



# Strategic Plan for 2023 - 2027

adopted April, 2022

Prepared with assistance from:



*“We must not only act, but also **dream**;*

*Not only plan, but also **believe.**”*

- Anatole France

## Background

In 1990, the New England Carousel Museum (NECM, or The Carousel Museum) established a board of directors, which applied for and obtained nonprofit status. At its inception, the museum was an educational entity that focused on preserving a valuable but vanishing part of American history. The museum has evolved considerably since it began. It has enjoyed considerable growth in the expansion of the museum collections, houses the renowned Fire Museum, serves as a gathering place for special events throughout the year, and in 2023 will host the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference of the National Carousel Association

In 2002 The Carousel Museum became the permanent home to the private collection of Firefighting equipment of local businessman and firefighting enthusiast Carlyle “Hap” Barnes. Hap’s collection of over 1,500 pieces of firefighting apparatus showcases the evolution of firefighting around the world and contains archival material from the City of Bristol.

Under the talented leadership of Morgan Urgo, who replaced the museum’s founder and long-time executive director in 2019, the future of the museum is bright. Still, challenges abound, including those caused by severe budget limitations, an aging building, and the pandemic, The Carousel Museum board determined in 2021 that it needed a new strategic plan to guide and focus the museum’s efforts over the next several years. With funding from the Barnes Family Foundation, NECM engaged Leadership Greater Hartford (LGH) to facilitate the planning process and to provide training and coaching support to the board and the executive director to ensure success of the plan.

## The Planning Process

LGH consultant Ted Carroll, with support from LGH associate Virginia de Lima, led a seven-month planning process that included:

- Formation of a five-member Steering Committee to help guide and support the planning process
- Surveys of the board and key staff to identify the museum’s aspirations, strengths, and opportunities as well as its current and future challenges.
- Interviews to garner perspectives from several prominent community supporters and with Louise DeMars, the museum’s founding, and former executive director.
- A board retreat in December 2021 to draft key goals and objectives.
- The formation of six task forces that met at least twice over the course of four months to refine and revise the goals and objectives and to map out action steps needed to address them.
- A second board retreat in April 2022 to sharpen the plan’s focus, identify the museum’s most pressing priorities and to discuss ways by which the board could improve its effectiveness as a governing body.
- Soliciting feedback on the draft report from the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and other key supporters before board adoption of the final draft at its April 2022 meeting.

# *Key Components of The Carousel Museum and Museum of Fire History's Strategic Plan*

## Updated Missions:

Based on the discussions during the planning process, a shorter and more focused mission statement emerged to describe what The Carousel Museum does and why it does it.

*The Carousel Museum is a non-profit organization that **preserves** and **exhibits** antique and modern carousel art, and **celebrates** dedicated craftsmen, to **inspire** creativity, **joy**, and **wonder**.*

*The Museum of Fire History is dedicated to preserving the firefighting legacy of Carlyle "Hap" Barnes. The Museum is dedicated to Hap's passion for collecting firefighting equipment and memorabilia and educating the public about fire safety and advancements in firefighting technology.*

## Our Visions:

As The Carousel Museum successfully advances its mission, its constituents and the larger public will increasingly recognize it as:

*the premier resource for carousel artists, historians, and enthusiasts from around the world, as well as a highly valued educational and cultural center for Bristol, CT and beyond.*

*The Museum of Fire History the premier resource for firefighting, historians, and enthusiasts from around the world, as well as a highly valued educational and cultural center for Bristol, CT and beyond.*

## Our Key Metrics:

The Carousel Museum and Museum of Fire History will know it is making progress in achieving its vision when it achieves the following outcomes over the next several years:

### *Program*

- By 2025, the museum will have at least 10 volunteer docents who are trained and scheduled to work at least once per month for an in-person tour or program.
- By 2025 the Museum will have established clear guidelines for building temperature and humidity controls for collection preservation.
- By 2025 the Museum will have secured at least 1 new bequest from a national collector.

### *Marketing*

- Museum visits will increase annually. By 2025, the museum will have 13,000 annual visitors, 6,000 more than in 2019.
- Have a branding guideline "light" by December 31, 2022
- Have full revised branding guidebook for each museum in place by 2025

### ***Development***

- The museum will steadily increase the number and size of individuals gifts received during the annual appeal.
- By 2025 we will have established 5 ongoing business sponsorships.
- By 2025 we will have at least 1 business sponsorship located outside of CT.
- By 2025, individual gifts will double from 62 individuals to 130 individuals.
- By 2025 individual gifts will support 10% of the museum's budget.

### ***Building and Grounds***

- The top three building projects will be prepared to go out to bid with funding to support them secured by 2025.

### ***Finance***

- For fiscal year 2022-2023, the museum will have developed a budget that shows revenue and expense allocation for each of the museum's key components.

### ***Personnel***

- By the end of 2022, the Personnel Committee will have researched and developed a more competitive compensation package aimed at attracting and retaining quality staff.
- By December 31, 2022, the museum will have a short-term organizational chart
- By 2025 the Museum will have a long-term organizational chart

### ***Governance***

- By the end of 2022, the board will have updated its roles and expectations and implemented a system for setting and reviewing board member performance goals.

## Our Goals and Priority Objectives:

The Carousel's Strategic Planning Task Forces identified many goals and objectives and developed action plans for how to address them. The museum board considered each of the Task Force plans and have determined that the following goals and objectives are the ones most likely to help the organization fulfill its mission and achieve its vision.

### Programming:

#### **Program Goal I: Ensure preservation of the Collection of the Carousel and Museum of Fire History**

##### *Priority Objectives:*

- Review the current collections status
- Create a collections maintenance plan
- Work with Buildings and Grounds to maintain or improve condition of pieces

#### **Program Goal II: Ensure growth and quality of the collections**

##### *Priority Objectives:*

- Identify status of the permanent collection and loans.
- Connect and establish relationships with collectors

#### **Program Goal III: Enhance the museum visitor experience**

##### *Priority Objectives:*

- Reinterpret Museum exhibits using contemporary and universal curatorial themes.
- Create engaging physical space that allows for flexibility in exhibition design
- Ensure staff and volunteers are trained to give an optimal customer experience

#### **Program Goal IV: Upgrade restoration department**

##### *Priority Objective:*

- Ensure environment is safe and adequate for workers and pieces

#### **Program Goal V: Working with Development and B & G Committees, set up a "state of the art" archives department that boosts both museum's prestige**

##### *Priority Objectives:*

- Determine what it means to have a "state of the art" archives department
- Create a preliminary plan of space needs, contents, audiences, revenue potential
- Conduct cost-benefit feasibility study

#### **Program Goal VI: Create a robust education and engagement program for adults that builds on the uniqueness of carousels**

##### *Priority Objectives:*

- Develop high-level programs directly related to carousels
- Use the facilities to focus on carousel-specific skills

#### **Program Goal VII: Establish the Carousel Museum as a teaching center**

##### *Priority Objective:*

- Create educational programs for students of all ages

#### **Program Goal VIII: Enhance the Visibility of Carousels in the City of Bristol**

##### *Priority Objectives:*

- Locate an operating carousel in the City

- Increase visibility of Carousel Museum and Carousels in the City

### **Program Goal IX: Enhance the Visibility of The Museum of Fire History in the City of Bristol**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Strengthen partnerships with the local Fire Department.
- Develop fire safety programming that supports early learning curriculum.

### **Program X: Decide on Future of Greek Museum**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of the partnership.
- Decide on short- and long-term future of the partnership.
- Develop a program to enhance the visibility of the museum as long as it is co-located.

## **Marketing:**

### **Marketing Goal I: Assess current marketing activities**

#### *Priority Objective:*

- Determine how visitors and supporters know about museum

### **Marketing Goal II: Develop a marketing plan to raise profile of museum locally, regionally, and nationally for target audiences**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Determine elements of a marketing plan and what kind of assistance may be needed to develop one
- Determine staffing needed to implement plan

### **Marketing Goal III: Rebrand Museum to better position it in the local, regional and national marketplace**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Strengthen museum's branding expertise
- Test how museum is seen by stakeholders - what do they value?
- Consider name change and process legal changes as needed

### **Marketing Goal IV: Expand reach to tourists from throughout Connecticut and Beyond**

#### *Priority Objective:*

- Create budget.

### **Marketing V: Create a Robust On-line Presence**

#### *Priority Objective:*

- Ensure Museum information is compelling and up to date

## **Development:**

### **Development Goal I: Create a development plan**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Identify current donors and determine ways to retain and improve relationships with them to retain and grow their contributions

- Leverage current donor relationships to attract new donors.
- Increase board giving.

### **Development Goal II: Establish a business membership program**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Build list of prospective members
- Query local businesses on what they would value
- Develop membership/benefits program

### **Development Goal III: Establish a volunteer recruitment and management plan**

#### *Priority Objective:*

- Provide sufficient staff and other resources needed to support expanded volunteer program.

## **Personnel:**

### **Personnel Goal I: Create a Personnel Plan/Organizational Chart**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Create an ideal staffing plan, identifying functions not appropriate for ED
- Execute staffing plan.
- Provide professional development opportunities

### **Personnel Goal II: Ensure competitive compensation packages for all employees**

#### *Priority Objective:*

- Develop salary ranges for executive director and other staff based on where the museum wants to be in the marketplace and can afford

### **Personnel Goal III: Support Executive Director**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Update ED job description and review contract
- Provide professional development opportunities

### **Personnel Goal IV: Create a succession plan for the executive director and other key positions**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Determine who will run museum in an emergency
- Determine how the museum will run during a short-term absence
- Determine how a successor will be chosen when the current executive director departs.

## **Buildings and Grounds:**

### **Building & Grounds Goal I: Ensure the long-term stability and maximization of the building located at 95 Riverside Ave.**

#### *Priority Objectives:*

- Identify urgent needs to maintain structural integrity
- Work with contracted professionals who can identify phases and projects to be addressed
- Budget forecast projects and phases.

**Building & Grounds Goal II: Create a street presence that reflects and supports the mission and collections of the organization.**

*Priority Objective:*

- Address the window and landscaping on the driveway entrance side of the Museum's exterior.

**Building & Grounds Goal III: Create a long-term vision that expands the physical presence of the variety of collections and programs in our care.**

*Priority Objectives:*

- Research background on commitments and possibly identify a new physical location for the Greek museum outside of 95 Riverside Ave.
- Develop proposed budgets for expanding the physical reach of our organizational structure.

## **Finance:**

**Finance Goal I: Strengthen Finance Committee**

*Priority Objectives:*

- Identify more accounting and insurance talent to add to committee
- Expand committee to include Board members, Museum Staff and consultants and interested stakeholders

**Finance Goal II: Improve short- and long-term budgeting processes**

*Priority Objectives:*

- Establish operating budget annually for adoption by the Board on or before the first month of the fiscal year (July)
- Create a cost allocation plan for current income and expenses for each component of the museum
- Review monthly financial statements with MTD and YTD comparisons to budget
- Create a cash flow budget including forecast of anticipated expenditures and revenues
- Report to the Board on a regular basis YTD financial position of Museum
- Bring to the Board for approval any expenditure that exceeds the budget by 10%

**Finance Goal III: Refine and update Museum Financial Procedures and Policies**

*Priority Objectives:*

- Review and update banking arrangements and signature access annually
- Ensure adequate checks and balances on all Museum financial activity
- Establish safeguards for assets

**Finance Goal IV: Create and oversee NECM Investment and Endowment Accounts**

*Priority Objectives:*

- Oversee the NECM Investment account
- Create and update the NECM investment policy annually as needed
- Identify and maintain any subcategories of funds ( Operating, Fundraising, Payables, Restoration, Capital Projects)
- Create and Endowment Fund and policy to ensure the long-term financial support of NECM building(s) and programs

**Finance Goal V: Audit of NECM Financial Reports**

*Priority Objectives:*

- Retain a competent firm to audit NECM financials



- Maintain fluid interaction with auditor for completion of annual audit on a timely basis
- Review and incorporate recommendations of auditor annually

## Governance:

**Governance Goal I:** Build board to ensure that it is comprised of people with the skills, knowledge, diversity, connections, and commitment required to help NECM advance its mission.

### *Priority Objectives:*

- Determine skills, knowledge, diversity, connections, and commitments needed to build a strong board.
- Inventory what skills, knowledge, diversity, connections, and commitments currently exist.
- Reach out through networks and Leaders on Board to fill gaps.

**Governance Goal II:** Ensure board governance is of the highest standards and adheres to best practices

### *Priority Objective:*

- Ensure timely and transparent communications

**Governance Goal III:** Ensure that board members are aware and capable of fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

### *Priority Objective:*

- Review and improve board orientation process as needed.

**Governance Goal IV:** Review and revise organizational bylaws

### *Priority Objectives:*

- Appoint a Bylaws Review Committee to formulate recommendations
- Review and revise Fire Museum guidelines

## Monitoring and Evaluation:

The Carousel Museum and Museum of Fire History board has identified committees to oversee the implementation of each of its strategic goals and objectives. The strategic planning task forces defined the action steps, leadership, resources, and timetable needed to advance these goals. The board's committees and executive director will update those detailed operational plans regularly to record progress achieved and to note new opportunities and challenges that may arise.

At regular meetings of the board, members will review a Dashboard comprised of the plan's key metrics. The museum will seek regular input from stakeholders, funders, and community partners to help the board and staff determine how successful the strategies have been. At the end of each calendar year, an overall written report will evaluate the success to date and recommend any changes to the overall strategic plan. The plan will therefore be refreshed each year with the expectation that another strategic planning process will be needed for the years 2026-2029 and started in 2025 to continue and build on the museum's momentum.