The Manassas Museum System

Business Plan

December 2, 2014
### The Manassas Museum System Business Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Historic Resources Board (the Board) is appointed by the Manassas City Council to liaise with the System, and present for Council’s consideration findings, conclusions, and recommendations bearing on the conduct, plans, and resource needs of the System. In 2011 the Historic Resource Board undertook a strategic planning process and recognized that the System’s ability to maintain its high standards of performance into the long-term future is challenged by significant economic and demographic changes in the community. The Board updated the System’s mission statement and convened a sub-committee, the Business Planning Committee (the Committee) in 2013 to analyze these challenges and identify strategic needs which must be satisfied if the System is to prosper, continue to serve its community, and remain a source of civic pride.

This report presents findings and conclusions prepared by the Committee and adopted by the Board regarding the economic, cultural, business, and political environments in which the Manassas Museum System operates, and offers recommendations to better position the museum for a challenging future.

Since its inception, the Manassas Museum System has successfully conserved the City’s historically significant sites and structures. In doing so, the System has achieved local and regional renown for the quality and vibrancy of its programs and exhibits. These programs and exhibits preserve the cultural fabric of the community, educate the System’s visitors and local K-12 students, and stimulate the economy of downtown businesses. However, the facility has become dated and the primary exhibit has not kept up with modern technology. To understand the current state of the System, the Committee identified the following strengths, weaknesses and challenges to the System’s long term viability.

The System’s value to the community includes:

- Strength in educational offerings and school partnerships
- Quality of staff, collections, exhibits, historic sites, research and programs
- Collaborative partnerships for area tourism and historic preservation
- Volunteer and membership support
- Contributing to tax revenues in Old Town
- Returning 68% of direct costs when considering revenue generated by System visitors

The System’s weaknesses include:

- Lack of multi-media capabilities: the System does not provide assistive technologies to accommodate and integrate visitors with visual and hearing disabilities. As a result, the City may be non-compliant with several pertaining Federal statutes. Also, the System lacks the fundamental teaching technologies expected of a learning institution in the twenty-first century.
- Minimal engagement/entertainment of visitors
- Lack of audio-visual assistive technologies
- Weak attraction of out-of-area visitors and bus tours
The System’s Demographic and Societal Challenges are:

- Economic depression, particularly within the rising generation of potential System customers, threatens, and will remain a constant, steady threat to the System’s long term sustainability.
- Ageing threatens, and will increasingly threaten the System’s long term sustainability and customer experience.
- The System will be profoundly challenged to satisfy the experiential expectations of two significant age groups with very dissimilar interests. It will be very challenging to motivate the wealthiest age group, the Boomers, to invest in converting the System to satisfy the needs and interests of the student debt-ridden younger generations; interests which the Boomers do not necessarily share.
- Overcoming Limited English Proficiency (LEP), particularly within the Hispanic heritage population, is an existential requirement to ensure the System’s long term sustainability and customer experience. The System will be profoundly challenged to engage potential customers with weak or no English reading skills. The System will be seriously resource-challenged to convert its information formatting paradigm to satisfy the expectation of the rising customer base which seeks to be an interactive participant in—not merely a receiver of—the cultural experience.
- Museums not located in major tourist destinations and which require significant gasoline consumption to visit will face enormous pressure.

During the planning work, the System staff undertook the following short term proactive measures in keeping with the final preferred business plan option.

Proactive Measures Taken

- Inventoried all holdings and improved collections care, storage and security
- Secured intellectual property rights with a proper computerized inventory
- Developed a long-term business plan
- Mobilized idle assets
- Reduced/refined store inventory
- Re-examined lawn rental policy
- Explored tour bus tie-ins, collaborating with Discover Prince William/Manassas Convention and Visitors Bureau to attract group tours
- Developed new outreach opportunities such as Museum at the Market
- Expanded educational outreach, and increased partnerships with city schools and George Mason University (GMU)
- Improved emergency planning

The Committee developed strategic measures of effectiveness (MOE), and using them assessed the degree to which proposed business solutions could build upon System strengths, and reduce or eliminate its weaknesses. The Committee developed general recommendations to improve System effectiveness, and recommended three specific options for much-needed improvement of the Museum facility. The Committee’s MOE required assessment of the degree to which proposed concepts could do the following:

a. expand the System’s market reach and visitation,
b. expand the System’s visibility to and electronic access by a global audience,
c. expand the System’s educational outreach,
d. expand and encourage interactive learning,
e. enable compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),
f. attract and enable communication with visitors who have limited reading skills, or who have limited or no proficiency in the English language.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

To prosper, the System must increase visitation and maintain its relevance. Increased visitation depends upon the System's ability to appeal to a broader spectrum of visitors with interests that include, but are not solely focussed on, the Civil War. The System must also be proactive in adapting to changing City-wide demographics, particularly to engage potential visitors who may have limited-to-no proficiency in the English language; who may be illiterate in any language; who are physically impaired; and who are being educated and entertained in technologically sophisticated, interactive environments. The Committee looked at both business improvement recommendations and physical improvements to the Manassas Museum.

Business Improvement Recommendations

The Board adopted the following recommendations:

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>Unify the budget authority for City expenditures supporting the arts, humanities, culture, history, and related facilities and public events under a single City Director.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Establish regional admission passes with museums and cultural centers throughout the Northern Piedmont.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Eliminate the Museum general admission fee. Charge fees for special exhibitions and events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Establish an academic partnership with George Mason University to provide internship and practicum opportunities, and to supplement the System staff with career-motivated graduate and undergraduate student assistants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>Expand the depth and variety of stories that the System tells to provide a sense of place spanning time from the original, Native American inhabitants of the region to modern times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Explore with local cultural associations how to better integrate their interests into the menu of System offerings and services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>Fund the System sufficiently to achieve certification by the American Alliance of Museums, to post the Museum catalogue on the Internet, and to determine the feasibility of developing a virtual museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>Divest the System of the Speiden-Carper House.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Museum Improvement Options

The Committee examined a total of nine options for improving the Museum facility to host larger, more varied exhibits, and to better address the City’s demographic changes. With the concurrence of the Historic Resources Board, the Committee reduced the number of options to the following three. The
Committee assessed each of these against the strategic MOE, and estimated cost and time to accomplish each.

a. **Revitalize the Existing Museum without Expansion.** Upgrade lighting and climate control. Ensure ADA compliance. Install location- and proximity-based communications, Wi-Fi connectivity, automatic spoken language translation, and “bring your own device” compatibility to existing or updated exhibits.

This option would expand the System’s market reach, improve information access and presentation, encourage and facilitate interactive learning, and enable seamless adaptation to demographic changes in the Community and extended visitor base. This option would enable nation-wide visibility by posting a virtual museum, and enable real-time interactivity between the System and all levels of Academia. It would also overcome the challenges of visitors with limited proficiency in English, and illiterate visitors. This option would assure ADA compliance. Future technology upgrades should only require software updates instead of new processors. This would cost-effectively dampen the challenges of future fluctuations in the economy, worsening regional traffic congestion, and different learning styles inherent to a multi-generational visitor base. This option has a moderately high Return on Investment (ROI) potential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Estimate Option A</th>
<th>Basis of Estimate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 Designer Fee</td>
<td>15% of construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$475,000 Interiors</td>
<td>1,900 sq.ft. @ $250 sq. ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$570,000 Technology</td>
<td>1,900 sq.ft. @ $300/sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$1,245,000 Total</strong></td>
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</table>

*Time to accomplish:* 24 months (Museum closed for final 12 months of Project.)

b. **Expand the Museum without Significant Modification of Existing Facility.** Expand the existing 6,400 square foot Museum building by 7,000 square feet to achieve a total exhibit area of 8,207 square feet. Design the expansion structure to allow future installation of a second floor. Upgrade lighting and climate control in the existing building. Ensure ADA compliance throughout the new expansion. Within only the new expansion, install location- and proximity-based communications, Wi-Fi connectivity, automatic spoken language translation, and “bring your own device” compatibility.

This option would preserve the intimacy of the existing Museum while expanding the System’s market reach, improving information access and presentation, encouraging and facilitating interactive learning, and enabling seamless adaptation to demographic changes in the community and extended visitor base. The technologic revitalization delivered by this option would enable nation-wide visibility by posting a virtual museum, and enable real-time interactivity between the System and all levels of Academia. It would also overcome the challenges of visitors with limited proficiency in English, and illiterate visitors, but only within the new expansion. This option would assure ADA compliance only in the new expansion. Future technology upgrades should require only software updates instead of new processors. This
would cost-effectively dampen the challenges of future fluctuations in the economy, worsening regional traffic congestion, and different learning styles inherent to a multi-generational visitor base. This option has the potential for a high, long-term ROI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Estimate Option B</th>
<th>Basis of Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2,000,000 Construction</td>
<td>Reference Appendix C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300,000 Architect Fee</td>
<td>15% of construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,051,750 Interiors</td>
<td>8,207 sq.ft. @ $250/sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,462,100 Technology</td>
<td>8,207 sq.ft. @ $300/sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,813,850 Total</td>
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*Time to accomplish: 42 months (Periodic closures of Museum possible.)*

c. **Expand the Museum and Install Modern Technologies throughout the Entire Facility.**

Expand the existing 6,404 square foot Museum building by 7,000 square feet as originally planned but with a total exhibit area of 8,207 square feet. Design the expansion structure to allow future installation of a second floor. Design the expansion to serve both as an historic exhibit area and as a Heritage Center to research and celebrate the cultural diversity of the City’s residents.

This option fully satisfies all strategic imperatives. It would preserve the intimacy of the existing Museum while expanding the System’s market reach, improving information access and presentation, encouraging and facilitating interactive learning, and enabling seamless adaptation to demographic changes in the Community and extended visitor base. The technologic revitalization delivered by this option would enable Museum accreditation, hosting of major travelling exhibitions, nationwide visibility by posting a virtual museum, and enabling real-time interactivity between the System and all levels of Academia. It would also overcome the challenges of visitors with limited proficiency in English, and illiterate visitors. This option would assure ADA compliance. Future technology upgrades should only require software updates instead of new processors. This would cost-effectively dampen the challenges of future fluctuations in the economy, worsening regional traffic congestion, and different learning styles inherent to a multi-generational visitor base. Option 3 has the potential for a high, long-term ROI.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Estimate Option C</th>
<th>Basis of Estimate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2,000,000 Construction</td>
<td>BOE: Reference Appendix C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300,000 Architect Fee</td>
<td>BOE: 15% of construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,051,750 Interiors</td>
<td>BOE: 8,207 sq.ft. @ $250/sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,462,100 Technology</td>
<td>BOE: 8,207 sq.ft. @ $250/sq.ft.</td>
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<tr>
<td>$6,813,850 Total</td>
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*Time to accomplish: 42 months (Periodic closures of Museum possible.)*
The Board has adopted and recommends that Option C, expanding the museum and installing modern technologies. Option C is the most viable long-term solution for the challenges faced by the System and would, among the three recommended options, produce the greatest long-term value on investment in addition to all of the business improvement recommendations.

There remains $968,000 in the Merchant Trust available for the expansion of the Museum or upgrading of the exhibit galleries and redesigning the existing spaces.

The Board has adopted the findings, conclusions, and recommendations contained in this Business Plan, and has forwarded this Plan to the City’s Director of Community Development.

Joseph A. Hanlin, Chairman
Manassas Museum System Business Planning Committee

Steven F. Thomas, Chairman
Manassas Historic Resources Board
INTRODUCTION

The Manassas City Council Priorities and Implementation Plan, VISION Manassas 2027, expresses expectations for the System to contribute to the cultural and economic success of the community. The plan expects the System to develop its collections into the leading repository on the history of Northern Virginia with an emphasis on greater Manassas and Prince William County facilities and historic sites. To do so, the System must conserve the City’s historically significant sites and structures for the cultural, educational, and economic benefits they provide to City residents and visitors and improve its utilization and cost benefit to the City by developing public/private partnerships to limit the City’s financial investment.

The City of Manassas Comprehensive plan recognizes the current and future economic value of the museum, citing: “The City’s investment in tourism initiatives based on the City’s rich Civil War history has provided tools for increased revenue from meals and sales taxes.” The plan also cites as a goal to “Promote the City’s downtown core and the Manassas Museum System as a tourism, cultural, and entertainment destination to attract visitors, residents and new businesses.”

The Committee seeks to resolve these issues through recommendations in this study:

- g. expand the System’s market reach,
- h. expand the System’s visibility to and electronic access by a global audience,
- i. expand the System’s educational outreach,
- j. expand and encourage interactive learning,
- k. enable compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),
- l. attract and enable communication with visitors who have limited or no proficiency in the English language, and
- m. attract and enable communication with visitors who cannot read.

Challenges

- Economic depression, particularly within the rising generation of potential System customers, threatens, and will remain a constant, steady threat to the System’s long term sustainability.
- Ageing threatens, and will increasingly threaten the System’s long term sustainability and customer experience.
- The System will be profoundly challenged to satisfy the experiential expectations of two significant age groups with very dissimilar interests. It will be very challenging to motivate the wealthiest age group, the Boomers, to invest in converting the System to satisfy the needs and interests of the debt-ridden younger generations, which the Boomers do not necessarily share.
- Overcoming Limited English Proficiency (LEP), particularly within the Hispanic heritage population, is an existential requirement to ensure the System’s long term sustainability and customer experience. The System will be profoundly challenged to engage potential customers with weak or no reading skills. The System will be seriously resource-challenged to convert its information formatting paradigm to satisfy the expectation of the rising customer base to be an interactive participant in, not merely a receiver of the cultural experience.

Mission Statement

The Manassas Museum System is the cornerstone of the City’s tourism effort with a mission to instill pride and promote civic engagement, use the lessons of the past to educate, connect and grow the community, and to create a unique and enjoyable visitor experience that contributes to making Manassas an extraordinary destination.
Proactive Measures Taken

In keeping with the preferred business plan option, the System has already taken steps to:

- Inventoried all holdings and improved collections storage and security
- Secured intellectual property rights with a proper computerized inventory
- Developed a long-term business plan
- Mobilized idle assets
- Reduced/refined store inventory
- Re-examined lawn rental policy
- Explored tour bus tie-ins, collaborating with Discover Prince William/Manassas Convention and Visitors Bureau to attract group tours
- Developed outreach such as Museum at the Market
- Expanded educational outreach, and increased partnerships with city schools and GMU

Further Near-Term Goals

- Improve collections care. Completion of this effort requires redesign of the exhibit spaces, particularly to reduce ultraviolet and visible light levels to recommended levels for sensitive materials.
- Redesigning the exhibit space to utilize exhibit space more effectively, to designate space for changing exhibits, and to include flexible cases which staff can adjust without help.
- Improving emergency planning for visitors, staff and collections.

TARGET AUDIENCE & STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders

- Citizens of Manassas and Prince William County who tour the museum and enjoy educational instruction, or attend events and programs
- Manassas City Public Schools
- Organizations supporting tourism promotion including Historic Manassas, Inc., Discover Prince William County/Manassas, Virginia Main Street program, The Journey Through Hallowed Ground, and the Virginia Tourism Corporation
- Old Town Business Association and Old Town Restaurant Alliance, whose members benefit from increased shopping and dining resulting from museum visitation
- Manassas National Battlefield Park, a cross-promotion partner
- Prince William Historic Preservation Division, a frequent partner in joint exhibits, programs and promotions
- Civil War Roundtables, Re-enactor groups, and other historical associations participating in programs
VALUE TO COMMUNITY

Strength in Education
In FY14, the System’s Educational Outreach made presentations to 7,163 students (4,782 City, 2,381 other) in grades K-12. This FY14 performance reflects a 107% increase over the total number of students who visited in FY13. The System does not charge the Manassas City Public School (MCPS) System for visits.

Quality of staff, preservation, research, and programs
All members of the museum staff are Certified Tourism Ambassadors (CTA) trained through the Journey through Hallowed Ground Partnership, and continue to pursue CTA and other professional education opportunities. The System continues to make significant progress towards achieving the recommendations of the Virginia Museum Association Circuit Riders Project for collections storage.

Delivery of quality goods and services to System visitors
FY13 exit polls indicated that 100 percent of the System’s visitors were satisfied with their experience, and that 95 percent were likely or very likely to visit the System again.

Value to Donors

- The museum and projects such as Liberia’s restoration, exhibits, and conservation offer donors the opportunity for philanthropic participation and tax benefits
- Donors help underserved populations enjoy cultural benefits
- Donors impact current and future generations, and create a personal legacy

MARKET ANALYSIS

Economic Environment
The slow pace of U.S. economic recovery, U.S. monetary policy, dependence on federal contracts, and the overhang of the federal budget sequestration with resultant federal employee furloughs have significantly jeopardized economic growth for years to come in the Commonwealth, particularly in Northern Virginia. Industries not typically associated with federal contracts, such as retail, hospitality, restaurants, tourism, and other services have been negatively impacted.

The crippling debt of today’s 20 and 30-somethings will have a ripple effect into the future. They will not have as much money to spend and donate when they get older, while, the Boomers remain the age group with the most significant amount of money to spend and donate. Volatile energy prices will have a major effect on the operating budgets of cultural institutions, and could play a larger role in decisions about expansion. Energy price volatility will also have a major effect on tourism. Two-thirds of car travel is currently discretionary, and as energy costs rise, travel costs will become an ever more important factor in Americans’ decisions about how to spend their leisure time and dollars. This effect may be buffered for local institutions that are plugged into their communities. “Bucket list” institutions that are distant but major tourist attractions will face challenges with increased gasoline prices, but not fatally as they continue to offer greater value to balance the higher costs of reaching them. Museums that require significant gasoline consumption and are not major tourist destinations will face enormous pressure, according to MUSEUMS & SOCIETY 2034: TRENDS AND POTENTIAL FUTURES, a report by the American Association of Museums.
Demographics
Subsidized Lunch Population
A reasonable barometer for the economic strength or weakness of a local economy is the percentage of public school students qualifying for subsidized lunches. Osbourn, Manassas Park, and Stonewall Jackson High Schools are among the highest sixth of all high schools in the Commonwealth for students qualifying for lunch subsidies.

% Students with subsidized lunch at area high schools

Ageing
The challenge posed by ageing is three-pronged. Age will eclipse race and ethnicity as the key factor that will split the System’s customer base into two different interest groups. Baby Boomers and Millennials have very different, often opposing, interests when it comes to cultural institutions. Boomers often want a cultural institution to be a place of respite and retreat; where they can disengage from the day-to-day and enjoy an unplugged state of being. Millennials want choice, they want cultural institutions to be interactive, participatory, exciting, and a place where they can socialize, lounge, and be the creator, not the passive consumer, according to a study by the California Association of Museums.
The chart on page 12 shows:

- a significant decrease of the under-forty population, which traditionally has been the source of approximately twenty percent of the System’s business;
- a dramatic decrease in the forty-to-sixty population, which traditionally has been the source of approximately sixty percent of the System’s business;
- an equally dramatic increase in the over-sixty population, which traditionally has been the source of approximately twenty percent of the System’s business. The dramatic increase in the over-sixty population will impose significant strain upon the System to remain an attractive destination and to provide an ADA1-compliant, meaningful experience for increasing numbers of physically and visually impaired customers.

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP)**

Projecting from current data, in about the year 2022, half of the population of Manassas will be of Hispanic heritage. If traditional proportions are maintained, about one half of the Hispanic heritage population will continue to speak only Spanish. Overcoming LEP, particularly within the Hispanic heritage population, is an existential requirement to ensure the System’s long term sustainability and customer experience.

**Communication**

There are two major facets to the communications challenge facing the System: illiteracy and information formatting.

Approximately twelve percent of Manassas households exist below the poverty level. There is a straightforward connection between literacy skills and household income, and it follows that a high number of lunch subsidies correlates directly to a high level of illiteracy. People with weak reading skills are unable to participate effectively in our community and the wealth of information in libraries and museums is inaccessible. The System will be seriously resource-challenged to convert its information formatting paradigm to satisfy the expectation of the rising customer base to be an interactive participant in, not merely a receiver of the cultural experience.

**Overall Strategic Concerns**

- Lack of multi-media capabilities: the System does not provide assistive technologies to accommodate and integrate visitors with visual and hearing disabilities. As a result, the City may be non-compliant with several pertaining Federal statutes. Also, the System lacks the fundamental teaching technologies expected of a learning institution in the twenty-first century.
- minimal engagement/entertainment of visitors
- lack of audio-visual assistive technologies
- weak attraction of out-of-area visitors
**COMPETITION**

Similarly sized small museums in the area include:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loudoun Museum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$100,000</td>
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<td>Culpeper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Museum staff/volunteers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>$143,000</td>
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<td>The Lyceum</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Museum staff</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>$442,774</td>
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<td>Lynchburg Museum</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Contractor using volunteers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>$450,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairfax Museum</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Museum staff/volunteers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>$527,239</td>
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<td>Manassas Museum</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Museum staff</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>$724,730</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manassas Museum</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Museum staff/volunteers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Va Historical Society</td>
<td>no (as of 1/2010)</td>
<td>Private Non-Profit</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Museum staff</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>$63,500,000</td>
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**COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS**

Collaborative Partnerships currently benefit the museum by extending promotional reach and advocacy, reaching larger mutual audiences, sharing exhibit collections, and utilizing logistical support for events. Partners include:

- Historic Manassas Inc. (HMI) for cooperative events like Civil War Weekend and joint promotion
- Discover Prince William/Manassas for event, program and tourism promotion
- PWC Historic Preservation Division for joint exhibits and programs
- Schools like Baldwin Elementary, which holds a regular movie night on the lawn
- Old Town Business Association (OTBA) for cooperative events such as Sidewalk Sales and First Fridays; and cooperation with group tours
- Virginia Tourism Corporation for cooperative advertising and online reach
- Virginia Association of Museums for political advocacy and promotions such as the Top 10 Endangered Artifacts competition
- Virginia Civil War Trails program for nationwide marketing assistance in promoting state-wide historic attractions
OPERATIONS AND SERVICES

Exhibits
Although changing exhibits are physically limited to hallway space, and a small area inside the permanent gallery, the museum has mounted nine exhibits, including three loaned traveling exhibits, in the last fiscal year. One exhibit was a collaboration with the Prince William County Historic Preservation Division, and one exhibit displayed the work of Osbourn High School students. One exhibit involved the renovation of a Civil War display inside the permanent gallery. The James and Marion Payne gallery inside the Historic Manassas Train Depot was also updated, and a display of architect Albert Speiden’s work was mounted in a City Hall conference room.

Education
Nearly 9,000 adults and students have attend special programs or have been touched by educational offerings. An expanding partnership with the Manassas City Public Schools ensures that its students receive free programming and tours. Of special note are one-day middle school programs at Liberia Plantation serving from 500-600 students. County and private schools continue to book tours and programs for fees. Other popular offerings include various walking tours, bike tours, and book talks.

Echoes, The Manassas Museum Store
Surveys from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) show that 72% of leisure travelers like to bring back local and regional memorabilia from the places visited. In satisfying that desire, Echoes generates four dollars of revenue for every dollar of revenue derived from Museum admissions largely by selling customized products.

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Museum
The existing Museum is 6,404 square feet and was constructed in 1991. It has one permanent exhibit gallery that was installed in 1991 and a hallway that is used for temporary exhibits. There is also a multipurpose room, a small research library, a store with a converted closet used for an office for the Visitor Services Supervisor and offices for the Curator, Program Coordinator and Administrative Associate. There is no collection storage onsite except for archival material. The central exhibit has not been updated since the Museum was opened in 1991.

Artifact collection storage is currently provided a leased off-site public self-storage unit in Manassas Park. Costume storage is currently provided at the Speiden-Carper House. A second leased off-site public self-storage unit is utilized for exhibit supplies and store inventory. There are also small storage sheds on the grounds of the Museum and a garage at Liberia used currently for supplies, tables and chairs. Another storage shed is planned for education supplies.

Liberia Plantation
Liberia is an 1825 plantation home donated to the City in 1986 to be used as a historic house museum. During the Civil War the house served as headquarters for both Confederate and Union forces. Since 1986 the City has stabilized the structure and continues restoration planning and efforts. The house and grounds are not generally open to the public and are only used for special events and
tours. The City placed the house, grounds and surrounding neighborhood in a historic district to protect both the house and outbuildings. In 2012 the city accepted the placement of a State historic easement on the house and immediate grounds to further protect this important resource in perpetuity.

Costs to restore the house and grounds are estimated at $1.6 million dollars, of which approximately $900 thousand dollars has been raised through private contributions and Capital Improvement Project funding by the City of Manassas.

**The Albert Speiden House**

The house was bequeathed to the City in 2005 for the specific purpose of presenting the house as a historic landmark. A task force was appointed in 2006 that recommended that the City accept the bequest and developed an outline of an interpretive plan and a budget of between $40,000 and $80,000 to open the house to the public and operate it as a historic house museum. A constraint of the property is that it is located within a residential neighborhood and a special use permit is required to open the house to the public. Conditions that would mitigate the impacts of noise and parking on the neighborhood would be instituted.

There are no funds available for the restoration of the house and improvements needed to open it to the public as a historic house museum. There is a trust fund established by Mrs. Carper with the goal towards using the interest earned from that fund for the maintenance of the house though the bequest also allows principal to be used if necessary.

**Manassas Industrial School/Jennie Dean Memorial**

The site of the former Manassas Industrial School for Colored Youth has been preserved by the City as an interpretive, passive park located in front of the Jennie Dean Elementary School. The site includes historical and interpretive markers. The City acquired the site in 1989. There is $16,190 for a memorial at the site. The site has both national and local significance and has been owned by the City for 23 years. It is an important site for the African American community and tells the story of a fascinating woman from Manassas' history.

**Hopkins Candy Factory**

The Candy Factory was deeded to the City of Manassas in 1998 with the stipulation that it be restored and used as an arts center. Rehabilitation began in 2001 under the direction of the Manassas Museum. There is a conservation easement on the building to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. The Center for the Arts leases the facility for a fee. The City is responsible for the maintenance of the facility and is able to use the facility at no cost for events and programs.

**Historic Manassas Train Station**

The Train Station was deeded to the City of Manassas in from the Norfolk Southern Railway Company. It was rehabilitated and opened to the public in 1997 with a small exhibit gallery. It is leased to Historic Manassas, Inc. to house houses offices and the City’s tourism information and visitor’s center. HMI pays no fee to lease the facility. The Museum staff is responsible for the exhibit.
Mayfield Earthwork Fort
Confederate troops occupied the fort between June 1861 and March 1862, and Union troops sporadically occupied the fort from March 1862 to November 1864. The 11 acre site features eight Civil War Trail interpretive markers, the stone markers for the foundation of the Hooe house site “Mayfield,” the earthen remainder of the Civil War earthwork fortification, and a replica of the Quaker guns left by the Confederates to mask the removal of their artillery as part of their withdrawal to defend Richmond. Today the site hosts living history and educational events and is open daily for self-guided tours.

Cannon Branch Earthwork Fort
It appears likely that the fortification was built by Union troops, circa 1863-1864, as part of a series of forts sited along the railroad to defend supply lines. Today the site hosts living history and educational events and is open daily for self-guided tours.

Civil War Trails Interpretive Signs
The Museum sponsors 21 Civil War Trails signs in Historic Downtown, at the Manassas Confederate Cemetery, at Liberia Plantation, and at Mayfield Fort in partnership with the Civil War Trails program, that are promoted as a state-wide attraction.

Collections
The value of the museum’s collection is estimated at $2.1 million and includes everything from historic books and textiles to farm implements and Civil War relics. The Circuit Riders program from the Virginia Association of Museums said of the collection during its recent evaluation: “Without question, the City of Manassas has a truly noteworthy collection and a wealth of material culture and archival holdings to tell the compelling story of the City’s heritage. The history and stories that MM is able to tell through its collections adds value to the community. Its local history archival and photographic resources offer a tremendous resource for local historians and genealogists. Its Civil War-era collections attract a national audience of visitors, scholars and researchers, bringing good repute and fostering tourism.”

Annual Visitation
The Museum System hosted 18,064 visitors in Fiscal Year 2013. Register receipts indicate that 73% were Virginia residents. The vast majority of these visitors resided in northern Virginia. The mid-Atlantic area accounts for 7% of visitors, followed by the Midwest, Southeast, Pacific Coast, and New England and Southwest.

On the following page are the numbers of recent visitors by states and by Virginia regions:
FINANCIAL ESTIMATES

Revenue from all Sources
The System does not receive financial benefit from contracts awarded by the City to rent or lease space within System buildings. All net revenues generated by the System are returned to the city’s general fund.

Approximately ten years ago, a capital campaign was initiated to raise $2 million for a roughly 7,000 square foot expansion to primarily increase the exhibit, assembly, business and storage space of the...
The campaign was unsuccessful though it was initiated by donations from a trust set by Ms. Mae Merchant that currently totals $958,447 towards the effort.

**Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Budget**

Over the next five years, the City has budgeted or plans to budget almost three-quarters of a million dollars for System improvements, as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY09</th>
<th>FY10</th>
<th>FY11</th>
<th>FY12</th>
<th>FY13</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Program Budget</strong></td>
<td>$521,579</td>
<td>$455,308</td>
<td>$390,674</td>
<td>$433,277</td>
<td>$567,438</td>
<td>$473,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Internal Services</td>
<td>($116,203)</td>
<td>($137,207)</td>
<td>($154,693)</td>
<td>($137,336)</td>
<td>($144,912)</td>
<td>($138,070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Costs</td>
<td>$405,376</td>
<td>$318,101</td>
<td>$235,981</td>
<td>$295,941</td>
<td>$422,526</td>
<td>$335,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from the System</td>
<td>$187,628</td>
<td>$165,910</td>
<td>$171,809</td>
<td>$221,093</td>
<td>$161,795</td>
<td>$181,647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from Visitor Spending in the City</td>
<td>$50,031</td>
<td>$45,288</td>
<td>$35,380</td>
<td>$51,486</td>
<td>$49,421</td>
<td>$47,536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue from the System as a percentage of Direct Costs</td>
<td>046.30</td>
<td>052.20</td>
<td>072.80</td>
<td>074.70</td>
<td>038.30</td>
<td>056.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Source Revenue as a percentage of Direct Costs</td>
<td>058.60</td>
<td>066.40</td>
<td>087.80</td>
<td>092.10</td>
<td>050.00</td>
<td>068.30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excluding funds for the restoration of the Liberia House, the City’s five year CIP for the System is fully absorbed by maintenance and repair necessities. Returning the System’s net revenues to the General Fund rather than to the System itself prevents the System from seizing the immediate opportunity these revenues would provide to expand and improve its educational outreach and public service.

**Revenue generation**

The System raises revenue through admission fees, rentals, and Museum Store sales. The table below, based on an Americans for the Arts, Arts and Economic Prosperity IV calculator, shows that the System returns, on a five-year average, approximately 51% of its direct costs to the City. Factoring in City revenue generated by System visitors spending in the local economy, the System’s effective return on its direct costs is, on a five-year average, approximately 68%.
Membership
The System receives strong and enduring support from the Manassas Museum Associates, with about 200 members. The Associates fund:

- curatorial interns
- publish a quarterly newsletter of System events
- purchase exhibit cases and program equipment
- fund traveling exhibits
- conduct annual fund-raising activities
- and ensure, especially as city budgets are trimmed, that the System remains able to steward and exhibit the community’s historic resources.

Grants
One challenge in obtaining grants is that most philanthropic organizations affiliated with the wellbeing of museums and libraries would require the City, as a venture partner, to pledge matching funds as a condition for grant consideration. Another challenge in attracting large-scale philanthropic support is the System’s lack of accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums. Within these constraints, some grants and in-kind services have helped fund recent exhibits and have contributed to the Liberia Restoration Fund. The most recent grants include those from:

- Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative (NOVEC)
- GFWC Woman’s Club of Manassas, Inc.
- Mark Olsen, Old Towne Landscaping
- Tina Reichenbach, Richbrook Conservation
- William Olsen

Rental Income
At this time, no facilities are available for rent, but staff is studying this issue. Idle assets, such as the Museum meeting room, lawn, and off-exhibit materials, may have potential earning power as rentals. A risk/reward analysis must precede pursuit of this opportunity.

Restoration of Liberia House is expected to generate considerable rental income from that site, but will require staff resources. The restoration is a high risk, high reward proposition, supported by a combination of public and private funding. Liberia’s potential cannot be measured at this time.

Marketing Efforts
Marketing efforts gain leverage with cooperative publicity involving Historic Manassas, Discover Prince William/Manassas (which recruits group, business and leisure travel) and Prince William County Historic Preservation Division, and through cooperative ad buys with the Virginia Tourism Corporation. Free listings on a variety of calendars and web sites have also increased exposure.

Past advertising efforts relied exclusively on print ads, but now feature a mix of print and online ads. A summer 2014 campaign to divert $15,000 in store inventory to advertising is now being evaluated. A lack of consistent advertising investment, and the infusion of advertising funds only for specific campaigns, has probably hampered overall recognition for the museum.
**Web Page Strength**

In Fiscal Year 2014, the museum’s web site had a total of 17,291 page views, for a monthly average of 1,440 page views per month. The museum was among the top five most viewed city pages in 10 of 12 months, and in the top six most viewed pages for the remaining two months.

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**MEASURING SUCCESS**

**Economic Impact**

The System supports Old Town businesses by encouraging System customers to patronize these businesses. The economic impact of this support cannot be directly measured, but it can be reliably estimated. Using a massive, nation-wide database, Americans for the Arts, in conjunction with the Georgia Institute of Technology, developed an industry standard calculator specifically to estimate the economic impact of the nonprofit arts and culture industry. Based upon the City’s population, the number of System customers, and the System’s budget, the calculator produced the following estimates of the System’s economic impact upon its neighboring businesses:

![Graph showing economic impact](image-url)
Discover Prince William/Manassas estimates that 2.96 million visitors came to the area in FY 2013, and local tax revenue has been rising as a result of such visits:

The Virginia Tourism Corporation’s analysis of tourism revenue also shows an 8.8% uptick in state tax receipts and a significant increase in local employment and tax revenue directly related to tourism:
GOVERNING BOARD, STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The Manassas Historic Resources Board
Steven Thomas, Chairman
Rob Fisher, Vice Chairman
James David Button II
Joseph Hanlin
Anne Harrington
Michael Lewis
Jennifer London
Keith A. Mueller
Mark Olsen
Ann Harrover Thomas
Don Wilson

Honorary Lifetime Members of the Historic Resources Board
Rita Koman
Suzanne Parker
John Payne
Ulysses X. White

Staff

- A full time curator, program coordinator, revenue manager, and administrative specialist, and four part-time visitor services aides staff the museum.
- Two seasonal interns help provide tour and program support during the busy summer tourist season.
- Both paid and unpaid curatorial interns assist with special collections projects.

Volunteers

- Weekend volunteers enable the museum to stay open when only one staff member is present.
- Approximately 30 program and special event volunteers are trained to assist with education programs, tours, and special events such as the annual Civil War Weekend.
- An average of 20 volunteers now serve as visitor docents during regular museum hours.
- Staff members are actively recruiting volunteers from among civic organizations and schools.
- A training program to better educate the existing core of 30 museum volunteers and create a new docent category of volunteers is underway. Docents will undergo more rigorous training and take an active role in providing tours and enhancing the visitor experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- To prosper, the System must increase visitation. Increased visitation depends upon the System’s ability to appeal to a broader spectrum of visitors with interests that include, but are not solely focussed on, the Civil War.
- Increased visitation also requires proactive adaptation to changing City-wide demographics, particularly to engage potential visitors who may have limited-to-no proficiency in the English
language, who may be illiterate in any language, who are physically impaired, and who are being educated and entertained in technologically sophisticated, interactive environments.

The Board has adopted the following recommendations. Recommendations a. through c. seek to reduce or eliminate self-imposed hurdles to achieving improved business efficiencies. Recommendations d. through f. seek to stabilize the System’s long-term viability by better integrating it into the fabric of its surrounding academic and cultural environments. Recommendation g. seeks to position the System for eligibility to host major traveling exhibitions. Recommendation h. seeks to eliminate a facility. Option C would, among that has no chance of developing revenue for the System.

| a. | Unify the budget authority for City expenditures supporting the arts, humanities, culture, history, and related facilities and public events under a single City Director. |
| b. | Establish regional admission passes with museums and cultural centers throughout the Northern Piedmont. |
| c. | Eliminate the Museum general admission fee. Charge fees for special exhibitions and events. |
| d. | Establish an academic partnership with George Mason University to provide internship and practicum opportunities, and to supplement the System staff with career-motivated graduate and undergraduate student assistants. |
| e. | Expand the depth and variety of stories that the System tells to provide a sense of place spanning time from the original, Native American inhabitants of the region to modern times. |
| f. | Explore with local cultural associations how to better integrate their interests into the menu of System offerings and services. |
| g. | Fund the System sufficiently to achieve certification by the American Alliance of Museums, to post the Museum catalogue on the Internet, and to determine the feasibility of developing a virtual museum. |
| h. | Divest the System of the Speiden-Carper House. |

Museum Improvement Options
The Committee examined nine options for improving the Museum facility to host larger, more varied exhibits, and to better address the City’s demographic changes. With the concurrence of the Historic Resources Board, the Committee reduced the number of options to the following three.

The Committee assessed each of these against the strategic Measures Of Effectiveness, and estimated cost and time to accomplish each.

**a. Revitalize the Existing Museum without Expansion.** Upgrade lighting and climate control. Ensure ADA compliance. Install location- and proximity-based communications, Wi-Fi connectivity, automatic spoken language translation, and “bring your own device” compatibility.


**Discussion.** This option partially satisfies all strategic imperatives. It would expand the System’s market reach, improve information access and presentation, encourage and facilitate interactive learning, and enable seamless adaptation to demographic changes in the Community and extended visitor base. This option would enable nation-wide visibility by posting a virtual museum, and enable real-time interactivity between the System and all levels of Academia. It would also overcome the challenges of visitors with limited proficiency in English, and illiterate visitors. This option would assure ADA compliance. Technology upgrades should require only software updates and new hardware. This would cost-effectively dampen the challenges of future fluctuations in the economy, worsening regional traffic congestion, and different learning styles inherent to a multi-generational visitor base. This option has a moderately high ROI potential.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost estimate:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$200,000 Designer Fee</td>
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<tr>
<td>$475,000 Interiors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$570,000 Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,245,000 Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Time to accomplish: 24 months (Museum closed for final 12 months of Project.)*

**Expand the Museum without Significant Modification of Existing Facility.** Expand the existing 6,404 square foot Museum building by 7,000 square feet as originally planned but with a total exhibit area of 8,207 square feet. Design the expansion structure to allow future installation of a second floor. Upgrade lighting and climate control in the existing building. Ensure ADA compliance throughout the new expansion. Within only the new expansion, install location- and proximity-based communications, Wi-Fi connectivity, automatic spoken language translation, and “bring your own device” compatibility.

**Discussion.** This option significantly satisfies all strategic imperatives. It would preserve the intimacy of the existing Museum while expanding the System’s market reach, improving information access and presentation, encouraging and facilitating interactive learning, and enabling seamless adaptation to demographic changes in the Community and extended visitor base. This option would enable nation-wide visibility by posting a virtual museum, and enable real-time interactivity between the System and all levels of Academia. It would also overcome the challenges of visitors with limited proficiency in English, and illiterate visitors, but only within the new expansion. This option would assure ADA compliance only in the new expansion. After a hefty initial investment, upgrading should require only software updates with new processors. This would cost-effectively dampen the challenges of future fluctuations in the economy, worsening regional traffic congestion, and different learning styles inherent to a multi-generational visitor base. This option has the potential for a high, long-term ROI.
**Cost estimate:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$2,000,000 Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basis of Estimate: Reference (c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$300,000 Architect Fee</td>
<td></td>
<td>BOE: 15% of construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,051,750 Interiors</td>
<td></td>
<td>BOE: 8,207 sq.ft. @ $250/sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,462,100 Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>BOE: 8,207 sq.ft. @ $300/sq.ft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>$6,813,850 Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Time to accomplish: 42 months (Periodic closures of Museum possible.)*

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**C. Expand the Museum and Install Modern Technologies throughout the Entire Facility.**

Expand the existing 6,404 square foot Museum building by 7,000 square feet as originally planned but with a total exhibit area of 8,207 square feet. Design the expansion structure to allow future installation of a second floor. Design the expansion to serve both as an historic exhibit area and as a Heritage Center to research and celebrate the cultural diversity of the City’s residents.

**Discussion.** This option fully satisfies all strategic imperatives. It would preserve the intimacy of the existing Museum while expanding the System’s market reach, improving information access and presentation, encouraging and facilitating interactive learning, and enabling seamless adaptation to demographic changes in the Community and extended visitor base. The technologic revitalization delivered by this option would enable Museum accreditation, hosting of major travelling exhibitions, nation-wide visibility by posting a virtual museum, and enabling real-time interactivity between the System and all levels of Academia. It would also overcome the challenges of visitors with limited proficiency in English, and illiterate visitors. This option would assure ADA compliance.

**Cost estimate:**

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<tr>
<td><strong>$6,813,850 Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Time to accomplish: 42 months (Periodic closures of Museum possible.)*
SUMMARY

The Board has adopted and recommends Option c., Expand the Museum and Install Modern Technologies throughout the Entire Facility. Option C would, among the three recommended options, produce the greatest long-term return value on investment in addition to implementation of all of the business improvement recommendations.

The Board has adopted the findings, conclusions, and recommendations contained in this Business Plan, and has forwarded this Plan to the City’s Director of Community Development.

APPENDICES

- **Appendix A - System Self-Analysis Report** describes in detail the System’s strengths and weaknesses. The Committee developed strategic measures of effectiveness (MOE), and using them assessed the degree to which proposed business solutions could build upon System strengths, and reduce or eliminate its weaknesses.
- **Appendix B - System Environments Report** provides detailed analysis of current trends.
- **Appendix C – Business Options Report** provides Committee developed general recommendations to improve System effectiveness, and recommended specific options for much-needed improvement of the Museum facility.