



POPLAR FOREST STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved by the Board of Directors
The Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest

September 8, 2022



INTRODUCTION

In 1983, Thomas Jefferson's intimate retreat and architectural masterpiece was up for sale and at risk of being adapted for a commercial use. Thanks to the tremendous foresight of a tenacious group of individuals who founded the nonprofit Corporation for Jefferson's Poplar Forest, Jefferson's endangered retreat was rescued for the cultural and educational benefit of the public, now and for future generations.

So much has been achieved since that time—the rescue of a total of 617 acres of original plantation lands; painstaking archaeological excavations revealing important information about the enslaved community and their incredible contributions to Poplar Forest; the first phase of landscape restoration; construction of our new entrance road and trail system; and in the spring of 2023, the successful completion of the state-of-the-art restoration of the Jefferson-era buildings—all thanks to the generosity of many and the unwavering commitment of our dedicated staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors.

Yet we have only just begun to tap our tremendous potential to fulfill our mission to preserve, inspire, and tell the emerging story of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest and to achieve our vision of a restored Poplar Forest that ignites curiosity, understanding, and engagement. This strategic plan guides our path forward, through thoughtfully crafted goals and strategies that position this National Historic Landmark as a thriving and engaging site where all who visit can make valuable connections with the past.

Alyson M. Ramsey,
President & CEO

Dr. Kathryn M. Pumphrey,
Chair, Board of Directors

OUR MISSION



To preserve, inspire, and tell the emerging story of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest

Preserve Thomas Jefferson's personal retreat and plantation

Inspire exploration of his legacy

Tell the stories of the free and enslaved people who lived and worked at Poplar Forest

OUR VISION



We envision a restored Poplar Forest that ignites curiosity, understanding, and engagement.

OUR VALUES



We are STEWARDS

We act responsibly and ethically with regard to all our resources, leading us toward financial stability and sustainability.

We are RELEVANT

We make an impact by connecting Jefferson and the history of Poplar Forest to the concerns and hopes of today.

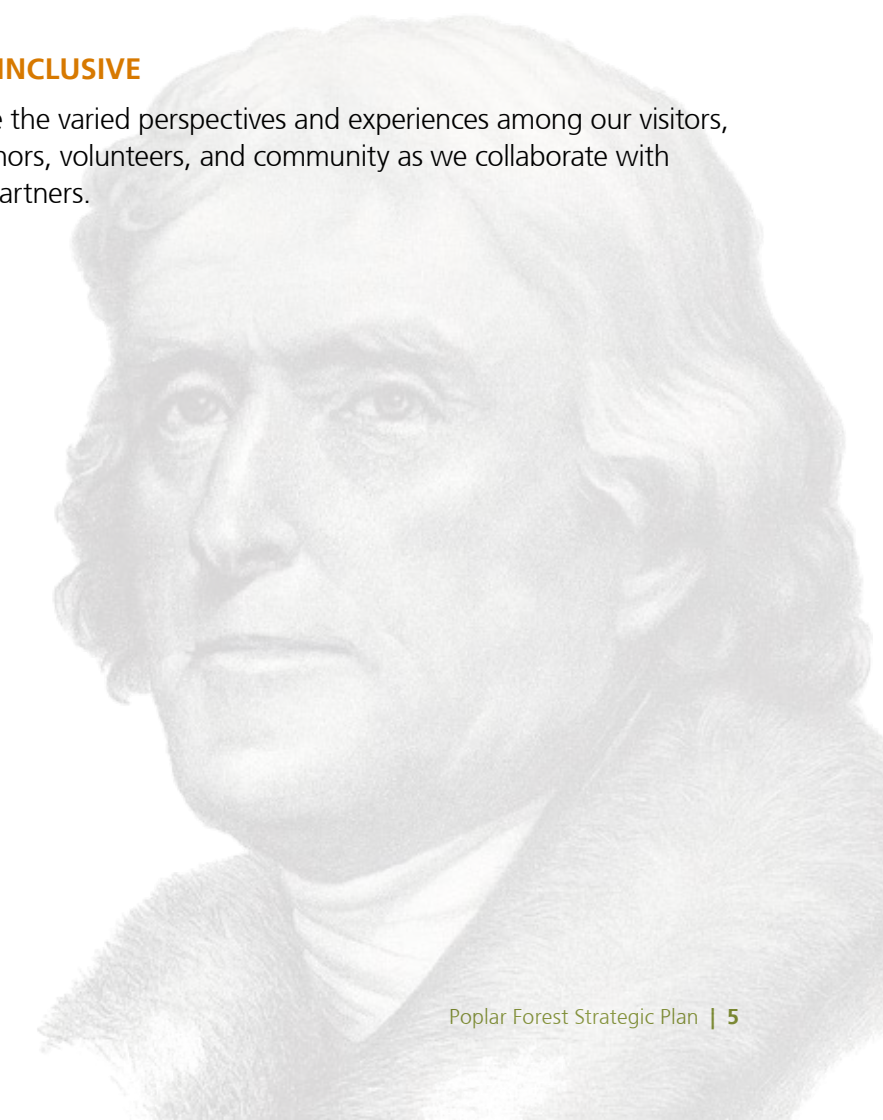
We are EDUCATORS

We are always learning of the stories about Thomas Jefferson, the plantation, and the enslaved and free people of Poplar Forest, and we work to share what we learn with our visitors and the community.



We are INCLUSIVE

We value the varied perspectives and experiences among our visitors, staff, donors, volunteers, and community as we collaborate with diverse partners.





GOAL PILLARS

PRESERVATION

Complete the restoration of the house, start restoring or recreating other sites on the property and begin implementing the plan for the plantation landscape.

NATIONAL VISIBILITY AND IMPACT

Expand Poplar Forest's visibility, scholarship, and visitation as we approach the 250th anniversary.

A PLACE FOR THE COMMUNITY

Engage a broader segment of the community near and far.

UNDERSTANDING AND INCLUSION

Increase opportunities for presentation, discussion, and understanding of a variety of diverse perspectives.

STRENGTHEN OUR ORGANIZATION

Grow our financial base and endowment to support expanded programs, increased staffing, and improved facilities.

GOAL PILLARS AND STRATEGIES

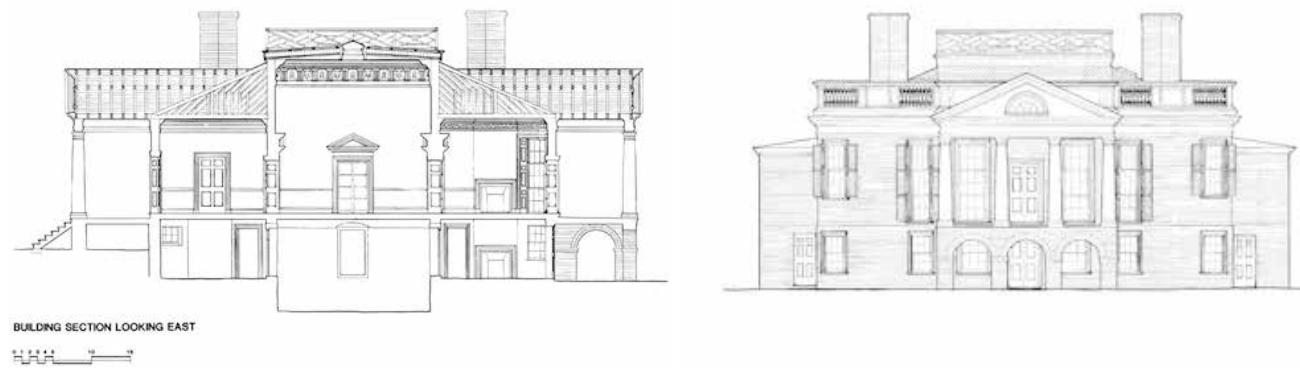


PRESERVATION

Complete the restoration of the house, start restoring, or recreating other sites on the property and begin implementing the plan for the plantation landscape.

STRATEGIES

- Ensure protection and careful stewardship of completed restoration projects through creation and adoption of management and cyclical maintenance plans (house, wing, privies, landscape restoration).
- Initiate the Quarter Site restoration as part of the first phase of the Plantation Legacy Project (archaeological lab and fieldwork started by December 2023).
- Develop slate of long-term restoration projects by December 2023 necessitating additional research and land acquisition (e.g., south lawn restoration, east curtilage restoration) with anticipated timeframes.
- Prioritize future archaeological research and restoration/reconstruction projects based on visitor and community impact, preservation needs, and availability of funding sources (by June 2024).
- Develop storage/stewardship plan for Corporation's research and archival resources (e.g. documents, photographs, plans, maps, building remains, archaeological collections) and identify funding and space needs.



NATIONAL VISIBILITY AND IMPACT

Expand Poplar Forest's visibility, scholarship, and visitation as we approach the 250th anniversary.

STRATEGIES

- Organize efforts to grow financial resources and number of donors around a 250th anniversary campaign (possible kick-off in 2023 on anniversary of Corporation's founding; culmination in 2026).
- Increase awareness of Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest on a national level through broad public relations efforts focused on highlighting recent accomplishments and future goals.
- Assess, improve, and expand internally generated online and social media products, adding new knowledge and scholarship to the site.



A PLACE FOR THE COMMUNITY

Engage a broader segment of the community near and far.

STRATEGIES

- Build on success and popularity of current programs (e.g., Hands-On History, Day is Past & Gone), sharing them with wider audiences and in new formats (e.g., taking educational programs to schools; plays/vignettes performed at other venues).
- Actively seek opportunities to engage with the greater community through our local partners (e.g., school systems), focusing on raising awareness of who we are, what we do, and how they can become involved.
- Broaden efforts to identify and engage with descendant communities, building on and expanding work with the African American Advisory Group and others (e.g., Monticello's Getting Word Project).
- Expand Poplar Forest's reach and impact through efforts to share our research related to archaeological investigations, restoration discoveries and practices, Jefferson's many interests, and the enslaved community with the public in a variety of formats (e.g., online, on-site, strategic events designed to attract new audiences).

GOAL PILLARS AND STRATEGIES



UNDERSTANDING AND INCLUSION

Increase opportunities for presentation, discussion, and understanding of a variety of diverse perspectives.

STRATEGIES

- Identify and pursue opportunities to share more of Poplar Forest's stories—through partnerships and varied presentation methods (e.g., art, theatre, exhibits, archaeology).
- Identify the descendants and continue to grow engagement and knowledge-sharing within those communities.
- Actively recruit a diverse staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, and members of advisory panels (currently: African American, Landscape, Architectural).

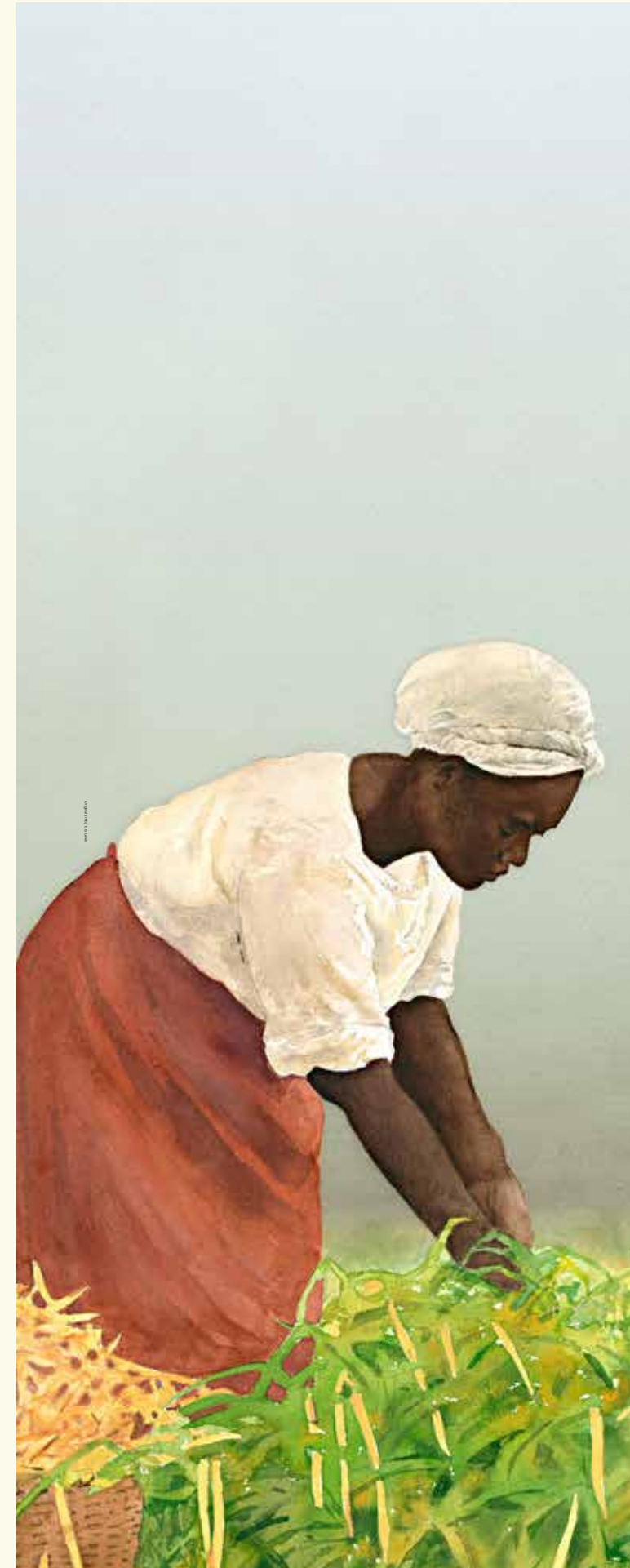


STRENGTHEN OUR ORGANIZATION

Grow our financial base and endowment to support expanded programs, increased staffing, and improved facilities.

STRATEGIES

- Develop financial resources to better support current staff, ensure the preservation of institutional knowledge, and allow for future growth through competitive salaries, expanded facilities, and funding for training.
- Focus on long term sustainability by growing the endowment fund to generate 10% of unrestricted operating costs.
- Create one endowed staff position within restoration department to ensure sustainability of preservation and conservation work.
- Develop an archaeology research fund to help support and ensure the success of new efforts to uncover, examine, preserve, and restore Poplar Forest.
- Develop new visitor experiences (e.g., family tours, one-day field schools, walking/hiking clubs) to encourage interaction, engagement, and financial support.





THOMAS JEFFERSON'S
Poplar Forest

1776 Poplar Forest Parkway
Lynchburg, VA 24502

