

# **Ecorse Historical Society Strategic Plan**

**2024 – 2027**

**DRAFT**

Ecorse Historical Society board members will work on a strategic plan to develop a vision, goals, and strategies to carry us through the next 3-5 years. This is a draft is meant to give us a foundation on which the EHS can build.

## **Vision:**

In the next three to five years. . .

By 2027 the Ecorse Historical Society will be a vibrant, vital, and visible community organization with exhibits, collections and programs that attract City of Ecorse residents and visitors from near and far. The three historic sites within the city will go beyond the “traditional” museum mentality to collectively function as a history park that brings the past to life in fun and unexpected ways.

The Historical Society will be a “must join” organization. City of Ecorse residents will want to get involved through membership and volunteer opportunities. New programs, exhibits, marketing, and a development plan will all work to entice people to become members into a healthy and engaged organization that not only brings local history to life, but that intimately connects to them on a personal level. The Ecorse Historical Society programs will strive to attract and serve residents of all ages. The Board will strategically find energized volunteers to sit on the Board and help run many of the current and new initiatives. These volunteers will

alleviate many of the past staffing issues and will lead to succession planning as current member/volunteers retire or shift their priorities. New volunteers will be allowed to explore their own program ideas, bringing freshness to the Ecorse Historical Society's offerings, and will be used to strategically connect to different populations within the town.

Greater financial security will be achieved through a comprehensive development plan that systematically expands the organization's membership and donor base. Individuals, foundations and at least one new gala event will be identified and developed to raise needed funds. Programs will also be developed with an emphasis on building attendance, raising income, and "friendraising." These initiatives will help place the organization on a better financial footing.

Emphasis will be placed on the Ecorse Historical Society's collections. Adequate volunteer staffing will be achieved to support and maintain the long-term preservation, staffing, and planning of historic assets. A disaster plan, collections plan and policy will each be developed to ensure best practices for collections. The collection will be fully integrated into a collection's software that allows for many of the images to be searched online. Other online and media outlets will be used to present and share the City of Ecorse's history and the Ecorse Historical Society's collection. Through these methods, the public will receive greater access to the organization's collections and will build a stronger appreciation of the City's past and the Ecorse Historical Society's value.

## **Strategic Goals/Priorities:**

In pursuit of the future, we have envisioned and aspire to reach, the Ecorse Historical Society's Board will focus its energies and resources on four areas of priority during the coming years:

1. ***Strengthen Financial Security:*** An improved financial position will be achieved by creating and implementing a development plan that thoughtfully incorporates ways to diversify income sources.
2. ***Increase Engagement of People:*** A more active membership and volunteer core will play a greater role in fundraising events, embracing new ideas and concepts, developing inclusive history programming that engages a broad audience, and filling key staff and board roles.
3. ***Expand Programs and Optimize Collections:*** New, innovative programs set forth in a thoughtful plan will bring an open museum site to life in fun and engaging ways that attract youth, families, and history buffs while the Ecorse Historical Society's collections will be organized and preserved to maximize their effectiveness and long-range preservation.
4. ***Build Public Awareness:*** Increased branding of the organization and clear and consistent public communication will build visibility of membership, programs, financial support, and the Ecorse Historical Society's resources.

## **Key Initiatives and Strategies:**

***Goal 1: Strengthen Financial Security:*** An improved financial position will be achieved by creating and implementing a development plan that thoughtfully incorporates ways to diversify income sources.

Identified initiatives and strategies are:

1. A comprehensive development plan will be created that incorporates membership, donor cultivation, planned giving, annual appeal schedule, grants and foundation support, and fundraising events, etc. Special emphasis will be placed on diversifying income sources.
2. Possible funding for this could be achieved through the [Home | Michigan Nonprofit Association \(mnaonline.org\)](http://mnaonline.org)
3. A new gala event will be developed to enhance some the Ecorse Historical Society's discontinued events and to take the stress off of the annual Chili Cook-Off as the only significant money maker. This gala event

should be designed to not only raise money, but to also build visibility and friends.

4. A dedicated fundraising committee will be established to regularly review and implement the development plan. New members/volunteers will be approached to be part of this committee. While the committee will be responsible for overseeing the plan, it will remain the ultimate duty of the entire Board to ensure that it is properly implemented and supported.

5. Membership fees will be regularly reviewed by the Membership Committee (see Increased Engagement of People) and compared to other historical societies in the region. Where possible, rates will be increased accordingly to reflect the market price.

6. “Fun” raising gala will be developed to create new friends within the community and build visibility.

7. New methods to produce revenue will be pursued. One such way will be to promote the Ecorse Historical Society’s sites, such as unoccupied homes that have been deemed “historic” as event venues for meetings, small gatherings, and special occasions. One Board/volunteer member will be assigned to oversee facility rentals. Fee structures, contracts, insurance, and staffing will be reviewed by the Board before the sites are promoted.

8. All existing programs will go through a cost/benefit analysis to assess and review their current viability and possibility for future income and sustainability.

9. New programs and events will be developed with the intent to raise needed funds. This will be done in tandem with the strategies outlined under “Increase Engagement of People”.

10. Other historical societies/museums within and outside of the immediate area/region will be investigated for successful events.

### ***Goal 2: Increase Engagement of People:***

A more active membership and volunteer core will play a greater role in fundraising events, embracing new ideas and concepts, developing inclusive history programming that engages a broad audience, and filling key staff and board roles.

## Identified initiatives and strategies:

### *Create a detailed membership plan:*

#### 1. This plan will include:

- Setting goals and objectives for membership numbers.
- Redesigning/reviewing the membership appeal process and materials.
- Determining methods to recruit and engage members so that they take a more active role in the organization and reduce the burden on the Board.
- Developing incentives for membership participation (i.e., special events, members' open house, monthly programs, Meet the Members social, etc.)
- Establishing a committee responsible for essential membership operations: e.g., recruitment of active members/outreach.
- In the immediate future the Board will reach out to a few (solid) existing members who are willing to play an active role in developing 1- 2 new annual fundraising programs.
- Recruit and identify new people committed to working and contributing.
- The Board will actively work towards reshaping the perception of membership, striving to find ways to empower members and get them more involved.
- Make sure that physical space for programs and exhibits is accessible to visitors with a specific emphasis on senior citizens and people with physical disabilities.
- If needed, pursue grants to ensure ADA accessibility and adequate HVAC controls in public meeting spaces.

2. Expand volunteer core through planning and using programs as ways to reach more people.

- Obtain more volunteers to help implement ideas.
- Ensure that there is a sufficient population of volunteers to perform the organization's jobs: docents, grounds help, teaching in schools.
- Recruit a volunteer office person to handle clerical matters for the society.

***Pursue Board Development:***

- The Board of Directors will be comprised of members with responsibilities that are essential to the success and operation of the organization.
- New Board Members will be identified/cultivated to represent town demographics.
- Participate in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's Board Leadership program.

***Goal 3: Expand Programs and Optimize Collections:***

New, innovative programs set forth in a thoughtful plan will bring the unoccupied historic home sites to life in fun and engaging ways that attract youth, families and history buffs while the Ecorse Historical Society's collections will be better organized and preserved to maximize their effectiveness and long-range preservation.

***Identified initiatives and strategies are:***

1. The development of more inclusive and creative programming to better serve the Ecorse community, such as:

- Weekday coffee/tea chat venues in unoccupied historic homes
- Development and promotion of short course certificates
- Lifelong learning programs
- Theatrical and music related events
- Youth mentoring programs

- Possibly developing an overnight program geared around crime and punishment where at-risk youth spend the night in an Ecorse Police Department (EPD) cell.
- New school history-based programs that connect specially with school curriculum needs.
- Meet with area teachers to identify needs and specific history interests
- Develop ways to connect to “history hobbyists”.
- Invite locals to share their “histories” to implement/promote oral histories.
- Find and provide an outlet for unfulfilled niches of interest i.e., pre-school programs during the week for children and parents, clubs, social organizations, etc.

2. New programs will be developed that emphasize the Society as a unified organization. These programs will focus on town’s heritage and will be in addition to those that are site specific.

3. Program times and days of the week will be experimented with to see what works best with different constituents.

- A survey of members/possible constituents will be developed to find out the program times and topics that would most interest them.

4. One larger annual event will be developed, such as:

- Detroit River Cruise Night
- Scuba Diving for Artifacts
- Photo Show
- Quilt Show
- Annual Exhibit

5. To enhance visibility and to ensure success the Ecorse Historical Society will look towards piggybacking with existing community events or the

creation of a Farmer's Market and invite other organizations and the City of Ecorse to piggyback the EHS.

6. ***New ways to offset program operating costs will be pursued:***

- Sponsorships
- Grants
- Collaborations with other partners to share resources (both staffing and financial)

8. A wish list will be created to fill in missing collections areas. This will be shared with members and possible donors.

9. A collections policy and plan will be developed to ensure that best practices are followed for all collections.

a. Consideration will be given to applying to established historical organizations for assessment and certification.

10. A collection software product such as PastPerfect will be acquired to better organize the collection and share it online.

- This and other technological needs might be supported through technology grants.

11. The creation of a disaster plan will be completed to ensure the safety and security of the unoccupied historic home sites, the Ecorse Historical Society's collections, and the public.

12. Seek author to write additional book(s) on omitted history of African American, Hispanic Native Americans in Ecorse.

13. Explore more activities that involve people in town: open house, Men Who Cook, ethnic/cultural dress festival, fundraiser, ethnic foods festival.

14. Look at prior successful undertakings and see if they could be restored in a new form.

15. The Ecorse Historical Society's photographs and documents will be scanned and organized into a software system that can be integrated online.



16. A long-range plan will be developed for each unoccupied historic home site that identifies physical needs, programming, staffing, and interpretation.

***Goal 4: Build Public Awareness:***

Increased branding of the organization and clear and consistent public communication will build visibility of membership, programs, financial support, and the historical society's resources.

***Identified initiatives and strategies are:***

1. Develop a detailed marketing plan that will promote the uniqueness of the Ecorse Historical Society, its programs, and its resources in a way that excites and engages a broad audience.
2. Develop a greater online presence. Create additional promotion through internet, etc.
  - a. Place collections online so that more people become aware of the Ecorse Historical Society as a vital historic resource.
  - b. Creation of Virtual Tour of the unoccupied historic homes to act as a teaser for people to come and see sites.
  - c. Utilize YouTube and TikTok to promote programs, exhibits, and other activities.
3. Identify a Publicity Volunteer to oversee marketing efforts.
4. Create a historic house plaque program for EHS Certified Historic Homes to celebrate local history and build public awareness of the historical society.
  - Review how other historical societies manage a program such as this with a clear understanding of the resources that it will take.
5. Showcase human interest stories and display them in the community (Library, Webcasts, Zoom, etc.)
6. Increase electronic communication with websites, expanded email list, and other organizations.

7. Develop a greater presence with the community through new programs, exhibits, and collaborations.

