



Mirabeau Point

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Inland Northwest Land Trust is a flexible organization. It can work patiently with individuals who need to take time to explore options, scrutinize questions, and analyze concerns to protect natural open spaces. It can work quickly, when directives are clear and intent is established, to meet the needs of partners pressed with deadlines and rapidly closing windows of opportunity.

If not for this flexibility, Mirabeau Point, the 80-acre cultural and civic center in the Spokane Valley, might never have happened.

Mirabeau Point lies in the heart of the most populated area of the Spokane Valley. Basalt outcroppings and gravelly remains from the glacial age lie close to the rapidly flowing Spokane River. Like Stanley Park in Vancouver BC, it is a natural living landscape that both exemplifies and defines a dry eastern Washington landscape forested by ponderosa pines, native grasses, and shrubs lying along the banks of Spokane County's most important waterway.

The former long-time landowner, Inland Empire Paper Company, knew it had something special by any standard and always intended that Mirabeau Point would someday be publicly owned. But when the company wanted to dedicate the land for public benefit and recreation, local government was not ready to accept it.

"We needed an angel," said Sue Lani Madsen, a member of the Mirabeau Point board of directors. "For us, that was the Inland Northwest Land Trust."

INLT's ability to work with diverse partners proved invaluable. They worked quickly to accept title to the property. INLT held the property until Spokane County could assume control. The eventual transfer helped secure additional project funding from the state, which required public ownership before grants could be disbursed.

Now, Mirabeau Point continues its development plan under the new City of Spokane Valley. Walking and wheelchair trails throughout the property have been completed, offering visitors both easy and challenging venues for hiking, as well as rock climbing and the relaxing repose of the Point's signature waterfall.

"Kids can take the bus to Mirabeau and, within a few steps, be on an adventure hike in an area that feels totally remote," says Madsen.

Mirabeau Meadows Park, an open field for picnics, festivals, and more has been prepared. Centerplace, the Valley's civic center, is under construction and will include the Valley Senior Center, meeting and classroom space, as well as a 300-seat hall for recitals, performances, meetings and more.

All are important enhancements to the region's appealing quality of life and are representative of the kind of project for which INLT's skills and resources are ideally suited.

"I have no doubt Mirabeau will become the crown jewel of the Spokane Valley park system," says Madsen. "It wouldn't have happened without the Land Trust."