

IS YOUR
Historic
House
MUSEUM
SUSTAINABLE?

Discover and practice
the top characteristics
of healthy and thriving
historic house museums.



AASLH

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for State and Local History**

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Top Characteristics of Historic

1. A sustainable historic house museum serves its audience and is valued by its community.
2. Sustainable house museums are inspiring.
3. Sustainable house museum leaders adhere to a standard of excellence.
4. Sustainable house museum leaders embrace a culture of learning and a spirit of inquiry.
5. Successful historic house museums connect to outside groups and individuals who are leaders and decision-makers in their communities and in the professional field.
6. Sustainable house museum leaders are proactive governors and managers of their organizations.
7. Sustainable house museums leaders are proactive stewards of their buildings, collections, and landscapes.

a Sustainable House Museum

8. Sustainable house museums are interpreted in innovative and creative ways that extend well beyond the traditional house tour.
9. Sustainable house museum programs are developed in conjunction with new sources of revenue. Sustainable house museum leaders are strategic in their thinking and in their activities.
10. Sustainable historic house museums adopt current technologies to enhance their understanding of their resources, expand public access, and improve efficiency and effectiveness.
11. Sustainable historic house museums are branded, promoted, and marketed using consistent graphic languages.

Visit www.aaslh.org/hhouses for more information on how to practice these TOP characteristics into your historic house museum.

H Characteristics of a Historic House Museum in **PERIL**

Developed by the AASLH Historic House Committee, this checklist will help you identify a historic house museum in peril. Visit www.aaslh.org/hhouses to download the full list of characteristics.

VISION

- ❑ Most people involved with the historic house museum believe that “keeping the doors open” or maintaining the status quo is acceptable.

MISSION

- ❑ Few people involved with the historic house museum know or understand the mission.

BOARD

- ❑ Most board members are unaware of their fiduciary and stewardship responsibilities. .
- ❑ There is no ethics or conflict of interest policy.
- ❑ There is no strategic plan or the plan itself is just a list of ideas.

FINANCIAL

- ❑ There are no checks and balances in use for handling financial transactions.
- ❑ There is an operating deficit.
- ❑ There is no endowment.

STAFFING

- ❑ There is high staff turnover.
- ❑ There are no performance expectations for staff or these expectations are not communicated to staff.

PROGRAMS

- ❑ Repairs are performed on an emergency basis.
- ❑ The historic house is open to visitors on a very limited basis.
- ❑ Docents/guides tell the same story that has been told for many years.
- ❑ Routine tours are longer than one hour.

COLLECTIONS

- ❑ Gifts to the collection are accepted without review of collecting policies or knowledge of the current collection.
- ❑ There is no active review of the collection for possible deaccessioning.
- ❑ Collections are not safely housed or stored.

COMMUNICATIONS

- ❑ Computer equipment is more than five years old.
- ❑ There is no website and/or no email address or email is checked irregularly.
- ❑ There is no signage or other means of finding the historic house museum.

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AASLH provides leadership and support for its members who preserve and interpret state and local history in order to make the past more meaningful to all Americans.