



# Fort Dobbs

## State Historic Site

Strategic Plan 2008

## STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

### Overview

The North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites and Properties prepared and presented a plan to the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources for funding the reconstruction of Fort Dobbs in September 2006. The Division requested a local community-based Strategic Planning Committee to conduct a strategic planning process and make recommendations to the Division. The Division of State Historic Sites and the Friends of Fort Dobbs, a not-for-profit membership organization, engaged Cool Spring Center to facilitate this Strategic Plan process in December 2006.

### Developing the Strategic Plan

The external phase of the Strategic Plan process began in January 2007 with two public forums and an open comment period. Over 120 participants shared their visions and concerns during this first step in the process. The next step was to create a broad community-based Strategic Planning Committee, which included representatives from schools, the local community, local government, civic groups, Friends of Fort Dobbs and site staff members. In addition, historians and archaeologists provided consultation throughout the process. After an initial orientation, the Committee reviewed and made recommendations during the course of their meetings related to site plan and development, programs, preservation, marketing/public relations, finances, and staff/volunteer development. Between March and September 2007, the Committee met six times, devoting more than 200 hours toward research, deliberation, reporting, and drafting. The Division of State Historic Sites requested that this plan encompass a ten-year period, beginning July 2008. ***The plan will be reviewed, updated, and revised by site and division staff and representatives from the Strategic Planning Committee as needed.***

### Fort Dobbs' Mission Statement

The mission of Fort Dobbs—

“To preserve and interpret North Carolina’s only French and Indian War fort.”

– Adopted by the Division of State Historic Sites and Friends of Fort Dobbs Board of Trustees, November 21, 2006

(Source: *Board meeting minutes*)





### **Fort Dobbs State Historic Site**

Fort Dobbs State Historic Site is located in present-day Statesville, North Carolina and provides a window into the tumultuous period of history known as the French and Indian War (1754-1763) or Seven Years War. It represents North Carolina's link to a global war for empire between England and France that crossed five continents, lasted nearly a decade, and sowed the seeds of independence. The Fort's construction was ordered by and named after the royal governor of the colony of North Carolina, Arthur Dobbs. North Carolina Provincial soldiers served the royal colony even prior to the Fort's construction during the first Ohio Expedition and continued their service throughout the War serving in campaigns in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New

York. Garrisoned from 1756 until 1761, Fort Dobbs served as a barrack for the North Carolina provincial soldiers, shelter for settlers during Indian attacks, and supply depot for the British Empire. It defined the western frontier for the colony of North Carolina in British North America. On February 27, 1760, the Fort's garrison repulsed an attack of more than sixty Cherokee Indians. The Treaty of Paris ended the French and Indian War in 1763 and Fort Dobbs was abandoned by 1764.

### **Site Background & History**

Fort Dobbs is owned by the state of North Carolina and is administered through the Department of Cultural Resources' Division of State Historic Sites and Properties. The State of North Carolina provides funds for operations, including site staff. The Friends of Fort Dobbs, a not-for-profit volunteer organization with more than 1,000 members nationwide, provides additional financial assistance for educational programs, special events and other needs not covered by the state budget. Iredell County also provides funding for educational programs and outreach.

Fort Dobbs is North Carolina's only French and Indian War State Historic Site. The North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites and Properties was established in 1955 and charged with the responsibility to preserve, interpret, operate, maintain, and develop a system of historic sites of statewide significance. The development of Fort Dobbs as an historic site first began in 1967, when the Historic Sites Division hired UNC-Chapel Hill historian Jerry Cashion to research the Fort's history and design. The following year, North Carolina state archaeologist Stanley South conducted an archaeological dig that confirmed the Fort's location. The N.C. Office of Archives and History held a public meeting at Mitchell Community College in 1968 to explore community members' ideas and attitudes about the State becoming involved with the project. Division of Historic Sites Superintendent Sam Tarleton noted that, if the State did become involved, its intention would be to reconstruct the Fort. The consensus of the Statesville community was that the State should take over the site and rebuild the Fort. With public backing, the State began acquiring property for the Fort Dobbs State

Historic Site in 1969 and had finished this process by 1973. Property owners involved in this 31.44 acre land acquisition included the Fort Dobbs Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, which owned the 9.84 acre tract containing the Fort site and had long desired to reconstruct it. To protect the Fort and enhance the site's visual appeal, a section of road was moved out of the Fort's footprint and utilities were placed underground.

The Fort Dobbs State Historic Site officially opened to the public in 1976. The Iredell County Board of Commissioners voted in 1977 to declare Fort Dobbs a historic property. The action, initiated by the Iredell Historic Properties Commission and supported by the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, was designed to provide additional protection for the site and to preserve it for future development.

A series of seven archaeological excavations have been conducted at the site between 1967 and 2006. The 2005 study by Dr. Lawrence Babits, a scholar trained in archeology and military architecture, reevaluated the results of all previous archeological work. In 2006, Ken Robinson of Wake Forest University conducted additional archeology to clarify certain issues pertinent to the Fort's reconstruction. These excavations uncovered over 5,000 artifacts and architectural features currently being conserved for research and exhibition purposes.



In 2006, the Division of State Historic Sites developed a plan to reconstruct the Fort at a cost of approximately \$2 million. This plan has been endorsed by the Department of Cultural Resources, and the funding for reconstruction of Fort Dobbs is being sought.

In December 2006, the Division of State Historic Sites and the Friends of Fort Dobbs engaged Cool Spring Center to facilitate a Strategic Plan for this important historic site. The resulting document, effective July 2008, will guide the Fort's development for the next ten years.

### **Long Range Goals: Principal Areas of the Plan**

The key components of the Strategic Plan are divided into five areas of operation:

- I. Site Development**
- II. Programming**
- III. Preservation**
- IV. Operations**
- V. Marketing & Outreach.**

Each of these components has long-range goals to be completed in the next ten years. The two central features of the Strategic Plan are 1.) reconstruction of the Fort; and 2.) development of an interpretive plan and accompanying programs. The long-range goals articulated for each area of operation are coordinated to support this overarching project of expanding the facility and its capacity. The components of the Plan are described below:

## I. Site Development

### Goals:

- To accurately reconstruct the Fort Dobbs structure using all archeological data available
- To accurately reconstruct Officer Barracks and other fort structures if sufficient historical and archaeological data is available.
- To construct a 5,000 sq. ft. visitor center providing orientation and interpretive information
- To increase available space for parking to meet the site's needs
- To create and enhance physical/visible landscape barriers between modern facilities and the 18<sup>th</sup>-century site
- To enhance visitor recreation facilities, including a picnic area shelter, playground, performance shell, toilets, and an activities field
- To enhance encampment and living history area
- To continue partnership and involvement in the process with surrounding land owners and the local community

Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Develop and implement Funding Plan for Fort Dobbs Structure.	Staff, Friends, and NCDCCR	Design Phase July 2008; Full Plan July 2010	Enhances public awareness and community relationships. Initial funding acquired.
2. Complete design documents and prepare Construction Plan.	NCDCCR, staff	July 2009	Develops momentum for Fort construction.
3. Implement Construction Plan for Fort Dobbs Structure.	Capital Projects Officer, NCDCCR, and staff	October 2010	Fulfills State commitment and establishes Fort Dobbs as a significant historic destination.
4. Conduct an archaeological assessment of the historic site outside of the Fort footprint.	Office of State Archeology directs the archeological plan and excavation sequence of the site.	Start by July 2008; Ongoing	Identifies areas, including established and potential interpretive features that will prohibit non-interpretive use.



5. Discuss and determine options for relocation of DAR log cabin and site options for recreational areas.	Staff, NCDCCR, DAR leadership, scouts, and neighbors	Start by July 2008	Achieves separation of historic and modern areas, while the preservation efforts led by the DAR and recreational opportunities for the community are honored.
6. Complete an overall site Master Plan.	Staff, NCDCCR, appropriate experts, and consultants	July 2010	Establishes a clear visualization of the Fort Dobbs mission.
7. Develop and implement Funding Plan for museum/visitor center.	Staff, Friends, and NCDCCR	July 2012	Enhances public awareness and community relations. Initial funding acquired.
8. Complete design document and prepare Construction Plan for visitor center.	NCDCCR and staff	July 2014	Develops momentum for construction.
9. Implement Construction Plan for visitor center.	Capital Projects Officer, DCR, and staff	July 2015	Fulfills goal of Strategic Plan and site mission.
10. Complete and implement a business and funding plan for the overall site.	Staff, Friends, NCDCCR, experts, and consultants.	January 2018	Establishes realistic goals that stakeholders can support to achieve the mission.

## II. Programming

### Goals:

- To develop a comprehensive interpretive plan to guide the development of interpretive exhibitions, on-site and outreach programs, and public information materials
- To offer programming that meets the needs and interests of current and potential visitors and other specifically targeted audiences, such as heritage tourists and families
- To conduct regular program assessment and evaluation to determine effectiveness and popularity of programs



<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
1. Develop an Interpretation Plan.	Staff, NCDCCR, and Friends	January 2009	Ascertains research and resources. Establishes institutional partnerships.
2. Implement an Interpretive Plan	Staff, NCDCCR, Friends	Begin by October 2009	Improves program quality, mission appropriate curricula, and historically accurate programs.
3. Integrate NC curriculum points in all appropriate subjects and grade levels within all Fort Dobbs educational programming.	Staff, in consultation with NCDPI	Begin by July 2008	Increases school group visitation and produces higher quality programs.
4. Accentuate topical diversity of program offerings.	Staff	Complete by January 2012	Increases awareness of area history, support from federal and state agencies, visitation, and return visitation.
5. Increase hands-on, interactive and experience-based programming for children and families.	Staff and Friends	Begin by January 2013; ongoing	Increases number of family-oriented programs and attendance by families.
6. Develop and implement comprehensive evaluation program for all educational and interpretation programming.	Staff and Friends	January 2014	Creates new programs, greater understanding of audience and community needs, and improves budgeting and planning.
7. Develop and implement an Exhibition Plan	Staff, in conjunction with the Museum and Visitors Service staff from Division of State Historic Sites	Begin by October 2009; complete by October 2018	Enhances visitor experience and preserves historic structures and on-site and traveling exhibits.



### III. Preservation

Goals:

- To protect, preserve, and maintain the reconstructed Fort for visitor education and appreciation
- To protect and maintain the physical site of Fort Dobbs within its broader ecosystem
- To protect and maintain natural, archaeological, and ethnographic resources
- To protect and conserve archeological objects and research collections
- To complete research and identification of all objects
- To digitize collections information and create informational database for the use of site staff and general public



Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Complete an archaeological plan for the site.	Staff, in conjunction with the Office of State Archaeology and other affiliated institutions	March 2010	Establishes plan to protect and explore archaeological features identified in the archaeological assessment.
2. Implement the DCR Collection Plan.	Staff, in conjunction with the Museum Collection Staff from Division of State Historic Sites	January 2011; ongoing	Identifies, collects, and preserves artifacts and material culture related to the history of the site and North Carolina during the French and Indian War, based on museum standards and best practices.
3. Strengthen partnership with Fort Dobbs and the Office of State Archaeology Research Center.	Staff, in conjunction with the Museum Collection Staff from Division of State Historic Sites	January 2010	Shares established research and databases on Fort Dobbs artifacts for broader research ability. Ensures timely processing of new artifacts.



- |  |       |                |   |
|--|-------|----------------|---|
| 4. Plant foliage screens along site's perimeter in compliance with Site Master Plan. | Staff | September 2010 | Creates natural buffer and protects historical integrity of the site from modern intrusion. |
|--|-------|----------------|---|

#### IV. Operations

Goals:

- To recruit and retain highly qualified staff and volunteers
- To increase the number of site staff to support expanded site and facilities
- To support staff in maximizing operational efficiencies through availability of necessary technology and related resources
- To strengthen the financial support base by:
  - Implementing an annual fundraising appeal
  - Increasing contributions and grant income
  - Creating an endowment
  - Cultivating and expanding the Friends of Fort Dobbs membership
  - Increasing earned income

Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Maintain standard operating schedule and standards.	Staff	July 2008	Operates during hours: 9 – 5, Tuesday - Saturday
2. Add additional permanent staff positions to meet the site's needs.	NCDCR	Based on capital project completion	Spreads workload and improves service and operational efficiency.
3. Create and implement a maintenance cycle.	Staff	January 2009	Establishes site maintenance management process.
4. Institute a planning cycle for technology and support resources.	Staff, NCDCR and Friends	January 2009	Increases efficiency and staff capacity, included in budget planning.
7. Develop a volunteer plan for cultivation, recruitment, training, evaluation, and recognition.	Staff and Friends	Complete by January 2009	Increases number and retention of volunteers. Develops plan for volunteer development and career path.



## V. Marketing & Outreach

### Goals:

- To develop a national reputation as a leader in the field of French and Indian War Fort history and interpretation
- To raise awareness of Fort Dobbs' and North Carolina's roles in the French and Indian War, including the development of a comprehensive marketing plan
- To build relationships and provide opportunities for community support and increased attendance
- To expand and enhance institutional partnerships



Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Develop and implement a Marketing Plan, with emphasis on local, regional, and national outreach. Target groups include families and tourists.	Staff, Friends, and NCDRCR	January 2011	Increases awareness, visitation, public profile, personal community connections, and use of appropriate advertising mediums.
2. Improve and update the newsletter, website, and appropriate links.	Staff and Friends	January 2009	Continue quality newsletter and website, with increased visibility and appeal.
3. Increase email and direct mail contacts.	Staff and Friends	January 2010; ongoing	Increases visitation and awareness of Fort Dobbs and programs. Maximizes use of technology.
4. Expand and enhance institutional partnerships locally, regionally, and nationally.	Staff, Friends, and NCDRCR	January 2012; ongoing	Increases institutional support base.
5. Initiate regular community information meetings with neighbors and local community.	Staff and Friends	July 2008; ongoing	Strengthens the partnership with neighbors and local community.
6. Maximize promotional opportunities associated with Fort Dobbs as NC's only French and Indian War Fort.	Staff, Friends and NCDRCR	January 2011; ongoing	Increases recognition of Fort Dobbs' role in history related to marketing, educational, and fundraising opportunities.



## Strategic Planning Committee

With grateful appreciation to:

Lewis Alexander	Mike Johnson
Susan Allred	John Karriker
Ralph Bentley	Bill Moose
David Bradley	Chuck Nantz
Chandler Bryan	Edmund Pendrich
Ginger Finley	Bob Remsburg
Martha Fowler	Ken Robertson
Sandra Gordon	Cecil Stallard
Bill Hicks	Marin Tomlin
Beth Hill	Glen Usury
Steve Hill	Tenna Williams
Louise Huston	

### Advisors:

Dr. Lawrence Babits, East Carolina University, Dept. of History and Archaeology  
Steve Bell, Architect (site maps)  
Scott Douglas, Historic Interpretation  
Keith Hardison, Director, North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites  
Dr. Tom Hatley, Western Carolina University, Dept. of History, Cherokee studies  
Matthew Keagle, Historic Interpretation  
David Latham, Museum and Visitor Services, N. C. Division of State Historic Sites  
Dr. Johanna Lewis, University of Arkansas, Dept. of History, Settlement history  
John Mintz, North Carolina Office of State Archaeology  
Jeff Wells, Site Director, Fort Loudoun  
Doug Wood, Cherokee History/West Virginia Humanities Scholar

### Facilitated and prepared by:

Charles Page  
Cool Spring Center, Inc.  
[www.coolspring.com](http://www.coolspring.com)

