

California State Railroad Museum
Strategic Plan 2017-2022
Summary

Proposed Vision: The California State Railroad Museum is a pre-eminent leader in railroad heritage preservation, engaging and enriching present and future generations about what railroads mean in our lives.

Proposed Mission: The California State Railroad Museum preserves and interprets the artifacts and culture of Western railroads and railroading for present and future generations. We use iconic collections, innovative and immersive exhibits, engaging interpretation and programs, and memorable events to create enjoyable experiences, empower learning and inspire appreciation for a diverse audience about the role and impact of the railroad and mobility in California, the West and the Nation.

The Vision and Mission will be reached by implementing major initiatives and actions in service of the following eleven strategies (please see the Condensed or Master Documents for additional details):

Strategy A – Recovery and Renewal – Planning and actively managing CSRM’s recovery and renewal

- Goal 1.1: CSRM is positioned to stop its decline, start to build public value and move towards its vision
- Goal 1.2: Core functions are strengthened with visible progress against established standards and visible new offerings
- Goal 1.3: Impediments to progress are mitigated or eliminated and relevant Parks Transformation initiatives are leveraged
- Goal 1.4: Internal and external stakeholders see change and a move towards public value

Strategy B – Stakeholder Engagement – Building and maintaining effective stakeholder relationships

- Goal 2.1: CSRM has a well-maintained relationship with key stakeholders which enables its understanding of its value and impact
- Goal 2.2: Stakeholders have a continually freshened understanding CSRM’s direction, progress and intended value

Strategy C – Public Value – Understanding CSRM’s potential value to its communities and delivering it

- Goal 3.1: CSRM clearly understands its potential public value and areas of specific focus. CSRM builds a reputation among transport and technology museums as a leader in public value and relevance
- Goal 3.2: CSRM delivers value to its communities, creates high satisfaction for current audiences and is positioned to create value for potential audiences
- Goal 3.3: Californians in all regions perceive value from CSRM

Strategy D – Audience Development – Building intelligence about CSRM’s physical, virtual, diverse and under-served audiences and using it to inform CSRM’s offerings

- Goal 4.1: CSRM has a clear, practical and evolving understanding of the needs and motivations of its current, potential and under-served physical, virtual and diverse audiences
- Goal 4.2: All audiences (current, under-served, diverse) have up-to-date understandings and expectations of CSRM

Strategy E – Institutional Diversity – Building on and creating the benefits of internal diversity and that of CSRMs stakeholders and audiences

- Goal 5.1: CSRMs internally (volunteers, paid staff, board) resembles its community and its visitors become noticeably more diverse

Strategy F – Organization Design – Designing and incrementally executing an organization design which serves the Mission and Vision and reflects our sector’s best practices

- Goal 6.1: The organization structure encompassing CSRMs, CSRMF, DPR and Railtown supports its Mission and Vision, optimizes use of resources and delivers public value
- Goal 6.2: CSRMs/CSRMF and Railtown have a highly effective governance and operating structure which positions the institution for success within future realities and effective and efficient performance of key roles
- Goal 6.3: CSRMs has a reliable supply of suitably-skilled, engaged and well-led volunteers
- Goal 6.4: CSRMs’s capabilities are expanded and public value improved using mutually-beneficial partnerships

Strategy G – Organizational Effectiveness – Ensuring our organization works effectively to deliver the Mission

- Goal 7.1: The CSRMs community supports a desired organizational culture aligned with its mission, vision and values and CSRMs has a high quality of work life
- Goal 7.2: CSRMs/CSRMF have a highly effective and collegial relationship at all levels of the organization
- Goal 7.3: The CSRMs community has the right skills and capabilities to do the necessary work

Strategy H – Planning & Accountability – Implementing the Strategic Plan and ensuring CSRMs works in a planned and high-accountability way

- Goal 8.1: CSRMs fulfills its mission and moves towards its vision by achieving strategic goal commitments on target and on budget
- Goal 8.2: The organization speaks a common language of accountability, delivers agreed-to results and measures performance credibly and fairly
- Goal 8.3: CSRMs is well on the road to sustainability in all five Facets of Sustainability

Strategy I – Best Practices Benchmarking and Implementation – Identifying best practices and working towards making CSRMs a best practices organization

- Goal 9.1: The museum in 3-5 years is reflecting best practices in most of its key areas compared to a broad spectrum of mainstream museums and industry standards

Strategy J – Shops Development – Setting up the Shops development for success

- Goal 10.1: CSRMs’s Shops concept reflects best practice in the areas of technology, history, culture and historic preservation
- Goal 10.2: All stakeholders understand and support the Shops concept, see visible progress and a quality presence in the broader development
- Goal 10.3: The Shops project is well-planned, governed and managed
- Goal 10.4: The Shops project and ongoing operation are financially viable and sustainable

Strategy K – Sacramento Southern Railroad Value and Integration – Integrating the SSRR and unlocking its value as a key CSRMs program

- Goal 11.1: As a key CSRMs program, SSRR unlocks its potential and is fully integrated with the museum’s mission, its programmatic, interpretive and exhibit needs, and public value delivery.
- Goal 11.2: There is organizational clarity about the desirability of the Zoo and Hood extensions, their value to CSRMs, business implications, and how they should be prioritized and addressed

The Strategic Plan is based on analyses of external trends, stakeholder feedback, the museum's core practices, its public value, organization design and culture; implications are highlighted as follows:

Trends – CSRM should build and refresh key political connections at all levels. The region's increasing diversity, Sacramento's downtown growth and renewal all mean the museum must improve its offerings to diverse audiences and position itself as a major local cultural amenity. CSRM must emulate the museum sector's best practices around authority, learning and relevance.

Stakeholders – CSRM's major stakeholders enjoy the museum, its beautiful facility, major artifacts and events. They consistently want refreshed and regularly-changing offerings, particularly in: interactive and engaging exhibits, child-friendly offerings, and a greater variety of programs. Some note the museum has lost touch with the local community, lacks its diversity, and has been an attractive but challenging partner. There is strong interest in the museum's development of the Shops and its possible embodiment of the dynamism and change the current museum lacks. CSRM has much work to do to build relationships with most of its stakeholders and to understand the most basic characteristics, needs and interests of its visitors.

Core Practices – For many reasons, the museum no longer reflects museum sector standards nor best practices in most of its core museum operations. It lacks the basic planning, accountability and performance measurement frameworks common in successful cultural organizations. While presenting a consistent (but tired) public face, its historical ability to rely on a steady stream of tourists and school children and lack of public value-based performance measures has masked the internal deterioration of its core practices, its nearly hypothermic state and its lack of resilience, all meaning it must focus on rebuilding its core museum and operational capabilities for the plan's first few years.

Public Value – While CSRM has “bragging rights” to an array of unique, valid and compelling outcomes, many are based on decades-old exhibits and offerings which are not keeping up with current and future generations' expectations and needs for relevance. CSRM's future success depends on its ability to understand its stakeholders' and audiences' needs and priorities and translate these into concrete offerings that produce value and positive impacts for them. This will not come unless CSRM benchmarks itself against admired mainstream museums rather than railroad museums.

Organization Design and Culture – CSRM's organization barely resembles the structure and headcount of admired museums, hobbling its ability to follow best practices, understand stakeholders and audiences, and engage in meaningful renewal. Its current culture has evolved organically based on a mish-mash of experiences and beliefs and is not delivering the results and activities needed to deliver on its stakeholders' aspirations. A new organizational culture is needed. New blood from mainstream museum practitioners bringing robust knowledge of best practices is needed, strategically selected so the organization evolves as resources permit towards conventional museum organization design.

The Shops – CSRM's long-dreamed of second museum in The Shops has never been closer to reality as part of the Railyard's imminent redevelopment in to a massive residential, retail, sports and entertainment district, yet its basic concept has not evolved with museum thinking or the changing needs of the community. We assumed redeveloping the historic Shops buildings should remain one of CSRM's highest priorities, but should be based on revised fundamental assumptions about its presentation and content, and be led by a special-purpose working group.