



# The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, Inc. Strategic Plan 2014 - 2020

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Reaffirmed: September 18, 2017

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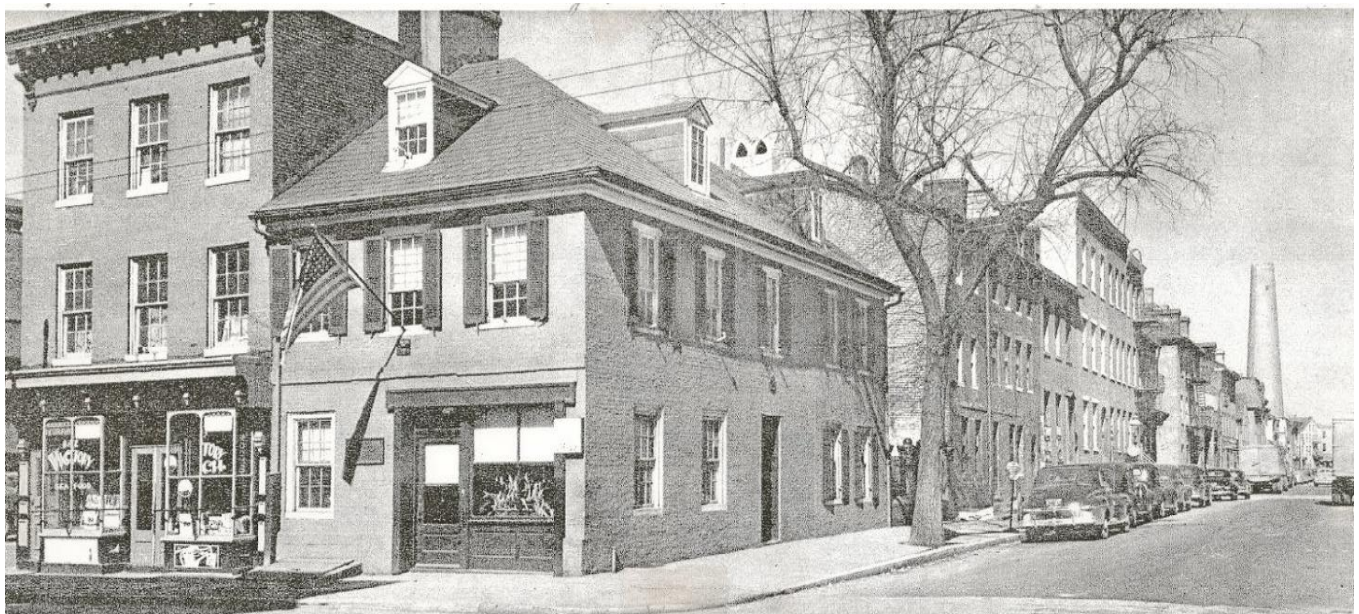
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*The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House, c. 1947*

# Introduction

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association, Inc. (the “Association”) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was incorporated in 1927 to assume control of the historic Flag House and restore it as a historical shrine to Mary Young Pickersgill, craftswoman of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag. The Flag House is dedicated to our mission to inspire personal connections to American history through the multi-faceted story of the Star-Spangled Banner.

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House (“Flag House”), located at 844 East Pratt Street, is owned by Baltimore City and managed by the Association. Next door, but part of the same historical site campus managed by the Association, are the Maryland House, built in 1950, which serves as a temporary exhibit space and educational programs site; and the Jean and Lillian Hofmeister Building, built in 2003, which houses the main exhibit space, event room, offices and museum collections. In addition to operation of the Flag House campus, the Association is responsible for curating the museum’s collection of decorative arts, documents, textiles, photographs and other objects of historical interest.

The Association is governed by a 30-member board of directors that is divided into 11 committees, each with particular responsibility for a discrete aspect of Flag House operations. The Association draws from an exceptional range of talent for its board. Directors come from varied backgrounds in business leadership, law, accounting, marketing, public relations, real estate, journalism, and management of other cultural institutions. Directors join the board to high expectations of their contributions—generally met—of time and talent to the work of the committees and of financial support of the Flag House budget and capital needs. The Association office is staffed by a full-time executive director, assisted in daily services and tasks by five part-time educational and support staff. The Flag House also relies on numerous volunteers and active cultural partners in its education and advocacy programs. Flag House staff and volunteers conduct tours of the site and its exhibits, enter into numerous off-site initiatives and partnerships, and carry out a wide array of educational programs focusing on 19<sup>th</sup>-century domestic life, the history of the Flag House building and the creation of the Star-Spangled Banner itself.

In early 2014, the Flag House board entered into a strategic planning process that culminated in an initial plan, approved on September 30 of that year, but with the understanding that it would be a living document to be refreshed annually with updating refinements. This document is the latest expression of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Strategic Plan (the “Strategic Plan”) in the board’s dynamic strategic-planning process. The Strategic Plan was refreshed to reflect goals for FY18 and was reaffirmed by the Flag House board on September 18, 2017.

*The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House decorated for the Star-Spangled Banner Centennial, 1914*



# Overview

## Mission Statement, Adopted by the Board of Directors in January, 2000:

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House's mission is to inspire personal connections to American history through the multi-faceted story of the Star-Spangled Banner.

## History:

Built in 1793, the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House was the home and business site of Mary Pickersgill, maker of the flag that inspired Francis Scott Key's famous poem that would become the American national anthem in 1931. In 1927, the City of Baltimore and the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House Association took over the historic property and established a museum dedicated to the legacy of Mary Pickersgill. The Flag House was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970. Today, visitors encounter a Flag House interior restored to an approximation of its 1813 appearance, with furnishings and domestic objects of the period, many of them belonging to the Young-Pickersgill family.

In 2003, the Jean and Lillian Hofmeister Building was opened on the Flag House grounds to provide a modern museum facility with welcome desk, gift shop, orientation theater, exhibition gallery, collections storage, and administrative offices. The façade of the building boasts a 30-by-42-foot glass replica of the Star-Spangled Banner. Inside, the first floor is taken up with the permanent exhibit, *Family of Flagmakers: The Women Who Created the Star-Spangled Banner*. This is the first exhibit devoted to the life and career of Mary Pickersgill and showcases personal objects, including the original receipt for the Star-Spangled Banner.

## Quick Statistics for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017:

- 11,200 individuals reached on and off-site;
- 80 percent of board goals achieved;
- 12 percent increase in admissions; and
- 46 percent increase in community programming.



Mary Young Pickersgill, c. 1850

## Identity and Principles:

The identity of the Flag House, as defined by its board of directors, forms around three essential characteristics: the history of the American flag, women's leadership, and historical scholarship. These characteristics find their practical expression in five basic principles, as determined by the board, that inform all that the board, the staff and the volunteers undertake for the Flag House. These are: (1) stewardship of the Flag House collection, (2) enrichment of the legacy of Mary Pickersgill, (3) reinforcement of the financial foundation of the Flag House, (4) promotion of the Flag House as a premier historic landmark, and (5) educational events and programs.



As adopted in 2014 and refined since, the Strategic Plan has identified a set of broad goals to be achieved during the Strategic Plan period of the years 2014 through 2020. These goals, each serving one or more of the five basic principles, are as follows:

- Enhance our role as a leading organization within the cultural and museum community in Baltimore;
- Develop innovative programs that utilize Flag House strengths and engage visitors by interpreting the Star-Spangled Banner story through many lenses;
- Ensure visibility and accessibility to our community;
- Promote women's leadership;
- Exercise exemplary stewardship of the museum collection and increase access to the public;
- Connect our constituency with educational opportunities and resources;
- Advocate history relevance and preservation;
- Reinforce financial security;
- Build strong relationships with educators and curriculum coordinators;
- Form partnerships with other cultural, educational, and social service organizations, such as the Greater Baltimore History Alliance, Preservation Maryland, Small Museum Association, Baltimore Museum of Industry, Jewish Museum of Maryland, and Baltimore Cultural Alliance; and
- Maintain a safe, open, and welcoming educational space for all.



*Visitors unfurl a 30-by-42-foot replica of the Star-Spangled Banner, Flag Day, 2017*

The board of directors has apportioned responsibility for achieving these goals across its executive leadership and 11-committee structure. Because of the overlap of shared responsibility for many of these goals, the board has organized them under four basic themes: Community Outreach and Impact; Web Presence and Technology Infrastructure; Collections Stewardship; and Historic Flag House Preservation.

Under these four headings, the board has presented more specific iterations of its broad goals, together with existing Flag House strengths to be drawn upon in achieving them, the challenges to be overcome, the action plan, progress to date, and the applicable structure of accountability. Many of the goals stated in the following pages have already been reached, while progress continues toward others.

# Community Outreach and Impact

## Goal:

The Education and Public Outreach Committee of the board of directors will identify areas of need for public programs and off-site outreach in order to strengthen the Flag House's engagement within the community. Current initiatives address three key areas: on-site public programs, off-site programs, and partnerships that promote diverse and engaging educational opportunities.

## Description and Strengths:

The Flag House offers a variety of programs and free events of historic and social interest for all-age audiences as well as specific programming that leverages partnerships with organizations that reach underserved communities and demographic groups beyond the Flag House's core constituency.

## Challenges:

The primary need is to increase visibility in the Baltimore area and promote visitorship with diverse programs. The effort will require strong partnerships, as well as increased staff and volunteer support and funding opportunities.

## Action Plan:

1. Market Flag House programs, anniversaries, and special events by the board's Education and Public Outreach Committee and the Public Relations Committee;
2. Increase engagement with underserved communities by participating in community events targeted to low-income, special needs, and military communities. Events will include: Doors Open Baltimore, Downtown Dollar or Less Days, Museum Day Live!, Jonestown Community Festival, Blue Star Museums, and Light City: Baltimore;
3. Put on at least one quarterly on-site lecture, performance, or other hands-on activity;
4. Conduct annual mailings of program flyers and brochures to Baltimore City and Baltimore County schools and libraries to leverage their distribution service;
5. Expand upon working relationships and joint programming opportunities with partner community organizations such as the library system, Greater Baltimore History Alliance, Girls Scouts of Central Maryland, Visit Baltimore, and Baltimore National Heritage Area;
6. Work with an educational partner to develop pre-visit materials that increase the value of field trip participation for local educators and home school groups;
7. Secure grants to support transportation for Flag House field trips from schools with substantial populations of low-income students through fiscal year 2020;
8. Secure further grants to support preparation of the Maryland House Building as a rotating exhibition space and as host of at least one temporary exhibit before the end of fiscal year 2018. Temporary exhibits will be designed to engage with local artists, promote diverse voices, and reach broad audiences; and

9. Increase participation within the Baltimore community, including staff attendance at neighborhood meetings and festivals, museum events aimed at residents of our immediate neighborhood, and leadership or partner roles with community alliances and like-minded non-profit organizations.

Current Status and Milestones:

- Secured grant support from the Baltimore National Heritage Area to fund outreach and marketing materials, new school brochures, and engagement with Baltimore City and County Public schools through sponsored field trips;
- Fiscal year 2015 total admissions on and off-site: 9,700;
- Fiscal year 2016 total admissions on and off-site: 10,000;
- Fiscal year 2017 total admissions on and off-site: 11,200;
- Completed a Mary Pickersgill Power Smarts story with BYTES, which is a program that creates stories and activities for elementary school-age children to help strengthen their language, math, and interpersonal skills, with pre-visit materials to be shared with educators and parents via a free online download or PDF;
- Participated in at least five free admission days each year since 2015;
- Opened our first temporary exhibit since 2014 in the Maryland House building and secured grant support for all prep materials;
- Filled leadership positions in community alliances to further our goal to partner with like-minded cultural organizations; and
- Increased outreach to more than 800 Baltimore City students from schools with substantial low-income populations, through joint programming with the Baltimore National Heritage Area.

Accountability: The Education and Public Outreach Committee will promote Flag House events and assist in preparing mailings, drafting and oversight of marketing materials, and scheduling public programs. The committee already oversees the Flag House’s annual Scholar Award and Mary Pickersgill Award for Women’s Leadership in Business. From time to time, the Public Relations Committee joins in this mission to help with media relations, press releases, and other promotional efforts. The executive director will work directly in staffing off-site events, partnership-building, school outreach, community networking, and contact with grantors.



Students from the Johns Hopkins class of 2021 in front of the Great Flag Window, 2017

# Technology Infrastructure and Web-Based Engagement

## Goal:

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House must find financial support for the purchase of internal administrative hardware and software systems that advance the organization technologically. The new infrastructure will enhance and strengthen the Flag House brand, communications, marketing, and digital outreach.

## Description and Strengths:

Internal systems and processes for record-keeping and engagement are already in place but will be better implemented through new administrative technology.

## Challenges:

The current hardware systems and software are unable to handle necessary updates to the Flag House branding, marketing and digital outreach strategies.

## Action Plan:

1. Secure grant to support internal technology infrastructure updates;
2. Enhance visitor experiences through installation of new orientation theater equipment;
3. Analyze museum operations based on collection of visitor feedback through new point-of-sale system;
4. Connect monthly with members, visitors, and other constituents through web-based newsletter;
5. Launch a new [www.flaghouse.org](http://www.flaghouse.org) by April 2015;
6. Engage with the community through social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter), including comments, likes, shares and live postings during events;
7. Increase access to the Flag House collections with a regular posting schedule on social media that ties Flag House history and objects to current events, anniversaries, and national days of celebration;
8. Strengthen the financial foundation of the Flag House with bookkeeping systems and processes that align with current non-profit account regulations;
9. Enhance stewardship of the Flag House collection with updated collections software; and
10. Evaluate web-based outreach success through collection of metrics that chart engagement (likes, follows, comments, website traffic) and boost such engagement each year by more than 500 individuals across all social platforms by the close of fiscal year 2020.

## Current Status and Milestones:

- Launched a new mobile friendly website in April, 2015;
- Upgraded our security systems with new video surveillance and DVR equipment;
- Increased our online engagement through refreshed social media posts by 56 percent since 2015, more specifically:



- Current Social Media Audiences:
  - Instagram: 160;
  - Twitter: 320;
  - Facebook: 2,000; and
  - Website sessions (as monthly average since April, 2015 launch): 2,000;
- Secured a \$5,000 grant from the Baker Foundation for new administrative computers, point-of-sale system, Quick Books, and digital camera;
- Secured grant support to purchase latest version of PastPerfect collection software;
- Secured a donation from Gramophone for new A/V equipment for the orientation theater;
- Reaffirmed our partnership with Visit Baltimore and Visit Maryland to promote the Flag House online through tourism marketing;
- Secured a grant for motion-sensor security to protect small artifacts in the historic structure;
- Implemented consistent posting and social media calendar that focuses on rarely displayed objects in the Flag House's museum collection and ties their histories into current trends; and
- Partnered with non-profit organization Digital Maryland to increase online access to Flag House archives and collections materials, with the first two digital capsule collections launched in 2016.

**Accountability:** The Technology Committee will provide guidance for purchasing technology hardware, implement a social media plan, and consult with the Collections and Exhibitions Committee on technology infrastructure directly related to the Flag House's collection. The executive director will be responsible for updates to the website, circulation of the digital newsletter, consistent engagement across social media platforms, and reporting on web-based engagement analytics to the committee and the board of directors.



*Family of Flagmakers, public opening, February 12, 2014*

# Collections Stewardship

Goal: Continue stewardship of the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House museum collection that aligns with current highest standards and best practices (as set forth by the American Alliance of Museums) by drafting or reaffirming the following Flag House documents: Collections Policy, Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, Disaster Relief Plan, and Code of Ethics (collectively, the “Core Documents”).

## Description and Strengths:

The Flag House has a rich collecting tradition that encompasses a wide variety of 19<sup>th</sup>-century artifacts, works on paper, Star-Spangled Banner ephemera, War of 1812 artifacts, and personal objects owned by the Young-Pickersgill family.

## Challenges:

While the Flag House’s collection is varied and broadly representative of the historical period of interpretation, the limited size of the historic property and permanent exhibit space also limits the museum’s ability to showcase the majority of our objects.

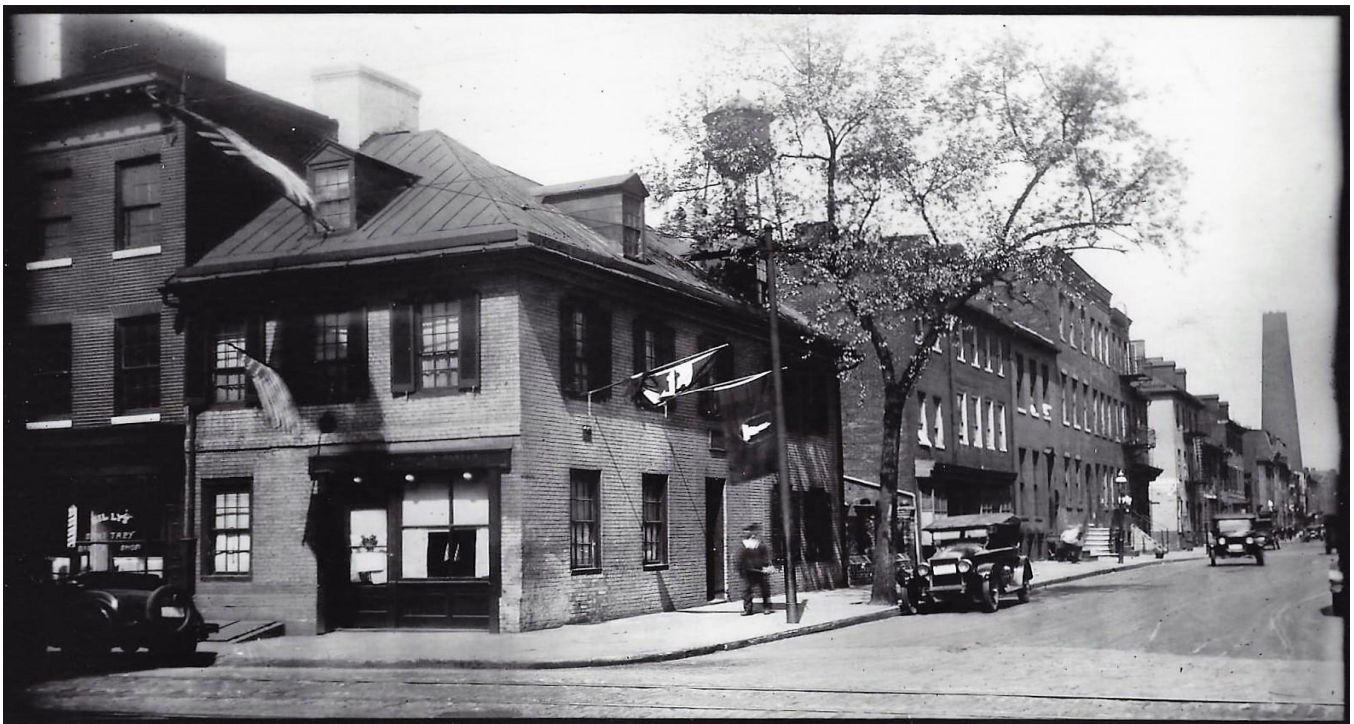
## Action Plan:

1. Catalog, label, and organize entire collection, and enter updated cataloging information into the PastPerfect software program, all to be completed by July, 2015;
2. Secure grant support for updated storage of objects in need of re-housing, by end of fiscal year 2016;
3. Apply for and complete Museum Assessment Program for Collections Stewardship (developed by the American Alliance of Museums) by end of fiscal year 2016;
4. Draft new Collections Policy, Emergency Plan, and Code of Ethics among the Core Documents by the end of fiscal year 2017;
5. Reaffirm the Flag House Strategic Plan and Mission Statement among the Core Documents;
6. Create a separate collection of objects from outliers in the Flag House collection that still have educational value;
7. Submit all Core Documents to the board of directors for evaluation by the start of fiscal year 2018;
8. Prepare to apply for accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums in fiscal year 2018; and
9. Complete accreditation self-evaluation and site visit within American Alliance of Museums’ accreditation timeline.

### Current Status and Milestones:

- Completed cataloging and reorganization of the Flag House collection in July, 2015;
- Completed museum assessment program for collections stewardship in January, 2016;
- Established a separate collection to enhance hands-on learning and develop new creative educational programs;
- Implemented suggestions and addressed concerns posed by the museum assessment program peer review;
- Secured grant for updated collections storage materials; and
- Completed drafts and revisions of all Core Documents, all of which were approved by the board of directors, by close of fiscal year 2017.

Accountability: The Collections and Exhibitions Committee will oversee staff conducting cataloging and routine spot inventory of the Flag House collection as stated in the Collections Policy. The committee will be responsible for the Museum Assessment Program for Collections Stewardship and play an active role in completing the self-study. The committee will draft or amend the Core Documents of the Flag House and report on progress to the board of directors. The executive director will undertake the collections management tasks outlined in the Collections Policy, report on progress of Core Document drafts to the Committee, and implement any edits to the documents.



*The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House looking north toward the Shot Tower, c. 1928*

# Historic Flag House Preservation

## Goal:

Ensure the continued structural stability of the historic Star-Spangled Banner Flag House and replace deteriorated exterior fixtures within the guidelines of historic preservation set forth by the Maryland Historic Trust.

## Description and Strengths:

Despite sitting at the corner of a busy downtown intersection, the Star-Spangled Banner Flag House retains many of its original fixtures, all as a result of periodic preservation and restoration measures to mitigate deterioration of the structure and fixtures.

## Challenges:

The Flag House must establish relationships with historic preservation organizations such as Preservation Maryland and the Maryland Historic Trust to assist in securing matching grants and completing building surveys. The Buildings and Grounds Committee of the board of directors will have to work closely with the Baltimore City Department of Historic Properties and enter into contracts for historic preservation services.

## Action Plan:

1. Apply for \$50,000 in General Obligation Bond funds from Baltimore City;
2. Secure matching grant support from outside sources;
3. Identify contractors and service providers licensed in historic preservation;
4. Identify preservation priorities, including brick sealing, window replacement, downspout restoration, and brick restoration;
5. Secure design work and proposals, and complete design phase in 2019;
6. Begin preservation work in fiscal year 2019; and
7. Complete preservation work in fiscal year 2020.

## Current Status and Milestones:

- Awarded \$50,000 from Baltimore City, with funds to be released in fiscal year 2019; and
- Secured matching grant support for the design phase of the project.

Accountability: The Buildings and Grounds Committee will be accountable for the tasks outlined in the Historic Flag House Preservation plan, including identifying contractors, designers, and vendors in the design phase of the project. The committee will review all bids from vendors and implement a priority checklist for work to be completed. The committee will conclude the bid process in timely fashion to ensure that preservation work is completed by fiscal year 2020. The executive director will be responsible for communicating with vendors and contractors and for reporting to the committee on the progress of the project.

# Evaluation/Oversight

The Star-Spangled Banner Flag House's Strategic Plan is a living document that the board of directors, working with the executive director, updates annually. Implementation of the Strategic Plan is not confined to staff or any particular committee; rather, the effort is borne across the Flag House governing structure. This occurs in the following ways:

## **1. Committee Meetings**

Museum staff and board committees overseeing the action items outlined in the Strategic Plan meet at least quarterly to assess the progress, identify points of delay, and assign new tasks.

## **2. Quarterly Executive Committee Meetings**

The executive director, officers, and committee chairs meet quarterly. Progress on all action items related to the strategic plan and goals of the committees is reported and shared, with discussion of any need for further personnel or financial support of goals.

## **3. Quarterly Board Meetings**

The executive director and committee chairs provide updates to the board of directors. Meeting agendas include all reports on the work of the board committees.

## **4. Reporting Metrics**

The Flag House has developed a project tracker spreadsheet that measures all incremental progress toward achieving each Strategic Plan goal as well as any delays or other obstacles as they arise. Project tracker results inform all committee and staff discussion of the Strategic Plan.

## **Acknowledgement and Sources:**

When drafting the Strategic Plan, the Flag House reviewed several strategic plan templates from organizations of similar size and scope and consulted the following sources in particular:

American Alliance of Museums, "Developing and Institutional Plan."

<http://www.aam-us.org/docs/default-source/continuum/developing-an-institutional-plan-final2.pdf?sfvrsn=3>.

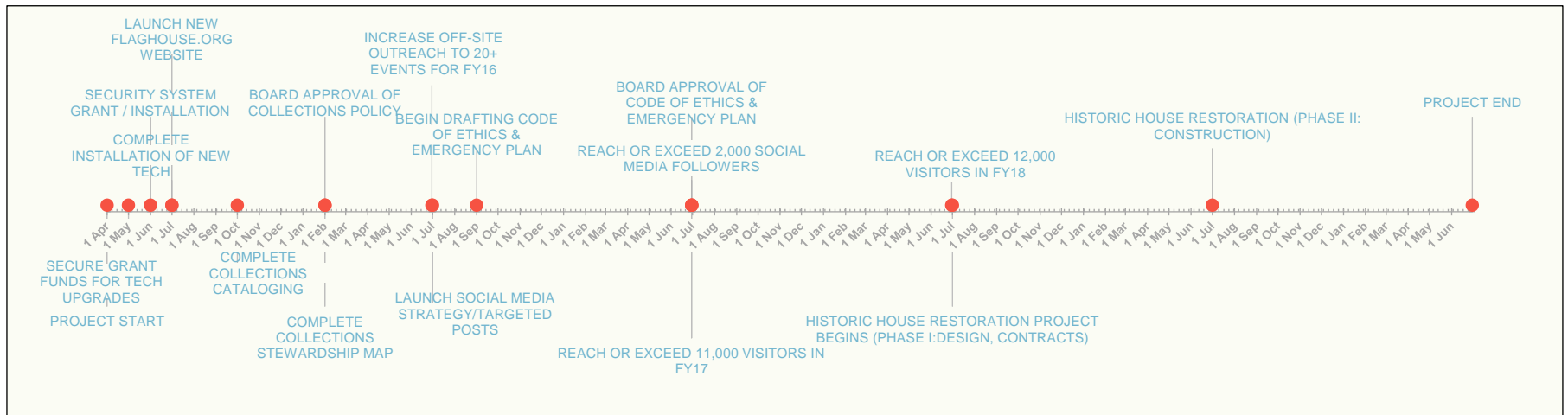
Lord Cultural Resources, Inc. *Columbus Museum: Strategic Plan 2015-2019*. May 2014.

Lundberg, Sara, George Parsons, Robert Fredieu, and Alan Jones. *Arlington Historical Society Strategic Plan*. Revised January 14, 2015.

*Medford Historical Society and Museum Strategic Plan 2014-2016*, December 9, 2013.



## STRATEGIC PLAN MAJOR MILESTONES



PROJECT DETAILS	
DATE	MAJOR MILESTONES
7/1/2015	Project Start
7/1/2015	Secure grant funds for tech upgrades
5/1/2015	Security system grant / installation
4/1/2015	Launch new flaghouse.org website
6/1/2015	Complete installation of new tech
10/1/2015	Complete collections cataloging
2/1/2016	Complete Collections Stewardship MAP
2/1/2016	Board approval of Collections Policy
6/30/2016	Increase off-site outreach to 20+ events for FY16
7/1/2016	Launch social media strategy/targeted posts
9/1/2016	Begin drafting Code of Ethics & Emergency Plan
6/30/2017	Board approval of Code of Ethics & Emergency Plan
6/30/2017	Reach or exceed 11,000 visitors in FY17
6/30/2017	Reach or exceed 2,000 social media followers
6/30/2018	Reach or exceed 12,000 visitors in FY18
7/1/2018	Historic house restoration project begins (Phase I: design, contracts)
7/1/2019	Historic house restoration (Phase II: construction)
6/30/2020	Project End