

**The Bob Bullock  
Texas State History Museum**

**Strategic Plan  
2011 – 2016**

September 20, 2011

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Joan Marshall, Director

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2011 - 2016

Celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011, The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum is a young institution that is moving from the immediate needs of a start-up operation to issues of long-term sustainability and growth. The Museum's planning efforts since opening have been primarily focused on operational issues such as: installing the permanent exhibits, building the basic museum infrastructure, and meeting immediate annual budget needs.

While the Museum has achieved considerable success as a national and international tourism attraction representing the State of Texas, it has yet to fulfill its true potential as a flagship institution serving the entire state of Texas and becoming a national leader in important and innovative public programming.

This Strategic Plan introduces a series of major initiatives to build on the strong platform of the past decade. Over the next five years, the Museum will become a dynamic and engaging hub of activity – a center for exchange and dialogue – and will explore the role of Texas history in defining the present and informing the future by educating children and supporting a more informed citizenry. The Museum will dramatically expand programming and partnerships and create a new brand identity and communications strategy to reflect this dynamic new positioning. Externally, the Museum will seek greater collaboration amongst its peer institutions, while internally promoting synergy and partnership to stimulate innovation and advancement.

The Strategic Plan is designed to bridge the gap between the founding vision and securing the Museum as one of the leading history museums in the country with vibrant and engaging programs that explore the unique development, traditions, and cultures of Texas, as well as the larger impact of Texas on the story of America.

### **Reflections and Input**

*"The Museum does not need to reinvent but to re-imagine how to thrive in the new learning environment and continue to 'wow' people."*  
- External Museum stakeholder

*"Let's make the Museum the 'Smithsonian for Texas'."*  
- External Museum stakeholder

*"We have to figure out what to leave behind to make new opportunities – sometimes you have to say 'no' to say 'yes' to something better."*  
- Museum staff member

*"Texans need to identify the Museum as their heritage site."*  
- Museum staff member

*"The Museum is not always seen as a neutral, objective educational institution."*  
- External Museum

## **THE MUSEUM'S HISTORY AND PURPOSE**

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum opened in 2001 as the state's only institution dedicated to teaching, showcasing, and celebrating Texas' dynamic history and heritage. The facility is located within a major hub of political, economic, and academic life in Austin, a few blocks from the State Capitol. The Museum creates an environment that encourages experiential learning and visitor engagement. It seeks to understand the changing concerns, interests, and needs of the public in order to involve broader and more diverse statewide audiences. The Museum also strives to position itself as a cornerstone of the community and as a key cultural destination within Texas.

The Museum tells the Story of Texas within 34,000 sq. ft. of state-of-the-art permanent exhibits on three floors. As a non-collecting institution, the Museum works with many statewide and national historical organizations and private individuals to feature artifacts in its galleries related to the themes of Land, Identity, and Opportunity. In addition, the Museum also includes a 7,000-sq.-foot special exhibit gallery that features original and traveling exhibitions. Its core programs consist of interactive and traditional exhibits and media experiences, which are augmented by educational and family programs relating to its mission. The Museum also houses a 400-seat IMAX Theatre and a 200-seat, multi-media theater for films and lectures.

The Museum is a part of the State Preservation Board through which the State provides the building, utilities, security, and most of the maintenance and administrative support. Earned revenue and private funding support the educational programming, exhibits, maintenance, staffing, and other expenses.

The Museum serves a diverse statewide audience, serving more than five million visitors including more than 850,000 schoolchildren since opening in April 2001. Approximately 55 percent of its audience comes from the Austin/Central Texas area, with the San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston metropolitan areas comprising a significant percentage of the remaining attendance as well as visitors from across the U.S. and foreign countries.

## MISSION AND VALUES

### **Mission**

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum engages the broadest possible audience to interpret the continually unfolding Story of Texas through meaningful educational experiences.

### **Values**

The Museum is dedicated to public service as reflected in the following values:

- **Excellence** - Pursuing excellence is at the core of everything we do, as evident through our exhibitions, programs, communication, stewardship, and scholarship. The Museum encourages independent thought and initiative, inquiry and debate, and values teamwork and collaboration.
- **Accessibility** - The Museum ensures the content and mission are universally accessible through diverse programming and the latest technologies. The Museum is committed to serve a broad public and share its resources with a statewide audience. The visitor experience is paramount to all aspects of our operation.
- **Relevance** - The Museum is responsive to the changing interests and concerns of the community to engage local and state-wide audiences in the complexities of interpreting and understanding history in an ever-evolving society.
- **Diversity** - The Museum's programs, exhibitions, and staff reflect and embrace the diverse viewpoints, backgrounds, and interpretations that are the basis of American society. The Museum's work is guided by recognizing the variety of perspectives that contribute to each visitor's understanding of the past.
- **Leadership** – The Museum will continue to be an innovator by expanding the boundaries for learning and public engagement through education, creativity, scholarship, and new technologies.

### **Reflections and Input**

*"We are becoming more diverse and we need to tell a broader story; some of it isn't so pretty, but it is critical to deeper understanding."*  
- External Museum stakeholder

*"We can't know the course of the future without knowing our past."*  
- External Museum stakeholder

*"Why should people study history and what is the connection to today? So that we can better understand who we are as Texans, our cultural identity, gain appreciation of who we are, where we have been and where we are going in the future."*  
- External Museum stakeholder

## **CRITICAL PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE**

The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum has determined five key priorities for 2011 – 2016. These priorities have been shaped by a series of in-depth interviews with key internal and external stakeholders including: Museum staff, Texas State History Museum Foundation representatives, and almost 20 colleagues from peer institutions. They were asked to provide candid insights into the Museum today, including strengths and weaknesses, and to envision opportunities of the future. Excerpts from these interviews have been included throughout the Strategic Plan.

Additionally, the entire Museum staff participated in a series of planning meetings culminating in a full-day strategic planning workshop to provide input and insight. The staff's participation and feedback was of utmost importance in planning the roadmap for the Museum's future, as each staff member has a unique perspective given their specific roles and responsibilities. The staff is deeply committed to the Strategic Plan and its successful implementation.

### **VISION:**

**By accomplishing the Strategic Plan's guiding priorities over the next five years, the Museum will become the best and most vibrant history museum in the U.S.**

The plan's five critical priorities will focus staff energies and form the basis of a campaign to engage the public and supporters. The first three priorities are related to programmatic growth and impact. The next two will position the Museum for growth and success.

1. Significantly expand public programming to engage a broader, more diverse statewide audience
2. Become the leading authority on Texas history by offering high quality and innovative exhibitions
3. Become a key partner in K-12 education and a resource for lifelong learning to meet the needs of the state and the local community
4. Re-imagine the Museum's brand and identity to affirm excellence and to increase visibility and attendance
5. Secure the Museum's long-term sustainability and success by expanding public and private sector support

The following sections describe each of the priorities including key goals and objectives.

## **Reflections and Input**

### **Priority 1: Become the Leading Authority on Texas History by Offering High Quality and Innovative Exhibitions**

The Museum's 175,000-square-foot building includes 34,000 square feet of exhibits on three floors. The Museum's state-of-the-art interactive exhibits trace the history of Texas from before European exploration to the present. When conceived of in the late 1990s, the galleries represented the cutting edge of museum design and included extensive use of film, multi-media, interactive technology and environmental vignettes. These galleries have held up well over the last ten years but could be refreshed and updated with current technology. More importantly, they could be augmented with new information, interpretation, and educational approaches.

The Museum will divide its 7,000 sq. ft. special exhibit hall on the first floor into two galleries to enable us to offer an expanded range of exhibitions and focused presentations. It will also ensure that the Museum's special exhibit galleries are never dark to the public, because only one gallery at a time will be changed.

The Museum will establish an advisory council to help shape the exhibitions and public programs of the Museum. It will be composed of scholars from Texas as well as nationally recognized innovative experts and educators that will contribute to positioning the Museum as a leader among history museums across the U.S.

**A. Goal: Become the leading public resource on Texas history to the state and the nation. Create the platform for presentation of excellence for scholarship, education, and public engagement.**

**B. Goal: Develop partnerships with distinguished institutions and organizations doing exemplary work, and collaborate with them to share collections, develop programs, and build new audiences.**

**C. Goal: Regularly enhance the permanent exhibits with innovative and high-quality information and interpretation.**

**D. Goal: Secure the Museum's future by investing in its leadership and infrastructure.**

### **Priority 2: Significantly Expand Public Programming to Engage a Broader, More Diverse Statewide Audience**

*"Timing is near to make critical changes to the galleries so we're not perceived as static – that we continue to be seen as innovative."  
- Internal Museum stakeholder*

*"Developing and sustaining an ongoing awareness of what the community needs, how these needs are changing and what partnerships are most strategic will help focus, prioritize, and leverage the museum/library's approach to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills."  
- Institute of Museum and Library Services*

The Museum strives to be a lively, interesting, and inspiring resource that encourages debate and engages visitors in a dialogue about our past, present, and future. Because the majority of the Museum's current galleries are permanent installations devoted to the history of Texas, it is important to avoid the public perception of the Museum as static.

To attract expanded audiences that reflect the diversity of the state and to build a robust membership program, the Museum will dramatically increase its current public programming which includes a range of interdisciplinary offerings such as lectures, performances, musical events, workshops, demonstrations, film screenings, book signings, and symposia. These programs will take advantage of the wealth of expertise at area universities and colleges, as well as the literary and artistic community. Events will often be presented in partnership with other nonprofits and state agencies, not only to leverage resources and maximize audience participation but to expand the Museum's range of programming possibilities. The Museum will create two to three annual large-scale signature events, like the successful Music Under the Star series, that will enhance its reputation as a statewide cultural institution and community resource.

Capitalize on the unique potential of the Texas Spirit Theater to promote the fine arts; past, present and future. By encouraging and supporting the arts through creative partnerships with established arts organizations, the Museum can become a respected, active participant in the statewide artistic community exploring Texas history and culture.

This array of interesting and diverse public programming will attract people who may never have visited a history museum and will expand the circles of Museum supporters. It will also give people a reason to return to the Museum throughout the year, increasing the Museum's reputation as a vital cultural destination and center of exploration and education.

The Museum will continue a tradition of integrating the latest multi-media and technology into exhibits and gallery presentations to ensure that information is offered at multiple levels and in varying formats to suit the changing learning behaviors of visitors.

**A. Goal: Create a higher profile in the community by increasing public programming that includes history, art, music, film, science, and literature.**

**B. Goal: Build and diversify audiences through expanded and enhanced programming, use of technology, interpretation, and exhibitions to become a true cultural anchor for the city and the state.**

**C. Goal: Regard all of the Museum's functional areas as opportunities for public engagement and education.**

### ***Reflections and Input***

*"We should be a hub for community activities, not just museum activities... We need a visual presence in the community to ensure visitation and strengthen city connections."*  
- Museum staff member

*"Museums and libraries... operate as places of social inclusion that promote curiosity, learning by doing, and discovery."*  
-Institute of Museum and Library Services

*"The model of the museum curator or educator standing in front of an object interpreting meaning for a passive audience is no longer realistic in a world accustomed to instant access to virtually any kind of information."*  
-The Horizon Report: 2010 Museum Edition

**Priority 3: Become a Key Partner in K-12 Education and a Resource for Lifelong Learning to Meet the Needs of the State and the Local Community**

The Museum will play a pivotal role in K-12 education, preparing teachers for the future by providing essential training as well as hosting an annual state-wide teacher institute. The Museum will contribute to the statewide curriculum on Texas history based on the Museum's permanent exhibits and will invite all Texas students to tour the Museum, offering a comprehensive introduction to Texas history and building life-long relationships with students and their families.

- A. Goal: Become an essential element of multi-disciplinary K-12 education in Texas.**
- B. Goal: Maintain the Museum's role as a place for family and lifelong learning.**

***Reflections and Input***

*"The Museum comes alive with kids – it sort of feels like the entire building is vibrating."  
- Museum staff member*

*The Museum needs "to get kids off on the right start about what the past was like and the importance of history."  
- External Museum stakeholder*

**Priority 4: Reinforce the Museum’s Brand and Identity to Affirm Excellence and to Increase Visibility and Attendance**

The Museum's permanent exhibits, which are devoted to the history of Texas will continue to be a primary draw for tourists from out of state and around the world who are attracted to the mythic profile and heroes of Texas. The Museum will work more closely with the Austin Convention and Visitor Bureau to actively promote the Museum to convention and tourism visitors. In addition, the Museum will promote itself in conjunction with the Capitol Visitors Center which attracts one million visitors a year and is located five blocks from the Museum.

The Museum will maintain its innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, while continuing to professionalize its operations by seeking accreditation with the American Association of Museums (AAM). As a Museum that must borrow collections from other institutions and depend on contract curators and scholars to develop exhibitions, its credibility as a professionally-run institution that maintains the highest standards of scholarship and collections care is essential to continued success. With the AAM accreditation and recognition of high professional standards, major collectors and scholars will be drawn to lend their collections, expertise, and reputations.

The Museum will also continue to invest in its physical building and equipment and provide the necessary resources to support staff development and retention.

- A. Goal: Clarify the Museum's image through a marketing campaign that emphasizes the Museum as an exciting cultural center which features the rich and varied story of Texas.**
- B. Goal: Increase public and professional awareness of the Museum. .**
- C. Goal: Seek accreditation from the American Association of Museums.**

**Reflections and Input**

*“We don’t dedicate the resources needed to be purposeful. We are catch-as-catch-can.”*

*- Museum staff member*

*“The Museum has not connected with philanthropic Texans. It isn’t on the radar of top priorities for charitable giving and bequests.”*

*- External Museum stakeholder*

**Priority 5: Secure the Museum’s Long-Term Sustainability and Success by Expanding Public and Private Sector Support**

To secure the resources needed to support these efforts, the Museum will build a fundraising program in partnership with the Texas State History Museum Foundation that continually reinvests in programs, exhibitions, staff and the physical building to stay competitive. The Museum and Foundation will embark

on a five-year campaign to raise substantial revenues to enable the Museum to achieve stated priorities and goals. To strengthen its future, the Museum must diversify its sources of income and work with the Foundation to develop a comprehensive fundraising plan.

Public and private sector income will be significantly expanded to complement the Museum's earned income. The Museum will adopt best practices and benchmarks in the field for acquisition of private sector contributions from individuals, foundations, government entities, and corporations. The role of the Foundation Board as advocates for the Museum and as fundraisers willing to identify and contact prospects and manage this effort will be essential.

The Museum will serve as a model for other museums for its entrepreneurial approach to earned revenue. Current earned revenue streams will be enhanced to reach greater potential.

- A. Goal: Build strong funding relationships with local, state, and national foundations, corporations, and government entities..**
- B. Goal: Build a stronger membership program to help expand broad-based support.**
- C. Goal: Increase earned income revenue to supplement contributed income.**
- D. Goal: Pursue a major fundraising campaign with the Foundation to secure sufficient funds to achieve the Museum's strategic priorities and contribute to long-term sustainability.**

## **CONCLUSION**

The new Strategic Plan will guide the Museum into its next decade of growth and success. It is focused on the Museum's long-term vitality and will fulfill its promise as the state's flagship cultural institution.

The Strategic Plan envisions an ambitious level of new programming and exhibitions as well as the expansion of partnerships that will strengthen the Museum's mission and impact. It builds on the Museum's founding vision and ten years of accomplishments to realize a bold new agenda matched with a practical roadmap of success and sustainability.

The plan balances short- and long-term goals that take into consideration not only the annual requirements of meeting budget and financial projections, but also the long-term needs of staffing, fund development, programming, and building infrastructure.

How will we measure our success in 2016? These are some of the highlights we hope to achieve:

- The Museum will be accredited and nationally recognized for its professionalism and rigor.
- Each year, visitors will be able to see the permanent exhibits and three special exhibitions, attend signature events and diverse community-driven and culturally relevant

programs involving the performing arts and leading scholars and journalists, view IMAX Theatre screenings, and participate in a wide range of educational activities.

- The Museum's website will be a treasure-trove of resources designed to serve the interests of diverse audiences. It will enable scholarly discourse, teacher training, exploration by young audiences, membership engagement, and lifelong learning. It will be participatory, fresh, and enable purchases, donations, and ticket sales.
- Attendance will increase by 25%; repeat visits during the year will increase due to changing exhibitions and multi-faceted programs.
- The Museum will have doubled the number of partners it works with.
- Over 100,000 K-12 students from throughout the state will visit the Museum annually.
- The Museum will have introduced a curriculum for the study of Texas history that supports the state standards.
- Membership will increase by 25%.
- Contributed income will be 25% of total revenues.

We invite your participation and support in making the Museum the best and most vibrant history museum in the U.S.!

