

HERITAGE CENTER OF THE ROYAL GORGE REGION

Long Range Plan 2015-2020

New Mission:

The Heritage Center of the Royal Gorge Region's mission is to collect, preserve, and interpret the history of our region for future generations.

Guiding Principles

- We preserve the history of Fremont County and surrounding area (localities that were once a part of Fremont County)
- We promote the preservation and instill an appreciation of our local heritage
- We provide easy public access to our collections and research materials
- We interpret our local history for our visitors of all ages in an educational and entertaining manner
- We aim to be authentic and accurate in the information we provide to the public
- We strive to adapt for the future and always be conscientious of the past

Explanation of Name Change:

Our facility and the services we provide the public are more than what the word "museum" implies (a building that keeps and displays objects of value). We do keep and display objects of value but we also are a research facility and assist our patrons in learning about our area's history. We provide engaging and informative programming and interactive exhibits. Our staff collaborates with other organizations with similar missions and with area schools to educate the community about our local heritage. These services imply that we are a cultural center or a center of learning rather than just a museum.

Summary of Service Needs

Two of our historic structures, the City Municipal Building and the Historic Rudd House, which are the Heritage Center's largest and most visible artifacts, have been neglected. The preservation needs of both buildings have gone from necessary to critical. The Municipal Building requires an HVAC System and restored front doors that function properly. The Rudd House requires a new roof, tuck-pointing, a restored porch, plaster work inside, chimney repair and many other repairs. These issues need to be addressed, otherwise we stand to lose the historical integrity of the Rudd House and witness further decline of the Municipal Building. Postponing or ignoring these issues will directly affect the preservation of the rest of the Center's collections housed in storage areas and displayed in the exhibit galleries.

Furthermore, the Municipal Building and the Rudd House were not designed to be climate controlled storage facilities that can house a multitude of artifacts ranging from an orchard sprayer wagon, a

buggy, 1000 lb. fossils, and vast amounts of textiles and archival materials. The storage areas are in every building on site and in one off site location. Not all of our collections are in secured climate controlled areas. Many of the collections are not even stored in proper archival boxes. Our collections are constantly growing. We have out-grown our inadequate storage areas. Lack of proper storage areas has limited our access to collections and hindered our ability to rotate exhibits.

We need to be able to change our exhibits on a regular basis in order to remain an educational institution within our community and to keep up with the best practices for museums and history centers nationwide. Changing exhibits offer new educational opportunities for our visitors and encourages them to come back again.

In the last two years, the demographic of our visitors to the Center has been altered considerably. Our visitors now tend to be families with small to school age children instead of more mature audiences. This change is a direct result of the Center's acquisition of the exhibit and collections formerly housed by the Garden Park Paleontology Society/Dinosaur Depot Museum. Historically, the City Museum has collected, preserved, and interpreted natural history collections. This acquisition of local fossils is a continuation of our commitment to preserve not only the social and economic aspects of our region's past but also the natural history that defined this area.

While other smaller community museums and historical groups in Fremont County have struggled to keep their doors open and their collections intact, the Heritage Center has thrived due to this change. Our Center needs to maintain this momentum of developing new interactive exhibits and educational opportunities to ensure that our Center continues to be a viable fixture in our community for future generations. Incorporating technology in our exhibits and in our marketing strategies is another necessity in reaching a broader audience.

Administration

Staffing

Complete and review the Center's policies and procedures by 2016.

Restructure or redefine each staff position and the roles/duties of each to reflect future needs of the Center.

Create a new full time director position for the Center by 2020 that oversees capital preservation projects, researches and writes grants, develops and fosters institutional partnerships and potential sponsorship opportunities, manages the budget, handles marketing, and supervises staff.

Recruit and train at least two younger enthusiastic volunteers on an annual basis.

Organize a yearly internship program that recruits one to two interns from museum studies programs across the country. (Collaborate with local real estate owners for available housing for our interns).

Marketing

Create and install a permanent sign for in front of the Heritage Center with our new name.

Redesign the website for the Heritage Center.

Create and maintain a Facebook page featuring historic photos, exhibits, upcoming events and programs, projects, and new donations.

Develop notices for upcoming programs and exhibits on Channel 19.

Collaborate with Museum of Colorado Prisons in marketing strategy outside of area.

Design rotating exhibit banners for front of building.

Facilities

Municipal Building

Security

Improve the security of our entire facility with mobile monitoring, better placed security cameras, and motion detectors in the next five years.

Install and maintain exterior lighting around the buildings for security purposes.

Environmental and Maintenance

Remove swamp cooling system on the second floor and install up-to-date HVAC system in the next year.

Fix the steps in front of the Municipal Building to prevent trip hazards.

Install LED lighting.

Historic Preservation

Within the next year, restore the front doors of the building.

Within the next three years, obtain a grant to restore the window frames on the exterior of the building.

Rudd House

Determine the function of the house (historic house museum, office space, rental space, storage space) by the spring of 2015. The function of the building will dictate whether the interior of the house will be restored or remodeled and it will dictate accessibility needs. Restoration projects for the Rudd House will also need to be a part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan.

Historic Preservation

New historic roof, bat mitigation, capping chimneys
Pointing and foundation work
Window repair
Front porch repair
Interior work (plaster, refinishing, etc.)

Rudd Cabin

Historic Preservation

Replace south window frames and panes.

Off-site Storage Area

Investigate the possibilities of obtaining or the construction of a more secure, climate controlled, and larger storage facility for the majority of the Center's 3-dimensional artifacts. (Including textiles, furniture pieces, and taxidermy mounts)

Decide on whether it is most feasible to build a new storage area or obtain an existing structure for storing the Center's vast collections within the next 2-4 years to include as part of a Capital Improvement Plan.

Aspects that will influence the decision of what type storage space:

- Security
- Climate control (HVAC System)
- Load or weight capacity of floor(s)
- Accessibility of the collection for staff and proximity to the Heritage Center, and
- Space or Storage Capacity (will it be enough space for growth of the collection and for how long)
- Cost

Collection

Improve the accessibility of our collection

Less than 10% of the Center's collection is on display at any given time; the vast majority of the collection is in storage. In order for the public to have safe and secure access to our collection (whether for research purposes or general curiosity) we need to improve how our collections are stored and cataloged so staff can easily locate an artifact.

Continue the reconciliation of the entire collection by entering into and/or updating our collection database.

Finish entering and/or updating the remaining catalog records from past large donations.

Begin a physical inventory of our collection and reconcile the inventory with our database records.

Develop a consistent storage method in each collection storage area to better track the location of each artifact in the collection.

Complete the curation of the BLM Federal Fossil Collection.

Assess collections and individual artifacts during the inventory process to ensure they support the Center's mission and deaccession artifacts that do not reflect our mission or are in poor overall physical condition when restoration or conservation of the object is cost-prohibitive.

Re-number older cataloged artifacts with the appropriate accession/object id numbers.

In five to ten years, have up to 10,000 records from our collections database searchable online through our website using PastPerfect -Online.

Improve the preservation of our collection

Re-house our glassware collection, textile collection, gun collection, and other collections as needed to better preserve those collections and to keep up with the best practices for museums.

Obtain 2 – 3 storage cabinets to better store the gun collection.

Create a Conservation Plan for the Center's artifacts.

Assess conservation needs and create a priority list of artifacts needing conservation with a timeline for completing conservation projects and a cost estimate for each artifact requiring conservation.

Exhibits

Fabricate or purchase at least five new versatile/mobile and secure display cases.

Develop three new interactive exhibits in the next five years that incorporate at least one technological component. (i.e. touch screen, audio sound, etc.)

Establish a virtual exhibit on our website in the next six years of past displays using PastPerfect Virtual Exhibit

Visitor Services and Educational Programming

Assure that our visitors and researchers will continue to experience excellent customer service from our staff and volunteer tour guides.

Produce two new educational programs for adult audiences.

Work with area teachers and BLM to research and develop one out-reach program for elementary level students relating to local history and the dinosaurs of Garden Park Fossil Area.

Technology

Increase the server capacity size to hold and save our increasing digital collection and artifact records.

Purchase another batch of licenses for our Collection Software (PastPerfect) within the next two years.