



CHIPPEWA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

Prepared by Knepper Development Strategies
119 Peck | Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783



BACKGROUND

The Chippewa County Historical Society of Chippewa County, Michigan, has been operating as a local organization for more than 100 years, holding its first meeting in 1919. Over the course of time, our all-volunteer organization has weathered the ups and downs that many similar organizations face, and has continued to serve Sault Ste. Marie, Chippewa County, and the eastern Upper Peninsula as the area's primary local historical society.

However, the Chippewa County Historical Society has experienced significant change as an organization in recent years. One of the biggest changes was due to the acquisition of our own building. We secured the historic News Building at 115 Ashmun Street in Downtown Sault Ste. Marie in 2006. However, our building is in need of restoration.

The Chippewa County Historical Society understands that the scope of work required to rehabilitate our building, as well as to accomplish our organizational mission within the changing environment, demographics, and culture in Sault Ste. Marie and Chippewa County - especially following the COVID-19 pandemic - requires us to plan for our future.

This strategic plan offers our board of directors and all our stakeholders a road map to follow as we work together to restore our historic building and prepare the Chippewa County Historical Society for an impactful and prosperous future.

METHODOLOGY

BOARD INVOLVEMENT

The Chippewa County Historical Society began internal strategic planning over the past few years, analyzing opportunities and challenges that the organization faced. A detailed electronic survey was also disseminated to the entire Board in 2020, and results were compiled for future consideration.

PLANNING SESSIONS

In spring 2022, the Board engaged Knepper Development Strategies to coordinate a full board planning session and facilitate a goal setting process. Nearly all board members participated in a day-long session, resulting in the establishment of four over-arching goals, with additional objectives and tactics considered.

“The mission of the Chippewa County Historical Society is to promote an appreciation of the history of the Upper Peninsula, in particular that of Chippewa County and Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, by collecting, preserving, exhibiting, and interpreting that history for audiences of all ages and interests.”

DELIVERABLES AND OUTCOMES

This strategic plan helps to clearly establish realistic goals and objectives consistent with the Chippewa County Historical Society’s mission and focuses the Organization’s resources on key priorities going forward. The following pages outline four overarching goals established through this strategic planning process.



2022 CCHS Board Strategic Planning Session



GOAL 1 SUCCESS MEASUREMENTS

- Increase in newsletter subscribers and social media followers
- New revenue-generating contract(s)/agreement(s)



GOAL 1 TOOLS TO UTILIZE

- e-Newsletter software
- Social media including Facebook and Instagram
- Promotional items featuring CCHS logo, information (banners, swag, etc.)



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Create master list of collaborators/competitors
- Meet with key orgs. and identify opportunities
- Identify one or two events each year and establish CCHS presence
- Grow newsletter mailing list, social media followers

GOAL 1

Be the regional leader in history education and preservation.

Objective 1: Strengthen CCHS' presence in the community

- Strengthen connections with local government, area businesses, and key individuals to position CCHS as key decision maker regarding the region's historic assets
- Revamp newsletter format, content, and distribution list to appeal to a wider ranging audience
- Distinguish CCHS from other area history-related organizations by improving membership awareness

Objective 2: Promote the CCHS brand more prevalently

- Engage in cross promotion with other organizations and trade for sponsorships to ensure brand and logo is more visible
- Identify annual events and/or regional programs to collaborate with in order to increase public awareness of CCHS

Objective 3: Re-engage as the eastern Upper Peninsula's leader in history education

- Consider establishment of contract with City of Sault Ste. Marie to manage historic homes on Water Street
- Re-launch Summer History Camp program
- Launch internship program for LSSU, Sault High history students
- Catalog and promote CCHS' history education installations (e.g. Water Street, Power Canal, historic homes)



GOAL 2 SUCCESS MEASUREMENTS

- Increase in annual attendance
- Publication of annual program/event calendar



GOAL 2 TOOLS TO UTILIZE

- CCHS website
- Annual calendar
- CCHS collections



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Serve on exhibits committee
- Contact other area orgs. and coordinate publication of annual calendar
- Serve on programming/events committee

GOAL 2

Actively encourage the public to engage with our collections and programming.

Objective 1: Increase CCHS' programming with a focus on regional appeal

- Create a programming plan to begin each calendar year
- Host increased events with better attendance
- Change exhibits and displays on a consistently scheduled basis
- Coordinate events and programming with other history-focused groups in the eastern Upper Peninsula

Objective 2: Improve our abilities to communicate information on our programming and collections

- Create advertising/marketing strategy promoting programming and exhibits
- Engage the regional population as well as the summer tourist population through innovative marketing
- Collaborate with other area organizations to share information and promote programming, exhibits, collections
- Update CCHS website to reflect new information, feature collections, exhibits
- Engage social media to better announce upcoming programming and events



GOAL 3 SUCCESS MEASUREMENTS

- Completion of 115 Ashmun Street renovations
- Improved operations due to completed renovations



GOAL 3 TOOLS TO UTILIZE

- Existing blueprints and conceptual designs
- Historic photos, Sanborn maps, fire maps
- Building committee experience



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Serve on building committee
- Move collections to appropriate storage locations to allow for construction
- Engage in fundraising efforts

GOAL 3

Improve our physical space to enhance the visitor, volunteer, and staff experience

Objective 1: Complete renovations to 115 Ashmun Street

- Finalize detailed plans that include elevator, removal of front stairs, and determinations for garage and cinder block additions
- Utilize plans to secure cost estimates for full rehabilitation
- Identify grant funding and other funding sources to complete renovations
- Improve and maintain the parking lot
- Build working relationships with neighboring property owners to ensure teamwork during rehabilitation process

Objective 2: Form committees to improve “in-house” experience after rehabilitation

- Analyze building flow, identify prime locations for exhibits
- Consider lighting, paint, finishes, restrooms and other stakeholder and customer needs

Objective 3: Upgrade gift shop to allow for improved retail experience, increased sales

- Inventory gift shop, identify unique local history items to add
- Create retail displays featuring high-profit margin items to drive sales

Objective 4: Continue to upgrade technological capabilities and equipment



GOAL 4 SUCCESS MEASUREMENTS

- Standardization of an annual budget
- Revenues exceed expenses
- Capacity grows to a level that supports paid staffing



GOAL 4 TOOLS TO UTILIZE

- Annual budget
- Finance committee
- Peer organization survey



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Finance committee
- Fundraising committee
- Membership committee
- Youth engagement

GOAL 4

Prepare for a sustainable and dynamic future

Objective 1: Improve our organization’s financial stability

- Prepare and follow an annual budget
- Review and correct existing membership list
- Consider increase to membership giving levels
- Encourage planned and charitable giving
- Schedule quarterly fundraising committee meetings
- Identify opportunities to monetize existing programming

Objective 2: Create a healthy volunteer environment

- “Lighten the load” on existing volunteer base
- Create best practices to ensure continuity of information between volunteers
- Connect with area schools to engage youth in volunteerism, preparing them to be CCHS’ future leaders

Objective 3: Consider long term capacity needs

- Investigate how peer organizations sustainably operate with paid director/staff
- Identify opportunities to retain contractors for support services
- Consider memberships in support associations for idea generation, leadership training, etc.



AN INTERVIEW

With Board President Carolyn Person on behalf of the Chippewa County Historical Society Board of Directors

Why do you believe in the Chippewa County Historical Society?

People who believe in preserving history recognized the need for an organization to be responsible for gathering and caring for area history. In our tri-county Eastern Upper Peninsula area, the Chippewa County Historical Society is currently embracing the digital age within our various collections. We realize the importance of environmental storage of archival materials. In offering a safe repository for archived material to other historical societies in our eastern end, we hope to prevent the loss of historical material. In the last 30 years great strides have been made in our mission of collecting, preserving, and sharing the importance of our past.

“Hearing or reading our stories remind us of connections to past family members and events that have shaped our community. This background gives an identity to the community.”

- Carolyn Person,
CCHS Board Chair

Why do you believe in emphasizing the eastern Upper Peninsula’s people and their stories?

Each geographic area has a unique story to emphasize the progress of civilization. As a gateway to trapping, fishing, mining and commerce, the eastern U.P. has its share of glamorous or heartbreaking stories of the people who contributed to our lives today. Hearing or reading these stories remind us of connections to past family members and events that have shaped our community. This background gives an identity to the community.

How does the Organization’s programming and events continue to focus participants on your purpose and mission?

Speakers are scheduled to tell stories of people and events of the last 300 years. Projects reflect visual remembrance of historical interest. Our videos of interviews and model train show remind people we are an active organization. It is important to keep our mission in the public eye.

What do you hope to achieve in terms of ongoing research and publication in the digital age?

History is happening now. Times are changing so quickly as our area grows and expands that there is a need for continued monitoring of those happenings. A goal is to provide research facilities for past and future developments. Publishing those results are part of our mission to educate. Current gathering of area happenings prepares the way for history in progress. Assisting people in family research and providing information of building and home sites links people and places. Having this wealth of information available promotes our area and encourages development.

What are our goals for collections storage?

Our collection includes photos, negatives, archived historical papers and letters, and textiles among other collectibles. Temperature and humidity control is vital for preservation of these materials. The building restoration plan would include several areas with different requirements to safely house the various collections. Quality preservation is an important goal. Digital archiving creates a basis of information of each item. Utilizing and

understanding the different programs available is vital in today's world. Maintaining distinct records enhances the importance of the collections.

What is your vision for 115 Ashmun Street?

The 1889 News building creates an historic place for the 100-year-old Chippewa County Historical Society. With careful renovation the building can house the growing collection, provide space for research, offer mini exhibits, and provide repository space for other historical collections.

How does the Chippewa County Historical Society wish to position itself in terms of financial viability and sustainability?

Continued membership and support are the basis of our income. The gift shop has potential, and sales of books through the website are an added bonus. Creating a viable educational society in the community that would attract monetary gifts would enable contributions for working capital. It is important to keep projects in mind that benefit the historical community and focus on historical significance of our past.

What is our long term vision for the future of CCHS?

With careful planning, the Society can survive the test of time and continue to preserve the history of the county. We offer a chronological recording of life in this region. Having a building to house the collection, environmental storage, a workable retrievable system and a community proud of its place in history generates a proud community. CCHS is and will continue to be a leader in the continued development of our historical city.

"CCHS is and will continue to be a leader in the continued development of our historical city."

- Carolyn Person,
CCHS Board Chair



Our thanks.

-2022 CCHS Board of Directors

- Carolyn Person, President
- Kelly Freeman, Vice President
- Mary June, Past President
- Sharon Dorrity, Treasurer
- Virginia Cymbalist, Secretary
- Robert Aldrich
- Bernie Arbic
- James Dwyer
- Steve Gordon
- Dennis Hank
- Ruth Nevue
- Patty Olsen
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