



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vashon Maury Island
Heritage Association



“I would like our Museum to become a place where the community can gather and have a greater appreciation for the past, care for the present, and look forward to the future.”

~ SURVEY PARTICIPANT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Strata Associates and Lisa MacLeod would like to acknowledge the Board Members, Trustees, Committee Chairs, and Docents, as well as all those who contributed to this Project.

Your participation, insight, and cooperation has been invaluable and will have significant impact on the future vision and development of both the Museum's web presence and the wider organization itself.

Thank you.

Lisa MacLeod

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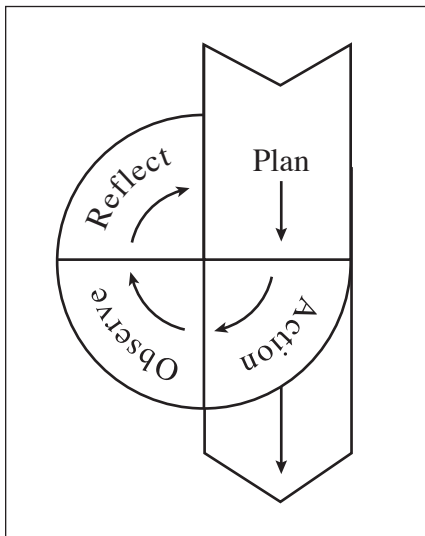
The Vashon Maury Island Heritage Association

“My efforts with the Museum are to move it more to be more approachable and integrated in the Vashon Community.”

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~ ACTION RESEARCH PHASE I

PROJECT PURPOSE

Gather data that will inform the strategic planning process and design direction for building a new website for the Museum.

OVERVIEW

Action Research methodology is a way to gather information using the Plan > Action > Observe > Reflect process and feed it back into the system. Through data collection and interviews Strata Associates (Strata) designed a series of questions (*Plan*), gathered information (*Action*), held meetings and interviews (*Observe*) and then used this information to help define priorities and direction for the Vashon Maury Island Heritage Association and its Museum’s on-line presence (*Reflect*). The Action Research methods then uses the information from the Reflection to inform and plan the next phase.

Key contributors were selected that best represented the diverse spectrum of invested VMIHA members. Strata devised a digital survey of ten essential questions that allowed the collection and analysis of data. This was followed by meetings and interviews that drilled deeper into participants’ ideas and perspectives to gain greater clarity.

The high level aim was to identify and present critical patterns, trends, and insight to help define future VMIHA priorities regarding developing their Museum’s online presence. It is Strata’s goal to provide project leaders and the VMIHA Board with data and analysis that will inform the design and development of a functional, representative, and adaptive website. It is also a hope that this report will create space for the VMIHA to use their own resources and know-how to address any emergent issues at the completion of the project.

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GOALS

Following consultation and collaboration with the project leadership, Strata formulated a series of goals that presented three key areas of focus.

Key Business Goal:

Reinvigorating the perception of the Museum as a viable and relevant Island attraction through using current digital technologies to reach and inform a broader audience and build membership.

Key Process Goal:

To unravel perceived or potential confusion between the holding organization “The Vashon Maury Island Heritage Association” and the Museum itself.

Key Sponsor Goal:

The Board President wants to build consensus around direction regarding hot issues such as re-branding the Museum.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE*

Executive Board Member	3
At Large Board Member	2
Ex Officio Board Member	3
Trustee	3
Committee Chair	3
Docent	2
Volunteer/Supporter	1

* Participants fill multiple roles within the VHMIA.

“I believe the job of any website is to attract people to the facility/organization at its core and to provide compelling information.”

~ SURVEY PARTICIPANT

“It is easy to be confused by references to “The Heritage Association” and “The Museum”. There have been discussions about the possibility of changing the organization’s name to something like “Vashon Heritage Museum” or “Vashon Heritage Association Museum” so there would be just one name for both the building and the organization.”

~ SURVEY PARTICIPANT

“I would be surprised to find all the active volunteers have a shared vision or expectations. We all work hard but have different philosophies about the Museum’s role.”

~ SURVEY PARTICIPANT

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“Using a combination of methods such as surveys, and member meetings is a great way to get involvement so as many people as possible are reached and given an opportunity to be heard.”

~ BOARD MEMBER

Approach to Research

18 invested members plus 30 additional members and community supporters were invited to take part in the survey based on their membership in one or more of the following categories:

- Executive/At-large/Ex-officio Board Member
- Trustee
- Committee Chair
- Docent
- Volunteer/Supporter

Data was collected via an online survey and meetings. There were 14 respondents to the online survey and 12 people attended the initial meeting with additional meetings held to accommodate those who could not make the first date.

The online survey was designed to collect demographic and perception data, with the aim of using the information to develop a proposal and strategic plan for the Museum’s website and also do a quick snapshot of the cohesiveness of the VMIHA around direction, mission and vision.

The meetings were designed to get clarity on the purpose of the website and to gain input from a variety of perspectives on priorities, functionality, and content for the site, as well as offering an opportunity for all voices to be heard and different perspectives to be offered.

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Review of the Data

What will be your legacy at the Museum?

- *Public use of the various resources and sustainability for the organization. I want to push for hiring a part-time museum director.*
- *My legacy will be one of the power of volunteers to make the museum a welcoming place for visitors and to help in historical research and to keep the bathrooms clean.*
- *The fact that there is a museum -- I was active in fund raising and planning to acquire the property, rehab the building, and develop initial exhibits.*
- *Probably my work with Voice of Vashon.*
- *My father was in the group that started the Heritage Association. I continue to support the Association and the Museum.*
- *My efforts with the Museum are to move it more to be more approachable and integrated in the Vashon Community.*
- *My legacy will be chairing the Building & Grounds Committee that undertook the replacement of the museum building's structural foundation to insure the building lasts another 100 years.*
- *Creating and maintaining systems for cataloging, storing, protecting and making accessible the museum's collections of documents, objects, photos and information for the public benefit.*
- *Hopefully moving the membership and donor list to our Past Perfect program and moving that procedure to a more modern time, and helping the kids programs grow to include contests, scholarships, and more visits*
- *Comprehensive.*
- *Purchasing Parsonage as future Heritage Education Center.*
- *Special exhibits going into the schools on Vashon to inspire excitement, interest, conversation, learning, artistic projects, literary pieces, among other great opportunities for youngsters.*
- *I hope to have created an awareness that the Museum has lots to offer young people as well as adults.*
- *Incorporating natural history element to the exhibits and developing a more supported docent program.*

Analysis:

Each person's vision of their legacy is tied to their role in the VMIHA. Consistent themes include:

1. *Maintenance, expansion, and continued growth of the Museum Campus, Exhibits, Events, and Programs.*
2. *Development of sustainable staff and volunteers.*
3. *Establishment of clear membership and donor database.*
4. *Growth of outreach and partnership or affiliate development.*

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What do you think is the primary purpose of the Museum's website?

- *To provide relevant interesting content in a modern format.*
- *Connecting and informing the public of our existence, mission, resources and artifacts.*
- *To communicate the activities (programs, events, exhibits), resources and volunteer opportunities.*
- *To inform visitors of our whereabouts and events and to ease access to VMIHA.*
- *To communicate up to the minute event info front and center. All the other links people can drill down on if they want more info. What's happening is critical to engage people into participation.*
- *Promoting and educating.*
- *To provide a link for the community to explore the many facets of the museum from the basics to the in depth via links to exhibits and upcoming events.*
- *Most important: current and timely information for the public.*
- *Currently, a place saver. I would like to see it function as a site for local historians and educators to research; for docents and other volunteers to access pertinent information; for the public to learn about our story, our displays, hours, and other off site interests.*
- *Show information about the Museum and the Heritage Association. Provide historical research information and links to other sites and information.*
- *I believe the job of any website is to attract people to the facility/organization at its core and to provide compelling information.*
- *To inform the community about experiences and services that VMIHA provides*
- *To convey information about the museum's activities, allow people a window into what it is up to and to allow people a way to join or to donate online.*
- *Promote and educate.*

Analysis:

There is cohesion about the "wants" for the website. Again, each participants opinion is informed by their role in the VMIHA. Themes include:

1. *To inform, promote, educate, and inspire on-line.*
2. *Establishment of clear membership and donor database.*
3. *Growth of outreach, partnerships, and affiliate (relationships with other similar organizations) development.*

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Who is the primary audience for the website?

- *Primary audience would be the current and past Vashon residents. It also could be a great resource for future residents, those considering a move here.*
- *I would like to see the website connect the museum to a younger generation (under 50). In order to sustain the museum's role in the community it will need to connect with a younger audience.*
- *Anyone interested in Island history and associated family history, whether island resident or not.*
- *People familiar with VMIHA paying memberships renewals, checking calendars and visitors to Island looking for tourist opportunities.*
- *Islanders past and present, people like to learn what was and is.*
- *Anyone interested in local history, including researchers, residents, past residents, students; members of the organization.*
- *Those curious about specific questions-could be islanders or out of towners.*
- *People who want to visit the Museum and want to know what is going on.*
- *Currently, board members if that! Ideally: public visitors, donors, educators, board members, other historical organizations.*
- *Vashonians, new, current and former. And any others seeking history of the Pacific Northwest.*
- *Three audiences, equally important: -- current and former residents and descendants of residents actively interested in Island history -- tourists (some overlap with former residents and descendants of residents) who are vaguely interested in getting to know the Island -- students, primarily K-12, who want to or are supposed to learn about Island history.*
- *Islanders of a certain age.*
- *Islanders.*

Analysis:

The audience for the site will be diverse, and has the potential to reach way beyond an Island audience. It needs to appeal to multiple targets at the same time.

1. *Past, present, and future Vashon Maury Residents.*
2. *Current and potential members, donors, funding agencies.*
3. *Connecting with an on-line, interconnected, tech-savvy younger (under 50) generation.*

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What is the mission (as best you know it)?

- *Without looking at the book I'd say it is to preserve the Island's history.*
- *The mission is to operate a community museum and collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret the history of Vashon and Maury Islands*
- *As stated in the bylaws*
- *To tell the stories of Islanders and people of the surrounding area*
- *Conservation of local history, research, public education, programs*
- *Collect, preserve, interpret (means educate), exhibit, with emphasis on Island history.*
- *To educate about Vashon history through pictorial illustration and verbal communication and to spark interest in gaining a greater understanding about the Island. The special exhibits are an added point of interest that provide specific and added information.*
- *To collect and preserve island history and make this information available to the public.*
- *To collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret the unique history of Vashon Maury islands.*
- *To preserve the Islands' history and to communicate that effectively*
- *Last I checked, the mission of the Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Association shall be to collect, preserve, interpret and exhibit materials reflecting the unique history and culture of Vashon-Maury Island and to serve as a resource for the community and region through educational programs, the collection of documents and data, and the operation of the Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum.*
- *I don't know the mission statement but its mission is to compile and preserve the historical documents of VMIHA, to teach and present the history of the island to adults and children.*
- *Collect, preserve, exhibit, interpret historical objects. Provide public access to historic resources for research and educational experiences.*

Analysis:

There appears to be consensus around the mission, but is it the mission of the VMIHA or the Museum itself.

While they work in partnership with each other, they serve a different purpose and may require separate objectives statements to avoid confusion around roles and goals.

VMIHA: Collect, Preserve, Compile, Conserve, Resource, Research.

Museum: Exhibit, Educate, Promote, Teach, Present, Communicate, Interpret.

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What is the vision (as best you know it)?

- *The Board came up with Educate, Engage, Inspire as the boiled down vision. Practically though, I think there are different visions.*
- *Educate and inspire*
- *As formulated by the Board last fall*
- *To include all peoples and to celebrate the past, verify that we are looking at it with eyes of the present, and contemplate the future*
- *Grow an effective organization that offers an array of products and services to meet the needs of the community and beyond.*
- *Educate, engage, inspire... needs to be revisited because so similar to other orgs' vision statements.*
- *To update the current photography exhibits, add more hands on educational tools for children, bring the exhibits into the community/schools, create a 21st century museum that speaks of the past and is very much a contemporary point of interest on the island.*
- *Sharing heritage. (This is not the vision statement we have agreed upon, however. The official vision statement begins with the word "educate" which I think is important, too.)*
- *Inspire. Engage. Educate.*
- *I honestly don't know, but I do know they've improved the quality of their exhibits and their outreach in the last 3 or 4 years*
- *To be awesome. I have no idea.*
- *I think the vision is to be a bigger part of the lives of islanders in order to advance awareness of island history.*
- *Engage, educate, inspire.*

Analysis:

There is less consensus around the vision, which can cause confusion as different members have their own version of what the vision "should" be. The vision is for the Museum and the VMIHA and should be very clear to everyone to generate organizational cohesion.

VMIHA: Collect, Preserve, and Advance Awareness of our Islands History.

Museum: Engage, Educate, Inspire.

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How do you think visitors and the community at large currently perceive the Museum?

- *They like the Museum, but It may seem like a one-visit type of place. I believe folks are glad we have such a Museum in our community.*
- *I think many community members and visitors are quite impressed and appreciate that a community of this size has such a great building and property focused on history. I think many islanders have never set foot in the museum and some do not know it exists.*
- *The feedback I hear is of appreciation and sometimes even surprise at the quality of the exhibits and programs in such a small museum.*
- *Most comments I hear are positive and pleased with what is done in our small space with an all volunteer group.*
- *That Heritage does a good job, yet understands it is a volunteer group with limitations, financially, technically, and professionally.*
- *Interesting, cool potential destination but not a must. Value isn't fully recognized, even by schools, though improving.*
- *Most have never opened the doors to see the treasure inside! With the outdated displays, the museum does not seem like a destination of interest. I believe most islanders only attend the special exhibits openings if there is something that they personally are interested in but otherwise are uninterested.*
- *A lot of islanders still don't even know we exist, so we continue to have a lot of outreach to do beyond the people who are members and are already supportive.*
- *Those who know we here find us impressive in the quality of display for the size and type of organization, however many notice the disparity between the quality of the temporary exhibit and permanent displays. Others don't know there is an association!*
- *People who see the museum are impressed but many people do not know it exists and are surprised to find out that Vashon has a history museum.*
- *I think most are generally surprised at the quality of this small town museum as well as the somewhat surprising and certainly fascinating history of these islands.*
- *I think people who know about it are happy that it exists, but not enough people know about it, and those who do need to be inspired to visit more often.*
- *I think visitors come to the museum and are surprised by its relevance and exhibits.*
- *Interesting, occasionally exciting, valuable. People are beginning to think of it as a place to bring visitors. Local families and educators think of it as a field trip destination.*

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How do you want visitors and the community at large to perceive the Museum?

- *Multi faceted organization that stirs curiosity and provides a foundational understanding our community and its place in the Pacific Northwest.*
- *I would like it to become a place the community can gather and have a greater appreciation for the past, care for the present and look forward to the future.*
- *As a place that values the preservation of Vashon history.*
- *Consistent with the needs and size of the Island and open to all who want to come or to exhibit.*
- *World class.*
- *Heart and center of the Island - THE place to bring families and visitors. Place to learn about island character, atmosphere, evolution.*
- *As an exciting and vibrant destination place that is welcoming to all ages, with hands-on and manipulative displays for children, interactive displays for adults and kids, and museum movies.*
- *To think of the Museum as an important, not-to-be-missed experience that has breadth and depth and keeps you coming back for more.*
- *A respectable institution for the preservation of island history and definitive source for education on such topic. A valued part of the island community.*
- *Ideally, I'd like the VMIHA to contribute to the islands' growing tourist economy by providing compelling and high quality exhibits as well as highlighting the uniqueness of this community.*
- *As a major cultural asset for the community, keeper of community memory, provider of interesting and varied programs, and resource for students.*
- *I want it to have more of a presence because I think history should be more of a presence in the lives of people. I want it to be cool and relevant.*
- *Vibrant, challenging, fascinating, grounding, a favored destination.*

Analysis:

1. *Too many Islanders are either uninterested or unaware that the museum exists.*
2. *The Museum's temporary exhibits are impressive, and the permanent exhibits need a face-lift.*
3. *Time to change the perception that the Museum is for one-off visits. Its a great place to regularly bring visitors, tourists, and field-trips, as the exhibits change seasonally.*

VMIHA: Respectable institution, Definitive source, Preservation of Island history, Community memory, Resource.

Museum: Exciting and Vibrant, Hands-on interactive display, Stirs curiosity, Challenges perceptions, A favored destination.

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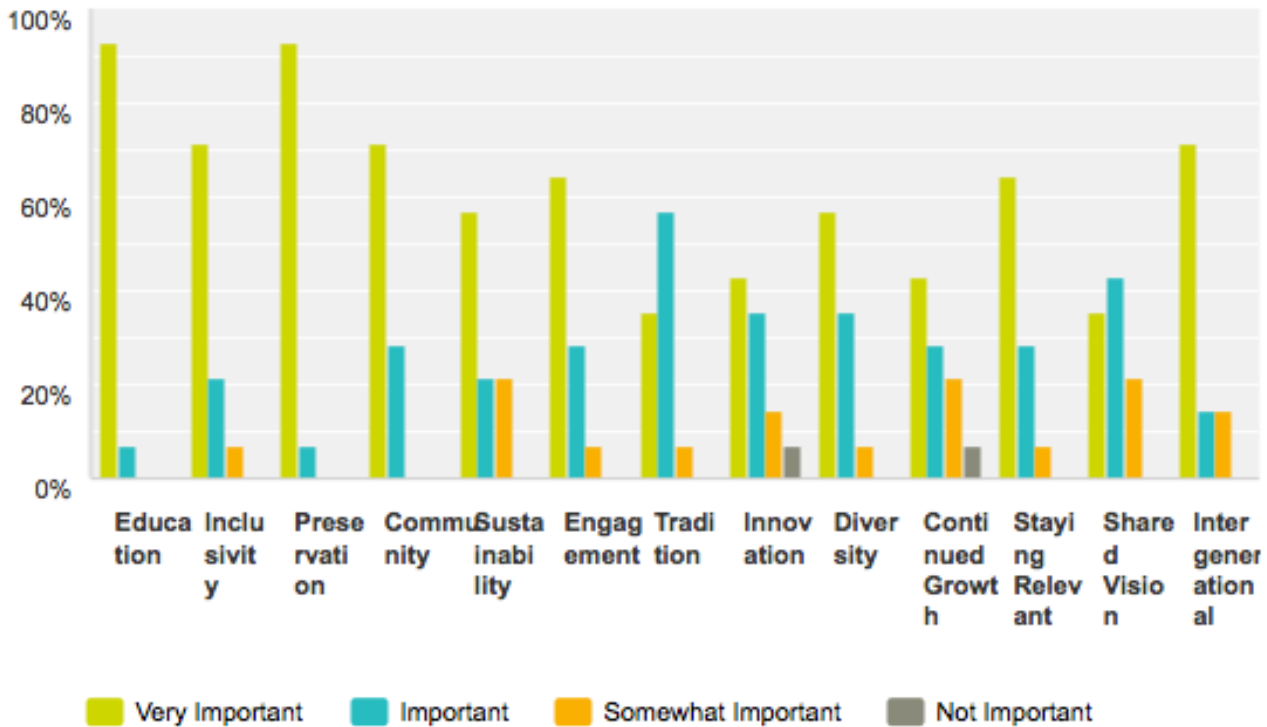
Additional Comments

- *Transition/change can be a challenge for some. It can be a decisive element. There can be quite a variety of opinions on ways money is spent on museum projects. People make a choice in whether they are willing to participate in change or not. The challenge becomes leadership that is willing to gently lead or shove. Providing opportunities such as this for input allows those who might not appreciate change at least express their feelings/concerns.*
- *I think you may have wanted us to talk about other non exhibit opportunities which I have not discussed here.*
- *I believe in professionalism, however, I think being down to earth, friendly, organized and technically capable is the key to the future.*
- *Volunteers welcome! Important to link to other history websites. Long Range Plan may be useful info for you.*
- *What other museums our size are doing to renovate and update their exhibits. How our web site can best display this trend to excite potential visitors to want to come "experience" our museum.*
- *I would be surprised to find all the active volunteers have a shared vision or expectations. We all work hard but have different philosophies about the Museum's role.*
- *I think the VCA format of upcoming volunteer opportunities is nicely formatted for volunteer use. I find the WA State Historical Museum website format and layout to be extremely user friendly, visually and informationally stimulating and easy to navigate. I hope our new site can be all of that!*
- *As illustrated by these survey questions, it is easy to be confused by references to "The Heritage Association" and "The Museum". The questions refer to 'Museum' website but 'Association' mission and values. There have been discussions about the possibility of changing the organization's name to something like "Vashon Heritage Museum" or "Vashon Heritage Association Museum" so there would be just one name for both the building and the organization. --Just a thought.*
- *I would love to see greater access to digital photo archives and past exhibits on line, as well as downloadable / printable documents that would specifically appeal to B&B operators and those to manage vacation rentals.*
- *Developing the campus will continue in the future.*

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Values:



Analysis:

Are these the values of the VMIHA or the Museum. As they become more clearly defined it is important to separate out the values of each entity.

1. *Top two values are Preservation and Education*
2. *Next three values are Inclusivity, Community, Inter-generational*
3. *Next two are Engagement, Staying relevant.*
4. *The lowest value was for Shared Vision. This could explain the disconnect around the previous vision question. Without a shared vision, that is held by the whole organization, is hard to move an organization forward without significant push-back.*

Values can be divided between the two entities:

VMIHA: Preservation, Inclusivity, Inter-generational, Community.

Museum: Education, Inter-generational, Staying relevant, Engagement.

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Notes from the Meetings

- *Immediate access to what's happening*
- *Kept up to date and easy to update and manage*
- *Incorporate Natural History and its relevance to Human History*
- *Clear Navigation (Past/Present/Upcoming Events)*
- *So simple, anyone can use it*
- *Flatten Layers: Keep navigation simple without too many clicks or drop downs*
- *Volunteer sign up and upcoming opportunities*
- *Board Portal*
- *"Ask the Expert" area and How-to section on picture preservation to encourage people to save their historical artifacts*
- *Video*
- *External links to other museums/resources*
- *Digitized resources.*
- *Be ADA compliant*
- *Donate & Membership up front – very clear! Membership section that is paid for*
- *Cultural mirroring across the country*
- *Attract local people on the Island who came here in the last 20 years – show relevance to contemporary life. "Who lived here before I did?"*
- *Get "new money" interested in history & connection*
- *Build a wider audience to the museum*
- *Walking tour that ends at the museum, plus Self Directed Driving and Boating Tour*
- *Local external links, what else to do on Vashon*
- *Testimonials*
- *Children's section*
- *Docent Handbook*
- *Social media connection and usage*
- *How Vashon's history relates to the wider NW history and National history*
- *Online Shop*
- *Permanent collections available online*
- *A publically owned, accessible asset; "It's My Museum" - People donate because it's loved.*
- *Building partners in the mission - "Become Part of History"*

OBSERVATIONS

1. There is a clear desire to use contemporary technology and social media to broaden and deepen the connection of the Museum to the context in which it exists, eg; Seattle area, Pacific Northwest region.
2. There is consensus around the “wants” for the new site. Some of these will be achieved through the structure and navigation of the new site, others will be driven by content.
3. There is no clear, consistent branding or positioning strategy for the Museum within the Vashon community.
4. The role/purpose/advantages of membership is unclear.
5. There is a perceived disconnect between the older and newer invested members that is more a difference in social style, process, and pace than a difference in direction.
6. The relationship between the roles and goals of the VMIHA and the Museum is confusing.

GOALS

Using the action research process, the information gathered during this process is fed back into the system to see how it affects the original goals set at the beginning:

Key Business Goal:

The information gathered will inform the decision-making process around reinvigorating the perception of the Museum as a viable and relevant Island attraction through using current digital technologies to connect with and inform a broader audience and build membership. As many have been included, Strata is hopeful there will be cohesion around the recommended direction.

Key Process Goal:

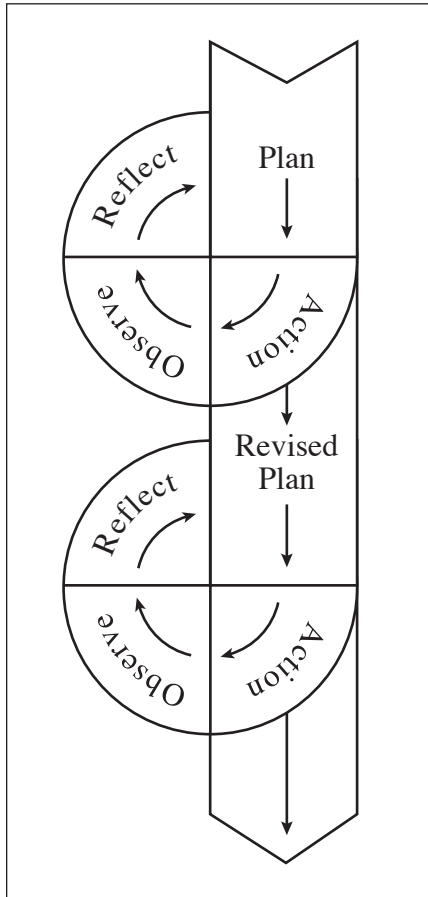
VMIHA would benefit from creating separation of objectives/vision/goals for the Association and the Museum. There are currently competing commitments and confusion between the role of the two entities, which in turn is causing lack of cohesion within the Association. Generating clarity around the purpose and values of each aspect of the organization will serve to align whole the with its parts.

Key Sponsor Goal:

Again, clarity around the roles/goals of the VMIHA and the Museum will diffuse tension around direction regarding “hot” issues such as re-branding. As the holding organization, VMIHA does not need a new name or logo. However, the website launch is an opportunity to redefine, reposition, and revitalize the Museum’s presence in the community and develop new marketing strategies.

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~ ACTION RESEARCH PHASE 2

REFLECTION

The first phase of the Action Research methodology is now complete. The information gathered informs the next step. This process can be repeated many times, feeding the new data into the system and using it as a way of evaluating success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement a two step website development process to allow time to initiate another round of the Action Research methodology and gather metrics on the success of the initiative before investing in expanding the offerings online.
2. Set up a digital media committee solely responsible for content generation and implementation.
3. Define a separate Branding/Values/Objectives for the Museum outside the holding organization of the VMIHA. This will help align the Museum's role with its people and purpose, and generate clarity between the two entities. The top two values of Education and Preservation really speak to the purpose of each part of the organization as a whole - the VMIHA focused on Preservation, the Museum centered around Education.
4. Revitalize and support the membership committee with specific membership goals that are easy to implement and manage.
5. Design a clear branding and communications strategy to help reposition the museum within the community - and further afield.

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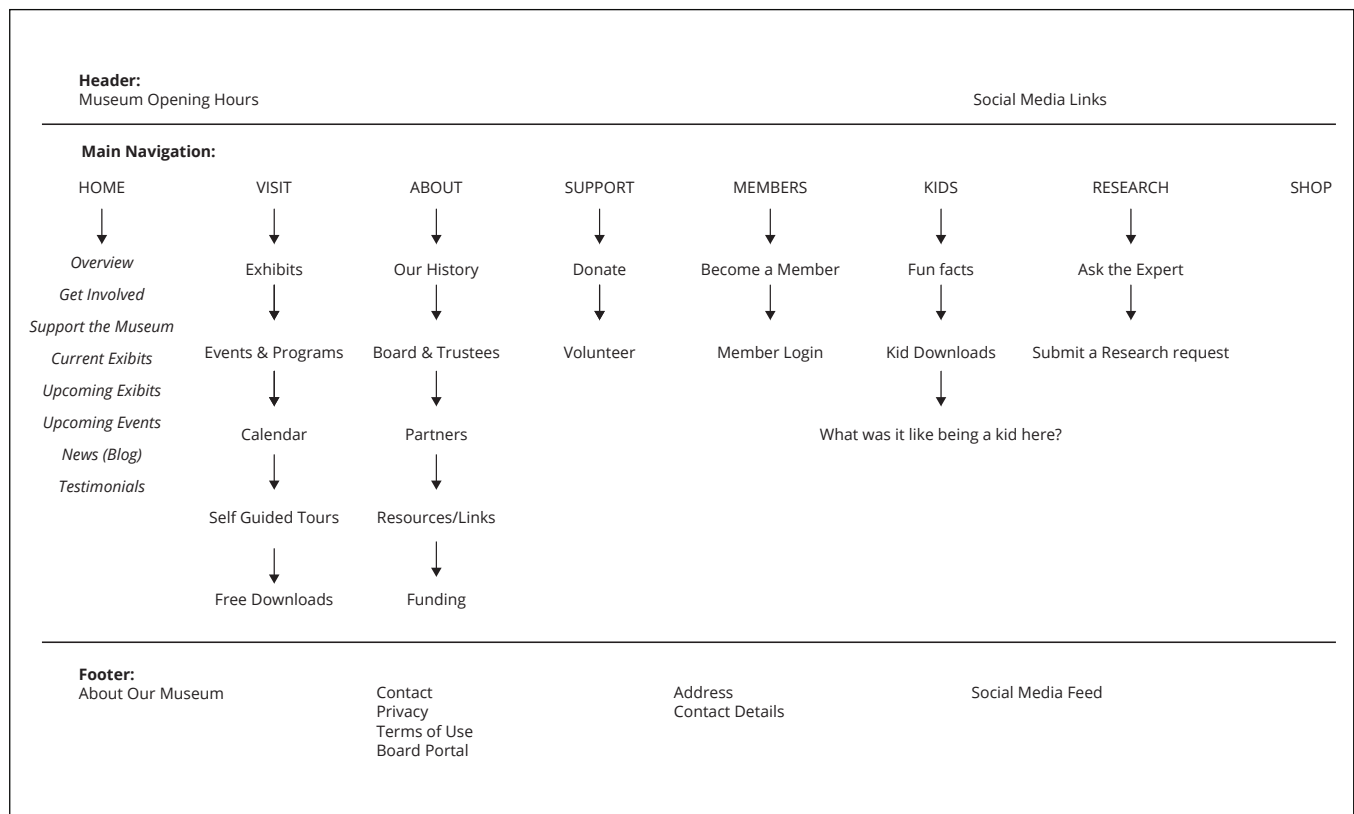
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Step 2:

Only to be undertaken after fully reviewing the performance of the first stage of development (after approx six months) to assess the functionality of the initial site working and have chance to address any emergent issues. Again, it is very important to clearly define “what success looks like” (metrics) at the start of the second step of the project.

1. On-line exhibits as an extension of in-house exhibits
2. Members only content
3. Kids area
4. Research area

SUGGESTED SECOND STEP SITE OUTLINE



CREATIVE ADDENDUM:

Vashon Maury Island Heritage Association: Preserving Our History

Vashon Maury Island Heritage Association's three main objectives:

Community History

In collecting and compiling documents and artifacts that reflect the unique heritage of Vashon-Maury Islands, the VMIHA maintains a continually evolving, expertly curated, and accurate repository of our community's history.

Preserving The Past

The VMIHA highlights the universality of the human experience, by preserving and conserving Vashon-Maury Island's diverse cultural, social, and natural history, from first peoples to present day.

Accessible To All

By providing a rich Museum experience and maintaining well-functioning facilities the VMIHA ensures Vashon-Maury Island's stories and collections are available to all, both in-person and online.

Vashon Heritage Museum: Our Living History

Vashon Heritage Museum's three main objectives:

Engage

By providing exciting and innovative displays, the Vashon Heritage Museum stirs curiosity and engages its visitors with expertly curated exhibits supported by knowledgeable docents.

Educate

With access to the wealth of knowledge collected through the VMIHA, the Museum educates its visitors by providing an accurate reflection of our community's history and its place in the Pacific Northwest.

Inspire

The Vashon Heritage Museum inspires visitors by celebrating our shared heritage, connecting the past and present, and demonstrating how history influences our future.