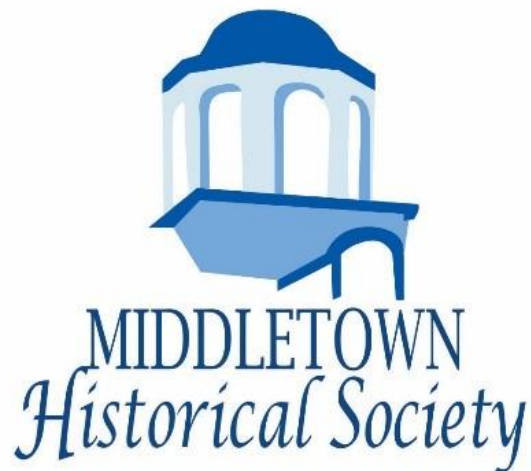


Middletown Historical Society of Middletown, Delaware

Strategic Plan

Preparing for the future and respecting the past



Approved by the Board of Directors: May 20th, 2019

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Introduction

The Middletown Historical Society of Middletown Delaware (MHS) was founded in 1985. The organization was born from the grassroots fight to save an historic structure called Greenlawn in Middletown, Delaware. Started as a volunteer supported organization, MHS has continued to impact the community through programming and special events. The major event put on by MHS is the Olde Tyme Peach Festival, started in 1993. The Peach Festival has grown from a small community festival to the main summer attraction for Middletown, Delaware.

It is known that change is occurring all the time and MHS wants to participate in change rather than reacting to it. With the growth of the Peach Festival and recognizing that change is already occurring, the Board of Directors has undertaken the process of creating the organization's first Strategic Plan. The Board, over 2 years, deliberated how to undertake this process. Recognizing its strengths would be best used in vision casting, the Board partnered with a consultant to manage the strategic planning process.

It became apparent that a community survey would be an effective way to understand how the society is perceived. The survey ran for 6 weeks via the organization's membership newsletter, social media feeds, local interest Facebook groups, Alpha Kappa Alpha Pearls of Distinction, and canvassing conducted at VolunteerBrewery, Appoquinimink Library, and Dutch Country Market. It was also decided that consultation with the Society's membership would be a crucial part of the planning process. An evening of blue-sky thinking with the membership was facilitated by MHS's Board Chair and consultant. The board also conducted a blue-sky thinking day with a third party facilitator.

Like any organization attempting to navigate the rapidly changing landscape of history and nonprofit organizations, MHS recognizes that this strategic plan is a living document.

Mission

The society collects, preserves, educates, and encourages the development of Middletown's history in order to foster historic awareness and pride in our community.

Environmental Analysis

MHS is centered in one of the fastest growing towns in Delaware. From 2000 to 2010 the population grew by more than 200%. This influx of newcomers gives the historical society an opportunity to welcome these new people and encourage pride in our local community. Middletown has a healthy arts scene with the Gibby Arts Center and the Everett Theatre just a 5 minute walk from MHS. The Historical society is within walking distance of pedestrian shopping and eateries, making a visit to Middletown, Delaware an excellent day trip or night out. MHS is also uniquely positioned to serve those who have been underserved by museums and historical societies in the past. By building relationship and talking directly with these communities, MHS can prepare for programs and exhibitions that are inclusive.

Yet, with all this growth and walkability, MHS personnel frequently hear "You're the best kept secret in Delaware!" It will be the work of the board, personnel, and partners to improve community awareness to ensure the longevity and sustainability of the organization.

Goals

The word that has driven this strategic planning process and will guide us in the next three years is Preparation. Recognizing that the society has limited resources and staff time, MHS is committed to improvement in the following areas:

- Internal Programming: in the areas of Collections and Preservation.
- External Programming: in the areas of Exhibitions and Public Programs.
- Awareness: in the areas of Marketing, Volunteers, and Membership
- Leadership: in the areas of the Board and Staff

Objectives

Internal Programming: Collections and Preservation.

- Care for our physical collections by agreeing to a feasible standard of care through the creation of a written Collections Management Policy by June 2020, a Collecting Plan by June 2021, and inventory 80% of Collections by June 2021.
- Become a resource for the community on preservation by creating a preservation portal on the website by June 2022.

External Programming: in the areas of Exhibitions and Public Programs.

- Improve accessibility and presentation of exhibitions by creating a written Exhibition Manual and Timeline by June 2020, creating an Interpretation Plan by June 2020, and through the completion of the re-installation of the Peach Industry Exhibition by June 2019.
- Become a community resource of Middletown's recent past by formally documenting our Oral History Policies and procedures by June 2020, making the Oral History Video Project available on our website by June 2020, and collecting 5 oral history interviews by 2022.
- Create sustainability by crafting opportunities for programmatic partnerships by June 2020.
- Increase community participation by producing a quarterly interactive program plan by June 2021 and running 2 interactive programs by June 2021.
- Make our programs accessible by the regular implementation of the walking tour as an interactive program and with a self-guided tour available on the website by June 2021.

Awareness: in the areas of Marketing, Volunteers, and Membership

- Increase awareness and sustainability through the design of a Volunteer Management Program by June 2020, by initiating a Volunteer and Educator Training Plan by June 2020, and by growing volunteer numbers by 10% by June 2022.
- Become a resource to the next generation of historians, museum professionals, and teachers by establishing an Internship Program by June 2019 and managing 1 Intern every year starting in 2020, and apply for and manage SWAT (University of Delaware Museum Studies January project) by 2022.
- Encourage community awareness by constructing a marketing plan by June 2020 which will lead to 10% increases in the volunteer corps and membership.
- Expand sustainability and community awareness by fashioning a formal membership program by June 2021 and expanding membership by 10% by June 2022.
- Create sustainability and community awareness by developing partnership opportunities with local businesses and other arts and nonprofit organizations. Success is determined by having 1 new partner outside of the Olde Tyme Peach Festival by June 2021.
- Encourage the community to take ownership in their historical society by maintaining an outreach schedule by participating in 2 outreach events a year outside of peach festival.

Leadership in the areas of the Board and Staff

- Invest in the future of the historical society and manage its professionalization by hiring an Executive Director by February 2020.
- Improve board leadership by having 75% of the board participate in 2 educational opportunities by June 2020.
- Develop sustainability and community connections by recruiting 1 new Board member by 2022.
- Commit to sustainability by initiating an internal intellectual property sharing plan by Winter 2021: have 25% of operations documented by June 2021 and 50% of operations documented by June 2022.
- Commit to the future sustainability of the historical society by preparing and creating a new strategic plan by June 2022

These goals and objectives effect every part of the operation of the Society. At the end of three years the Board is committed to an organization that is on its way to sustainability, with engaged membership and volunteers at all levels, creating programs that positions the Society as a valued and desired resource in the community.

Evaluation

The Board shall review the strategic plan every six months (January and June each year) to keep the project on track. As the organization acknowledges the realities of life and shifting priorities, we recognize that each evaluation will be a time to reflect on the work of the society and on the many projects triggered by this plan and each program's feasibility.