



SCANDIA HERITAGE ALLIANCE: **RAISE OUR HISTORIC WATER TOWER BARN**



WATER TOWER BARN - SCANDIA ARTS & HERITAGE CENTER

Executive Summary

The Scandia Heritage Alliance (SHA) envisions restoring the city's historic Water Tower Barn to serve as a regional Arts & Heritage Center. Built in c. 1895 by Scandia Mercantile owner Frank Lake, the barn provided water to early residents and businesses. The iconic building is believed to be the state's only remaining tankhouse, and we are working to seek placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

Plans for the **Water Tower Barn Arts & Heritage Center** include Scandia history displays, demonstration of a functioning tankhouse and windmill, an indoor stage, an outdoor amphitheater, a water play area, wetland overlook and trails, and a summer café featuring traditional Swedish fare. This beautiful gathering space will celebrate the history, arts, and cultural heritage of Scandia through museum exhibits, art shows, music concerts, theater productions, arts and environmental classes, and cultural events.

Heritage Preserved

The Water Tower Barn – Scandia Regional Arts & Heritage Center will provide a place to celebrate and share Scandia's rich history, recognizing its unique position as home of the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota. Museum displays will tell stories of Native American settlements, immigrant agrarian farming, and Scandia's successful transition to a small center of commerce.

The restored Water Tower Barn will showcase 19th Century craftsmanship, including hand-hewn logs in a post-and-beam structure and an operational tankhouse. An elevated wooden water tank will occupy the tower, and a windmill will sit atop the barn's distinctive cupola. Stepping back in time, visitors will fill their water bottles using a historic hand pump.



The Story of Scandia and Settlers' Valley: Re-Energizing the American Dream

Scandia has tales to tell—from its first Dakota and Ojibwe people to stories of inspired immigrants looking for better lives. How can their rich sagas educate Minnesotans about our Native and immigrant roots and the similar experiences our ancestors share with today's new Americans? We believe our common backgrounds can help create cohesive community in divided times – and simultaneously inspire and bring hope to new immigrants seeking the American dream.

Originally part of Marine Mills, Scandia is one of several communities in the St. Croix River Valley that formed as new settlers – primarily Swedish – made their way to communities like Marine Mills, Lindstrom, Taylors Falls, and Chisago Lakes. Drawn to the area's abundant lumber, river traffic, and farmland, they populated the area known as Settlers' Valley. The Water Tower Barn represents the success of the next generations as they opened businesses like the mercantile, creamery, bank, and millinery in the township of New Scandia. SHA aims to collaborate with nearby communities to develop regional tourism around the story of Swedish immigration.



Celebrating the Arts

Living in the St. Croix River Valley, we are surrounded by an amazing arts community that is not currently showcased in Scandia. The Water Tower Barn and an outdoor amphitheater will bring our community together for local and regional art shows, art classes, music, theater, film, and school concerts. The Water Tower Barn will feature an indoor stage, hosting up to 80 people, while the amphitheater will seat up to 260.

Location and Water Features

The location for the Water Tower Barn Arts & Heritage Center is perfectly situated on Olinda Trail just south of the Community Center and across the road from the world-class Gammelgården Museum. The site is surrounded by three healthy wetlands and has a beautifully forested backdrop.

The Center's water focus will provide an opportunity to educate visitors via interpretive displays on the importance of our wetlands, lakes, streams, aquifers, and the St. Croix River – all vital features of our beautiful city. Programming plans include summer day camps for kids focused on the arts and environment.



The Center will feature a summer splash pad for kids (image is representative and not the actual design)

Family-friendly Venues

An outdoor amphitheater, splash pad, and summer café featuring traditional Swedish fare will welcome both local families and regional visitors. We anticipate that families camping at William O'Brien State Park will bike to our facility along the future Gateway Trail extension connecting the park to Scandia's Village Center. The amphitheater will also be a perfect summer venue for our youth theater classes; for local elementary teachers to conduct outdoor classroom activities; for school band, jazz, and choir concerts; and for outdoor movie events.

Synergy with Gammelgården Museum

Scandia is blessed with a wonderful cultural gem – the acclaimed Gammelgården Museum. The future Arts & Heritage Center will neighbor the museum, and the two venues plan to hold joint events and create synergistic attractions. Partnership has already begun with the Scandia History Series and SHA's Annual Progressive Dinner, a community event held in part at the Museum.



Why Now?

You might be asking yourself, "Why is this important now? What is the urgency?" For many reasons, now is the time.

Project Momentum

The Arts & Heritage Center has gained community and city support, and project success hinges on continued enthusiasm. Local residents have strongly indicated their desire to maintain Scandia's rural character, enhance small-town charm, and preserve history – all of which are elements of our project. We have unanimous City Council endorsement and Parks & Recreation Committee involvement. In 2020 the City agreed to lease the land to SHA for \$1/year for 100 years, and in 2021 it endorsed the architectural renderings. The project is clearly aligned with the City's long-range plans, and maintaining momentum is critical to meet our fundraising deadline with the City.

Viable Barn Materials

We currently have an opportunity to save an iconic structure – the Water Tower Barn. The historic barn was painstakingly dismantled in 2014 to allow for future restoration. SHA has received a \$10,000 grant from the Minnesota Historical Society to research the "history, engineering, and distinctive design" of the tankhouse, pump, and windmill construction. We must act soon while the stored original barn materials remain viable.

Attracting and Serving Young Families

The Arts & Heritage Center will attract new families to Scandia by offering family-friendly programming that serves the community's needs. Scandia Elementary School is increasingly serving students from expanded boundaries rather than Scandia itself. Attracting young families will help ensure the future viability of our treasured school.

Telling the Native American story

Interest has been growing locally in gaining a fuller understanding of our region's history. Prior to the arrival of the first Swedish immigrants, Scandia was home to Dakota and Ojibwe Nations. SHA aims to celebrate and raise awareness of the culture of Indigenous Peoples from the St. Croix River Valley.

Shared Immigrant Experiences

Telling Scandia's immigrant story and demonstrating the value that immigrants have always brought to our American society is more relevant and compelling than ever before. All immigrants come to America with their own version of a similar story. We hope to encourage immigrants from all nations to visit our Center and share their experiences. Exploring our shared stories will emphasize our many similarities, energize the American dream, and demonstrate that the dream is indeed alive today.



Make Your Own History: Partner With Us

We invite you to be part of Scandia's Legacy – to partner with us in rebuilding the iconic Water Tower Barn, create greater understanding of our shared immigrant histories, and celebrate local art and artists.

We are seeking to raise \$1.5 million in private/foundation funding and \$1.5 million in public funding.



Our Mission: To make Scandia a uniquely interesting and vibrant place to live in and visit by preserving and celebrating our rich history, culture, arts, and rural character.

Our Vision: Scandia is blessed with a rich history and sense of place due to its unique position as the first Swedish settlement in Minnesota, its beautiful natural and rural landscapes, and its tradition of local arts and artists. Going forward, we envision a community that has worked together to preserve, restore, and celebrate our community assets, creating a vibrant village center with preserved buildings that complement the existing Gammelgården Museum and a community center complex that includes the Water Tower Barn: Scandia Arts & Heritage Center. Our community character will enrich the lives of Scandia residents and inspire properly scaled tourism and economic development. As a result, Scandia will be widely viewed as a uniquely interesting and vibrant place to live in and visit.





Visit Scandia Heritage Alliance:
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