

# *THOMASVILLE LANDMARKS*

## *STRATEGIC PLANNING*



*Strategic Planning Retreat  
February 7, 2008*

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

The following report documents a strategic planning retreat held by the Board and staff of Thomasville Landmarks at Myrtlewood Lodge on February 7. The products of the retreat were a slightly amended mission statement, a list of organizational strengths and weakness and identification of six priority goals for the organization. The report does not elaborate on the results but, instead, tries to accurately record the decisions made by the board.

In identifying follow up responsibilities for each goal it must be noted that there are many action items identified to be accomplished prior to the May Board meeting.

## ***MISSION***

The mission of Thomasville Landmarks currently reads:

“To protect, preserve and promote the history, architecture and heritage of Thomasville and Thomas County.”

There was discussion concerning this statement and a strong consensus that the statement accurately reflected the activities and purposes of the organization. There was one point of discussion concerning the geographic focus of the mission statement. After brief discussion, especially concerning whether the question of geographic focus had already been addressed in a previous rewriting of the mission statement, the following amendment was made and agreed to by all attending (*italics added*):

**“To protect, preserve and promote the history, architecture and heritage of Thomasville and *the Thomas County area.*”**

The newsletter and other uses of the mission statement should be changed immediately to reflect this change

## ***STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES***

Prior to initiating a discussion of the most important priorities of the organization, time was spent listing the relative strengths and weaknesses of Thomasville Landmarks. Time was allowed for brief discussion of items that engendered disagreement or needed clarification.

The list of strengths reflects the organization's strong history and some of the current programs and efforts. The list of weaknesses reflects some concern over recent trends or current circumstances. Inherent in the list of weaknesses is recognition that the future of Thomasville Landmarks is not assured because of its history of accomplishments.

### ***Strengths***

Thomasville Landmarks (TL) enjoys a high profile in the community  
TL continues to get recognition for its efforts  
The organization has a 40 year history of accomplishments  
Warren Avenue project was a success  
TL has accomplished several important preservation victories over time  
Advocacy for downtown revitalization is an important accomplishment  
Membership base is strong  
TL has good staff in place  
The Heritage Education program is successful  
TL has a recognized awards program  
The wisdom of experience is part of TL's success  
TL has a working relationship with the city government  
TL has a stable funding base  
TL has always had good board leadership

### ***Weaknesses***

Membership numbers have declined  
Need to improve relationship with city government  
There are questions in the community about TL's role  
TL has become complacent  
There is a need to improve public relations efforts  
The volunteer base for TL is shrinking  
There is more competition for support within the community  
Some question the lasting impact of specific projects and programs  
There is a current lack of focus, priority and understanding of mission  
Board recruitment and succession of leadership needs improvement

## **GOALS**

After considering the Mission of Thomasville Landmarks and discussing its strengths and weaknesses, participants were asked to generate answers to the following question:

*What does Thomasville Landmarks need to accomplish over the next three years in order to better fulfill its mission?*

The following answers to that question forms the basis for setting priorities for the organization. The list was generated by each participant taking turns in sharing items from their own list until all of the ideas were recorded. Time was spent clarifying items on the large list and discussing possible duplicates. The following items represent the consolidated list of potential goals for Thomasville Landmarks.

- **Develop a program for small, historic churches**
- **Develop another premier project for Thomasville Landmarks (like the Warren Ave. project)**
- **Establish a more formal, stronger relationship with city government (including advocacy for a planner position)**
- **Expand Thomasville's historic districts**
- **Increase the membership base**
- **Develop and promote incentives for buyers of historic property**
- **Use and empower the board to represent the organization in the community**
- **Educate the community (esp. its leaders) more about historic preservation**
- **Get involved in the smart growth committee**
- **Focus more efforts on public relations**
- **Publish a book on Landmark's accomplishments**
- **Expand our presence out of Thomasville and Thomas County**
- **Develop an intervention policy to improve reaction time to preservation emergencies**
- **Secure future funding (also institute good fiscal management)**

- **Recruit more volunteers**
- **Increase capacity of Thomasville Landmarks in order to meet community needs and expectations**
- **Decide the future of the Hardy-Bryan House**
- **Improve business practices within the office**
- **Utilize the existing line of credit**
- **Work with hospital for more sensitive expansion**
- **Be more visible at city council, planning and zoning meetings**
- **Have more board participation in the membership activities**
- **Establish a land bank**
- **Establish an easement program**
- **Conduct a new historic resources survey for Thomasville**
- **Recruit former board members back to the board**
- **Incorporate strategic planning into annual calendar and board meetings**
- **Address the need for ongoing maintenance with community preservation projects**
- **Establish an architectural salvage program**
- **Establish a preservation trades and techniques program**
- **Develop partnerships for low income housing through preservation**
- **Be more involved in zoning issues**
- **Re-examine the community preservation program.**

## ***PRIORITY GOALS***

Strategic planning, at its core, is setting priorities. Every nonprofit organization faces the task of mediating between the abundance of good ideas and pressing needs on the one hand, and limited resources on the other. There are not enough people, not enough time nor enough money to accomplish everything that is possible for any organization, including Thomasville Landmarks.

Working from the list of potential goals, participants in the retreat were asked to individually choose the 5 highest priorities from among the list. Each individual was further asked to give weight to their selections, ranking them from Most to Least important. The resulting weighted voting system resulted in 6 Priority Goals being distinguished from the list. Each of those goals was, in turn, discussed by the group with the aim of identifying a road map to help realize the intent of each of the priority goals.

The following section summarizes the discussion of each of the priority goals in order of their rank.

### ***Develop another premier project for Thomasville Landmarks***

*What criteria should be used in developing a premier project for Thomasville Landmarks?*

Highly visible

Support from the public/public sector

Identifiable as a Landmarks program (branding)

Has an “impact”

Could attract funding

Fit within the mission of Thomasville Landmarks

Could include activities other than rehabilitation

Positive image

Scalable (could lead to more of the same kind of activity)

*Some possible programs that might meet the criteria:*

Tree program

Historic Survey

Work inside existing historic districts

*How to identify the right program:*

Solicit ideas from Board, membership, staff (**Engage in this activity through the Derby Party**)

Vet those ideas: Staff and Executive Committee make a shortlist, apply criteria and present to full Board **Deadline for presentation to full Board: May Board Meeting**

## ***Increase the membership base***

*What is the goal for membership growth?*

Highest membership total for Thomasville Landmarks: 800

Current membership: 350

**Goal for membership in 2011: 700**

*Who is responsible for meeting this goal?*

**Membership Committee and Development Director**

*What are some strategies for increasing membership?*

Reach out to lapsed members

Involve the Board more in recruitment

Strengthen one-to-one and word of mouth recruitment

Evaluate all projects for their membership recruitment potential

Develop materials that can be used by board and friends of Landmarks

*What changes are needed to current efforts?*

Need better software

Need a more accurate and usable database

## ***Expand Thomasville's historic districts***

*What is being expanded?*

It is proposed that new districts be added to Thomasville's existing local and National Register listed districts and that new boundaries be drawn that would provide local design review (through historic overlay or new conservation districts) of a large, contiguous area of central Thomasville.

*Who is responsible for meeting this goal?*

**Historic District Task Force (including staff)**

*How will this be accomplished?*

By generating community and neighborhood support

Staff outreach to neighborhood leaders

Empower community and neighborhood leaders to be advocates for expansion

Provide education to realtors on benefits of historic district protection

By education of City Council and City Legal staff

*Who needs to be involved?*

The full Board of Thomasville Landmarks

**By 2011 have the area delineated on the attached map be protected by historic district designation**

### ***Decide the future of the Hardy-Bryan House***

*Who is responsible for meeting this goal?*

**The Hardy-Bryan House Committee**

*What are the issues to be addressed in deciding the future of the Hardy-Bryan House?*

Protecting the history of the house

Dealing with the community's association of the house with Thomasville Landmarks

Understanding Landmark's investment in the property

What liability is associated with the property or its disposition?

*What are the primary options for the Hardy-Bryan House?*

Keep things as they are

Keep the house as headquarters but reprogram the space

Keep the house as office and special event rental

Rent the house to one tenant

Rent a portion of the house, while retaining space for an office

Sell the house

**A recommendation concerning the use of space in the house for Landmarks staff will be made by the Hardy-Bryan House Committee at the May Board meeting.**

## ***Focus more efforts on public relations***

*Who is responsible for meeting this goal?*

**Public Relations Committee**

*What is currently being done for public relations?*

Executive Director prepares press releases

Executive Director edits the quarterly newsletter

Presentations to community groups (primarily Ex. Dir.)

Maintain web site (primarily Ex. Dir.)

Solicit sponsorships for events and advertising for newsletter

*What are some short term ideas for improving public relations?*

Set up presentation on preservation with Realtor group (Ben and Janet to lead)  
(also ties in to historic district expansion goal)

Let other community groups know that the organization is available for presentations

Build on the good support of the newspaper for more stories or regular feature

Look at strategies for membership development for overlap with this goal

*What are longer term needs for improving public relations?*

Need to address the workload capacity of the Executive Director in this area

Evaluate existing materials (brochures, etc.), logo and website for ways to improve

Explore production of an annual report of accomplishments

## ***Establish a more formal, stronger relationship with city government***

*Who is responsible for meeting this goal?*

**A new Government Relations Committee should be established**

**Sharlene Cannon proposed as chair**

**Executive Committee must first define the responsibility of the Government Relations Committee**

***By the April Executive Committee meeting the Ex. Comm. will have finished its work on defining the scope of the new Government Relations Committee.***

*How will success be measured?*

Successful completion of the historic district expansion goal will be a good measure of success

*What are some items for the Executive Committee to consider when defining the responsibilities of the Government Relations Committee?*

Increase involvement with Smart Growth Committee

Concentrate on working with Max Beverly and Steven Sykes

Increase advocacy and presence of Thomasville Landmarks before City Council and City Review Boards

Consider complementary memberships to City and County Council members

Question of best way to educate City Council

Include Planning and Zoning Commission in efforts

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Map of proposed historic district for Thomasville

Appendix 2: List of current committees for Thomasville Landmarks

