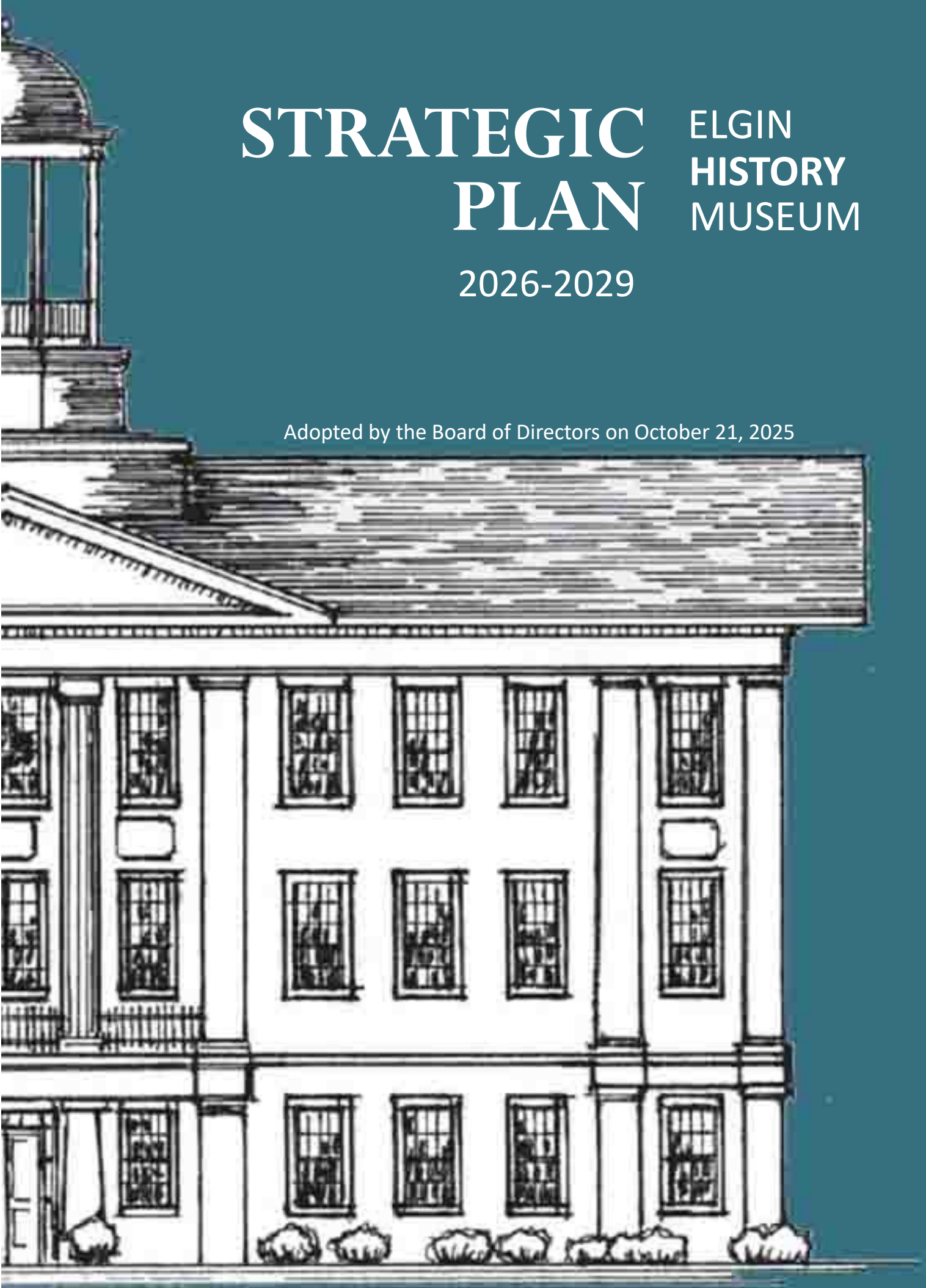


# STRATEGIC PLAN

ELGIN  
HISTORY  
MUSEUM

2026-2029

Adopted by the Board of Directors on October 21, 2025





## *Executive Summary*

The Elgin History Museum, located in the 1856 Greek Revival landmark Old Main, serves as a hub for preserving and sharing Elgin's heritage. Operated by the Elgin Area Historical Society (founded in 1961), the Museum offers permanent and rotating exhibits highlighting the city's history, including the Elgin National Watch Company, the Elgin Road Race, and the Elgin River to Rails story. The staff welcome visitors, support research, and provide educational programming.

In May 2025, the Museum initiated a strategic planning process led by a board-staff subcommittee and facilitated by Board Member Tricia Grosser. After five meetings, the updated plan was presented and formally adopted by the Board of Directors on 10/21/2025.







## Guiding Principles

### *Mission*

Preserve Elgin's diverse heritage and sense of place while striving to be equitable, accessible, and relevant in our interactions with the community.

### *Vision*

Inspiring historical discovery by preserving and sharing Elgin's heritage

### *Values*

The Elgin Historical Society believes **history matters**, connecting people to each other and to something larger than themselves. People of all backgrounds and generations need history to understand the world around them and to develop solutions for the future.

We believe **everyone makes history**. Relevant history is inclusive history. Creativity and innovation inform the Museum's work as an organization. Collaborative partnerships and practices are key to advancing the mission in the community.

**We value** the investment of time and experience of **our volunteers** and are transparent in how we connect to the community as an association and as historians.

**We are accountable** to the fiscal policies of the organization by balancing efficiency and flexibility with budgetary discipline. We also seek sustainable resources while practicing financial oversight with long term planning.

## *Strategic Plan - Goals*

The mission and vision of the Elgin History Museum align with these six goals. They are part of a continuing multi-year plan.

### **OUTREACH & VISIBILITY**

Increase the Museum's outreach and visibility in the local community. This will result in making resources and programming well known and readily accessible. Accurately convey Elgin's history so that it is inclusive and provides perspective and context to past and present events. Seek partnerships with other local organizations, institutions, and individuals.

### **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

Improve the Museum's overall operation by adherence to professional standards. This will be accomplished by participating in the STEPS self-assessment program issued by the American Association for State and Local History.

### **ENHANCE COLLECTIONS**

Enhance collections management and stewardship by improving storage, and indexing systems. Accelerate work on digitization of images and other holdings. Support the collection management with upgraded information technology.

### **INCREASE REVENUE**

Seek opportunities to increase revenue from diverse sources. Operate on a sound financial basis and pursue long-term financial resiliency through the steady growth of the endowment fund.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES**

Adopt technological advances to improve museum management accessibility to collections. This extends programming to larger audiences to enhance communication and outreach.

### **EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

Through governance, staffing, training, collecting, programming, investing and all other aspects of operations, be inclusive of diversity, mindful of conscious and unconscious bias, evaluative of environmental implications and demonstrate fair and just treatment of all community members.

# Goals & Objectives

In the table below each objective is highlighted when it falls within the realm of that particular Museum goal.

| Objective                           | OUTREACH & VISIBILITY | PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS | ENHANCE COLLECTIONS | INCREASE REVENUE | TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES | EQUITABLE PRACTICE |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Partnerships                        |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Old Main Improvement                |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Nancy Kimball House                 |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Educational Programming             |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| STEPS                               |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Content Development/<br>Multi-Media |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Collections Management              |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Fundraising                         |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Museum Store                        |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Exhibits                            |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Interpretive Signage                |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Hispanic Heritage Project           |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |
| Succession Planning                 |                       |                        |                     |                  |                        |                    |





## Partnerships

Cultivate and maintain relationships with local organizations to reach wider demographic groups.

**OUTREACH & VISIBILITY** • **EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| ACTIONS   | WHO             | WHEN     |
|---|-----------------|----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Couple the museum's programs with Gail Borden Public Library outreach. This could include the Book Mobile and "Museum in a Box."</li> </ul>        | STAFF/DIR       | Ongoing  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize outreach on the far west side with programs and collections.</li> </ul>  | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Ongoing  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue partnering with car enthusiasts for car show.</li> </ul>  | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Annually |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with Elgin Township, City of Elgin, the Museum community, New Citizens, EPMA, Explore Elgin, Enhancing Elgin, and other groups.</li> </ul> | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Ongoing  |



## Old Main Improvement

Address the future needs in Old Main.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS • TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

| ACTIONS   | WHO             | WHEN     |
|---|-----------------|----------|
| • Replace carpeting on first and second floors.*  | STAFF/DIR       | 2027     |
| • Paint exhibit areas on first and second floors.   | STAFF/DIR       | 2026     |
| • Repair meeting room floor.  | STAFF/DIR       | 2027     |
| • Replace meeting room furniture.*  | STAFF/DIR       | 2027     |
| • Repair front step exterior limestone.   | STAFF/DIR       | 2026     |
| • Install a lightning rod system.   | STAFF/DIR       | 2028     |
| • Install an automated handicap accessible back door.   | STAFF/DIR       | 2027     |
| • Install historically appropriate windows on façade.*  | STAFF/DIR       | 2027     |
| • Update sound system addressing the needs of the hearing impaired. Improve internet service. | STAFF/DIR       | 2026     |
| • Write 2 grants to fund improvements. Request City funds for Improvements.                   | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Annually |

*\*Subject to Budgetary Considerations*





## *Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House*

**Increase use of the facility.**

**OUTREACH & VISIBILITY • INCREASE REVENUE**

**TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES**

| <b>ACTIONS</b>   | <b>WHO</b>      | <b>WHEN</b> |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
| • Increase the use of the building with 10% more rentals, meetings, and/or programming.      | STAFF/DIR       | Annually    |
| • Maintain the building and grounds in cooperation with the City of Elgin and the Wild Ones. | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Quarterly   |
| • Complete the lower level floor with a layer of epoxy.*                                     | STAFF/DIR       | Q3 2026     |
| • Outfit office spaces on the third floor.*  | STAFF/DIR       | Q2 2026     |
| • Increase public open hours to 4 hours a week.*   | STAFF/DIR       | Q3 2026     |
| • Improve technology through consistent internet access, printer and one laptop.*            | STAFF/DIR       | Q2 2026     |
| • Work with the city to maintain lift, HVAC, lighting and alarm system.                      | STAFF/DIR       | Ongoing     |
| • Nominate the Cobblestone for the National Register of Historic Places.                     | BOARD/DIR       | Q4 2026     |

*\*Subject to Budgetary Considerations*





## *Educational Programming*

Continue to offer student engagement through curriculum-based programming.

**OUTREACH & VISIBILITY** • **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS** • **INCREASE REVENUE**  
**TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES** • **EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| ACTIONS   | WHO             | WHEN    |
|---|-----------------|---------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase U-46 and private/parochial/charter field trips and Scout/home school groups by 10 percent.</li> </ul> | STAFF/DIR       | 2026    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the programs to include middle school curriculum with one new program.</li> </ul>                       | STAFF/DIR       | 2027    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize 3 drop-in presentations at Tefft Farm and Lords Park Zoo during each summer.</li> </ul>               | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Ongoing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase Saturday drop-in activities to 3 each year at Old Main.</li> </ul>                                    | STAFF           | Ongoing |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a U-46 teacher awareness campaign for the “Story of Our Towns” publication.</li> </ul>                  | STAFF/DIR       | 2026    |



## STEPS

Continue to use the STEPS process to maintain high level of professional standards for Museums.

**PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS • ENHANCE COLLECTIONS**

**EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| ACTIONS  | WHO             | WHEN        |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate the re-assessment process from AASLH for the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (STEPS)</li> </ul> | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Q1 2027     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review policy revisions, Strategic Plan, and By-Laws.</li> </ul>  | STAFF/DIR       | Q1/Annually |





## Elgin History Museum

7.2K followers • 228 following

### *Content Development and Multi-Media*

Develop new content and use across all platforms: newsletter, email, website, WRMN, exhibits, programs, lectures, events, social media, and podcasts.

**OUTREACH & VISIBILITY** • **INCREASE REVENUE**

**TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES** • **EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| ACTIONS   | WHO             | WHEN       |
|---|-----------------|------------|
| • Redesign the <i>Crackerbarrel</i> newsletter to align with current institutional branding. Solicit 2 new writers. | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Q2/2026    |
| • Solicit 1 new volunteer for the Speakers' Bureau  | STAFF/DIR       | 2026       |
| • Increase use of collections images in social media posts. Develop a baseline for quantitative analysis.           | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Ongoing    |
| • Explore making content available in languages other than English, starting with the newsletter.                   | STAFF/DIR       | Ongoing    |
| • Use an annual theme or catch phrase for content.  | BOARD/DIR/STAFF | Q1/Ongoing |



## Collections Management

Collect and preserve Elgin history through material culture including objects, archival material, photos, and digital media.

**PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS** • **ENHANCE COLLECTIONS**  
**TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES** • **EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| ACTIONS   | WHO       | WHEN     |
|---|-----------|----------|
| • Return 100% of probate records to Kane County.  | STAFF/DIR | Q2/2026  |
| • Utilize 10% of storage areas shelving space more effectively in the artifact object room.*  | STAFF/DIR | Annually |
| • Digitize 600 images and upload to the Museum's website.                                     | STAFF/DIR | 2028     |
| • Continue to review the collection for items no longer appropriate for use.                  | STAFF/DIR | Annually |
| • Collect artifacts from far west Elgin and of underrepresented people from at least 1 donor. | STAFF/DIR | Annually |
| • Increase website access for postcard collection.*   | STAFF/DIR | Q4/2026  |
| • Continue digital collecting of photos.  | STAFF/DIR | Ongoing  |
| • Connect collections to enhance historical concepts in exhibits and programs.                | STAFF/DIR | Ongoing  |

*\*Subject to Budgetary Considerations*





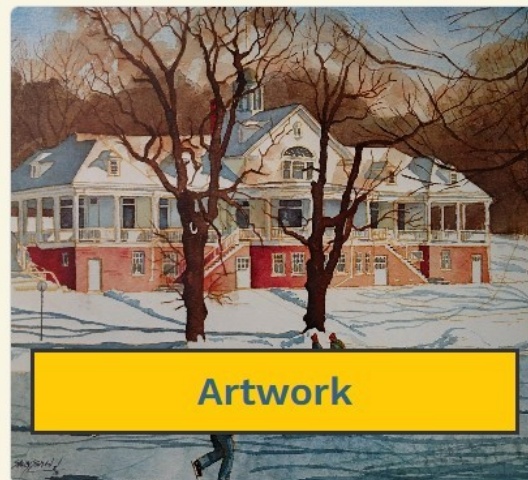
## Fundraising

Enhance relationships with donors to fund Museum events and projects, and explore different revenue streams.

**OUTREACH & VISIBILITY** • **INCREASE REVENUE** • **TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES**

| ACTIONS  | WHO             | WHEN     |
|--|-----------------|----------|
| • Implement 4 major development campaigns.   | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Annually |
| • Continue with 2-3 smaller fundraising programs.  | PROGRAM         | Annually |
| • Develop 1 or 2 new income generating partnerships.   | BOARD           | Annually |
| • Promote the concept of planned giving to the membership through <i>Crackerbarrel</i> and on website. | DIR/BOARD       | Ongoing  |
| • Write 2 grants to fund projects and/or collections.  | DIR/STAFF       | Annually |

# Visit the Museum Store



## Museum Store

Provide merchandise that tells the story of Elgin and engages the public.

**INCREASE REVENUE** • **TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES** • **EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| ACTIONS   | WHO             | WHEN     |
|---|-----------------|----------|
| • Research 3 new store items that complement the collection and the exhibits. | STAFF/BOARD     | Annually |
| • Redesign store with new shelves and display spaces.*                        | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Q3 2026  |
| • Create and sell 2 new Elgin branded products.*                              | STAFF/BOARD     | Annually |
| • Look for 1 new local event and/or marketing venue.                          | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Ongoing  |
| • Investigate the digital book market for 1 current book.*                    | STAFF/DIR       | 2027     |

*\*Subject to Budgetary Considerations*





20th Century City



Elgin: A City Run on Time



Elgin Road Race

# Exhibits

Create dynamic history exhibits at Museum facilities.

- OUTREACH & VISIBILITY • PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS • ENHANCE COLLECTIONS
- TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES • EQUITABLE PRACTICE

| ACTIONS   | WHO             | WHEN     |
|---|-----------------|----------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update first floor exhibits while planning for future renovations of the Elgin timeline: “The Development of the City from 1835-2000.”*</li> </ul> | STAFF/DIR       | 2028     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install 2 traveling exhibits at local museums and libraries.</li> </ul>  | STAFF/DIR       | Annually |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit 2 local artists for changing exhibits at the Nancy Kimball House.</li> </ul>   | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Annually |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open “Sports History” in the Temporary Exhibit Gallery.*</li> </ul>  | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Q1 2026  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include accessibility modifications in new exhibits.*</li> </ul>   | STAFF/DIR       | Ongoing  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update selected permanent and temporary exhibits.*</li> </ul>  | STAFF/DIR       | Annually |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the outside log cabin installation 2 times a year.</li> </ul>  | STAFF/DIR       | Annually |

\*Subject to Budgetary Considerations



## *Interpretive Signage in the Community*

**Provide historical expertise for public signs.**

### **OUTREACH & VISIBILITY**

| <b>ACTIONS</b>   | <b>WHO</b>      | <b>WHEN</b> |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with the Elgin Parks Department, Bluff City Cemetery, Elgin Heritage Commission, neighborhood groups, and private businesses to create and install signs that highlight local history.</li> </ul> | STAFF/DIR/BOARD | Ongoing     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and replace 2 existing signs.*</li> </ul>  | DIR/BOARD       | 2026        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install 3 new signs in areas such as Festival Park, River Trail Parkway, Lords Park, Foundry Park, Walton Island, Wing Park, Pioneer Memorial and Elgin's Far West Areas.</li> </ul>                      | STAFF/DIR       | 2029        |

*\*Subject to Budgetary Considerations*





## Hispanic Heritage Project

Continue partnering with the Elgin Hispanic community and project advisory group to cultivate relationships with the Hispanic community.

**OUTREACH & VISIBILITY** • **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS** • **ENHANCE COLLECTIONS**  
**TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES** • **EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| ACTIONS   | WHO       | WHEN     |
|---|-----------|----------|
| • Research local Hispanic history creating exhibit text.  | STAFF/DIR | Q1/2026  |
| • Fundraise for sponsors and donors to fund the project.  | DIR/BOARD | 2026     |
| • Create a documentary film and traveling exhibit: <i>Hispanic Heritage Project: Celebrating Culture and Community</i> .* | DIR/BOARD | Q2/2026  |
| • Collect artifacts and archival materials illustrating the Elgin area Latino culture.                                    | STAFF/DIR | Annually |

\*Subject to Budgetary Considerations



## *Succession Planning*

**Plan for upcoming changes in volunteer and professional staffing.**

### **PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS • EQUITABLE PRACTICE**

| <b>ACTIONS</b>   | <b>WHO</b> | <b>WHEN</b> |
|--|------------|-------------|
| • Plan for the transition of Board leadership.           | NOMINATING | Q1/2026     |
| • Plan for the transition of staff positions.            | HR COMM    | Q1/2026     |
| • Review organizational chart for possible re-structure. | DIR/BOARD  | Q1/2026     |
| • Update job descriptions for board and staff.           | HR COMM    | Q1/2026     |





## *Board of Directors and Staff*

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**President** – Anne LoCascio

**Vice President** – John Devine

**Secretary** – Christen Sundquist

**Corresponding Secretary** – Tricia Grosser

**Treasurer** – Bill Briska

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Marianne Bost

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Nick Freeman

Terry Gabel

Rudy Galfi

Ricky Harris

Mary Kemerling

Paul Larson, Membership Committee Chair

Sandi McClure

Jill Moore

Krisilee Murphy

Dennis Roxworthy

Laura Stroud

Jim Turner

Jerry Turnquist

Alan Walters, Program Committee Chair

### **STAFF**

**Museum Director** – [Liz Marston](#)

**Museum Curator** – [Beth Nawara](#)

**Museum Educator** – [Rebecca Miller](#)

**Media Coordinator** – [Trish LaFleur](#)

ELGIN  
HISTORY  
MUSEUM

