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September 6, 2003

From: Institute for Senior Professionals

To: Rae Williams  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees  
Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida  
Valparaiso, FL

Dear Ms Williams:

The Heritage Museum Committee appointed by the Institute for Senior Professionals (ISP) has reviewed the physical facility occupied by the Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida and has considered the problems of its location and condition as requested in your letter of May 10, 2003 to Eileen Arpke, Chairperson of ISP. The committee believes the existing facility is inadequate for the present operations of the Museum due to its location, size and layout, physical condition and architectural design. These issues and a recommended course of action are very briefly discussed below.

## LOCATION

Broad public awareness of the Museum is a desirable ingredient for its success. However, the location of the facility is not readily obvious. This point is demonstrated by the fact that the number of signatures in the visitors' register is only one-thirtieth of the number enjoyed by the Indian Mound Museum in Fort Walton Beach. This difference is believed to be almost entirely an issue of location.

It is not believed that the problem of location can be truly overcome by publicity, directional signs, upgrading, reconstruction or any other means. The only real means of resolving this problem is to relocate the Museum to a very visible and easily accessible location.

## SIZE AND LAYOUT

It is understood that the size of the present facility is approximately 6,000 square feet. If the Museum plans to continue its efforts to display and store artifacts and documents; provide space to conduct research; have a shop area in which to prepare

displays and work on artifacts; maintain a reference library for heritage crafts and local history; dedicate space for classrooms; and provide offices for staff; then the size of the facility is believed to be inadequate.

This problem is made more acute by the fact that the oldest part of the existing facility was intended to be a bank, not a museum. Although the recent addition to the facility does increase the total amount of space available, the efficient and satisfactory utilization of the combined space will continue to be a truly difficult goal to attain.

## PHYSICAL CONDITION

It is understood that the roof leaks, insect and rodent problems exist, and fire protection and environmental systems are periodic areas of concern.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The most efficient use of available space and the greatest protection of artifacts and documents entrusted to the Museum can probably only be achieved by a facility reasonably designed to provide these benefits. Whether a new museum is constructed or the existing facility is upgraded and modernized, attention in the design should be given to providing a sprinkler system for fire protection, sealed and insulated walls with vapor barriers, a climate control system that controls both temperature and humidity, and traffic flow patterns that provide separation of activities.

## RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION

In the short course of its work, the committee has learned that there is apparently no strategic (long range) plan and vision statement in place that addresses the most important issues facing the museum; including among other things, the clientele to be served, the ways and means of providing that service and the programs to be offered. The committee feels that the development of a strategic plan and vision statement is the first step that should be taken by the Board of Trustees before the issue of facility revision or relocation can be undertaken. Without the guidance of a strategic plan a recommendation completely out of step with the goals and financial abilities of the Museum might result. In view of this the committee recommends that a planning group consisting of the Board of Trustees, selected members and staff; assisted by ISP members and a competent facilitator, meet as necessary to develop a vision and complete strategic plan.

The committee believes that in the development of the strategic plan and vision every effort should be made to obtain the enthusiastic commitment of the planning group to communicate the plan to the general membership and to go forward with the execution of the plan

Upon completion of the strategic plan work on the facility study can be resumed.

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