

# **Long Range Plan**

**(Approved)**

**The  
Hubbard Museum  
of the  
American West  
2007-2011**

**June 20, 2006**

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*“Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency.”*

Daniel Hudson Burnham, architect, 1910

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## **Executive Summary**

Long range plans, unto themselves, have no value whatsoever: the actions that follow the document determine its success or failure. The ostensible purpose of such a document is to guide operations over a period of time. In this case, however, the plan provides the philosophical underpinnings for decision-making processes; it reviews the context of present circumstances; it provides a definitive list of goals and challenges facing the Museum; and it presents a strategic methodology for actions that will allow the museum to thrive and grow into the future.

The Hubbard Museum of the American West is a dynamic institution with a unique history of expansion and contraction over a short period of just sixteen years. While change is constant, it has to be managed if it is to result in growth. This document serves as a vehicle for those entrusted with the management and care of the institution to meet challenges creatively and constructively, while ensuring that professional demands are met. It is neither so specific as to be impracticable should outside conditions change dramatically, nor is it so general as to be open to diametrically opposed interpretations. It provides a direction, a map, and a guide, that when taken as a whole, can be easily followed. Its *gestalt* is its strength: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It is a flexible document, designed to be periodically reviewed by the governing authority to chart progress as well as to make course corrections as needed.

Over the next five years, new opportunities will present themselves and new challenges will emerge but if the basic outline of this document is followed, the Museum will have the tools, staffing, and experience it needs to move forward from a solid base of fiscal stability and an institutional culture that breeds success.

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## I. Process

On August 30, 2005, ownership of the Hubbard Museum of the American West was transferred from Ruidoso Downs Racing, Inc., to the City of Ruidoso Downs. The transfer required numerous changes at the Museum: a restructuring of staff, the creation of an Advisory Board of Directors, and the implementation of new purchasing processes designed to conform to the state procurement code. Museum employees became City of Ruidoso Downs employees, and a new Museum Director was hired in October of 2005.

The change in ownership, the hiring of a new director, and the mixed public response to the change in ownership created an opportunity to review master planning efforts for the Museum. Most of the existing Museum planning documents were dated from 1997-2000, and many of the initiatives had been completed or discontinued in the years following the departure of former Museum Director Bruce Elldredge in 2001. Many of the present staff members were unaware of a long range or strategic plan, while others felt that it was an outdated document.

Following discussions with former Hubbard Museum Board Members, city staff, city council members, and Museum staff, it was determined that January 2006 would be an appropriate time to launch a new planning process.

Museum staff formed a committee of three to guide the process: Jay Smith., Museum Director; David Mandel, Curator of Exhibits; and Coda Omness, Curator of Education. The committee felt that that the process needed to be open to the public as well as to Museum insiders and public officials, in order to provide area residents an opportunity to voice concerns as well as to share their insights about the present and future of the Museum. Therefore, the following process was adopted:

1. Benchmarking – collecting information from other, similar museums in size and scope, in the area and around the nation
2. Public Meetings – Three (3) were held at the Museum in February
3. Stakeholder Meetings – Three (3) were held at the Museum in February and March with a variety of community leaders from around Lincoln Co.
4. Volunteer Meetings – Two (2) were held in March
5. Advisory Board – Planning issues were brought to the Advisory Board for discussion at two (2) meetings
6. Staff Meetings – Ten (10) were held with all staff invited to attend
7. City Officials – One (1) meeting was held with key City staff members
8. City Council – Four (4) private meetings were held with four out of five of the members of the Ruidoso Downs City Council
9. Survey – a survey was sent to all Museum members

Drafts of the document are being presented to staff, Advisory Board, and City Council members for discussion prior to public discussion at the Ruidoso Downs City Council Meeting on Monday, June 26, 2006.

## **II. History of Institution**

The Hubbard Museum was founded in 1989 as a Texas not-for-profit corporation by R.D. and Joan Dale Hubbard to provide a venue for the display of their extensive personal collection of art works. Shortly thereafter, the Hubbards were approached by Anne C. Stradling about displaying her personal collection of art, artifacts and materials related to the horse then on exhibit at the Stradling Museum in Patagonia, Arizona. An agreement was quickly reached, and the Hubbards joined the two collections to create the Museum of the Horse in 1992.

The site selected for the Museum was a former convention center that was retrofitted and expanded between 1990 and 1992 for the Museum opening. Located just ½ mile from the Ruidoso Downs Race Track, the Museum attracted nearly 25,000 visitors within its first two years of operation. In 1995, the Museum became the host of the annual Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium, which attracts more than 20,000 people to the three-day event every October.

The Museum enjoyed a great deal of initial success, owing to numerous activities that drew new visitation as well as support for the Museum. In 1990 and 1991, the Hubbard family brought national attention to the facility by offering the prestigious Hubbard Art Award for Excellence, including the issuance of a \$250,000 prize for the winning entry. In 1995, the Hubbard family commissioned internationally known artist Dave McGary to create one of the largest equine sculptures in the United States. “Free Spirits at Noisy Water” became a signature piece for the Museum with visitors traveling from around the nation to visit the monument to the American horse. Museum attendance doubled following the opening of the monument growing to over 55,000 per year in 1998 and 1999. In 1995, the Museum brought a display of Russian Equine Art to the Museum through a partnership with the Russian State Agricultural Museum. In addition, 1997 saw the opening of the Billy the Kid National Scenic Byway Center with the Museum collaborating with the Village of Ruidoso to operate the Center located on Museum grounds.

In 1997 and 1998, the Museum developed a comprehensive Long Range Plan for the facility that included a massive expansion of operations. It also included a commitment to change the name of the institution from “Museum of the Horse” to the “Hubbard Museum of the American West” to recognize the broad scope of the collections, exhibits and programming then in place. In 1999, the Museum opened the Ruidoso Downs Race Horse Hall of Fame in a gallery space at the Hubbard Museum, and in 1999, at the request of the Lincoln County Heritage Trust, it accepted the operational responsibility and ownership of Historic Lincoln and its association with the story of Billy the Kid. This expansion brought a total visitation of 130,000 to Hubbard Museum operations in 1999.

In 2000, the Hubbard Museum of the American West became the first New Mexico museum to be designated as an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution. One of the key projects of the affiliation was the development of a major show by artist Gordon Snidow that attracted more than 245,000 visitors to the Smithsonian Castle in Washington, DC in 2002.

In the spring of 2005, the Hubbard family and the City of Ruidoso Downs began negotiations for the transfer of the Hubbard Museum of the American West to the City of Ruidoso Downs. That agreement was completed on August 30, 2005. The Village of Ruidoso now operates the Billy the Kid Scenic Byway Center. The Race Horse Hall of Fame was relocated to the Ruidoso Downs Race Track, and Historic Lincoln was transferred to the State of New Mexico in January 2006.

The Hubbard Museum of the American West is now working on the development of several new initiatives including the development of children's interactive area, new exhibits, and programming related to the interpretation of the American West.

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### **III. Introduction to the Long Range Plan**

The long range planning discussions that took place over a five-month period from January through May 2006 revealed several key challenges for the Museum:

- A. To develop Hubbard Museum funding and revenue sources for the purpose of becoming a self-supporting institution, and a nationally recognized destination for heritage tourism.
- B. To build a national audience for the Hubbard Museum of the American West through strategic national marketing, collaboration with area attractions and tourism promoters, and a program of unique activities designed to encourage repeat visitation.
- C. To maintain and grow our relationship with our present and past supporters, philanthropists, and members in order to ensure that the legacy of the Hubbard family and their gift of the Hubbard Museum is properly maintained for generations to come.
- D. To expand Hubbard Museum operations, personnel, and facilities in a cohesive fashion while continuing to improve the quality of exhibits, programs, and public events.
- E. To develop a recognizable and iconic brand and image for the Museum that the public clearly responds to and identifies with.
- F. To attain accreditation from the American Association of Museums.

Our discussion of the challenges the Museum faced also led us to the recognition that a new mission and vision statement would be needed to guide museum operations. We included an exercise in benchmarking with other institutions, and consulting with the American Association of Museums and American Association for State and Local History standards for mission and vision statements. Additionally, the statements were reviewed by the City Council and Advisory Board prior to the completion of the long range plan.

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Hubbard Museum of the American West is to collect, preserve and interpret the political, social, business, cultural, and environmental history of the American West from the period of human habitation to the present day, with special emphasis on the local and regional arts, history and culture. The Hubbard Museum will be a collaborative institution that provides exemplary public service for our patrons. Hubbard Museum programming, exhibits, and special events will seek to empower audiences to engage in a dialogue about the legacy of the American West and its continuing impact on American society.

## **Vision Statement**

Residents of the Ruidoso Valley area view the Hubbard Museum of the American West as a public asset and as one of the finest museums in the State of New Mexico.

The Hubbard Museum of the American West, as a Smithsonian Affiliate, is a premier destination attraction for nationwide travelers. It provides excellent public service while promoting the tourism market in the American Southwest.

The Hubbard Museum of the American West is a dynamic institution and a collaborative facility that promotes a greater awareness of the historical and cultural contributions of area residents, past and present, to the legacy of the American West.

The Hubbard Museum of the American West is a model of cooperative stewardship within a municipal organization, and serves as a model for similar museum facilities around the nation.

## **IV. Core Values**

Museum consultants from around the nation concur that in museums that have experienced massive changes, it is usually the best practice to identify core values and institutional priorities to ensure that Museum staff and the governing authority share a commonality in their approach to daily operations. It is good practice for staff as well in that individuals are required to confront deeper topics than they are typically asked to in the course of daily operations – and they often find shared characteristics and beliefs that they did not know they had.

### **The Value of Education**

We respect and value educational opportunities for all ages and ethnicities, and will strive to provide exhibits, programs, and special events that appeal to a diverse audience. We believe that a scholarly approach to the various disciplines addressed at the Hubbard Museum of the American West allow us to provide a broad and dynamic tapestry for understanding and appreciating the legacy of the past.

### **Pursuit of Excellence**

We will endeavor to maintain the highest standards of quality in all pursuits. The quality of the work produced at the Hubbard Museum of the American West is the standard on which our value to the public is judged, and it is the standard on which we develop our priorities and measure our effectiveness.

### **Teamwork**

We believe that a collaborative approach to developing public programs, exhibits, and special events is the best means for achieving the highest quality in public service. The management trusts its staff to respect and empower each other in order to attain the highest possible quality in all public services. We believe in the value of working with other museums and educational institutions in order to broaden our perspectives and expand our capacity to serve the public.

### **Integrity**

We believe that our integrity is the cornerstone that we build on with all relationships within the organization, with other institutions, and with the public.

### **The Value of Historic Preservation**

We are committed to preserving the legacy of the past so that future generations may understand and value both the natural and built environments. This belief requires all Hubbard Museum of the American West personnel and volunteers to act as informed stewards of the collections, and advocates for historic sites and structures that are deemed important examples of our collective past on behalf of the public.

## **V. Institutional Priorities**

### **Benchmarking & Evaluation**

We want the Hubbard Museum of the American West to be regarded as one of the premier institutions in the Western United States and to serve as a model for similar institutions. To achieve this goal, the Hubbard Museum staff will develop measurable outcomes and goals for each department, while surveying visitors on a regular basis to assure that the desired outcomes are being achieved. Additionally, Hubbard Museum staff will regularly monitor professional associations and communicate with similar attractions to make certain that the Museum utilizes the best professional practices in its operation.

### **Outstanding Collections**

We believe that outstanding collections are the bedrock on which historical museums are built. Hubbard Museum staff will strive to create relationships with the public that allows us to acquire superior examples of our material past through a planned collecting program.

### **Serving a Diverse Audience**

We wish to be an institution that welcomes all people regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or political beliefs, and to provide facilities for those with special needs.

### **Innovative Educational Programs**

We wish to serve audiences of all ages with superior programming that reflect proven academic scholarship, using the best teaching methods and resources available. We will use our collective staff expertise in providing enlightening and entertaining fare at all Hubbard Museum programs, exhibits and special events.

### **Broadening Our Base of Financial Support**

We are committed to providing necessary funding for public projects and outreach activities by developing short and long range funding programs and plans that address the present and future revenue needs of the Museum operation. We will build on current revenue streams, as well as seek new and alternative revenue sources to ensure an ongoing and solid base of financial support.

### **Building Effective Partnerships**

The Hubbard Museum of the American West is a museum that seeks creative collaborations within the community, the state, and the nation to develop its audience and its base of support.

**Developing Staff Knowledge & Professional Expertise**

People are the most valuable asset in any organization and we are committed to providing continuing education activities for staff, our volunteers, and our governing authority. This commitment ensures that the Hubbard Museum staff is well versed in the most current trends in professional museum practice.

**Providing Useful Public Services**

We will ensure that we provide useful public services for our audience and community through maintaining close relations with the public, and by conducting an evaluation of all outreach activities and management practices. The governing authority will periodically require a review the mission and update of the long-range plan for the museum.

**Responsible Stewardship of Assets**

We will endeavor to care for Hubbard Museum and City of Ruidoso Downs assets by closely monitoring the conditions of our physical structures and collections, while conducting exemplary volunteer and staff development programs.

**Planning**

We are committed to planning all facets of the operation, as well as the physical preservation of the museum site, in collaboration with officials from the City of Ruidoso Downs, in order to develop the reputation of the Hubbard Museum of the American West as one of the premier museums in the nation dedicated to preserving and interpreting the history of the American West.

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## VI. Goals and Tasks

The Museum's Core Values and Institutional Priorities drive the following actions herein represented as the **Goals** and **Tasks** of the organization.

### VI. A Fiscal Operations

The Hubbard Museum of the American West is currently supported through five (5) primary funding mechanisms:

1. Admission fees & Gift Shop revenue
2. Earned Income: Program fees, membership, etc.
3. Fundraising: Including fundraising events, donations, and grants
4. Restricted Funds: Includes a \$1.5 million dollar donation from the Hubbard family in 2005
5. City of Ruidoso Downs support through the general fund

While it appears that there is a diverse source of funds available to the Museum for operations, unfortunately, the long-term outlook is not as stable as it should be. At present, there is no endowment in place, though it is hoped that the Museum may create one from the remainder of the unspent Hubbard donation at some point in the future.

The two key concerns for the Museum are long term financial stability and the elimination of the need for funding from the City of Ruidoso Downs general fund. These concerns will need to be addressed immediately, but the Museum should not assume that additional annual fundraising alone will solve the long-term issues. Therefore, a comprehensive fundraising and development strategy that includes the creation of new and sustainable revenue sources will have to take place if the vast majority of plans and goals advocated within the remainder of this document are to be pursued.

At present (June 2006) there is an effort to create a separate foundation for the Museum with the purpose of fundraising for Museum operations and special projects. The proposed Hubbard Museum Foundation is being developed ostensibly for the purpose of carrying on traditional Hubbard Museum fundraising activities such as the car raffle that takes place each July, but also to answer potential donor concerns about giving funds to a city entity. The proposed foundation will be a tremendous asset to the Museum, and may help to develop annual operational funds, funding for special projects, capital campaigns, and the future development of an endowment.

In order to ensure the orderly development of the Museum, as well as to place the Museum on a solid fiscal base, Museum management should adopt a comprehensive economic development strategy that builds on present revenue capacity and develops new sources.

**Goal 1: Increase attendance to at least 50,000 paid admissions on an annual basis by 2011**

The most profitable visitors (aside from those that attend fundraising events) are those who pay an admission fee and spend money in the gift shop, as opposed to facility rentals that require major additional services. Facility rentals are important to any Museum, but these should be kept to minimum so as not to disrupt regular operations or serve as too great a distraction to professional staff. More concentration should be given to basic day-to-day visitor services in order to enhance this primary means of revenue generation. This means that Museum staff must concentrate more on exhibits, programs, and public outreach activity than facility rentals – with the exception, of course, of the Annual Fundraiser and other events we are contractually obligated to provide.

**Tasks:**

- A. Develop a unique program of exhibits, programs and outreach activities
- B. Create a program of special events and fundraising events that focuses attention on museum related needs and special projects
- C. Create a marketing strategy that reaches out to the target demographic during the tourist season and serves local community appropriately in the off-season

**Goal 2: Increase gift shop sales in proportion to increases in attendance**

An increase in visitation should mean a concurrent increase in gift shop revenues as well.

**Tasks:**

- A. Create a gift shop purchasing strategy that provides for products related to special exhibits and ongoing programs of activity.
- B. Ensure that products in the shop relate to the mission of the Museum
- C. Survey shoppers periodically to assess their needs
- D. Become more active in the Museum Store Association
- E. Retain a sales ratio of \$4.00+ for each paid admission
- F. Execute an annual sales strategy related to Museum activities

**Goal 3: Increase Earned Income Opportunities**

Earned income is often the best way to increase the bottom line in the area of revenue, but the real issue is one of profitability. Each program offering should at least break-even, and membership revenues should substantially exceed the cost of incentives.

**Tasks:**

- A. Create a Business Plan for Museum that addresses:
  - 1. Educational Program Costs
  - 2. Blockbuster exhibit program
  - 3. Membership Program
  - 4. Potential new opportunities and untapped markets
  - 5.

- B. Require all staff involved with Public Outreach to create budgets for each activity
- C. Create an annual program of activities and events by July for the following calendar year with financial goals associated with each initiative

#### **Goal 4: Diversify and Increase Fundraising Effort**

Fundraising is both an art and a science, and successful facilities have both a plan and built-in flexibility to respond to opportunities that often appear (and disappear) quickly. The challenge before the Hubbard Museum is that it must find a way to embrace its past style of fundraising while creating new opportunities and forging a new identity. The proposed museum foundation will be of great assistance in this area, and every effort should be made to embrace traditional activities like CARD Golf, the Annual Fundraiser (car raffle), and other activities. It is essential for the Museum to maintain its ties with the Hubbard family and other influential people who live in or frequent the Ruidoso Valley area. Further, it is vitally important that Museum staff working in Development collaborate with members of the Ladies Auxiliary, the fund raising arm of the former Board of Directors. The Auxiliary hosts a Table Creation Luncheon, Golf Tournament, and plans the Annual Fundraiser.

It is important to remember that museums cannot embark on major capital improvement projects without first being certain that they have a legitimate opportunity to succeed. It seems clear that so long as the Ruidoso Valley retains its reputation as a popular resort community, the Hubbard Museum has an opportunity to increase its market share. With infrastructure growth and improvements, the Museum may be able to draw as many as 100,000 to 150,000 visitors per year. That level of capital improvement project, however, should not be contemplated until support and attendance are both appreciably increased.

Current exhibits and partnerships, such as the *Western Artists of America Annual Exhibit and Sale*, have the potential to be greater revenue generator for the Museum should the facility grow the stature of the event through marketing. Blockbuster exhibits, like “A T-Rex Named Sue” could also provide opportunities to generate additional revenues, especially if sponsors can be located. High-end western art exhibitions should also be pursued, and partnerships with institutions like the Gilcrease Museum in Oklahoma could be important for the development of the Hubbard Museum’s reputation for displaying quality western art.

##### **Tasks:**

- A. Work closely with the Hubbard Museum Foundation to maintain traditional fundraising activities and to develop new efforts
- B. Develop a program of “blockbuster” exhibits every 3-4 years
- C. Hire a Development Officer

- D. Develop a corporate outreach program for sponsorship purposes
- E. Increase grant writing effort focusing a on projects and infrastructure
- F. Create an annual giving and a planned giving program
- G. Reach out to nationwide foundations interested in the history, art and culture of the American West

### **Goal 5: Develop an Endowment for the Hubbard Museum**

For many museums, an endowment is an important means to ensure survival during difficult economic times. At present, the Hubbard Museum does not have an endowment in the traditional sense; the funds donated by the Hubbard family in 2005 amounted to \$1.5 million with an understanding that those funds could be used to support operations at \$150,000 per year over a ten-year period. If indeed the Museum could reduce its need for using both general fund (City tax) support and the Hubbard donation, the remainder of those funds could form the basis of an initial donation toward an endowment.

It is also important for Museum supporters to recognize how much money an endowment should retain before providing an ongoing support mechanism. The general rule of thumb is that Museum endowments should be kept in perpetuity and grown as much as possible. When a Museum decides to use its endowment for ongoing operational purposes, it is suggested that the Museum should not expect to realize any more than 4.5% to 5% of the principle earnings. In other words, a \$1 million dollar endowment may provide \$50,000 in annual support – but quite often this level of expected support does not allow for growth outside of continued donations to the principle. Thus for a facility with an annual budget of approximately \$1 million, a \$1 million dollar endowment is much better than no endowment, but it is generally not going to make a dramatic difference in a major economic downturn, especially if the endowment funds are invested in the stock market. That is what often makes endowment drives (by themselves) so difficult – it takes a larger endowment to provide an economic cushion than most people realize. Endowments solicitations are often attached to major capital campaigns in order to demonstrate how the new expenditure will be paid for in the future. The National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant program is one that provides a match for endowment contributions, especially for major educational projects.

#### **Tasks:**

- A. Create a plan which creates a \$10 million dollar endowment for the Museum by the year 2016
- B. Work with the Hubbard Museum Foundation to ensure that an annual contribution is made to the endowment fund
- C. Develop a “Usage Policy” and “Investment Strategy” for the endowment fund

## **Goal 6: Eliminate the reliance on City of Ruidoso Downs general funds for Museum Operations**

Ultimately, one of the key goals of any municipally operated Museum must be to reduce or eliminate the need for tax revenues to support operations. This goal should not be seen as a means for the City of Ruidoso Downs to “abandon” the Museum, but it should provide an opportunity for the City to invest in capital needs and special projects while reducing taxpayer burden during slower or depressed economic times.

**It should be further noted that part of the process of removing the need for City of Ruidoso Downs tax funding will be in staff budgeting. Planning and budgeting will be a greater part of the responsibility for Department heads in the future, and it should be emphasized that planning and budgeting early will save the Museum, and the City, tens of thousands of dollars per year. Ten thousand dollars in savings represents approximately 1,667 paid admissions that would have to be made up otherwise.**

Tasks:

- A. Successfully implement a comprehensive economic strategy for Museum operations as described in Long Range Plan
- B. Ensure that economic growth is sustainable in all forms
- C. Revisit economic strategy on an annual basis to ensure that conditions have not changed so dramatically as to obviate any prior suppositions

**It will be important for Museum and City officials to keep in mind that in light of the controversy surrounding the transfer of the Museum to municipal ownership, Museum and City staff members are going to have to build a level of trust with potential donors, past supporters, and others. While the Museum has a “track record” per se, there has been enough change in leadership that the “new” leaders are going to have to prove their capability to all concerned. It may be important to undertake smaller projects and demonstrate clear successes early on to develop a positive image amongst the potential and present constituents before embarking on major capital efforts.**

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## **VI. B Human Resources**

Human resources are the most important resources any Museum has. People make the exhibits come to life, the programs buzz with excitement, and keep the restrooms clean. Like other industries, museums create a product that is sold to the public, but Museums are more related to the service or tourism industries as they provide public services. Museums should be prepared to spend at least 50% of the operational budget on staffing, with some funds dedicated to the volunteer program. The Hubbard Museum is now at the end of a transition process that has seen a great deal of staff upheaval and change that required a great deal of patience and perseverance for everyone associated with the Museum. In 1995, attendance at the Hubbard Museum of the American West increased dramatically owing to special projects and the introduction of “Free Spirits at Noisy Water” monument by artist Dave McGary. Attendance grew from the mid-20,000 mark to the mid-50,000 mark by the end of the decade. Additionally, the Museum took on new responsibilities in 1997 with the addition of the Billy the Kid Visitor Center in 1997, and Historic Lincoln in 1999. The addition of the new venues and the growth in attendance at the main museum facility brought attendance to a high of 130,000 by 2001.

The significance of a 600% growth in attendance over the period from 1995-2001 is important for it represents an incredible amount of additional responsibilities and planning for staff, who were undoubtedly jolted by the significant change in operations. The incredible growth, and subsequent restructuring of staff responsibilities, is magnified when coupled with the actions taken in 2005-2006 that resulted in a major downsizing of staff and the relocation of managerial responsibilities for Historic Lincoln and the BTK Center to other entities.

In a ten-year period, attendance went from 25,000 annually, to 130,000 and back to 22,000. That level of change is nearly impossible to manage effectively, and it is no small wonder that the institutional culture, fiscal expectations, and staffing responsibilities are rather disjointed at the present time.

The resulting strain on human resources remains palpable, even more so due to the fact that there was significant turnover among employees – especially those in leadership positions with professional museum training. Coupled with employee turnover, the lack of professionally trained leadership from the Museum field led to a “juggling” of responsibilities, which at the time was both necessary and appropriate to ensure that the work was accomplished, but created an institutional culture that was often driven by conflict rather than cooperation. For instance, an outgrowth of the preceding era was a division between “upstairs” and “downstairs” employees that is marked by contentious relations. To the credit of all employees, most visitors do not perceive the division, as most staff conduct themselves in a publicly professional manner.

The point of the above discussion is neither to cast blame nor to suggest that past management erred in some way – the level of change in personnel and professional

expectations was such that it would be difficult for any business to navigate these turbulent waters. Present Museum staff, however, is affected by the subsequent “hangover” from past changes, and the prospect of more change on the horizon.

Therefore, one of the key goals for the Museum has to be stabilization and smart growth regarding the number of staff as well as how they are positioned within the organization. Creating a stable atmosphere that rewards performance and nurtures professional growth is going to be an important key to the development of the Museum.

### **Goal 1: Stabilize working environment within the Museum**

Tasks:

- A. Develop a “Team” Culture
  - 1. Provide individualized professional training
  - 2. Provide “teambuilding” training and exercises
  - 3. Work to ensure that group activities, professional and social, are provided
  - 4. Ensure that events and activities that require cross-departmental cooperation are well-planned to ensure efficiency for all
- B. Develop Competitive Compensatory packages for all personnel
  - 1. Ensure that performance is rewarded
  - 2. Perform compensation studies for Museum positions in the Southwest
  - 3. Ensure that all personnel are well informed about compensation practices within the City as spelled out in the Personnel Policy Manual
- C. Review and Revise Job Descriptions annually as per the Personnel Policy Manual
- D. Develop annual individual performance goals and measures
- E. Ensure that all employees are well versed regarding the goals and plans for the Museum

### **Goal 2: Add Staff members as funding and attendance growth allow**

“Smart growth” regarding the size of the staff should be undertaken with the institutional priorities in mind, rather than a focus on how things have operated in the past as a basis for comparison. Too many variables have recently changed, and those changes have been too dramatic, to use the immediate past as an effective guide for future operations.

During the long range planning process, every single group meeting as well as individual meetings tended to focus on improved exhibits and diversified exhibits as something people wanted to see from the Museum. To accommodate this request, we are going to have to change the focus of staffing to some degree to provide relief for the Curator of

Exhibits who is the only staff member whose primary responsibilities address exhibit fabrication. Indeed, if exhibit quality is going to improve, the Curator of Exhibits will need more assistance in the areas of research, design, and fabrication to accommodate this initiative.

Tasks:

- A. Hire an additional employee in the Development and Fundraising area as soon as possible
- B. Hire departmental assistants, coinciding with proportional increases in revenues and support, to ease the workloads of department heads in the areas of Exhibits, Education, Collections, Gift Shop, and Security
- C. Monitor Gift Shop sales and attendance to ensure adequate personnel are available to serve visitors
- D. Develop an intern program with area colleges and universities  
Interns represent an opportunity to develop relationships with local or nearby individuals interested in a potential career in museums. They also represent a potential for a greater labor pool for larger projects or activities that require additional people to assist in basic operations.
- E. Train and utilize dependable volunteers in all areas of museum operations
- F. Work with colleges and universities to develop work-study programs

**Goal 3: Continue to develop volunteer program**

Tasks:

- A. Identify areas where volunteers are most needed
- B. Develop Volunteer Training program in all areas of Museum operations
- C. Create Job Descriptions for all volunteer positions
- D. Recruit new volunteers as needed and within the capacity of staff to provide adequate training and interaction
- E. Annually review volunteer incentive program, and thank them for their involvement every day

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## **VI. C Facilities & Infrastructure**

The Hubbard Museum of the American West enjoys a positive public perception regarding the cleanliness of the Museum. Visitors from around the nation have commented about how clean and inviting the public areas of the Museum are kept. It is vitally important that we maintain this perception, but we need to make a commitment to ensure that every area of the facility is viewed that way, including the exterior appearance, and the internal staff and work areas.

Additionally there are some long-term maintenance needs that every facility requires periodically to ensure continued effective use.

The key goals for the Museum facility & infrastructure is to maintain (in good order) what we have, build on our assets, and to make decisions that will allow for future expansion should the opportunity arise.

### **Goal 1: Ensure that the monument area grounds-keeping is of the highest standard**

Tasks:

- A. Repair and maintain sprinkler system
- B. Ensure that shrubbery and decorative elements conform to original plans
  - 1. Ensure that any additional decorative elements do not result in damage to underground irrigation system
- C. Provide low-impact signage in the monument area directing visitors to Museum

### **Goal 2: Improve exterior signage**

One of the primary areas of discussion in most public and private meetings related to the long range plan revolved around signage. While signage related to marketing will be discussed later in this report, it is important to note that signage is perhaps the most important means by which branding and image are reinforced. While it is important to move forward with adequate signage immediately, it should be noted that a future marketing plan would address both branding and image in the near future. Immediate measures taken should be seen as temporary until the marketing issues have been addressed.

Very few people within our discussion felt that exterior Museum signage was either adequate or effective. Many people believe that the Museum loses visitors from the monument area and the BTK Center because signage directing people to the Museum is not clear. Another issue discussed was the fact that the Museum facility was not visible from the highway, or to visitors entering the parking lot until they are at the entry door.

The size and scope of the Museum are lost on most visitors until they step inside the door. While it is important for a Museum to have a “wow” factor as we do with our interior entrance, it is lost if the patrons do not get in the door. Therefore, all exterior signage at the Museum needs to be redone.

It is also important to remember that too many signs can be just as ineffective, or an eyesore, that detracts from the ambiance of the visitor experience.

Tasks:

- A. Erect a new, digital signboard near entryway of Museum facility
  - 1. Ensure that new sign does not detract from the monument
  - 2. Work closely with Champions Run Condos and BTK Center for the concept
- B. Replace both wooden signs at parking lot entry with a single sign
- C. Remove upcoming programming sign on the east side of the monument and replace with directional sign to Museum for monument visitors
- D. Replace both signs leading visitors to handicap parking level and relocate for ease and efficiency

### **Goal 3: Create outdoor attractions in the upper level parking lot**

Sometimes there are opportunities available that can turn a perceived weakness into an asset. While people are correct that the Museum building is basically invisible until you get right up to it, the simple fact is that signage alone may not be enough to lure people down towards the Museum building. With an aging population, it is going to be increasingly important to reduce the unknowns, increase the advantages, and ensure that the visiting public has a comfortable as well as fulfilling experience. Since we cannot “bring the mountain to Mohammed” we are going to have to bring “Mohammed to the Mountain” literally and figuratively. By adding historical features clearly visible from the highway entry, more cars will be drawn into the parking lot, and more visitors will pay the admission to see the rest of the Museum facilities.

Tasks:

- A. Use HUD grant to create an “Open Storage” exhibit building on the northeast side of the parking lot
  - 1. Ensure that building materials equate to general historic building materials and standards to ensure that the building is not seen as a “storage” building and more as part of the Museum facility.
  - 2. Create an exterior, covered porch along the length of the HUD building to promote daily programs and rest/picnic areas for visitors (this will provide an excellent, unobstructed view of the mountains)
- B. Create green space on the east side of the parking lot

1. Add other outdoor attractions to the area such as a gazebo for concerts, a horse pen for demonstrations, a windmill, and other outdoor historical features
- C. Pave the remainder of the parking lot to create 200-250 stalls

The proposed HUD building should be welcoming to visitors, and should include a porch for programming, a picnic area for school classes, and restored or recreated historic structures as appropriate for the region.

#### **Goal 4: Repair major infrastructure issues that impact building viability and safety**

As a former ice rink converted to a convention center, and later retrofitted for use as a Museum, the building is remarkably workable from a Museum perspective. There are certainly areas within the structure that are less efficiently re-used than others are, but for the most part the building does not deter most traditional museum functions. There are definite areas, however, that require immediate attention.

Tasks:

- A. Re-route exterior drainage system away from and around the building
  1. Repair downspouts and drain pipes on the roof of the building
- B. Repair concrete foundation under the building
  1. Main floor and office areas show major cracks
  2. Repair exterior wall on south side
- C. Repair and replace outdated fire sprinkler system
- D. Repair and replace HVAC units to ensure building has adequate systems
  1. Replace present control system with central unit
  2. Install door sweeps for all doors for more energy efficiency
- E. Purchase new window protection for heat entering from atrium entryway
- F. Purchase a new security system with camera surveillance for interior, exterior, and monument areas
- G. Repave loading dock near shop area.
- H. Create ramps at doors 10, 12, and 16 to facilitate loading and unloading

#### **Goal 5: Clean and reorganize every storage, shop and work area at the Museum**

Tasks:

- A. Remove Cowboy Symposium materials to Track to create more room in shop
- B. Reorganize shop area to accommodate realistic construction needs

1. Work with City of Ruidoso Downs to ensure materials are disposed of properly
  2. Prioritize equipment needs and dispose of unneeded or duplicate items
- C. Reorganize hallway storage areas near collections area
1. Dispose useless items appropriately
- D. Clean out all materials from south wall corridor (main floor) and dispose or move items to appropriate departmental storage
- E. Clean out all materials from north wall corridor (mezzanine) and dispose or move items to appropriate departmental storage
- F. Clean all storage areas including party rooms, photography room, art room and the collections storage area located above the shop
- G. Purchase and install insulation along exterior walls of facility

### **Goal 6: Reorganize the shop and storage areas**

The Hubbard Museum of the American West is like most museums in that decisions about the facility are often dictated by the needs of the present or the strengths of the staff. For instance, at one time, the Hubbard Museum had several photographers working at the facility, so a dark room was established. At present, the dark room is used for overflow storage and the room has been used sparingly for its ostensible use in the past three years. Overflow items from the Race Horse Hall of Fame were placed in storage closets (albeit secured closets) in the office area when the collections storage area filled up, and few collections other than art have been actively solicited in several years. Like most museums, the Hubbard Museum has items that have been neglected or untouched due to malaise: the “party room” storage contains boxes of coffee mugs that have been unopened since 1993.

With the movement of the Race Horse Hall of Fame to the Track, and the addition of the HUD storage building in the near future, the Hubbard Museum has an opportunity to reorganize its use of space in a manner that will allow departments to have separate storage and work areas, and to make the overall Museum operation more efficient.

In order to better utilize the shop areas, a decision about the direction of operations will help facilitate a re-visioning of the area. In the past, Museum personnel often performed restoration work on some of the artifacts in the collection. When the Museum first opened, this was both necessary and cost-effective. Now, however, the Museum does not have the necessary expertise (or staffing complement) to engage in such activity. Nor does it pay the Museum to engage a full-time staff member for 40% of his or her time to restore an artifact when we need to be working on new exhibits, programs and other initiatives. The cost in staff time, materials (like plexiglass), and equipment makes it inefficient to build most cases in house. When Museum staff are fully engaged in the jobs that they are trained for and their expertise can be fully utilized, the Museum as a

whole becomes more productive internally and externally – and in the end, the Museum is here to serve the public need.

**Tasks:**

- A. Downsize the workshop area to key needs, and move some of the working equipment to the bay where Symposium materials had previously been located.
  - 1. Dispose of materials in accordance with City regulation
- B. Remove collections storage items from the mezzanine of the shop bay to the northeast end of the present shop (and later to the HUD building)
- C. Remove all collections from west end of the building to east end (and some to HUD building)
- D. Create flammable storage area, paint storage areas, and tool room within shop and shop bay areas that conforms with City, State and Federal regulation

**Goal 7: Rethink the use of public and private spaces within the Museum**

One of the challenges that the Museum faces is the manner in which we use space. Past practices have required that the entire mezzanine was used for exhibits, and the main floor or the Board Room were the only areas available for meetings, programs, or Special events (at least over the last 4-5 years). One of the key assets that any Museum has is the working space it contains. That space needs to be used as efficiently as possible, in order to promote the most efficient use of employee time available.

Unfortunately, however, when the main floor is used for functions, it usually requires the movement of carriages and wagons to create space for seats or tables. This movement requires additional staff time (especially for weekend events,) planning, and often has a negative impact on visitor service for those not attending special functions. Further still, if the main floor continues to be used as special event space, it limits the potential of the Museum's interpretive abilities, and perpetuates an atmosphere that results in damage to the wagons and carriages from the Stradling collection. The Museum needs to conduct an impact study to determine the economic and conservation impact of holding major events (200+ people) on the main floor of the Museum.

Smaller events and educational activities – which make up the majority of special needs usage – often require a simple, self-contained space for activity. If the usage of space were redefined to an extent, much of the impact of moving artifacts on the main floor could be minimized. Such action would be beneficial in terms of preserving the artifacts on display on the main floor while limiting the potential for unfortunate damage to artifacts through careless action by staff or visitors.

Finally, by the very nature of the building design, storage and office areas surround ¾ of the public space. Over the years, storage and preparation functions have been moved to accommodate new needs and initiatives resulting in a situation that has exhibit storage and exhibit prep areas on opposite ends of the building. Collections areas are spread throughout the building, and education department storage is assigned to a large closet on the mezzanine level that is presently shared with gift shop storage.

Tasks:

- A. Complete an economic and conservation impact study regarding Special Events on the main floor
- B. Develop a master plan for gallery usage
- C. Develop a “Wild West” themed exhibit for the former Race Horse Hall of Fame gallery
- E. Relocate collections storage to east end of the building and/or HUD building

**The facilities and infrastructure repairs discussed in Section VI. C. MUST be a key matter for the governing authority to emphasize in future budgets. Every single goal, every single task, every action we take in the future is predicated on making these infrastructure changes and improvements. Further still, it is important for the governing authority to recognize that we will never receive accreditation without infrastructure improvements such as the HVAC system repairs and foundation repairs. Without improvements to our collections storage areas, the Museum will lose the confidence of potential donors, we will not receive accreditation, and the long term forecast for the Museum would be rather dire.**

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## VI. D Collections

History and art museums are only as strong as the collections they possess. They must keep adding to the collection to promote the diversity of the objects for display, as well as to cultivate new donors, supporters, and audiences. When the collections department of a museum stagnates, the entire facility suffers – not right away, but slowly and imperceptibly over time, only noticeable to the public when the exhibit program stagnates. The Hubbard Museum is certainly not in a “dangerous” position, but the public response to the long range plan should serve as a clarion call to Museum leaders.

The collections area also creates an ongoing conundrum for management in that if our charge is to preserve an artifact for perpetuity, then the worst thing we can do with that artifact is place it on display. If however, we do not place an artifact on display, we are not maximizing the potential value of the artifact. Museums that are able to strike a balance between preservation and public access are those that clearly are capable of elevating their level of professionalism – and they are recognized and rewarded by grant makers, donors, and funding agencies.

The development of the Hubbard Museum collection is well documented, from the relationship with Anne Stradling to the desire to exhibit artworks from the personal collection of the Hubbard family. Unfortunately, however, the general collections beyond the Stradling materials have not grown with the development of the Museum – largely due to the fact that the growth strategy was to add attractions such as the Race Horse Hall of Fame, Historic Lincoln, etc. to the Museum rather than to grow the Hubbard Museum’s collection. This strategy was fine for the Museum as it was originally conceived, but now leaves the Museum in an unforeseen predicament that it must deal with immediately if it is to thrive and grow into the future.

First, management must make a commitment to provide more resources to the collections department through both personnel and equipment. The department is poorly supplied and understaffed. Second, the entire staff must be trained to think about its artifacts from the standpoint of preservation as well as exhibition and collection. Third, management must find a way to strike a balance between the need to add collections, and the need to provide more and better documentation with the artifacts already within its possession. Every staff member, every Board member, and every City official must recognize that the key to long-term growth resides in our ability to add to our collection in a manner that meets our mission statement while providing greater interpretive and exhibition opportunities.

**Goal 1: Create an environment in the Collections Department that conforms to professional standards and practices**

Tasks:

- A. Ensure that future staff have necessary collections training
  - 1. Allow collections staff to attend more programs and workshops related to collections management
- B. Provide basic collections training for remainder of staff
- C. Develop a new collections policy and scope of collections statement
- D. Form a proactive collections committee well versed in local history, western history and western art
- F. Hire and train collections assistants for department
- G. Create a training program to allow new volunteers to work in collections department

**Goal 2: Ensure that all collections storage areas meet with professional standards**

While the idea of rearranging the collections storage area has been addressed in other areas of this document, it is important to reiterate the need to improve collections storage areas. The addition of the HUD building will be beneficial, but it will not be the entire answer to our collections issues. For instance, professional standards for collections storage environments require separate control units for collections than other areas of the museum. The HVAC units at the Museum have controls for different areas, but the collections storage area is tied into the shop, which has two doors which open directly to the outside (one of which can stay open for long periods of time when loading or unloading the maintenance truck.) Additionally, one of the collections areas is directly exposed to the shop, and sits directly on top of the area where paint, various oils, and some gasoline is stored, meaning that a portion of our collections are always exposed to noxious off-gassing.

Tasks:

- A. Unite all collections storage in climate controlled areas
- B. Reconfigure HVAC system so that controls for the storage area are separated from other areas of the Museum
- D. Build HUD building and ensure that it meets with professional standards
- E. Ensure that collections and shop areas are separated

**Goal 3: Bring Database information back to professional standards**

The present collections software, PastPerfect 4.0, is one that is popular amongst many museums across the nation. It is a relational database that allows users to search records in a variety of ways such as donor records, accession numbers, and keywords. It also allows users to enter information about exhibits in which artifacts have been used, loans, and other essential information.

Unfortunately, however, past administrations have not emphasized the value of complete record keeping, or of utilizing professional standards in numbering artifacts. Thus, within the database are at least three different numbering systems, incomplete records, and items that have been accepted into our possession but never entered into the database. Worse yet, many of the files within the database are not complete, and others are missing key bits of information.

Having complete records is important on a variety of levels. First, from a research and exhibit perspective, using the correct information avoids mistakes in labeling, and false claims of provenance. Complete records also establish ownership, and provide information for insurance purposes in the case of disaster. Most importantly, however, it establishes trust in the minds of donors and potential donors who are certain that their family heirlooms will be protected and displayed for future generations. Without this trust, museums are better off not collecting anything new, as they will not receive the “best” materials from potential donors, just the “stuff” they do not want.

Unfortunately, it may take years to “fill in the blanks” and to ensure that items in the collection are properly documented. The Museum must regain intellectual control of its collection in order to fully realize the value of the collections for exhibition, education, and academic research. Again, the demands of future visitors will be such that Museum personnel are going to need to be subject matter experts in order to satisfy the quest for information. Coupled with the recent explosion of genealogical research, the advent of E-Bay, and the economic implications of artifact donation, it is only a matter of time before the offspring of former Museum donors become very interested in how their family donation is fairing at the Museum.

Tasks:

- A. Apply for a Collections Assessment Grant for consultation purposes
- B. Go through entire database, artifacts, and records to unite numbering system and ensure that paperwork agrees with accession files, donor records, and database.
- C. Perform necessary research to ensure that the museum has provenance and usage information for as much of the collections as possible and as warrant
- D. Photograph each piece of the collection for the database
- E. Ensure that proper numbering techniques are used throughout the collection
- F. Perform an overall inventory of the collection

**Goal 4: Digitize the Museum’s collection, especially the Stradling materials**

Beyond the need to ensure our information is accurate, there is a growing need within the museum profession to provide vital information about artifacts to researchers. This can be cumbersome for both the Museum and the researcher, if the Museum has to pull every

piece a particular request calls for. Many museums have digitized the collections so as to provide both information and vital statistics to researchers across the internet.

Tasks:

- A. Obtain grant funds for necessary equipment, personnel, etc.
- B. Train personnel and volunteers to perform necessary tasks
- C. Purchase necessary servers to handle the volume of information
- D. Hire a web designer to design a usable format for the web site incorporating collections data

### **Goal 5: Add more local, state, and regional historical artifacts and art work to the collection**

While the present collection is important and internationally famous, it is a relatively narrow collection compared to the mission of the Museum. If the Museum is going to grow and develop in the future, it must cultivate a greater variety and scope of materials related to the history of the West.

We must also recognize our responsibility to honor our institutional past, and recognize that the collection of western art should be reinforced. The genre of western art has deep roots and recognizable names such as Remington, Moran, and many others. There is a public expectation that the Hubbard Museum exhibits quality western art, and Museum leaders and staff need to be proactive in the collection of Western Art. However, the Museum should also create a standing policy that defines this area of the collection policy specifically, as art produced in the West is not necessarily within the genre of Western Art. For some, the distinction may be minor, but in reality, it is vitally important as the Museum is by definition, not an “Art” museum.

Tasks:

- A. Form a local history committee immediately to assist with the development of list of artifacts and potential donors to pursue
- B. Work closely with Collections Committee to develop a strategy for collecting new artifacts, and a priority list for art acquisitions
  - 1. Work with Foundation Board members to identify potential collecting and funding opportunities
- C. Ensure that all materials collected meet the scope of collections statement and the mission
- E. De-emphasize the restoration side of the operations in favor of providing a better storage environment and sensible public access to collections
- F. Develop the research collections area and archives through the collections of both primary and secondary source material

**Goal 6: Develop a master plan for disaster preparedness**

It is of vital importance to develop a disaster preparedness plan. Lincoln County is subject to a variety of natural disasters, especially fire and flood. Given the relative isolation of the area, it will be vitally important to be both prepared for a disaster, and to have the necessary information in place for disaster recovery. The collections department of most museums traditionally takes the lead in the development of such a document, especially because the collections are generally the reason for the existence of the Museum.

**Tasks:**

- A. Gather information from other museums
- B. Develop a list of potentially helpful organizations, locally and statewide
- C. Convene a committee of local disaster preparedness professionals to ensure that the Museum's plan is coordinated with the community plan
- D. Hope that the disaster the Museum is prepared for never comes

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## **VI. E Exhibits**

Exhibits are among the most important functions of any museum, but especially so with historical and art museums. Exhibits are often seen as the primary means of reaching out to potential visitors, members, volunteers, and supporters. Since they play such a central role in a museum's outreach activities, exhibits are often the primary means by which the public judges a museum.

The Hubbard Museum has an excellent history of past successes in the areas of exhibits, with such features as "A T-Rex Named Sue", the Russian Horse exhibit, the Gordon Snidow exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, and other shows such as the boot exhibit, gunfighters, and many others. The Museum's visitors are aware that the exhibits change on a fairly regular basis, and so the expectation of the visiting public may be higher for the Hubbard Museum than some may realize.

Additionally, the introduction of the major traveling exhibit "Sue" has also served to create an expectation that the Museum can offer "blockbuster" exhibits on a regular basis. During the long-range planning process, exhibits were the focus of much of the discussion at public meetings and with the stakeholder groups, and much of the feedback centered on the desire to see more exhibits like "Sue".

Therefore, the Hubbard Museum staff must be cognizant of the fact that the public expects to have occasional blockbuster exhibits at the facility. With that in mind, Museum staff must make a concerted effort to develop a three-to-five year exhibit plan that includes strategic funding initiatives that will make it economically feasible to bring blockbuster exhibits to the museum – or at least to the Ruidoso Valley area. Partnerships and collaborative ventures with other area attractions may make this effort more viable, given the population density of the immediate area and the skyrocketing cost of blockbuster exhibits.

Another issue to keep in mind with exhibits at the Hubbard Museum is that while the Stradling collection is remarkable, much of it has been shown already, and it is not a major collection of "western" artifacts. Thus, many of the major exhibit successes in the past have come from borrowed artifacts or exhibits on loan from other institutions. Museum staff must be fully engaged in the process of seeking new items for donation, as well as keeping an eye out for potential loans related to our mission. Though it will be addressed later in this document, Museum staff must utilize its affiliation with the Smithsonian more than it presently does. The "nation's attic" is filled with materials that the Hubbard Museum could certainly use.

These and other issues make it clear that the Museum must pursue a plan for exhibits that includes the development of in-house exhibits, renting traveling exhibitions, and hosting occasional blockbusters as finances allow.

Creating exhibits is not just about having a plan, however. A fully realized exhibits program needs to include people that have the proper training and availability of tools to assist their endeavors. Exhibit fabrication equipment is quickly moving away from the standard tool shop, to a technologically sophisticated computer lab. The Hubbard Museum is woefully behind its sister institutions in this regard. In fact, much of the “savings” that may have been realized in the past by having staff build cases, is not practical given the cost of materials and staff time devoted to construction in comparison to the cost of ordering cases from a vendor.

Further, it will be important to provide a clear guide for the use of space for exhibition purposes in the near future. The main floor area of the Museum represents more than 13,000 square feet of space that has been used for exhibition purposes, but also for special events and fund raising functions. While the Museum certainly needs to continue hosting such functions, museum officials need to determine if this is the most cost effective use of the space, or if it limits the potential of the key museum function: exhibits.

Given the nature of the change in management that took place in 2005, it would be wise to employ the concept of “shared authority” where exhibits are concerned. In other words, while Museum officials control the exhibit process, they bring in experts in the field, or people with experience in a given subject, as consultants to assist with interpretive issues and ideas. This process allows for more public involvement with exhibits, opens up new possibilities for collaboration, and provides staff with an “insider” perspective that many exhibits do not have. Quite often, the “consultants” also open the door to programming ideas that support the exhibit.

### **Goal 1: Develop an ongoing 3-5 year plan for exhibits**

#### Tasks:

- A. Develop an exhibits committee of staff, board, and general public to assist staff with planning
- B. Develop a strategy that includes in-house construction, traveling, and blockbuster shows
- C. Revisit and update the plan on an annual basis with economic conditions in mind
- D. Retain a changing exhibits schedule that is manageable for staff

### **Goal 2: Define the use of exhibit spaces within the Museum**

The word “permanent” is often misused in a museum setting. People often refer to a “permanent” exhibit when in fact “permanence” is an impossibility in an exhibit situation. Materials decay, paint fades, glue wears out, support beams fail: and most of the time, the visiting public quits going to the facility long before any of these things

occur due to the perception that is often voiced about the main floor of the Hubbard Museum, “nothing ever changes there.” Change is inevitable, and, in fact, changing exhibits are the marketing lifeblood of facilities that exist in resort communities where the faces may change, but there is a tradition of annual visitation. Museums must have “repeat customers” especially in areas where the population base is not in the millions. It must also be stated that to build a multi-million dollar “permanent” exhibit is not in the best interest of the community the Museum serves – especially given the population base of the Ruidoso Valley. A permanent exhibit is only as permanent as its “parts” including construction materials, audiovisuals, interactive technologies, interpretive content, and the interest of the audience. Generally speaking, very few museums can exist on their permanent exhibits alone.

Therefore, it is advocated that Hubbard Museum define the use of galleries spaces in a manner consistent with the staff ability to refresh those galleries. It is incredibly difficult to build a single, 10,000 sq. ft. exhibit every six months, but building smaller exhibits of shorter durations, and mixing these displays with traveling exhibitions and other outside shows is much more feasible for a small staff. Thus, if each of the exhibit spaces is given an appropriate, manageable function and term for display, an actual exhibit schedule is much easier to produce and follow than if the use of space is not clearly defined. This process also ensures that the staff is held to a standard of creativity that often grows stagnant when they are working with the same spaces repeatedly.

A “primary” exhibit that changes every few years, and serves as the “anchor” feature of the museum experience is important to this process. A primary or anchor exhibit serves a traditional function in that it serves the purpose of “telling the big story” or dominant narrative of the region or area as typically a “permanent” exhibit would. The difference between the two is that a primary exhibit should be designed in components so that portions of it can be changed over time as needed – such as in situations where technology breaks, photographs fade, or interpretive errors are discovered due to new research. This strategy limits the exposure of the Museum to a constant state of capital campaigns to refresh a “permanent” exhibit, and it serves traditional visitors who prefer a less dynamic exhibit schedule. Some visitors are comforted by the fact that they can always go see Billy the Kid’s gun at the Hubbard Museum.

This is especially important at the Hubbard Museum, owing to the design of the building: The view of the main floor from the mezzanine is both dramatic and unusual. If the Museum can bring a level of change and vibrancy to this view on a regular basis, it can forever eliminate the perception that “nothing ever changes at the Hubbard Museum.”

#### Tasks:

- A. Create an exhibit guide that clearly defines the use of space
  1. Ensure that the guide addresses staff responsibilities, a construction timeline, and contingencies for marketing, publicity, etc.

- B. Revisit the exhibit guide annually and update the document should conditions change
- C. Ensure that Museum employees receive proper training in exhibit fabrication to allow for maximum flexibility among staff members
- D. Develop a plan for incorporating a primary exhibit on the main floor of the Museum within the next 2-3 years

### **Goal 3: Develop an Interpretive Plan for the facility**

There are many ways to improve the quality of exhibits without spending a fortune. Careful consideration of color choices, good label writing, proper lighting, good directional signage, and excellent artifacts on display often lead to better visitor experiences than traveling exhibits with every bell and whistle imaginable. Incorrect dates, bad research, poor editing, and poorly displayed artifacts under hot lights often leave visitors with a feeling that staff do not care about the facility – or their jobs.

Perhaps even more important to the visitor experience is that staff recognize that there are important questions they must address before embarking on the exhibit design or fabrication process. Staff needs to clearly define – beyond the economic considerations and costs of exhibitions - the idea or concept they are trying to communicate in each exhibit. Who is the audience? Why would they visit this exhibit? Who cares about the topic? What is the best form for our communication? How much space do we need? Does the exhibition represent a risk to the Museum, because the topic could generate controversy? In other words, there is a science to exhibit design, but there is also an art. When these elements are combined effectively, a memorable and popular exhibit will be the result.

One of the key issues identified throughout the long-range planning process was the need for greater diversity in our exhibits. People want to see more about other cultures and other ethnicities than presently on display at the Hubbard Museum. They want to see more people in the exhibits as well.

Local, regional, and national history in the American West is replete with stories about the interaction of cultures, and the Ruidoso Valley is no exception. The facility has not begun to address the variety of exhibit topics available, or the interpretive means through which these topics might be addressed. For instance, if the Museum were to focus on the horse, we could look at the horse from a historical perspective through timelines. We could address breeding, and how that affects the sport of horseracing. Alternatively, we could focus an exhibit on the varieties of horse racing presently and over time. Additionally, perhaps we could look at horseracing as it is presently practiced around the world. All of these exhibits could be done using the Ruidoso Downs Race Track as the starting point for the investigation of the topic.

There are varieties of approaches to the development of the exhibit as well. An exhibit can be idea-driven or artifact driven, depending on the availability of materials. Exhibits can place artifacts in a context, such as taxonomy, or in situ, in which the artifact is placed within the recreated environment in which it was used. There is a variety of means by which an exhibit can be developed, but research into museum learning environments reveals that audiences wish to know more about human interactions – with other humans, with their respective environments, and with the artifacts from the particular time and place. In other words, audiences are interested in seeing the story of human relationships of all types across both time and space. Making the “Old West” come alive, therefore, means more than putting up a display of rifles of the era, or pictures of outlaws. People want to know the whole story as we understand it, and they want to relate to the story somehow within the realm of their own experience.

**Tasks:**

- A. Catalog a list of potential exhibits
  - 1. Develop a corollary list of programming that relates to the exhibit
- B. Develop a statement defining the time frame and geography of the of the American West
- C. Create a definition for Western Art that guides the decision making process for accepting local artist’s exhibits, traveling exhibits from other museums, and exhibits that are developed on-site
- D. Commit to a program that addresses all aspects of cultural diversity, especially in the southwestern United States
  - 1. Prepare a guide to exhibits that is printed in Spanish
  - 2. Prepare appropriate interpretive labels in Spanish
- E. Commit to a program of using authentic materials rather than reproductions where possible in the development of exhibits

**Goal 4: Commit to a program of introducing new technologies to the Museum exhibits**

Today’s museums struggle with a variety of issues related to exhibits, not the least of which is the use of technology within exhibits. The recent explosion of technological possibility brings virtually limitless possibilities for Museums – all of which comes with a price tag that must be accounted for in planning. Too often, museum exhibits are plagued with components that “never quite worked properly” or “worked once” and never again. A strong, countervailing influence within the profession is the question of authenticity – would people rather see a computer generated version of the Mona Lisa, or the actual Mona Lisa?

Since the Hubbard Museum presently lacks most sophisticated interactive technologies, this question may seemingly be irrelevant. However, it must be remembered that Museum customers are demanding a greater level of public service than ever before – researchers are requesting digitized images of artifacts along with information about

artifacts within the collection. Many museums are also using the worldwide web to provide educational programming, and Museum shops are providing internet savvy visitors with retail options that were unimaginable 15 years ago. Museums must find a way to utilize present technology to deliver services, including those on the exhibit floor. Therefore, the Hubbard Museum staff should commit itself to providing the training and staff development activities necessary to become more versant in new technology, and to provide departmental plans for adding technology to the operations.

Tasks:

- A. Make fundraising for new technologies an institutional and exhibit department priority
- B. Plan to utilize at least one new hands-on component in each new exhibit
  - 1. Plan institutional budgets accordingly
  - 2. Plan departmental budgets accordingly
- C. Develop technological components for each exhibit within the context of the technological potential to provide services that typical construction or interpretive devices could not (don't overwhelm the visitor with technology, use it as a means not an end)
- D. Study the development and use of technology by present and future generations to ensure that the Museum is relevant to younger visitors

### **Goal 5: Display artifacts within the professional standards developed by the American Association of Museums**

Exhibits that are well researched, well planned, and well designed deserve to be well executed. The audience can reject the best exhibit in the world if they cannot read the labels or cannot see the artifacts because it is too dark. If a museum exhibits a cavalier attitude toward the safety and security of the materials on display, visitors may question the professionalism of the Museum staff.

Tasks:

- A. Provide adequate work stations for exhibit construction and fabrication
- B. Provide basic materials necessary to the construction needs of Museum staff
  - 1. Purchase a dedicated exhibit computer with appropriate software
  - 2. Ensure that adequate tools are available, e.g. a plexi-bender, mat cutters, etc.
- C. Ensure that exhibits are finished while utilizing basic professional standards, e.g. label font & size, proper cases, good climate control systems, UV protection, etc.
- E. Ensure that professional lighting standards are followed
  - 1. Purchase new track lighting as needed

## **VI. F Education**

Thirty years ago, museum education was a novel concept created as an adjunct to typical docent programs, traditional tours, and the occasional lecture. With the growth of Museums across the nation, as well as the growth of alternative forms of entertainment, museums have been required to develop new ways or forms to reach out to their audience. Outreach programs, educational programs, adult-education classes, and a variety of special events ranging from historical re-enactments to Victorian Christmas programs have been developed in order to compete with other museums, television, movies, and a host of other competitive entertainments.

In many ways, however, museum education has grown well beyond the simple desire to attract a larger audience. Museum education research is a growing and influential track of museum scholarship, with studies that challenge the underlying assumptions of the manner in which Museum visitors learn and retain the information communicated within the exhibits, programs and events that the public demands.

Educational programming also offers a means for effective collaboration with other community groups, museums, and professional entities. For instance, in developing an exhibit on governmental influence in the American Southwest, the education department may develop a lecture series with local and national political leaders. A program about Native American foods might be enhanced by bringing in a local Apache tribe member to demonstrate traditional preparation practices.

Regardless of the types of programs, it is vitally important for Museum staff to recognize that the location of the facility in the midst of a resort community with a limited local population eight months per year, presents a variety of challenges that must be addressed within an educational activity plan. Museum officials must determine the potential audience before embarking on particularly expensive programming ideas that may draw a limited audience. Conversely, the Museum must not abandon the idea of providing programming for the local audience at low points between summer and winter seasons.

Given the nature of previously described goals for improvements to the Museum, the Education Department must begin to contemplate new opportunities for educational programming. Having a dedicated space for both programming and storage of education supplies will be revolutionary for the department. The potential development of outdoor spaces provides new interpretive programming and special event possibilities that were previously unrealistic. Therefore, the Education department should immediately embark on a process of researching current standards for education programming that addresses lifelong learning concepts. Programming should be developed for all ages using the mediums available for communication, and to provide technology training to ensure that staff has “all of the tools” in its potential arsenal. Education Department staff should recognize that different age groups may have different needs, and that not all topics may appeal to all ages. It is acceptable, and encouraged, to cater to the needs of a particular

group so long as the other groups are not excluded on a regular basis. Further, the Museum's Education Department should be cognizant of changing area and nationwide demographics: There will be more retiring baby-boomers with more disposable cash than any generation previous in American history. It would behoove the education department to provide more future opportunities for an older audience than is presently available in most competing venues.

**Goal 1: Develop a list of programming possibilities and evaluate the needs for implementation**

Tasks:

- A. Convene an educational planning committee to assist with planning
  - 1. Have committee assist with program timing related to the resort community challenge
- B. Create a plan for adult education
- C. Create a plan for youth educational activities
- D. Create a plan for school programming for all grades
  - 1. Ensure that the programs meet state standards and local curriculum
  - 2. Create a committee of educators to assist with these programs

**Goal 2: Create a collaborative approach to educational programming and events where possible**

Collaborative programming can help develop the assets as well as the public perception of the Museum. Collaboration brings resources together to achieve a level of accomplishment a facility working alone cannot. Collaboration also develops professional relationships and contacts that sometimes open new doors of opportunity. Collaboration introduces groups or ethnicities together in a working environment that often creates an environment of trust that may not have previously existed. Most importantly, real collaboration creates ongoing interrelationships beyond "one-shot" events. These relationships are viewed positively by the public – and perhaps just as importantly by grant making agencies, foundations, and corporations that seek to support such relationships.

Tasks:

- A. Continue to develop the relationship with the Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium
- B. Seek to develop relationships with other nearby museums
- C. Develop ongoing relationship with the Mescalero Apache nation, the Spanish-speaking community and other cultures within the region
- D. Work with exhibit department to ascertain potential opportunities related to future exhibits

### **Goal 3: Work cooperatively with Exhibit Department on the development of the Interpretive Plan**

It is important to recognize that the success of the Museum is dependent on providing a quality product to the audience we serve. While some educational programs will not be associated with other initiatives in other departments, it is important to remember that programming can and should support exhibits, and that exhibits should be developed with an educational component as part of the planning process.

#### **Tasks:**

- A. Work with the Exhibit department and other Museum staff in developing the Interpretive Plan
- B. Participate in exhibit planning and serve on exhibit development teams as warranted
- C. Utilize available resources (such as local experts, NMHC, NMAA, and other organizations) to assist with programming where possible

### **Goal 4: Develop the “Friend, Amigo, and Shichuune” interactive learning area**

Much of the emphasis on educational programming revolves around the youth. Foundations, businesses, and grant programs focused on youth services are more prevalent than any other area of alternative funding sources. Thus, the Museum must take advantage of these opportunities to develop an evolving children’s interactive area that includes hands-on activities, programs and other learning opportunities.

#### **Tasks:**

- A. Develop an area plan that provides for future change and continued development
  1. The Exhibits Department will play a role in developing the interactive area, both in terms of design and fabrication and budget
  2. Develop a survey for parents whose children use the area to determine ongoing equipment or interpretive needs.
- B. Develop school programs for elementary grades 1-6 using the new area
- C. Provide for ongoing maintenance, daily inspection, and regular replacement of materials that are “loved to obsolescence”
  1. Keep administrative staff aware of area usage that may negatively impact the museum environment for other visitors
- D. Develop programming for underprivileged families using the children’s area as a basis for family learning activities
  1. Pursue grants for the new program

### **Goal 5: Plan for new activities using new areas of the Museum**

As previously mentioned, the development of an education room, outdoor venues, and other opportunities created because of the long-range plan requires Education staff to rethink the manner that programs are conducted today. This includes the docent led tours of the museum, the size and variety of costumed programming and Chautauqua style presentations, and the potential for unique new offerings.

#### **Tasks:**

- A. Develop an all-day history program for elementary students each spring
  - 1. Utilize Museum staff, volunteers, and others as presenters
- B. Develop weekend music programs at the new exhibit building
- C. Develop an evening or weekend storytelling program using outdoor venues
- D. Develop a daily tour schedule for museum visitors during the summer and winter seasons
- E. Develop web-based programming opportunities that complement school programs
- F. Develop cooperative tours of historic places in New Mexico for members and others
- G. Develop more “demonstration” programs as an attraction for families and children
- H. Develop interactive art programs, and continue developing present offerings, to ensure arts education remains an important component of Museum programming
- I. Offer more seminars or panel discussions regarding topics of interest to older audiences
  - 1. Develop an “Antiques Roadshow” type of program
  - 2. Utilize area scholars for programs related to exhibit and education topics
  - 3. Bring in ranchers for a discussion of ranching issues today versus those in the past

**The key here is not to think of the above list as either comprehensive or required, but to develop new and creative concepts for all aspects of educational programming.**

## **VI. G Development**

While many of the development issues have been addressed in the “Fiscal Operations” portion of this document, it is useful to address “Development” within the body of this document. Development departments in museums, depending on their size, scope, and institutional history often encompass a variety of museum operations including membership programs, marketing, gift store operations, and other concerns. The Hubbard Museum has a checkered history in the area of development, with a variety of departmental duties attached to the position, often depending on the strengths and weaknesses of the staff at the time.

In some ways, the present initiative to bring in a development director is in recognition of the present “shaky” fiscal foundation of the Museum. More attention is needed in the areas of donor identification and cultivation, corporate sponsorship and giving, and fundraising event planning than present staff has the necessary time or expertise to devote to these initiatives. Further, a development director with skills in these areas would complement the skills of the present Museum director, and could serve as an additional liaison with the proposed Hubbard Museum Foundation.

Regardless, in light of the proposed redrafting of job descriptions, any potential duplication of responsibilities can be easily corrected. Given the level of change and new initiatives advocated in the long rang planning document, there will be plenty of work to go around for everyone.

Since much of the history of the Hubbard Museum and its traditions are tied so closely to the Track, it will be important for the new development director to explore the potential for additional local, state, and regional donors that may have an interest in the Hubbard Museum. At the same time, he or she should focus on strengthening and maintaining the ties to the present donor base in coordination with the proposed foundation.

To ensure that the Museum’s goals and objectives are clear to potential donors, it will be important for the Museum to work more closely with the Ladies Auxiliary and the Foundation to ensure that the public understands how their donation is being used. To reiterate a previously stated goal, all entities concerned with fundraising should be focused on the goal of making certain that the Museum is self-supporting so that fund raising dollars can be used to build the foundation, bring in blockbuster exhibits, capital campaigns, or other major goals.

### **Goal 1: Cultivate potential new donors**

#### Tasks:

- A. Make personal contacts with present donors to determine their goals and priorities.
  - 1. Work closely with the Foundation to develop donor profiles
- B. Develop a contact list of potential donors outside the present database

1. Utilize contacts and experience of Foundation Board members and other supporters to assist with this process
- C. Make contact with local and regional businesses to assess interest in future Museum projects
- D. Coordinate activities with the Ladies Auxiliary to ensure that traditional fund raising activities are focused on museum projects and needs

### **Goal 2: Develop a Corporate Cultivation program**

While the corporate community in Ruidoso, Ruidoso Downs and Lincoln County is rather small, there are many corporations based in the Southwestern United States that have demonstrated interest in the preservation of the history of the American West as well as the cultivation of Western Art.

Tasks:

- A. Research regional corporate giving in the Southwest
  1. Develop a list of potential contacts
- B. Coordinate the Museum's "fundable" initiatives with potential sponsors
  1. Develop appropriate sponsorship packages and benefits for programming, exhibits, capital campaigns, etc.

### **Goal 3: Identify and apply for funding from governmental agencies, grant makers, and foundations from around the nation that conform with Museum needs**

The Hubbard Museum has a strong history of successful fundraising among its established constituency. This is important, but new sources for funding must be pursued.

Additionally, the Museum has received grants in the past for an AAM self-study, two federal earmarks from HUD for storage at Lincoln and at the Museum. The museum also turned down an award from the National Endowment for the Humanities for storage equipment in 2005, which may have a negative impact on how that body perceived the Museum as we seek alternate sources of funding in the future. Recently, the Education department has successfully requested funding from the State Humanities Council and the New Mexico Arts for educational programming.

Fund raising at this level is neither easy nor instantly rewarding. However, a Museum's record of accomplishment in receiving grants is important for its professional perception. Institutions that receive prestigious grants are more likely to receive other grants – based on the perception of reviewers who are often successful grant authors. A successful record of accomplishment in receiving grants is considered within the profession to be a sign that the facility meets with or exceeds professional standards, and stands as a model for other institutions. Grants are awarded for a number of factors depending on the

program, but fiscal stability, collections stewardship, multi-cultural programming, and collaboration with other institutions are usually factored into consideration for major grants.

The key to successful grant writing is not in sending out a lot, but in focusing on programs that meet the needs of the institution. It is also about understanding the goals of the grant program, or foundation, or governmental authority, to which the proposal is given. If an agency goal is collaboration, and there is not a history of collaboration, then it is basically a waste of time to write a grant to that agency until a track record is established.

Tasks:

- A. Use the long range plan as a tool for proving the museum's needs
- B. Identify programs that fit the needs of the institution
- C. Utilize staff expertise in the respective professional areas to draft the proposal
- D. Ensure that matching funds, if required, are budgeted in advance
- E. Plan all grant writing efforts 1-2 years in advance

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## VI. H Membership

There are many potential purposes for creating and retaining a membership program: as an annual giving program, as a means of maintaining annual support, as a means of communicating needs or issues, or as a way to communicate the objectives of an organization. For the Hubbard Museum, the membership program actually encompasses each of these objectives to various degrees of effectiveness. In the past, there have been as many as 900 members, but typically, that number of active members has been about 700 for the past few years. The recent transfer of the Museum to the City of Ruidoso Downs seems to have had a negligible impact on the revenue generated by the program, but there are fewer active members today than there were five years ago.

The present membership program is intimately tied to the Lincoln County Cowboy Symposium, which has both positive and negative implications as the facility moves into the future. So long as there is a direct tie to the Symposium through Museum related programming or other involvement, and the Symposium Board wishes to retain its discounted ticket program through the Museum, there is no major problem. Should that situation change, however, the entire membership program would need to be overhauled. With the recent changes at the Museum, and with the organizational focus and staffing changes with the Symposium, it is unclear if this is the most efficient means of handling this relationship. Perhaps the Museum should purchase a block of Symposium tickets each year – or the Track may choose to donate a certain amount of tickets so that the tradition is continued.

What is abundantly clear, however, is that the recent change in ownership presents an opportunity to restructure the program and create new avenues of involvement for our members. The membership program needs to generate interest and support for the Museum, but it also needs to conform to business standards. Unfortunately, that has not always been the case; for instance, in analyzing the benefits offered to members at the \$1,000 level in 2005, if the member chose to utilize all the program amenities, the benefit to the member would equal \$1,779, excluding the museum shop discount of 20%. Many members at that level did not use all the benefits, but that is not the point: Burger King does not offer a “buy three burgers for the price of one” discount unless there is a profit margin.

Additionally, a membership program should have a variety of benefits that appeal to a range of the audience. Again, with so many benefits in coordination with the Track, we may lose some potential members who may not be interested in those particular benefits. As an example, the Buffalo Bill Historical Center offers a range of benefits including a quarterly journal, free admissions to a Museum consortium, members-only events, and tickets to special events. There are a variety of benefits within a structured benefits package that give people a variety of options at various levels of giving. This option could be pursued at the Hubbard Museum.

Finally, there needs to be an event that allows members to interact with staff, in a fun, informal, but informative setting, such as at annual meeting, an annual picnic, or an ice-cream social. More “behind the scenes” benefits create learning opportunities that also may help us attract more volunteers. A scholarly journal, produced bi-annually or quarterly, would also lend credibility to the Museum within the academic community, and the Museum needs to cultivate this community in order to provide professional credibility to the institution – much like Drew Gomber’s appearances on the History Channel provided in the past.

### **Goal 1: Restructure Membership Program**

Tasks:

- A. Create a variety of tiered benefits for each level of contribution
- B. Maintain Smithsonian membership benefit
- C. Restructure LCCS benefits within program
- D. Develop an annual meeting/program for members only
  1. Maintain exhibit & program invitation incentive
  2. Maintain *Hoofprints* on quarterly basis
- E. Perform a cost/benefit analysis with entire program

### **Goal 2: Create a scholarly but entertaining journal on a quarterly or bi-annual basis**

As previously mentioned, developing a relationship with the academic community should be an institutional goal. It brings credibility to the Museums programs and exhibits, and the philanthropic community (including major grant makers) sees it as a necessity for funding. A journal can also be a manner of reaching out to a different constituency for funding. Some businesses, individuals, and western history buffs may advertise in the journal to help defray costs – and others might join solely for this benefit.

Tasks:

- A. Explore publication costs
- B. Develop academic and publishing contacts to assist with editing the journal
- C. Create an annual publication award to be given at annual meeting
- D. Require contributions from qualified staff members as part of their job descriptions

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## VI. I Gift Store Operations

The Hubbard Museum's gift store, *Museum Mercantile*, is a profit center that has not yet reached its full potential. It is an asset that generates \$80,000+ per year at present, but it has the potential to do a lot more business. During the "boom years" of the Hubbard Museum, the shop produced in excess of \$150,000 per year. It has generally realized an average sales ratio of \$4.00 per head among paid customers, which although better than the national average, does not begin to approach its potential earnings, especially if visitation grows.

The shop location is perfect for the Museum industry – it is close to the entrance and exit – and it serves to tantalize some visitors before they even see what exhibit is on display. It is perceived to be a "classy" shop by its regular clientele as well as the majority of visitors, and it tends to cater to higher end buyers (in a museum context). Merchandise choices have been rather narrow of late, owing much to the perception of the gift shop managers.

Recently, a new cash register system was purchased at a cost of more than \$10,000. The system is far more powerful with more options than are presently being utilized. There are tracking options for stock, hourly counts of visitors, etc., that represents valuable data that is not presently utilized to full benefit. Additionally, there are internet sales options, purchasing programs, and other system amenities that beg for staff training if the system is to pay for itself.

If the shop is to maximize its potential, however, there are a variety of philosophical as well as physical changes that will be required.

### **Goal 1: Maximize the present retail opportunities and introduce new options**

Tasks:

- A. Provide staff training on present cash register system
  - 1. Include administrative staff in training
- B. Create a plan for using both cash registers in a trackable manner
  - 1. Separate admission and gift shop functions as needed
- C. Develop an internet sales/online store function for additional retail opportunities
  - 1. Ensure that online store conforms to state taxing authority for web sales

The earnings potential of the shop is not maximized because in some ways, we do not provide items that have mass appeal. For instance, there is little that relates to the Mexican national audience, or those seeking Apache related items. Further, the school tour crowd is filled with kids that have \$5.00 in their pockets that they are "dying to spend", but cannot because there is nothing available in that price range.

## **Goal 2: Diversify stock**

Additionally, not enough of our merchandise relates to the programming and exhibits at the Museum. Research clearly indicates that people are more willing to purchase items that relate to their exhibit experiences than most other items.

### Tasks:

- A. Join and participate in Museum Store Association
- B. Create new relationships with new vendors
  - 1. Ensure that appropriate vendors meet state “sole source” standards
- C. Ensure that the Store stocks items related to exhibits and programs
  - 1. Ensure gift shop staff participates in discussions regarding future public outreach programs, exhibits, special events, etc.
  - 2. Create display techniques that “highlight” or “feature” programming related stock
  - 3. Develop a “Featured Artist” program for bi-monthly sales program
  - 4. Stock items that appeal to multiple audiences and economic profiles
    - a. Stock items that appeal to school groups during spring tour schedule

## **Goal 3: Market the shop**

Museum shops are like other retail shops in that they can attract more patrons with effective advertising. New stock in the gift shop should be treated as a marketable opportunity, and new programs that bring unique stock to the shop need to be advertised. More local advertising money should be focused in this direction.

### Tasks:

- A. The gift shop manager needs to communicate with the marketing director about new stock
- B. Earmark budgeted local advertising dollars for shop promotion
- C. New items should be positioned within the shop so as to be easy for patrons to find
- D. Regular changes to the layout of the shop should be encouraged, so as to assist visitor perception that new stock has arrived

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## VI. J Marketing

Marketing is a process that leads to the consumption of a product. In today's market economy, attendance at a Museum is a choice for most people, and not a philanthropic act. Museums must recognize that they compete in the marketplace with movies, television, theater, sports, recreation, camping, gambling, shopping, and host of other choices. Museum attendance, like philanthropy, is no longer (for most) a public obligation, but a choice.

What does a museum produce? What is/are the product(s)? What differentiates the museum experience from other experiences? What is to be gained by museum attendance that cannot be provided by other, perhaps less expensive, venues? These and many other questions should be the focus of Museum administration, its leadership, its staff, and its volunteers if the facility is to be competitive.

While the Hubbard Museum presently enjoys a positive perception among some segments of the general public, it suffers from an identity crisis from the name change that occurred several years ago. The logo and the brand are not immediately recognizable, and thus, within some segments of the public, the Museum is an unknown commodity. Some people still call it the "Museum of the Horse" and some agencies still use that name in billing the Hubbard Museum of the American West. While this situation is not uncommon among museums, it is not helpful to a facility with aspirations of being a regional and national destination attraction.

Unfortunately, there is no "quick fix" for this situation. Some museums bring in national companies to work on this issue, but at this point in the Museum's redevelopment, it may be premature to bring in an outside marketing firm to assist with developing a branding, imaging, and marketing campaign. More data is needed about the museum audience, the demographics of the area, and seasonal trends – as well as the further development of the quality of the programs and exhibits. There is nothing worse than disappointing the high expectations of visitors created by a marketing campaign so great in scope that the services pale by comparison. Still, the Museum will have marketing needs prior to the completion of any marketing plan or the execution of a marketing or branding campaign.

### **Goal 1: Continue advertising the facility as effectively and reasonably as present conditions allow**

#### Tasks:

- A. Maintain consistent local advertising in newspaper, radio, and local sources
  1. Maintain regular press release schedule
  2. Take every opportunity to speak on radio programs, service clubs, etc.

3. Make use of local opportunities in newsletters, mailings to members, etc.
- B. Develop billboard advertising program
  1. Change billboard periodically to highlight major programming
  2. Inspect billboards and locations as often as possible to ensure that environmental conditions do not limit effectiveness
- C. Maintain traditional regional advertising mechanisms
  1. *True West* magazine, *El Paso Scene*, etc.
  2. Ensure that Museum brochures and rack cards are distributed across New Mexico & Texas
- D. Focus major advertising dollars on large exhibits and tourism season
  1. Feature Western Artists of America exhibit & sale
- E. Continue to make improvements to Museum web site

## **Goal 2: Develop a marketing plan for Museum**

### Tasks:

- A. Gather preliminary data, i.e. census figures, tourism demographics, statistics for Highway 70 use, etc.
- B. Form a committee to assist with planning process
  1. Draw committee from local marketing firms, membership, board, etc.
  2. Develop a challenging but achievable timetable and set of goals for the committee
  3. Ensure plan addresses branding and image
- C. Present final report to Museum leadership, City Council, Advisory Board
- D. Hire a marketing/design firm to develop brand, design needs, etc.
  1. Ensure that marketing concepts are incorporated in all manner of public documents, stationery, business cards, etc.
- E. Ensure that internal signage, public advertisements, etc., conform to marketing/branding standards to reinforce brand

## **Goal 3: Collaborate with other agencies where appropriate**

Marketing and advertising are expensive pursuits. Advertising choices should be made based on Museum needs, not on community perception. The Hubbard Museum, like most agencies, will have a limited marketing budget that will not allow for many “giveaway” ads. Newspapers, magazines, other not-for-profits, schools, and others will all have a good cause for which advertising dollars are requested. The Museum needs a policy for such requests, not necessarily to deflect all requests but to choose properly. There are also opportunities for local collaboration that may include marketing or advertising expense, and these “opportunities” should be carefully chosen as well.

Tasks:

- A. Develop a guideline for advertising
- B. Collaborate with local or regional agencies when deemed effective
  - 1. Join appropriate advertising cooperatives
- C. Work closely with tourism agencies in developing major campaign strategy
  - 1. Maintain relationships with TANM, local and area Chambers of Commerce, etc.
- D. Do not ignore public responsibilities to assist other groups or agencies as deemed appropriate by staff and governing authority

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## VI. K Security

While the need for security in museums is universally acknowledged, the form and manner of the security represents a cornucopia of possibilities. Further, the question of what needs to be secured, should be clearly identified before the issue of security measures is discussed.

Unfortunately, we live in a society in which doors have to be locked, people need to be wary of strangers, and possessions are regularly stolen from houses, businesses, and museums. There are four basic areas of concern at the Hubbard Museum:

1. Safety of People (including patrons, staff, volunteers)
2. Artifacts on exhibit and in collections storage
3. Property (including the building and grounds)
4. *Free Spirits at Noisy Water* monument area

At present, the Museum employs a variety of security techniques including:

1. Two full-time guards
2. Monitored alarm system (for Museum and shop areas)
3. Locked doors and limited availability of keys for personnel
4. Limited monitoring (and taping) of museum areas
5. Entry and exit procedures for staff

Unfortunately, the monitoring system is rather dated, and is not particularly effective. Funds will have to be invested in a better monitoring system in the near future.

As with all businesses, the key to a successful operation is to manage costs efficiently in a fashion that results in a finished product that is profitable, or at least breaks even. As with successful businesses, this basic principle rings true across time and space. In the area of security, choices have been made in the past about the manner in which exhibited items are protected (and conserved) in a public setting that have not proven to be cost effective, or proper for artifact display. Each person that touches an artifact leaves a trail of dirt, fungus, and microorganisms that are slowly decaying the artifact on display. Continued exposure to light, humidity, and vibrations from moving the artifacts periodically results in an environment that is not conducive for display purposes. Ignoring conservation concerns, however, is the issue of security. The Museum has employed security guards to help deter people from climbing on, or handling artifacts (especially the wagons and carriages on the main floor).

Employing 2-3 security guards each year for 15 years at an average cost of \$50,000 per year results in an expenditure of \$750,000 dollars. Had the museum invested \$150,000 in display technologies that deter visitors from touching artifacts (through devices like

plexiglass cubes, secure cases, platforms, and other techniques) the equipment would have paid for itself within a few years – and would also have realized ongoing artifact conservation and preservation benefits that unfortunately, the Museum will eventually have to pay for in future restoration costs.

Though artifact care is not the only job of security guards, the previous analysis can be applied to other situations where the Security department is concerned. With the placement of the security guard station at the top of the stairs at the main entrance, most visitors think of the guards as an information center, or expect to purchase admissions tickets (as was apparently the case in that area several years ago). Part of the guard's routine is to periodically check the monument area – where again the anecdotal evidence suggests that visitors think of the guards as site interpreters. To their credit, the guards that are (and have been) employed at the Museum have recognized this situation and provided service to the best of their abilities. Museum aides, docents, or volunteers, however, would have been better suited for the interpretive and informational duty. It should be noted, however, that the guards do presently act as a deterrent to theft or other potential criminal activity, and as such, should not be eliminated from the present staffing complement.

Given the economic arguments, anecdotal evidence, and experience, it is clear that the security and service needs of the Museum, in relation to present practices, are not as effective as they could be. It is clear that security guards cannot (and should not) be eliminated at present. Other forms of security, however, (such as new monitors, cases for exhibits, etc.) obviate the need for a significant portion of the present daily responsibilities of the guards. Due to the size of the crowds that visit the Museum during the tourist season, however, a security presence at the Museum is needed to deter potential theft, vandalism, and other mischief.

### **Goal 1: Reconsider security needs of institution in relation to Long Range Plans**

#### **Tasks:**

- A. Purchase more surveillance and monitoring equipment as the budget allows
- B. Continue to invest in exhibit cases, and other display techniques that provide a more protective environment for the objects on display
- C. Provide more training for present and future staff in daily security measures
- D. Develop a volunteer/staff program that provides a greater educational staff presence at the monument during the summer season.
- E. Relocate admission register to (present) security desk, and staff with Museum aides and volunteers during the tourist season(s).

- F. Slowly phase down the security presence as warranted through the implementation of other staff security related measures, but do not completely eliminate a security presence
- G. Develop seasonal and part-time security position related to visitor traffic, etc.

In moving towards a security force that is more seasonal in nature, and more focused on high traffic periods, the Museum staff will need to be cognizant of certain facility rentals, art exhibits, and other special needs activities to determine the level of security needed. The facility may want to move toward 8-hour shifts with the present security force to ensure that overtime hours are not incurred on a regular basis. Additionally, the issuance of keys, security codes, and similar activity that concern the general security of the facility must be satisfactorily addressed, producing the same or better conditions for the institution.

Regardless, no drastic action should be taken in the area of museum security until the implementation of measures as described in the long range plan is implemented.

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## **VI. L Smithsonian Affiliation**

The Hubbard Museum of the American West enjoys the honor of being an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, the nation's museum. As one of the few affiliates in the West, the Hubbard Museum has a unique opportunity to utilize an amazing array of collections, programming, fund raising opportunities, and other benefits of the program. Since receiving the honor in 2000, the Museum has engaged the affiliate program a total of five times, including two lecture programs, a promotional event at the Race Track, borrowing artifacts for the "Firearms of the American West" exhibit, and the remarkably successful exhibition of Gordon Snidow's art work at the Smithsonian Castle in 2003.

Since 2003, however, the Museum has not made use of the affiliation status. The Museum has hosted an exhibit produced by the Smithsonian ("Between Fences", 2006) but that had nothing to do with the affiliate program. The Museum continues to provide its members with a reciprocal Smithsonian membership, but the relationship has been stagnant for the most part.

Museum staff and institutional leadership must commit to a program of using the affiliation status for more and greater activity. The sheer distance between Ruidoso Downs and Washington, D.C. precludes many New Mexico residents from ever visiting one of the greatest museums in the world. The Museum has a public responsibility to area citizens to bring as much of the Smithsonian as we can to New Mexico, otherwise the facility is throwing away a potential opportunity to grow its visitation, its stature, and its importance to the cultural community.

### **Goal 1: Engage the Smithsonian in more exhibit, programming and promotional Opportunities**

Tasks:

- A. Designate staff to attend the annual Smithsonian Affiliate Conference
- B. Require department heads to include Smithsonian related activities in annual plans
- C. Engage in regular communication with Smithsonian Affiliate representatives regarding museum activities and plans
- E. Market Smithsonian related merchandise consistent with the Museum's mission statement.

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## VII Conclusion

The long range plan for the Hubbard Museum of the American West represents, as Daniel Hudson Burnham suggested, an organizational commitment to “aim high in our hope and in our work”.

The mission, vision, core values, key challenges, goals, and tasks fit together like bricks with mortar – with the building blocks resulting in a Museum that inspires generations of visitors to engage a usable past in a dialogue that creates a more informed citizenry that understands the history, art, and culture of the American West and how that legacy affects our lives today.

This document represents a collaborative effort between Museum staff, community leaders, museum members, the Advisory Board, Ruidoso Downs City Council representatives, and the general public to chart a course for the Hubbard Museum over the next five years. It also represents a recognition that to be successful, the facility must build on the legacy and vision of Museum founders R.D. and Joan Dale Hubbard, while developing a new identity in its continued role as a major destination attraction for the State of New Mexico and the American Southwest.

There are no “quick fixes”, no calls for “miracles” or for sudden influxes of major monetary support (though it should be noted that no “sudden influxes” from a philanthropic donor would be turned down...) in order to achieve the goals addressed in the document. It is an achievable plan with challenging goals that will require hard work and dedication on behalf of the governing authority, staff, and the institution’s patrons and donors. It empowers staff to act according to the plan, to be proactive rather than reactive, and collaborative rather than isolated.

No plan can address the unforeseeable. It is hoped that external forces beyond our control do not negatively impact the progress advocated within the document. Undoubtedly, however, the flexibility built into the plan represents a resiliency as well, and that external forces will not alter or dull the need to reach for the apex of the Museum profession. The plan should be reviewed annually by the governing authority and staff to ensure that the organizational commitment has not waned, and that progress is being made.

In the end, what matters most is that the quality of the visitor experience at the Hubbard Museum of the American West continues to improve. The point of planning is to ensure that the improvements we seek are executed strategically and thoughtfully, with the best effort that we can muster.