



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2023

The Museum Center
The Historic Sites
The Heritage Museum
The Collection & Archives

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Lakeshore Museum Center Mission, Vision, Core Values

Mission

To tell the story of Muskegon County by collecting, preserving, and interpreting the history of its people and natural environment.

Vision

We provide immersive experiences that reveal Muskegon County's identity, inviting guests to explore themselves and the world around them. Our history, science, and technology content is often developed in collaboration with community partners and always delivered by knowledgeable and personable staff and volunteers.

Core Values:

We are trustworthy through honesty, integrity, and ethical conduct.

We think big. Our vision for the future guides our day-to-day work.

We are caring, respectful, and inclusive.

We encourage creative, innovative problem-solving.

We possess the skills to get the job done professionally and value each other's contributions.

We strive to be leaders in the museum profession and the greater community.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Lakeshore Museum Center (LMC) was created by community for community and has been the central institution in the county charged with preserving history, objects, artifacts, and memories. The organization currently has three public sites.

1. The Museum Center, which has both permanent and changing exhibits, programs, workshops, and day camp experiences.
2. The Historic Sites, encompassing two Victorian houses with a shared horse barn, an 1875 replica Fire Barn, and an interactive Depression-Era house.
3. The Heritage Museum, that preserves and interprets Muskegon’s economic and industrial history.

In addition, the LMC also manages a separate Collections Center building which houses all of the 3D objects and an Archives Building that stores and protects the paper documents such as photographs and maps.

This Strategic Plan establishes clear goals to help determine by 2024 how the LMC will tackle large facilities issues such as a new home for the Collections and Archives, a funding plan for the Historic Sites and how we will update and change exhibits in the Museum Center. This plan also examines marketing measures and overall fund development. The plan was developed by a series of brainstorming meetings that involved the staff and Board of Trustees.

List of Acronyms

- HS = Historic Sites including Fire Barn and Scolnik House of the Depression Era
- LMC = The “main” museum building on 4th and Clay
- MHM = Muskegon Heritage Museum
- C&A = Collections and Archives
- DEV = Board Development Committee
- FAC = Board Facilities Committee
- FIN = Board Finance Committee
- COMENG = Board Community Engagement Committee
- MH = Melissa Horton, Executive Director
- ES = Erin Schmitz, Historic Sites Director
- JB = Jeff Bessinger, Collections and Exhibits Director
- KB = Kirk Bunke, Heritage Museum Site Manager
- CW = Chuck Ware, Buildings and Grounds Manager
- JH = Jackie Huss, Museum Experiences Director

Sustainability

LMC's collections and archives are stored in several buildings across the City of Muskegon, many of which are unsuitable for protecting and preserving our objects. In recent years, inadequate investment has been made in maintaining our historic sites and public structures. Ensuring the sustainability of LMC's collections, archives, and historic sites is a top priority for the next three years.

1. Develop a long-term plan to protect and preserve our historic sites, collections, and archives
 - a. Identify and document long-term needs
 - b. Evaluate current facilities' ability to meet long-term needs
 - c. Propose, approve, and begin execution of plan to upgrade current facilities or move to new facilities

GOAL: Develop a long-term plan to protect and preserve our historic sites, collections, and archives				
	OBJECTIVES	SITE	LEAD	SCHEDULE
a.	Exterior inspections and documentation	HS	ES	2021
b.	Continue Interior inspections and documentation	HS	ES	2021
c.	Create a prioritization list and cost analysis	HS	ES	2021
d.	Create a plan to fund identified priorities	HS	ES/MH/DEV	2021-2023
e.	Determine costs for windows	LMC	CW	2021
f.	Exterior inspections and documentation	LMC	CW	2021-2022
g.	Determine if expansion OR accessible front entrance changes are in best interest of institution - may be tied to Collections/Archives relocation	LMC/C&A	JB/MH/FAC/JH	2022
h.	Determine if we need to hire a consultant to assist us with expansion/accessibility question, identify associated costs	LMC/C&A	MH/FAC/JB/JH	2022
i.	Exterior inspections and documentation	MHM	KB/CW	2021
j.	Research cost of pouring floor in basement/tied to HVAC needs and concerns	MHM	KB	2021
k.	Evaluate climate control costs to upgrade	MHM	KB	2022

l.	Staff planning for future with fewer volunteers	MHM	KB	2023
m.	Address Collections Center roof leak	C&A	CW	2021
n.	Evaluate Collections and Archives to determine how much space we currently occupy and how much we need to add for growth – may require a consultant	C&A	JB	2021
o.	Museum Assessment Program (MAP)	C&A	JB	2022
p.	Actively begin to look for a new location or determine if we will expand next to LMC	C&A	MH, CW, JB, FAC	2022
q.	Staff plan for future relocation	C&A	ALL	2023-2024

Marketing

The LMC is now three separate public destinations under one parent organization. In the next three years, the museum needs to communicate to the many different audiences it serves and ensure that the public understands all that we have to offer. The LMC also needs to identify the “main” museum center with a stand-alone name to help eliminate confusion.

Marketing

1. Build awareness for each site
 - a. Establish metrics for all marketing activities to track efficacy
2. Rename “the main” building

GOAL: Build Awareness for each site				
	OBJECTIVES	SITE	LEAD	SCHEDULE
a.	Determine if Revel is still a good financial choice or should we hire and train an in-house marketing person	ALL	MH/JH	2021
b.	Establish baseline for marketing measurables	ALL	MH/JH/Revel	2022
c.	Upgrade to lighted signage at all sites	ALL	Revel	2022
d.	New branding and better marketing metrics rolled out		MH/JH/Revel	2023

GOAL: Rename “the Main” building				
	OBJECTIVES	SITE	LEAD	SCHEDULE
a.	Rename Main; consider gathering community feedback	ALL	ALL/COMENG/Revel	2021
b.	Explore and rename MHM to just HM	ALL	MH/KB/Revel	2021
c.	Plan for donor naming rights for Archives and Collections if we build new	ALL	MH/DEV	2023-2024

Exhibits and Programming

The exhibits at the LMC are all over 10 years old and need to be changed out or updated. Also, the temporary space is too small for most rentals, which decreases the museum’s ability to bring in exhibits that could benefit the community. A plan is needed to update/refresh current spaces. With the museum having 3 different sites that all have exhibits, a plan to prevent overlap also needs to be developed, and where overlap occurs a decision needs to be made for which site displays the topic. Furthermore, all exhibits need to be evaluated to make sure that the complete story is being told and we are not forgetting or deliberately leaving out a cultural group’s voice. Part of the three-year strategy needs to show a plan for increased hours of operation to meet the visitor needs.

Exhibits and Programming

1. Coordinate exhibits and programming across all sites to eliminate duplication
2. Ensure that our exhibits and programs are inclusive, reflecting the stories of all Muskegon County residents
3. Expand hours at all sites to accommodate year-round guests

GOAL: Exhibits and Programming				
	OBJECTIVES	SITE	LEAD	SCHEDULE
a.	Identify overlap and coordinate exhibits and programming	ALL	ES/JH/KB/JB	2021
b.	Investigate different models of operation for H. Sites to go year-round	HS	ES	2021
c.	Planning for increased hours in staff and budgeting to accommodate groups as demand increases	ALL	MH/ES/JH/KB	2023
d.	Community survey to determine if populations feel museum reflects them and is for them -could be combined with naming survey	ALL	MH/JH/Revel/COMENG	2022-2023
e.	Upgrade or change permanent exhibits	LMC	JB/Exhibits Committee	2023-2024

Fund Development

Long term fund development has not been a priority in recent years. LMC needs to identify strategies for procuring corporate and private funds to ensure that all goals included in this plan are successful.

Fund Development

1. Establish a fund development strategy to meet the needs of protecting and preserving our objects

GOAL: Establish a fund development strategy to meet needs of protecting and preserving our objects				
	OBJECTIVES	SITE	LEAD	SCHEDULE
a.	Develop a planning model for saving money for site specific projects	HS	ES/DEV	2021
b.	Create a plan for engaging more corporate sponsors	ALL	MH/DEV	2021
c.	Solicit sponsors for temporary exhibits	LMC	MH/DEV	2021-2023
d.	Motivate Board to take a bigger role in fund raising	ALL	MH/DEV	2021-2023
e.	Implement and look for seed money for Historic Sites	HS	ES/MH/DEV	2022
f.	Create a strategy for monetary growth at all sites	ALL	FIN/DEV/MH	2022-2023
g.	Staff and board training for fundraising	ALL	MH	2022
h.	Actively look for underwriting for programs and exhibits	LMC	DEV/MH	2021-2023
i.	Start fundraising for building improvement projects	ALL	DEV/MH	2023-2024

IMPLEMENTATION

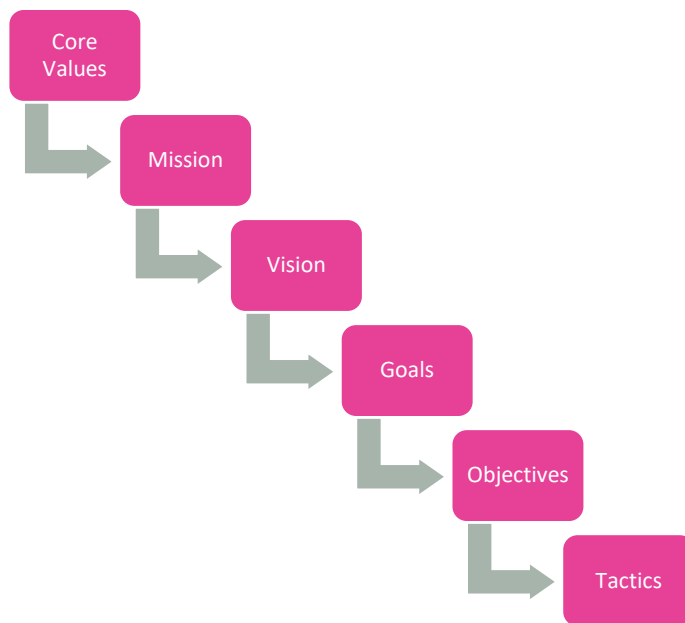
Plan implementation will be overseen by Executive Director, Melissa Horton, with progress against each objective tracked at regularly scheduled staff meetings. Kendra Consulting will participate in quarterly accountability sessions with staff throughout the first year to ensure staff continues to maintain focus on achieving the strategic goals.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS: By 2024	
1.1	The LMC will have a new name for the “Main”
1.2	The LMC will have a marketing strategy underway to better market the three sites as one institution
1.3	The LMC will have recommendations for the board to move or build a new home for the Collections and Archives
1.4	The LMC will have recommendations for how to ensure sustainability for Historic Sites
1.5	The LMC will have recommendations for how to create a more accessible and welcoming entrance for the Museum Center
1.6	The LMC will have a strategy in place for Fund Development

Strategic Planning Process Overview

In early 2021, Kendra Consulting was engaged to lead the Lakeshore Museum Center staff and Board of Trustees in developing the 2021 – 2023 Strategic Plan by working through the Strategic Planning Hierarchy of Steps using the SOAR model. SOAR is a strategic thinking and planning framework that focuses on strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. The goal of the SOAR model is to build trust and positive connections among planning participants, create innovations, fuel productivity, inspire action, and generate positive change.

Strategic Planning Hierarchy of Steps



The plan was created in three phases.

- Phase One: Envisioning. Staff created first drafts of core values, mission statement, and vision statement.
- Phase Two: Planning – Three Year Horizon. Staff and Board of Trustees reviewed core values, mission and vision statements, brainstormed organizational strengths and opportunities, and established strategic goals for 2021 – 2023.
- Phase Three: Planning – Objectives for 2021 – 2023. Staff identified specific objectives to be met each year to achieve the strategic goals by the end of 2023.

APPENDIX A

Organizational Strengths

Main Museum

1. Amazing staff with creative energy that go along with changes (programming, exhibits)
2. Location in Muskegon
3. Role as an education resource for school, parents and adults
4. Strong community partnerships (Pigeon Hill, Wonderland, other downtown cultural institutions ...)
5. Accessibility for families
6. Breadth of our collections
7. Program development evolving and adapting. Serving the broad community
8. Moxie the mascot
9. Institution of lifelong learning
10. Fill a few niches (history, science, children) under one roof
11. Our space (auditorium used by community)
12. Diversity of our exhibits (permanent and temporary try to attract various audiences)
13. Podcasts and virtual tours

Collections and Archives

14. Digital initiative (partnered with other organizations)
15. Professionally organized
16. Scope of our collection (photos, 3D items)
17. Collections department lets community know what is available; heart of everything we do; ongoing
18. Policies and procedures (model for other institutions)
19. Staff doing a good job of collecting things while they are happening
20. Staff doing well identifying holes in our collection
21. Resource for outside researchers and internal staff
22. Content to tell Muskegon's cultural history

Heritage Museum

23. Very immersive
24. Volunteer staff (knowledgeable and diverse)
25. Link between past and present for students
26. Very well known in the community
27. Good location in the community
28. Capture excitement for new exhibits and projects (generate community support)
29. Cruise ship visitors

Historic Site

30. Iconic for Muskegon
31. Able to capture an adult audience
32. Programs serve as a response to something or an experience desired
33. Great visitor amenity and tourism draw.
34. 90% tourism

35. Repeat visitors
36. Staff are the face of the museum and do a remarkable job with customer service
37. Training of staff
38. Most significant items for Muskegon's history
39. Significant architectural examples
40. Visitors get a feel for how people lived
41. Wealth of information is huge and research is ongoing
42. Museum store has items for all locations
43. Name recognition (Hackley House); brand recognition

APPENDIX B

Organizational Opportunities

Main Museum

1. Hackley Administration Building usage (County wide millage?)
2. Convention center opening nearby (push people to museum)
3. Expand hours to accommodate tourists, convention center attendees, families
4. Branding initiative; name of main building
5. Fund development (naming rights - buildings, rooms, exhibits)
6. Make building more accessible (physically and for various age levels)
7. Social media for promotion and exhibits
8. Evaluate current exhibits
9. To appeal to and attract larger populations downtown (tourists)
10. Addition to building
11. Evaluate suitability of the building
12. Programming to draw in all members of the county and reflect their stories
13. Adaptive reuse of building (collection and archive center)

Collections and Archives

14. Programming to draw in all members of the county and reflect their stories
15. Move items to safer locations closer to downtown
16. Share location for items with Silversides museum, art museum
17. better access to items and share the collection more openly
18. Reproducing artifacts for hands on use; 3D scans of artifacts to explore digitally
19. Expand online presence of collection
20. Emergency and disaster planning (collaborate with other museums?)

Heritage Museum

21. Industrial heritage is an emerging field
22. Expand on strong industrial partnerships
23. Marketing - awareness of all museum sites
24. Expand staff; volunteer management; programming coordination
25. Ticketing bundles
26. Exhibit timelines to prevent overlapping

27. Vacant lot behind building

Historic Site

28. Sustainability - funding and plan to preserve and restore buildings
29. Continue restoration; completion of projects; generate awareness and support
30. Continue to build programming
31. Take advantage of less seasonality (year-round schedule; open all year; open for special events)
32. Build on accessibility (physical, language ...)
33. Fill holes in our knowledge using MSU collection

APPENDIX C

Prioritized Opportunities – Highlighted

1. Sustainability - funding and plan to preserve and restore historic buildings
2. Branding initiative; name of main building
3. Move items to safer locations closer to downtown;
4. Evaluate current exhibits
5. Evaluate suitability of the building
6. Continue restoration; completion of projects; generate awareness and support
7. Expand staff; volunteer management; programming coordination
8. Marketing - awareness of all museum sites
9. Programming to draw in all members of the county and reflect their stories
10. Exhibit timelines to prevent overlapping
11. Hackley Administration Building usage (County wide millage?)
12. Emergency and disaster planning (collaborate with other museums?)
13. To appeal to and attract larger populations downtown (tourists)
14. Reproducing artifacts for hands on use; 3D scans of artifacts to explore digitally
15. Expand online presence of collection
16. Convention center opening nearby (push people to museum)
17. Expand hours to accommodate tourists, convention center attendees, families
18. Fund development (naming rights - buildings, rooms, exhibits)
19. Social media for promotion and exhibits
20. Expand on strong industrial partnerships
21. Take advantage of less seasonality (year-round schedule; open all year; open for special events)
22. Adaptive reuse of building (collection and archive center)
23. Programming to draw in all members of the county and reflect their stories
24. Make building more accessible (physically and for various age levels)
25. Addition to building
26. Share location for items with Silversides museum, art museum
27. better access to items and share the collection more openly
28. Fill holes in our knowledge using MSU collection
29. Fund development

These items received 1 or 0 votes

30. Industrial heritage is an emerging field
31. Ticketing bundles
32. Vacant lot behind building
33. Continue to build programming
34. Build on accessibility (physical, language ...)