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# COLUMBUS MUSEUM: STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2019

May 2014

Lord Cultural Resources is a global professional practice dedicated to creating cultural capital worldwide.

We assist people, communities and organizations to realize and enhance cultural meaning and expression.

We distinguish ourselves through a comprehensive and integrated full-service offering built on a foundation of key competencies: visioning, planning and implementation.

We value and believe in cultural expression as essential for all people. We conduct ourselves with respect for collaboration, local adaptation and cultural diversity, embodying the highest standards of integrity, ethics and professional practice.

We help clients clarify their goals; we provide them with the tools to achieve those goals; and we leave a legacy as a result of training and collaboration.

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# From the Strategic Planning Committee Chair

It is my pleasure to introduce the Columbus Museum Strategic Plan 2015-2019!

It started in 2013 at the occasion of our 60th anniversary with the question 'How can the Columbus Museum be a cultural leader and stay relevant to our community in a rapidly changing and competitive environment?'

The Board of Trustees engaged Lord Cultural Resources - a leader in Strategic Planning for Museums - to help us with the process.

For several months our consultant team Lindsay Martin, Joy Bailey Bryant and Priya Sircar worked with members of our community, the Muscogee County School District and Museum staff and Board members. They challenged us and encouraged us throughout the process. They provided us the necessary tools to think strategically about the future of the Columbus Museum. After many meetings, conversations and a Board and staff retreat we developed a vision statement, foundation statements and goals and objectives. The Board approved the new statements, goals and objectives on February 11, 2014. This Plan will help us to move forward in a meaningful and focused way. We are very much looking forward to the implementation and to celebrating our progress.

I am very thankful for a very generous community, a committed Museum staff and engaged Museum Board. I would like to specifically thank the Museum senior staff team for their constructive participation and valuable input throughout the process and Board President, Trip Tomlinson and Vice-President Fray McCormick for their full support. I commend the Strategic Planning Committee for their flexibility and dedication and I thank community members, Museum staff and Board members for collaborating and for making this plan possible.

Marleen De Bode Olivie  
Chair Strategic Planning Committee

# 1. Charting the Future

The Columbus Museum is deeply rooted in culture, community, and education. The Museum began with an inspired gift by the W.C. Bradley Family when they donated a 13-acre estate to serve as a center of culture and education. The Columbus Museum opened its doors to the public on March 29, 1953 offering lectures, classes, and exhibitions of fine art and historical artifacts. Over time the Museum evolved, adopting a focus on collecting American art and telling the story of life in the Chattahoochee Valley.

As the Museum celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013, it took the opportunity to celebrate the past by engaging in deep conversations about the Museum's future. The Board of Trustees led the process in partnership with the Museum staff and the Muscogee County School District. Lord Cultural Resources facilitated the planning process focused on articulating a vision for the future informed by much discussion and research. Reflective of its commitment to serving the broader community, more than 140 people contributed to the development of plan<sup>1</sup>.

This report serves as a bridge, concluding the planning phase while also kicking off the implementation phase with the start of the 2015 fiscal year. It includes foundation statements, goals, and objectives that will be implemented over the next five years. They are the outputs of a robust process that included an all day retreat of the full board in late September 2013; several meetings of the Strategic Planning Committee; and qualitative and quantitative research that included interviews with external key opinion leaders, interviews with Board members and a Board survey, staff workshops and interviews, community workshops, and financial and operations assessment. To guide the implementation, Museum staff has developed action plans for each objective; progress will be monitored quarterly by Board and staff leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A: Acknowledgements lists all participants in the planning process.

## 2. Vision & Strategy

The Columbus Museum will be a leader in the Chattahoochee Valley and distinguish itself through an educational approach that is in the spirit of its deep connection to Muscogee County School District. It will also seek to integrate American art, history of the Chattahoochee Valley, and the unique setting in Bradley Olmsted Garden.

The following definition of success will guide the Museum moving forward:

- Serve as a cutting edge cultural organization.
- Empower the public to feel ownership of the Museum.
- Engage the community as an accessible and welcoming center of learning.
- Be a highly visible organization with a lot of “buzz” about town.
- Fill the galleries, exhibitions, and garden with activity and visitors.
- Build a high quality collection and enhance public access to it.
- Ensure that every school-age child visits the Museum.
- Bring the Museum into classrooms furthering learning through art and history.
- Connect with teachers and serve as an essential partner.
- Actively partner with other cultural, educational and social service organizations, such as the Springer Opera, the Civil War Naval Museum, CSU, and United Way of Chattahoochee Valley.
- Enhance art and history appreciation among the local population.
- Continue on a path toward long-term financial security and sustainability.



## 2.1 Foundation Statements

### Mission: Why we exist

*The Columbus Museum brings American art and history to life for the communities of the Chattahoochee Valley.*

### Vision: The impact we strive to have

*The Columbus Museum is central to life in the Chattahoochee Valley as a hub of community learning and enjoyment. Through an educational approach the Museum strives to ignite creativity, inspire critical thinking, and spark conversation.*

### Mandate: What we do

The Columbus Museum:

- Delivers educational programs and learning experiences as an integral part of the Muscogee County School District.
- Presents compelling exhibitions and programs that link art and history.
- Generates and shares new knowledge and research through exhibitions, publications, and web-based media.
- Collects, preserves, and interprets high quality works of American art and significant historical objects with a focus on regional history.
- Integrates the Olmsted Garden as a key part of the museum experience.

### Values: Core beliefs that guide our conduct

**Quality.** We believe that the Chattahoochee Valley deserves only the best; we aim to excel at everything we do.

**Accessibility.** We exemplify Southern hospitality; we are welcoming and friendly to all.

**Collaboration.** Partners are essential; we work to build relationships and co-create with organizations and individuals.

**Curiosity.** We never stop learning or thinking; we continually push boundaries and explore new territory.

**Stewardship.** The Museum will serve in perpetuity; to ensure this, we build and care for our collections, make smart use of our financial resources, and continually invest in our future.

**Accountability.** We exist to benefit the community; we demonstrate our success and value.

# 3. Goals and Objectives

The Strategic Plan yielded five broad organizational goals that support the Mission and Vision. The Vision will become a reality through the implementation of an Action Plan; a series of objectives and specific tasks that create a roadmap for achieving the goals. The Action Plan was developed primarily by Museum staff and identifies how, together with the Board, they will address each of the strategic goals. Key to the Action Plan are assignments of personnel, due dates, outcomes and defined performance measures that will allow leadership to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan over time.

## 1. Strengthen and deepen the Museum's engagement in the community.

- a) Grow audience for the Museum so that it reflects Chattahoochee Valley residents and visitors.
- b) Increase participation of low-income, special needs, African-American, and military communities.
- c) Increase access, reach, and visibility through targeted outreach efforts in the community.
- d) Establish partnerships with social service and other like-minded non-profit organizations.
- e) Strengthen strategic relationships with community leaders.

## 2. Establish the Museum as a leader and partner in education.

- a) Strengthen the partnership with the Muscogee County School District and its schools.
- b) Refine and expand K-12 educational offerings that meet the needs of administrators, educators, and students.
- c) Develop strong working relationships with educational institutions in the Chattahoochee Valley.
- d) Grow public programs and adult education offerings that promote creativity and build community.
- e) Reinstall and reinterpret permanent galleries to enhance learning and promote art and history connections.
- f) Develop and promote the collection as a primary resource for learning and to support key narratives in the permanent exhibition.



- g) Provide a robust digital learning experience.
- h) Grow financial support for education efforts so that they may be provided free of charge or at the lowest cost possible.
- i) Re-launch and validate/emphasize docent program to provide a strong volunteer pool to support education initiatives.

### **3. Provide a fun and enjoyable Museum experience.**

- a) Create a welcoming and comfortable entry experience.
- b) Adopt a culture of hospitality and develop a visitor centric-approach to visitor services, security, and interpretation.
- c) Provide family-friendly visitor amenities to promote comfort and engagement.
- d) Evolve changing exhibition program to connect with community interests and motivate attendance.
- e) Integrate, interpret, and program the Olmsted garden as part of the visitor experience.

### **4. Ensure long-term sustainability and grow organizational capacity.**

- a) Increase accountability at every level.
- b) Cultivate, retain, and attract a talented staff.
- c) Grow volunteer corps to provide expertise and support to Museum activities.
- d) Focus board on long-term strategy, fundraising, executive oversight, and fiduciary responsibilities.
- e) Grow and diversify financial resources—operational and endowment—with a focus on major donors, major gifts, and planned giving.
- f) Refine the relationship with Muscogee County School District to improve efficiency and provide the non-profit corporation with greater responsibility and oversight.

### **5. Strengthen the Museum's brand, communications, and marketing.**

- a) Develop and launch a fresh Museum brand.
- b) Enhance public and media relations to reach the entire Chattahoochee Valley.
- c) Review and align the Museum's marketing efforts with its audience development goals.
- d) Create a communication strategy for promoting the Museum's accomplishments.

# 4. Evaluation

The Strategic Plan is a living document which may be adjusted annually. Progress of the plan will be monitored in four ways:

## 1. Monthly Staff Meetings

Museum staff will come together for a monthly status meeting to report on progress, identify points of collaboration on upcoming tasks, and tackle issues that may be causing any delays.

## 2. Quarterly Board Meetings

The Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee will provide quarterly updates to the Board. The information provided in the update will be based on reports from and discussion with the Director and any other staff members who may be responsible for key tasks that quarter.

## 3. Annual Performance Reviews

The Action Plan provides a clear framework for evaluating each staff member against concrete goals, objectives, and tasks. The Action Plan should be used as a reference document during the performance review process to ensure that each staff member is carrying out this segment of their responsibilities as planned.

## 4. Annual Reporting on Metrics

Measurable outcomes are critical to demonstrate progress, growth, and comparative impact from year to year. Funders, partners, and other supporters all seek metrics as a means for understanding the success of the organization. The performance measures outlined in the Action Plan will be tracked, year to year, to ensure consistent evaluation.

# Appendix A: Acknowledgements

## 2013-2014 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Dr. Gary Gibson, Muscogee County School District Liaison

## COLUMBUS MUSEUM STAFF

Charles T. Butler, Director  
Patricia A. Butts, Assistant to the Director  
Marcolm Tatum, Graphic Designer

### *Collections and Exhibitions*

Kristen Miller Zohn, Director of Collections and Exhibitions  
Rebecca Bush, Curator of History  
Aimee Brooks, Registrar  
Mellda Alexander, Assistant Registrar  
Katie Coakley, Exhibition Coordinator  
Chris Land, Art and Artifact Handler  
Leslie Shirah, Exhibit Preparator

### *Education*

Abbie Gail Edens, Curator of Education  
Jessamy South, Youth and Family Programs Coordinator  
Kaci Kelly, School and Educator Services Coordinator

### *Development*

Donna Atkins, Director of Development  
Ashley Bice, Marketing and Media Manager  
Marsha Mason, Membership Manager  
Laura Narr, Development Assistant  
Whitney Lackey, Social Media and Online Coordinator

### *Administrative Services*

Kimberly Beck, Deputy Director for Operations  
Deborah M. Danford, Bookkeeper  
Mary Goff, Information Assistant  
Logan Arrowood, Thursday/Weekend Receptionist  
Elise Exton, Front Desk Receptionist/Development Assistant  
Jennifer Blomqvist, Museum Shop Manager/Buyer and Volunteer Coordinator  
Rick McGowan, Chief of Security  
Alfred Johnson, Security Deputy  
Gail Solomon Kittrell, Security Deputy  
Ted Sanchez, Building Engineer  
Larry Relf, Head Custodian  
Martha Culp, Peggy James, Carl Upshaw, Custodians

## CONSULTANT TEAM

Lindsay Martin, Principal Consultant & Strategic Plan Lead  
Joy Bailey Bryant, Principal Consultant  
Priya Sircar, Consultant

## KEY OPINION LEADER INTERVIEWS

Billy Blanchard, *President and CEO, Columbus Bank and Trust Co.*  
 Stephen T. Butler, *Chairman of the Board, W. C. Bradley Co.*  
 Cecil Cheves, *Immediate Past President, Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley*  
 Betsy W. Covington, *Executive Director, Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley*  
 Dr. Larry DiChiara, *Superintendent, Phenix City Public Schools*  
 Scott Ferguson, *President and CEO, United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley*  
 Mike Gaymon, *President and CEO, Greater Columbus Georgia Chamber of Commerce*  
 F. Sheffield Hale, *President and CEO, Atlanta History Center*  
 Audrey Hollingsworth, *Chief Human Resources Officer, Synovus*  
 Isaiah Hugley, *City Manager, Columbus, Georgia Consolidated Government*  
 David F. Lewis, *Superintendent of Education, Muscogee County School District*  
 Katie McMaster, *Wife of Fort Benning Commanding General, Maj. Gen. H. R. McMaster*  
 Dr. Timothy S. Mescon, *President, Columbus State University*  
 Paul R. Pierce, *Producing Artistic Director, Springer Opera House/Springer Theatricals*  
 Alan Rothschild, Jr., *Chair, Columbus State University Foundation Board*  
 Teresa Tomlinson, *Mayor, Columbus, Georgia Consolidated Government*  
 Robert Varner, *Board Member, Muscogee County School Board*

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

### *African American Community Members*

Lauren Chambers  
 Derrick Green  
 Willotte Lowe  
 Josina Pittman  
 Crystal Pendleton Shahid  
 Kwame Smith  
 Willette Shalishali

### *Young Adults*

David Arrington  
 Catherine Budzynski  
 Whitney O'Hara  
 Erica Chestnutt  
 Erin McLeod  
 Claudia Olivie

### *Families*

Charlotte Bowman  
 Michelle McCrillis  
 Lisette Perez  
 Jennifer Ricker  
 Chandler Riley  
 Crystal Shahid  
 Ann Tankersley

### *Educators*

Sally Bradley  
 Patty Chamberlain  
 Sue Funk  
 Dr. Gary Gibson  
 Terri Gullatt  
 Robbie Holt  
 Liz Jordan  
 Bob Kidd  
 Chris Lindsay  
 Virginia McCollough  
 Sandy Sherman

### *Cultural Leaders*

Ron Anderson  
 Peter Bowden  
 Mike Bunn  
 Silvia Bunn  
 Erin Fitzhugh Gregory  
 Hannah Israel  
 Ken Johnston  
 Sara Ketcham  
 Anne King  
 Billy Winn  
 Steven Teet