



# Lindsborg Old Mill & Swedish Heritage Museum: Strategic Plan 2025-2030

## **Mission**

The Lindsborg Old Mill & Swedish Heritage Museum celebrates and preserves the pioneering spirit of the Smoky Valley by educating, entertaining, and building community across generations so that history comes to life.

## **Vision**

Those who support the Lindsborg Old Mill & Swedish Heritage Museum value not only the cultural legacy of the Smoky Valley area, but the significance of Swedish culture over time.

The museum's historic buildings and inviting green spaces showcase the artifacts, exhibits, and stories that reflect the rich tapestry of life in the Lindsborg area and the region. As a museum we will:

1. Preserve the cultural legacy of the Smoky Valley area from past to present.
2. Promote Lindsborg's passion for preserving and sharing its Swedish Heritage.
3. Educate the public with diverse historical and cultural perspectives of the world.



**Museum Grounds: 10 historic buildings  
(2 on the National Register) on 15 acres**



# Museum Overview

As the museum continues to grow to its full potential, it aims to fulfill the mission that serves the people of Lindsborg, the Smoky Valley, and our Swedish-American Heritage. In 2021, the Lindsborg Old Mill & Swedish Heritage Museum underwent a change in ownership and became a private nonprofit organization. As we continue to grow as a nonprofit, our goal is to serve our community in the long term. We have two buildings on the National Register of Historic Places and multiple buildings that represent our Smoky Valley history.

The Smoky Valley Roller Mill (a.k.a. Smoky Valley Roller Mills) was built in 1898 and is a full-size and fully functioning gradual reduction mill. Unlike a grist mill, which uses stones, a roller mill uses a series of corrugated and smooth steel rollers to grind grain. This type of mill, known as “the granddaddy of the modern mill” became important in the Smoky Valley with the introduction of hard winter wheat in the 1870s. The mill operated as a business until 1955, shipping flour across the U.S. and Europe. The mill was originally water-powered, using the river water to turn the turbines. Later, steam engines were added as a backup, followed by exclusive powering by electric motors.

Efforts to restore the mill to operating condition began in the 1960s and were completed in 1981. The National Register of Historic Places added the mill to their roster in 1972.

Our second National Register historic site is the Swedish Pavilion. Designed by Ferdinand Boberg, one of Sweden’s premier architects at the turn of the century, the Swedish Pavilion is the only one of Boberg’s several dozen international exposition buildings still in existence today. It is the only example of his work in the United States. It is also one of very few international buildings remaining from the 1904 St. Louis

World's Fair; only one other still exists. At the close of the Fair, the Swedish Pavilion was purchased by W.W. Thomas, U.S. Minister to Sweden and Norway, and presented to Bethany College in Lindsborg as a memorial to his friend Carl Swensson, who had died suddenly in February 1904. While on the Bethany Campus, Swedish artist and professor Birger Sandzén used the Pavilion as his studio. In 1969, the Swedish Pavilion was moved from Bethany College to the Old Mill Museum, and a partial restoration was completed. The building was entered on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. In 1976, King Carl XVI Gustaf rededicated the building to all Swedes and Swedish Americans during a personal visit to Lindsborg in the United States Bicentennial year.

In addition to the 1898 Flour Mill and the 1904 World's Fair Swedish Pavilion, several other historic structures are on the museum grounds:

- 1903 West Kentuck One-Room School – originally located between Lindsborg and McPherson.
- 1879 Lindsborg's Kansas Pacific/Union Pacific Railroad Depot – moved just a few blocks from original location.
- 1879 Academy Building– First public school in Lindsborg, and the first building at Bethany College.
- 1890 Erickson Brothers Workshop – local farm workshop where the Erickson brothers developed the first practical rotary telephone dial.
- 1869 Gold Prospector's Shop and Blacksmith Shop – originally located near Coronado Heights northwest of Lindsborg.
- 1869 "Sweadal", First County Courthouse – originally located southwest of Lindsborg.

- 1870 Homestead Cabin - Originally located southwest of Lindsborg, this home was one of the first above-ground structures in the area.

The museum is also home to:

- The Santa Fe Steam Engine #735 - Rebuilt in 1900, #735 is one of 46 train engines of its kind on display in the United States. It was given to the City of Hutchinson in 1950, then to Lindsborg in 1975.
- 1908 Dempster No. 9 windmill - Fully restored in 2025, it's a wonderful example of a typical farmstead windmill of the period.
- St. Paul's Lutheran Church chapel - Originally located near Mentor, St. Paul's was struck by a 1969 tornado and destroyed. Its recovered sanctuary interior was moved to museum grounds in one wing of the Swedish Pavilion.



# **Strategic Overview**

The Lindsborg Old Mill & Swedish Heritage Museum has five strategic goals to guide its work over the next five years:

- 1. Organizational Stability*
- 2. Buildings Prioritization*
- 3. Preservation of Our Cultural Heritage*
- 4. Community Building*
- 5. Diversified Programming*

These goals represent our staff, board of directors, partners, and benefactors' perseverance in building a museum that preserves our heritage and educates future generations.

## **Organizational Stability**

The museum achieves financial stability through partnerships and an active development plan established by a strong professional team.

1. Work towards financial stability by increasing and diversifying revenue.
  - a. Increase income through admissions, gift shop sales, workshops, and facility rentals.
  - b. Diversify income by increasing awareness, transparency, and partnerships.
    - o Create stable sources of foundational income by pursuing corporate sponsorships.

- Partner with local organizations to host events and exhibitions.
- c. Grow our endowment fund by \$250,000 in the next five years.
- 2. Work toward financial stability by decreasing unnecessary expenditures wherever possible.
- 3. Create yearly Development Plans that outline our goals to increase revenue from each income stream.

### **Buildings Prioritization**

The museum is actively reevaluating the ownership and management of the land and buildings. In so doing, the museum will prioritize and address necessary maintenance projects in a timely manner.

1. Identify and prioritize projects.
  - a. Address deferred maintenance.
  - b. Address ADA Compliance for museum buildings.
2. Reassess ownership of property and buildings.

### **Cultural Heritage**

The museum develops historical and cultural preservation through storytelling and genealogy. It is honoring the past while fostering inclusivity and education.

1. Develop historical and cultural preservation throughout exhibitions.
  - a. Honor the Swedish heritage of Little Sweden, USA and the Old Mill.
  - b. Develop the inclusive story of Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley.

2. Artifact and genealogy preservation.
  - a. Facilitate genealogy research.
  - b. Continue focus on the care of collections.

### **Community Building**

The museum seeks to foster community support by developing a strong identity and by being of service to a growing community in Lindsborg and the Smoky Valley. To that end, the museum wants to strengthen its image as a historical and cultural hub, and ultimately increase the size and involvement of the community.

1. Develop community support by developing a strong identity.
  - a. Strengthen our reputation by reviewing the museum's history.
  - b. Strengthen our image through our communications and marketing strategy.
2. Build a robust volunteer force.
3. Grow our memberships and friends of the museum group by at least 30%.

### **Diversified Programming**

The museum diversifies its offerings by continuously hosting temporary exhibitions and events developed in coordination with the community. It serves the local communities and increases tourism in the region.

1. Foster events that make the museum complex a key community space.
  - a. Review opportunities to host or co-host community events.
  - b. Increase and diversify workshops and events for the community.
2. Contribute to the efforts made to increase tourism in the region.



# Year-by-Year Milestones

**For Year One (2025): Objectives align with four of the strategic goals.**

## 1. Organizational Stability

- a. Conduct a feasibility study on turning the Swedish Pavilion into an events venue.
- b. Grow the Endowment Fund by \$50,000.
- c. Evaluate the campground and its impact on our financial stability.
- d. Create a year-one Development Plan.
- e. Increase the friends of the museum donor group by 6%.

## 2. Building Prioritization

- a. Complete structural repairs on the Swedish Pavilion and complete remaining fundraising available under the Community Service Program grant to go to later roof replacement (“Raise the Roof” campaign).
- b. Create a concept design for the exhibits in the Swedish Pavilion.
- c. Address ADA and Safety compliance updates to the main museum building and create family bathrooms.

### 3. Cultural Heritage

- a. Evaluate artifacts and their alignment to the museum mission.
- b. Accept artifact donations that fulfill our museum mission and vision.

### 4. Community Building

- a. Create a Development and Events Committee.
- b. Develop a membership Spotlight program (Member of the Month).
- c. Meet with community developers quarterly.

**For Year Two (2026): Objectives align with four of the strategic goals.**

1. Organizational Stability

- a. Work on the Swedish Pavilion as determined by the feasibility study.
- b. Increase the Friends of the Museum donor group by 6%.
- c. Grow the Endowment Fund by \$50,000.
- d. Create a year-two development plan.

2. Building Prioritization

- a. Complete “Raise the Roof” campaign to have necessary funds to replace the Swedish Pavilion roof.
- b. Safety Updates to Heritage Square
- c. Update the emergency plan in each building.

3. Cultural Heritage

- a. Develop an outdoor concept design for Heritage Square that tells the history of Lindsborg and Swedish American culture.
- b. Complete outdoor signage for Heritage Square.

4. Community Building

- a. Participate in community activities to promote the museum and to connect with others.
- b. Promote, grow, and sustain the museum’s volunteer program.

**For Year Three (2027): Objectives align with four of the strategic goals.**

1. Organizational Stability
  - a. Continue work on the Swedish Pavilion as determined by the feasibility study.
  - b. Grow the Endowment Fund by \$50,000.
  - c. Create a year-three development plan.
  - d. Grow Friends of the Museum by 6%.
2. Building Prioritization
  - a. Replace the roof of the Swedish Pavilion.
  - b. Make the necessary repairs for the hotel strip at Heritage Square.
3. Cultural Heritage
  - a. Create and implement an educational exhibit for the hotel strip.
  - b. Install a rotating exhibit hall in the main building.
    - Exhibit displays that are easy to rotate out each year.
    - Provide interactive exhibits that are geared towards diverse teaching methods - such as visual, auditory, reading/writing, tactile, and kinesthetic.
    - Create a welcoming space to hold programs.
4. Diversified Programming
  - a. Hold an event at the museum.
  - b. Increase Millfest attendance.

**For Year Four (2028): Objectives align with four of the strategic goals.**

1. Organizational Stability

- a. Complete all renovations and new construction on the Swedish Pavillion per the feasibility study results.
- b. Grow the Endowment Fund by \$50,000.
- c. Create a year-four development plan.
- d. Expand the Friends of the Museum group by 6%.

2. Building Prioritization

- a. Conduct necessary repairs on the Lindsborg Train Depot.
- b. Re-evaluate the train behind the depot.

3. Cultural Heritage

- a. Provide concept design for the Lindsborg Depot.
- b. Implement a new exhibit for the Lindsborg Depot.

4. Diversified Programming

- a. Create a Scandinavian Folk Art class.
- b. Collaborate with the Lindsborg Arts and Cultural Association on developing programs.

**For Year Five (2029): Objectives align with three of the strategic goals**

1. Organizational Stability
  - a. Rent out the Swedish Pavilion for private events per the results of the feasibility study.
  - b. Research new ways to diversify corporate and public funding sources.
  - c. Increase the Endowment Fund by \$50,000.
  - d. Create a year-five development plan.
  - e. Have a 6% increase in the Friends of the Museum donor group.
2. Building Prioritization
  - a. Perform any necessary repairs on the McPherson County Courthouse (Sweadal).
3. Cultural Heritage
  - a. Create a concept design for the McPherson County Courthouse exhibit in Heritage Square.
  - b. Implement the courthouse exhibit design.

# Museum Leadership

## Staff

Executive Director: Aubrey Wheeler

- [aubrey.wheeler@oldmillmuseum.org](mailto:aubrey.wheeler@oldmillmuseum.org)

Marketing and Communications Director: Adam Pracht

- [adam.pracht@oldmilmuseum.org](mailto:adam.pracht@oldmilmuseum.org)

Collections Manager: Lenora Lynam

- [lenora.lyman@oldmillmuseum.org](mailto:lenora.lyman@oldmillmuseum.org)

All museum staff may be reached by phone at [785-227-3595](tel:785-227-3595) or at [info@oldmillmuseum.org](mailto:info@oldmillmuseum.org).

## Board of Directors

**President:** Betty Amos

**Vice President:** *Currently vacant*

**Treasurer:** Trevor Whittaker

**Secretary:** Tim Stewart

## Committee Leadership

**Personnel:** Betty Amos

**Finance:** Trevor Whittaker

**Collections:** Collin Carlson, Tom & Marlysue Holmquist

**Exhibits:** Tim Stewart, Rachel Norlin-Chaput

**Buildings & Grounds:** Jerry Hammerton

**Events & Development:** Becky Anderson & Bill Olson

**Volunteers:** Kirsten Bruce & Chandra Cooper