



March 13, 2017

Mr. Joseph Kernell
Greenville County Administrator
Greenville County Office
301 University Ridge, Ste. 2400
Greenville, SC 29601

Dear Greenville County Administrator Kernell:

On behalf of the Board of Directors for the Upcountry History Museum – Furman University, I respectfully submit for your consideration the Board’s interest in expanding the Museum’s operations to include management of the historic Coca Cola bottling building at Heritage Green, Greenville, SC.

The Museum, a 501(c) 3 organization, founded in 1983, opened its purpose built History Museum in 2007, adjacent to the Coca Cola bottling building. For the past 10 years the organization has remained debt free while successfully growing both its operations and its mission to connect people, history and culture.

In 2012, the organization sought a professional museum leader to re-imagine the Museum and engage it with its community. In 2013, following my hiring, the Board of Directors committed to an aggressive strategic plan that focused on positioning the Museum as a dynamic, relevant and active community partner. The museum viewed the process not as re-branding, but rather as a strategy project, focused on designing the museum to appeal to a broader audience. Preserving and presenting the history of the Upcountry was partnered with the goals of inspiring imagination, stimulating thought, and creating a welcoming environment.

Since 2013, in addition to my hire and the creation of a strategic plan, the Museum has instituted new mission, vision and goal statements; created a business plan, a 5-year exhibition plan, and a collection care and management plan. The statements and plans were developed to diversify and improve delivery, impact, and return on investment.

The past four years have included significant capital fundraising and subsequent improvements that support the strategic plan and contribute to achieving its goals. The Museum has successfully raised over \$500,000 for the installation of a humidity control system, the build-out of an industry approved permanent collection storage area, the creation of a third changing exhibition gallery, the installation of a recording studio for the oral history department, and the installation of a new building-wide security system.



Additional outcomes as a result of strategic planning, fundraising and the ability to initiate change from 2014 to the present include:

- Achieved Smithsonian Affiliate status in 2015
- Established 6 new funded initiatives committed to providing museum access for underserved audiences (Neighborhood Night, Memory Café, Family Fun Day, EBT Card Program participant, Blue Star Museum participant, Museums for All participant)
- Provide up to 9 changing exhibitions per year (compared to 1 per year 2007-2012)
- Selected by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service to be the premier venue for two separate exhibitions (*Searching for the Seventies: The DOCUMERICA Photography Project*, 2015 and *Things Come Apart*, 2016)
- Have been approved to host major object-based traveling exhibitions and the loan of objects over the next 5+ years from: National Museum of American History, National Portrait Gallery, American Art Museum, National Archives, National Endowment for the Humanities, Jim Henson private collection, City of New York Museum, Kent State University Museum, Rock ‘n Roll Hall of Fame & Museum, Norman Rockwell Museum, Charles M. Schulz Museum, Center for Puppetry Arts, Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Services, Eric Carle Museum, Bank of America Private Art Collection, U.S. Naval History & Heritage Command, The Citadel, South Carolina Historical Society, South Carolina Department of Archives & History, Caroliniana Library, Clemson University Special Collections; and more
- Have added 4 new full-time and 2 new part-time positions to the Museum staff
- Increased Museum’s annual operating budget by \$200,000
- Additions to the permanent collection have increased by 5%
- School group visitation to the Museum has increased by 10%
- Individual Giving to the Museum has increased by 15%
- Museum membership has increased by 16%
- Facility rentals at the Museum have increased by 17%
- Foundation and Corporate Giving to the Museum have increased by 35%
- Out-of-Town visitation to the Museum (tracked by zip codes) has increased by 37%
- Overall attendance at the Museum has increased by 60%

Through strategic planning and decisive implementation the Museum is poised to grow, thrive, deliver and engage local residents and out-of-town visitors in history and the cultural arts, as well as contribute to creating and sustaining a vibrant community.

The Museum views the adjacent Coca Cola building as a natural extension for its continued growth and development. If selected, the Museum would utilize the building as its major changing exhibition space. The building would be open year-round to the public, at a minimum of 6 days per week. During the months of June – September, and during the holiday season, the building would be open 7 days a week.

The Coca Cola building has been renovated and designed to serve as an approved industry-standard museum space. The building's climate control, lighting and security systems; visitor amenities; interior and exterior accessibility; and proximity to the Upcountry History Museum make it "move in ready" for the Upcountry History Museum's intended exhibition use.

As the Upcountry History Museum is the only entity at Heritage Green to own its own parking lot (80 spaces and 2 handicap spaces) it will provide immediate delivery and parking access for the Coca Cola building. The Museum will extend parking access to guests visiting both its original building and the Coca Cola building. The parking lot is also readily available to both buildings for semi-truck and box truck deliveries, coach and school bus parking, and space for outdoor events and activities.

The Museum exhibition plans include: re-opening the Coca Cola building to the general public on October 14, 2017 with a major special exhibition titled *Katharine Hepburn: Dressed for Stage and Screen*. This 2,500 square foot costume exhibition from The Kent State University Museum, includes over 50 costumes and memorabilia from the Hollywood legend's private collection. On display October 14, 2017 through February 5, 2018, the project would be the first major costume exhibition to be displayed in the Upstate. A *Red Carpet Chic* Hollywood premiere event would celebrate the re-opening of the building, the Museum's 10th Anniversary, and the opening of the *Katharine Hepburn* exhibition.

Subsequent exhibitions for the Coca Cola building have been tentatively secured for the 2017-2018 exhibition season and beyond. Pending a decision, the Upcountry History Museum has placed tentative holds on major exhibition projects to ensure their availability should the Upcountry History Museum be selected to operate the building.

The Museum's leadership and Finance Committee are carefully reviewing projected operational costs and models to ensure that the organization can successfully operate and sustain two museum buildings.

The Museum strives every day to "earn our stripes" and to demonstrate to the Greenville County Council, who generously supports the Museum's efforts, that we are a worthy investment. The Upcountry History Museum would apply this same philosophy in its management of the Coca Cola building to ensure the ongoing success, historic preservation, and continued use of this iconic historic structure.

Thank you for giving the Upcountry History Museum – Furman University's request to operate the Coca Cola bottling building, consideration. I look forward to our continued conversations. If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,



Dana L. Thorpe
Chief Executive Officer