

THE
JOHN WESLEY POWELL RIVER HISTORY MUSEUM

STRATEGIC PLAN



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MISSION

Celebrating the significance of river history through the cultures and landscapes of the Colorado Plateau.

VISION

Ethical stewardship of the rivers, landscapes, and cultures on the Colorado Plateau.

CORE VALUES

MISSION FOCUS

We value the mission of the organization over individual accolades.

PROFESSIONALISM

We support an environment that leads to success for our employees, including professional development, career growth, and financial stability. We are committed to self-improvement.

INNOVATIVE

We are a unique museum with a unique mission. We value creativity, forward thinking ideas that challenge the field and lead to better stewardship, education, and a willingness to grow.

INCLUSIVE

We understand our role as a community asset and we strive to be experts in our field. We value accessibility, public input, and access to diverse educational opportunities and cultural experiences.

FUN

We are a welcoming institution that reflects the culture of the river running community that we serve.

Executive Summary

In early 2015, the John Wesley Powell River History Museum embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process that marked the first in the organization's history. A steering committee made up of experts in the field, museum and city staff, and local stakeholders helped guide the creation of a long-term strategic plan that was completed and approved by the Green River city council in the summer of 2015.

The document was intended to provide systematic guidance during a period of transition and growth for the museum. In many ways, it was a big success – it provided clear direction and action plans for major changes that were in the best interest of the organization. The plan represented the voice of many stakeholders, and carried the approval of both governing bodies who had been tasked to oversee the health of the museum. It was the first functional plan the organization had seen in more than two decades, and represented a turning point in the management of the organization.

Through the first four years of guidance, the plan helped the museum achieve significant strategic priorities that have strengthened the organization and built a foundation for the sustainability of the museum for years to come. Areas of improvement included formal documents that clarified the roles and relationships of the museum, city, non-profit organization, and ownership of the museum's collection. The museum created a collection policy, developed professional staff, created a funding plan, and balanced its budget – all of which were laid out as priorities in the strategic plan.

Nearing the end of 2018, museum staff sensed a need for a new round of planning. After several years of successful guidance, it was time to restructure the museum's core guiding document so that it better matched the needs and pliability of the organization. The following is an effort to do just that.

This document offers a more broad and visionary direction for the future of the organization without getting lost in the details of the day to day, or week to week needs of departments or staff. It is an effort to look at the future of the museum from thirty thousand feet rather than ground level. Using core values and visionary goals as touch points, this updated strategic plan offers flexibility in implementation and lofty guidance.



Boat Room of the John Wesley Powell River History Museum



John Wesley Powell
Popular Science

Organization History

In September of 1988 several state, county, and city politicians gathered at the future site of the John Wesley Powell River History Museum. Together, with a small crowd of local community members, they held a groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of what was designed to be a nationally relevant and culturally significant historical museum. At the ceremony, Green River's mayor gave an impassioned speech on the city's expectations for the new building, local community members performed the national anthem, and the event featured a melon bust to coronate the construction of what everyone hoped would be an economic boon to the local economy. The museum was an enormous undertaking, something that the community had been working towards for quite some time, and it was finally coming to fruition.



Artist's rendering of museum

As early as 1987, members of the Green River community began reaching out to museum professionals, business owners, and politicians throughout Utah in an effort to gather information and support for the construction of a new museum facility that would highlight the historical and cultural significance of the Green and Colorado Rivers on the communities of southeastern Utah. Support came from senators, congressmen, local business owners, and even Robert Redford (a letter that must have caused quite a stir on the day that it showed up in the office!)

The grounds for the museum were donated by Betsy Hatt "in memory of Vail Hatt and his commitment to the betterment of the community and tourism." By 1988, the city of Green River had been approved for funding to begin construction on a twenty-three thousand square foot museum facility with an expected cost of approximately \$1.5 million dollars to construct. Owned and operated by the city, the John Wesley Powell River History Museum opened its doors in 1990 and has strived to achieve the early vision of its founding group ever since.

Understanding a need for support outside of the City of Green River, a group of organizers created the John Wesley Powell River History Museum, Inc. in 2008 to further promote the mission of the museum. A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the museum corporation partnered with the city of Green River and originated the public-private partnership that exists between the museum and the city today. This partnership led to the hiring of the museum's first full-time executive director, a commitment to strategic planning, and a renewed effort across the organization to reach new levels of professionalization.

In 2015, the museum reaffirmed its commitment to the river running community through its annual River Runners Hall of Fame induction ceremony and made a renewed commitment to the community of Green River to offer regular programs, local exhibitions, and a commitment to preserving the history of the region.

"Keep history alive,
especially for
younger folks."

-Survey response



Process

Museum staff engaged stakeholders, board members, and visitors through dedicated planning conversations, invitations for feedback, and brainstorming sessions to gather broad input on the long-term goals and core values of the museum.

Being the most informed on the needs of the organization, museum staff held planning meetings to create consensus on major goals and core values. Staff considered successes and failures from the previous strategic plan, the current trends of the organization, fiscal realities, and feedback gathered from visitors over the course of several years. Staff also solicited feedback from stakeholders through digital outreach, and surveys that were gathered as part of our original plan.

The museum governing board provided input on the work that had been developed by staff, and offered direction on the strategic goals and mission of the organization. The board was then given a draft copy of the current strategic plan and members were asked to provide input and feedback before the plan was finalized and voted on. Following board approval, the strategic plan was then presented to the Green River City Council for input and final approval.

Survey question -

Overall, how satisfied are you with the professionalism of our museum?



Of those surveyed, no one responded to this question with anything less than four stars.

Looking Ahead

Using the following document as a guide, departmental staff will create annual action plans that coincide with the organization's mission, vision, core values, and long terms goals. Department plans will be approved by executive staff, and presented to the museum board and city council to ensure that the strategic vision of the organization is carried out.

The board will be tasked with reviewing the relevance and success of the strategic plan during their first meeting each year. Because the organization views the strategic plan as a living document, any necessary changes will be made to the plan at the direction of the board.

In an effort to maintain momentum and to ensure that all the relevant parties are well informed and agree on the direction of the museum, the organization has committed to a review and renewal of the strategic planning process beginning in the winter of 2021.

How Things Stack Up

GOVERNING

The museum is an official city department and is funded primarily by gift shop sales, admissions, and the city of Green River general fund. The museum is owned by the city, and museum staff are employees of the city who are supervised by the Green River Mayor and City Council. A memorandum of understanding between the city and the John Wesley Powell River History Museum, Inc. has allowed for more stability in strategy while maintaining city ownership of the museum.

POPULATION

Green River is a small isolated community with limited access to many of the amenities that large cultural institutions rely on to be sustainable. Even under measured and sustained growth over the course of several years, this reality of our community will likely remain true. The isolated nature of our location will continue to be a factor in the programming, fundraising, visitation, and maintenance of our organization for the foreseeable future.

UNIQUE SPACE

Our museum stands among few in the West as a place that interprets and preserves river history on the Colorado Plateau. We strive to be the premier river history museum in the region. There are very few locations for historic boats and other artifacts relating to river history to be preserved. Our uniqueness will be a major opportunity for the advancement of the museum for the foreseeable future.

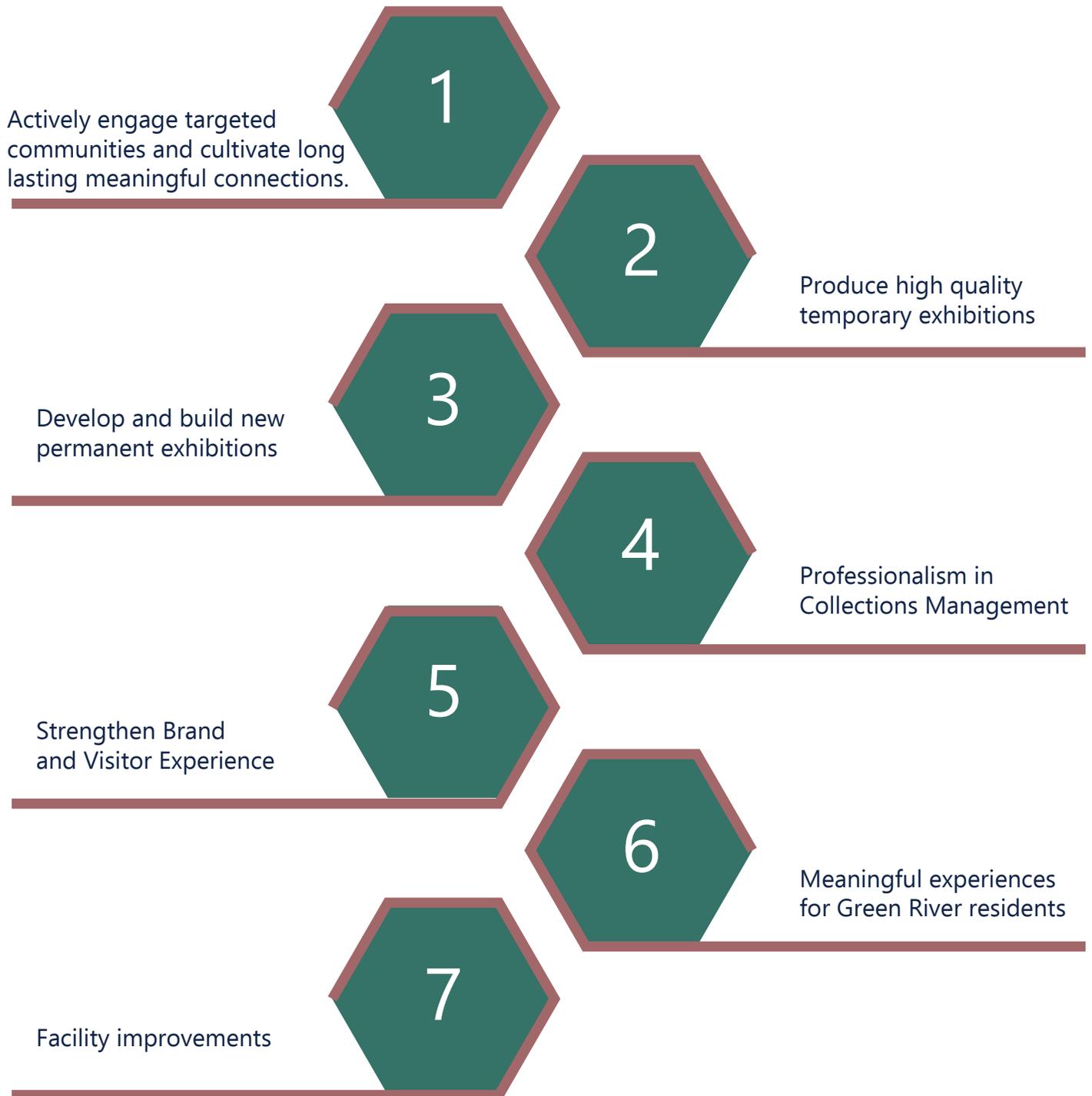
STAFF

We are a small staff with limited resources who aim to do remarkable things in service to the mission of the organization. The realities of limited staff time and resources are a factor, but not a deterrent to the success of the museum.

TOURISM

The vast majority of visitors that come to the museum are tourists that have traveled to Southeastern Utah to visit the natural resources of the region. The tourist community will continue to make up the majority of our visitorship for the foreseeable future.

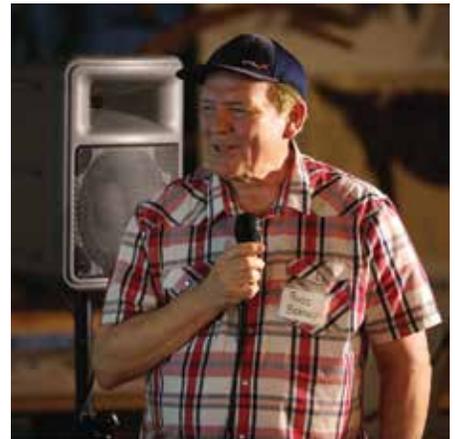
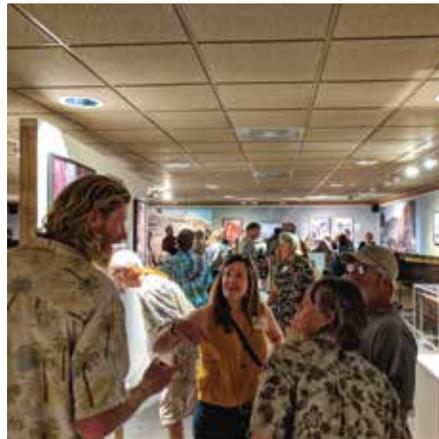
STRATEGIC GOALS



STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Actively engage targeted communities and cultivate long lasting meaningful connections.

- Nurture a more connected community of river runners based around the energy of the Hall of Fame and the museum as a hub.
- Solicit visitor feedback and evaluate regularly to better anticipate visitor needs and to improve visitor experience.
- Maintain local partnerships and increase opportunities for access.



“Celebrate the river and all that it brings and has brought to us”

-Survey response

STRATEGIC GOALS

2. Produce high quality temporary exhibitions

- Streamline and professionalize our guest curator program for a more seamless process.
- Develop in-house process and and idea bank for small temporary exhibitions based on our collections.
- Market and advertise temporary exhibitions to build visitor expectations for quality rotating experiences.

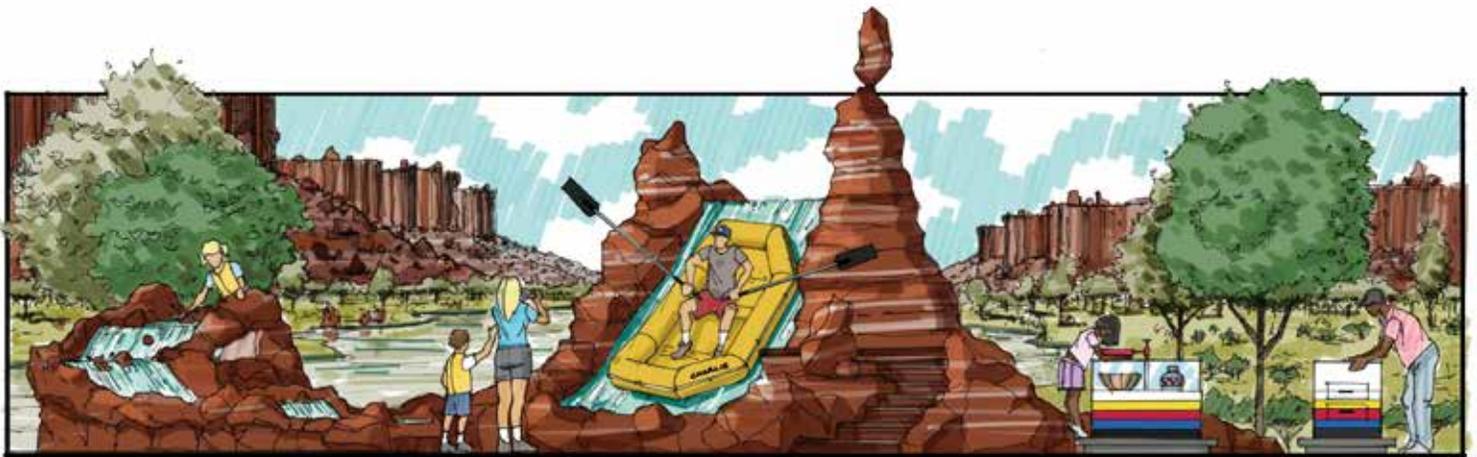


Of those surveyed, 58% cited "exhibitions" as one of the primary reasons for visiting the John Wesley Powell River History museum.

STRATEGIC GOALS

3. Develop and build new permanent exhibitions

- Use existing staff resources and expertise to get as far as possible without creating a financial burden.
- Create design book to be used as a guide for design, buildout, and fundraising.
- Communicate plan to create new exhibits to stakeholders, funders, visitors, and community.



Artist rendering of potential exhibits
Thanksgiving Point

Many respondents cited permanent exhibitions as the least satisfying aspect of the museum and suggested building new exhibits or making “room for more boats.”

STRATEGIC GOALS

4. Professionalism in Collections Management

- Make progress in completing inventory, understanding what we have so we can better manage and make use of the collection
- Finish core documents that help protect the integrity of the collection
- Extend collections training to all staff for a more robust understanding of the museum's collection goals



Survey respondents overwhelmingly cited museum collections as the most essential resource for the success of the museum.

STRATEGIC GOALS

5. Strengthen Brand and Visitor Experience

- Maintain website and ensure information is current through regular audits.
- Create marketing plan to improve signage and messaging.
- Take advantage of partnerships and existing infrastructure.



JOHN WESLEY POWELL
RIVER HISTORY MUSEUM
GREEN RIVER, UTAH



“Keep reaching out to special communities,
but include the general public as well.”

-Survey response

STRATEGIC GOALS

6. Meaningful experiences for Green River residents

- Create and curate programs, events, and exhibitions that directly target and serve Green River residents.
- Establish our collection as a resource for residents.
- Leverage resources like outdoor space, theater, museum to be a more valued resource in the community.
- Mitigate loss of programs manager and continue to serve local students/residents first.



"I love the new "river walk" and outdoor stage. Keep the community involved - make it a gathering place. I love having this in Emery County!"

-Survey response

STRATEGIC GOALS

7. Facility improvements

- Create facilities plan that addresses strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improved facilities.
 - Remodel outdoor bathrooms
 - Develop working relationship with city maintenance team to ensure proper facilities care
 - Elevator facelift
 - Visitor center plan
- Mitigate collections needs with reality of facilities.
- Strategically address facility upgrades to improve visitor experience.

“Educate the public about the history or river running and exploration on the Colorado Plateau and the value of rivers as the lifeblood of the region.”

-Survey response

“Many historic boats need a home. The Emerald Mile is a prime example. Expand the basement to include more boats.”

-Survey response

John Wesley Powell River History Museum

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GREEN RIVER
utah