



2015-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN
Adopted by the Board June 15, 2015

Introduction:

The Seal Cove Auto Museum began the process of developing a three-year strategic plan in 2014. Raney Bench, Executive Director, began the planning process by conducting a series of interviews with staff, the board of directors, and selected stakeholders, including the Trustees of the Richard C. Paine Jr. Charitable Trust. The results of those interviews gave direction for the future goals and opportunities to be pursued by the Museum.

In August 2014, the board met to discuss the results of the interviews and identify the primary goals to work towards, and established a Strategic Planning Committee. The committee met to lead the planning process, interview potential consultants to help with the development of the Plan, and determine core competencies. Based on recommendations from the Planning Committee, the board voted to hire Starboard Leadership Consulting, and Kathy Hunt met with the board twice to help narrow the long term vision into a three-year strategic plan that will lead the Museum on a path towards its long range vision.

This document includes the Mission and Vision of the Seal Cove Auto Museum as well as the Values, Core Competencies, and the Ten-Year Plan. The strategic plan will guide the work of the staff and board of directors for the next three years.

The plan is meant to be a living document and will be adjusted by the board as needed to reflect changes and opportunities that arise and help advance the mission of the Museum. The staff works as a team with the board to meet the goals outlined in this Plan.

MISSION

To tell the story of innovation and ingenuity in New England and America through the early development of the automobile

VISION

- To collect and preserve examples of early vehicles.
- To be a resource for the local community and for auto enthusiasts across the nation.
- To be the premier brass era car museum in the country.
- To offer dynamic educational experiences that inspire, enlighten, and entertain visitors of all ages.
- To be a knowledge center on Brass Era automobiles, their designers and manufacturers.
- To honor the memory of pioneer automobile collector Richard C. Paine, Jr.

VALUES

We are dedicated to:

- Providing excellent visitor experiences at every point of contact.
- Upholding professional and ethical standards and practices in the maintenance of the Museum, its collections, and historical scholarship.
- Educating the American public – especially our youth – about our nation’s early automotive history and its relevance to today.
- Maintaining the highest level of conduct in our relationships with each other and in our governance of the Museum.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- A wealth of knowledge about antique automobiles, and the story they tell about industrial developments that changed the history of the US, to share with colleagues and the public.
- Ability to maintain and display an outstanding collection of steam, electric, and gas-powered antique automobiles from the Brass Era with the potential of becoming well known among antique auto enthusiasts everywhere.
- Significant endowed sources of funding to maintain and leverage growth by the organization.
- A dedicated, focused, and active Board of Directors and Trust, many with expertise in antique vehicles.
- A professional staff including an Executive Director and Curator of Collections with extensive museum experience, a passion for the history of early automobiles, and the ability to develop high quality exhibits and programs.

- Ownership of building and grounds with room for development and expansion.
- Demonstrated capacity to network and display automobiles with similar or related organizations, both nationally and internationally.
- Strong year-round community outreach with potential to build on a small but dedicated group of community volunteers.
- Located near Acadia National Park, which attracts 2.4 million visitors annually.

TEN-YEAR VISION

The ten-year vision for the Seal Cove Auto Museum, to be recognized nationally as a premier brass era car museum and resource center in the country, is based on interviews with the Board of Directors, stakeholders, and staff in 2014. They further envision the Museum will be recognized locally and nationally as an automotive history museum engaging in meaningful and fun ways with local residents, visitors to Mount Desert Island, and on a national scale through car shows and an active loan program that will make the Seal Cove Auto Museum an important venue for the display and interpretation of brass era automobiles.

The Museum will be a community resource through education initiatives, outreach programs and events, and value added experiences. The Museum will maintain its exceptional reputation for visitor experience through high-quality and informative exhibits, demonstrations and rides in the cars, knowledgeable and friendly front-line staff and volunteers, and a facility and site that reflect the uniqueness of the collection. Staff and leadership will be stable, with a strong relationship between the Museum and the Trust, united in a common vision for the future.

The collections will be expanded, not only through increasing the number of automobiles added and loaned to the museum, but also in era-related accessories that help capture more stories and interest a broader range of visitors. The collections will be fully documented on Past Perfect with hard copy backups on each car kept in binders. An individualized maintenance plan will be established for each automobile. More of the cars will be operational, and we will have a strong staff and volunteer team to care for the collection. Cars will be used for demonstrations, and videos will be available for people to view on non-demonstration days.

The building will be larger and include improved space for staff offices and administrative functions, event space, a larger exhibit and orientation gallery, and a climate control system that will allow for better care of the collections. The aesthetics of the building will be improved by an addition, creating more appeal to draw in visitors. This expansion will also improve the historic structure by covering or replacing the metal siding.

To improve visitor services, the Museum will offer some food options, via a snack station or an outside food vendor. To reach these goals, the staff and Board of Directors will increase development efforts, connecting with new volunteers, building the donor base through increased contacts made by the board and museum leadership, and establishing strong partnerships.

A cost-benefit analysis of developing a driving track on the site will have been conducted, as well as a survey of the site, and options for the type of material used will have been fully explored. The Board of Directors, staff, and stakeholders will have had thorough discussions and come to a conclusion on this issue.

Apart from the discussion about a driving track, the site will have improved parking, specifically to accommodate car shows and increased visitation. It will be

beautified through the development of gardens managed by local garden clubs or as part of the operational budget of the Museum. There will be an interpretive element to this outdoor experience that will link visitors to our mission and the collections inside. The site improvement will enhance our beautiful location and be more appealing for events.

2015-2018 Strategic Initiatives

GOAL: ENGAGE OUR PUBLIC

The Auto Museum has several "publics," including visitors to the Museum, electronic and social media visitors, community members, automobile enthusiasts, visitors to Mount Desert Island, and regional and national audiences at car shows and events. Recognizing that we engage with each of these publics in different ways, the Auto Museum will continue the successful programs, partnerships, and exhibits already established, and enhance them as resources and staffing allow.

OBJECTIVES:

- Create and maintain interesting exhibits and programs with meaning and lasting impact that our public can connect to on a personal level.
- Offer enhanced visitor experiences to foster excitement and create memories.
- Recognize that our public extends beyond the museum building and pursue opportunities to engage with people off-site, as time and resources allow.

STRATEGIES:

- Implement exhibit rotation every two years, developing each exhibit with a storyline whose core message impacts people today and includes opportunities for visitors to share and participate in the story.
- Hire a summer programs coordinator to manage and implement summer schedule.
- Increase number of drivers available to give rides in cars and operate cars in parades.
- Secure tow vehicle to tow museum trailer; identify and train drivers.
- Identify purposes for getting cars operational and a process for doing so. Create a list of cars suitable for operation and schedule mechanical work that acknowledges the resources available.
- Work with *Visitor's Count!* or similar program to evaluate the visitor experience; adjust programs in response.

GOAL: Strengthen Organizational Capacity

Over the past six years, the Auto Museum has undergone rapid growth and professional transformation, while also experiencing leadership transitions that resulted in inconsistencies. The Board and Executive Director will focus on stabilizing staff and completing policies and planning that will streamline and professionalize operations.

OBJECTIVES:

- Stabilize staffing and leadership to reduce turnover.
- Incorporate board education opportunities at all meetings.
- Revitalize board committees to meet regularly.

-

STRATEGIES:

- Ensure competitive salary and benefit packages for all staff, including merit-based raises and/or bonuses and annual performance evaluations.
- Audit existing board policies and procedures, update existing policies, identify gaps, and fill those gaps.
- Review and articulate the strengths and weaknesses of the collection and formulate a plan for acquisitions and loans specifically tied to exhibits and programs.
- Install climate monitoring and control measures including portable dehumidifiers.
- Create a master site plan to guide future improvements to the campus and building.
- Research and make a final decision about including a driving track on campus.

GOAL: Build a Strong Foundation for the Future

As the Auto Museum looks to the future, consistent growth, engaged donors and stakeholders, and improved facilities will be necessary to expand and improve the campus and visitor experience. Capital and short-term financial improvement and investment goals will rely on active leadership from the Development Committee and participation from all Board members. Building a strong foundation for the future will also depend on the degree of success achieved in the first two goals.

An engaged and interest public, stable leadership, and a growing member base will all contribute to a strong and exciting future. The Board and staff will focus efforts on growing membership, enhancing the member and visitor experiences, and engaging with donors.

OBJECTIVES:

- Establish an active and engaged donor base; articulate a vision for the future that excites donors and establishes trust.
- Create a master plan and structure for planned giving, large donations, and estate planning.
- Increase the number of donations and the amount given.
- Retain and grow membership; enhance membership benefits through special programs, discounts, and increased communication.
- Grow the business membership program.

- Transform the Rusticators Picnic or similar event into a fundraiser generating at least \$7,000 toward the general operating budget, or reassess its purpose.