



# Abridged Interpretive Plan

Water Tower Barn Scandia



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All images courtesy of Scandia Heritage Alliance, unless noted.

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# Project Background



# Background

Around 2012, a group of Scandia residents began meeting to discuss the fate of the Water Tower Barn, a significant local landmark that was slated for demolition by its owners. One resident commissioned a historic study, which determined the building was a tankhouse, and likely the only one remaining in Minnesota. The local residents began to advocate for the preservation of the Barn, and in 2014 it was carefully dismantled with the hope of reconstructing it one day. One local resident purchased and stored the structure. In 2016, a group of Scandia residents decided to form an organization dedicated to the preservation of the Barn, as well as the broader goal of preserving the culture and history of Scandia.

In 2018, the group formally incorporated as Scandia Heritage Alliance (SHA), and they gained 501c3 status in 2019. Since then, they have conducted extensive research into the Water Tower Barn, as well as other local historic places and events. In 2023, they published a popular Scandia Heritage Trail Map – a walking/ biking tour brochure of historic sites – and each year they have hosted Scandia History Series lectures, tours, artifact displays, and community dinners. In addition, they have developed relationships and partnered with other local organizations, notably Gammelgården Museum of Scandia.

In 2019, Scandia Heritage Alliance identified the ideal location for the future reconstruction of the Barn, just south of the City Hall/ Community Center on Olinda Trail. The City of Scandia agreed to support this vision to lease out the land to SHA for \$1 a year for 100 years. In 2020–2021, SHA developed schematic plans for the site to include the reconstructed Barn, an outdoor amphitheater, a Water Garden play area, a wetland overlook, rain gardens, parking lot, and walking/ biking trails connecting to City Hall and the future State Gateway Bike Trail. Since then, they have raised funds to further develop these plans. Most notably, the City of Scandia and SHA were awarded \$2.2 million by the State Legislature in the 2023 Capital Investment Bill to help build the regional WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA arts and heritage center.

At present, Scandia Heritage Alliance continues to raise funds for the project, while working to refine both the architectural plans and the plans for staffing, exhibits, and programming. In 2024, Scandia Heritage Alliance completed an audience analysis, and it has invested significant efforts in internal discussions regarding the vision and use of the building and external spaces.

At this point, SHA has identified a need for an abridged Interpretive Plan that focuses on analyzing the market; identifying the target audience/s; developing interpretive message and subthemes; and recommending exhibit topics and exhibit methods.

# Mission

## SCANDIA HERITAGE ALLIANCE MISSION

To preserve and celebrate Scandia's rich history, culture, arts and rural character.

## WATER TOWER BARN MISSION

Preserving Minnesota's last remaining tankhouse, WATER TOWER BARN SCANDIA will be a preeminent community gathering place to celebrate arts, history and cultural heritage.

# Vision

Rooted in rural heritage and sense of place, Water Tower Barn will be recognized as a beautiful and vibrant venue that cultivates and strengthens community connections. Residents and tourists alike will be encouraged to explore, gather and play through exhibits, stories, performances, workshops and tranquil public spaces. We are committed to partnering with regional arts, cultural, and environmental organizations to develop collaborative programming.

# Tagline

Explore • Gather • Play





Collections





Interior of Scandia Mercantile, circa 1925. From Anna Engquist's book *Scandia: Then and Now*.



At present, Scandia Heritage Alliance does not have a reputation as an organization that collects artifacts. Within the immediate community, Gammelgården has the highest profile for gathering and preserving local historic items. The Washington County Historical Society and Stone House museum in Marine on St. Croix have also collected and preserved Scandia-related items. There are also local private collectors who have thoughtfully preserved historic items.

However, since its formation in 2018, Scandia Heritage Alliance has been approached with items. At present, SHA has a modest collection of local historic items that it stores off-site, including artifacts associated with the Water Tower Barn, the bank, the mercantile, the post office, and other local businesses. Most notable is their collection of items associated with the local men's softball teams. SHA does have a digital collection of photos and other historic resources, which they have begun storing and documenting in the Past Perfect collections management system. They do have a collections policy and a formal donation process, and intend to continue to collect local history items (particularly those outside Gammelgården's focus). Once the Water Tower Barn project is complete, they intend to invest more into this aspect of their mission, including developing archival storage solutions.

At present, SHA does not intend to have the Water Tower Barn become a repository for historic items. (Though the Water Tower Barn is being designed to include some storage space, it will be minimal and not designed to museum-quality standards.) Nevertheless, there will be historic items on temporary display in the building. Regarding these items, SHA should be thoughtful about security, light-exposure, climate control, and the risk of pests or water damage. Exhibit designers should keep those factors in mind when planning for artifact displays.

## Historic Water Tower Barn Structure

There is one significant artifact that will be on site: the Water Tower Barn itself!\*

Plans for the reconstruction of the Water Tower Barn include the insertion of modern internal amenities such as an elevator, restrooms, and stairwell, as well as a potential future addition of a lobby and additional restrooms. Though there is a strong argument for inclusion of the structure in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, based on its distinctive architectural and engineering characteristics, the significant alterations, as well as the disassembly, transfer, and reconstruction of the Water Tower Barn in a new location, have had a significant negative impact on its eligibility. However, these changes do exemplify the positive strategy of rehabilitating a historic building for a compatible use.

Modern audiences are familiar with the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings. Many of the commercial and residential buildings in the core of Scandia date from the 1800s and have had similar treatment. SHA's building plans have thoughtfully preserved or highlighted many significant historic attributes and characteristics of the barn, particularly the post-and beam structure, the ornamental rafter tails, the well shaft and windmill, the decorative windmill platform, and the wood water tank housed in the tower. The plans call for the creation of a viewing area to observe the working windmill equipment, as well as a vintage hand pump that visitors can try. SHA intends that this feature will become a major theme of interpretation within the building.

\*Note: all water tower barns are tankhouses, but not all tankhouses are water tower barns! A tankhouse is a building that includes an elevated water tank. It typically includes a windmill, well, and tank. The addition of a *barn* makes Scandia's Water Tower Barn unique.



# Historic Context





Frank and Ida Lake Home on Olinda Trail. Courtesy Heather Benson.



# Scandia, Frank Lake, and the Water Tower Barn

Over the past few years, SHA has sponsored many historic research efforts that have helped illuminate the local history context. This section describes the major initiatives that were reviewed for this Interpretive Plan.

Since 2024, SHA has been collaborating with an Indigenous Partner Team to develop research regarding the history of Native Americans in the area. SHA currently has a Legacy grant to develop an annotated bibliography and research plan. In 2024, Susan Miles initiated an “Indigenous Lifeways Timeline” to document evidence regarding local Native American History. SHA has also worked with the Science Museum of Minnesota to learn about archaeological evidence in the area of an Oneota habitation site.

In 2020–2021, Bluestem Heritage Group developed a history of selected sites within Scandia. This April 2021 report, called “Selected Historic Sites in Scandia,” offers details about the broader history of Scandia, as well as the history of the Scandia Farmers Store/Mercantile, Water Tower Barn, and Scandia Creamery (all associated with Frank Lake.) This report includes an annotated bibliography of sources regarding local history. During Scandia’s initial period (1850–1879), much of its culture and commerce was based in Marine Mills. During the second period (1879–1915), Scandia established its own commercial center, formed its own township (1893), and managed to thrive despite the railroad passing it over. During the 1900s, Scandia shifted from being an agricultural community to a bedroom community. In 2007, the City of Scandia incorporated.

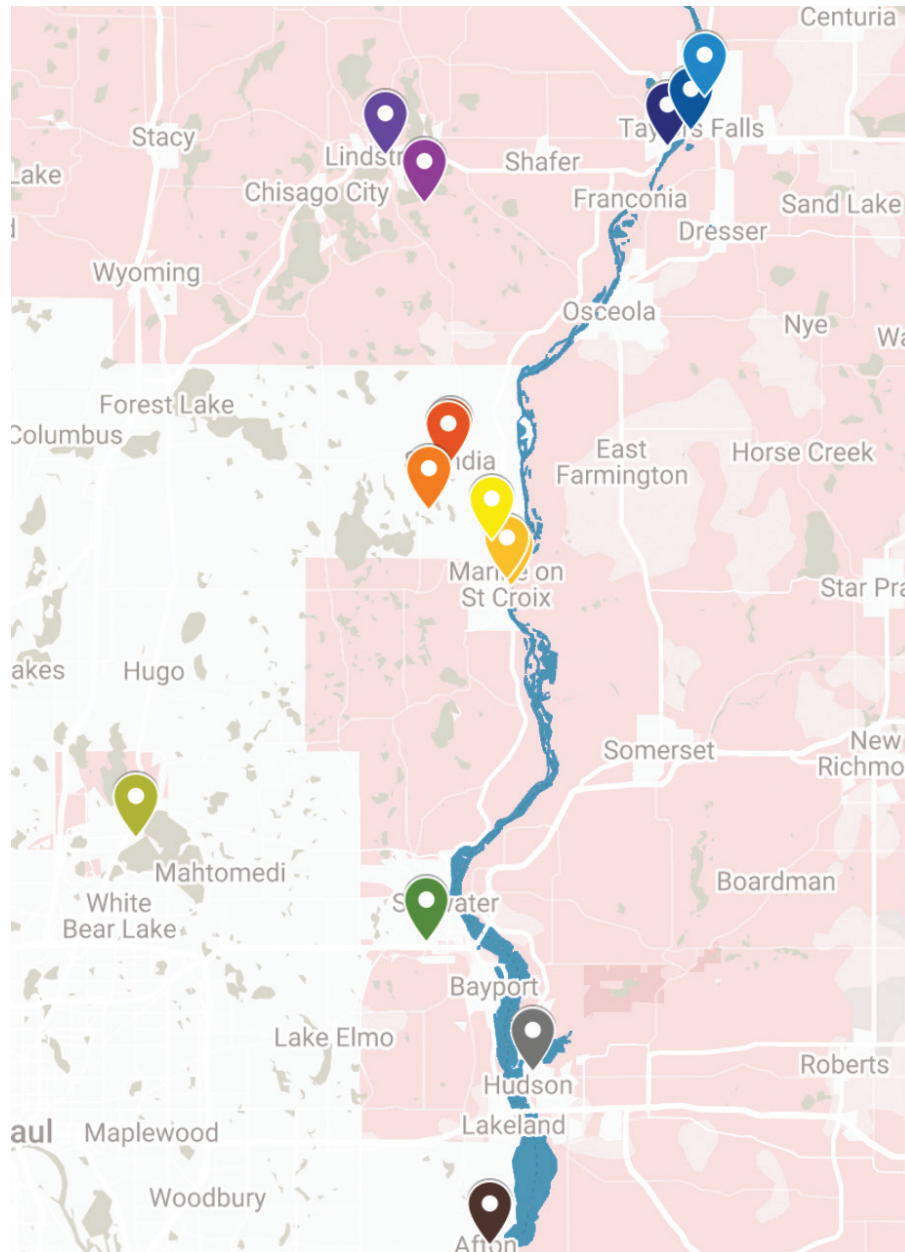
Frank Lake was a leading figure in Scandia. In addition to forming his Farmer’s Store in 1879, which grew into the local general store, he was also involved in the creamery, other nearby businesses, and the township governance. His role as a local merchant and town advocate are significant. Anna Engquist’s 1974 history *Scandia, Then and Now* and Mark McGinley’s 2019 article on Frank Lake offer additional details on him.

Research into the history of the Water Tower Barn was conducted by Charlene Roise, and her June 2022 report “Scandia Water Tower Tank Barn: A Historical Investigation” offers a detailed investigation into the structure’s construction and existing evidence of the windmill equipment. While precise date for the structure is not available, evidence suggests it was constructed around 1895, at the time Frank Lake purchased the land it sat on. The research report describes the engineering of the water tank and helps contextualize it within the history of windmills within the state. The uniqueness of the structure (in form and use) and its connection to Scandia’s development are appealing topics.


















# Market Analysis

## REGIONAL SITES



The Water Tower Barn will be joining an active cultural heritage community. Within a 30-minute drive, there are numerous historic sites, community cultural centers, art organizations, museums, and theater companies, not to mention parks, trails, and other notable landmarks.

Many of the communities within the region share a similar geography and history of settlement and development. Thus, there are many places that interpret themes such as the St. Croix River natural history, river commerce, Ojibwe history, lumbering, immigration in the 1850s, and establishment of the St. Croix as a Wild and Scenic River. Swedish-related themes are also popular. The following table illustrates the frequency of these topics among local venues.

 Water Tower Barn	 St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Visitor Center
 Gammelgården Museum	 The Chisago County Historical Society
 Hay Lake School & Erickson Log House	 Nya Duvemåla
 Marine Mill	 White Bear Lake Area Historical Society
 Stone House Museum	 Washington County Heritage Center
 William O'Brien State Park	 Octagon House Museum
 Interstate State Park	 Afton Historical Museum
 Folsom House	

## REGIONAL VENUES AND THEMES

	Gammelgården Museum	Hay Lake School and Erickson Log House	Swedish Settlers Monument	Afton Historical Society	Marine Mills Historic Site	Stonehouse Museum	Washington Co. Heritage Center	Interstate State Park	William O'Brien State Park	Folsom House	Chisago Co. Historical Society	Karl Oskar/Nya Duvemåla House	St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Visitor Center	White Bear Lake Area H.S.	Octagon House
Ojibwe and Dakota History and Culture				(x)			X	X	(x)					X	
Swedish Immigrants	X	X	X		(x)	(x)	(x)		(x)			X			
Early Female Entrepreneurs														(x)	
Story of the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota (three men)		(x)	X												
Modern Immigrant Story	X	X	X	(x)	X	X	X			X	(x)	X			(x)
Natural History				(x)			X	X	X	(x)	(x)		X	(x)	
Logging				(x)	X		X	X	(x)	X					
Agriculture	X	(x)													
Town Settlement	X				(x)	(x)				(x)					(x)

Items marked with a (X) have this content included, but not prominently

## REGIONAL VENUES – DETAILS

GAMMELGÅRDEN MUSEUM	
Mission/Vision	“...devoted to preserving, presenting and promoting Swedish immigrant heritage in the United States.”
Location	20880 Olinda Trail – Scandia, MN
Website	<a href="https://gammelgardenmuseum.org/">https://gammelgardenmuseum.org/</a>
Audience	Swedish heritage tourists, field trip students, arts & culture adults.
Programs	<p>Monthly Clubs: History and Heritage Book Club; Fiber Arts Club; Silent Book Club; NAMI Mn Mindfulness Club</p> <p>Swedish language classes, youth and family arts and crafts classes; heirloom gardening</p> <p>Annie’s Coffee Parties</p> <p>Bluegrass Jam Music Series: June, July, August, and September.</p> <p>Midsommardagen Celebration</p> <p>Spelmansstämman (Fiddle Fest)</p> <p>Scandia Vinterfest events in collaboration with Scandia Heritage Alliance</p> <p>Taco Daze Running of the Meatballs Fundraiser</p>
Exhibits/Focus	An “open air” museum, with a focus on interpreting the history associated with the 1850s-1930s buildings on site (The Präst Hus, Gammelkyrkan, Ladugård barn, Immigrant Hus, Stuga, and Välkommen Hus which houses seasonal exhibits and the Scandia Butik gift shop), as well as broader immigrant-related history, art, craft, and folklife.
Hours	May–Mid–October. Monday–Saturday from 10–4 & Sunday 1–4
Cost	Free for exhibits. Guided Tour: Adults, \$10; Children under 12, free. Members free.
Special Note	Scandia Heritage Alliance and Gammelgården Museum have been steady partners and supporters of each other’s missions, collaborating on multiple events and aiming to share different aspects of Scandia history.



HAY LAKE SCHOOL AND ERICKSON LOG HOUSE	
Mission/Vision	N/A. Owned/Managed by the Washington County Historical Society
Location	14020 195th St N, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047
Website	<a href="https://www.wchsmn.org/museum/hay-lake/">https://www.wchsmn.org/museum/hay-lake/</a>
Audience	Swedish heritage tourists, local history buffs and tourists, field trip students.
Programs	Occasional special programs.
Exhibits/Focus	1896 one-room schoolhouse. 1868 log house built by Swedish immigrants.
Hours	May-October. Friday-Sunday 12-4
Cost	Free
Special Note	Scandia Heritage Alliance and Hay Lake School/Erickson Log House have collaborated on events and aim to support each other's missions.

**AFTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Mission/Vision	"The Afton Historical Society was organized in 1980 for the purpose of locating and collecting any material which would help to establish or illustrate the history of the Afton area or the state, the exploration, settlement, development, and activities in peace and war, the progress of population, ethnic groups, wealth, education, arts, science, agriculture, manufacturing, trade, etc., and to disseminate historical information to interested persons, groups, and institutions."
Location	Located in the former Congregational church, PO Box 178, 3165 St. Croix Trail S., Afton MN 55001
Website	<a href="https://aftonhistoricalmuseum.com">https://aftonhistoricalmuseum.com</a>
Audience	Researchers.
Programs	They once had an active press.
Exhibits/Focus	N/A
Hours	By appointment only.
Cost	N/A

**MARINE MILLS HISTORIC SITE**

Mission/Vision	N/A. Owned by Minnesota Historical Society. Managed by City of Marine on St. Croix.
Location	Judd Street, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047
Website	<a href="https://www.mnhs.org/marinemill">https://www.mnhs.org/marinemill</a>
Audience	Families, outdoor enthusiasts, local history buffs.
Programs	N/A
Exhibits/Focus	Ruins of a mill that operated from 1839–1895.
Hours	Daily, sunrise–sunset. Trails are not maintained in winter.
Cost	Free

STONEHOUSE MUSEUM	
Mission/Vision	N/A. Owned by City of Marine. Managed by Women's Civic Club.
Location	241 5th Street, Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047
Website	N/A
Audience	Tourists and local history buffs.
Programs	N/A
Exhibits/Focus	1872 Marine town hall, with displays of local history items.
Hours	Memorial Day – Labor Day, Saturdays & Sundays 1-4pm
Cost	Free

WASHINGTON COUNTY HERITAGE CENTER	
Mission/Vision	"The Washington County Historical Society collects, preserves and disseminates the history of Washington County and the state of Minnesota."
Location	1862 Greeley Street South, Stillwater, MN 55082
Website	<a href="https://www.wchsmn.org">https://www.wchsmn.org</a>
Audience	General audience, researchers, tourists, field trip students.
Programs	Film Series, lectures, ice cream social, historic house tours.
Exhibits/Focus	Permanent lumbering exhibit, temporary exhibits on local history.
Hours	Tuesday-Saturday, 10-4
Cost	Adults, \$8. Children 6-17, \$3

### INTERSTATE STATE PARK

Mission/Vision	N/A Owned and operated by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Location	307 Milltown Road, Taylors Falls, MN 55084
Website	<a href="https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00178#homepage">https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00178#homepage</a>
Audience	Outdoor enthusiasts, tourists.
Programs	Wildflower stroll, Nature Tots.
Exhibits/Focus	Walking path with interpretive signage on natural features. Visitor Center with modest signage.
Hours	8am-10pm. Visitor center is open seasonally
Cost	State park sticker

### FOLSOM HOUSE

Mission/Vision	N/A. Owned by Minnesota Historical Society. Managed by Taylors Falls Historical Society
Location	272 W. Government St. Taylors Falls, MN 55084
Website	<a href="https://www.mnhs.org/folsomhouse/">https://www.mnhs.org/folsomhouse/</a>
Audience	Local tourists.
Programs	N/A
Exhibits/Focus	Home of local lumber baron. The Folsom House is furnished with the family's original belongings, including a Hews rectangular grand piano, Folsom's vast library, clothing and other personal items. Guides tell the history of the Folsom family, who lived in the home for five generations, and their influence on the development of the area and the state.
Hours	Seasonal
Cost	Free

### CHISAGO COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mission/Vision	"To discover, preserve, and share the history and heritage of Chisago County, Minnesota."
Location	12795 Lake Blvd, Lindstrom, MN
	<a href="https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00178#homepage">https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00178#homepage</a>
Website	<a href="https://www.chisagocountyhistory.org/">https://www.chisagocountyhistory.org/</a>
Audience	Local history buffs.
Programs	Themed weekend events: Karl Oskar Days, Chisago County Fair, Almelund Threshing, Car Show, Apple Fest.
Exhibits/Focus	Display of artifacts collected from the area. Winter clothing.
Hours	Seasonally shifted. Jan-March 31, Mon, Tues, Thurs, Friday 12-4, Sat 10-4
Cost	Free

### KARL OSKAR HOUSE/NYA DUVEMÅLA HOUSE

Mission/Vision	"To preserve, share, and celebrate Swedish immigration and culture." "To sustain the historical Karl Oskar House for education about Swedish immigration to the Chisago Lakes region of Minnesota and to celebrate the connection of Nya Duvemåla with Vilhelm Moberg's contributions to the Swedish immigration story."
Location	29061 Glader Blvd, Lindström, MN 55045
Website	<a href="https://friendsofthekarloskarhouse.org/">https://friendsofthekarloskarhouse.org/</a>
Audience	Swedish heritage tourists, field trip students
Programs	Swedish language chats, once a month.
Exhibits/Focus	Vilhelm Moberg's fiction, Swedish immigration
Hours	Summer season, Sundays 1-4
Cost	N/A

**WHITE BEAR LAKE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY/FILLEBROWN HOUSE**

Mission/Vision	"The White Bear Lake Area Historical Society connects our community to its past, cultivating an understanding and appreciation for our history."
Location	2228 Fourth Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110
Website	<a href="https://whitebearhistory.org/">https://whitebearhistory.org/</a>
Audience	General audience, adult programs, field trip kids, local history buffs.
Programs	Lectures, adult events, house tours, workshops, festivals, bus tours, boat tours, walking tours.
Exhibits/Focus	Fillebrown House displays domestic items from 1920-1940 period. Upcoming exhibit on 10 events in local history.
Hours	Fillebrown open seasonally for Weekend hours.
Cost	Free

**OCTAGON HOUSE MUSEUM**

Mission/Vision	"Bringing History to Life"
Location	1004 3rd Street, Hudson, Wisconsin 54016
Website	<a href="https://www.hudsonoctagonhouse.org/">https://www.hudsonoctagonhouse.org/</a>
Audience	Tourists and local history buffs.
Programs	Teas, kids programs, history chats, special tours.
Exhibits/Focus	Octagon House, Moffat-Hughes family, and Hudson area history from the 1850s to the 1950s.
Hours	Summer hours: Fri-Sunday, 11-4
Cost	Adults, \$12. Students, \$8



<b>WILLIAM O'BRIEN STATE PARK</b>	
Mission/Vision	N/A Owned and operated by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Location	16821 O Brien Trail N, Scandia/Marine on St. Croix, MN 55047
Website	<a href="https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00283#homepage">https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/park.html?id=spk00283#homepage</a>
Audience	Outdoor enthusiasts, tourists, overnight campers, boaters, and anglers.
Programs	Family programs, birding, GPS training, outdoor skills instruction, fishing lessons.
Exhibits/Focus	Natural history. Modest exhibits in Visitor Center.
Hours	Year-round, but limited in winter
Cost	State park sticker

<b>ST. CROIX NATIONAL SCENIC RIVER VISITOR CENTER</b>	
Mission/Vision	N/A Owned and operated by the National Park Service
Location	401 North Hamilton Street, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024
Website	<a href="https://www.nps.gov/sacn/planyourvisit/visitor-centers.htm">https://www.nps.gov/sacn/planyourvisit/visitor-centers.htm</a>
Audience	Outdoor enthusiasts, tourists, overnight campers, boaters, and anglers.
Programs	Occasional ranger-led nature programs.
Exhibits/Focus	Natural history. Modest exhibits in Visitor Center.
Hours	Mid-April through October, 10-5 daily
Cost	Free

# Inspirational Models

To identify heritage organizations that could serve as effective models and inspiration, we focused on places that shared one or more of the following core characteristics:

- Sites that focused on an architecturally significant historic structure or particular engineering feat
- Sites that focused on ethnic immigration narratives
- Sites that focused on Native American history
- Sites that actively tap into bike tourism
- Organizations that partnered with broader arts and cultural groups for programming

In addition, we limited our attention to places that had a scale of operations that will fit within the proposed plans for the building. (~1 FTE staff, 10–15 reliable volunteers, modest square footage for exhibits, only 1 classroom).

## **Santa Fe Springs Heritage Park, CA**

This city park in Santa Fe Springs includes a restored tankhouse building with a windmill similar to the Water Tower Barn, as well as other historic buildings, displays, and park amenities.

## **Chicago Water Tower, IL**

America's most famous water-related building! This iconic 1869 Pumping Station and Water Tower is a popular spot for tourists and local shoppers. A modest exhibit space displays changing exhibits related to local history.

## **Giants of the Earth Heritage Center, Spring Grove, MN**

Local heritage organization in a mid-sized museum. They are actively promoting Norwegian heritage and immigration history through classes, genealogy, and exhibits.

## **Nordic Center, Duluth**

An arts-and-cultural heritage center that offers exhibits, events, lectures, and performances that reflect a wide sampling of Northern cultures. A very small exhibit space/single classroom.

## **Cuyuna Iron Range Heritage Network and Soo Line Depot Museum, Crosby, MN**

This historic depot is home to a local heritage society and modest seasonal museum. To entice local bike tourists, they are actively promoting the unique history of a local man who ascended a mile high via a hot air balloon, as well as the Milford Mine disaster.

## **Kistefos Museum, Norway**

Although the scale and funding for this site is much larger, this park has served as an inspiration to the SHA Board of Directors. Kistefos is a large park about an hour outside of Oslo that includes museum displays on the site's original sawmill, walking trails with outdoor sculptures, an art museum, a splash pad for kids, a forest-themed playground, and an outdoor café.

## Larger Organizations to Note

Although their scale is much greater than what the Water Tower Barn can host, the following organizations offer wonderful models for creative programming, high-quality exhibits, or particularly strong community partnerships.

- Mille Lacs Indian Museum. (High-quality Ojibwe content and exhibits.)
- Hokokati Ti Dakota History Museum – Shakopee (High-quality Dakota content and exhibits.)
- White Bear Lake Center for the Arts (Strong classes and theater programs.)
- ASI – Minneapolis (High-quality Swedish programs.)
- The Works Museum – Bloomington (High-quality engineering exhibits and programs.)
- The Bakken Museum – Minneapolis (High-quality engineering exhibits and programs.)
- Minnesota History Center – St. Paul (High-quality exhibits, frequent programming, strong educational offerings)

## Partner Organizations

SHA has identified the following organizations as candidates for future collaborations.

- Gammelgården Museum (already partnering)
- Marine Community Library (already partnering)
- Washington County Historical Society – Hay Lake School and Erickson Log House (already partnering)
- Marine Mills Folk School
- Wyoming Arts Center
- Osceola Art Barn
- White Bear Lake Center for the Arts
- ArtReach St. Croix – Stillwater
- Franconia Sculpture Park
- McNeely Music Center
- Hmong Cultural Center, St. Paul
- Hmong Museum, St. Paul
- Frosted Glass Productions – Marine on St. Croix
- Festival Theatre – St. Croix Falls
- Zephyr Theatre – Stillwater
- Lakeshore Players Theatre – White Bear Lake
- Masquers Theatre – Forest Lake
- Stone House Museum
- Chisago County Historical Society
- Wild Rivers Conservancy (in discussions about partnering)
- North Woods and Waters



# Audience Analysis

# Background

Successful organizations understand that they must balance the needs and interests of their different audiences. The needs and interests (and capacities) of the first-time visitor are significantly different from that of a board member. A healthy organization makes informed choices regarding the allocation of their resources towards different audiences.

The pyramid of connection illustrates the steps of engagement people have with an organization. At the bottom, the largest group of visitors arrive because they are looking for recreation. These visitors are open-minded, but interested in engaging, fun, and often light-hearted topics or experiences.

The repeat visitor returns because they felt welcomed and are interested in a deeper engagement with content. They trust they will have a high-quality experience.

Members and volunteers typically have high quality and engagement expectations – they care deeply about the content and the organization and often are drawn to more complex exhibits and hands-on programs.

At the top of an organization, the smallest group of board members and major donors are deeply drawn into an organization because of the mission – not because of particular exhibits or programs.

A strong Interpretive Plan recognizes this pattern and identifies Target Audiences and suggested topics to appeal to different levels of the engagement pyramid.





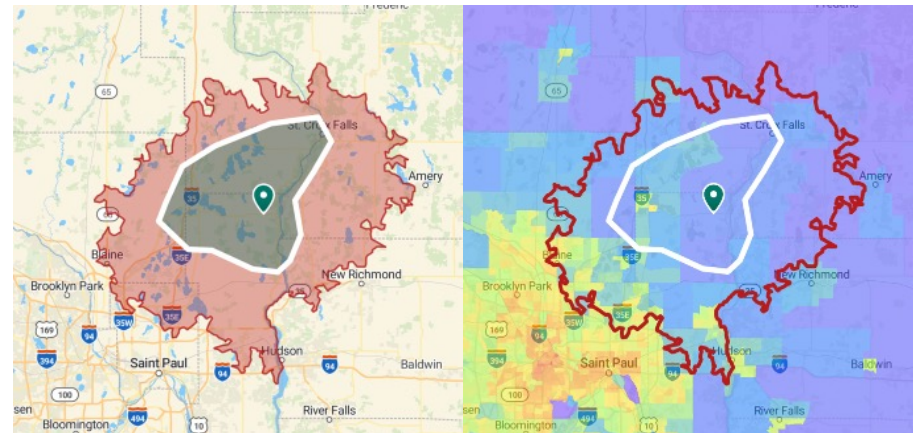
## Potential Audience

Scandia sits in an unusual zone within the region's geography. Although it is located at the far northeast edge of the Twin Cities metro area, and is technically within its economic boundaries, Scandia is more rural in its landscape and demographic patterns. However, Scandia is also within a regional tourist and recreation zone; the St. Croix Valley. This region enjoys strong seasonal tourism.

During the colder months (November–April), Scandia's potential audience tilts towards local residents. (See the spring 2024 audience analysis developed by Jill Brown Public Relations for details on local demographic patterns.)

Many of the residents within Scandia work in the Twin Cities, and the average commuting time is 41 minutes. While driving longer distances to access work, groceries, entertainment, or other services is fairly normal for Scandia residents, people within the inner Twin Cities typically are *not as likely* to travel as far. (Residents to the north of Scandia, however, are *more likely* to travel longer distances than Scandia residents.)

The concept of an “attraction watershed” helps to illustrate the idea of where the likelihood of your potential audience is highest. The larger, scraggly-edged red boundary shows what is within a 30-minute drive. There are approximately 339,397 inhabitants within a 30-minute drive. The inner, white-lined shaded area shows the “watershed” concept. There are approximately 61,859 people within this watershed area. The right-hand map shows the population density within these areas. (Note the denser population near Forest Lake.)





Committee at Swedish Settler's Monument, 1900. Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.

Note that attendance to previous SHA events reflects this pattern. About 50–66% of participants in the fall 2024 Scandia Historic Homes Tour and the June 2024 Kayak/hike to Historic Knapp's Cave were from SHA's core communities of Scandia, Marine on St. Croix, and May Township. These visitors represent the local audience.

The 33–50% of visitors from outside the local area came primarily from neighboring communities and northern Twin Cities suburbs. A significant number drove over 30 minutes from places such as Minneapolis, Edina, and St. Louis Park, consistent with the St. Croix Valley being a draw for tourists.

During the summer and shoulder seasons, the potential audience for programs and exhibits expands. Scandia is located within a recreationally-rich zone, with strong seasonal tourism to Taylors Falls, Marine on St. Croix, and Stillwater with increasing tourism to Scandia given popular venues like Rustic Roots Winery and Redeemed Farm wedding venue. The rich assortment of state parks, shopping, outdoor recreation opportunities, dining, festivals, seasonal events, and museums draws a wide variety of weekend visitors. Though Gammelgården Museum has been a strong tourist draw for Scandia for decades, the addition of new tourist attractions within Scandia will help build a beneficial synergy. The planned extension of the State Gateway Bike Trail from William O'Brien State Park into the Scandia Village Center suggests that some of the park's typical 275,000 annual visitors will wind their way into Scandia. This audience is likely tilted towards recreation, natural history topics, and St. Croix-valley history content.

Explore Minnesota frequently publishes data on tourism patterns within the state. The 2023 Spring-Summer travel profile offers useful insights into tourist interests and behaviors. ([https://mn.gov/tourism-industry/assets/EMT%20Traveler%20Profile%20Spring-Summer%202023%20-%20External\\_tcm1135-604767.pdf](https://mn.gov/tourism-industry/assets/EMT%20Traveler%20Profile%20Spring-Summer%202023%20-%20External_tcm1135-604767.pdf))



## Audience Research

The spring 2024 audience analysis developed by Jill Brown Public Relations measured an extremely high interest by local residents in both Indigenous and Swedish-related history – with the No. 1 topic being Ojibwe and Dakota history and culture. Of the top ten topics, three of them (marked with an asterisk\*) relate to Swedish heritage and overlap with Gammelgården's focus:

- The history and culture of Ojibwe and Dakota (57%)
- Cultural parallels between historic Ojibwe and Swedish culture\* (40%)
- The three Swedish immigrant men who established the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota\* (38%)
- Early women entrepreneurs (38%)
- The Water Tower Barn impact on the area (33%)
- The story of Frank Lake (Scandia founder) and development of entrepreneurial businesses (31%)
- The immigrant story\* (30%)
- History of hamlets and towns that are now part of Scandia (29%)
- Infamous Chicago gangster John Dillinger's Big Marine Lake cabin hideout during Prohibition (29%)
- Logging in the St. Croix River Valley and beyond (29%)



Frank and Ida Lake. Courtesy Elim Church Archives.

# Target Audience

Though it may seem obvious: your target audience is the audience you target. The following two major groups are recommended target audiences for the Water Tower Barn exhibits and history-related programs.

## Local History Hounds

- Local residents – live within 30 minutes
- Active and participatory adult learners who enjoy comradery and learning new history content.
- Older – visit individually, or in a couple
- Visits are typically longer – 45 minutes or more
- Visitor Interests:
  - Opportunity to learn and share with others – through lectures, presentations, classes, hands-on workshops, clubs, history book club, lunch lectures, film screenings and performances.
  - Local history and culture content that promotes identity and civic pride
  - Robust programming calendar of events



## Weekend Visitors

- Non-local visitors
- Arts and culture tourists (visit sculpture gardens, wineries, art galleries, museums)
- Campers and other outdoor recreationists (visit state parks, bike paths, rivers, ski hills)
- Chance visitors (ball park users, local wedding guests, local event attendees)
- Younger, visit with a family
- Visits are typically shorter – less than 30 minutes
- Visitor Interests:
  - Orientation, both geographic and historic. What is this place?
  - History and culture content that is entertaining and/or inspiring
  - Ideally: Snacks, hats, rain ponchos, ice cream, T-shirts
  - Bike repair stand
  - Bike rentals, cross-country ski rentals
  - Restrooms, water fountain







Scandia Creamery, 1894. Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society.



# Interpretive Recommendations

## Interpretive Message

# Welcome to Water Tower Barn Scandia

Powered by Nature; Designed by Dreamers;  
For the Common Good

At Water Tower Barn, we celebrate the unique Natural History and rich cultural heritage of Scandia, honoring the people, traditions, and stories that have shaped this place. From the stories of the Native Americans to the vibrant arts that are woven into the fabric of our community today, this space is a bridge between the past and the future.

As a gathering place for all, we host exhibits, art and environmental classes, and performances that honor both history and creativity. Here, you'll find a stage for local musicians and actors, an open space for creative expression, and a place for children and adults to explore, gather and play.

This center is powered by community and a shared focus on the common good—driven by the people who share their stories, talents, and passions. Whether you're here to explore a history exhibit, enjoy a theater performance, or simply spend time with friends and neighbors, Water Tower Barn Scandia invites you to be part of a living legacy of creativity and connection.



# Interpretive Themes

## 1. Powered by Nature

Exploring the ways Mother Nature has defined the Scandia Area; through the water cycle, the St. Croix River Valley, the Wild and Scenic River designation, and how water, wind, and woods literally powered our communities.

## 2. Designed by Dreamers

Exploring how design has defined the Scandia area; from Native American potters to early town platters, barn fabricators, business entrepreneurs, and contemporary artists, designers have inspired and transformed our community.

## 3. For the Common Good

Exploring how a focus on shared goals and common good have influenced the Scandia area community; from the formation of early churches and cooperatives, to nonprofits and social clubs, and the protection of rural open spaces.

## EXTERIOR SIGNAGE

During the visioning process for the site, SHA identified topics for inclusion in the exterior signage. These topics and their connection to the broader themes are below:

- The importance of wetlands and rain gardens for protecting Scandia's lakes, streams, and St. Croix River (Powered by Nature)
- The History and Culture of Native Americans who lived in the area before European settlement (Designed by Dreamers)
- Stories of Native Americans, early and modern settlers, and historic neighborhoods (For the Common Good)

As the plans for the site develop, SHA should develop a signage plan to identify the number and location for these signs, as well as details of which topics will be covered where. It is probable that some of the topics have pre-existing research on hand that is high quality, and that some signs may need more research.

## GAMMELGÅRDEN MUSEUM INTERPRETIVE THEMES

The nearby Gammelgården Museum aims to preserve, promote, and share Swedish immigrant history and culture, focusing on history associated with its 1850–1930 buildings, as well as broader immigration topics. The proposed Water Tower Barn interpretive themes are intentionally emphasizing topics that are *not* immigration. While some overlap may develop, SHA and Gammelgården should continue to coordinate and partner together to avoid repetition or competition, especially in permanent exhibits.

# Recommended Exhibits

The following topics reflect ideas that have been discussed and explored previously, as well as new ones that reflect the themes articulated above.

## **A Storied Structure: The Scandia Water Tower Barn**

Explore the history, design, and function of the landmark Scandia Water Tower Barn. Learn about its impact and significance in the growth of Scandia. (Recommended permanent exhibit)

## **Game On: Scandia's Softball Champions**

Discover the hidden history of our men's fast-pitch softball team; 11-time state champions. (Recommended permanent exhibit)

## **Native Americans of the St. Croix Valley**

Learn about the history and contemporary culture of the Native Americans who lived here for centuries.

## **Ghost Towns and Graveyards**

The history of the boom-and-bust towns that once existed, as well as the local graveyards.

## **Landmarks in Scandia History: The Loghouse Landing**

History of development of Native American landing into a modern boat landing.

## **One Små Step for Man: The First Swedish Settlers**

The history of the first three Swedish men to settle in Minnesota: Oscar Roos, Carl Fernstrom, and August Sandahl. Note: Consider co-developing with Gammelgården, as this overlaps with their focus.

## **John Dillinger Drank Here**

Infamous Prohibition-era gangsters were known to hang out in St. Paul and lake communities to the north: "Creepy" Karpis, Ma Barker, and "Babyface" Nelson. John Dillinger was known as a "friendly" chap when hiding out on Big Marine Lake in Scandia and once appeared in a local saloon to enjoy a beer.

## **Vice President Walter Mondale's love of Scandia and the St. Croix River**

Walter "Fritz" Mondale and his wife Joan's first date was a St. Croix canoe ride through Scandia where they later shared a cabin. Such began Mondale's love of the St. Croix and creation of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

### **From Travois to Trains, and Boats to Bikes**

History of development of transportation routes in Scandia Area.

### **Fashioning Community: The Women Entrepreneurs in Scandia's History**

Learn about the early women who built Scandia's businesses.

### **Birch, Bark, and Belonging: Cross-Cultural Craftsmanship**

Exploring the shared similarities and traditions between Ojibwe and Swedish culture. Note: Consider co-developing with Gammelgården, as this overlaps with their focus.

### **Scandia's Cooperative History**

The history of the creamery, mercantile, telephone company, and other shared ventures.

### **Scandia's Schools**

History of rural schools. Note: Consider partnering with Hay Lake School and Washington County Historical Society.

### **Ida and Frank Lake: Powering Scandia**

The history and impact of Ida and Frank Lake, and their roles in promoting Scandia's development.

### **Egg in the Coffee: Scandia's Swedish Traditions**

Light-hearted exploration of Swedish influence on local culture.  
Note: Consider co-developing with Gammelgården, as this overlaps with their focus.

### **The Steeple and the People: Elim Church in Scandia**

The role of Elim in the development of Scandia.

### **Frontier Friends: Benjamin Otis and John Copas**

An exploration of cross-cultural friendship in the territorial days.

### **Paddles and Petticoats: Women on the St. Croix**

History of women adventures on the St. Croix, from Alice O'Brien to Ann Bancroft.

# Exhibit Considerations

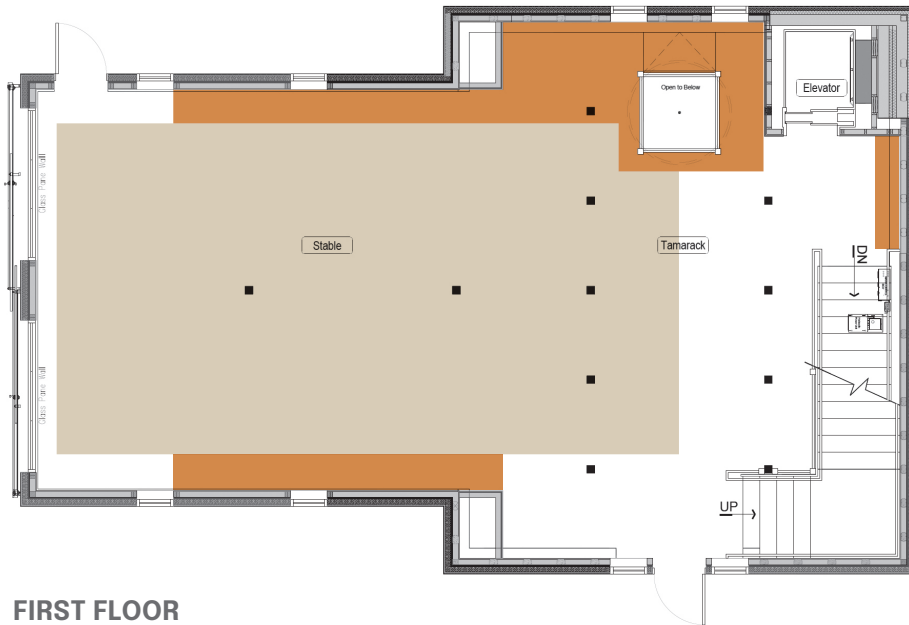
The vision for Water Tower Barn Scandia includes a robust calendar of programs such as lectures, art classes, environmental workshops, performances, meetings, and other events. The furniture within the spaces will be frequently re-arranged to accommodate those different functions. (Storage for tables, chairs, coats, a lectern, and AV equipment is being integrated into the design.)

As flexibility is key and space is limited, it is wise to consider these factors early in the exhibit design process. The diagrams on the following pages sketch out a potential base exhibit design, and help to explore the circulation, window, and site-line issues that will be at play.

This first-floor diagram notes the best locations for permanent exhibit signs in red, and alternate, less-ideal locations in brown. Potential cases are marked in blue. The soft green lines mark locations for temporary, removable signage. These signs could be suspended as banners from the beams or displayed on convention-style pull-up vinyl roller stands. There is space for up to four vitrines (cases), but they are trickier to move, and may begin to restrict flexible space use. There are no signs located along the western zone of the space, as they would be visually distracting during lectures or performances.

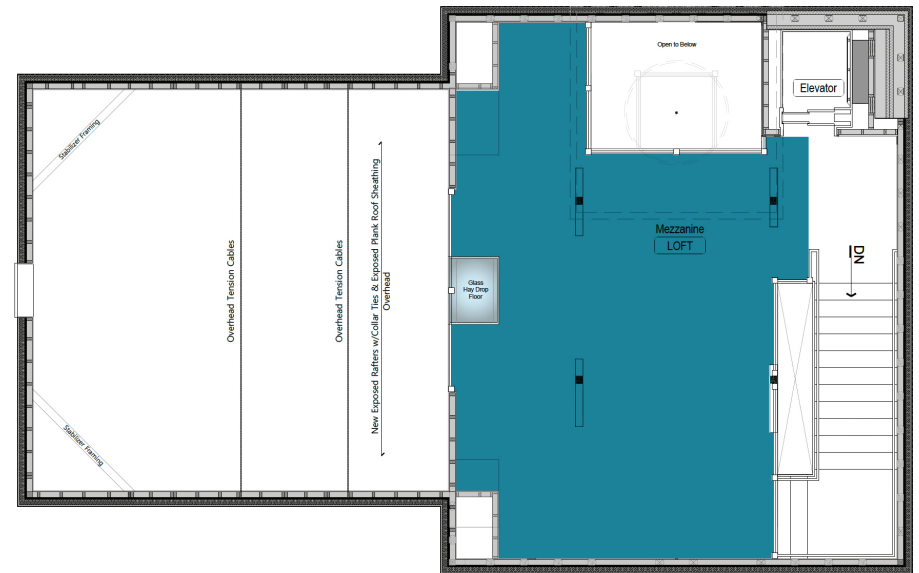
Although it would be possible to insert more exhibit signage or elements into the first floor, it is not really necessary. The targeted audiences for the exhibits are the weekend, recreational visitors from out of town. The number of potential exhibit elements identified here (7 permanent signs, 10 temporary signs, 4 cases) provides more than adequate opportunity for the depth of content that would be suitable for this audience.

The second-floor diagram also uses red to show the best potential locations for signs, and brown for less-than-ideal locations. There are actually more opportunities for wall signage on the second floor than the first. There is space for up to 3 vitrines. As the small square-footage limits the total number of visitors who can view the exhibit at one time, it seems appropriate to decrease the signs from 12 to 6-8.



## FIRST FLOOR

- PERMANENT EXHIBIT: WATER TOWER BARN
- TEMPORARY/MOVABLE EXHIBIT



## SECOND FLOOR

- TEMPORARY/FIXED EXHIBIT: SOFTBALL

Ultimately, the process helps us outline the general scope/format of the exhibit options:

**Permanent Exhibit: “A Storied Structure: The Scandia Water Tower Barn”**

- First Floor
- Three “zones” (north wall, well shaft, east wall)
- 4-6 signs on exterior walls on first floor – could extend to second floor
- 1-2 vitrines
- Exhibit will be on display 5-8 years
- Target Audience: first-time, recreational “weekend visitors” and repeat, local “heritage hounds”
- Exhibit includes themes:
  - Frank and Ida Lake’s arrival in Scandia
  - Establishment of Mercantile businesses
  - Need for water tower, service to village core, role in supporting growth
  - Water Tower Barn function – how the engineering works
  - Preservation and Restoration of the Water Tower Barn

**Permanent Exhibit: “Game on: Scandia’s Softball Champions”**

- Second floor
- 6-12 signs on walls
- 2-3 vitrines – including mannequin display/s of uniform
- Possible opportunity for video piece
- Exhibit will be on display 5-8 years
- Target Audience: repeat, local “heritage hounds”
- Exhibit includes themes:
  - Success of teams
  - Impact on community spirit
  - (other themes to be confirmed after research completed)

### **Temporary/Seasonal Exhibit**

- First floor
- Up to 12 signs on portable/removable banners (if using “pinwheel” strategy)
- ~2 vitrines (same as permanent)
- Potential video projection piece along west-side performance wall
- Exhibit will be on display 4-6 months
- Target Audience: first-time, recreational “weekend visitors” and repeat, local “heritage hounds”
- Best for seasonal/entertaining topics like:
  - John Dillinger Drank Here
  - Cooperatives
  - Ghost Towns and Graveyards





Next Steps

# Inspiration

Scandia Heritage Alliance is seeking to design spaces that will support both a healthy and creative schedule of exhibits, as well as impactful lectures and other public events. The need for flexibility is particularly important on the first floor, which will be frequently transformed from an exhibit space to a gathering space.

We recommend two types of exhibit spaces to highlight the significant stories associated with Washington County.

## Permanent Exhibits (Second Floor and North Side of First Floor)



Permanent exhibits typically include cases, mannequins, reading rails, and traditional signs.

## Temporary Exhibits (First Floor)

With limited space and limited staff available, it is important that the temporary exhibits be easily collapsed, transported, and stored.



A system of suspending signs off tracks allows for a heavier, more solid feeling. Design and construction costs are higher, and storage requires unclipping signs and/or creating a zone for panels to line up together.



Vinyl, convention style banners are extremely popular for temporary exhibits. Production is inexpensive, and storage is easy. Vinyl signs can feel flimsy and have a lot of movement. Sintra signs can feel slightly more stable, but do not collapse.



Self-supporting panels can be constructed from wood. Their heaviness and size can be difficult for individuals to transport.



Fabric or vinyl signs can be supported on dowels or hung from grommets. Weighted dowels on the bottom can minimize movement. Image resolution and typeface can be slightly blurry on fabric.

# Exhibit and Program Development

Scandia Heritage Alliance will spend the next two to three years reconstructing the Water Tower Barn, creating landscaping, finishing the barn interior, moving into it, and opening the new heritage center. While there will be many demands on SHA's time, exhibit and programming development must remain a priority in order to launch the exhibits and programs in a timely manner after opening. Below is a recommended phasing schedule.

## Recommended Priorities

Though the following timeline is likely to shift, the order and phasing of these steps should remain reliable.

### **Priority I: Design the Permanent “A Storied Structure: The Scandia Water Tower Barn” Exhibit (3-6 months)**

As soon as funding allows, SHA should hire an exhibit design team to research and design the permanent exhibit. This is a complex exhibit with an ambitious vision for creating a replica of the windmill tank system.

### **Priority II: Design the Permanent Softball Exhibit (3-6 months)**

As soon as the on-going softball research is completed, and funding is available, SHA should hire an exhibit design team to design this permanent exhibit.

### **Priority III: Create Simple Exhibits for Opening (2 months)**

In preparation for the Heritage Center opening, simple, temporary exhibits should be installed on the first floor. The pre-existing research and content in the historic tour brochure could work well. Inexpensive solutions such as vinyl banners would work, too.

### **Priority IV: Build and Install Permanent Exhibits (6 months)**

Once the funding is available, construct and install the two permanent exhibits.

### **Priority V: Establish Adult Programming (2 months)**

Focus on adult programming first. Lectures, workshops, and book readings are easier to develop and will build credibility with the adult audience.

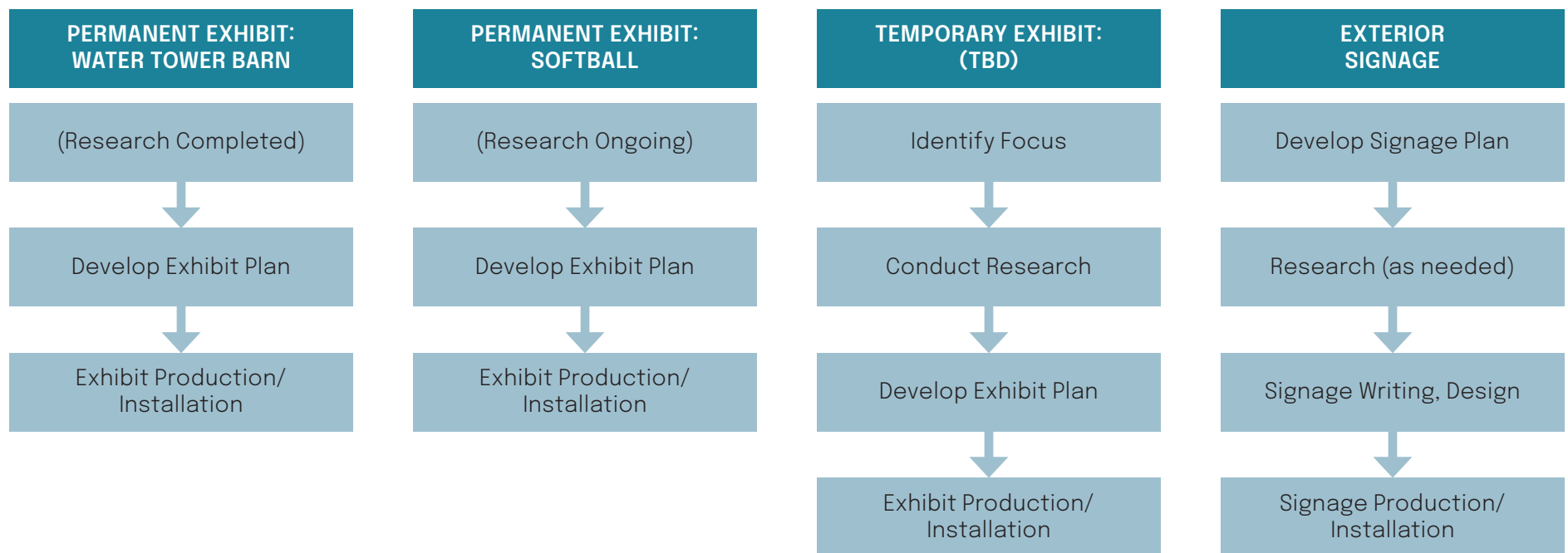
### **Priority VI: Expand Special Events Programming (2 months)**

Expand the seasonal, special programs for the general audience.

### **Priority VII: Establish Special Exhibits and Temporary Gallery Schedule (6 months)**

Once the permanent exhibits are open, develop the schedule for travelling and temporary exhibits. Original exhibits will require adequate time (one or more years) for research, design, and construction.

The creation of the Water Tower Barn Scandia site is a large, multi-year project, including historic building reconstruction, playground, amphitheater, landscaping elements, paths, interior exhibits, and external signage. It is being developed in collaboration with a large group of partners and stakeholders. Keeping the different details in mind is tricky! SHA has demonstrated a remarkable ability to build and maintain momentum. The following recommended steps are created with an eye towards the interpretive elements, only.





# Budgeting Guidance

Interpretive costs can be among the largest and most variable expenses within an organization's budget. For exhibits, the variables are square footage, exhibit quality, and exhibit type. For programming, the variables are staffing levels, frequency of programs, and complexity and type of programs. Neither exhibits nor programs are ever likely to "carry their weight" by creating enough income to cover their costs. These efforts are conducted because they are central to the organization's mission, and are often the most visible evidence of the organization's health and relevance within a community.

## Exhibits

The floor plans in this Interpretive Plan for the new Water Tower Barn Scandia have set aside three different spaces for exhibits. The following cost estimates for creating exhibits within these spaces *do not include finishing the spaces* (such as electrical wiring, exhibit-quality lighting, carpeting, painting, security, climate control, and built-in lighting and shelving for display walls). Those costs should be included as construction costs for the building.

### Opening Temporary Exhibit: (TBD)

A temporary exhibit on vinyl banners could be developed for the opening. This display could be re-used for outreach events. We recommend budgeting \$10,000–\$15,000 for the design and production of 10 signs.

### Permanent Exhibit: "A Storied Structure: The Scandia Water Tower Barn"

The permanent exhibit is intended to be installed along the north side of the first floor, with a shaft going both up to the second floor and down to the basement, as well as potential signage on the second floor and basement. Based on conversations with the committee and in alignment with industry practices, this is envisioned to be the most impressive and highest quality exhibit within the space, with complex interactives and potentially a media piece. The cost for developing high-level exhibits is around \$500 to \$750/sf. With the exhibit footage of around 200sf, we suggest budgeting \$100,000 to \$150,000 for this space, including around \$30,000 for research and planning.

### **Permanent Exhibit: Softball**

The permanent exhibit is intended to be installed on the second floor. Based on conversations with the committee, this is envisioned to be a medium quality exhibit, mostly reliant on artifacts and signage, and potentially a media piece. The cost for developing mid-level exhibits is around \$200 to \$250/sf. With the second-floor space around 400sf, we suggest budgeting \$80,000 to \$100,000 for this space, including around \$25,000 for research and planning.

### **Temporary Exhibit**

The temporary exhibit space is intended to support easily removed, two- and three-dimensional exhibits that rotate every six to eighteen months. These exhibits will have minimal interactive pieces. The exhibit vitrines could be re-used for new exhibits. Estimates for production depend on quality and size of exhibit. This estimate matches the “hanging exhibit” format that SHA has expressed interest in. The initial cost to design and develop an exhibit for a mid-level-quality, 625sf. space is estimated to be around \$100 to \$200/sf., or about \$62,500 to \$125,000 (including research and planning, as well as design of a temporary wall system). Future exhibits would be less expensive, approximately \$40,000, as the vitrines and wall system could be re-used.

## **Programs**

This plan does not offer a detailed description of the future programs at the Water Tower Barn Scandia, which are being developed elsewhere. However, it is important to keep these program costs in mind. Within this market, a lead full-time program position salary is typically \$60,000 to \$75,000. This person would develop, plan, and market programs (conceive of ideas, coordinate speakers and specialists, schedule volunteers, develop promotional materials, order food, and manage reservations) and run the programs (manage volunteers, present lecture/lessons, support speakers, manage visitors, coordinate evaluations, and handle fees and payments).

Beyond staffing costs, programs also require budgeting for marketing, materials, speaker fees, and other miscellaneous costs. We recommend a budget of \$2,000 a month – or \$24,000 a year – as a baseline.

## Total Interpretive Budget Estimates

	2025	2026	2027	2028 and on
<b>EXHIBITS</b>				
Opening Exhibit (10 signs - vinyl banners)		\$15,000		
Permanent Exhibit: Frank Lake and Water Tower	\$30,000	\$120,000		
Permanent Exhibit: Softball	\$25,000	\$75,000		
Temporary Exhibit			\$125,000	\$40,000
<b>Total Exhibits</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>	<b>\$210,000</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>
<b>PROGRAMS</b>				
Staff (1 FT position)		\$75,000	\$78,750	\$82,688
Materials		\$24,000	\$25,200	\$26,460
Marketing and Speaker Fees		\$25,000	\$26,250	\$27,563
<b>Total Programs</b>		<b>\$124,000</b>	<b>\$130,200</b>	<b>\$136,710</b>
<b>TOTAL NEW INTERPRETIVE COSTS</b>	<b>\$55,000</b>	<b>\$334,000</b>	<b>\$255,200</b>	<b>\$176,710</b>





Members of Frank and Ida Lake family in front of mercantile. Holly Kaufhold. Gifted by Lake Family.

SCANDIA HERITAGE



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