



LancasterHistory

April 15, 2024

Lancaster County Convention Center Authority
Kevin Molloy, Executive Director
25 South Queen Street
Lancaster, PA 17603

Dear Mr. Molloy, Chair Nelson, and Authority Board Members,

The following proposal seeks to answer this question:

How can LancasterHistory ensure that visitors to the Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy, the long-awaited final component of the Lancaster County Convention Center's original vision, conclude their Lancaster visit convinced they have had the best museum and hospitality experience of their lives?

On behalf of the Board of Directors of LancasterHistory, I am pleased to submit to the Lancaster County Convention Center Authority this proposal for the future use of the Historic Swan Hotel. LancasterHistory proposes to transform the Swan Hotel into a showcase Welcome Center for visitors to the *Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy*.

Outfitted in a style and with furnishings reflective of Historic Lancaster—particularly the decades in which Stevens and Smith lived in Lancaster—visitors, upon entering, will be transported to the mid-nineteenth century where they will discover light food and beverage service, retail gift shopping, plentiful restrooms, welcoming meeting spaces for special group gatherings, a tailored orientation to the City of Lancaster's many offerings, all while relaxing in a comfortable period-inspired space awaiting their timed-entry to the Stevens & Smith Center for History and Democracy.

With gratitude to the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County for their early work and vision for this property, and in sincere appreciation of the collaborative working relationship forged between the Convention Center Authority leadership and LancasterHistory leadership over more than a decade, LancasterHistory is genuinely excited about the opportunity presented by the Historic Swan Hotel to ensure the success of the Stevens & Smith Center, and add to the many successes of the Lancaster County Convention Center.

As we approach the five-year anniversary of commencing our planning for the Stevens & Smith Center, we continue to be amazed at the depth and number of compelling stories of struggle and courage that await the American public in this future world-class museum. Having just completed the site-stabilization phase of the project, as well as the exhibition planning, artifact gathering, and the site's architectural design work, we have come to the realization that every bit of useable space within the

leased facility will be fully devoted to telling stories, displaying artifacts, and engaging the public in these vitally important and long-neglected parts of America's history.

Based on current conservative estimates of at least 50,000 visitors per year in each of the first five years, (James Hartling's 2021 Pro-forma Business Plan for the Stevens & Smith Center), LancasterHistory is compelled to ensure that all visitors to the Center find a comfortable, welcoming, and adequately spacious environment from which to begin their experience. With no room to spare in the currently leased space, we seek to transform the Historic Swan Hotel into just that place of welcome. In addition, with our hours of operation primarily from 9am-5pm, we believe there are opportunities for the Convention Center to add the Swan Hotel to its list of historic reception spaces when your demand is high.

LancasterHistory has a demonstrated capacity to plan, fund, and execute precisely this type of proposal. Over the last 15 years, we merged the Lancaster County Historical Society with President Buchanan's Wheatland, rebranded as LancasterHistory; transformed our 12 acres on North President Avenue into a *Campus of History* with a striking new 20,000 sq. ft. addition and renovation of our 1955 building; and assumed the entire collections of the former Heritage Center Museum and the Lancaster Quilt and Textile Museum; all while conducting a \$13.5 million campaign to expand our facilities, to which we added an additional \$3.5 million campaign to endow the Heritage Center Collection. In each of those endeavors the board of directors of LancasterHistory exercised caution, made fiscally conservative decisions based on facts and careful planning, and succeeded in each instance.

It is with precisely this type of careful planning for the future, combined with creative thinking to solve or avoid problems, that we see the Historic Swan Hotel as the best answer to the question: *How can we ensure that visitors to the Stevens & Smith Center, a critical component of the Lancaster County Convention Center, leave Lancaster having had the best museum and hospitality experience of their lives?*

In full compliance with easements protecting the exterior of the Swan Hotel, we envision an architecturally sympathetic addition along Vine Street that will provide a street-level, fully accessible entry. While preserving the two remaining fireplaces on the first floor, we envision a completely renovated interior with all the appearance of the mid-nineteenth century yet all the modern conveniences of the twenty-first century.

We will be delighted to discuss this proposal in greater detail with your leadership, and we remain open to your ideas on how this use of the Swan Hotel will work to the advantage of both the Stevens & Smith Center and the Lancaster County Convention Center.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Ryan
President & CEO

LancasterHistory's ***Historic Swan Hotel Proposal***

101 S. Queen Street
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

LancasterHistory proposes to transform the Historic Swan Hotel into a showcase Welcome Center for visitors to the *Thaddeus Stevens & Lydia Hamilton Smith Center for History and Democracy*. Outfitted in a style and with furnishings reflective of historic Lancaster—particularly the decades in which Stevens and Smith lived on the corner of East Vine and South Queen Street across from the Swan—visitors will be transported to the mid-nineteenth century where they will find light food and beverage service, retail gift shopping, plentiful bathrooms, welcoming meeting spaces for special receptions, and a general orientation to the City of Lancaster's many offerings, all while relaxing in a comfortable period-inspired space as they await their timed-entry to the Stevens & Smith Center.

Background History

We recall with immense gratitude the early work of the Historic Preservation Trust of Lancaster County, former leaseholders of the Swan Hotel, on the two Lydia Hamilton Smith properties, the Kleiss Brewery, and the Stevens & Smith Home and Law Office. After their successful restoration of the exteriors of several of those buildings, and due to the economic recession of 2008, the Preservation Trust invited LancasterHistory to take on the future development and complete the project they envisioned. LancasterHistory readily agreed to step in, yet amid the economic downturn, and in the interest of ensuring the future success of the project, we chose to limit the new lease to only the Kleiss and Stevens & Smith buildings, as well as the area below the Commons on Vine. We believed then that those two historic spaces, along with the adjacent new construction, would be sufficient to tell the pathbreaking stories of these long-neglected heroes in the struggle for equality and racial justice in America. We still believe those spaces are perfect for telling these important stories.

Current Status

After four years of careful planning by a national committee of scholars and museum professionals, with architectural design and infrastructure improvements coordinated by Centerbrook Architects, and exhibition design by Ralph Applebaum Associates (one of the world's leading designers of museum installations), LancasterHistory has successfully raised over \$15.7 million in pledges toward a capital budget of \$19 million and is ready to award a construction contract to begin work on the Stevens & Smith Center within the next few weeks.

To our delight, and to the benefit of future visitors to the Stevens & Smith Center at the Lancaster County Convention Center, our planning has resulted in an embarrassment of riches in terms of the number of artifacts and furnishings acquired and the breadth of important stories to be told. Based on our final exhibition design plans, we will utilize every one of our 25,000 square feet of leased space to introduce visitors to this history as it occurred in Lancaster and reverberated throughout the nation, including:

- The remarkable history of Underground Railroad activity here in Lancaster,
- Stevens' role in the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the U. S. Constitution,
- The Reconstruction-era legislation championed by Stevens designed to help set the nation on a course for equality,
- Significant events like the Christiana Resistance, a turning point on the path to the Civil War with Black Lancasterians at the center of the story as they pushed back against the Federal Fugitive Slave Law, and
- The extraordinary entrepreneurial career of Lydia Hamilton Smith.

The Center will explore the profound effects that Mr. Stevens, Mrs. Smith, and networks of abolitionists connected to them had on movements to end slavery, support racial equality, and promote full citizenship. We are confident that the exhibits, programs, and state-of-the-art-immersive experiences within the Center's walls will provide an opportunity for learning, while also encouraging visitors to think deeply about notions of equality, citizenship, democracy, and racial justice that continue to shape our nation today. LancasterHistory is honored to be serving as the stewards of this project and is grateful for the collaborative relationship we have enjoyed with the Lancaster County Convention Center as we bring this project to fruition.

Present Challenge

Based on the five-year *pro forma* business plan prepared by Urban Partners of Philadelphia, we conservatively anticipate at least 50,000 visitors per year, or 250,000 within the first five years. On average that would be, at a minimum, 1,000 people per week, 166 per day, and on a busy weekend, perhaps 300 or more per day. Thousands of those visitors will be in residence at the Marriott Hotel or attending conferences, conventions, and meetings at the Convention Center. While we are working closely with Kevin Molloy and Josh Nowak and their respective teams to accommodate this large and steady influx of visitors, many of whom will come as bus groups from throughout the Middle Atlantic region and beyond, we have become acutely aware that adequate, readily available landing space, rest rooms, and waiting areas for anywhere from 50-100 or more people at a time, will be essential for a superior, safe, and rewarding visitor experience at the Stevens & Smith Center.

Proposed Solution

While the new and expanded Commons on Vine event space and lounge may on occasion offer a safe and comfortable landing space for some of the thousands of visitors to the Stevens & Smith Center, we realize that it will not always be available. We understand and fully support the LCCCA's desire to monetize that space to the best possible advantage for guests staying at the Marriott, as well as for conference attendees. We believe the Swan Hotel can provide the ideal place to welcome and engage our visitors, many of whom we will share with the Convention Center, through a combination of orientation, retail shopping, snacks and beverages, comfortable seating, overflow waiting space, and adequate restrooms, all of which will enhance their experience of the Stevens & Smith Center, the Lancaster County Convention Center, and their visit to the City of Lancaster.

Enhanced by elevator access to upper floors and street-level access to the Swan via a sympathetic addition along Vine Street at the rear, all designed to ensure the preservation of

the original historic exterior, we can provide a safe landing place for visitors and a rewarding experience for everyone. With Southern Market across the street, the Plough on the Center Square, and a multitude of other hospitality venues in the adjacent areas, additional food, drink, shopping, and entertainment will be ready at hand.

Lancaster County Convention Center Objectives

Your carefully articulated request for proposals states: *“The first floor of the Swan Hotel has long been envisioned as a restaurant, with the upper floors being lodging.”* However, you continue *“That does not preclude other uses that have synergies with the Convention Center...”*

We believe that enhancing the experience of visitors to the Stevens & Smith Center, who will likely perceive the museum as an integral part of the Convention Center, aligns with many of the goals articulated in your RFP, such as:

- Support and Expand the City Core;
- Streetscape Activation;
- Augment the Growth and Sustain the Convention Center as a public facility and Vital Economic Driver;
- Connecting growth opportunities to the southern half of the City; and
- Developing Additional Amenities surrounding the Convention Center.

Convention Center & Stevens & Smith Center Synergies and Opportunities

The very synergies you identify as markers of success for the Convention Center align with the goals of the Stevens & Smith Center. So, while we are certain that the Historic Swan Hotel will directly help serve the needs of visitors to the Stevens & Smith Center, we also believe it can help meet the growing needs of the Convention Center. In the same way that the Stevens & Smith center will, from time to time, want to rent the Commons on Vine for its special events, dinners, dances, etc., the Convention Center may look to the Historic Swan Hotel to rent available space for small parties and special receptions. It will add another attractive historic venue to your menu of offerings for convention attendees, family reunions, weddings, and hotel guests.

With our principal hours of operation between 9AM and 5PM, five or six days/week, the Swan Hotel can be available on an as-needed basis for the Convention Center. Thus, an important component of the restoration of the Historic Swan Hotel by LancasterHistory will be accommodating the needs, whenever possible, of the Convention Center, especially during your periods of heavy occupancy. There are many additional potential synergies between our two enterprises to discover at the Swan Hotel, and we are eager to explore them with you as a way of contributing to one another’s mutual success.

Return on Investment

While the RFP is billed as a “public sale of the Historic Swan Hotel,” the fact that the building has been vacant for decades makes it impossible for the purchaser to view 80% of the structure, including the basement, second floor, third floor, attic space, or even the entire first floor. As such, it is challenging to estimate the cost of potential hazardous material mitigation,

site stabilization, and structural rehabilitation. This yields a significant level of uncertainty regarding return on investment for an entity that may need to commit—and therefor recoup—several million dollars toward the Swan’s renovation. For LancasterHistory, however, our non-profit status and proven success with fundraising means our success will not be dependent on earned revenues over several years. Rather, the return on investment will be guaranteed in the form of an enhanced experience for visitors to the Stevens & Smith Center at the Lancaster County Convention Center.

Our proposed use of the Swan Hotel will strengthen the success of the future Stevens & Smith Center, and further the successes of the Lancaster County Convention Center. Therefore, LancasterHistory proposes that the Convention Center Authority convey the Historic Swan Hotel to LancasterHistory, at a mutually agreeable price to be negotiated by the two parties. The Swan Hotel will then be developed according to the uses proposed above, and on a timetable that does not impede the successful completion of the Stevens & Smith Center as it is currently envisioned.

It is our expectation that several long-standing supporters of LancasterHistory, who have already committed to support the Stevens & Smith Center, will grasp the significance of this unique opportunity and work with us to provide the construction funds necessary to bring this vision to reality. LancasterHistory has demonstrated a long track record of fundraising success from foundations, individuals, as well as local and state entities, including the CRIZ Authority and State RACP funding. We are confident in our ability to raise the funds needed to make this a resounding success.

Heritage Conservation District

The recently completed site-stabilization phase of the Stevens & Smith buildings demonstrates with clarity that LancasterHistory is adept at honoring the integrity of historic structures and can plan and execute such preservation efforts with care, attention to detail, and with historic authenticity. LancasterHistory’s organizational mission and commitment to preservation make it the ideal partner to ensure the long-term maintenance of this important historic building for our community. LancasterHistory, founded in 1886, is a known and trusted partner in our community, with a commitment to Lancaster’s future based on its illustrious past.

We will gladly conduct all exterior work on the Historic Swan to conform to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the treatment of historic properties and honor the façade preservation easement on the Swan Hotel building. We envision an architecturally sympathetic addition extending to the rear along Vine Street with window and door fenestration that blends with the historic exterior of the Swan Hotel, and the creation of a sidewalk-level, fully accessible entrance to the ground floor. We have several preservation experts on our staff and have worked with the City of Lancaster’s Historic Preservation Officer in the past and will look forward to doing so again to ensure that all designs meet or exceed all requirements.

Project Team

Thomas R. Ryan, President & CEO of LancasterHistory since 1997, will serve as project manager.

Robin Sarratt, Vice President of LancasterHistory and chief fundraiser for the past 17 years, will serve as co-manager of the project.

Ken Huber, Retired owner of TAH Construction, Chair of Building Committee, and Treasurer of the Board of Directors of LancasterHistory, will serve as owner's representative.

Team Partners

Architect, to be determined.

Shawn Weber, TransSystems, will provide structural engineering services.

Moore Engineering for MEP.

Element Environmental Solutions for hazardous material remediation.

The construction company and subcontractors will be selected through a competitive bidding process from amongst Lancaster's many outstanding contractors.

Professional References

The Honorable Danene Sorace, Mayor of Lancaster

John Swanson, Willow Valley Communities

Ismail Smith-Wade-EI, Pennsylvania State Representative

Mike Sturla, Pennsylvania State Representative

Proposed Project Schedule

Months 1-3 Discovery Phase and Engineer's Study and Review

Months 4-6 Mechanical and Architectural Design Phase

Months 7-9 Demolition and Site Stabilization

Months 10-18 Construction and Completion

Property Owner's Participation

Owner-Occupied

Sustainable Building Practices

L.E.E.D. Silver Certification for LancasterHistory Headquarters, 2013

- Geothermal System Heating and Cooling at LancasterHistory
- Solar Panel Installations at LancasterHistory headquarters
- Permeable Pavement installation at LancasterHistory
- Low VOC product selections throughout recently built facility.

Relevant Work (within the last 5 years)

- Fall 2023-Spring 2024 Site Stabilization at 45-47 South Queen Street with \$1.5 million in stabilization work including water mitigation, brick and foundation repointing, extensive excavation, floor joist replacement, steel reinforcement, etc.
- Full historic roof replacement at President Buchanan's Wheatland 2019-2020 at a cost of \$450,000, including major structural repairs and substantial brick repointing.

Financial Capacity to Undertake Project

LancasterHistory has a solid record of success in major fundraising including a \$13.5 million Capital Campaign (2009-2013) during the recent recession, to which we added a second \$3.5 million Campaign to endow the former Heritage Center Collections in perpetuity (2011-2014).

We have successfully raised \$15.7 million for the current Stevens & Smith Center Project through Federal funding sources including the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, State sources including RACP, CRIZ, PHMC, as well as local and regional Foundations and private contributions from philanthropic individuals both locally and nationally. We currently carry investments in excess of \$8 million, including Perpetual Trusts held by Third Parties, Charitable Remainder Trusts, and Investments directly held by LancasterHistory.

Closing Statement

When LancasterHistory agreed, in 2011, to complete the work begun by the Historic Preservation Trust, the country was still recovering from the Great Recession. As we renegotiated the lease with the LCCCA, caution and economic uncertainty led us to forgo the option to include the Swan Hotel in the lease. In hindsight, we admit, we were wrong; the Historic Preservation Trust was correct to have included the Swan in their lease. Now with more than 77% of our project funding in place, the site stabilization completed, architectural plans ready to go, interpretive scripts written, and exhibition cases designed and ready to be manufactured, we have maximized our use of the 25,000 square feet of space. A beautifully restored Swan Hotel, ready to greet visitors to the Stevens & Smith Center, would bring tremendous activity to the Southeast corner of Vine and Queen Streets, offer positive benefits to both the Stevens & Smith Center and the Lancaster County Convention Center, and provide assurance that visitors will be fully satisfied with their Lancaster experience. We thank you for the opportunity to present this proposal for your thoughtful consideration and look forward to discussing it further with you.



LancasterHistory

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