



AURORA
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EST. 1963

2026-2031

Strategic Plan





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Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that Aurora is located within the traditional territory of the Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinaabe Peoples, in the Treaty #13 and Williams Treaties areas. We wish to recognize the long history of First Nations and Metis peoples in Ontario and show our respect to them.

We also acknowledge the Chippewas of Georgina Island as the closest Indigenous community to Aurora. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people, and we are grateful to live and work on this land today and every day, and we hope you join us in showing this respect and gratitude.



Introduction

The Aurora Historical Society (AHS) and Hillary House National Historic Site, the Koffler Museum of Medicine (Hillary House), enter the 2026–2031 planning period with a renewed commitment to stewardship, community relevance, and organizational resilience. As stewards of a National Historic Site designated for its remarkable Gothic Revival architecture and enriched by its deep medical and community history, we hold a responsibility not only to preserve the past but to ensure that Hillary House remains meaningful, accessible, and engaging for the communities we serve.

Across Ontario, museums and heritage organizations are embracing strengthened conservation practices, inclusive interpretation, digital transformation, deeper community partnerships, and renewed investment in volunteer engagement. This Strategic Plan positions Hillary House and AHS within that evolving landscape. It aligns with the Standards for Community Museums in Ontario, sector best practices, and the expectations of the Ontario Heritage Trust, ensuring that our work reflects both professional excellence and local relevance.



Reflecting on Our Path, Defining Our Future

While the 2018–2023 Strategic Plan was well-intentioned and thoughtfully developed, its implementation was challenged by the impacts of COVID-19, changes in staffing and Board composition, and ongoing discussions regarding the future ownership and stewardship of Hillary House. These factors limited the organization’s ability to fully advance its goals.

As AHS moves beyond the challenges of recent years, the organization has emerged with a renewed and clearer sense of purpose and direction. The 2026–2031 Strategic Plan provides a focused and forward-looking framework designed to strengthen AHS’s capacity and deepen its impact in the years ahead.

Developed through staff expertise, Board leadership, community insight, and alignment with municipal and provincial priorities, the 2026–2031 Strategic Plan outlines six interconnected Strategic Priorities that will guide our efforts:

01.

Safeguarding and restoring Hillary House and its collections

02.

Enhancing interpretation, education, and visitor experience

03.

Strengthening partnerships and community engagement

04.

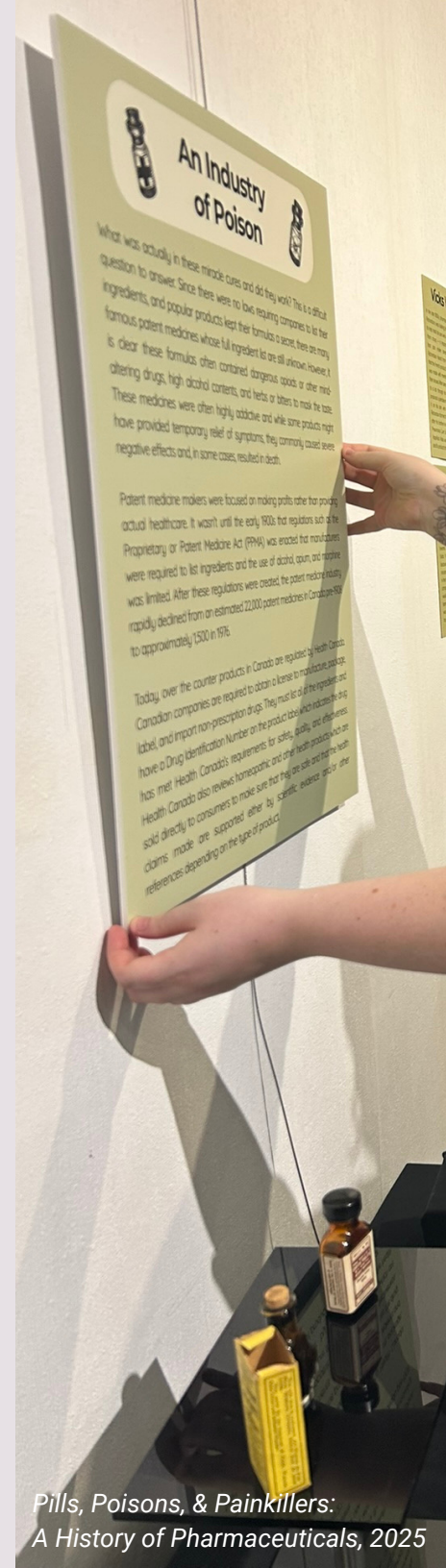
Elevating brand identity and public awareness

05.

Ensuring strong governance, financial sustainability, and diversified fundraising

06.

Expanding and sustaining a skilled, diverse, and engaged volunteer community



The detailed objectives, actions, and KPIs within this plan are intentionally measurable and transparent, supporting accountability to our members, funders, partners, volunteers, and the broader community. Together, these priorities position AHS to steward Hillary House with care, expand its role as a vibrant community hub, and build a resilient organization capable of meeting both present and future needs.

With this Strategic Plan, AHS reaffirms its commitment to preserving Aurora’s heritage, enriching public understanding, and ensuring that Hillary House continues to inspire residents, visitors, volunteers, and learners for generations to come.



History & Context

Aurora Historical Society

Founded in 1963, the AHS has served as the community's steward of local heritage for more than sixty years. What began as a volunteer-driven historical association has grown into a professional heritage organization responsible for collections care, exhibitions, programming, and community engagement. Guided by its mission to preserve, interpret, and share the history of Aurora, AHS has played a central role in shaping how the community understands its past.

Hillary House National Historic Site

Built in 1862, Hillary House is one of Canada's best-preserved examples of Gothic Revival domestic architecture. Its national designation, awarded in 1971, recognizes both the architectural significance of the house and its exceptional state of preservation. Over its long history, Hillary House was home to several prominent Aurora physicians and their families, including Dr. Walter Bayne Geikie, Dr. Frederick William Strange, and both Dr. Robert William Hillary and his son Dr. Robert Michael Hillary. Their medical instruments, furnishings, photographs, and archival materials form the foundation of the museum collection stewarded by the AHS today.

Since assuming responsibility for Hillary House in 1981, the AHS has transformed the property into a year-round historic house museum and community heritage centre, offering exhibitions, tours, programs, and events that connect residents and visitors with Aurora's past.

A Museum in Transition

In the early 2010s, the Town of Aurora assumed responsibility for the broader Aurora Collection and community museum services. This shift led to the formation of the Aurora Museum & Archives, which now stewards the Town's collection and delivers municipal museum programming. Following this transition, AHS continued to promote the history of Aurora, but with Hillary House as its sole heritage asset and primary area of responsibility.

AHS has long operated as a professional heritage organization, continually refining its museum practices, collections care, and public programming. In recent years, the Society has continued to strengthen its operations and community presence while also navigating challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, staffing and Board transitions, and ongoing discussions about the long-term stewardship of Hillary House. These experiences highlighted the importance of renewed clarity and a focused organizational direction.

As AHS enters the 2026–2031 planning period, the organization does so with a revitalized sense of purpose and, for the first time, a formally articulated mandate centered exclusively on Hillary House. This Strategic Plan builds on decades of stewardship while charting a forward-looking path that strengthens preservation, enhances visitor experience, and ensures the long-term sustainability of Hillary House as a museum, heritage landmark, and community hub.

Message from Co-Chairs



The AHS is proud to present the 2026–2031 Strategic Action Plan, a forward-looking roadmap that strengthens our stewardship of Hillary House and deepens our role as a trusted cultural institution in Aurora and York Region. This plan reflects months of thoughtful work by our Board, staff, volunteers, and community partners, and it positions us to protect, interpret, and share this national treasure with future generations.

At its core, this plan reaffirms our commitment to heritage preservation and responsible stewardship. Over the next five years, we will complete the short-term restoration priorities identified in the 2023 Enhanced Condition Assessment Report, advance accessibility improvements across the grounds, and strengthen the long-term sustainability of Hillary House through diversified funding and capital planning. These actions ensure that the site remains preserved to recognized conservation standards and continues to embody the integrity that earned its national designation.

The plan also charts an ambitious path for museum excellence and visitor experience. We will update our interpretive and exhibition plans, expand inclusive and research-informed storytelling, and introduce new digital and hands-on experiences that make Hillary House more engaging and accessible. Enhanced school programs, community-based learning partnerships, and expanded youth and adult programming will deepen our educational impact.

A renewed focus on community engagement and partnerships will strengthen Hillary House’s role as a vibrant cultural hub. Through expanded outreach, pop-up exhibits, collaborative programming,

and a new annual signature event, we will broaden our reach and foster meaningful connections across Aurora and beyond.

To support this work, the plan advances a clear strategy for brand identity, marketing, and digital presence, including a full transition to a unified Hillary House brand and strengthened tourism partnerships that elevate our profile as a must-visit heritage destination.

Finally, the plan reinforces the foundations of our organization, strong governance, financial sustainability, and a thriving volunteer community. Through improved policies, board development, diversified fundraising, and enhanced volunteer recruitment and recognition, we are building the capacity needed to deliver on our mission with excellence.

This Strategic Plan is both practical and aspirational. It provides clear timelines, measurable outcomes, and accountable leadership, ensuring that progress is transparent and aligned with community expectations. Most importantly, it reflects our shared belief that Hillary House is not only a historic site, but a living place of learning, connection, and civic pride.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this plan. Together, we are charting a confident path forward, one that honours our past while embracing the opportunities ahead.

We look forward to working with our community to bring this plan to life.



Guiding Principles

We ground our decisions and actions in the following principles:

Stewardship First

We protect Hillary House and its collections with care, responsibility, and long-term vision.

Community at the Centre

We create welcoming, meaningful experiences that foster connection, belonging, and relevance.

Professional Integrity

We uphold museum standards, ethical practice, and transparent governance in all we do.

Collaboration & Partnership

We work collaboratively with volunteers, partners, and the community to strengthen impact and broaden reach.

Learning & Engagement

We activate history through education, dialogue, and inclusive cultural experiences.

Sustainability & Resilience

We make decisions that support organizational stability, adaptability, and future readiness.

Connections to the Standards for Community Museums in Ontario

The development of this Strategic Plan was guided by the Standards for Community Museums in Ontario. Throughout the four-phase planning process, the AHS ensured alignment with the Governance Standard through Board leadership, oversight, and final approval of the plan. Consideration of long-term sustainability and resource needs reflects the Finance Standard, while consultation with staff and volunteers and assessment of organizational capacity align with the Human Resources Standard. Extensive community and stakeholder engagement supports the Community Standard, ensuring the plan responds to local needs and expectations.

The Strategic Framework also reflect many standards, including the Collections, Conservation, Exhibition, and Research standards through their focus on stewardship, documentation, preservation, interpretive renewal, and evidence-based content development. The objectives, action items, and KPIs related to programming, curriculum alignment, and visitor experience emphasize community engagement and partnerships demonstrate alignment with the Community and Interpretation & Education Standards, while actions addressing building maintenance, accessibility, and site improvements support the Physical Plant Standard. Together, these connections ensure that the Strategic Plan is grounded in sector expectations and supports the long-term stewardship of Hillary House.





Victorian Garden Party, 2024

Strategic Planning Process

The 2026–2031 Strategic Plan was shaped through a thoughtful, multi-phase process that brought together community perspectives, organizational realities and the long-term stewardship needs of Hillary House. The process unfolded in four phases, each building on the insights and momentum of the last to create a clear, grounded, and forward-looking direction for Hillary House.

November - December 2024

The process began with a public consultation survey conducted in partnership with the Town of Aurora. The survey invited residents to share their views on the future of Hillary House, including potential ownership and operational models. This feedback provided valuable insight into what the community supports, what it opposes, and how residents envision the site's future.

The responses revealed strong, consistent themes:

- Hillary House should remain a public historic house museum
- The community values heritage preservation, education, and authentic storytelling
- There is interest in expanded educational and cultural programming, use of the grounds, and small-scale cultural events
- There is limited support for commercial repurposing

This phase clarified what matters most to the community and provided a foundation for the direction of the Strategic Plan. A summary of the survey findings is included in Appendix A.

April - November 2025

Following the public consultation process, the Town of Aurora decided not to move forward with changes to the ownership or operational model of Hillary House. After consulting with the AHS membership, the Board shifted its focus to strengthening governance. A targeted recruitment effort restored the Board complement to a full nine members, ensuring stability, continuity, and the leadership capacity needed for strategic planning to proceed effectively.

With governance strengthened, the Board turned its attention to the big questions shaping the organization's future:

- What is AHS's mandate moving forward?
- What makes Hillary House distinct and irreplaceable?
- How can AHS enhance visitor experience and community relevance?
- What opportunities exist for programming, partnerships, and site activation?
- What challenges must be addressed to ensure sustainability?

Through a facilitated planning session, the Board explored these questions in depth, reviewed the consultation findings, reflected on organizational strengths and challenges, and identified emerging priorities. This session established the initial framework for the Strategic Priorities.



AHS Board
Strategic Planning
Session, 2025

January – March 2026

With a clearer sense of direction, the AHS engaged staff, volunteers, and key stakeholders to gather operational insights, professional perspectives, and explore community needs. These conversations examined:

- programming feasibility
- visitor experience and community needs
- collections care
- site stewardship
- capacity, resources, and organizational realities

Their insights helped refine the priorities and ensure the plan reflects the aspirations of the community, professional best practice, feasibility, and on-the-ground experience.

April – June 2026

A second Board session brought all inputs together. Through discussion and refinement, the Board finalized the Strategic Priorities, confirmed objectives, and shaped the action items that form the backbone of this plan.

This final phase ensured that the Strategic Plan is:

- grounded in community expectations
- aligned with museum standards and best practice
- realistic within AHS's capacity
- responsive to the unique needs of a National Historic Site

The resulting plan reflects the collective input of the community, Board, staff, volunteers, and partners. It provides a clear, focused roadmap for AHS as it formally embraces its mandate to steward, interpret, and activate Hillary House.

A Plan Grounded in Community and Built for the Future

Hillary House is a defining heritage landmark for Aurora. This planning process ensured that the voices of the community, the experience of staff and volunteers, and the leadership of the Board all contributed to a shared vision for its future. Together, these four phases shaped a Strategic Plan that is grounded, achievable, and aligned with the long-term stewardship of one of Aurora's most significant heritage landmarks.



Strategic Foundations

At the heart of the AHS's work is a clear sense of purpose and responsibility. This section presents the foundational elements that guide the AHS as steward of Hillary House.

Our **Mandate**

defines the responsibilities we are entrusted with and the public purpose we are expected to uphold.

Our **Vision**

reflects the future we are working toward and the impact we hope to make.

Our **Mission**

articulates our purpose and the commitments that define our work.

Our **Values**

represent the beliefs and principles that shape how we engage with our community and care for the site.

Our **SWOT Analysis**

highlights the internal and external factors that influence our choices and help us plan responsibly for the future.

Together, these elements provide the grounding for the Strategic Priorities.



Mandate

The Aurora Historical Society is mandated to steward, preserve, interpret, and activate Hillary House National Historic Site, the Koffler Museum of Medicine for the benefit of the community.

Vision

We are the stewards of Hillary House National Historic Site, the Koffler Museum of Medicine, responsible for a vibrant, welcoming museum and national landmark where history, culture, and learning intersect to inspire connection and pride across generations.



Mission

We preserve and steward Hillary House National Historic Site, the Koffler Museum of Medicine and its collections while activating them through immersive education, storytelling, and cultural experiences. As a museum and community contributor, we connect people to Aurora's history, foster belonging, and create meaningful opportunities for learning, dialogue, and engagement.



Values

These Values articulate the principles that define our organizational culture and commitments.



SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS

- Nationally significant historic asset
- Dedicated leadership and governance
- Committed people
- Unique physical setting
- Diverse and rich collections
- Strong location
- Credibility and standards

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WEAKNESSES

- Limited organizational capacity
- Low public awareness and visibility
- Accessibility and compliance constraints
- Parking and site limitations
- Small and aging volunteer base
- Revenue vulnerability
- Execution challenges
- Legacy constraints

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OPPORTUNITIES

- Expanded and diversified programming
- Earned-revenue growth
- Tourism alignment
- Partnership potential
- Site activation
- Brand renewal
- Digital and social engagement
- Academic and professional networks
- Community hub potential

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THREATS

- Funding instability
- Political and governance risk
- Physical and environmental risks
- Safety and access concerns
- Relevance challenges
- Internal capacity strain
- Volunteer decline
- Reputation and trust

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Heritage Preservation, Restoration & Stewardship

Safeguard, restore, and steward Hillary House National Historic Site, the Koffler Museum of Medicine and its collections in accordance with recognized conservation standards, ensuring the long-term preservation, integrity, and public value of this nationally significant heritage resource.

Museum Education, Interpretation & Visitor Experience

Deliver high-quality, engaging and inclusive museum programming that encompasses interpretation, education, exhibitions, collections care, and visitor services that position Hillary House as a leading immersive heritage destination.

Community Engagement, Partnerships & Profile

Enhance the role of Hillary House as a vibrant community hub by fostering meaningful partnerships, strengthening community connections, and creating opportunities for collaborative programming, shared learning, and civic engagement.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Brand, Marketing & Community Awareness

Expand public awareness and visitation through a clear and compelling brand, insightful storytelling, and effective marketing and digital engagement that communicates the value and relevance of Hillary House offerings to diverse audiences.

Governance, Financial Sustainability & Fundraising

Ensure the viability of the Aurora Historical Society through strong governance, prudent financial management, and diversified fundraising that supports both day-to-day operations and long-term strategic priorities.

Volunteerism

Expand and sustain a skilled, diverse, and engaged community of volunteers who are supported, valued, and meaningfully involved in delivering programs, governance, and organizational success.

Strategic Priority 1: Heritage Preservation, Restoration & Stewardship

Safeguard, restore, and steward Hillary House National Historic Site, the Koffler Museum of Medicine and its collections in accordance with recognized conservation standards, ensuring the long-term preservation, integrity, and public value of this nationally significant heritage resource.

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Prudently manage and conserve Hillary House and capital assets through proactive maintenance, capital planning, and restoration.	Implement prioritized maintenance/restoration schedule/plan – complete ‘Short Term’ items of phased upgrades to HVAC, electrical, and building envelope.	2026-2031	1. Complete 100% of the “Short Term” maintenance and restoration items identified in the Enhanced Condition assessment by 2031. 2. Secure qualified heritage-appropriate contractors and finalize project schedules for all short-term items, ensuring all work aligns with conservation standards. 3. Achieve full compliance with recognized conservation and building standards for all completed upgrades as verified by the OHT.	Board/Staff
	Secure sustainable and diversified funding to support the long-term capital restoration and preservation needs of Hillary House.	2026- 2031	1. Increase capital-project funding by at least \$250,000 through grants, sponsorships, and donor contributions by 2031. 2. Secure a minimum of three new sustainable funding sources (e.g., multi-year grants, corporate partnerships, or recurring donor commitments) dedicated to capital projects by 2031. 3. Grow Building & Grounds capital reserve fund to reach at least \$100,000 by 2031.	Board
	Grow and diversify corporate sponsorship revenue streams to strengthen funding for capital projects.	2027-2031	1. Develop and launch updated sponsorship package. 2. Increase corporate sponsorship revenue by at least 20%. 3. Secure a minimum of five new corporate sponsors aligned with heritage, healthcare, or community-impact themes.	Board

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Improve infrastructure for enhanced accessible public use, where feasible.	Improve public access to grounds, gardens, and landscape following AHS Accessibility Plan 2023-2028.	2026-2028	1. Complete accessibility improvements to pathways, garden access points, and landscape features identified in the AHS Accessibility Plan by 2028. 2. Increased positive visitor feedback related to outdoor accessibility (pathways, garden access, grounds navigation) in visitor surveys.	Staff/Board
	Assess and improve parking and site access, including exploring the feasibility of developing additional parking behind the Hillary House property.	2027-2028	1. Prepare and submit a formal request to the Town of Aurora to explore parking options behind the Hillary House property by end of 2027, including rationale, site considerations, and alignment with accessibility goals. 2. Secure at least two formal meetings with relevant Town departments (Planning, Heritage, Accessibility, Infrastructure) by end of 2028, to review feasibility, requirements, and potential constraints. 3. Receive and document the Town of Aurora's preliminary feedback or direction regarding parking feasibility and required studies by 2028, and present recommended next steps to the Board.	Board
	Implement AHS Digital Strategy 2025-2030 to assist with accessibility of the museum and collection.	2026-2031	1. Implement Goal 3 "Improve Access" from the AHS Digital Strategy by 2028. 2. Increase visitor use of digital accessibility tools (e.g., alternate text, closed captioning, language translation), measured through website analytics and user feedback.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Continuously improve storage, environmental controls, and cataloguing procedures for artifact and archive collection.	Implement AHS Digital Strategy to assist with collections preservation and accessibility of the museum and collection.	2026-2030	1. Implement Goal 1 “Preserve History” from the AHS Digital Strategy by 2030. 2. Increase the number of digitized and accessibility enhanced collection items (e.g., descriptive text, captions, transcripts) by 100 items by December 2028, ensuring compliance with AODA and WCAG 2.1 AA standards.	Staff
	Improve collections storage conditions by implementing feasible, professional-standard upgrades to shelving, housing materials, and environmental mitigation strategies.	2026-2031	1. Implement at least three priority storage improvements in the Collections Room (upgraded shelving, archival quality containers, improved organization) to meet professional museum standards by 2031. 2. Rehouse at least 75% of at-risk or improperly stored artifacts inventoried into upgraded, professional-standard storage by December 2030, with documentation recorded in PastPerfect. 3. Use targeted mitigation strategies (buffering materials, microclimates, humidification/ dehumidification, improved airflow) to reduce the range of temperature and relative humidity fluctuations in storage areas by at least 10–15% by December 2031, based on data logger readings collected quarterly.	Staff
	Continue and enhance the collections inventory process to improve cataloguing accuracy, record completeness, and data consistency across the entire collection.	2026-2031	1. Review and correct catalogue records for at least 1,000 artifacts annually, ensuring alignment with AHS cataloguing standards and consistent metadata fields. 2. Digitize and upload at least 1,000 artifacts annually, including photographs and basic descriptive metadata. 3. Reduce cataloguing errors identified during the inventory process (e.g., incorrect locations, missing fields, duplicate records) by at least 20% annually, as demonstrated through quarterly spot-checks, following the implementation of annual staff and volunteer training.	Staff

Strategic Priority 2: Museum Education, Interpretation & Visitor Experience

Deliver high-quality, engaging and inclusive museum programming that encompasses interpretation, education, exhibitions, collections care, and visitor services that position Hillary House as a leading immersive heritage destination.

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Continue to enhance and effectively curate Hillary House collection and exhibitions.	Update interpretive plan, highlighting medical history, domestic life, and Aurora's evolution.	2026-2028	1. Complete and secure formal approval of the updated interpretive plan, reflecting the themes of medical history, domestic life, and Aurora's evolution by the Board. 2. Map all existing and planned exhibits to the three priority themes and achieve a minimum of 80% thematic alignment within the updated interpretive plan.	Staff
	Update exhibition plan 2027- 3031 including in-house exhibitions and hosting travelling exhibitions from other institutions.	2026-2027	1. Complete and obtain Board approval for the updated 2027–2031 Exhibition Plan by June 2027, ensuring it meets CMOG Exhibition Standard requirements. 2. Develop and publish a detailed annual exhibition schedule (themes, objectives, artifact needs, accessibility considerations) for each upcoming year by October 31 of the preceding year. 3. Secure at least one travelling exhibition partnership per year beginning in 2027, with agreements documented and aligned with the Exhibition Plan.	Staff
	Regularly review and revise museum policies to maintain compliance with the Standards for Community Museums in Ontario and support best practices.	2026-2031	1. Conduct a formal review of all museum-related policies annually and update at least one policy per year as needed, with Board approval. 2. Complete a compliance check of all relevant policies against current CMOG Standards and museum best practices by June 2027, documenting required updates and implementing 100% of identified changes by December 2031. 3. Provide updated policy orientation to 100% of staff and volunteers involved in collections and exhibitions within one month of any policy revision, with training completion documented.	Staff/ Board

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Improve interpretive content to reflect current research, inclusive narratives, and community relevance.	Develop standardized tour scripts and strengthen docent training to deliver consistent, inclusive, and engaging visitor experiences.	2026-2028	- Existing tour scripts reviewed, updated, and standardized to reflect current research and inclusive narratives by 2027. - At least 90% of staff and volunteers complete the standardized training program. - Achieve a 20% increase in visitor survey ratings related to “accuracy,” “inclusivity,” and “relevance” of interpretive content within 12 months of implementing updated scripts and training.	Staff
	Develop and implement hands-on, digital, and accessible interpretive resources, such as interactives and audio tours, to enhance visitor experience through technology-supported, inclusive interpretation.	2027-2031	- Launch at least six new digital or hands-on interactive elements (e.g., QR codes, audio stops, sensory kits, mini games) by 2031, with each meeting established accessibility and usability standards. - Achieve an average engagement rate of 60% or higher across all new interactives within 12 months of launch. - Collect qualitative feedback from at least 100 visitors through interviews, comment cards, or open-ended survey questions within 12 months of launching new interactives, with 75% of respondents describing the tools as enhancing their learning, understanding, or overall experience.	Staff
	Improve indoor and outdoor wayfinding and interpretive signage to support accessible, intuitive, and engaging visitor experiences.	2026-2029	- Complete a full audit of all interior and exterior wayfinding and interpretive signs and replace or update all the identified priority signage by 2027. - Achieve a 20% increase in positive qualitative feedback describing signage as “clear,” “helpful,” or “informative” through open-ended survey responses collected over the first year after installation. - Increase the percentage of visitors who report finding their way “easy” or “very easy” by 25% within 12 months of installing updated interior and exterior wayfinding signage, as measured through post-visit surveys and on-site feedback.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Refine and expand youth and adult education programs.	Develop and update curriculum-aligned school programs and outreach initiatives and build strong partnerships with local schools to support participation.	2026-2028	1. Update or create at least four curriculum-aligned education programs by 2027, each reviewed by at least two local educators for accuracy and relevance. 2. Pilot new programs with a minimum of two teachers and collect structured feedback, achieving 80% positive ratings on clarity, engagement, and curriculum alignment, with revisions completed within 90 days of feedback collection. 3. Increase the number of participating schools by 30% by 2028 through targeted outreach, advertising, and partnership-building.	Staff
	Develop youth and adult programming in consultation with the community and local groups that target under-reached audiences.	2026-2028	1. Engage at least two community groups or local organizations representing under-reached audiences by 2027, with documented input incorporated into program development. 2. Develop and launch at least two new programs specifically designed for under-reached audiences by 2028, each piloted with at least one partner group. 3. Increase participation from identified under-reached audiences by 25% within 12 months of launching the new programs, as measured through registration data and optional demographic self-identification.	Staff
	Establish ongoing community-based learning partnerships and multi-session programs for youth and adults, co-developed with local organizations, cultural groups, and subject-matter experts.	2026-2031	1. Formalize at least two learning partnerships with local organizations, cultural groups, or subject-matter experts by 2027, each with a documented collaboration plan. 2. Develop and deliver at least three multi-session youth or adult learning programs by 2028, with a minimum of 10 participants enrolled in each series. 3. Collect qualitative and quantitative feedback from at least 75% of participants in each program series, with 85% reporting increased knowledge, relevance, or connection to the content.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Expand digital preservation and public access to collections.	Implement AHS Digital Strategy 2025-2030 to assist with accessibility and preservation of the museum and collection.	2026-2030	1. Implement Goal 1 “Preserve History” from the AHS Digital Strategy by 2030. 2. Digitize and upload at least 1,000 artifacts to PastPerfect annually, including photographs and basic descriptive metadata. 3. Increase the number of digitized and accessibility enhanced collection items (e.g., descriptive text, captions, transcripts) by 100 items annually, ensuring compliance with AODA and WCAG 2.1 AA standards.	Staff
	Implement AHS Digital Strategy 2025-2030 to engage virtual audiences in exhibitions and curatorial content.	2026-2030	1. Implement Goal 2 “Engage Audiences” from the AHS Digital Strategy by 2030. 2. Develop and publish at least one virtual tour or online exhibit annually, each meeting AHS Digital Strategy accessibility and content standards. 3. Collect feedback from at least 100 users through embedded surveys or comment tools within 12 months of launch, with 80% reporting that the virtual content increased their understanding or connection to the site.	Staff
	Improve the museum’s digital and social media presence to support broader public access to collections and digital preservation initiatives.	2026-2030	1. Publish a minimum of 10 high-quality posts per month across core platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook), following a content calendar aligned with organizational priorities. 2. Increase total followers across all social media platforms by 25% within 12 months through targeted content, collaborations, and community engagement. 3. Achieve an average engagement rate of at least 3% per post (likes, comments, shares, saves), measured quarterly to track improvement.	Staff

Strategic Priority 3: Community Engagement, Partnerships & Profile

Enhance the role of Hillary House as a vibrant community hub by fostering meaningful partnerships, strengthening community connections, and creating opportunities for collaborative programming, shared learning, and civic engagement.

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Grow and strengthen partnerships and collaborative relationships to enhance exposure of Hillary House in the community.	Develop and formalize partnership agreements with current partners to ensure clear roles, expectations, and long-term successful collaboration.	2027	1. Standardized partnership agreement template developed by December 2026. 2. Formal partnership agreements completed with 100% of current partners by 2027. 3. Minimum of two documented engagement touchpoints per formalized partner annually, beginning in 2027.	Staff/Board
	Engage in proactive outreach to government, community, cultural, educational, private-sector, and healthcare organizations to identify and develop new partnership opportunities.	2026-2031	1. Conduct outreach to at least five new organizations across identified sectors annually. 2. Secure a minimum of three exploratory meetings with prospective partners annually. 3. Add one to two new qualified partnership leads to the partnership tracking list annually.	Staff/Board
	Collaborate with partner organizations to create and deliver innovative, community-relevant programs and content.	2026-2030	1. Formalize at least two learning partnerships with local organizations, cultural groups, or subject-matter experts by 2027, each with a documented collaboration plan. 2. Develop and deliver at least three new co-created programs or content pieces with partners by 2028. 3. Achieve a minimum of 150 cumulative participants across all collaboratively delivered programs annually.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Continue to participate in community events that will profile Hillary House.	Broaden outreach efforts by creating and deploying pop-up displays and exhibits in locations across Aurora, York Region, and beyond.	2026-2030	1. Deliver a minimum of one pop-up display or micro-exhibit annually across Aurora and York Region, beginning in 2027. 2. Secure at least three new host locations (e.g., libraries, community centres, businesses) for pop-up displays by 2027. 3. Achieve a cumulative audience reach of at least 1,000 people per year through pop-up exhibit placements, starting in 2027.	Staff
	Strengthen involvement in outreach events and strategically expand into new markets to enhance Hillary House's community profile.	2026-2028	1. Participate in at least five outreach events annually, including one in new markets, beginning in 2027. 2. Increase total outreach event audience reach by 15% year-over-year starting in 2027. 3. Collect a minimum of 25 new audience contacts or engagement interactions (e.g., sign-ups, QR scans, feedback cards) per year from outreach events, beginning in 2027.	Staff
	Develop and expand outreach presentations that highlight the history of Hillary House and strengthen its presence in the community.	2026-2027	1. Deliver a minimum of two outreach presentations annually that highlight the history and significance of Hillary House, beginning in 2027. 2. Increase total presentation audience reach by 10% year-over-year through expanded community and sector-specific offerings. 3. Develop and maintain a presentation catalogue of at least three distinct topics or formats by December 2026, with temporary topics annually to align with exhibitions.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Expand year-round inclusive, relevant programming that attracts diverse audiences and reflects community interests.	Enhance and promote intimate rental spaces at Hillary House for community groups, individuals, & businesses by improving facilities and increasing targeted outreach.	2026-2028	1. Increase rental inquiries for intimate spaces by 20% annually through targeted promotion, beginning in 2027. 2. Achieve a minimum 75% satisfaction rating from rental users regarding space quality and amenities by December 2027. 3. Increase annual rental revenue by 10% year-over-year starting in 2027.	Staff
	Broaden outdoor programming through new offerings such as picnics, markets, stargazing events, and garden activities to enhance year-round community engagement.	2026-2028	1. Launch at least two new outdoor programs annually (e.g., picnics, markets, stargazing, garden events) beginning in 2026. 2. Achieve a minimum total outdoor program attendance of 50 participants per year starting in 2027. 3. Secure at least two new community partners or vendors annually to support outdoor programming, beginning in 2027.	Staff
	Reimagine, update, and promote AHS membership packages to increase value, relevance, and community engagement.	2026-2028	1. Launch redesigned membership packages by September 2027, with updated benefits and pricing. 2. Increase total AHS membership enrollment by 10% within the first full year of the new packages. 3. Achieve a 70% renewal rate for redesigned membership packages by the end of 2028.	Board/Staff
	Participate in community events alongside aligned groups to increase visibility for Hillary House.	2026-2027	1. Participate in at least three community events annually alongside aligned groups, beginning in 2026. 2. Generate a minimum of 100 cumulative audience interactions per year at these events. 3. Document participation outcomes from all events each year, including estimated reach and basic engagement indicators.	Staff
	Launch an annual signature event that elevates Hillary House's profile and strengthens community engagement.	2026	1. Launch inaugural signature event(s) by October 2026 with a minimum attendance of 100 participants. 2. Achieve at least 80% participant satisfaction based on post-event feedback surveys each year. 3. Generate a minimum of \$5,000 in annual revenue or sponsorship support from the signature event(s) starting in 2027.	Board

Strategic Priority 4: Brand, Marketing & Community Awareness

Expand public awareness and visitation through a clear and compelling brand, insightful storytelling, and effective marketing and digital engagement that communicates the value and relevance of Hillary House offerings to diverse audiences.

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Distinguish and strengthen brand identity as a museum – Hillary House National Historic Site, the Koffler Museum of Medicine.	Identify community needs that align with Hillary House’s mission to inform the museum’s brand positioning.	2026-2028	1. Complete a community needs assessment by December 2026, identifying at least three mission-aligned gaps that can inform brand positioning. 2. Consult with a minimum of two community groups or stakeholders annually to validate identified needs and gather insight on brand relevance. 3. Produce an annual summary with at least three brand-positioning recommendations based on community needs and mission alignment.	Board
	Define and articulate Hillary House’s museum brand identity, including key messages, value statements, and narrative themes.	2026-2028	1. Develop a draft brand identity framework (key messages, value statements, narrative themes) by Q2 2027. 2. Validate the framework with at least 2 stakeholders or community groups by Q3 2027. 3. Finalize and approve the brand identity package for organizational use by Q1 2028.	Staff/Board
	Update all print and digital materials to reflect the unified Hillary House museum brand, ensuring consistent visual identity and messaging.	2027-2028	1. Complete an audit of all existing materials by Q4 2027 to identify items requiring brand updates. 2. Update at least 75% of priority print and digital materials with the new brand identity by Q1 2028. 3. Ensure 100% of newly produced materials from 2028 onward follow the updated brand guidelines.	Staff
	Implement the full transition from AHS branding to a clear Hillary House identity across signage, website, communications, and public-facing platforms.	2027-2029	1. Replace or update all public-facing signage, website elements, and core communications with the Hillary House NHS identity by the Q2 of 2028. 2. Remove outdated AHS branding from at least 90% of public-facing platforms and materials by Q2 2028. 3. Conduct an annual brand consistency review beginning in 2029 to ensure full and ongoing alignment with the Hillary House NHS identity.	Staff/Board

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Increase online visibility, grow digital engagement and enhance online learning opportunities.	Implement AHS Digital Strategy 2025-2030 to increase online visibility, grow digital engagement, and enhance online learning opportunities.	2026-2027	1. Implement Goal 2 “Engage Audiences” from the AHS Digital Strategy by 2030. 2. Increase total followers across all social media platforms by 25% annually through consistent and brand-aligned content. 3. Achieve an average engagement rate of at least 3% per post (likes, comments, shares, saves), measured quarterly to track improvement.	Staff
	Expand online learning opportunities by producing and publishing digital educational resources.	2026-2031	1. Develop and publish at least one virtual tour or online learning resource annually, each meeting AHS Digital Strategy accessibility and content standards. 2. Consult with at least one educator or community partner annually to ensure digital learning content aligns with curriculum or community needs. 3. Collect feedback from at least 100 users through embedded surveys or comment tools within 12 months of launch, with 80% reporting that the virtual content increased their understanding or connection to the site.	Staff
	Improve website usability and visibility through updates to structure, navigation, and SEO.	2026-2028	1. Complete a website usability and SEO audit by Q2 2027 to identify priority improvements. 2. Implement at least three high-impact website improvements (navigation, accessibility, SEO) by Q4 2027. 3. Increase website traffic by 10% annually starting in 2028 following implementation of updates.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Utilizing the national designation, leverage Hillary House as a must-visit heritage destination.	Strengthen tourism partnerships across Aurora, York Region, and Central Counties Tourism to expand Hillary House NHS's reach and visibility as a heritage destination.	2026-2028	1. Establish at least one new tourism partnership annually beginning in 2027. 2. Participate in at least two tourism partner meetings, roundtables, or networking events annually beginning in 2026. 3. Participate in a minimum of two joint tourism initiatives or promotional assets per year (e.g., itineraries, campaigns, cross-promotion).	Staff
	Promote Hillary House through coordinated tourism marketing with platforms such as Attractions Ontario, Destination Ontario, Central Counties Tourism, and Explore Aurora.	2026-2028	1. Secure inclusion in at least two tourism marketing platforms or campaigns each year beginning in 2026. 2. Increase online impressions or reach from tourism-related listings and campaigns by 20% annually. 3. Track referral traffic from tourism partner websites annually and aim for year-over-year growth beginning in 2027.	Staff
	Develop and promote compelling visitor experiences and packages (e.g., themed tours, seasonal programs, heritage experiences) to increase visitation and attract new audiences.	2027-2031	1. Launch at least two new or enhanced visitor experiences or packages annually starting in 2027. 2. Increase annual onsite visitation by 10% beginning in 2027 as new experiences roll out. 3. Achieve an average satisfaction rating of 4/5 or higher for new visitor experiences through post-visit surveys.	Staff

Strategic Priority 5: Governance, Financial Sustainability & Fundraising

Ensure the viability of the Aurora Historical Society through strong governance, prudent financial management, and diversified fundraising that supports both day-to-day operations and long-term strategic priorities.

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Maintain and enhance AHS organizational capacity by strengthening governance procedures, developing our board, and enhancing operational planning.	Review, update, and formalize governance policies and procedures to ensure clarity, accountability, and alignment with nonprofit best practices.	2027-2031	1. Complete a full review of all governance policies (e.g., bylaws, board handbook, conflict-of-interest policy, committee terms of reference) by Q4 2027. 2. Update or revise at least three governance documents per year based on identified gaps or emerging needs. 3. Achieve 100% board acknowledgement of updated governance policies.	Board
	Implement ongoing board development through training, recruitment, and evaluation to strengthen leadership capacity and organizational oversight.	2026-2031	1. Deliver a minimum of two board training sessions per year (e.g., governance, fundraising, DEI, museum standards). 2. Recruit new board members, as required, with skills aligned to strategic needs (e.g., finance, fundraising, legal, heritage). 3. Conduct an annual board self-evaluation with a target of 80% participation and documented action steps for improvement.	Board
	Strengthen operational planning by implementing annual work plans, performance tracking, and staff/volunteer capacity-building initiatives.	2026-2031	1. Develop and approve an annual organizational work plan by the start of each fiscal year, aligned with strategic priorities. 2. Implement quarterly progress reviews with staff and board committees, achieving at least 75% completion of planned tasks each quarter. 3. Provide a minimum of two professional development opportunities per year for staff and key volunteers to support operational excellence.	Board/staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Grow fundraising approaches with a focus on Hillary House preservation and restoration.	Develop and implement targeted annual and major gift fundraising campaign that support Hillary House preservation and restoration priorities.	2026-2031	1. Launch one bi-annual preservation-focused fundraising campaign per year, raising a minimum of \$25,000. 2. Secure at least three major gifts annually designated for preservation or restoration projects. 3. Increase the number of annual donors contributing to preservation by 10% year-over-year.	Board
	Increase grant applications to government, foundation, and heritage funding bodies to support conservation, restoration, and capital improvements at Hillary House.	2026-2031	1. Submit a minimum of two grant applications per year specifically tied to preservation, restoration, or capital needs. 2. Achieve a minimum 25% success rate on submitted preservation-related grant applications. 3. Secure at least one multi-year or high-value grant (e.g., \$50,000+) for restoration or conservation by the end of strategic cycle.	Staff/Board
	Develop diversified fundraising streams, including events, sponsorships, and community giving programs, to support ongoing preservation and restoration work.	2026-2031	1. Introduce or expand at least one fundraising event annually with a preservation or restoration focus. 2. Secure a minimum of three new corporate or community sponsorships per year tied to preservation initiatives. 3. Increase unrestricted community giving by 15% by 2031.	Board

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Improve operational efficiency through internal systems, staff capacity, and succession planning.	Review, streamline, and standardize internal systems and workflows to improve efficiency, consistency, and organizational effectiveness.	2027-2031	1. Complete a full audit of internal systems and workflows by the end of 2027, identifying gaps and inefficiencies. 2. Implement at least three systems or workflow improvements annually (e.g., digital filing, CRM updates, standardized procedures). 3. Ensure that all staff and volunteers are trained on updated systems and procedures within six months of implementation.	Staff/Board
	Enhance staff and volunteer capacity through training, role clarity, and cross-training to support operational resilience.	2026-2031	1. Provide a minimum of two professional development or skills-based training sessions per year for staff and key volunteers. 2. Update all staff and volunteer role descriptions annually, ensuring clarity of responsibilities and alignment with organizational needs. 3. Document all essential operational tasks in a shared manual by Q4 2026 to support continuity during staff or volunteer absences.	Staff/Board
	Create and maintain a succession plan for key staff, volunteer, and board roles to ensure continuity of operations and institutional knowledge.	2026-2031	1. Identify all mission-critical roles and document core responsibilities and workflows by Q4 of 2026. 2. Develop a formal succession plan and update it annually, including emergency coverage protocols. 3. Create and maintain a shared knowledge-transfer repository (manuals, checklists, process documents), with 100% of essential functions documented by the end 2031.	Staff/Board

Strategic Priority 6: Volunteerism

Expand and sustain a skilled, diverse, and engaged community of volunteers who are supported, valued, and meaningfully involved in delivering programs, governance, and organizational success.

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Increase the number of active volunteers to support programming, operations, and organizational growth.	Enhance volunteer recruitment through targeted outreach strategies that attract diverse, skilled volunteers.	2026-2031	1. Increase the active volunteer roster by 15% annually. 2. Attend or host four volunteer recruitment events annually. 3. Generate 10 qualified volunteer applicants annually.	Staff/Board
	Develop targeted volunteer roles that strengthen organizational capacity across programming and operations.	2026-2031	1. Refine volunteer role descriptions by 2027. 2. Ensure all roles include clear expectations and onboarding materials by 2027. 3. Maintain an up-to-date roster with at least one active volunteer assigned or available for each established volunteer role by year-end.	Staff
	Enhance the volunteer intake and onboarding experience to ensure new volunteers feel prepared, supported, and connected from day one.	2026-2031	1. Implement an updated intake and onboarding process by Q1 2027, including clear steps, timelines, and role-specific orientation materials. 2. Reduce the average time from initial inquiry to active volunteer placement to under four weeks, when applicable. 3. Provide all new volunteers with a welcome package and clear point-of-contact information by their first day.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Increase the visibility of volunteer opportunities by promoting them across multiple platforms and community channels.	Increase digital visibility of volunteer roles through targeted online promotion and consistent multi-platform messaging.	2026-2031	1. Post updated volunteer opportunities on five platforms annually. 2. Increase online volunteer inquiries by 20% year-over-year. 3. Publish one volunteer-focused social media post per month.	Staff
	Strengthen community awareness of volunteer opportunities through partnerships with schools, community groups, and local organizations.	2026-2031	1. Establish or renew three community partnerships annually that support volunteer promotion. 2. Deliver a minimum of two volunteer information sessions or presentations per year with partner organizations. 3. Receive 10 volunteer referrals annually through partner channels.	Staff
	Craft engaging volunteer messaging that highlights volunteer impact and encourages community participation.	2026-2031	1. Develop a standardized volunteer messaging toolkit by 2027, including key messages, impact statements, and visual assets. 2. Publish at least one volunteer impact story or spotlight each quarter across digital platforms. 3. Increase social media engagement on volunteer-related content by 10% year-over-year.	Staff

Objective	Action	Timeline	KPI	Responsibility
Enhance volunteer retention by providing meaningful training, support, and recognition.	Enhance volunteer retention by offering ongoing training and development opportunities that build skills and deepen engagement.	2026-2031	1. Provide a structured orientation for 100% of new volunteers within their first month. 2. Offer at least two volunteer training or skill-building sessions per year. 3. Conduct an annual training needs check-in with volunteers and implement at least one improvement based on their feedback.	Staff
	Strengthen volunteer recognition and appreciation to ensure volunteers feel valued, supported, and connected to the organization.	2026-2031	1. Host at least one annual volunteer appreciation event recognizing contributions and milestones. 2. Implement a milestone recognition system (e.g., hours, years of service, special contributions) by 2028. 3. Publish at least four volunteer spotlights per year across digital platforms or newsletters.	Staff
	Foster a supportive and inclusive volunteer culture where all volunteers feel valued, respected, and connected.	2026-2031	1. Conduct at least two volunteer feedback or listening sessions per year with a minimum of 10 participants in total to identify needs and strengthen inclusion. 2. Implement two volunteer feedback-driven improvements per year. 3. Increase the annual volunteer retention rate by 10% from baseline established in 2026 by the end of 2031.	Staff

Resource Implications

Effective implementation of this Strategic Plan requires thoughtful consideration of the staffing, financial, and organizational resources needed to support the AHS's work as steward of Hillary House. The following resource implications outline the capacity required to advance the Strategic Priorities over the next five years.

Staffing Capacity

Delivering the objectives and action items in this plan will rely on maintaining a stable core staff team supported by volunteers and the Board. Key staffing implications include:

- sustaining current staff positions to ensure continuity in operations, programming, and collections care
- leveraging volunteer capacity to support collections management, visitor services, events, and community engagement
- identifying opportunities for contract or project-based support for specialized initiatives
- ensuring adequate training and professional development to meet sector standards

Financial Resources

Advancing the Strategic Priorities will require a combination of existing operating funds and targeted new investment. Financial implications include:

- ongoing operational funding to support staffing, maintenance, and core museum functions
- capital, restoration, and maintenance funding to address heritage building needs and site improvements
- project-based funding for programming, exhibitions, and digital initiatives
- strengthened fundraising, sponsorship, and grant-seeking efforts to diversify revenue streams

Organizational Capacity

Successful implementation will depend on strong governance, clear roles, and effective internal systems. Organizational implications include:

- Board oversight and strategic leadership
- clear assignment of responsibility for action items across staff, volunteers, and committees
- annual work planning aligned with the Strategic Priorities
- monitoring and evaluation processes to track progress and adjust as needed

Together, these resource considerations ensure that the Strategic Plan is grounded in the realities of a small non-profit charitable organization operating a National Historic Site while positioning the AHS for sustainable growth and impact.



En plein air painting, 2023

Implementation & Evaluation Framework

Effective implementation of this Strategic Plan requires clear processes for monitoring progress, reviewing priorities, and reporting outcomes to the community and the Town of Aurora. The following framework outlines how the AHS will evaluate success over the five-year period of the plan.

Monitoring Progress

Progress on the Strategic Priorities, objectives, and action items will be monitored throughout the year by staff and the Board. The Responsibility column in the action framework identifies who is accountable for each item, ensuring clarity in oversight and execution. Responsibility for each action item is assigned to the Board and/or staff, with specific role allocations clarified annually through work plans. Staff will track progress using the KPIs identified in the plan, supported by internal documentation, visitor data, and program metrics.

Annual Review Process

The Strategic Plan will undergo a formal review each year to assess progress, identify emerging needs, and adjust timelines or actions as required. This review will include:

- assessment of progress toward KPIs
- evaluation of completed and ongoing action items
- identification of new opportunities or challenges
- alignment of annual work plans with the Strategic Priorities

The annual review ensures the plan remains responsive, realistic, and aligned with organizational capacity.

Reporting to Membership and the Town of Aurora

AHS will report annually on progress toward the Strategic Priorities through:

- an update to the membership at the Annual General Meeting
- an annual report summarizing achievements, challenges, and key metrics
- updates to the Town of Aurora as part of ongoing partnership and accountability

These reporting mechanisms ensure transparency and demonstrate the impact of AHS's stewardship of Hillary House.

Success Indicators

High-level indicators of success for this Strategic Plan include:

- strengthened stewardship and conservation of Hillary House
- increased community engagement and visitation
- enhanced programming, interpretation, and partnerships
- improved organizational sustainability and capacity
- progress toward KPIs identified in the action framework
- positive feedback from visitors, members, and partners

These indicators provide a clear picture of how the organization is advancing its mission and fulfilling its mandate over the life of the plan.

Approval

Approved by the Board of Directors of the Aurora Historical Society
June 15, 2026.



June 15, 2026

Al Lambert, Co-Chair, Board of Directors



June 15, 2026

Geoffrey Dawe, Co-Chair, Board of Directors



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Appendix A: Summary of 2024 AHS - Town of Aurora Public Consultations

Question 1: Are you a current resident of Aurora?

- 69.1% - Yes
- 30.9 – No

Question 2: How many times have you visited the Hillary House?

- 37.6% - 10+ times
- 37% - 1-5 times
- 14.5% - 0 times
- 10.9% - 5-10 times

Question 3: Are you a current member of the Aurora Historical Society?

- 74.5% - No
- 25.5 – Yes

Question 4: Indicate your level of support for the following options.

- Option 1 - The Town should acquire and preserve Hillary House: Strong support (147 agree vs. 18 disagree).
- Option 2 - The Town should not acquire Hillary House and instead encourage AHS to seek alternative solutions, including selling the property: Strong opposition (150 disagree vs. 15 agree).
- Option 3 – The Town should acquire Hillary House but repurpose or lease it for potential commercial use within OHT restrictions: Mostly opposed (131 disagree vs. 34 agree).
- Option 4 – The Town should acquire Hillary House and continue to provide programming: Strong support (142 agree vs. 23 disagree).
- Option 5 – The Town should provide additional funding to AHS to maintain and continue programming at Hillary House: Strong support (141 agree vs. 24 disagree).

Question 5. If you agree/strongly agree that the Town should acquire the Hillary House but repurpose or lease the property for a potential commercial use, what type of commercial use do you think is best? (ex: Restaurant, office etc.)

Most respondents do not support commercial repurposing of Hillary House. Among those who do, the strongest preferences lean toward restaurants, cafés/tea houses, and event-based uses that still allow public access and heritage appreciation.

1. Strong opposition to commercial use

A large portion of respondents explicitly rejected any commercial repurposing. Their reasons include:

- Hillary House should remain a museum and continue its heritage mandate.
- Commercial use is inappropriate for a National Historic Site.
- Concern that commercial tenants would not care for the heritage and that “history will be lost.”
- The house should remain a public entity, not a private business.
- Some respondents simply answered “No,” “N/A,” or “Not a good option,” indicating rejection of the premise.

2. Support for commercial use

Among those open to commercial use, several themes emerged.

Most frequently suggested commercial uses

- Restaurant (including upscale, Canadiana-themed, or pub-style)
- Café / tea house / coffee shop
- Event venue (weddings, showers, retirement parties, art shows, author visits)
- Hybrid museum + commercial model (museum restaurant, museum event space)

Less common but notable suggestions

- Office space (real estate, insurance, legal)
- Art studio or arts institution
- Retail
- Spa or B&B
- Community hall or meeting space
- Seasonal or special-occasion café rather than daily commercial use
- Wine/whisky tasting events as revenue generators
- Partnership model similar to the Armory building in Aurora
- Sell off land behind the house (one respondent)

3. Conditional or cautionary responses

A few respondents expressed openness but with caveats:

- Commercial use must not compromise the building’s integrity or violate OHT restrictions.

- Converting to a restaurant may be impractical due to building code requirements.
- Any use should encourage public engagement, not private office space.
- The house should remain intact even if leased.
- Some respondents referenced successful models elsewhere (e.g., Heintzman House, Liverpool estate).

4. Summary of themes by frequency

Most common responses (in order):

1. Keep as museum / no commercial use
2. Restaurant
3. Café / tea house
4. Event venue
5. Hybrid cultural uses (art classes, author visits, community rentals)
6. Office or retail (minority)
7. Other creative ideas (spa, B&B, arts institution)

Question 6. If you agree/strongly agree that Hillary House should be retained as a public use, what type of public use and programming do you think is best? (ex: The existing museum, or other options?)

Respondents express strong, consistent support for retaining Hillary House as a public historic house museum. The museum function is viewed as essential to preserving Aurora's heritage, identity, and sense of place. Many comments explicitly state "*existing museum*", "*keep it as it is*", or "*retain the museum function*."

1. Core Themes of Desired Public Use

A. Preservation and Continuation of the Existing Museum

The dominant theme is maintaining Hillary House as:

- A historic house museum
- A National Historic Site
- A place that preserves and interprets Aurora's early medical and domestic history

Representative comments:

- "The existing museum is an excellent use of the space."
- "Museum! What a valuable piece of history and part of the community."
- "Keep the existing museum and programming."

This reflects a strong desire to protect the building's heritage integrity while keeping it publicly accessible.

B. Expanded Educational Programming

Respondents strongly support more educational opportunities, especially for children, youth, and students. Desired programming includes:

- Curriculum-linked school visits and heritage tours
- Hands-on learning (e.g., pioneer-style activities, medical history demonstrations)
- Workshops for adults and students (crafts, research skills, archivist training)
- Partnerships with colleges/universities for research and training

Education is seen as a natural extension of the museum's mandate.

C. Community Events and Cultural Programming

Many respondents want Hillary House to serve as a community cultural hub, offering:

- Music concerts, readings, small performances
- Art exhibits and craft workshops
- Lecture series, history nights, reenactments
- Seasonal and themed events (teas, holiday programs, garden events)
- Partnerships with the Cultural Centre, Library, and Town Square

This reflects a desire for more vibrancy and public engagement on the site.

D. Rentals, Meeting Space, and Small Gatherings

Respondents frequently mention the need for small-scale rental and community-use spaces, including:

- Ballroom rentals for small events, weddings, and gatherings
- Meeting space for clubs, book groups, craft circles
- Social gatherings, teas, yoga, and art classes

This theme highlights a community need for intimate, character-rich venues.

E. Use of Grounds and Outbuildings

Respondents see untapped potential in the grounds and barn, suggesting:

- Outdoor events, picnics, markets, stargazing nights
- Garden programs and nature-based activities
- Converting the barn into an exhibition or programming space
- Using the grounds for camps and children's activities

This reflects interest in expanding capacity without altering the historic house.

F. Emphasis on Medical History

A notable theme is the desire to highlight the medical heritage of the site:

- Exhibits on the medical profession
- Interpretation of the doctor's office
- Special exhibitions on healthcare history

This is seen as a unique and differentiating strength of Hillary House.

G. Tea House or Café (Minor but Repeated Theme)

A smaller but recurring idea is adding:

- A tea room or tea house
- Regular afternoon tea service

This is often linked to the historic ambiance and existing tea programming.

H. Governance and Ownership Preferences

Several respondents comment on governance:

- Many believe the Town should acquire and maintain the property.
- Several prefer AHS to continue programming, even if the Town owns it.
- Some suggest public-private partnerships for upgrades.

This reflects a desire for stable funding and stewardship.

Taken together, the responses describe a clear vision:

Hillary House should remain a historic house museum while evolving into a more active, accessible, and community-oriented cultural and educational hub.

Key elements of this vision include:

- Preservation of heritage and museum identity
- Expanded educational and interpretive programming
- Increased community events and cultural activities
- Greater use of the grounds and barn
- Small-scale rentals and meeting spaces
- Enhanced focus on medical history
- Strong public ownership and stewardship

Question 7: Please provide any other comments.

Respondents overwhelmingly view Hillary House as an irreplaceable heritage asset that must be preserved, protected, and meaningfully activated for public benefit. While opinions differ on ownership and funding models, there is strong consensus that the site

should remain a museum, cultural space, and community gathering place, with expanded programming and improved infrastructure to ensure long-term sustainability.

1. Core Themes

A. Heritage Value and Emotional Significance

- Hillary House is described as a “treasure,” “heritage jewel,” “unique historical feature,” and a defining symbol of Aurora.
- Many respondents share personal memories and express deep emotional attachment.
- Strong belief that losing Hillary House would mean losing part of Aurora’s identity.

Implication: Any strategic plan must foreground heritage protection and articulate the cultural value of the site.

2. Ownership, Governance, and Stewardship Models

A. Support for Municipal Ownership

- Many note that most National Historic Sites in municipalities are municipally owned.
- Belief that the Town has a responsibility to protect designated heritage.
- Some see municipal ownership as the only way to “elevate” the site.

B. Support for AHS Stewardship with Municipal Funding

- Others trust the Aurora Historical Society’s expertise and want the Town to provide stable, long-term funding while AHS continues operations.
- Preference for a shared model similar to the Arboretum.

C. Opposition to Town Purchase

- Concerns about taxpayer burden, political influence, and competing municipal priorities.
- Fear that the Town may eventually sell the property in difficult financial times.

D. Alternative Models

- Suggestions include the Ontario Heritage Trust or Parks Canada as potential stewards.

Implication: Governance decisions must balance heritage protection, financial sustainability, and community trust.

3. Desired Uses and Programming Opportunities

A. Heritage Interpretation and Education

- Strong support for maintaining and expanding museum functions.

- Desire for more immersive, interactive, and thematic programming (e.g., history of medicine, period events, school programs).

B. Community and Cultural Uses

Suggestions include:

- Small weddings and private events
- Art shows, music, theatre, book launches
- Outdoor events and seasonal festivals
- Live-streamed cultural or historical content
- Partnerships with schools, universities, and medical faculties

C. Outdoor and Landscape Activation

- Landscaping to create usable event spaces.
- Meditation gardens, trail connections, and integration with nearby parks.
- Permaculture or herbalism gardens for educational use.

Implication: A diversified programming strategy can increase relevance, revenue, and community engagement.

4. Revenue Generation and Funding Ideas

A. Public Funding

- Federal and provincial heritage grants.
- Municipal capital support for major repairs.

B. Earned Revenue

- Event rentals (weddings, celebrations, corporate meetings).
- Film/TV location fees.
- Gift shop modernization (heritage toys, tea sets, local crafts).
- Café or small amenity space (suggested via adaptive reuse of the summer kitchen).

C. Partnerships and Sponsorships

- Collaborations with medical schools, arts organizations, local businesses.
- Sponsorships for gardens, events, or restoration projects.

D. Volunteer Mobilization

- Recruitment of retired tradespeople for maintenance.
- Expanded volunteer roles through improved outreach and social media.

Implication: A multi-stream revenue model is essential for long-term sustainability.

5. Infrastructure, Access, and Site Improvements

A. Parking and Access

- Parking is repeatedly cited as a barrier to events and rentals.

- Suggestions for access from Machell Ave or Water Well Lane.
- Desire to avoid removing mature trees.

B. Building Repairs and Upgrades

- Recognition that the structure needs significant investment.
- Calls for interior upgrades to support programming and visitor experience.

C. Site Enhancements

- Administrative building or gift shop addition.
- Trail connections to Fleury Park and the former waterworks area.

Implication: Infrastructure improvements are necessary to unlock programming and revenue potential.

6. Concerns and Cautions

A. Fear of Commercialization

- Strong opposition to condos, offices, or private redevelopment.
- Concern that commercialization would erase heritage value.

B. Financial Sustainability

- Worries about municipal spending and competing priorities (e.g., housing, basic services).
- Questions about whether the site is currently “properly managed.”

C. Need for a Clear Value Proposition

- Some respondents note the need for a compelling reason to visit.
- Limited hours and visibility reduce public engagement.

Implication: Communications and strategic planning must address financial transparency, value creation, and public trust.