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An historic Kolb Bros photograph of Edith and Defiance.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



An historic Kolb Bros photograph of the Laundry Building with Power House in the background.

In cooperation with the National Park Service (NPS), the Colorado River Fund (CRF) has commissioned this study for the creation of a Grand Canyon River Heritage Museum (GCRHM) at the South Rim of The Grand Canyon National Park. This study looks specifically at the feasibility of locating the GCRHM in the “Laundry Building” of the former Fred Harvey service buildings located to the south of the rail tracks and across from the Bright Angel Lodge. This grouping of National Historic Register buildings is identified as part of a larger NPS plan to adaptively reuse them as components of a South Rim “Village Interpretive Center”. The purpose of the GCRHM is to house, display, and interpret the Park’s collection of historic watercraft and the surrounding history of boating on the Colorado River through the Park, from John Wesley Powell’s pioneering 1869 expedition to explore the uncharted waters, to the modern commercial and private rafting that have made river running hugely popular with the American people.

In its role as the National Park Service representative for this project, the CRF engaged Pfau Long Architecture (PLA), with The Sibbett Group, exhibit designers, and a team of consultants to undertake this feasibility study. This team was the same team that produced the 2004 concept design for the Village Interpretive Center, thus leveraging a significant working knowledge of the Laundry Building with an understanding of the historic and cultural resources of the surrounding site.

This study was initiated in August of 2009 and started with a kick off meeting and site investigation visit in October. During this visit an extended meeting was held with the CRF and the Park Superintendent and other NPS Staff, as well as the Grand Canyon Association (GCA) and other interested river operators and advisors. This meeting set out the shared objectives for the project, which then directed the work of the team.

**GRAND CANYON RIVER HERITAGE MUSEUM  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - CONTINUED**



Current north elevation of Laundry Building

In December 2009 the team returned to Flagstaff to deliver a presentation of the in-process feasibility study along with preliminary budgets, and received feedback and suggestions from all attendees which were then incorporated into the continuing work process. Revised building and interpretive schemes were generated, and again sent around by email for review by key NPS, CRF and GCA personnel. The final feasibility schemes contained in this report represent the results of this in process review and subsequent communications.

**Findings**

The following findings are the result of this study regarding the key questions asked in the original Request for Proposal for this project

**Suitability for Historic Boat Display**

The character of the existing building's historic interior is extremely well suited to the display and conservation of the historic boat collection at the Park. Once cleared out of all the non-historic infill, the space is an open naturally day-lit space with high ceilings that are well suited to the interpretive elements that would support the boat collection. However, study of the space required to reasonably accommodate the existing boat collection and other museum support functions such as restrooms, information desk, GCA store etc., demonstrated that it would not be possible to fit everything within the existing building.

It was also concluded that additional floor space would be required to provide an authentic visitor experience that inspires Grand Canyon visitors to make meaningful connections with Colorado River boats. This study proposes using the entire floor and vertical space to display a majority of the existing boat and artifact collection. The exhibit design approach uses storytelling to



The existing interior of the Laundry Building with non-historic infill.

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Photo of existing blank wall on east elevation

bring the boats to life, reflecting the spirit of *The Boats Will Speak*. Organizing the boats chronologically, the interpretive exhibits highlight the design evolution of the boat collection. Complimenting the boats are photographs, video and artifacts, all combined to convey the compelling past, present and future stories about boating on the Colorado River.

Additional discussions also concluded that the GCRHM experience would be greatly enhanced by a small theater. The theater will show a variety of short films that incorporate repurposed historic footage from the Park's collection, as well as vivid contemporary footage. These high-quality productions will highlight memorable people and events, instilling in viewers a sense of excitement and adventure for running the Colorado River. During special events the theater can be used for small lectures, talks or programs.

**Interior/Exterior Modifications**

When the original Laundry Building was built, it was designed with the intent of adding an equally-sized expansion to the east of the existing structure. This is evidenced by the eastern façade having been left blank to facilitate this work. In order to accommodate the larger space needed for the GCRHM, this study proposes a 4,061 gsf addition to the east of the original building. The roof volume and shape of this addition is complementary of the historic structure while a lower roof element dividing the new from the existing serves to differentiate the two. The new structure has a large glass façade that makes the historic boat displays visible from the well visited areas of the canyon rim, serving as a natural advertisement for the GCRHM (see rendering page 24).

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Photo of existing steel roof truss and column structure

The new structure will also provide new ADA compliant restrooms on the main level, and with the provision of a new concrete topping slab everywhere within the old and new structure, all elements (save a storage and mechanical area below) will be on a single level assuring ADA and universal access compliance. Structural upgrades to the combined building will improve its ability to respond to a seismic event and assure preservation of the resources. The new structure will also incorporate a solar thermal hydronic heating system, using the inherent thermal mass of the building to store energy and in combination with other sustainable elements will result in a LEED gold project, demonstrating a high level of environmental stewardship.

**Historic Character**

The original character of the National Historic Register Fred Harvey Laundry Building can be preserved by adaptive re-use of the building as the GCRHM. The non-historic additions on the south, east and west elevations can be removed revealing much of the original character of the building facades surprisingly intact. Re-pointing and minor repair to the masonry elements, as well as historically appropriate treatment of other historic features (see historic preservation section page 35 ), complete the restoration of the key elements of its historic character.

The new additions will be deferential and complimentary in character to the existing historic structure and therefore compliant with the intent of National Historic Preservation Act, as well as other applicable historic requirements. The rehabilitation of the existing historic building and the design of the addition will follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of historic structures.

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An historic Kolb Bros photograph of the Laundry Building under construction.

### **Project Costs**

For this feasibility study, cost estimates (NPS Class C) have been prepared for the adaptive re-use of the historic building, the addition and the interpretive content outlined herein. In order to set out the full project cost, these cost estimates also offer line items for project soft costs, a photovoltaic electrical system and allowances for hazmat mitigation. The total project cost is \$9,324,093. Please refer to the Executive Summary of Project Cost section for the detailed cost estimate information. This overall project cost results in a cost per sf of \$862.00 which is well within the cost of comparable interpretive facilities.

### **Conclusion**

This feasibility study demonstrates that the Laundry Building is very well suited to be adapted for use as the “Grand Canyon River Heritage Museum”. Additions to the east elevation, increasing the footprint of the Museum to 10,821 gsf, make the structure well sized to accommodate the boats and allow the interpretive elements to tell their stories. The combined historic building and addition will result in a “green” building, demonstrating a high level of environmental stewardship.

By re-pointing the stone and appropriate repairs to the historic building fabric and windows, non-contributory additions can be removed and the historic facades on the north, west and south restored to their original character. In fact, adaptive re-use of the historic structure, with its respectful addition, will serve as an incentive for the historic preservation of this important national historic resource.

Lastly, the exciting opportunities for preservation, display and interpretation of the park’s boat collection, and the multiple stories there are to tell about so many

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related topics, from the stories of river characters, the quirky evolution of river craft, opportunities to connect with the river experience, to the linkages with evolving resource policy in the West, all add up to make this a potential “must visit” part of the south rim experience.

Further, introduction of the GCRHM, on the now under-utilized site for the future “Village Interpretive Center”, will serve as a positive driver for the future re-use of this area.



Aerial view of Village Interpretive Center Master Plan - 2004