

Strategic Plan of the Lewes Historical Society for 2018-2022

Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan will usher the Lewes Historical Society into its 60th anniversary in 2022. The Society was incorporated in 1962, the vision of a handful of volunteers dedicated to the protection of Lewes' history and unique identity. The widely recognized accomplishments of these original volunteers provided the basis for today's success. Since its incorporation, the Society has gradually added professional staff and significantly broadened its reach and the scope of its activities. In 2022 we will celebrate the result of the founders' vision - a fully staffed, volunteer supported professional organization that has regional, state and national supporters and contributors and a wide audience familiar with the region's unique contributions to American history.

About Us

The Lewes Historical Society promotes and advocates the historic preservation, interpretation and cultural enrichment of the Lewes region through use of its archival collection for museum exhibits, educational programs, historical research and publications.

We work to preserve and honor the history of Lewes Delaware and its region. We are an integral part of our community and partner with the state, the county, the City of Lewes and local organizations to highlight Lewes' importance as the first incorporated city in Delaware and key contributor to the development of southern Delaware and the Delaware Bay Region. Our preservation efforts keep Lewes' history, unique nature and contributions alive. In doing so, we contribute to the local economy and attract visitors, new residents and commercial activity.

We preserve and safeguard a collection unsurpassed in southern Delaware for its breadth, quality, and accessibility and maintain and protect 18 historic structures on six separate locations throughout Lewes. We also work with our community to support preservation of privately owned properties by providing information on the historical character and importance of structures and properties under discussion. Our educational programs, museums, tours and other events attract more than 80,000 visits annually. In 2017 we undertook a major step forward by opening the Lewes History Museum in order to better preserve our collection, create exciting exhibits and facilitate research that deepens understanding of our history and its impact. The Museum is within the multi use Margaret H. Rollins Community Center and is part of an important **emerging** cultural campus within the heart of Lewes. Its location keeps us in a close working relationship with the City of Lewes and numerous community organizations and helps us serve a broader audience.

Our Key Strategies and Opportunities

Over the next five years we will continue to be effective and dynamic stewards of our collection, properties and the Lewes History Museum. We anticipate challenges resulting from

our rapid growth and are taking steps to ensure that we are resourced and managed so as to meet them. We will use this growth to greatly expand our role and community outreach within Lewes and Southern Delaware in order to stimulate public interest in our history and the benefits of understanding it.

We will foster a greater fascination with history among children and youth by continuing the development of an educationally stimulating and fully interactive Children's Discovery Center at the Museum and by using the capabilities of a new educational assistant position to expand the breadth and reach of our educational programs. Our new Museum allows us to better focus our other properties on achieving greater educational impact through robust year-round programming and experimentation with nontraditional interpretation methods and alternative uses.

We will also foster greater efforts at preservation by our community. We will use Society properties as cutting edge, dynamic examples of current historic preservation practices, offer public programs on preservation strategies and techniques, and work with builders, designers, realtors and other parties to develop historically sensitive design and restoration plans based on our knowledge of historical house design and construction techniques. We will also explore and test programs, such as historical easements and deed restrictions, that can be used by others to proactively protect historically significant properties.

The Lewes History Museum has allowed us to develop exhibits outlining the rich cultural history flowing from the region's diversity, and we have undertaken programming that allows broader public sharing of our diversity. We anticipate even greater success at involving our diverse populations in exploring and demonstrating their unique contributions to our history and underscoring the lessons to be learned from them.

Our Commitment

In adopting this ambitious Strategic Plan, the Society's Board of Trustees fully recognizes the challenges it represents and the commitment its success demands. The Board pledges to provide the time, attention and resources needed to achieve its promises to Lewes and the greater community it serves by the end of the Strategic Plan time-frame in 2022.