

Executive Summary

The Dossin Great Lakes Museum is facing a number of challenges, among them declining attendance, and lack of funding. A variety of factors have contributed to its decline and museum personnel have approached students in the planning practicum course, in the department of Urban and Regional Planning at Michigan State University to help construct a strategic plan for the museum.

In preparing the strategic plan, attendance was tabulated and a visitor profile was constructed to determine the Dossin's core audience. Existing exhibits were listed and major attractions described to determine what the museum offers visitors. The annual budget and management practices, including a staff profile, have been compiled in order to ascertain the financial and managerial resources within Dossin's reach. Current promotional strategies were also assessed. Lastly, a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted with focus groups to pinpoint the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the Dossin.

To assist in providing recommendations, four other museums were also profiled to act as measures of comparison. The Michigan Maritime Museum, the Marquette Maritime Museum, and the Wisconsin Maritime Museum serve as benchmark maritime museums all focused on the Great Lakes. The Motown Historical Museum serves as a single-themed comparative in the City of Detroit.

Lastly, to reach a larger audience, surveys were conducted at the Detroit Boat Show and Novi Boat Show.

Finally, recommendations were formulated, beginning with the establishment of a Board of Directors. The Dossin must also generate sources of stable funding through the creation of partnerships with Detroit organizations and other maritime groups and institutes, in addition to federal and state grants and programs. Once funding is fully established, advertising, maintenance, staff, and expansion can be considered.