Railtown 1897 State Historic Park
Jamestown, California

Capturing the heyday of a late 19th-early 20th century short-line railroad, Railtown's rolling stock and roundhouse remain in their original working condition. In 2014, Compass Planning was tasked with the challenge of helping California State Parks celebrate this remarkable facility, as well as the history of a Sierra foothills town, a railway, and California's rail industry. Rolling stock still serves as a magnet for train enthusiasts of all ages. Would the interpretive master plan identify ways to beckon other people and help them understand just how special Railtown is?

Kathy Syverson

From 2014-2015, Compass Planning worked closely with California State Parks, including staff of Railtown 1897 State Historic Park and the California State Railroad Museum to develop Railtown 1897 State Historic Park's interpretive master plan.

The planners spent time on-site, meeting with staff, studying historical and photographic archives, existing interpretive conditions, and visitor use patterns. Rising early, they met with volunteers working in the roundhouse, members of a corps of dedicated, highly skilled train engineers and mechanics who maintain and help preserve the equipment.

Compass planners also observed Railtown's interpretive programs, guided tours, and train rides. They worked with staff, stakeholders, and volunteers to lay the groundwork for the development of recommendations. At a second planning session, the team met again to review draft mission and vision statements and goals for interpretation. At the final planning session, they crafted a series of recommendations anchored by four interpretive goals.

At this time, The Acorn Group began developing two curriculum units based on the State of California's landmark Education and the Environment Initiative (EEI). Designed for fourth grade and fifth grade, these units are the first EEI-based materials ever produced by California State Parks. The Acorn Group worked closely with Compass to ensure seamless alignment of themes.