

Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Alternative Concepts

	Core Network	Core Area	Core Clusters
Actions assumed to be common to all Alternatives	<p>Complete PATH trail system to South River and to future phases</p> <p>Develop Environmental Campus including middle and high school</p> <p>Completion of state plans and improvements to Vaughter’s Farm and Panola Mountain Conservation Park</p> <p>Continued operation and improvement of key parks by county and local entities, including Davidson/Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve by DeKalb County, South Rockdale Community Park, others.</p> <p>Cooperative efforts to implement South River Greenway Corridor among counties, local owners, other public entities.</p> <p>Continued actions by Monastery of the Holy Spirit to preserve its land holdings</p> <p>Stonecrest Mall out lot developments</p> <p>New Birth Baptist Church developments</p> <p>Acquisition/donation of land parcels to Arabia Alliance or other qualified entity</p>		
Concept	<p>Improve trails and key byways as the primary corridors of interpretation that encourage visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area.</p>	<p>Preserve distinctive natural and man-made landscapes within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental quality that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors.</p>	<p>Focus interpretation of the area’s history and culture at key locations that become the “gateways” to understand the Heritage Area’s ‘themes’ and story.</p>
Key Words	<i>Linkages</i> – the Experience Network	<i>Areas</i> - Landscape Settings	<i>Nodes</i> - Interpretative Gateways
Strategy	<p>Strengthen the existing trail and roadway network; build new trails; develop ‘hands-on’ interpretive experiences along these routes; provide driving and walking tours; Provide interpretation along key routes; strengthen interpretation at key venues along routes; Customize routes for specific interests; define streetscape standards for key roadways and provide incentives to implement</p>	<p>Define the key landscapes – natural, historical, extractive – and the character-defining values of each. Encourage public and private entities by providing technical and financial assistance to them to maintain, enhance, and preserve these landscapes. Develop interpretation at each landscape, using the environmental character and “sense of place” within each to communicate the history and significance of the Heritage Area.</p>	<p>Select a small number of key sites that best tell the story of the Heritage Area. Create interpretive exhibits and activities at each venue that focus on a specific theme and/or story and also provide an overview of the Heritage Area. Develop self-guided tour routes to connect the venues to one another.</p>

<p>Examples</p>	<p>Add interpretive signage to trail segments to explain the Heritage Area, such as: ‘The Land of Rocks and Rivers’ Trail - beginning at Arabia Mountain to Panola Mountain and down the South River towards the monastery. ‘Stone-cutters’ Trail – beginning at Arabia Mountain and extending north through Lithonia to Big Ledge Quarry.</p>	<p>Examples of landscapes include: Farmscape at Vaughter’s Farm. Urban settings that are linked to area culture at Lithonia and along Klondike Road. Working landscapes at existing and former quarries. River and stream landscapes along Stephens Creek and South River.</p>	<p>At each key interpretive gateway, develop interpretative exhibits and activities that explain the themes of the Heritage Area. Examples might include: An exhibit of a ‘Working Farm’ at the Vaughter House. ‘Exhibit about ‘Granite Industry and Culture’ in a new interpretive facility in Lithonia. An exhibit about the ‘Landscape of Faith’ adjacent to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit.</p>
<p>Potential use of Federal Funding</p>	<p>Creation of new trails; staff; creation of interpretive signage; development of scenic byway along the backbone of the Heritage Area. Self-guide driving and walking tours and hands-on experiences.</p>	<p>Development of guidelines and examples of best practices for each key landscape. Provision of technical and financial assistance to local entities to encourage definition and protection of landscape qualities. Brand each key landscape to reinforce its identity.</p>	<p>Development of exhibits and interpretation at each gateway venue; technical and financial assistance to not only create exhibits, but to assist in preserving interpretive settings.</p>
<p>Possible Management Roles</p>	<p>The Alliance would provide assistance to local entities to extend and complete trails and byways, to provide interpretation en route, to enhance venues on the network, and to develop recreational and educational linkages that build on the network.</p>	<p>Local and County entities would take leadership in landscape preservation, while the Alliance provides assistance in interpreting these landscapes in a consistent way, reinforcing the sense of identity of the Heritage Area.</p>	<p>Each interpretive gateway would be the responsibility of a single entity -- City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, State DNR, etc. The Alliance would provide financial and technical assistance to these entities and would assist in maintaining linkages between them.</p>

Alternative Concept Summaries

Network

The Network focuses on routes as a backbone and access to key features, venues and facilities within the Heritage Area. The primary concept is to experience the environment through a number of interpretive facilities along a route system that links heritage resources.

The Network would serve as a connector and a unifying element on the Heritage Area, and branches and loops off the primary route would allow visitors to explore features of the area at their leisure, or based on preference.

The Network envisions existing and future trails, along with certain roadways, to become the routes for visitors and residents to initially experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area. Visitors along this network of routes can learn about the history and significance of the Heritage area via interpretive signage at key venues, driving tours, and existing and proposed facilities. Once in place, these routes could be ‘customized’ based on such themes as historic homesteads, natural areas and wildlife, quarrying and granite, etc. Possible gateways onto this network include existing and future trailheads (i.e. The Stonecrest Mall or Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve), Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, and future facilities in Lithonia, Klondike, and along the South River.

The Network emphasizes the experience of moving through the Heritage Area as the primary means to understand and learn about it. By utilizing interpretive signage, designated roadways and trails, informational kiosks and new and existing facilities, the Network Concept focuses on the visitor *experiencing* the sites and history of the Heritage area.

Area

The Area concept seeks to enhance and preserve the quality of the Heritage Area landscape by differentiating areas of varying character and encouraging local entities to preserve these settings. The Area concept emphasizes the branding and identity of different environments to educate the user on the complexities of the Heritage Area landscape.

Visitors to the Heritage Area would experience key environments that effectively convey the rich culture and history of the area. The visitor would experience the story of the Heritage Area by truly experiencing these uniquely different ‘places’ in the landscape. Preservation of key landscapes in the area is the focus of both the management and educational experience of this plan concept. The vast difference between the urban fabric of Lithonia and the agricultural beauty of Vaughter’s farm is just one example of how the Area concept could effectively convey the dynamic relationship between the culture, history and landscape of this unique and diverse place.

The selected environments to be highlighted in this concept could be connected and accessed via the existing (and future) trail system and roadways. The stories that could be told at specific landscapes- also known as gateways- include the following:

- City of Lithonia- The story of the people in the ‘place of rock’
- Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve- The granite impact: flora, fauna and geology

- Vaughter’s Farm- The agricultural evolution
- Panola Mountain Conservation State Park- Natural systems and the relationship to the South River

Cluster

The Cluster concept utilizes a series of areas (or clusters) to communicate the story of the Heritage Area. Each cluster would serve as a ‘gateway’ into the area, thereby allowing each to clearly and comprehensively represent a particular subject or theme.

Each cluster utilizes a ‘gateway’ facility to provide the interpretive information and experience to engage the visitor. The clusters could be connected to one another via a driving tour, and eventually, a walking tour via the PATH trail system. The intent of this concept is to educate the visitor on four major themes of the area through experiences and interpretation at four key locations within the Heritage Area. This concept allows the visitor to ‘customize’ the experience and story based on his/ her interest, time, or accessibility.

The gateway for Cluster A: City of Lithonia would occur in an existing building within the city limits, where possible, and would highlight the relationship of *People of the Heritage Area*. Additional locations for interpretation within Lithonia could include the Lithonia Woman’s Club, historic churches and cemeteries, and the connection to the PATH trail system.

The Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve would be the gateway facility for Cluster B, where the stories of the *Culture of the Heritage Area* would be highlighted and interpreted utilizing the existing (and potentially expanded) Nature Center and Arabia Mountain. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include Vaughter’s Farm, the PATH trail system, Evans Mill, the surrounding cemeteries and churches, Native American sites, and historic homesteads.

The gateway for Cluster C: Panola Mountain State Conservation Park would utilize the existing (and potentially expanded) Interpretive Center, and would highlight the *Natural Systems of the Heritage Area*. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include future connections to South River via the PATH trail system and Native American sites.

The Monastery of the Holy Spirit would be the gateway facility for Cluster D, where the stories of the *Land of the Heritage Area* would be highlighted and interpreted utilizing a new facility and the land adjacent to the South River. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include the monastery grounds, future connections to South River via the PATH trail system, and Native American and historic sites.