



Strategic Plan

(Draft: January 28, 2024)

2024—2026

MotorCities National Heritage Area

www.motorcities.org



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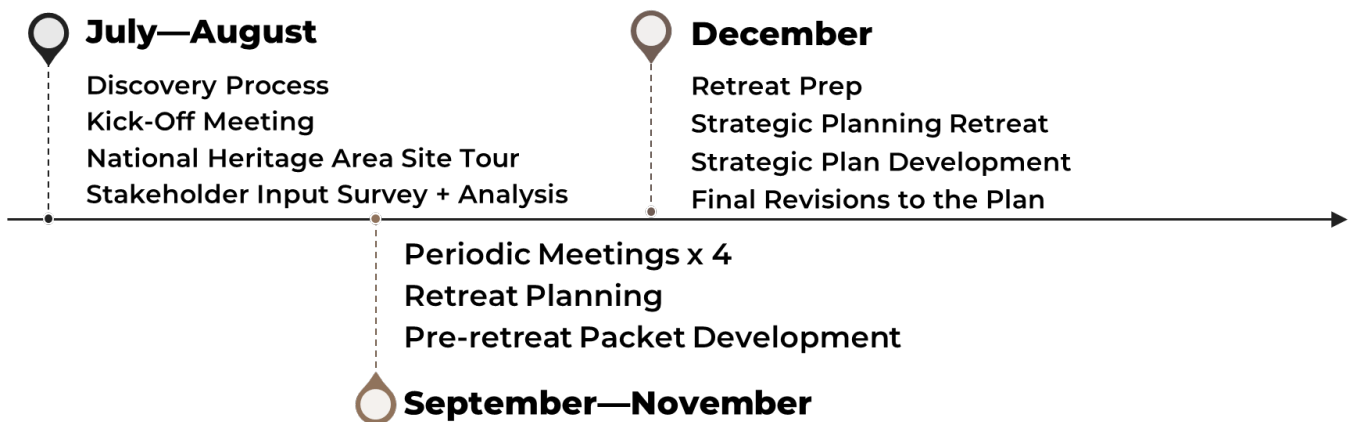
PLAN OVERVIEW

Background

In the summer of 2024, the board of directors of MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership (MotorCities) engaged in a planning process designed to set the stage for the strategic future of the organization. The strategic planning process was led by a planning committee of board members and staff who hired external consultants to gather input from key internal and external stakeholders, and plan for and facilitate committee meetings and a board retreat and document the process. MotorCities and interSector Partners, L3C conducted the strategic planning process from July—December 2023.

The Planning Process

The following outlines the planning process undertaken by MotorCities.



Decision-Making Guidance

Decision-making during the process was guided by a set of decision-making criteria. These criteria can also be used as new ideas and opportunities arise and will allow MotorCities to return to a set of questions that help it to decide – what is essential?

- ✓ Does this strategy help us to achieve our mission?
- ✓ Does this direction move people up the ladder of engagement and inspire individual action toward the issues we exist to address?
- ✓ Does this decision support systemic action toward the issues we exist to address?
- ✓ Does this option help build awareness of the issues we exist to address?
- ✓ Does this strategy or direction allow us to build on existing or develop new partnerships?
- ✓ Does this option help us to engage with marginalized populations?

- ✓ Does this decision support financial sustainability for MotorCities?
- ✓ Is the board on board with this direction? Is the staff excited by it?
- ✓ Will this direction or decision allow us to tell our story better?
- ✓ Is the opportunity cost of this idea acceptable?
- ✓ Do we have the runway to truly test this idea?
- ✓ Can we take a risk on this opportunity and withstand the hit if it doesn't go our way?

The Plan

The following plan outlines a three-year approach for how MotorCities will evolve toward achieving its vision and delivering on its mission. The strategic plan explains the process used to develop the plan, as well as details the goals and objectives the organization will focus on to implement the plan.



MOTORCITIES HISTORY

On November 6, 1998, Congress and the National Park Service recognized the significance of the American automobile and the people and places that shaped its history by creating the MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership. Throughout a region of 10,000 square miles in 16 Michigan counties with a population of more than six million people, we tell the stories of how this area put the world on wheels. These stories are our stories: the stories of a region where people grew up with the automobile; where its heritage lives in our neighborhoods to this day; and where an industry begun by a few hundred changed the world for millions.

Timeline

EARLY YEARS

- 1996 American automobile industry celebrates its centennial anniversary and a coalition rallies for designation of various automotive heritage landmarks.
- 1997 Feasibility study conducted by Wayne Counts Parks and Rec for National Park Service Heritage Area consideration.
- 1998 Signing of Automobile National Heritage Area Act by President Clinton; MotorCities becomes the 28th National Heritage Area in the country
- 2001 The General Management Plan is submitted to the Secretary of the Interior and the boundaries of the National Heritage Area are drawn.

MIDDLE YEARS

- 2002-2018 Implementation of the General Management Plan and its mission "to preserve, interpret and promote the automotive and labor heritage of Michigan by encouraging revitalization through conservation, increasing auto-related tourism, and developing and deploying educational and informational programs".

Sub-grants totaling \$1.5 million.

Number of grants awarded: 295.

Investments in programs: \$1.1 million.

- 2013 Evaluation conducted by U of M Dearborn
- 2014 Inauguration of Michigan Auto Heritage Day & Awards of Excellence
- 2014 MotorCities National Heritage Area is reauthorized by Congress

- 2015 Evaluation by Weststat completed and presented to Congress
- 2016 Economic Impact Report concludes a \$410 million impact annually and support of over 4,000 jobs by the MotorCities National Heritage Area
- 2018 20th Anniversary
- 2018 Revamped website launched

RECENT YEARS

- 2019 First of 14 Highway Signs Installed
2019 Ground broken for Fort Street Bridge Park
- 2020 Fort Street Bridge Park opens to the public
- 2021 MotorCities launches "Many Voices, One Story" webpage as part of its DEI efforts
- 2022 National Heritage Area Act passed by Congress, providing reauthorization for 15 years!
- 2023 National Heritage Area Act signed by President Biden; MotorCities celebrates 25 years!



MOTORCITIES'S FRAMEWORK

Vision

MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership inspires residents and visitors with an appreciation for how the automobile changed Michigan, the nation, and the world. This rich heritage will be a source of pride for our communities and a positive influence on our region's future.

Mission

The MotorCities National Heritage Area Partnership is a nonprofit corporation affiliated with the National Park Service. We preserve, interpret, and promote the region's rich automotive and labor heritage.

Values

- *Dedication* to the mission of preserving and promoting auto and labor heritage
- *Commitment* to partnerships, community, collaborations, and regional economic development
- *Transparency, integrity, and excellence* in all practices, policies, and programming
- *Creative visioning* of the past, present, and future of auto heritage
- *Responsible* stewardship of resources and the public trust



MotorCities Strengths, Competencies and Assets

MotorCities' s strengths, competencies, and assets are many and were identified throughout the process by key external stakeholders, board and staff members, and consultants. The board and staff considered these strengths when developing future strategies for MotorCities.



Strategic Filter for the Planning Process

In addition to its history, vision, mission, values, and strengths, the MotorCities board of directors and staff also utilized a strategic filter during the planning process. The filter was based on one that MotorCities typically uses when making major decisions for the organization with some additional criteria focused on future strategies.

- ✓ Is this decision consistent with our mission, vision, and values?
- ✓ Can we implement this with current resources (funding, staff, volunteers) or additional resources that we can access?
- ✓ Will this opportunity or idea break even, be revenue positive, or have a source of dedicated funding?
- ✓ Will this direction/decision reinforce an existing partnership or create a significant new partnership?
- ✓ Does this strategy help us distribute our resources over the full geographic area?
- ✓ Will it create focus on a significant constituent population? Does it support our DEIA focus?
- ✓ Will this allow us to innovate and be creative?
- ✓ Do we have enthusiasm for the idea among the staff and board of directors?

MOTORCITIES 2024—2026

Strategic Plan Goals

Building on its assets and core competencies, input from key internal and external stakeholders, and leveraging its 25-year history of delivering quality heritage area services, MotorCities established several pillars of its strategic plan and determined the goals it will focus on in support of these pillars during the three-year planning period:

Pillar I. Education, Revitalization, and Tourism

Goal I.A. Enhance Role in Preservation / Revitalization

Goal I.B. Leverage Role in Tourism Program Offerings

Goal I.C. Expand Educational Offerings

Pillar II. Partnerships

Goal II.A. Define and Formalize Partnerships

Goal II.B. Prioritize and Foster Sustainable Relationships

Pillar III. Increase Awareness and Engagement

Goal III.A. Expand Audiences of MotorCities Using Current Resources

Goal III.B. Demonstrate MotorCities' Role as both Leaders and Supporters of Our Programs

Goal III.C. Develop and Promote Relationship with National Park Service for Our Partners' Benefit

Goal III.D. Explore Feasibility of Visitor Center / Headquarters

Pillar IV. Operational Excellence

Goal IV.A. Embed Our Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Values into Our Work

Goal IV.B. Make MotorCities a Great Place to Work and Volunteer

Goal IV.C. Develop Staff Expansion Plan to Meet Goals of the Strategic Plan

Goal IV.D. Demonstrate Impact Programmatically and Economically

Pillar V. Financial Sustainability

Goal V.A. Develop and Build an Organizational Endowment

Goal V.B. Pursue and Secure State Funding

Goal V.C. Review and Assess Membership Program

Goals, Objectives & Rationale

The following section outlines the objectives for each goal, as well as the rationale for the goal and objectives as a result of stakeholder input and other analysis conducted during the planning process.

I. Education, Revitalization and Tourism



I.A.: Enhance Role in Preservation / Revitalization

Objectives in support of this goal

- I.A.1: Convene a meeting of nonprofit and government preservation groups this year (MHPN, SHPO, MEDC, etc.) to discuss how to enhance MotorCities' preservation role
- I.A.2: Review and evaluate grantmaking program including identifying what's working and where changes are possible
- I.A.3: Explore opportunities to increase funds allocated to grantmaking through matching funds
- I.A.4: Highlight completion of grant programs via video storytelling within six months after grants conclude

Process research and input in support of the goal area

During the stakeholder input phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that provided guidance that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Staff expressed desire to refocus efforts on the "three-legged stool" which is the foundation of MotorCities' programming
- Stakeholder feedback that the grant program can be leveraged to help tell MotorCities' story and that of automotive history preservation
- Desire to step into and own MotorCities' role among preservation groups

I. Education, Revitalization and Tourism

I.B: Leverage Role in Tourism Program Offerings



Objectives in support of this goal

- I.B.1: Develop and launch “Day in Motorcity” itinerary program rolling out one itinerary per quarter
- I.B.2. Support “Day in Motorcity” itinerary program through blog posts (like Great Michigan Roadtrip) and social media quarterly as aligned with itinerary roll-outs
- I.B.3: Secure access to Downtown Detroit Partnership kiosks for MotorCities materials
- I.B.4: Explore feasibility of kiosks or mobile exhibits in public areas such as airports

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board’s direction for this goal area:

- A visitors center concept may not be feasible, but mobile exhibits/kiosks could be a good option
- Many tourism information locations exist; how can MotorCities leverage existing tourism assets to spread the work about the heritage area?

I. Education, Revitalization and Tourism



I.C. Expand Educational Offerings

Objectives in support of this goal

- I.C.1: Find ways to expand on existing programs like Many Voices, One Story; create plans for expanding reach of these programs
- I.C.2: Create short (1 minute) interview program with professionals (museum, historic preservation, engineering, and other related/adjacent professions), and roll out one per month
- I.C.3: Increase promotion of partner education programs with 3-4 new partner program highlights per year

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Short, digestible videos to engage younger audiences
- Desire to leverage technology in outreach and education
- MotorCities has good programming; how can we grow it through program extensions or getting it in front of more people
- Partners have programming that supports our mission; make sure to promote it especially to attract diverse audiences

II. Partnerships



II.A.: Define and Formalize Partnerships

Objectives in support of this goal

- II.A.1: Establish partnership categories
- II.A.2: Prioritize the categories based on their organizational potential impacts and their alignment with our goals
- II.A.3: Establish focus groups to discuss and benefits of each category, partnership agreements and establish agreements

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Partner categories may include: NPS as part of NHA system (+ all other funders), passport sites & brochure locations, programmatic partners (like MEDC, SHPO, MNA, MHPN, MMA, MI Historical Society, MI America250, UAW, Henry Ford Heritage Association, educational institutions, DEIA organizations, economic development), MotorCities grant recipients, Alliance of National Heritage Areas
- Partners are struggling to participate fully as resources are constrained; how can MotorCities make engagement clear and easy?
- NPS connection is seen as adding credibility by those who understand it; how can this connection be clarified and highlighted?

II. Partnerships



II.B. Prioritize and Foster Sustainable Relationships

Objectives in support of this plan area

- II.B.1: Evaluate programmatic partners to determine if a formal agreement is necessary
- II.B.2: Implement benefits of each partnership level for partners and MotorCities

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- MotorCities can be seen as a competitor for scarce resources; how to develop relationships of abundance vs. competition?
- Consider creative ways to connect with partners and build in mutual accountability
- Build on relationships through annual, in-person engagement alongside virtual content
- Consider establishing peer groups led by MotorCities (comms/marketing, development, etc.)



III. Increase Awareness and Engagement

III.A. Expand Audiences of MotorCities Using Current Resources



Objectives in support of this plan area

- III.A.1: Explore National Park Foundation Technology and Innovation arm for grants re: new tech, data analytics and ways to connect staff and visitors
- III.A.2: Create a plan for repackaging/reusing current stories for other platforms or in other places
- III.A.3: Attend meetings and events to reach new audiences; train board members in a speakers' bureau model to attend and present to at least one new audience per person, per year
- III.A.4: Increase engagement with MotorCities social media content by 15% annually

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Opportunities to present to service clubs, professional organizations, libraries, educational organizations, EMU, Kettering, Autorama, economic development organizations, UAWs; could there be funding for this?
- Effective use of social media has amplified MotorCities' reach, and more is possible
- Brand is not recognizable to a broad audience



III. Increase Awareness and Engagement

III.B. Demonstrate MotorCities' Role as both a Leader and Supporter of Our Programs



Objectives in support of this plan area

III.B.1: Directly highlight our role when we promote others via MotorCities “did you know” to demonstrate specific projects;

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board’s direction for this goal area:

- Determine how MotorCities can differentiate from its partner organizations while also promoting them
- Determine if it’s MotorCities role to be visible or make others visible

III. Increase Awareness and Engagement

III.C. Develop and Promote Relationship with National Park Service for Partner Benefit



Objectives in support of this plan area

- III.C.1: Explore benefits of new national heritage system brand
- III.C.2: Develop new passports and brochure for reprinting and distribution
- III.C.3: Complete the highway sign project

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board’s direction for this goal area:

- There’s a feeling the organization is flying under the radar
- NPS connection is an opportunity
- NPS connection cited as adding credibility by those who understand it

III. Increase Awareness and Engagement



III.D. Explore Feasibility of Visitor Center / Headquarters

Objectives in support of this plan area

- III.D.1: Determine what is needed by MotorCities in terms of office space, meeting space, program space, and storage space
- III.D.2: Explore potential strategic locations for MotorCities to be located
- III.D.3: Determine the feasibility of a physical location for MotorCities offices and the potential of that being located in a new or part of an existing visitor center

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Ongoing conversation about whether MotorCities should/could open a Visitor Center needs to be resolved fully one way or the other
- Staff offices are currently at a co-working facility that may not be the best long-term option for the organization
- What would it mean for MotorCities to have a home – not just a physical location or a “house,” but a home?
- Visitor Centers are very expensive, hard to staff, and may not be the right fit for MotorCities; consider mobile options instead



**Entering
MotorCities National
Heritage Area**

IV. Operational Excellence



IV.A. Leverage DEIA into Every Aspect of Our Work

Objectives in support of this plan area

IV.A.1: Review impacts of DEIA work since implementation in 2020

IV.A.2: Review all existing policies and procedures to ensure DEIA is properly integrated

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- DEIA are organizational priorities and should show up in all aspects of MotorCities internal and external work
- Embedding DEIA into policies and practices is a top organizational priority



IV. Operational Excellence

IV.B. Make MotorCities a Great Place to Work and Volunteer



Objectives in support of this plan area

- IV.B.1: Build in 10-15 minutes of best practices training and discussion at each board meeting to build capacity and to deliver on goals in the strategic plan (e.g. partner highlight, DEIA topics, financial sustainability, advocacy)
- IV.B.2: Improve board participation
- IV.B.3: Update human resources and staff review procedures through a committee of the board of directors

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Board development activities can be integrated into board meetings or offered as stand-alone sessions
- Board members want to challenge themselves to become a best-in-class board
- MotorCities is moving into a mature nonprofit lifecycle stage, and building capacity through board development, policies, procedures, and practices are paramount to this stage

IV. Operational Excellence

IV.C. Develop Staff Expansion Plan to Meet Goals of the Strategic Plan



Objectives in support of this plan area

IV.C.1: Analyze current staff workload and any gaps to meet current operational or programmatic needs

IV.C.2: Analyze *additional* staff and volunteer needs to meet the goals outlined in the strategic plan

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Strategic plan implementation can lead to expanded staffing needs
- Current staff are at max capacity and additional work will require additional FTEs
- To expand fundraising efforts toward financial sustainability, MotorCities will need to hire fundraising staff
- What can be done to increase bench strength and plan for staff successions either planned or emergency?

IV. Operational Excellence

IV.D. Demonstrate Impact Programmatically and Economically



Objectives in support of this plan area

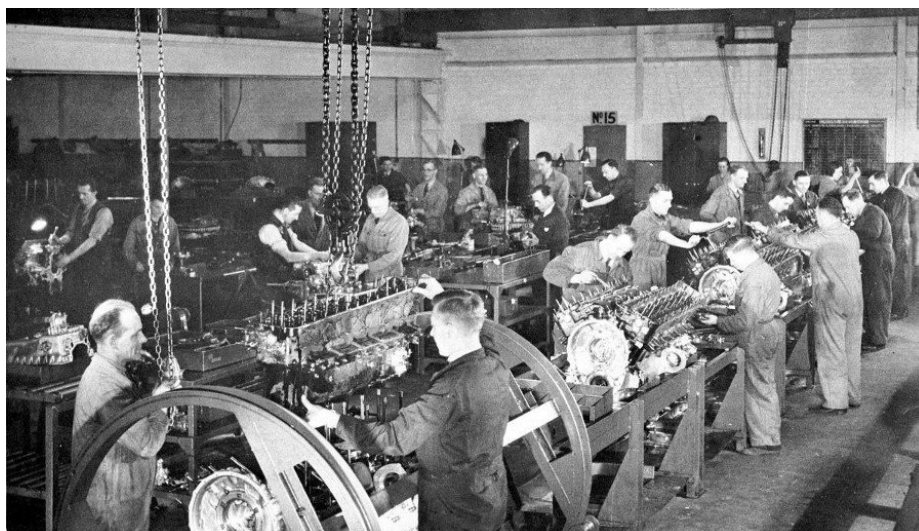
IV.D.1: Analyze whether to update economic impact statement

IV.D.2: Revisit and update program impact instruments as compared to NPS needs

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- MotorCities should use specific examples to show economic impact
- Program evaluation is an evolving opportunity; what is the MotorCities Theory of Change and how can measurement and evaluation demonstrate movement toward achieving impact?



V. Financial Sustainability



V.A. Develop and Build an Organizational Endowment

Objectives in support of this plan area

V.A.1: Develop 3-, 10-, and 20-year goals for the endowment

V.A.2. Develop policies and procedures for an endowment

V.A.3. Raise or allocate \$10,000 to open an endowment fund and utilize a match challenge to double the amount

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Unrestricted funding is highly desirable
- Seeking additional sources of contributed income may put MotorCities in direct competition with partner organizations; an endowment would be less of an issue
- Need to ensure if the federal funding goes away, we'd be okay

V. Financial Sustainability



V.B. Pursue and Secure State Funding

Objectives in support of this plan area

- V.B.1: State Funding Working Group analyzes opportunities in the current state legislature
- V.B.2: State Funding Working Group analyzes opportunities in the executive branch's budget
- V.B.3: Assess feasibility of a contracted lobbyist
- V.B.4. Clearly identify board roles and responsibilities in the legislative process

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Bill is scheduled to be introduced in February, voted on in July
- State tax funding is highly desirable
- Concerns about federal "whims" and changing political tides that create a threat to funding; note: would this also hold true with state funding
- Federal funding does not provide as much revenue as MotorCities needs to fully realize its mission

V. Financial Sustainability



V.C. Review and Assess Membership Program

Objectives in support of this plan area

V.C.1: Survey members about their experiences and the value they receive from membership

V.C.2: Analyze current membership program vs donor program in light of best practices and engagement with our members

V.C.3: Continue to set and communicate the annual member/donor goals for both number of members and funding from memberships

Process research and input in support of this goal area

During the stakeholder input process phase of the planning process, data and information were gathered that helped to set the board's direction for this goal area:

- Membership funds are unrestricted and much needed by MotorCities
- Is our community “members” or “supporters”? Find out what resonates more with current members
- Membership supports all aspects of MotorCities from financial sustainability to awareness