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Looking to the Future: A New Strategic Master Plan

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The Calvert Marine Museum explores how our prehistoric past, natural environments, and maritime heritage come together to tell a unique story of the Chesapeake Bay.

In this age of hyper technology and instantaneous communication, is there a role for museums to play? When people can obtain information by "Googling" from the comfort of home, will they still come to see the real thing? Can museums successfully compete with theme parks and discovery zones and water parks? What is the future role of museums? These questions are being asked in museums and historic sites around the world, and the answers are as varied as the institutions. What seems to be understood, however, is that we must respond to the challenge to remain relevant in today's world or slowly wither away in the aftermath of an increasingly indifferent public.

The Calvert Marine Museum has embarked on our own quest to discover answers to these and other questions in the form of a new strategic master plan.

The Team

Once the decision was made, we established a Strategic Planning Committee, with representation from management, senior staff, volunteers, Board of Governors, Board of County Commissioners, the local business community, and interested citizens. This group worked with the team of EwingCole and Economic Research Associates, Inc. (ERA), known for their broad experience in working with museums on master plans and for well-researched market analysis.

The Process

The consulting team spent several months listening and learning about the museum and how people relate to it. They interviewed staff and volunteers, observed visitors, poked into all of the many crevices and crannies, asked lots of questions, read everything they could find about the history and development of the institution, and led several day-long sessions to build a complete profile and to understand fully

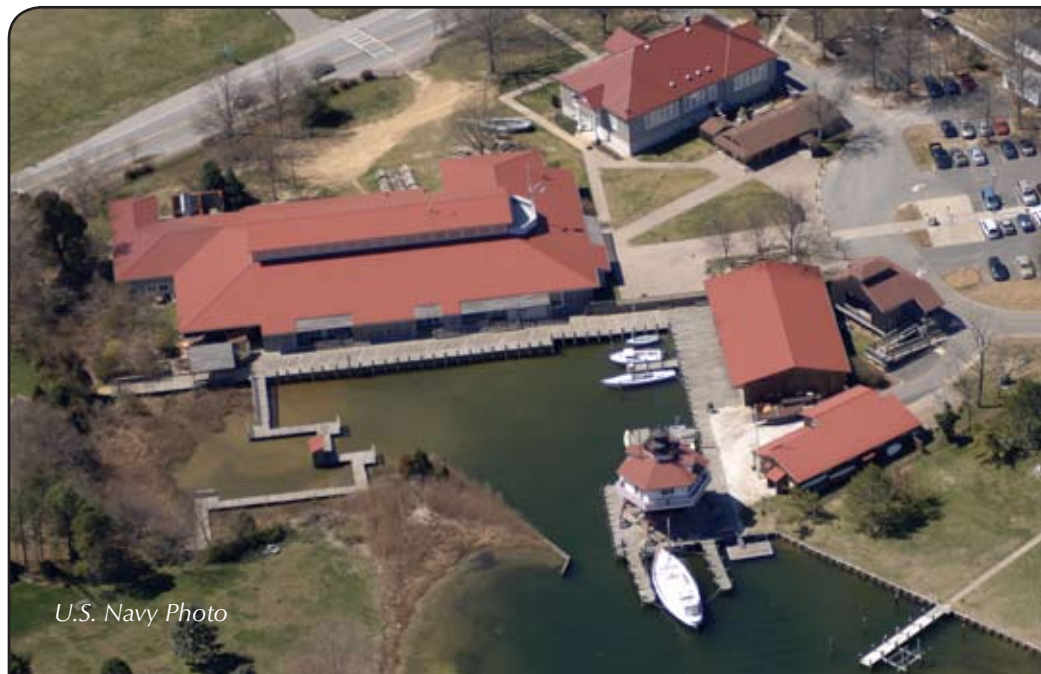
where the different players wanted to take the museum. What evolved was a picture of a very successful institution that people cared deeply about, but were divided on how to carry to a new level. We had many different ideas about the best way to move forward, and very little to base those strongly held opinions on.

Market Analysis

This changed dramatically when ERA completed the market analysis and delivered two reports: "Evaluation of the Attendance and Market Characteristics of the Calvert Marine Museum, April 2006," and "Insights from Comparable Attractions, June 2006." The key findings, as outlined in the master plan document, are:

- ◆ Level of audience penetration within 30-minutes drive was 14.1%, a high rate for a regional museum. This number declines substantially in the next ring, 30 to 60 minutes drive, as residents in the northern part of the county tend to look towards Washington, DC, and Baltimore for cultural activities.

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U.S. Navy Photo