American Saddlebred Museum

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 – 2027

MAKING HISTORY EVERY DAY
Located on the grounds of the beautiful Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky, the American Saddlebred Museum boasts the largest collection of American Saddlebred artifacts in the world. Our archives house trophies, photographs, tack, and artwork, including one of the most extensive collections of George Ford Morris American Saddlebred artwork. Our research library contains over 3,000 volumes used by our members for bloodline and genealogical research. While the Museum serves as a hub and resource for the American Saddlebred industry, it also educates tens of thousands of visitors annually about the beauty, versatility, and history of the American Saddlebred horse.
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND CHAIR OF THE BOARD STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Dear Friends of the American Saddlebred Museum,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are pleased to present the American Saddlebred Museum’s 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. The plan is built around the cornerstones of the Museum: Our Collections, Our Destination, Our Audience and Our Resources. We believe that these four areas collectively represent the most important opportunities over the coming years.

This plan—nearly a year of work from the Strategic planning committee, Board of Trustees, Museum supporters, and the staff—communicates the Museum’s response to the opportunities and challenges that we currently face. Having just completed the extensive renovation of our History Wing, we believe this is an opportune time to leverage the beautiful new facility in support of our plan.

Of importance, the plan is designed to expand access to the collections throughout not only the local but also the global community. We seek to develop programs that appeal to families, young professionals, breeders, new equine audiences as well as our existing American Saddlebred enthusiasts. Lastly, it seeks to strengthen our financial position and ensure stability and longevity of the organization.

We look forward to an exciting future. Managed and led by our tremendous and talented staff, we strive to support our vision of a Museum that is a destination for everyone to experience the horse America made – the American Saddlebred.

Thank you for your support of the American Saddlebred Museum!

Mark Strong, President, Board of Trustees
Amy Dix Rock, Chair, Strategic Planning Committee
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the American Saddlebred Museum, we are well poised for the future. With the 2022 completion of the extensive physical renovation of the Museum, we have so much more to offer our audience than ever before. We now have flexible event space as well as outdoor space. We can accommodate corporate and social events. Our exhibits are greatly expanded, along with our artifact space, and we are extending our community outreach and educational programming to inform our next generation equine enthusiasts.

Looking back over the past six years as the Executive Director of the Museum, we’ve been through many phases. We have celebrated many successes, overcome challenges, faced a pandemic, and have remained a vital, relevant and staunch preserver of American Saddlebred history.

For many years, the Museum has been the place to learn about and understand the history of the American Saddlebred and its current place in the equine community. Under the leadership of the previous Executive Director, Tolley Graves, the Museum thrived and set us up for future success. As we move forward, we will continue to use the founding principles from the past to forge into the future, continuing to grow and strengthen the Museum.

Jennifer K. Foster, Executive Director
the collection of
George Ford Morris

DRAWN TO HORSES

Renowned equestrian artist George Ford Morris (1873-1950) documented the fast-changing role of horses—particularly American Saddlebreds—in the early to mid-20th century. Largely self-taught, he was equally talented as a photographer, illustrator, sculptor, and painter.

Over the course of his life, he photographed and painted so many Saddlebreds—including his own—that his collection became an archive of Saddlebred history. His two publications featuring reproductions of his work are still coveted today.

Though many think of George Ford Morris as a historian of the American Saddlebred, equine artist Helen Hayse, a protégé of his, thought he was a prophet.

"The reason American Saddlebred horses today look the way they do is because he saw it in them."

— Helen Hayse
Equine Artist

special thanks to
Sam and Victoria Reed
Mary Gaylord McClean
Joe & Sally Jackson
VISION AND MISSION

OUR VISION
The American Saddlebred Museum is the destination for everyone to experience history through the journey, past to present, of the horse America made—the American Saddlebred.

OUR MISSION
The American Saddlebred Museum preserves the traditions and promotes the heritage of our beautiful athletic horses, through active engagement of the general public and equine community by expanding interest and appeal in our breed.
The goals of the plan are to realize our vision—create THE American Saddlebred Destination—by leveraging and expanding the cornerstones of the Museum—Our Collections, Our Destination, Our Audience, and Our Resources.

Our Collections  
the art, artifacts, media, and displays

Our Destination  
the Museum, gift shop, and the experience

Our Audience  
the American Saddlebred community, Kentucky Horse Park visitors, and the global equine enthusiast

Our Resources  
the finances, staff, and volunteers
MEASURES OF SUCCESS

BY 2027

OUR COLLECTIONS
• Institute a public campaign to capture the “Top 100 moments in American Saddlebred History” leveraging media available both online and at the Museum

OUR DESTINATION
• Expand the Museum visitor experience
  • Increase in-person and online program offerings by 200%
  • Increase attendance for program offerings
• Achieve 15% of total revenue from venue rentals
• Obtain American Alliance of Museums accreditation

OUR AUDIENCE
• Increase community and corporate engagement by 200%
• Establish a global volunteer network

OUR RESOURCES
• Increase endowment to $1.6 million
• Develop long-term succession plans for staff and trustees to ensure continuity and stability for the Museum
OUR COLLECTION

OBJECTIVE:
Expand access to the collections, both at the Kentucky Horse Park location and across the local and global communities

KEY ACTIONS
1. Evaluate ways to leverage our online presence with virtual tours and online exhibits
2. Create library of featured historical interviews, broadcasts, movies, show clips

OBJECTIVE:
Develop ways to engage visitors to enhance education and appreciation of the collection and the breed

KEY ACTIONS
1. Create hands-on experience for school groups and younger audiences
2. Leverage statement “making history every day” and include focus on recent World’s Champions and current competitors

OBJECTIVE:
Develop a long-term exhibit plan (ensure meaningful and relevant exhibits) and event calendar in order to strategically plan development activities, including acquisitions and fundraising events

KEY ACTIONS
1. Create and maintain a rolling 24-month calendar
2. Publish annual calendar on website

OBJECTIVE:
Secure our collections

KEY ACTIONS
1. Audit and update collection database
2. Ensure appropriate storage, maintenance and archival procedures for existing and new collections
OUR DESTINATION

OBJECTIVE:
In collaboration with the Kentucky Horse Park, American Saddlebred Horse and Breeders Association, United Professional Horsemen’s Association, United States Equestrian Federation, and other breed organizations, develop plans for collaborative events and initiatives to increase American Saddlebred Museum visibility and awareness

KEY ACTIONS
1. Develop a marketing plan to support “Become a Destination”
2. Participate in and coordinate promotion with Kentucky Horse Park events
3. Offer field trips to school groups
4. Establish a joint arrangement with American Saddlebred Horse and Breeders Association and United Professional Horsemen’s Association to provide free information resource for new, prospective and current American Saddlebred owners—American Saddlebred Museum resource library

OBJECTIVE:
Position the American Saddlebred Museum as a preferred venue for events

KEY ACTIONS
1. Develop all business materials and acquire all amenities necessary to build a successful and profitable rental venue
3. Successfully promote and market the venue through a variety of channels

OBJECTIVE:
Seek American Alliance of Museums accreditation

KEY ACTIONS
1. Develop and implement a three year plan to acquire American Alliance of Museums accreditation
OUR AUDIENCE

OBJECTIVE:
Create pathways and programs that appeal to families, young professionals, breeders, new audiences (all breeds) as well as existing American Saddlebred enthusiasts

KEY ACTIONS
1. Provide meeting and event space to conduct horsemanship, equitation and training seminars on the breed – historical and present day topics
2. Introduce the Museum and the history of the breed early in the American Saddlebred experience, for example via academy tournaments and lesson programs
3. Attract and engage highly dedicated volunteers to help deliver on our mission and promise

OBJECTIVE:
Cultivate partnerships with the local community and regional academic communities to drive engagement with the American Saddlebred Museum, the gift shop and educational programs

KEY ACTIONS
1. Partner with academic institutions to offer internships
2. Liaise with business, leisure, sporting and travel groups as potential audiences for American Saddlebred Museum engagement and events
3. Expand the role of American Saddlebred Museum in conjunction with the American Saddlebred Horse and Breeders Association and United Professional Horsemen’s Association for outreach programs

OBJECTIVE:
Significantly increase the American Saddlebred Museum membership

KEY ACTIONS
1. Evaluate member benefits and increase awareness of member benefits
2. Enable reciprocal membership/visitor programs with other organizations—Kentucky Derby Museum, Old Friends Thoroughbred Retirement Facility, and other American Saddlebred organizations
OUR RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE:
Increase philanthropic investment and broaden community support

KEY ACTIONS
1. Create successful corporate sponsorship programs
2. Assess investment strategy to maximize return
3. Assess and optimize event calendar, evaluate ways to maximize revenue/profit

OBJECTIVE:
Evaluate gift shop short-term and long-term strategies

KEY ACTIONS
1. Revise and update the gift-shop business plan
2. Increase gift-shop awareness and reach

OBJECTIVE:
Create an inspiring environment for staff, trustees and volunteers

KEY ACTIONS
1. Develop a diversity, equity and inclusion charter
2. Strengthen teamwork, decision-making and accountability to support execution of the strategic plan
3. Create a succession plan to identify and develop new, potential trustees, leaders and staff who can move into leadership roles when they become vacant
In early 2017, the American Saddlebred Museum Board of Trustees developed a Strategic Plan to organize, prioritize and be a guiding tool to set direction for the future. This was the first time a formal plan had been completed for the Museum. At the April 2017 Board meeting, Trustees approved a preliminary plan. Brainstorming ideas that were developed in workshops were grouped into eight areas for further review by Museum committees. As we put structure around the Strategic Planning areas, we realized facility challenges were preventing us from taking advantage of financial growth, relevancy, and sustainability into the future. Therefore, the renovation budget was approved at the April 2018 meeting and the project scope was defined at that time.

Since that time, the Board has focused on fundraising events and initiatives that cycle through our calendar each year. The enormous amount of work surrounding the renovation has limited the amount of time we could devote to exploring and developing many of the new initiatives contained in our Strategic Plan. The global pandemic affected not only the health of our community but also the pace of the renovation and financial position for the Museum. The Museum was fortunate to have a strong financial foundation that allowed us to “weather the storm.”

By mid-2021, the end of the renovation was in sight and celebratory equine events started to resume. The Board decided to revisit the original strategic plan and saw opportunities to leverage new ideas and technology. Over the past year, the strategic planning committee has hosted additional brainstorming meetings, leveraged online surveys and refined the plan. Detailed operational planning is underway – while ensuring we maintain flexibility in an ever-changing environment.

The Board of Trustees will use this plan moving forward to guide our actions over the next five years. We look forward to sharing, and celebrating, our progress with you!
WITH GRATITUDE

The following have contributed to and created this plan:
Board of Trustees, chaired by Mark Strong
Board Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by Amy Dix Rock
Staff of the Museum, led by Jennifer Foster
Volunteers and community leaders
V. Taylor Foster, booklet design

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Anne Tasch
Nancy Trent
It Takes a Team
to Raise a Champion
May 2022 Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Grand Re-Opening of the Elisabeth M. Goth History Wing