



REOLDS
TRANSPORTATION
MUSEUM

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023

OVERVIEW

The Lansing area's automotive heritage continues to have a great impact on the region's social and economic outlook. If not for the birth of the mass manufacturing of cars and trucks that began in Lansing the world, but especially this city, would be an entirely different place. The RE Olds Transportation Museum strives to be at the forefront of understanding and interpretation of this long history by being a "pace-setting" museum of cultural and social relevance for the Lansing area, the region, the state, and the country.



MISSION

The RE Olds Transportation Museum preserves and promotes Lansing's automotive heritage, its lasting impact on the mid-Michigan community, and the American automotive industry.

The R.E. Olds Museum was incorporated in 1977 on the incentive of a study task force of the Greater Lansing Chamber of Commerce. After site selection and renovation, the Museum opened to the public on May 18, 1981 at its present location. The Museum rented its building from the City of Lansing until February 2018 when the city sold it to the museum for \$2.

Today, the museum houses an extensive collection of automobiles, engines, and other automotive materials significant to the transportation history of the region. The James D. Butt Archives contains hundreds of thousands of pieces of ephemera such as photographs, drawings, manuals, newsletters, and other records. The R.E. Olds Transportation Museum and the Bates and Edmonds Engine Company offices are resources within the Lansing Stewardship Community of Motor-Cities-National Heritage Area, an affiliate of the National Parks Service. Operations are funded primarily through the financial support of members and donors.





STRATEGIC PLAN

In the fall of 2022 a new Executive Director was hired and the Board of Trustees agreed to undertake a new three-year strategic plan. The services of long-experienced John Beck, a professor at Michigan State University, were enlisted as facilitator. Everyone (including all volunteers) were invited to be a part of the strategic planning committee.

Why Do Strategic Planning?

To focus the financial, cultural, social activities, and possibilities of the museum over the next three years (starting Fall 2023). To understand and improve stakeholder communication and engagement, current and future financials, increase efficiencies, and to generally improve operations with clear goals and priorities.

How Planning was Developed

After Mission Statement was developed and workshopped areas of Goals and Objectives were defined and data was collected via surveys: Membership (online questionnaire), Visitors (online questionnaire), and Volunteers (in-person). The areas then determined on which to focus going forward from this data were to include:

- Financial Goals
- Membership Goals
- Thematic Goals
- Visitor Experience Goals
- Visitor Goals
- Volunteer Goals

FINANCIAL GOALS

Long-term financial solvency by the museum's ability to produce a net positive bottom line, year after year.

Objectives/Strategies:

1. Review, understand, and if needed alter all expenses of the museum (cost management, building maintenance and improvements).
2. Review the membership renewal process and if required make changes.
3. Establish reserve accounts – rainy day fund and “revolving” fund that can be used for non-budgeted opportunities or unbudgeted expenses.
4. Increase the rental usage of the museum.
5. Understand and identify grant funding and foundation funding opportunities.
6. Resolve the issue of the “restricted” funds.
7. Museum inventory evaluation with an eye toward sales – conduct and inventory assessment and sell off agreed upon items.
8. Upgrade the museum's gift shop inventory.

MEMBERSHIP GOALS

Grow our membership by delivering an exceptional visitor experience. Also: Engagement and Relevance as goals.

Objectives/Strategies:

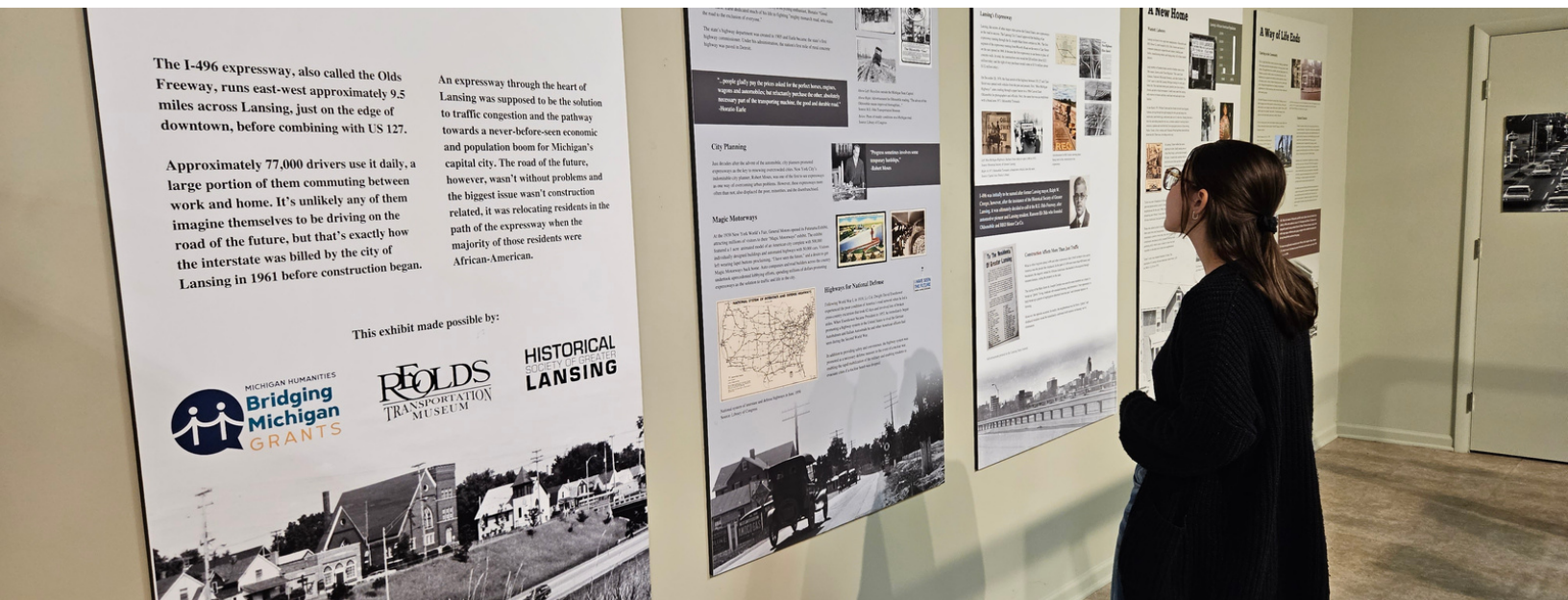
1. Understand both the current number of members, annual sales, and retention rate.
2. Evaluate the membership sales and retention process of the museum – is there a volunteer role?
3. Develop new membership markets with an eye toward diversifying the membership (age and race).
4. Evaluate membership categories and build a member value index (what does the member get at various levels).
5. Identify and grow the opportunities to connect the museum to various organizations within the community (GM, UAW, Convention and Visitors Bureau, Chamber, Youth groups, etc.).
6. Look for opportunities to work with other museums and organizations (State and Lansing Historical Societies - bundled memberships, 2 for 1 admission, etc).
7. Establish a marketing plan for the museum (grass roots, social media, etc.) to include:
 - Membership drive, 50 new members per year (or 100+ during life of plan).
 - Corporate memberships.
 - Tie donations (car shows, etc.) to memberships.
 - Partnerships for memberships.

THEMATIC GOALS

Increase visits, revenue, cultural relevance.

Objectives/Strategies:

1. Create exhibits that reflect community demographics and are engaging to the public.
2. Three-year plan: Paving the Way (I496 exhibit), Lansing and WWII, Durant, Curved Dash Olds, "Glory years of Oldsmobile".
3. Work on GM heritage (the plant, social, etc.).
4. Work on labor history.
5. Grants to help pay for exhibits.
6. Change "relational" space every year (as apposed to "foundational" exhibits which are not temporary).
7. Other aspirations: UAW-AFL (for Motor Wheel, which coincides with the 2027 anniversary of the Lansing Labor Holiday), 2024 is the 160th birthday of RE Olds, foster lecture series (with John Beck/Our Daily Work Our Daily Lives).



VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

Increase visits, revenue, cultural relevance.

Objectives/Strategies:

1. Create self-guided tour.
2. Exhibit interactivity.
3. Advertise new content.
4. Engage community groups by reflecting their diversity in exhibits.
5. Create program for docents.



VISITOR GOALS

Increase visitors.

General Objectives/Strategies:

1. Signature events.
2. Advertising/marketing/social media: Create online exhibits, publicize events and new exhibits. Create a communications plan.
3. Partnerships (civic orgs, business orgs, youth groups, church groups).
4. Educational organizations.
5. Other historical organizations.

Specific Visitor Goal 1: Accessibility:

- Website evaluation.
- "405" committee to review accessibility (year one), implementation of priorities by year three.
- Better/more strategically placed seating.
- Gather data on visitor experience. Find a volunteer to do this.

Specific Visitor Goal 2: Creating a better learning experience:

- Docent program.
- Self-guided tour handout/takeaway.
- Interactivity: Lots of ideas discussed, one already started (having to do with the CDO).
- Have a master interpretive plan (within three years).
- Create exhibits from museum collections to tell stories of interest. Tell stories of diverse content. Tell stories of lesser-known (but should be known) content.
- Online catalog for Archives: Create subcommittee to determine efficacy of an online/public facing catalog. To be considered: Space, Growth, Sustainability of physical archival collection.

Specific Visitor Goal 3: Return visitors

- Calendar of events.
- Programming (many ideas discussed, see Thematic Goals).

VOLUNTEER GOALS

Increase utilization of volunteers. Satisfy expectations and value.

General Objectives/Strategies:

1. Archives: See specific Visitor Goal #2. Make a collection development policy that works for the archives as well as the museum at large.
2. Cars: File for every vehicle and its mechanical history (which is ongoing and being done).
3. Facilities: Ongoing file for maintenance of buildings. Immediate need for conference room windows. Possibility of shed for tools, which could expand museum's interpretive footprint.
4. Docents: Establish docent program, work on guide for "stations," work toward a pool of 6-8 docents. Be conscious of demographics of docents.
5. Fund raising/grant writing: Advertise for a volunteer.
6. All volunteers:
 - Needed is a volunteer for technical issues.
 - Make master schedule for volunteers.
 - Develop goals for volunteer coordinator.
 - Transparency of directions for museum.
 - Suggestion box.
 - Recruitment—Look to new networks to recruit.
 - Revamped recognition system.





KEEP 'EM FIRING

In the world over today the manufacture of cars (and trucks and buses) is changing in ways not imagined just 10 years ago and is in another period of "changeover." The RE Olds Transportation Museum is uniquely positioned to educate, promote, and preserve an automotive heritage that is critical to the understanding the Lansing region's economic, social, and scientific past, present, and future, and its importance to the country and world. All those who participated in this strategic planning process hope that this plan guides future decisions for the museum and helps make those decisions "strategic."

The plan is a road map, but pleasant (or unpleasant) diversions and detours can happen. While the Board of Trustees, the Executive Committee, and the Executive Director are committed to executing the plan, we also realize that change outside the immediate line of vision can happen (and probably will). The plan is based on current data and the next strategic plan should gather its own data to understand the effectiveness of these 2023 objectives and goals.