



## **Naper Settlement**

### **Strategic Institutional Plan**

### **Vision 2031**

#### **Executive Summary**

This is an exciting time for Naper Settlement as it looks to capitalize on the strengths of its past and move boldly into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with an updated mission, purpose, and vision. Rooted in the results of a year-long, community-based Strategic Interpretation and Program Planning Process that resulted in the museum's updating its mission (December 2006) to share the community's history through present day, the vision behind this dynamic shift and transformation is for the museum to serve its entire community by combining historic and contemporary stories and capturing memories to define Naperville's place in the local, state, and national fabric. This new museum era is relevant to residents and visitors alike and harnesses and honors the diversity of Naperville's 21<sup>st</sup> century residents, the vitality of the City's story, the spirit of the future, and the tradition of philanthropy that has created and sustained the museum over generations. To bring this ambitious vision to life, Naper Settlement has created a roadmap to guide the organization from today to the City's bicentennial in 2031 that aligns the organization's objectives and activities with this vision. The museum's strategic plan articulates a set of three- to five-year goals and resultant outcomes that support each of Naper Settlement's Vision 2031 strategic initiatives, breaking down the long-range vision into tangible and measurable milestones. Annual plan reviews are built into the process.

#### **Background**

In 2031, the City of Naperville will celebrate its 200-year anniversary. As the City's history museum, Naper Settlement sees the bicentennial as a perfect target date for achieving a transformed museum that acknowledges a comprehensive history of the community and identifies its place in the unfolding American narrative. To meet this ambitious goal and bring this vision to fruition, Naper Settlement has engaged in strategic and operational planning to align the direction of the organization, leverage its assets, prioritize initiatives, and lay the foundation for the successful acquisition of necessary financial and human resources.

Established in 1969, Naper Settlement, through a management agreement with the City of Naperville, operates under the direction and governance of the Naperville Heritage Society, whose mission is to "document, preserve and interpret the community life of Naperville, Illinois, including, but not limited to the social, political and business history." Guided by this, Naper Settlement's mission is to "create community by connecting visitors to Naperville's history through engaging, unique experiences." Until recently, Naper Settlement has served as an outdoor history museum focused on life in Naperville and Northern Illinois from the City's early days as a pioneer outpost founded in 1831 through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Today, Naper Settlement's mission has evolved to include Naperville history through present day.



Naperville has continued to grow and evolve, and serves as a microcosm of the larger American context, sharing historic milestones that have shaped our nation.

### **Naper Settlement's Future**

Contemporary thinking about the importance of history identifies key ways that history plays a pivotal role in our society: it helps to create personal and community identity, lays the groundwork for strong, resilient communities, is a catalyst for economic development, and helps to create an engaged citizenry of critical thinkers and leaders. Within this framework is the opportunity to create a multidisciplinary museum that provides an understanding of the interconnectedness between history, culture, the arts, sciences, reading and math.

Naper Settlement recognizes the important role it plays as an active repository of Naperville's memory and material culture and the potential for those resources to be used to understand community and global events. It is already a welcoming place of community gatherings and dialogue. Vision 2031 imagines a museum experience that travels the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Programs and exhibitions will draw on community stories that articulate the evolution of Naperville from a farming community to a high-tech suburb that is now one of the largest cities in the State. By adding the more recent chapters of history to the story, the museum will connect meaningfully with the Naperville of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. As a vital educational resource and cultural asset, Naper Settlement will set the bar for innovative learning and community gathering.

Rather than focusing on history as something that happens in the past, Naper Settlement emphasizes history as constantly unfolding all around us. History informs, entertains, enlightens and inspires 21<sup>st</sup> century visitors with the stories of men and women who started movements, built businesses, and led crusades for the community good: people who made contributions of lasting local and national significance.

### **NEVER SETTLE: The Campaign for Naper Settlement**

Paving the way for the future, the pioneering spirit and entrepreneurial history of the community is embodied in NEVER SETTLE: The Campaign for Naper Settlement. The campaign will finance exciting additions to the museum including an Agricultural Interpretive Center, the Heritage Gateway Welcome Center and Scott's Block, serving to transform the 19<sup>th</sup> century village into a dynamic cultural campus. The new buildings and reimagined existing buildings and exhibits will combine to tell the story of a community that has grown from a small farm town into a vibrant American city, home to innovators, business leaders and local heroes.

### **Comprehensive Planning**

To make its long-range vision a reality, the planning process included the articulation of clear action steps with clear objectives and outcomes that further solidify and align the direction



the institution will take moving forward. From master planning incorporating new buildings and exhibits onto the campus footprint, to the development of a comprehensive board-driven fundraising campaign, to strategies for enhancing Naper Settlement's learning experiences, the institution has already made significant strides in the last few years towards Vision 2031. This road map is a tool for coalescing internal and external support and provides for planned activities that align and support the strategic initiatives instituting governance and operating structures that exemplify best practices in the museum field today.

## **Vision & Strategic Initiatives**

### **Vision 2031**

*Naper Settlement's long range vision is to become an immersive, experiential, cultural campus of discovery and lifelong learning by Naperville's Bicentennial in 2031.*

### **5-Year Goal**

*Naper Settlement is acknowledged regionally and nationally as an essential and vital historical and educational resource that is a prime tourist destination in Northern Illinois.*

### **Core Elements of the Vision**

The transformation of Naper Settlement will focus on four key ideas:

- Preserving the legacy and considering the future of the community's **agricultural economy**
- Naperville's shift to **suburbanization** is a vital story in the American narrative
- Ensuring **inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility** throughout the museum, welcoming the entire community
- **History is important** and the museum plays a significant role in history education, leading to a more informed citizenry

Visitors come to Naper Settlement to experience the history of the region, from settlement times to the present, by reflecting the diversity of its people and honoring the role the community has played in helping to shape the history of the nation and our American identity. At Naper Settlement visitors are invited to see themselves as active participants in the historic narrative that is unfolding each and every day. The museum is an inviting place to explore innovative, interactive programs, exhibits and events that explore many aspects of history from popular culture to difficult topics. Naper Settlement engages, educates and delights visitors of all ages, transforming the way they experience history. The pedagogy and content methodologies utilizing onsite, online, and in classroom experiences mark Naper Settlement as an institution partnering with formal education and nationally recognized for its innovation and excellence. As the institutional memory of the City, and an acknowledged driver of economic growth, Naper Settlement is a respected and highly valued asset. The museum's excellence not only underpins its successful programs and pristine grounds, but



also serves as a standard bearer for other educational and historical organizations across the United States.

## Strategic Initiatives & Three- to Five- Year Outcomes:

### Strategic Initiative 1

**Become a leading resource for lifelong learning through creativity, community engagement, and excellence.**

#### Outcomes

1. Naper Settlement programs provide **meaningful and relevant learning opportunities** designed to engage diverse and inclusive audiences by sparking creativity and innovation through exploration and new knowledge. The museum will become a **place of conversation and dialogue** offering **multi-perspectives** on wide ranging topics.
2. Naper Settlement is recognized as an **informal education leader**, sought after by educators as an **extension of the classroom** and as a provider of **teacher professional development** opportunities at the local and state levels that will enhance formal education systems.
3. Naper Settlement is an **innovator in pedagogy** by partnering to provide historically based, interdisciplinary, immersive educational experiences that include culture, civic engagement, and STEM education.
4. Naper Settlement has the **technology infrastructure** in place to support educational objectives.
5. Naper Settlement has the **physical infrastructure** in place to support its educational objectives, event and rental needs, and ability to be a community gathering place.

### Strategic Initiative 2

**Serve as the institutional memory of Naperville and the region through preservation of stories and cultural heritage.**

#### Outcomes

1. The **Naperville Memory Project** engages current and past residents to share their story so that Naper Settlement can accurately **represent the cultural diversity and richness** of the City.
2. **Object collections** are utilized every day in a variety of ways, including research and display.
3. Visitors understand the **local history** of Naperville as it **connects to the regional and national narrative**.

### Strategic Initiative 3



**Strengthen our role as an economic engine for the City of Naperville and the State of Illinois and become a household name.**

**Outcomes**

1. Naper Settlement is a significant cultural tourist attraction for the city – generating revenue by attracting residents and non-residents who visit to experience the museum and stay to patronize other local businesses, including restaurants, shops, and hotels.
2. Naper Settlement provides increased opportunities for businesses to engage in reciprocal partnerships with the institution.
3. Naper Settlement is “top of mind” in the community and media and is represented “at the table” among local decision-makers in areas including travel, tourism, City culture, and education.

**Strategic Initiative #4**

**Establish ourselves as a viable and desirable investment in order to successfully fundraise locally and nationally in support of operational and capital needs.**

**Outcomes**

1. Increase operating **revenue** (annual campaign, membership, and sponsorship).
2. **Never Settle Capital Campaign** supports ongoing institutional projects and improvements, including the Agricultural Interpretive Center, the Heritage Gateway Welcome Center, and Scott’s Block.
3. **Infrastructure is in place** to support expanded fundraising efforts, including the development of a culture of philanthropy among staff and board.
4. Naper Settlement is a **nationally recognized expert** in the museum field.