



Using a Historic Place to Build Community

How-To Guide - Part 1 - Why This Project?

Building community, of whatever size, is risky but so is any venture beyond our comfort zone. Help may come from your local historical or preservation organization, museum, library, school, college, business, foundation, or friends. If you or your organization wish to undertake such a venture, it is not hard. Still, before you begin, you and your colleagues should ask yourselves the following questions – your answers will determine if your organization is ready to proceed.

1. Why do you want to do this project in the face of competing priorities? Since we communicate by words and by “chemistry,” you need to be clear and honest about the project for the benefit of yourself and others. Are you at ease?
2. Do you as well as members of your organization and community perceive the need for this project?
3. Who are your allies? Your opponents? Be sure to address the negatives in an affirmative manner.
4. This project should be grounded in respect. The purpose is not to prove that one viewpoint is right and the others wrong. You are all part of the same community, so think of this as a learning or team-building exercise towards higher goals.



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How-To Guide - Part 1 - Reality Check

5. Planning is critical. What are your organization's mission, vision, and strategic plan? What are your organizations' strengths in terms of staffing and expertise? Is your organization ready to meet the project's needs in terms of time, funding, facilities, and personnel?

6. What historic place or site engages the minds and hearts of a diversity of people? Examples could be a historic site, museum, town center, road, park, or river.

7. What is the demographic range of your community (gender, age, income, race, long-term or new resident, etc.)? What can you do to ensure such a range participates?

8. The "Drayton Hall Stories" project may serve as a model because its products are a book, a website, public programs, and an audiovisual and documentary archive of recent history. What might your products be? Publications, public programs, exhibits, website, walking tours, online applications, videos, or archives? Which serve your mission and meet your budget, time frame, and capability? Perhaps proceed in phases but aim for higher goals.

9. Who are the audiences? Do the products fit their interests and needs?

10. Since the interviews are at the heart of the project, does your organization have sufficient experience in this area?