

# Strategic Plan 2023/2028



*Making an Impact*



## Summary

The Geneva History Museum is determined to increase community support and to thrive in the future. This revision of the strategic plan took into account the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing GHM. The plan includes three strategic initiatives with accompanying action steps to be accomplished over a five to ten-year period. This plan is a path to transform the organization into a sustainable educational institution, collaborating with other likeminded entities and reaching people all over the world through integrated technologies.





## Strategic Planning Process

In January of 2023, the GHM Board of Directors and staff worked together on revising and updating the Geneva History Museum's (GHM) 2023-2028 Strategic Plan.

This plan is a template for action, to unify the organization and align it for progress toward the goals spelled out herein for the next five to ten years. At the time this Plan was approved, the Board and staff reached clear understandings about the approval requirements relating to the actions and expenditures contemplated by or implied in the Plan. Plan progress is reviewed periodically at Board meetings, and expenditures will be approved through the budget process.

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee consisted of: Mary Swanson, President of the GHM Board of Directors; Eleanor Hamilton, Secretary and previous President; Llona Steele, Second Vice President; and Terry Emma, Executive Director. A ten-question survey was created and emailed to the entire museum list of more than 2,000 people including members, donors, volunteers, current and former board members, staff and community stakeholders. More than 70 responses were received and summarized to highlight what others see as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of GHM. Board and staff members participated in a retreat in February of 2023 and formed work groups tasked with developing the goals and action plans that address each of the identified strategic issues. GHM is grateful to all who contributed to the success of this project.

## Organizational Culture

### Mission

The mission of the Geneva History Museum is to preserve and share Geneva's evolving story while inspiring and engaging the community.

*We will accomplish this by...*

*Collecting:* Acquiring material on Geneva's history in all forms from past to present.

*Preserving:* Caring for the artifacts in our collection for present and future generations.

*Researching:* Sharing our unique resources with researchers across the world.

*Educating:* Inspiring and engaging visitors through programs and exhibitions.

### Vision

Our vision is to continue as an accredited, sustainable Museum, connecting globally as the premiere source of Geneva's history.



### Core Values

*Stewardship* - We are committed to providing the highest level of care for objects the Museum holds in perpetuity.

*Authenticity* - We provide links to history through well-documented collections, accurate interpretation, diversity, inclusion and reliable scholarship.

*Ingenuity* - We apply limited resources in innovative ways to maximize the effectiveness of our programs and the efficiency of our operations.

*Engagement* - We invite community involvement in our exhibits, programs and collection development, and build partnerships with organizations and individuals.

## Our Story

In 1943, dedicated citizens formed the Geneva Historical Society to preserve local history and educate the community. Artifacts were cataloged and stored in private residences and exhibited in storefronts. A Museum Committee was formed in 1961 to raise funds for a building. After years of searching existing buildings, they made a deal with the park district and city to build the first Geneva History Museum in Wheeler Park. This building was expanded twice, in 1972 and in 1990.

As newcomers began to outnumber long-time residents, the Historical Society recognized the need for flexible space and a more central location. In 2004, the organization, renamed the Geneva History Center, conducted a successful capital campaign to purchase a two-story building in the heart of Geneva's historic district. The building was renovated to create two exhibition galleries, storage areas for collections and archives, a research room, a meeting room and offices.

In 2013, while participating in the Museum Assessment Program, it was rediscovered that the word Museum best represents the activities and services of the organization. In June 2014, the name became the Geneva History Museum, operated by the Geneva Historical Society.

The Museum celebrated 10 years in this building in August 2014 with a grand reopening of the redesigned Main Gallery, "Geneva's Story," our permanent exhibition. Group Programs and Geneva on

Wheels tours by van, trolley and bicycle were also developed to bring the Museum out into the community.



In 2014 the Museum started the Standards of Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs) offered by the American Association for State and Local History which provides benchmarks against nationally recognized standards.

In 2017, the Museum was awarded a Collections Assessment for Preservation grant from the Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation which provided a site visit by a conservationist and an architect who created a prioritized list of goals to improve the facility.

After completing all of the five StEPs, the American Association for State and Local History chose the Geneva History Museum as their national StEPs SpotLight in 2018 as an example of how StEPs is helping organizations take a leap forward by improving policies and practices, opening lines of communication and setting goals for a bright future.

In June of 2022 the Geneva History Museum achieved a strategic goal and became the first Nationally Accredited Museum in Kane County. The Museum is proud to celebrate 80 years of serving the community as the only accredited organization collecting, preserving and sharing the history of Geneva, Illinois.

## Strategic Plan 2023/2028

### *Key Strategic Initiatives*

#### **Attain financial sustainability**

**The Geneva History Museum will thrive with financial stability. A rigorous process for creating, monitoring, and evaluating both short term and long term financial plans will improve budget forecasts and provide more realistic outlooks for addressing potential shortfalls via fundraising.**

##### Action Steps:

- Create an estate gifting (legacy circle) option. Market this giving option at the annual donor event in July and publicly acknowledge legacy promises annually.
- Create a corporate sponsorship program. Board members will share sponsorship opportunities with their contacts in the community to generate donations. Include membership and attendance statistics when selling sponsorships.
- Continue to pursue City funding for GHM. Continue to collect statistics on number of visitors drawn to the Museum. Prepare annual report to the City Council regarding usage of the funding provided.



- Evaluate other opportunities to improve financial sustainability, including leasing the 2nd floor, if corporate sponsorships and legacy giving do not offset the budget deficit.

#### **Remain relevant with a goal of reaccreditation**

**As the city of Geneva and the surrounding communities continue to evolve and change, the Geneva History Museum must adapt to remain relevant. The museum must strive to improve diversity, equity and accessibility as a key focus area.**

##### Action Steps:

- Curator and GHM Board Member work together to create accessibility aids for exhibitions.
- Include and reach out to diverse and underrepresented voices for programs and exhibitions.

- Share a list of the current collection online to highlight GHM as a resource available to the community and to create collection goals and gaps.
- Collect more oral histories from various audiences and share at events and in programs or exhibitions.
- Continue to review, revise and update Core Documents and/or policies and follow AAM Accreditation standards.
- Review and update GHM Bylaws.
- Develop a conservation plan for collections.

## Increase outreach and marketing

**A strong museum marketing strategy is very important to drive attendance, improve revenue and increase the impact of our efforts. The Geneva History Museum needs to continue to broaden its audience and educate others about museum offerings and services.**

### Action Steps:

- GHM Staff and Board will increase exposure and involvement with community events through the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and organizations.
- Work with local real estate agents, Welcome Wagon and Be Local to engage new residents in the museum's services.



- Increase educational programming availability to schools and educational groups through the high school, colleges and local organizations.
- Experiment with participating in the downtown First Friday event by staying open late and offering guided tours of the museum.

