

LAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

The year 2005 was exceptionally productive for the Lakewood Historical Society. Members actively pursued Society goals to develop a Long Range Plan, recruit new members, present programs of historic interest, promote and preserve Lakewood history and continue the current focus, in conjunction with our contracted Museum Specialist, to establish a local history museum and fulfill our commitment to the City of Lakewood for Lodging Tax funds received in 2005. Highlights of the year 2005 are summarized below.

Lodging Tax Grant Applications

The Society prepared and submitted an application to the City of Lakewood in October 2004 for an award of Lodging Tax funds for disbursement and use in 2005. The \$25,000 request was granted, which allowed the Board to aggressively pursue the activities described in this Annual Report, the fruition of which will result in a new history museum and increased tourism.

The Society submitted a second application to the City in October 2005 for a \$50,000 Lodging Tax grant (awarded in 2006) to further the activities underway. Recommended by the Advisory Board and approved by the City Council in December, the funds will be used to finalize the options for a local history museum, present those options to the Society Board for action, prepare a fund raising plan predicated on the startup of a new museum, and help expand and promote the programs outlined in this report.

Membership Goals and Development

The Board approved a membership expansion plan, adding two new categories and goals for an aggressive membership drive. The Board recognizes that new, active members will bring vitality and new connections, which are critical in the support of a new museum and a successful fundraising campaign. An emphasis will be placed on gaining support from the business and corporate community as well.

Newsletter

The 3rd Quarter saw the revival of a newly designed and expanded Historical Society Newsletter that is being mailed to members bimonthly. The first few issues have also been mailed to various local businesses and others within the community. The newsletter format is still evolving and the editor is looking forward to contributions of information and articles from and by our members. The next Lakewood Historical Society newsletter will be mailed in February 2006.

Programs

The Program Committee presented six interesting programs in 2005 on the history of familiar places, beginning in January with old slides of Mt. Rainier. Subsequent programs included the histories of the Steilacoom Boulevard Fire Station, Little Church on the Prairie, Tacoma Golf and Country Club (video presentation), and, a grand finale in October, with a history of the Lakewood Ice Arena on Lake Steilacoom presented by the former arena manager and professional skaters. The Annual Meeting program was festive with a musical presentation by "A Class Act." Society programs are normally held at the Lakewood Library on the third Tuesday of the month and are open to the general public at no charge.

Special events held during the year included an April antique display and sale at Lakewood Gardens and concluded with the promotion and sale of the newly published "IMAGES OF AMERICA – LAKEWOOD," a photo history book compiled and written by Society members Steve Dunkelberger and Walter Neary, with Society support and historical records and photos shared by Society members and other longtime Lakewood residents.

2006 Programs and SummerFest

Programs being planned for 2006 will include 4-6 programs on local history, a special program for Pierce County History Month in May, and other new programming. The Society intends to seek grant funding for programs of historical interest to Society members, the community and to visitors from surrounding areas. The Society plans to participate in Lakewood's 2006 SummerFest activities and has a representative on the Planning Committee for the June event.

Oral History 2006 Program

Two Society members attended a training program in November as the first step toward collecting oral histories in and about Lakewood. They hope to recruit other volunteers, Society members and others, to be trained to assist in the collection and preservation of local oral histories.

Partnerships and Outreach Programs

The Society expects to begin a public relations outreach program in 2006 that will strengthen ties with other Lakewood organizations, schools and community groups. Society representatives hope to visit various groups to share future plans to preserve Lakewood's history, discuss opportunities for public benefit, educational outreach plans and the potential for a Lakewood History Museum.

Collection Policies and Procedures

New donations of artifacts, memorabilia, and archival materials are prompting the need for a collection policy and various approved procedures. A Collections Plan, Policy, Procedures and Forms are being developed by the Consultant. Following adoption by the Board of Directors, the Collections Committee (Board and general members) will implement the plan.

Secure Storage for Collections

Interim storage for some Historical Society archival materials has been arranged, courtesy of the Historic Fort Steilacoom Association, the City of Lakewood and individual Society members. Secure, environmentally safe interim storage continues to be a pressing need for collected artifacts and new donations that may become more frequent in the near future as the Society progresses.

2006 Budget

The Finance Committee and the Consultant developed a 2006 budget based on pursuit of the goals under discussion in the Long Range Plan, including a local history museum, continuing programs/activities, membership growth, fundraising and education outreach. The Board of Directors approved the budget in October and presented it to the membership at the Annual Meeting in November. A copy of the budget is available upon request.

Fundraising Activities - 2006

Fundraising activities underway include plans for the Society's annual auction, plans for an aggressive 2006 membership drive, and periodic sales of the aforementioned Lakewood History book. The book will be available for purchase through the Historical Society with the next fundraising activity planned to coincide with SummerFest.

Public Relations/Marketing

The PR and Marketing component of the Long Range Plan was completed during the 4th quarter. A Public Relations Packet is being updated and will be available for committee use early in 2006. The Packet has a list of local press contacts, guidelines, a PR checklist, forms, tips and resources among other items as well as the Society's newly established dedicated phone number and e-mail address. The Plan addresses Marketing needs, although initially, marketing will be dependent on the pace of facility development. The Board will have an active Public Relations/Marketing Committee in 2006.

Web Site

Creating a Lakewood Historical Society web site is a primary goal for 2006. A list of criteria has been developed for review and a selection of contractors has been identified for consideration. Proposed web content and a historical timeline are underway and a list of desired links with other heritage resources is being readied to obtain linking permission. This will be an effort to increase public awareness of the Lakewood Historical Society, offer online historical content, including maps and documents, and encourage viewers to become visitors to the City of Lakewood.

Museum Visits

Board and Planning Committee members visited the Gig Harbor Peninsula Historical Society Museum in July and the newly opened Enumclaw Plateau Historical Society Museum in September to learn more about the acquisition and remodeling process, challenges encountered, costs/benefits, local support, anticipated visitation and general information of use to the LHS project. Visits to other facilities will occur as needed relative to specific development issues.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee was tasked with meeting criteria in the City's 2005 Lodging Tax grant of funds to the Historical Society. The primary focus of the grant was to prepare a long range plan and to research the viability of a Lakewood History Museum that would help to preserve local history and to increase visitors to the City of Lakewood. The Committee met monthly during the year, in addition to several sub-committee meetings with other experts and advisors, in working toward these goals.

Strategic Long Range Plan - Ten-Year

A draft of the Ten-Year Long Range Plan has been completed and was presented to the Board for review in early January. Comments are being incorporated. The revised plan will be presented to the Board for final review and adoption in early February. The Plan will help guide the future growth and development of the Society. It also addresses each major area in the organization, management, development, promotion and operation of a local history museum, including public programs and education outreach. There is also an emphasis on membership growth, fundraising and marketing to ensure sustainability and the ongoing support and success of the Society as well as the proposed museum.

Long Range Plan components include: Organizational History and Structure; Administration and Management; Maintenance & Operations; Financial Management and Fundraising; Technology; Membership and Volunteer Development; Community and Education Programs; Marketing, Public Relations and Communications; Collections Management and Conservation; Facility Development; Project Timelines; and Evaluation Methods and Tools.

Fundraising Campaign

Fundraising needs and goals are being incorporated in the Financial Development Plan. This will include research on various levels of giving and potential donors to set the stage for a Major Gifts Campaign in the near future to support a new museum (storefront or permanent facility).

Some components of a Capital Campaign are currently being developed in a preliminary format, including the background for a Case Statement, a Campaign Timetable, Giving Tables, donor identification, and foundation and corporate giving prospects. Grant writing can begin when a site is selected, legal use is established, and design and funding needs are identified.

Facility Search – Permanent Museum Site

The Planning Committee and Consultant completed an extensive museum criteria checklist, comparing eight possible facilities for acquisition and conversion to a museum. The City was queried regarding Lakewood municipal ordinances and codes for public museums and inquiries were made of the Washington Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation regarding criteria to consider in the selection process of historic properties.

Committee recommendations were presented, first to the Board, then to the membership in a public meeting on September 20th at the Lakewood Senior Center. The recommendation to further explore cost and availability of the Lakewood Theater, Mueller-Harkins Airport Hangar, and the Boatman-Ainsworth House was accepted by both the Board and the membership. The Lakewood Theatre has since been dropped from this list. To date, six of the eight initially proposed sites have been eliminated as being not readily available or practical for conversion to a history museum.

The Society is currently focusing on the Mueller-Harkins hanger on the Clover Park Technical College grounds and the historic Boatman Ainsworth house located on 112th Street across from Clover Park High School. A contract was signed in early January with a local firm for professional engineering and a structural cost analysis of the two properties. This is a first step to determine the structural viability of the facilities and to ascertain if either can be renovated to meet the Society's needs for a museum or if new construction might be more practical.

Storefront Museum

The Planning Committee has been researching the feasibility of a storefront museum with the assistance of a local Lakewood Realtor. Board members have a continuing interest in this concept to gain a presence in the community while a permanent facility is being developed and especially if the acquisition of a permanent site is more distant. The committee reviewed 13 properties based on core criteria necessary (e.g., location, availability, and affordability) for a successful startup operation. This approach is being weighed against the cost, availability and near-term feasibility of a permanent facility. The primary deterrent at this time is cost.

The concept of a storefront museum would be considered an interim means to an end. It would help the Society gain more of a presence in the community which, in turn, would help build membership and support. It will allow the Society an opportunity to enlarge its collection of artifacts and archival materials, present exhibits to the public relating the history of the Lakewood area and provide educational opportunities and partnerships with local schools at all levels. It will engage the community in the Society's efforts to preserve and protect Lakewood's history as well as offer a *local* museum destination for out-of-town visitors to Lakewood.

Summary

The Lakewood Historical Society Board is making every effort to define its future goals and direction and to ascertain the desire and feasibility of a local history museum, how best to achieve this goal and what steps must be taken to raise interest and funding in such a venture, including the attraction of tourists and overnight guests to visit Lakewood.

Preparation of the requisite documents is a primary need to lay a strong foundation for a future museum and to position the Historical Society for success in future fundraising as the prospect of a Lakewood History Museum becomes more real. Input from our members is also critical for success. Public review and discussion of plans will be presented to the Society membership and the City of Lakewood for review and comment on a regular basis.

Submitted January 11, 2006 by Gary Fowler, Treasurer, Lakewood Historical Society