target:

- Visitors will connect past stories of Dakota County to the present day, including their own lives.
- Visitors will be able to identify stories of local history, including within their own neighborhoods.

Audiences

Who is it for?

Target audiences can help focus content and design decisions. These groupings can be organized by age, gender, background, and ethnicity. Even motivations for visiting—such as bicycling or finding a place to simply unwind and relax—add layers to wayside development and design. These categories could deepen, expand, and evolve with future community engagement and interpretive opportunities for the Interpretive Loop, but we can utilize a preliminary understanding to begin wayside development. According to a Dakota County Pedestrian and Bicycle Study (2018),¹ potential visitor types may overlap with people who currently use bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Dakota County, such as:

- Recreational users, including:
 - Dakota County residents and visitors, including families with children utilizing trails or play equipment
 - Dakota County workers
 - Older adults (30+)

Expanding on these demographics, museum researcher John Falk’s categories of museum visitors—including explorers, facilitators, experience seekers, professional hobbyists, and rechargers—can help us begin to anticipate what Interpretive Loop visitors might want to experience along a casual stroll, a lunchtime walk, or a longer bike ride. For this project, we anticipate that most recreational visitors will fall into the Explorers category.

¹ Dakota County, “Dakota County Pedestrian and Bicycle Study,” 2018, <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Transportation/TransportationStudies/Past/Documents/PedestrianBicycleStudy.pdf>, accessed October 23, 2024.

Explorers are in search of new, exciting, and unfamiliar stories.

This visitor type is most likely motivated to:

- Take pictures of the landscape.
- Look for key highlights and main points, rather than focus on reading every wayside.
- Seek out interesting, bite-sized facts that spark their curiosity.

Interpretive Approach

What stories will we include?

During the Discovery phase, the proposed list of up to 23 interpretive topics was evaluated and organized based on each topic's ability to support the draft theme statement; the availability of documented research and images to tell the story on a 24"x36" interpretive panel (approximately 100 words and 1-2 images); and a proposed topic's clear connection to a specific location on the trail. The site visit on October 11, 2024, provided further clarity to each topic's strength as an interpretive experience, as well as the overall interpretive approach for the Interpretive Loop. **In the Revised Plan, we've proposed a set of alternative topics that reflect the diversity of Dakota County. Additionally, a revised sub-theme called "Cultural Roots" interprets the impact of past and present immigration.** The following list of recommendations aim to guide the project team and local stakeholders as they finalize the list of interpretive topics and locations.

Place-based interpretation

The Interpretive Loop should feature stories that are directly connected to the immediate landscape, whenever possible.

Connecting visitors to unique places—by interpreting visible physical features in the immediate area—is currently considered best practice for visitor-centered interpretation. "Place" can also include elements that visitors can no longer see, such as historical events, buildings, or people from the past with a clear connection to the specific location (homesteaders who lived and farmed in that location, for example). According to the place-based education approach, residents or visitors to Dakota County can form deeper connections to cities and towns by learning more about the immediate landscape around them. Stories that do not have a visible or tangible link to what visitors can see, think, feel, or do are weaker and less effective in accomplishing project goals.

Clustered interpretation

The Interpretive Loop should feature small groupings of easily accessible historical signage that are united by a sub-theme.

Following the October 2024 site visit, it is recommended that the team cluster historical interpretation by sub-theme in well-trafficked, easily accessible areas, perhaps in shorter loops or routes. As originally conceived, the 24-mile loop was difficult to follow with some sections lacking safe and accessible infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians. The length and scale of the proposed trail did not appear to support the main goal of the project, which is to connect residents of Dakota County to local history and community-based stories. Best practices in interpretive planning prioritize accessibility for visitors of all abilities, including the analysis of facilities and locations that best meet visitor experience needs.² A detailed analysis of likely visitors (organized by age, gender, and other demographics) is out of scope for this project; however, the Interpretive Loop should broadly consider questions such as:

- What stories are visitors motivated to learn about, especially if their primary visit is driven by recreational experiences such as bicycling, dog walking, or running?
- What do visitors already know about the area's history?
- How accessible is each location to different populations of potential visitors? Are they already visiting this location (to access a nearby dog park, for example) or is the location out of the way of nearby amenities?

Relevant interpretation

The Interpretive Loop should bring history to life that is meaningful and relevant to today's visitors.

The History Relevance (HR) campaign, created by public historians over a decade ago, is one example of an initiative that challenges historical organizations such as Dakota County Historical Society to develop intentional, purposeful, and meaningful interpretation. One of our jobs as interpreters is to build bridges between the personal experiences of every visitor to deeper, universal meanings—which are often organized by themes or sub-themes—and stories from the county's collective past.³ A story on the Interpretive Loop should not be selected merely because it is historical or even local, but because it is relevant to the everyday lives of people in Dakota County today. Qualities defined by the HR campaign, including the list below, could be used as a rubric to narrow and focus the final list of stories on the Interpretive Loop:

² Harpers Ferry Center, "Planning for Interpretation and Visitor Experience," 1998, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/hfc/upload/interp-visitor-exper.pdf>, accessed October 22, 2024.

³ Steph N. Dean, "National Park Interpretation and Place-Based Education: An Integrative Literature Review," 2020, https://open.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1075&context=teach_learn_pub, accessed October 21, 2024.

- **Rooted in Historical Quality** – Offers historical context using primary source materials
- **Applicable** – Connects to visitors and fosters change in the community; teaches historical thinking skills
- **Impactful** – Challenges familiar assumptions, provokes new thinking
- **Current and Timely** – Relates to discussion happening at the local and national levels
- **Connected** – Shows continuity between past, present, and future and relates to individual and collective identities⁴

⁴ Tim Grove, “New Tool Available from the History Relevance Initiative,” 2020, [New Tool Available from the History Relevance Initiative – AASLH](#), accessed October 23, 2024.

Exhibits

Site Map

For the Revised Plan, we propose a series of interpretive clusters that are thematically place-based.

Unlike the Draft Concept Plan, which proposed four large groupings of loosely connected topics together in one area, this revised approach proposes multiple clusters per sub-theme, but with fewer panels per cluster. A total of 10 clusters are shown on the map below, organized by sub-theme. Depending on the location and viewshed, each cluster could feature one to four interpretive panels, whether on individual, low-profile signs or front-back upright panels.

When selecting final locations for the clusters, it is recommended that new interpretive panels not directly “interrupt” existing interpretation within Dakota County, including interpretive signage with distinct branding developed by the National Park Service and Dakota County Trails. Other general recommendations for interpretive waysides refer to visitor data gathered for local pedestrian and bicycle studies, which includes:⁵

- **Locations that are accessible to all visitors** (as of 2018, one-third of Dakota County’s population does not drive/own a car, and walking, biking and transit infrastructure is less complete than the road network.)
- **Safe intersections in high traffic areas**, particularly at locations without existing traffic control.
- **Shade and scenic walks with natural features.**

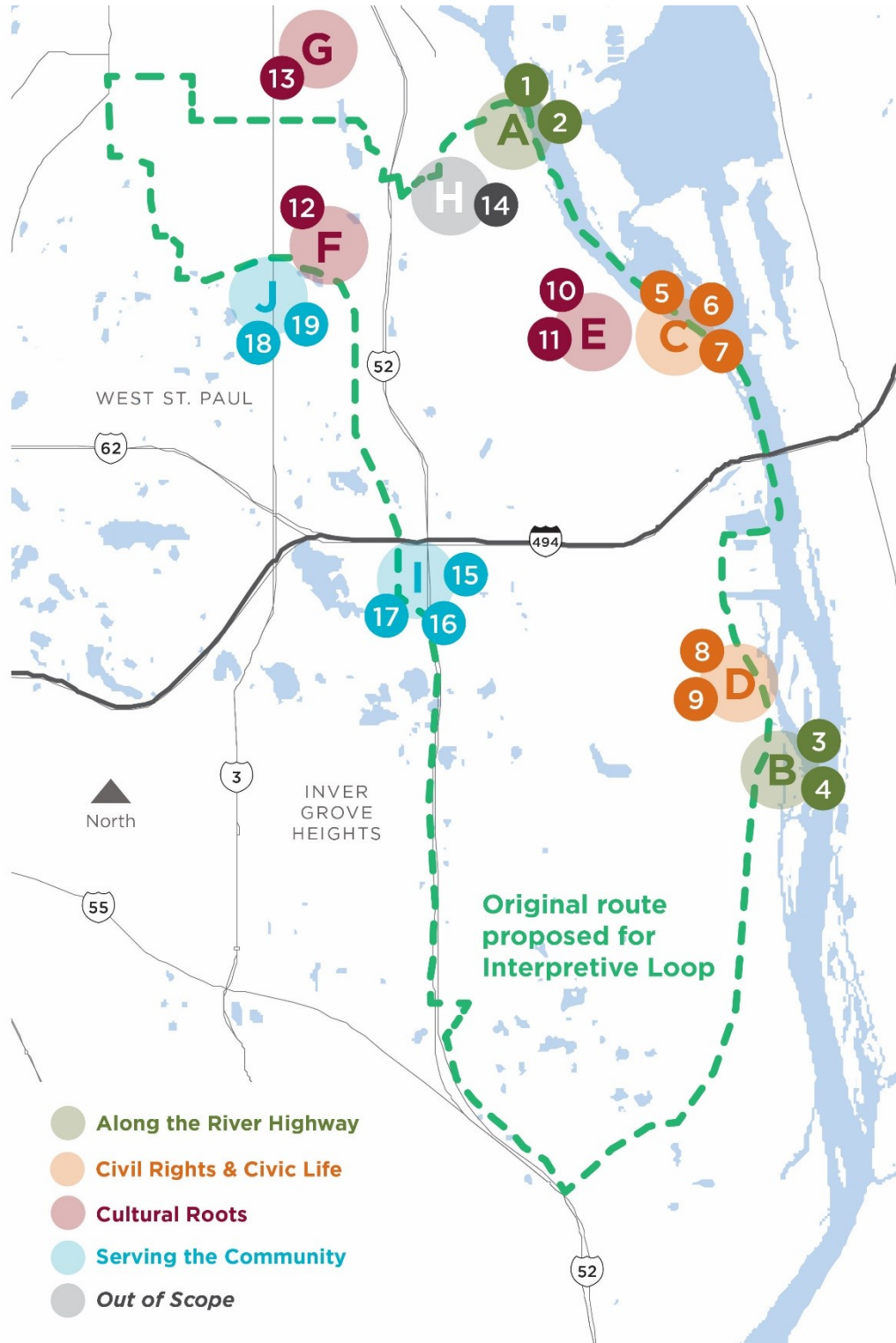
⁵ Dakota County, “Dakota County Pedestrian and Bicycle Study,” 2018, <https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Transportation/TransportationStudies/Past/Documents/PedestrianBicycleStudy.pdf>, accessed October 23, 2024.



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Theme 1: Along the River Highway



General Locations: Cluster A (Mississippi River Trail overlook, Terminal Railway No. 10); Cluster B (not shown: Rock Island Swing Bridge, 4465 66th St. E, Inver Grove Heights, MN, 55076)

Cluster A:

- **Panel Topic-01: Wreck of the 10 Spot**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the 1912 wreck of a livestock locomotive, including the injuries and loss of life sustained in dense fog.
- **Panel Topic-02: Stockyard Navigation**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret 20th-century labor on the river, including the lives of immigrant workers who moved freight to and from the St. Paul stockyards via river boats.

Cluster B:

- **Panel Topic-03: Rock Island Swing Bridge**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the role of the South St. Paul Beltline Railroad as a connector between stockyards in 1894, as well as the bridge's eventual decline.
- **Panel Topic-04: Dillinger Chase**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the sensational lore of John Dillinger after three separate gun battles with federal authorities in 1934.

Theme 2: Civil Rights and Civic Life



General Locations: Cluster C (Stockyards Exchange building, 200 Concord Exchange N, South St. Paul, MN 55075); Cluster D (Heritage Village Park, 4321 65th St. E, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076)

Cluster C:

- **Panel Topic-05: Officer Leo Pavlak**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the tragic loss of Officer Leo Pavlak, who was killed on duty in front of the South St. Paul post office (near the Stockyards Exchange building) while escorting two bank messengers in 1933.
- **Panel Topic-06: Black Suffrage Bill**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret Charles Griswold, a state representative for Winona County, who led an extensive campaign to introduce three petitions, including one in Hastings in Dakota County in 1865, for expanded voting rights in Minnesota.
- **Panel Topic-07: First Women to Vote Following 19th Amendment**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the stories of local women in South St. Paul who hastily voted at the polls following a national amendment.

Cluster D:

- **Panel Topic-08: Mayor Saves Council**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the 1957 gas leak and heroism of Mayor Theodore Piekarski, whose actions saved nine lives at the village hall.
- **Panel Topic-09: 1st Public School**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the former location of Dakota County's first public school, which was built by local settlers in 1854 and burnt to the ground in 1872.

Theme 3: Cultural Roots



General Locations: Cluster E (South Saint Paul High School, 700 2nd St N, South Saint Paul, MN 55075); Cluster F (Hmong Farmers Association, 149 Thompson Ave E Ste 202, West Saint Paul, MN 55118 or HAFA Farm in Vermilion Township); and Cluster G (not shown: District del Sol, 175 Cesar Chavez St. Ste 2, Saint Paul, MN 55107)

Cluster E:

- **Panel Topic-10: Son of immigrants in the National Football League**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the life and multi-sport career of Stanislaus Kostka, born in 1912 to Polish and Bohemian parents, who attended South St. Paul High School, the UMN, and later the NFL.
- **Panel Topic-11: 19th-century European immigration**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret waves of European labor and immigration to Dakota County, including the railroads and meatpacking plants where they worked.

Cluster F:

- **Panel Topic-12: Hmong farmers**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the history of Hmong immigration to Minnesota and Dakota County in the 1970s, connecting to the current Hmong Farmers Association in West St. Paul (established 2011) and the HAFA Farm in Vermilion Township.

Cluster G:

- **Panel Topic-13: Mexican cuisine**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the history of Mexican immigration and family businesses in what is now known as District del Sol⁶, such as the El Burrito Mercado run by the Silva family, founded in 1979.

⁶ [District del Sol | Saint Paul Historical](#)

Cluster H: (not in scope)

- **Panel Topic-14: Dakota village sites**

- **Purpose Statement:** To refresh outdated Dakota interpretation at Simon's Ravine Trailhead kiosk, including interpretation of existing public artwork. *Note: This topic will require extensive community engagement with stakeholders and is not recommended for this Concept Plan.*



General Location: Cluster H (Simon's Ravine Trailhead, 1308 Concord St. N, South Saint Paul, MN 55075)



Theme 4: Serving the Community



General Locations: Cluster I (Inver Grove Heights Fire Station 3, Upper 55th St. E, Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077); Cluster J (Marthaler Park/West St. Paul Police Department, 1616 Humbolt Ave, Saint Paul, MN 55118; image credit: weststpaulreader.com)

Cluster I:

- **Panel Topic-15: Stockyards Memorial Day Fire**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the significant fire that swept through the stockyards in South St. Paul on May 31, 1948.
- **Panel Topic-16: Waterous Company**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the local manufacturers of fire trucks and hydrants dating back more than 100 years.
- **Panel Topic-17: Female Firefighters**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the all-female firefighter crew of 2020 and Judy Smith Thill, the first female fire chief at Inver Grove Heights Fire Department in 2007.

Cluster J:

- **Panel Topic-18: Deputy Jerry Cotton**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the service of West St. Paul's Jerry Cotton, the first African American deputy to join the Dakota County Sheriff in 1980.
- **Panel Topic-19: Deputy Scott Patrick**
 - Purpose Statement: To interpret the honor and sacrifice of Deputy Scott Patrick, who was killed at Smith Avenue and Dodd Road intersection in West St. Paul in 2014.

Design Style

Visual elements help bring Dakota County history to life while creating a cohesive and meaningful experience for the visitor. Below are two tools that will help guide the overall look and feel and provide the structure and tone of any future exhibits.

Style Guide

A style guide lays out the building blocks for interpretation. Elements such as color, typography, material references, and graphic motifs are explored based on visual research of a specific period of time, artistic era, location, and/or mood.

Inspired by Dakota County's industry and infrastructure of the late 1880s and early 1900s, especially on Concord Street and the Stockyard Exchange Building, this style guide leans on warm, industrial hues and pronounced geometric lines and shapes. The palette features red and orange tones reminiscent of steel, brick, and wood, mixed with more modern influences of blue and warm grays. A wider, sturdier typeface for headings and callouts (Pennypacker Wide) pairs with a typeface that is more legible for body copy. This typeface features qualities you would encounter with a typewritten, or monospaced font (Richmond Text). Overall, the style lends itself to the history of this area while also incorporating modern touches of the current time.



PENNYPACKER WIDE

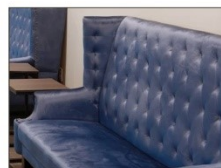
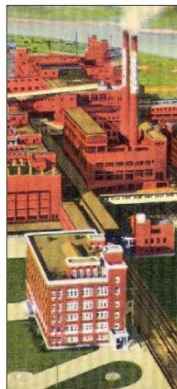
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Richmond Text

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Regular
Medium
Semibold
Bold
Black



Typical

Before drafting interpretive text, a graphic typical demonstrates how design style may be translated into graphic design. Typical shows the relationship between color, typography, and graphics in order to communicate exhibit messages. They do not show finished designs; rather, they use placeholder text and/or imagery to demonstrate layout and future content.

The typical below uses the Wreck of the 10 Spot as a test case. Its dimensions are 36" wide x 24" tall, and it demonstrates roughly the amount of content recommended at this size (100-150 of body copy and one or two inset images with captions) and employs the industrial, modern elements of the style guide. As discussed on our October 11, 2024, site visit, the typical also showcases a simple trail map in the top righthand corner that would repeat on each sign to help orient visitors to the Interpretive Loop. It also displays the Dakota County Historical Society logo.



Base Design

A branded experience for the Interpretive Loop can go beyond graphic design. While more expensive, a custom design for the exhibit structure or substrate, also known as a panel base, can provide a distinct visual identity and help visitors easily identify clusters of exterior exhibits around Dakota County.

Whether we pursue upright signage or more standardized, off-the-shelf, low-profile signage utilized by the National Park Service, there are a range of durable options and styles to choose from based on your available budget and project needs.



Production Budget

106 Group can complete design, production, fabrication and installation of the DCHS Interpretive Loop project for a fixed fee of **\$178,665**. We've also included recommendations for optional fees, particularly to increase visitor accessibility, in the table below. The price quoted in this budget is guaranteed for 180 days from the date of submission. If more than 180 days elapses between submission and acceptance of this proposal, 106 Group reserves the right to make appropriate adjustments to the price. We seek to meet your needs for this project and would be happy to discuss any changes to help meet them.

Base Fee

Item	Description	Cost	Total
Design	<i>Includes two rounds of revision (final text and proofread layouts) for interpretive writer and graphic designer. Includes production-ready files and fabrication management. Assumes \$2,505 in labor per panel/23 waysides. Note: This fee does not include community engagement or stakeholder coordination.</i>	\$57,615	\$178,665
Image acquisition	<i>Assumes \$50 per panel for image licensing fees from external archives and institutions. Note: This fee would not apply if images were acquired from Dakota County Historical Society.</i>	\$1,150	
Custom illustration	<i>Assumes \$7,000 per illustration for 4-5 panels without adequate historic imagery.</i>	\$35,000	
Bases and panels	<i>Assumes up to 23 waysides/\$1,300 per unit. Includes shipping and delivery. Note: Custom design or branded panels could cost up to \$4,000 per unit.</i>	\$29,900	
Installation	<i>Assumes in-ground installation/\$2,391 per unit.</i>	\$55,000	

Optional Fees

Item	Description	Cost
Language Translation	<i>Assumes approximately 100 words per panel at 50 cents a word (\$50 per unit). Note: Translation fee may depend on language selection.</i>	\$1,150
Tactiles (accessibility)	<i>Assumes 6"x6" bronze tactiles with raised letters and braille to increase accessibility and visitor access. Options could include building replicas, cast molds of artifacts. Larger tactiles, such as plat maps, range from \$11,000 to \$25,000 depending on size.</i>	\$7,000/tactile
Audio Description (accessibility)	<i>Includes script writing, recording, and hardware for up to 23 stops. Audio description content could be accessed via sound post (additional fees would apply), panel beacon, QR code, or website.</i>	\$15,000