

McHenry County Historical Society & Museum
EST. 1963 • UNION, ILLINOIS

STRATEGIC PLAN

July 2026 – June 2029

Preserving the Past. Inspiring the Future.

OUR MISSION

We engage and educate current and future generations by preserving and sharing McHenry County history.

OUR VISION

The McHenry County Historical Society & Museum endeavors to be a hub for collection, preservation and educational outreach reflecting McHenry County's history.

OUR VALUES

Integrity
Innovation
Inclusion
Relevancy
Outreach
Leadership
Sustainability
Stewardship
Knowledge
Collaboration
Accessibility

“The state of our Society is strong.”

— Robert Frenz, President, McHenry County Historical Society

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Since 1963, the McHenry County Historical Society has strived to engage and educate current and future generations about their county's history. In addition to operating the museum and research library, the Society plaques historic sites and structures, hosts workshops and classes, makes satellite exhibits available, and arranges a wide variety of school and other group programs. Without federal or local funding, the Society relies on membership dues, admission fees, donations, and endowments.

The McHenry County Historical Society & Museum (MCHS) stands at an exciting inflection point with a full professional staff, year-round operations, and a growing, engaged community. This 2026–2029 Strategic Plan charts a clear course for sustainable membership growth, revenue diversification, and community impact.

PRIORITY: MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

Membership is the foundation of MCHS. Growing and diversifying the membership base is the most critical strategic lever for long-term organizational health. Maximizing membership in all demographics is a priority.

Key Initiatives

- Foster future membership through family and youth interests and programming
- Increase & Retain membership
- Enhance the value of membership
- Build relationships with government agencies

PRIORITY: REVENUE GROWTH

A variety of revenue sources reduces dependence on singular revenue streams while building reserves.

Revenue Growth Targets (2026–2029) Fiscal Year July 1 - June 30

Revenue Stream	2026 Goal	2027 Goal	2028 Goal	2029 Goal
Annual Fund	\$60,000	\$72,000	\$85,000	\$100,000
Membership Dues	\$22,000	\$28,000	\$34,000	\$42,000
Programs	\$12,000	\$16,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
Heritage Fair + Events	\$10,000	\$12,000	\$14,000	\$16,000
Grants	\$30,000	\$35,000	\$40,000	\$45,000
Corporate Sponsorships (NEW)	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$18,000	\$25,000

Key Initiatives

- Generate and build donor relationships
- Develop corporate sponsorship opportunities and incentives
- Emphasize MCHS non-profit privately funded status
- Launch legacy planning campaign
- Enhance museum shop marketing

Increase social media fundraising

PRIORITY: FACILITIES VISION

A comprehensive facilities is a necessity to apply for grants, plan for and coordinate facilities maintenance, identify funding for capital improvements, remodeling and expansion projects.

Key Initiatives

- Establish task force to identify future uses of all buildings
- Identify environmental limitations and other site limitations
- Recommend upgraded security and safety improvements
- Plan for coordinated accessibility improvements
- Identify interior modifications that will improve space utilization
- Identify locations for building additions
- Recommend aesthetic improvements, and site enhancements

PRIORITY: INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

The building portfolio represents both MCHS's greatest asset and its most significant deferred liability. A phased and coordinated capital improvement plan (CIP) will address safety, security, accessibility and space needs while maintaining daily operations.

Key Initiatives

- Develop a CIP and update annually to address ever-changing conditions
- Create a collection storage space plan
- Have some projects shovel ready to respond to grant and donation opportunities
- Continue proactive building maintenance efforts
- Update safety and security

PRIORITY: PRESERVATION OF COLLECTIONS

Incorporating preservation best practices addresses the critical needs of the collections.

Key Initiatives

- Complete current oral history project
- Continue and expand digitization projects
- Explore digitization grant opportunities
- Develop a digital in-house library catalog
- Digitize and upload library items to Internet Archive for preservation and accessibility
- Organize the 3D objects collection

PRIORITY: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Institutional structure, guidelines, and oversight facilitate the organization's decision-making to maximize its potential.

Key Initiatives

- Complete managing-to-governing board transition
- Strengthen and improve youth involvement
- Develop Executive Director succession plan and operations manual
- Pursue museum accreditation
- Explore new positions to enhance professional staff

PRIORITY: AWARENESS, RELEVANCE, AND OUTREACH

The future success and effectiveness of the organization will be enhanced by shaping and nurturing a strong stakeholder base that understands and supports the mission.

Key Initiatives

- Increase public awareness of the organization and its mission
- Improve branding and relevance
- Build partnerships with local communities and organizations
- Share traveling exhibits and create satellite exhibitions at libraries, schools, and civic organizations
- Connect to people through community outreach.

With this 2026–2029 Strategic Plan, MCHS is poised to build on its momentum, deepen community roots, and secure a thriving future for McHenry County history — for current and future generations