



Request for Qualifications: Buffalo Bill Museum Governance

1. PURPOSE

The Buffalo Bill Gravesite and Museum and Pahaska Tepee (historic lodge that formerly housed the museum) are key attractions within the Denver Mountain Park system, located on Lookout Mountain. Denver Parks and Recreation seeks a consultant to help the city-owned and managed Buffalo Bill Museum transition to a more independent cultural institution, with its own Board of Trustees.



2. OUTCOMES

- Recommendation of the best governance model for Buffalo Bill Museum within the City structure.
- Increased community awareness of and advocacy for Buffalo Bill Museum
- A preliminary Board of Trustees identified, recruited, and trained.

3. SUBMISSION DETAILS

Four (4) copies of the RFQ should be sent and will be accepted until 5 p.m. July 31, 2008.

Please send to:

Steve Friesen, Director of Buffalo Bill Museum
Denver Parks and Recreation
201 West Colfax, Dept. 605
Denver, Colorado 80202
303-526-0744
steve.friesen@ci.denver.co.us

Submissions should include:

- Consultants' relevant experience in Board creation and governance issues
- How he/she would approach the Buffalo Bill project
- References
- Estimate of the range of cost for the services

4. OTHER

- All submissions remain confidential, subject to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act.
- More information on Buffalo Bill Museum is available at www.buffalobill.org
- The City and County of Denver is committed to a program of equal employment opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, nationality, or disability.
- Interviews with potential consultants will be in the late summer or fall 2008.

5. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Denver Parks and Recreation is completing a 2008 Master Plan for its historic 14,000-acre Denver Mountain Park system that stretches across four counties. An internationally known icon and destination in that park system is Lookout Mountain, the location of the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave and the 1921 historic Pahaska Tepee (the original museum). No historical figure, both in fact and in perception, has captured the allure, the realities, the ironies, and the mythology of the American West as Buffalo Bill Cody. Buffalo Bill Museum and campus are set apart from other area museums and cultural attractions:

- The Buffalo Bill Museum itself, despite a small, unaccommodating building, contains over 6,000 significant and compelling artifacts from Buffalo Bill's life and of his touring company. Both the gravesite and Pahaska Tepee lodge, Johnny Baker's (Cody's "foster" son) early museum and memorial to Buffalo Bill, give visitors a rich experience of authenticity. The Museum appeals to the growing number of heritage tourists.
- Lookout Mountain Park is one of the many beautiful, historic Denver Mountain Parks with mature ponderosa pines, evergreens, and native grasses. The campus captures spectacular views of both the front range to the east and the continental divide to the west. The setting, Lookout Mountain Park, is on the National Register of Historic Places.

One of the key recommendations in the *Denver Mountain Park Master Plan* (2008) is to dramatically improve the Museum and the surrounding Lookout Mountain Park in order to improve visitor experience, expand and protect the collection, physically improve and organize the distinctive pieces of the campus into a whole, and financially sustain the museum. Denver Parks and Recreation will be issuing an RFP fall of 2008 for a feasibility study for this major enhancement of the Buffalo Bill campus. That study will look at program direction, site planning to include a new museum, and business planning.

At the same time, the Museum wants to build the organizational capacity to fund and sustain it into the future and believes that a shift from a 100% city staffed and run museum to a new model that incorporates a significant non-profit cultural component will be necessary. Other city-owned facilities, such as the Denver Botanic Gardens, Four-Mile-House, and the Denver Zoo, already operate with some independence from the City and have their own Board of Trustees. Each has a slightly different contractual model with the City.

As a City owned and managed resource, currently the Museum is a part of the Denver Mountain Parks section of the Parks and Recreation Natural Resources Division. The Director reports to the Superintendent of Denver Mountain parks. All staff are Career Service employees. All funding, with the exception of grants, gifts, and a special revenue fund from concessionaire revenues, comes from the City's General Fund (operating) and its separate Capital Improvement Fund. Revenues from the Museum go into Denver's General Fund and are not earmarked for the Museum. No Advisory Group or Board exists for the Museum except for an informal ad hoc group organized fall of 2007. These "Buffalo Bill Brainstormers" met twice. As a City facility, the museum also receives other City services, such as legal, personnel, insurance, finance, and some maintenance. The Museum does have a Friends group, but only around \$1,000 a year is raised by that group.

This RFQ is to find and select a consultant to work closely with the Museum's Director in researching the best governance model for the museum, building initial community interest in and support for the Museum, and in recruiting (and doing an initial training for) a founding Board of Directors. Having a Board selected and in place will be important in the decision-making and policy and program direction discussions that will take place during the Feasibility Study. A Board created early in the process also sets the stage for future successful fund-raising and for the

Board to be an integral part (and then advocate for) of creating a vision for a new museum and overall improvements.

Potential Consultant Duties include working closely with the Museum, City Staff, and others to:

- research possible governance models and practices that apply well to Buffalo Bill Museum.
- identify the optimum matrix and structure of a founding Board.
- build awareness, advocacy, and interest in the Museum, particularly with adjoining communities.
- recruit and do an initial training for a founding Board of Directors.

6. ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Denver Mountain Parks

The nationally known Denver Mountain Park system began in 1912 with the funding and acquisition over time of 9,000 acres in Jefferson County. The original vision for the system, rooted deeply in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was to build looped roads and parks that captured spectacular views and the best scenery for tourists and residents taking day-long automobile trips. Most of the parks even had well water for drivers to refill their thirsty radiators! In 1912, the nationally prestigious Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architectural Firm was hired to design this loop's ambitious system of roads, trails and parks which Denver then systematically acquired and developed over the next decade. When built out, the park system covered 14,000 acres of park land in Jefferson County, Douglas County, Clear Creek County, and Grand County (Winter Park Ski Resort). The system includes over 25 small to large parks, a number of inaccessible conservation areas, and the international icons such as Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre, Mt. Evans, Winter Park Ski Resort, and Lookout Mountain with the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave. The Denver Mountain Parks system is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Lookout Mountain Park is located at 7,375 feet elevation, at the top of the first road built in the park system, the "Lariat Loop". The "loop" ran from the town of Golden at the base of the foothills through the entry gates to the mountain park system (the McClelland pillars) up a series of hairpin turns to the picnic area and stone shelter at the top. The stone shelter was built in 1915 by prominent Denver architects, W.E. & A.A. Fischer, in the classic rustic style of the period. The area dramatically changed from a quiet picnic area to place of fame when Buffalo Bill Cody was buried on the summit in later in 1917.

History of Buffalo Bill and the Museum

The following statement of purpose for the Buffalo Bill Memorial Museum was approved on November 25, 1996:

The Buffalo Bill Memorial Museum, a facility owned and operated by the City and County of Denver, exists to preserve the memory of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. To this end it maintains the Cody gravesite and related structures on Lookout Mountain Park; collects, cares for and interprets artifacts associated with "Buffalo Bill" Cody's life and times between 1846 and 1917; and records Cody's ongoing influence on American culture.

William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody was a child of the West. By the time he reached age 25 he had encountered nearly every adventure a young man could experience in the West. Born in 1846 in Iowa, he moved with his family to Leavenworth, Kansas when he was age eight. There the family became involved in the abolitionist cause. After his father died of fever, eleven year

old Will went to work as a messenger boy and herding cattle. Later that year he took a job as driver on a wagon train, making the first of many Great Plains crossings. He went on to fur trapping and gold mining, then joined the Pony Express in 1860. During the Civil War he served with the Seventh Kansas Cavalry and scouted for the Army following the War. He soon gained the nickname “Buffalo Bill” as a hunter for the Army and the Kansas Pacific Railroad.

In 1872 Buffalo Bill began his show business career, appearing onstage for the first time with Ned Buntline and Texas Jack. For the next decade he appeared in playhouses throughout the United States, including the Central City Opera and other venues in Denver and Colorado. In 1883 he decided to create an outdoor exhibition with Indians, cowboys, vaqueros, buffalo, and other attractions. He called it Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. The Wild West toured the United States and Europe for thirty years, introducing the American West to millions. The Wild West influenced everything from rodeo to movies and created an image of the West that continues until today.

Buffalo Bill Cody became one of America’s first great celebrities. When he died in 1917, over 20,000 persons paid their respects to him while he lay in state in the Colorado State Capitol rotunda. Before his death, Cody had visited Denver’s Lookout Mountain Park on several occasions. At his request, he was buried in the Park on June 3, 1917. In 1882 a young man named Johnny Baker joined the first cast of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West. It was the beginning of a friendship between Baker and Cody which lasted until Cody’s death in 1917. Cody treated the younger Baker like his own son. Over the years, Johnny Baker performed many jobs with the Wild West show, eventually becoming a sharpshooter with equal billing to Annie Oakley. As Buffalo Bill got older, Baker acted as both show manager and right hand man to the aging Cody.

In 1921 Johnny Baker opened the Buffalo Bill Memorial Museum in Pahaska Tepee near Buffalo Bill’s grave in Lookout Mountain Park. A rustic structure constructed of roughhewn logs, it was called “Pahaska Tepee” after Cody’s hunting lodge of the same name outside of Yellowstone Park. The City of Denver owned the property but the Bakers owned the artifacts and ran the museum and shop. The artifacts in the Museum were items he had collected over the years and had gathered from the many friends who had performed with him in the Wild West. Mrs. Cody herself also provided objects, although she died and was buried next to her husband shortly before the Museum opened. In order to provide himself with a livelihood as caretaker of the Museum, Baker ran a gift shop and cafe.

After Johnny Baker’s death in 1931, his wife Olive continued to operate Pahaska Tepee until her own death in 1956. At that point, under an earlier agreement, the collection became the property of the City and County of Denver. After taking an inventory, the first written recording of the collection, the City hired a concessionaire to run the site and take care of the collection. This first concessionaire was the H.W. Stewart Company, which continues to operate the concession today. During the 1970s the City hired a curator to manage the collection and the Museum began to develop a more separate identity from the gift shop.

The 1921 Pahaska Tepee was built for six month summer/fall use only and was not built with anticipation that it would be used for 75 plus years. By 1960, the Buffalo Bill collection had outgrown the original Pahaska Tepee and the City and County of Denver conducted a feasibility study for a new museum building in 1970. The original design for a structure intended to surround the Grave was never built. Instead the current pre-stressed concrete building was erected on the side of the hill in 1979 so that the collections could be removed entirely from Pahaska Tepee. The 7,064 square foot concrete building was constructed to present no profile and thus not compete with the 1921 structure. It was also designed without consideration of typical museum needs. The roof of the building doubles as a terrace for visitors to experience the spectacular views of Golden and the Denver area. When Pahaska Tepee became wholly devoted to gift shop and food sales, the concessionaire’s direct involvement with the Museum ended.

Buffalo Bill’s gravesite is located on top of the hill just south of Pahaska Tepee and has been changed several times during its history. Visitors walk up a concrete walk to visit the site.

The simple monument on the site dates to 1918 and the present configuration of the site (with concrete and fence) dates to 1927. At one time the parking for the site was located to the southwest of Pahaska Tepee with the main entrance to the structure being to the south and facing Buffalo Bill's grave. The gravesite has spectacular views in every direction.

At some point the present 80,000 s.f. parking lot was constructed and the entrance to Pahaska oriented to the West. The large, solid asphalt parking lot is usually 80% full on a typical summer day. Lookout Mountain Park and the Buffalo Bill Museum/Grave site are on the National Register of Historic Places. The only building that is not a contributing structure to this designation is the 1979 Museum building

Access to the Museum and Lookout Mountain is scenic but certainly indirect. The earliest route to the east is the Lariat Loop Trail, is a 4-mile series of hairpins turns from the base in Golden to Lookout. The 1917 McFarland Gates, the two stone pillars at the base of the road mark the entry to the Denver Mountain Park looped road system. Primary access is the marked Buffalo Bill Grave Exit 256 off of I-70. Drivers are routed along Highway 40 to Lookout Mountain Road for approximately six miles to the museum.

Current Visitation

The Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave is the number six tourist attraction in the Denver metro area, according to the Denver Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau's latest survey. The overall site is visited by as many as 500,000 persons each year. They visit the Grave, enjoy the view, shop in the gift shop, and have picnics. Visitation at the Museum has ranged from 58,000 to 64,000 over the past decade. The site attracts visitors from all over the world because of Buffalo Bill. Around 20% of visitors to the Museum are from Denver and 20% from the rest of the metro area. A survey in 2005 showed the ethnicity of visitors at 68% Caucasian, 15.8% Hispanic, 3.4% African-American, 2.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.8% Native American, and 3.4% "other". Visitors can park and see the gravesite free; admission to the museum is modest and has not changed since 1995. Adult admission is \$3.00, children are \$1.00 and seniors are \$2.00.

Current Collections and Exhibits

There are presently over 6,000 artifacts in the Museum's collection. These include 1721 archival items, 1995 historic photographs, 1893 three-dimensional objects, and 525 pieces of artwork/lithography. At the core of the collections are 1000 items collected by Johnny Baker and part of the Museum when it opened in 1921. While the quantity of artifacts in the collection is not as large as at many museums, including the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Wyoming, there are a number of historically significant materials. These include Buffalo Bill's show outfits and saddles, war bonnets that belonged to Sitting Bull and Iron Tail, original documents from Buffalo Bill and members of his Wild West, and materials from the Wild West, such as posters and programs. While some of these materials are on exhibit, there are many items in storage which could be shown in a greatly expanded exhibit area. The Museum continues to collect important artifacts associated with Buffalo Bill and the Wild West as they become available, but a lack of storage space severely hampers this collecting effort. Approximately 3,793 square feet is devoted to exhibits, 1,000 square feet for collections storage and staff work/office areas, and 1,347 square feet for public services such as restrooms and lobby.

In 1998 the Museum began a process of systematically placing all of its collections records in a computerized database. These records included digital photos of all artifacts. The process is nearly completed, with only 1000 records left to complete. By the end of 2008, ten years after the project began, the entire collection should be digitized. The collections are stored in closets and on storage racks in the Museum workroom. A few large collections items are stored in an unheated building at the Mountain Parks facility. That building also holds plexiglass cases and other exhibit furniture when they are not in use at the Museum.

Because of the collection's significance, the Museum receives an average of one research request a day. These range from requests for information about Buffalo Bill from authors to requests for copies of photographs from film makers. In the past three years, photographs from the Museum's collection have been used for an exhibit at Disneyland Paris, on a postage stamp in the Republic of Georgia, and in several documentaries on PBS, to name a few.

The Museum provides two types of exhibits: permanent and temporary. The permanent exhibits deal with Buffalo Bill's life, his show business career, his relationship to the Indians, his ongoing legacy, antique guns, and a hands-on area where people can dress up as cowboys/cowgirls and take photographs. These permanent exhibits are "refreshed" or replaced at the rate of one per year. The Museum currently mounts one temporary exhibit each year on a topic related to Buffalo Bill's life, time, or legacy. The current temporary exhibit is "Western Style: A Convergence of Cultures". Past exhibits have covered heroes and villains of the Old West, cowboy hats, cowboy boots, Buffalo Bill's horses, Western movie posters and other topics.

In 1997 the Museum created a traveling exhibit of Wild West posters. That exhibit has been retired and the Museum is currently promoting an exhibit of Western movie posters. These traveling exhibits help earn extra income as well as promote the Museum.

Current Events/Educational Programs

The Museum currently stages three free major special events: Buffalo Bill's Birthday, Mountain Melodies Museum Festival, and Buffalo Bill Presents. All three are staged in the parking lot and small wooded area close to the museum and have been well-attended, with around 900 participants at each event. The Museum used to observe Buffalo Bill's burial date on or near June 3 until public interest dropped over the years.

The Museum currently offers two options for school groups. They can make a self-guided visit using a handout with questions to direct their attention or they can participate in one of two hands-on programs (The American Indian or The Mighty Buffalo). School visitation to the Museum is weak because of the extra costs involved with a field trip to Lookout Mountain. The Museum has tried a number of different approaches to attract more school visits with little success, largely because current standards involved with No Left Child Left Behind do not apply to the Museum's subject material. At this point less than ten public schools send groups to the Museum, although the Museum is frequently visited by home school groups and day care centers take.

Current Visitor Services

The Museum currently has brochure racks tucked by the accessible restrooms in its entrance area as well as a reception desk for collecting admission. There are picnic tables on the observation deck as well as in picnic areas in front of Pahaska Tepee and at Lookout Mountain Park. There are also interpretive signs on the observation deck as well as at an overlook in the parking lot. The space in Pahaska Tepee is devoted completely to a gift shop and café. There are public restrooms (not disabled accessible) in a lower area. Pahaska Tepee does not meet current standards for disabled access.

The site relies upon press coverage, listings in visitor guidebooks signage and word of mouth for promotion. Neither the Pahaska Tepee concessionaire nor the City currently does any active advertising or systematic marketing of the site.

Finances and Organization

Operating Budget. The Museum receives its entire operating budget from the Denver Parks and Recreation budget. The budget for 2007 was \$296,400. The bulk of this budget was devoted to personnel-related costs, with general operations expenses being covered by approximately \$16,000 of the budget. Admission income from the Museum was around \$131,000 in 2006. Admissions charges are \$3/adult, \$2/senior and \$1/child. Admissions income is

deposited into the City's General Fund, the source for Parks and Recreation's operating funds.

The Denver Mountain Parks' budget includes funds to cover the costs of utilities at the Museum and the. Mountain Parks and Parks and Recreation maintenance department has also provided a great deal of assistance with everything from trouble-shooting the HVAC system to wiring security systems.

Capital Budget. Parks and Recreation has approximately \$8m/year in its Capital Improvement Fund (funds from the Conservation Trust Fund, Winter Park, and CIP funds) for capital repairs and new facilities. The Buffalo Bill Museum, as well as the rest of the Denver Mountain Park system, competes with projects across the city for these funds. Amounts have varied from \$0 to \$300,000/year for the 14,000 acre Denver Mountain Parks system. Over the past decade the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave site has received allocations for stabilization work in Pahaska Tepee and for upgrading the Museum's fire exits and alarm system.

Undesignated Funds. The annual operating and capital museum budgets from the City are supplemented by moneys from the Lookout Mountain Development Fund. This Special Revenue Fund (set up by Ordinance) is designated specifically for use at the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave site. The Fund is "fed" by donations and other miscellaneous income (e.g. traveling exhibit rental income) but receives its main income from the Pahaska Tepee concessionaire. 10% of the gross sales at Pahaska Tepee is deposited to the Fund by the concessionaire each year, that is approximately \$80,000 per year. Around \$25,000 is used each year to supplement general operations. The other 2/3 of this fund, \$50,000/year, is spent on capital improvements as needed (e.g. in 2005 an air conditioning system was installed).

Concessionaire. In addition to providing a percentage of gross sales, the concessionaire also provides \$20,000 in improvements to Pahaska Tepee each year. The concessionaire further provides a variety of other services: a nighttime security presence (including closing the facility), grounds cleaning around Pahaska Tepee and the grave, tourist information, and other forms of assistance to the Museum staff as needed.

Grants. The Museum seeks grants each year from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) and from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The Museum is a Tier III entity according to SCFD guidelines and can apply for up to 15% of its budget in general operating support from the Denver SCFD. Usually the general operating support grant is around \$26,000, which is used to pay the front desk cashier/receptionist. The Museum also has applied for and received around \$2,500 from the Jefferson County Science and Cultural Facilities District fund in support of the Mountain Melodies Music Festival. The Museum has received IMLS grants very consistently for the past ten years to support the collections computerization/digitization project. The total amount for 2007 and 2008 is \$64,000. The Museum has had a strong track record in receiving grants.

Staffing.

The Museum currently operates with 4.5 Full Time Equivalent staff supported by the annual budget plus 1.25 FTEs supported by grants. That translates to five full-time and one part-time paid staff members. There are approximately 60 persons who volunteer for the Museum, primarily as costumed interpreters at special events. The Museum has had a few unpaid interns assist with collections in the past but this is not a regular occurrence.