



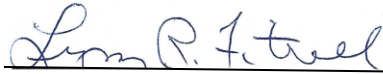
# **Strategic Plan**

**2023 –2027**

**Taking pride in our history and our future.**

**Approval**

This Strategic Plan was created by a board appointed committee comprised of museum staff and board members in September of 2022. It is a continuation of previous plans beginning in 2009. The plan has been reviewed by the Board of Trustees and is approved to serve as a guiding document for the board and staff of the Museum Division. It will be reviewed and amended once a year with the museum’s budget review and approval.



Lynn Fitrell  
President  
Museum Board of Trustees

10/20/2022

Date

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## **PURPOSE:**

The strategic plan is intended to guide the St. Mary's County Museum Division's work through significant institutional changes in support of a dynamic period of renovation, reconstruction, refocus and renewal taking place from 2023 through 2027. The plan provides:

1. A process for the Board of Trustees and Museum Division staff to continue operations during building construction and exhibit renovations
2. Milestones for the revitalization of existing and introduction of new public programs and special events
3. A framework for keeping the public and government officials up to date throughout the implementation of the plan; and
4. Measurable objectives to track the Division's progress toward achieving its goals

This plan covers five years, during which time the existing St. Clement's Island Museum building will be demolished, and a new 4,500 square foot museum will be built, and the Drayden African American Schoolhouse, Piney Point Lighthouse Museum & Historic Park and the Old Jail Museum & Leonardtown Visitor Center will be improved, maintained and supported. New programs, special events and relationships with other agencies and local nonprofits will be pursued to ensure that the Museum Division's sites are on par with national museum standards, thereby making them a visitor and educational focal point for St. Mary's County.

## **MISSION:**

The Museum Division's four sites are essential to the collection, preservation and interpretation of historic buildings, locations and artifacts that illustrate the natural, cultural and social histories of St. Clement's Island and the Potomac River, and elements of the county's history that are not researched or interpreted through other heritage attractions. The Division's focus is on the preservation of these historic structures and artifacts and the development of events and programming to encourage both the celebration of the natural environment and hands-on learning about the life and times of the county's past residents.

The sites managed by the Division serve as a link to the past by bringing the area's rich cultural heritage to life for technology-based, twenty-first-century residents and visitors. These museums connect the history of diverse residents by sharing their stories through permanent and changing exhibits, special events and public programs.

As the keeper of the birthplace of Maryland, the Museum Division is responsible to all Maryland residents, not just those living in St. Mary's County. The Division is the primary collector, interpreter and presenter of Maryland's early history.

Approximately 73% of the day travelers to the Museum Division's sites come from within the state, and are looking for exhibits, research materials and public programs to enjoy while learning about the founding of Maryland. At the Division's sites, visitors can experience the state's history by stepping onto the island of the colonists' first landing, climbing the oldest lighthouse tower overlooking the Potomac River, sitting at a child's school desk or exploring one

of many scenic byways and historic trails that broaden and enhance the stories of the Museum Division's sites.

The staff and volunteers who support the Museum Division take their responsibility to the community seriously by collecting and caring for the artifacts, photographs and other records of the county, and helping to preserve both the built and natural landscape in furtherance of the Division's mission.

## **HISTORY:**

In its forty-year history, the Museum Division's holdings have grown from a single building to now include four distinct properties with two additional historic sites, six historic buildings, seven contemporary buildings, two piers, a kayak launch, a water taxi, an educational pavilion and a bio-retention pond. The collection includes over 5,200 artifacts and the archives and library include 2,156 documents, photographs, maps and books.

The Museum Division manages:

1. St. Clement's Island Museum
2. Piney Point Lighthouse Museum & Historic Park
3. Drayden African American Schoolhouse
4. Old Jail Museum & Leonardtown Visitor Center

The Division's original holding is the St. Clement's Island Museum, founded in 1975 through a cooperative effort of the Optimist Club of the Seventh District, St. Mary's County and the State of Maryland. This museum was established to interpret and tell the history of the events on St. Clements Island, the landing place of the first English colonists in 1634.

The St. Clement's Island Museum was originally located in a house on Bay View Road in Colton's Point, which it quickly outgrew. In conjunction with Maryland's 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the first landing in 1984, the museum was relocated to a larger, purpose-built building, where it still operates. In 1991, the Charlotte Hall Schoolhouse was relocated to the grounds and is open for public viewing and programming. During that same year, the St. Clement's Island Museum began its support of the Blackstone Island Lighthouse by carrying volunteers and visitors to the Island to tour the lighthouse.

Over the years, the museum building at St. Clement's Island has weathered and deteriorated, prompting the Commissioners of St. Mary's County to initiate planning in 2014 for a new and larger building. Construction and opening of the new museum are scheduled to take place within the next few years.

The Piney Point Lighthouse Museum & Historic Park was overseen by the county from 1980 until 1990, when it was then added to the Museum Division's holdings. This museum includes the following buildings:

1. Lighthouse, Keeper's Quarters and fuel oil building, built in 1836
2. Potomac River Maritime Exhibit Building

3. Maintenance Building, which was once a U.S. Navy workshop
4. Museum Store and offices

In 2000, the Drayden African American Schoolhouse was restored and came under the stewardship of the Museum Division. Sitting on its original site, it is one of the best preserved one-room schoolhouses in the country. The school opened its doors in the 1890s and operated as a segregated school until 1942, when it was closed, and the students were transferred to the school in Jarboesville.

In 2020, the Old Jail Museum in Leonardtown was added to the Division's holdings and now functions as both a museum and a visitor center. It was built in 1876 and served the county as a jail until 1945. This museum provides rich stories about local law enforcement including the history of sheriffs and prisoners. As one of the four sites in the county on the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Trail, it tells the tale of abolitionists and freedom seekers.

## **GOVERNANCE:**

The St. Mary's County Museum Division is part of the Department of Recreation & Parks and is subject to the direction of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County. In 1982, the Commissioners appointed a Board of Trustees to provide advice and assistance concerning the running of the Museum Division. Made up of members representing different geographic areas of the county, the 11-member board works closely with the staff and serves as a conduit to community leaders, especially the Commissioners.

The Museum Board of Trustees, as well as the Friends of St. Clement's Island & Piney Point Museums, act as liaisons to the public through regular written and verbal reports on what is happening with the Museum Division. Annual briefings to the community are provided through St. Mary's County Government's Citizens Academy, frequent public speaking engagements with community groups and local nonprofit organizations, as well as via televised Commissioners' briefings.

As part of the St. Mary's County Department of Recreation & Parks, the Museum Division's operating and capital improvement budgets and other resources are determined by the Commissioners. The Division's operating budget is supplemented through the support of the Friends of the St. Clement's Island & Piney Point Museums. The Friends is an entirely volunteer run 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to raise funds for activities at the Museum Division's sites through museum store sales, special events, membership, major donor solicitation and volunteer programs.

The county's capital improvement project (CIP) budget for the Museum Division includes \$1.5 million for the construction of the new St. Clement's Island Museum building. This building will double the space for exhibits to allow the complete story of the first landing, from both the English and Native American perspectives, to be told. Final planning and construction of the building will be completed during the five years covered by this plan.

In the years since its founding, the Museum Division's purpose and performance have become nationally accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). Initial accreditation was in

1992 and reaccreditation has been achieved as required ever since. The Division is responsible for annual reporting to the AAM, National Park Service (NPS), Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Maryland Historic Trust, per memoranda of understanding with these partners.

Finally, the Museum Division's staff adhere to the guiding principles and values of the county and continuously strive to attract diverse visitors, educators and historians to the museum sites, buildings, programs and services. The Division offers rewarding educational and recreational experiences for the public, considers the preservation and dissemination of local history vital to the community and creates experiences and programs with this in mind. The Division considers partnerships with government and other entities key to its success and works to create and sustain these alliances.

## **VISION AND CORE VALUES:**

The Museum Division's staff and volunteers adhere to the following vision:

To encourage the public's exploration, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge of the culture and history of St. Mary's County, in perpetuity; to serve as a resource, liaison and advocate for all of the county's public and private natural and cultural resources; to lead by example as institutions that instill pride of place for all citizens of the county; to create an atmosphere of unity through the exhibiting of our shared heritage; to be places where residents can embrace the area's past, enjoy its present and imagine its future together; and to use this history to provide a context in which to form intelligent opinions and to make informed decisions.

To fulfill this mandate, the Division's programs and collections will continue to reflect the changing nature of society through increased and improved offerings and enhanced services to the public. The Division must expand the number of and continue to recruit, train and retain the very best personnel that it can - both paid and volunteer.

The staff and volunteers will work year-round to put the Museum Division's core values into practice. Furthermore, as a division of county government, the staff and volunteers:

- Recognize the strengths and welcome the differences of each person
- Will not discriminate in any way
- Show empathy to each other and the visitors
- Strive for excellence in all they do
- Exhibit professionalism in their work
- Maintain a high level of integrity in their work
- Work cooperatively to identify and solve problems
- Are attentive to the changing needs of the visitors and strive to meet the needs of a diverse community
- Continue to operate, maintain and improve existing facilities and programs in an efficient and cost-effective manner for the benefit of residents and visitors

## **ENGAGING THE PUBLIC:**

The Museum Division's staff and volunteers recognize that the history they preserve belongs to the community they serve. It is therefore important to engage county residents in the work of collecting, preserving and sharing of this history with the broader public. To accomplish this, the Division maintains partnerships with advisors from local agencies and non-profit organizations including, but not limited to, the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions (UCAC), the United States Navy, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the St. Clements Hundred and the Piscataway Tribe.

When members of the broader community are involved, they become stakeholders, ensuring that the four museum sites remain as vital parts of the community. The public's involvement also helps to ensure that the museums reflect the complete history of the county, thereby supporting the Division's continuous efforts to achieve greater inclusion, diversity and equity in its retelling of the past.

As community resources, the museums provide places for people to connect with one another through attending or co-hosting events. The presence of these sites is directly tied to the community's perception of the quality of life in St. Mary's County and to the ongoing attraction of new and repeat visitors to the county.

## **MEASURABLE GOALS:**

By adhering to the mission, vision and St. Mary's County Government's core values, the Museum Division will:

1. Be recognized as the leader in collecting, preserving and interpreting St. Mary's County and early Maryland history through its sites, research library and educational programs
2. Become a lifelong learning institution by enhancing the current offerings of high-quality programs and adding teacher workshops, adult learning opportunities, public lectures and other events and programs for the public
3. Embrace an active engagement approach to the visitor experience by providing visitors with enhanced single and multi-day, participatory experiences for travelers of all ages and abilities in support of St. Mary's County as a premier tourism destination.
4. Lead the way in collaborative programming with other agencies and nonprofits by establishing channels dedicated to connecting stories and programs across the region, thereby enriching and enhancing the visitor's experience in St. Mary's County
5. Continue to expand the donor, member and event sponsor base through community appeals, membership drives and increased program offerings
6. Broaden and deepen the community's respect of the Museum Division as a responsible steward of its historic properties

## **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:**

Adherence to the mission of collecting, preserving and interpreting the natural, cultural and social histories of St. Clement's Island and the Potomac River is the driving principle behind the



Museum Division's activities. This mandate is the very reason for the Division's existence, and as such, is top of mind when planning and reviewing programs and services. The mission is also the basis for soliciting funding, volunteers and partners.

Alliance-building, adaptability and engagement are vehicles used to achieve the mission and will be integral to the development of programs and events for each museum site. A strong focus on data-driven strategies that include evaluations of programs and services, and frequent benchmarking of the implementation of the strategic plan, will also be required.

To ensure sustainable success, the Museum Division will continue to be both ethical and transparent in all transactions and activities pertaining to its mission.

### **ASSUMPTION OF STRENGTHS:**

- County financial and service support
- Its immutable position as the home of the first landing of colonists in Maryland
- Experiential tourism offerings
- Unique and diverse exhibits
- Strong local and volunteer support
- Authentic experiences
- Quality maintenance of historic structures, artifacts and documents

### **ASSUMPTION OF WEAKNESSES:**

- Lack of public awareness of all that these sites have to offer
- Inadequate parking for large events
- Lack of adequate outreach programming
- Inadequate use of technology
- Staff retention; part-time versus full-time staff for senior level positions
- Not living up to potential
- Lack of diversity training

### **ASSUMPTION OF OPPORTUNITIES:**

- Collaborations with other sites, hotels and restaurants
- Increased call for interactive, experiential and recreational pursuits
- Innovations in programming and exhibit offerings
- Alternate options for use of spaces: weddings, small meetings and conferences
- Educated and wealthy local population
- Knowledgeable staff
- Capitalizing on the many heritage and recreation trails throughout the region

## **ASSUMPTION OF THREATS:**

- Poor connectivity to other sites and metropolitan area
- Large local competition for discretionary time and money
- Stagnant economy
- Remote locations
- Joint ownership/management of some of the properties
- Environmental conditions & climate change

## **ACHIEVING THE GOALS:**

**Goal 1.** The Museum Division will be recognized as the leader in collecting, preserving and interpreting St. Mary's County and early Maryland history through its sites, research library and educational and public programs.

Success will be shown by an increase in visitation, especially by people from within the county, and an increase in the use of the research library and artifacts.

1. Achieve the establishment of the Southern Maryland National Heritage Area, the 56<sup>th</sup> in the United States, which contains over 300 sites of interest
  - a. Advocate for the final passage of the legislation by the U.S. Senate. Legislation passed the U.S. House of Representatives in July 2022.
  - b. Participate in writing and implementing the Area Management Plan
2. Construct and open a new building for St. Clement's Island Museum to more than double the site's exhibition and programming space
  - a. Temporarily locate operation of the Museum Store and the water taxi to the Museum Annex building
    - i. Enhance marketing and signage of the store and water taxi to attract the public during construction of the new building
    - ii. Display renderings of the new museum building in the Museum Store to heighten awareness
  - b. Prepare and store artifacts in the Museum Collections Building during the construction phase
  - c. Develop and implement a communication plan about construction of the new museum building to both inform the public and heighten interest
3. Install new exhibit at Piney Point Lighthouse Museum about the World War II U-1105 submarine, an advanced dive site, in support of Maryland's first Shipwreck Preserve
4. Update the preservation plan for each of the Museum Division's sites
  - a. Market the preservation plan to increase public awareness
5. Establish events to coincide with the exhibits

- a. As changing exhibit galleries open, plan openings and public lectures
- 6. Update all exhibits to be inclusive
  - a. Develop audio-visual presentations for all non-handicapped accessible sites
- 7. Make better use of the Drayden African American Schoolhouse
- 8. Evaluate the holdings of the research library, inventory items in the collection and make it more available and accessible to the public
  - a. Upgrade to the cloud version of the PastPerfect software program for museum record keeping
    - i. Maintain paper files as back-ups
- 9. Continue partnership with Southern Maryland History Coalition to support the continued development of an African American resource database
- 10. Expand the Appraiser Fair to increase public awareness of collections

**Goal 2.** The Museum Division will become a lifelong learning institution by enhancing the current offerings of high-quality programs and adding teacher workshops, adult learning opportunities, public lectures and other events and programs for the public.

Success will be shown by an increase in attendance at special events, the creation of new partnerships and collaborations and increased requests for programs.

- 1. Enhance lifelong learning experiences at the museums
  - a. Increase staffing capacity
    - i. Achieve full-time status for the Education/Programming Coordinator position
    - ii. Achieve full-time status for the Water Taxi Captain
    - iii. Add additional Museum Assistants
- 2. Expand existing off-site programming for adults and children
  - a. Engage local scout troops, schools, adult day care centers, senior centers, etc.
  - b. Re-institute *Museums on the Go* travelling program
- 3. Utilize the museums as learning laboratories
  - a. Develop partnerships with local learning community
    - i. Public and private schools
    - ii. Scouts and related youth groups
    - iii. College of SOMD and other higher education institutions
- 4. Become part of the adult education program at local colleges
  - a. Use contacts at the colleges to identify appropriate staff and offer cooperative courses
- 5. Meet public needs by adding new special events and programs
  - a. Hold public forums and use surveys to identify what kinds of programs are desired
- 6. Promote public awareness of Museum Division's evolving programs and collections
  - a. Market new exhibits to include on and off-site programming to create awareness

- b. Share preservation plans with the public through events, lectures and other methods
  - c. Promote research use of the library and archives
- 7. Improve outreach programming
  - a. Develop a variety of mission-based programs for each site to be taken out to the community
- 8. Work with school system in developing field trips to all the sites

**Goal 3.** St. Mary's County is a tourism destination, so the Museum Division will embrace an active engagement approach to the visitor experience and will provide visitors with enhanced single and multi-day, participatory experiences for travelers of all ages and abilities.

Success will be shown by an increase in overnight stays and restaurant meal sales, increased use of the public piers and kayak launches, increased visitation from outside the county and increased use of the trail maps.

1. Purchase larger vessel to hold up to 40 passengers for tours from both St. Clement's Island Museum and Piney Point Lighthouse Museum
2. Increase public awareness of the many scenic byways and historic trails that pass by the Museum Division's sites such as the Religious Freedom Scenic Byway, the National Parks Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Trail, the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and others
  - a. Coordinate through Visit St. Mary's MD to market with other area sites
  - b. Improve signage at all sites to identify trails
  - c. Improve public awareness of all National Parks Service stamp stops
3. Increase public awareness of all museums and historic sites within St. Mary's County
  - a. Develop collaborative programming and marketing among the sites
  - b. Establish a county-wide passport program among the sites
  - c. Increase awareness of North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association participation
4. Collaborate with Visit St. Mary's MD to increase visitation
  - a. Create tourism packages that combine dining and lodging with museum visits
  - b. Promote purchase of multi-day passes to events
5. Continue staff training on customer and visitor engagement/retention

**Goal 4.** The Museum Division will lead the way in collaborative programming with other agencies in St. Mary's County, establishing channels dedicated to connecting stories and programs across the region, thereby enriching and enhancing the visitor experience.

Success will be shown by an increase in repeat visitation, by an increase in the diversity of the visitors and by an increase in the length of time visitors spend in the exhibits.

1. Continue collaboration with the Piscataway People in developing new permanent exhibit at St. Clement's Island Museum
  - a. Assist the Piscataway with the writing of their own storyline for the exhibit
  - b. Work with the Piscataway in choosing appropriate artifacts for the exhibit
2. Enhance programming at the Drayden African American Schoolhouse
  - a. Continue working with the Unified Committee for Afro American Contributions (UCAC) to offer additional programs
    - i. Enhance program offerings during Juneteenth and Black History Month
  - b. Identify ways to leverage the Slackwater Project at St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) to increase visitation and public awareness of the museum sites.
    - i. Make oral history tapes available via QR code or other means
  - c. Create curriculum-based programming to encourage school field trips
3. Increase public awareness of all museums and historic sites within St. Mary's County
  - a. Develop collaborative programming and marketing among the sites
  - b. Establish county-wide passport program among the sites
  - c. Increase awareness of North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association participation
4. Develop programming based on the many trails and byways connecting sites in the county

**Goal 5.** The Museum Division will continue to expand the donor, member and event sponsor base through community appeals, membership drives and increased program offerings.

Success will be measured by the increase in the number of donors, members and event sponsors.

1. Offer additional perks for members through special program offerings
  - a. Offer incentives if they bring in new members
  - b. Create a community-wide appeal
  - c. Leverage and maximize membership in groups such as the Chamber of Commerce
2. Create special focus appeals to enhance membership diversity
3. Increase the number of event sponsors
  - a. Offer incentives for multi-year sponsorships
  - b. Create dedicated appeal for each event
    - i. Appraiser Fair
    - ii. First Landing Wine & Arts Festival
    - iii. Black Diamond Civil War Weekend
    - iv. St. Clement's Island Heritage Day
    - v. Potomac Jazz & Seafood Festival
    - vi. National Lighthouse Weekend
    - vii. Children's Day at St. Clement's Island Museum

- viii. RetroFest on the Potomac
- ix. Dinner & a Cruise Series
- x. Conversation & a Cruise series, Outdoor Adventure at Piney Point, St. Clement's Island Museum Art Kids and other educational programs and events
- xi. Holiday Events & Open Houses at each museum site

**Goal 6.** The Museum Division will continue to earn the community's respect as a responsible steward of its historic properties.

Success will be measured by the attendance at events, by community involvement in the projects and by the number of objects and stories that are collected throughout the year.

1. Promote the preservation of the Division's historic properties
  - a. Develop a preservation plan for Piney Point Lighthouse and Keeper's Quarters
    - i. Seek approval from the U.S. Coast Guard and Maryland Historic Preservation Commission
  - b. Develop a preservation plan for the Drayden African American School House in cooperation with the UCAC.
  - c. Market the preservation plans to enhance public awareness
2. Develop maintenance plans for each of the Division's non-historic structures
3. Enhance conservation of artifacts
  - a. Develop plan for restoration of outdoor exhibits
4. Continue to upgrade exhibits and facilities
  - a. Develop a changing exhibit schedule
5. Create a public communication plan
  - a. Issue press releases about the progress of the new museum's construction and new exhibits
    - i. Place renderings of the new St. Clement's Island Museum at Piney Point, the Old Jail Museum, and the Drayden African American Schoolhouse to peak public interest
  - b. Provide lectures and other means to inform public about new exhibits
    - i. Incorporate marketing plan
  - c. Ensure that the museum's staff at each site is tasked to promote news about the Museum Division's changing exhibits and new construction with visitors