



Sustainability Plan

June 2012

Executive Summary

In 2008, HSSM acquired the nearby Opendore (Isabel Howland House), also a contributing property to the Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District. Following research and recommendations from an Ad hoc committee, and a professional review of the Isabel Howland House (IHH) via a National Trust for Historic Preservation Grant in 2011, an application for a New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Environmental Protection Grant was successful in acquiring for HSSM a 50/50 matching grant in the amount of \$400,000 to restore/revitalize a portion of the IHH. This significant undertaking will allow us to:

- increase programming, exhibits, beyond our present one room
- have secure, climate-controlled storage for our historically significant collection
- preserve and rehabilitate a portion of a property considered as a significantly contributing building to the Historic District
- provide restrooms, running water, parking, handicapped accessibility
- enhance opportunities for tourism and economic development in the area.

A professional fund-raising consultant has helped us organize our capital campaign to support this EPF grant. The proposed project as approved by the Board of Directors, estimated at \$1,000,000 for construction and related costs, includes funding for project, development/construction, start up costs, and a reserve to support annual operations for the first few years under the new structure as follows:

- \$800,000 for removal and reconstruction of Opendore
- \$100,000 for start-up costs and furnishings
- \$100,000 as a reserve to support annual costs for the initial years of operation while HSSM develops new funding sources, builds an endowment, and solidifies plans for the future

HSSM has a nationally significant collection, one that deserves our protection—and one that we are obligated by law to preserve. In our relatively short existence, we have been blessed with committed supporters and special gifts. It is now our challenge to continue to move forward.

Organization

Historic

The Howland Stone Store Museum (HSSM) is a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 organization located at 2956 State Route 34B in Sherwood; our mailing address is PO Box 124, Aurora, New York 13026. The group received its permanent charter as a museum from the New York State Department of Education in 1996. Our current museum is a small cobblestone structure built in 1837 by Slocum Howland as a store. This building is on the National Register of Historic Places, both as a single listing, and as a contributing property to the Sherwood Equal Rights Historic District. Historically, HSSM has been an all-volunteer organization, governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees.

Vision Statement: *Share the historic contributions of Sherwood's past to inspire current and future generations.*

Mission Statement: *The Howland Stone Store Museum promotes an interest in, and appreciation of the cultural heritage of Southern Cayuga County, with particular interest in Sherwood and its environs, for the education and enjoyment of the public. To accomplish its purposes, the organization shall preserve and maintain (an) historic site(s) and structure(s), preserve and make available for study objects of material culture, and sponsor and encourage programs and exhibitions reflecting the scope of its nationally significant collections related to abolition, women's rights, and education.*

Future

With our current capital plan for the restoration and move to Opendore, we will move toward an organization with a mix of paid and volunteer staff. We will maintain our governance structure as a 501 (c) 3 as well as our vision and mission statements. Understanding the need to reexamine and evolve however we will initiate a 5 year review of our mission as well as put in place a 5-year planning cycle that will look at the issues defined in this document under marketing and strategy.

Product/Service and Strategic Planning

A 2009 SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis resulted in a list that has guided, in significant part, our plans. Looking at this list, we have built our future on our strengths, are using our grant and other resources to address our weaknesses and challenges as noted:

Strengths

- Collections (esp. Women's Rights and Howland papers collection)
- Reasonably secure structure in good repair (Howland Stone Store Museum)
- Architecture of building
- Working Board
- Diverse membership and financial support
- Historic district (UGRR designation, Women's Rights designation)
- Summer/fall programs

Weaknesses/Challenges

- Location of items in collection
- Parking and other amenities (coffee shop)
- Space (lack of) for exhibition and storage
- Need funds for security system
- Cosmetic improvement/needs in building
- Limited hours
- Uneven governmental support
Each of these is addressed, at least significantly in part, by our current grant and plans for development
- Rural location of Sherwood
- Need for publicity/PR
Our plans to partner with others will mitigate these issues
- Human and financial resources
- Better utilize former board members
We plan to address these among other issues with the hiring of an Executive

Opportunities

- Collaborate/coordinate with other museums on programming and programs
- Higher visibility re: UGRR and Women's Rights
- Sale of duplicate posters/books
- Signage/exhibit highlights (Heritage Trail specifically)
- Local colleges/students/professors
- Develop new audience(s)
- Increase internet/website presence
Each of these is included in our marketing approach

Threats

- Declining economy
- Continuity/turnover of board members
- Declining population
By expanding our focus in both partnerships and geographic reach and by looking to new audiences, these threats will be confronted.

As is the case with the SWOT, the HSSM Strategic Plan has informed all actions to date. The Strategic Plan is included here in its entirety in Appendix D. This is being pursued both through the Capital Campaign and programming plans. There are several significant themes woven throughout the strategic plan: the need to preserve, to insure security, to display appropriately the unique collection; the need to provide space for administration and meetings; the need to increase membership and attendance; the need to partner with other museums and organizations; the need for extended hours and more programming; the need to look to paid staff; the need to formalize budget and fiscal operations. Each of these areas is addressed in the project as noted under the Market and Financial Sustainability sections.

Market

Historic

Our stakeholders include: local residents, historians and researchers, educators and their students, especially Middle School through college; persons interested in Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and Women's Rights.

We have an annual brochure listing seasonal programming; it also includes a brief history, and a membership application. This is distributed by mailing with our May newsletter; via the County Tourism Office in Auburn, NY; by placement in motel/hotel lobbies, area museums, and other community areas as allowed. We also list this information on our website (www.howlandstonestore.org). Each of our special events is sent to local newspapers for listing on their community calendars. We have joined with other small museums to publish a brochure which promotes regional historic organizations. We have approximately 1000 visitors per year.

Future

Our stakeholder population remains our focus. However, we seek to attract a larger audience to view our exhibits, attend our programs, and learn about the significance of Sherwood and its residents in local, state and national history. How to accomplish this is the major part of our plan.

We recognize that paid staff is the beginning of any expansion plan. We also recognize that despite the fact that we have been in existence for a number of years, we are in essence in the start up phase of our organizational life cycle but with the need to move quickly (given the grant) to the next phase of our work/existence. Given this, we need to move aggressively with a staffing plan.

There are two related questions. First is to consider and decide on structure, particularly as it relates here to full time vs. part time. This staffing decision will guide a second set of deliberations as the Board looks to structure itself into oversight and working committees. This is important since the structure and responsibilities of the Board and its committees must be informed and affected by staffing plans. This will be accomplished by mid to late 2013. Once our structure is re-visioned, we will move to consideration of partnership and program specifics. This is in two parts as well. One is to continue and build upon our current programming. In this phase, we will consider how to increase programming, attendance and participation in the Stone Store Museum and its programs as currently structured. The second part is to look ahead and anticipate increased capacity once the Opendore restoration is complete. This exploration begins with partnership identification and continues with a look at new program initiatives. It will begin with current Board and volunteer staff and continue with paid staff.

Among the general explorations to be undertaken by the Executive and Board will be:

- Identify and market to new audiences
- Plan programming to attract a larger and more diverse audience
- Promote the museum programming, including development of a more sophisticated program brochure
- Plan more family-oriented activities and exhibits

- Increase attendance of/outreach to local students/school groups
- Promote the significance of items in our collection, particularly the Women's Rights posters. (This promotion has been restricted by security and display concerns previously)
- Increase our web presence so that a wider audience may know about our collection, and so that some items of our collection are available for long-distance viewing via the web
- Increase number of hours/days museum is open to the public
- Increase membership
- Use of our new Opendore meeting space and gardens for weddings, reunions and parties.

Among the specific explorations to be undertaken will be:

- Building upon partnerships with other museums and area attractions to create unique bus trips and self-guided tours. Among these will be partnership exploration with the Aurora Inn, MacKenzie-Childs, local wineries, the Auburn museums and other Southern Cayuga County rural museums, as well as the Women's Hall of Fame and National Historic Site in Seneca Falls, the Cayuga County Office of Tourism and the Office of Economic Development.
- Expanded visibility in the area schools as a means of attracting both students and their parents by modeling the Passport program partnership of the Auburn museums
- Exploring with the Aurora Inn use of Opendore as an alternative wedding, event site as a "budget" alternative for Aurora based events
- Use of social media to stimulate interest in the historic significance of the area
- Cooperation with the Town of Scipio in exploring local designation of Sherwood as an historic hamlet
- Development of a gift shop and exploration of how to manage, i.e. by contract or direct management by HSSM staff and volunteers. The shop will feature reproduction of posters and related offerings on exhibit in the new museum space.
- Investigation of introduction of admissions fee or free will contribution
- Research including survey of current patrons and discussions with area museums and partners on expanded hours.
- Defining connections with Wells College and Cayuga Community College, Cornell University, Ithaca College, Syracuse University to create internships, social entrepreneurial, and service learning opportunities as a way to increase visibility, develop volunteers, and create programming.

Financial Sustainability

Appendix E includes a list of significant grants and other funding sources from the past several years. Appendix F contains our budget projections based on part time staffing. Of note in these documents is a history of funding success. On an all volunteer basis, HSSM has raised over

\$80,000 for special projects since 2006, not of course including the current grants. This history of revenue generation is testament to the ability, dedication and perseverance of a group of hard working volunteers and is recommendation for continued success.

We will continue to seek grant support building upon our previous success and include a modest \$5,000 per year in grant generated funds, increasing to \$ 10,000 by 2015. In addition and key to our success is a strategy that will focus on building membership interest, numbers and contributions through our capital campaign and increased programming. Historically, approximately \$50 per member has been received in annual memberships and special and memorial gifts. We do not seek to increase this average in the initial period but rather to increase the number of members from our current 100+ to 350 by 2015. This will be accomplished partly through the capital campaign itself which has as one of its goals to increase visibility and support and partly through the increase in visibility through partnerships, programming and the other activities identified in the marketing section above.

In addition, we expect by 2015 to raise \$ 10,000 through special event fundraising. This is based on the amounts generated in the area by groups such as the Aurora Free Library and its several fund raising events and other not for profits. This will be made possible by the creation of event space in the Opendore facility

Finally, we look to raise \$ 15,000 by 2015 through operations, including our gift shop, admissions, and event rentals. This is based on an increase of the current 1,000 visitors/year to 3,000—5,000 visitors/year and will be realized through our plan of partnering, increased programming, and expanded visibility in the area and beyond.

This still leaves us with a modest need to raise an additional few thousand from undesignated sources but allows us several years for planning. As part of the fiscal plan, a reevaluation of financial operations is underway. A new budget and accounting oversight system is in development and a Board Finance Committee has been appointed.

Appendices

Available on request or on the HSSM website: www.HowlandStoneStore.org

- A Constitution and By-Laws
- B Current Board of Directors
- C Collections Management Policy
- D Strategic Plan
- E Listing of Grants/funding sources