

Strategic Plan for 2026 - 2029

Vision:

We envision the Bar Harbor Historical Society as a dynamic cultural hub where the stories of the past ignite curiosity, foster community identity, and inspire stewardship. La Rochelle will serve as a living classroom, where every artifact, exhibit, and view of Frenchman Bay tells a story that empowers learners of all ages, strengthens community ties, and invites visitors to see Bar Harbor not only as a destination but as a home with deep roots. Through innovative interpretation, inclusive programming, and deeper connections across our community, we aspire to bridge local heritage with global conversation — ensuring that our history is not only preserved, but continually brought to life as a source of creativity, belonging, and inspiration for generations to come.

Goals:

1. Financial Stewardship & Development

- Strengthen and broaden membership
- Diversify and grow revenue streams.
- Create a positive experience for the Proprietors Club members to sponsor and support the BHHS.
- Build a culture of philanthropy through major gifts, planned giving, and organizational outreach/events.

2. Governance & Leadership

- Strengthen leadership capacity through accountability and clarity of responsibility.
- Task the Nominating Committee with policy review and board training
- Formalize governance policies across the organization.
- Use quantitative analytics to measure strategic goals and organizational performance annually

3. Collections, Exhibits & Interpretation

- Actively accession objects that fill gaps in BHHS's collections, such as objects from the second half of the twentieth century to the present, and objects representing working-class narratives, and have a deaccession procedure that supports this growth. Gaps are filled to better represent these periods and people in exhibits, programs, and for researchers.
- Improved collections/archival organization and infrastructure based dynamically on needs presented during annual inventories of at least 10% of the collection and other reviews mandated by the *Collections Management Policy*. This includes digital storage and database improvements, and improvements to the physical infrastructure at La Rochelle.
- The Collections Team works closely with the Experience Team to present vibrant exhibits, history-based programming, and historic enhancements to fundraising events. These

experiences are presented using industry-standard public history practices, such as primary source utilization, open-to-the-public bibliographic practices, and ethical oral history solicitation.

- The Bar Harbor Historical Society legally owns +50% and utilizes more of its collection. There is a routine process of reassociating abandoned or unidentified property, and this process is cost-effective, adheres to the State of Maine requirements for museums and libraries, and is well understood by staff and the governing bodies.
- An exhibition procedural guideline should be developed to assist with expectations and scheduling new and refreshed exhibitions. Each exhibit should be reviewed at the beginning and end of each season to ensure accurate inventory and catalogue data, professionalism, and condition reports.

4. Campus & Assets

- Continue ongoing restoration efforts of La Rochelle and its surrounding grounds, and maintain the property to ensure the historic integrity and to convey historical excellence.
- Modernize exhibit spaces by 2030.
- Integrate gardens and grounds into exhibits and the visitor experience.

5. Community Engagement & Programs

- Ensure all programs and events are sponsored and/or grant-funded to the fullest extent possible.
- Prioritize community-relevant, historically engaged programming that directly pertains to current exhibitions. Events must be grounded in the BHHS mission, but they might not be directly connected to a current exhibit.
- Every effort should be made to foster local heritage connections between year-round and seasonal visitors, as well as short-term visitors, to welcome Bar Harbor's community to its fullest.
- Develop new branding to unify La Rochelle Mansion and Museum under the Bar Harbor Historical Society umbrella, to incorporate the values of the organization, and to reflect our updated vision.