



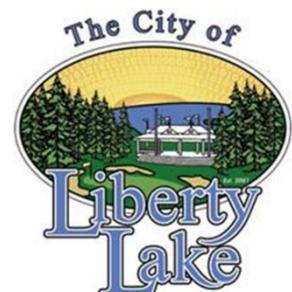
## **LIBERTY LAKE – 2046**

**DRAFT CITY OF LIBERTY LAKE**

# **CULTURAL & HISTORICAL RESOURCES ELEMENT**

**FOR THE 2026 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

September 8, 2025



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## A. Introduction

Although Cultural Resources is not a required Comprehensive Plan element under the state Growth Management Act, the City of Liberty Lake values the protection and preservation of its cultural and historical resources. While the area around Liberty Lake is not included within the city limits, much of the culture and traditions that exist today began there and were carried on by the greater Liberty Lake.

## B. Goals and Policies

**Cultural Resources Goal 1:** Protect archaeological and historic sites and structures.

**Cultural Resources Goal 2:** Promote the appreciation of Liberty Lake’s diverse heritage, as expressed by its cultural resources.

**Cultural Resources Goal 3:** Recognize that the arts contribute to the character of the physical, mental, social, and economic well-being of the community and encourage public and private commitment and investment.

**Policy 1:** Identify and evaluate archaeological and historic sites to determine which should be preserved.

**Policy 2:** Nominate significant cultural resources to the local, state, and national Historic Registers. The Cultural Resources Inventory should be used as a reference in the identification of significant structures and places eligible for nomination.

**Policy 3:** Maintain City-owned cultural resources in an appropriate manner.

**Policy 4:** Provide a program of public education concerning the need to preserve and incorporate cultural resources and keep the public informed of actions to carry out plans.

**Policy 5:** Provide incentives such as bonus densities and lot coverage to encourage the use of open space and public art which celebrates the people and spirit of the Liberty Lake community within public and private developments.

**Policy 6:** Encourage permanent displays of art in new public facilities.

**Policy 7:** The City may consider hiring a staff member to manage the following steps and strategies, which may be implemented in order to guide the identification, nomination, and ongoing preservation of the City’s historical resources:

- **Identification of Historical Properties:** A comprehensive process should be implemented to identify existing and potential historical properties within the City. This should involve community input, expert assessments, and thorough research to create an inclusive list of historical resources.

- **Nomination Process:** Once identified, properties that meet established criteria may be nominated for inclusion on an official register of historical properties. This nomination process should be transparent, ensuring the public and stakeholders have opportunities for input before final decisions are made.
- **Ongoing Maintenance and Preservation:** The City should strive to preserve registered historical properties in good condition through ongoing monitoring, regular assessments, and following maintenance guidelines. This approach would need to include a commitment to funding and supporting preservation efforts for these properties, particularly those under the City’s ownership.
- **Access to Information:** City planners, developers, property owners, and citizens should have easy access to the necessary information about historical properties to make informed decisions. This information could be made available through digital platforms, public meetings, and other accessible means.
- **Integration into Planning Tools:** Historical properties could be integrated into the City’s planning tools to ensure that land use decisions consider the impact on these resources. This would require collaboration between a diverse range of stakeholders, including those whose heritage and traditions are directly connected to the properties.
- **Sustained Support for Preservation Programs:** If implemented, the City would need to ensure long-term stability and reliability of support for this historical and cultural preservation program, in order to successfully implement this process and the achievement of the preservation goals outlined in this element.

## C. History and Background

### Liberty Lake’s Cultural and Historical Heritage

The culture we cherish today began long before the formation of the City of Liberty Lake. The Liberty Lake area was inhabited by Native Americans centuries before the first white settlers came to the area. In 1808, David Thompson, a fur trader, arrived in the area and was soon followed by missionaries. Native Americans still occupied Liberty Lake and surrounding areas as the white settlers began to arrive. According to the book entitled *Memories of Liberty Lake* by Mildred Brereton and Evelyn Foedish, an early fur trader named Ross Cox told tales of the Indians holding horse races on the plains. These horse races were a part of an annual feed on the shores of Liberty Lake that was hosted by Andrew Seltice, Chief of the Coeur d'Alene Indians. After the dinner, everyone enjoyed the horse races and athletic events where prizes were given out. Many families stayed overnight to hear Tecomtee, a Couer d'Alene Tribe member sing Indian songs out over the Lake.

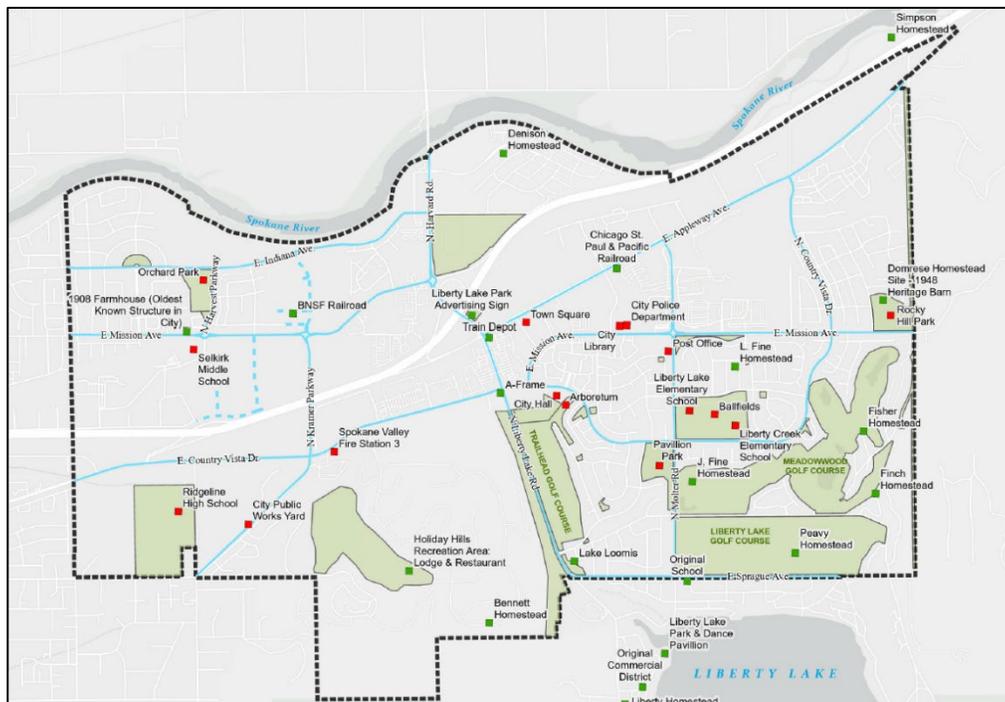
## City of Liberty Lake – Land Use Element

Liberty Lake was originally named Lake Grier, but was later re-named after a Frenchman from Canada, Etienne Eduard Laliberte, who came to Liberty Lake in 1871 after changing his name to Stephen Liberty while carrying mail over the Mullan Trail to Rathdrum. Stephen Liberty and his family homesteaded on the west side of the lake and he was known as a friend and spokesman for the Native Americans, and was especially close with Chief Andrew Seltice of the Coeur d'Alene Indians.

Other early settlers may have been drawn to the Liberty Lake area and other parts of the west by the Homestead Act of 1862. The Homestead Act declared that any citizen or intended citizen could claim 160 acres - one quarter square mile - of surveyed government land. Claimants must "improve" the plot with a dwelling and grow crops. After five years, if the original filer was still on the land, it was his property, free and clear. According to records from the Bureau of Land Management, there were eight homesteads between 1884 and 1907, in the area now within the City limits.

The first homesteader was **James Fisher**. Fisher was issued a land patent on May 15, 1884. The next to homestead was **Joseph Peavy**, in the early 1880's. Peavy, the area's first blacksmith, also carried mail along the Mullan Trail with his friend Stephen Liberty, who homesteaded on the west side of Liberty Lake. **Levi P. Fine** and **John J. Fine** homesteaded in the early 1880's. The Fine family lived in Liberty Lake long enough to see the new schoolhouse, discussed below, built about ¼ mile south of them on land they had donated. John Simpson was issued a land patent on April 20, 1891. **Charles Denison** was issued a land patent on June 8, 1895. **George Bennett** homesteaded in the late 1880's and finally, **Fred Finch** was granted a land patent on March 8, 1907. See Map X.1 for an overview of these former homestead locations.

**Figure X.1 – Liberty Lake Historical Places**





as “hillbilly music” and in modern times referred to as “Country/Western Music”, from around 8 p.m. till dawn.

Another winter activity for the locals were the “500 card parties” at one of the area ranches on Saturday night. The basic card game involved tables of four with partners sitting across from each other and working their way up toward a top table by collecting points, with the winners of the evening prize being the partners that reach the top table or 500 points.

During periods of heavy snow, Saturday night hayrides were available with a team of four horses, complete with sleigh bells that pulled a bob sled holding about 20 couples sitting on a mattress of straw. The ride toured from Liberty Lake to Newman Lake and around to Spokane Bridge where they could enjoy the dance hall.

By the early 1900's, several resorts were being developed around Liberty Lake, and the Lake was quickly becoming a vacation destination for the residents of Spokane and other surrounding areas. Pleasure boats that toured the lake were one of the many amenities that entertained visitors. The Spokane Inland Empire Railway began running electric trains in 1903 from Spokane to Liberty Lake that took around 45 minutes one way. A round trip to and from the Lake cost around 75 cents. The train originally stopped at a 6' x 6' station located at the intersection of the highway of the time, which is near where the intersection of Mission Avenue and Harvard Road is today. Emmett Denison, a descendant of the homesteader, lived at the junction and he would meet the train at the depot with his horse drawn stage and transport visitors south to the Lake for 25 cents. As Liberty Lake's popularity increased, the station became a depot with signage that identified it as Liberty Lake junction.

More people visited the Lake around 1907, when the railroad installed a spur line along today's Liberty Lake Road to bring visitors closer to the lake. The Spokane Inland Empire Railroad developed the Liberty Lake Park in 1908-1909 which became very popular for picnics and other gatherings. Traffic steadily increased from 1910 to 1913 with a two-car train running every half-hour in 1910, and by 1913 a five-car train ran every half-hour on Sundays and holidays, or when large weekday picnics were scheduled. The years 1910 to 1915 were the peak for the Liberty Lake Park running every half-hour in 1910, and by 1913 a five-car train ran every half-hour on Sundays and holidays, or when large weekday picnics were scheduled. The years 1910 to 1915 were the peak for the Liberty Lake Park and Liberty Lake became known as "Spokane's Inland Seashore".

The park's natural beauty that included many different tree varieties and unusual flowers, mixed with the many attractions, made the park very popular. Visitors could rent boats from the Liberty Lake Boat Company for joy rides, enjoy the live band music and dancing at the Pavillion (its historic spelling), stay at the hotel or one of the many resorts, rent swimming suits at the Hurtig Bath House, fish, picnic, savor the dining options, or just relax. As in the days of Tecomtee, the music from the Pavillion could be heard throughout the area. All Valley picnics and other business parties became a tradition at the Lake for many people each summer, and in the winter, people could enjoy ice skating on the Lake. Automobiles were becoming popular in the 1920's and visitors

could either arrive to the Lake by train or along Sprague / Appleway Avenue and then down Molter Road by car. Because of the popularity of fruit orchards in the Spokane Valley, fruit stands with apples lined Sprague Avenue throughout the valley area, causing it to be renamed “The Appleway”.

The 1920's brought major changes to Liberty Lake. All Valley picnics began in 1922, and 1924 saw the biggest crowd ever for the annual 4th of July celebration. 14,000 people attended the festivities that year, with 9,000 of them arriving by train. With the onset of the automobile as the transportation mode of choice, the trains that had brought so many visitors to Liberty Lake quit running by June of 1927. The beautifully maintained Liberty Lake Park was sold in 1934 and was re-named Silver City. It was converted to more of a carnival atmosphere with a ferris wheel, a swing ride, and an unusual carousel. Hand-carved wooden tigers, horses, frogs, cats, and dogs circled the elaborately crafted carousel built by artists and engineers of the Herschell-Spillman Company in 1913.

The carousel remained at the Park until 1961 and today it is in the Henry Ford Museum at Dearborn, Michigan. The town was also beginning to develop around the Lake with more homes and supporting businesses and services being constructed. Farming continued with much of the land being covered in orchards and eventually grass fields.

By 1951, Liberty Lake was becoming known as a suburb of Spokane and development was limited to the Lake area, south of Sprague Avenue. The Liberty Lake Golf Course, the first of the three golf courses in Liberty Lake, was constructed on the northeast corner of Sprague Avenue and Molter Road in 1959. By the 1960's, many of the original attractions around the Lake were gone. The dance pavilion at the old Liberty Lake Park was destroyed by fire in the late 1950's and was torn down by the early 1960's. Spokane County bought and created the almost 3000-acre Spokane County Regional Park in 1966, which became the only public beach access, however, a public boat launch was also available on the north side of the Lake. Unfortunately, the water quality of Liberty Lake had begun to decline, with algae covering much of the lake. By the end of the 1960's, more resorts had closed and the Liberty Lake Park area was converted into a housing development. In 1991, the last resort on the Lake at Sandy Beach closed. Lodging today is primarily limited to the hotels located within the City limits.

The 1970's brought a surge in activity north of Sprague Avenue that would eventually be encompassed within the City of Liberty Lake. The large hill on the west side of the City, formerly known as Carlson Hill, became known as Holiday Hills, a ski and snowmobile recreation destination with a lodge and restaurant. Holiday Hills gave visitors more winter activity choices than just ice skating. An RV Park with an A-Frame office also offered camping in the summer at Holiday Hills. Over the years, the Holiday Hills site was used for equestrian activities, snowmobile and motocross racing, youth sports camps, and ice skating. Unfortunately, due to financial difficulties, Holiday Hills closed by the end of the decade.

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## City of Liberty Lake – Land Use Element

Recreation opportunities increased in 1973 with the development of the Valley View Golf Course east of Liberty Lake Road. At the time, it was the only mid-length executive course in the northwest. Housing choices also expanded in the 1960's and into the early 1980's with the development of the Liberty Lake Heights west of Molter Road.

The Liberty Lake Sewer & Water District was formed in the mid 1970's to help clean up the conditions of Liberty Lake. Construction of the new sewer system began in 1977 and the wastewater treatment facility east of Harvard Road was completed in 1982. By the early 1980's, commercial and industrial development had begun with the Hewlett-Packard facility on the east side of Molter Road.

The modern-day version of Liberty Lake began with developments from the Main Corporation and the Greenstone Corporation. The Homestead residential development was envisioned in the late 1970's and began in the mid 1980's. The streets within the Homestead development were named after early Liberty Lake families. Housing sales boomed in Liberty Lake in the mid 1990's with the creation of Meadowwood subdivision. Meadowwood Golf Course, the third golf course in Liberty Lake, Pavillion Park, and Liberty Lake Elementary School were also completed by the time that the City of Liberty Lake officially incorporated on August 31, 2001. With three golf courses in the City limits of Liberty Lake, the Liberty Lake area is now known as a premier golf course community.

**Figure X.3 (1960)**



**Figure X.4 (1980)**



**Figure X.5 (2025)**



## Incorporation

Liberty Lake experienced significant population growth in the 1990s and early 2000s. As the population increased, so did the demand for local services, infrastructure, and zoning control. Incorporation allowed the city to manage growth more effectively and establish its own planning and development regulations. In November of 2000, the residents of the Liberty Lake area voted in favor of incorporating. Liberty Lake officially became a city on August 31, 2001. Incorporation has fostered a sense of community identity, as well as increased access to services and revenue streams.

## Preserving Cultural and Historical Traditions

Cultural traditions were formed as far back as when the area was occupied by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe. Traditions were further developed during the time when Liberty Lake was known as "Spokane's Inland Seashore". There were Fourth of July Celebrations with fireworks over the lake, live music and dancing at the Pavillion, picnics, boating, and most of all, memories were being created. Although the original buildings no longer exist, the memories and traditions still live on. Families still visit Pavillion Park for picnics, birthdays, and other celebrations. Every year, Liberty Lake draws huge crowds for the annual Fourth of July celebration with a parade by the lake, and live music and dancing at Pavillion Park, which contains a replica of the original Pavillion for the next generation to enjoy. The musical traditions from years past still exist as the music echoes throughout the area. To conclude the festivities, fireworks are launched over the community.

Pavillion Park also contains two memorials dedicated to families that helped establish the Liberty Lake area. Other hints of the past can be seen at the grocery store building located northeast of the intersection of Liberty Lake Road and Country Vista Road, where lighted symbols representing the original tour boats decorate the building. In 2002, the City purchased the Valley View Golf Course, which is located at the center of the City on the corner of Country Vista and Liberty Lake Road. In the future, as the structures and landscape are remodeled, hopefully more symbols of the past can be incorporated, such as the original Herschell-Spillman Silver City carousel.

The Liberty Lake community has also developed new annual traditions that have become a part of Liberty Lake culture. Additional research into the history of the area might uncover more of the past, including the possible location of a fur trading post that was rumored to have been located here, other Native American traditions, etc.

Very few historical sites and structures remain within the City area. The old Holiday Hill winter recreation area, now known as Legacy Ridge, still had the pole barn, track, and the original lodge fireplace when the City incorporated. Unfortunately, the original lodge burned down in a fire in the early to mid-1980's.

The Rocky Hill housing development in the northeast corner of the City, on the north side of Mission Avenue, contains a home site that dates back to the 1940's, with a well house that dated back to the early 1900's. This home site had the oldest known existing structures within the City of Liberty Lake (prior to annexing the River District). The site is included as part of the Rocky Hill Park area and the Domrese barn is on the WA State Heritage Barn Registry. Unfortunately, the well house and farmhouse had to be demolished due to disrepair. More information on the Rocky Hill Farm - Domrese homesite is contained in the Washington State Heritage Barn Register Application 2007.

The River District portion of the City has an extensive cultural and agricultural history as well. Interpretive signage recognizing the cultural and agricultural history could be incorporated into the parks and greenways. The 100' wide Avista powerline easement provides an opportunity to connect the commercial center at Telido Station (named after the historic train station) to Orchard

Park and the Centennial Trail with a greenway. A community orchard is being developed within the greenway to provide a cultural connection to agricultural and orchard uses that historically dominated the River District site. The River District now contains the oldest-known existing structure; a single-family home that dates back to 1908 is located along Mission Ave.

## **Importance and Purpose of Protecting Cultural and Historical Resources**

While the majority of the early culture and history occurred around the Lake, the Liberty Lake community as a whole is continuing old cultural traditions, while developing new ones. As more development and re-development occurs, a record of cultural resources will be important as the City attempts to preserve the past while preparing for the future. Like wetlands and forests, historic properties and culturally significant traditions are a finite resource.

Once a historic or archaeological property is destroyed, it is lost forever. Many significant properties in and around Liberty Lake have already been redeveloped, making thoughtful preservation, replication, or interpretation essential. These resources reflect the city's unique identity and help distinguish it from other communities.

This plan may help to ensure that Liberty Lake's cultural and historical heritage is respected, protected, and integrated into the city's ongoing development. A large part of the greater Liberty Lake community's identity is derived from its heritage. From the Native Americans and early traders who first established their homes here to the subsequent newcomers from around the world, all have left their mark. Included in the City of Liberty Lake's definition of cultural or historical resources are buildings, structures, sites, associations, objects, landscapes, and traditions left behind by a group of people. While many historic resources are over 50 years old, newer sites and evolving traditions should also be recognized for their potential significance. Preserving this heritage is key to ensuring Liberty Lake remains a place rooted in history while looking toward the future.