

FRIENDS OF THEODORE ROETHKE

Strategic Plan

2020–2022





FRIENDS OF ROETHKE FOUNDATION | 1805 GRATIOT | SAGINAW, MICHIGAN 48602

Strategic Plan | 2020-2022



MISSION

It is our commitment to promote, preserve, and protect the literary legacy of Theodore Roethke, Michigan Pulitzer Prize winning poet, by restoring his family residences in Saginaw, Michigan, for cultural and educational opportunities.

VISION

The Theodore Roethke House will be a sought-after place to visitors from around the world, encouraging a culture of literary excellence.

INCLUSION

The Friends of Theodore Roethke (FOTR) fully values and welcomes all people into the Roethke Home Museum and Stone House, regardless of beliefs or doubts, age, color, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical, mental, or emotional ability or economic status. We celebrate and value the rich diversity of our community. No person shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, or on the basis of a disability, age, or sexual orientation be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the applicant received federal financial assistance.

CONTENTS

Introduction & Overview.....	3
Planning Process.....	5
Guiding Principles.....	6
Goals	7
1 Demonstrate and communicate commitment to Roethke’s legacy.....	7
2 Maintain and grow community programs.....	8
3 Develop fundraising, membership, and marketing plans.....	9
4 Engage in preservation and interpretive planning.....	10
5 Strengthen governance and operations.....	11

INTRODUCTION

Theodore Roethke ranks among the greatest American poets of the 20th Century and was a major influence on his peers and generations of writers that followed. Roethke received the Pulitzer Prize and twice the National Book Award, and he is widely regarded as one of the greatest poetry teachers the country has produced. Many of his students have gone on to become award-winning poets in their own right, and they credit Roethke’s influence.

Roethke was born in 1908 in Saginaw, Michigan and grew up in the house now preserved as The Theodore Roethke Home Museum. This house at 1805 Gratiot Avenue was built around 1911 for Theodore’s parents, Otto and Helen Roethke. Otto’s brother Carl lived in the adjacent fieldstone house, 1759 Gratiot Avenue, referred to as the Stone House. Together, Otto and Carl managed the William Roethke Floral Company, founded in the 1880s by their Prussian immigrant father. The company’s extensive greenhouses once stood on the land behind these two houses. Theodore worked in the greenhouses with his father, and his childhood experiences with the family’s Saginaw floral company inspired many of his poems. As he wrote, the greenhouse “is my symbol fo the whole of life, a womb, a heaven-on-earth.”

The Friends of Theodore Roethke is committed to promoting, preserving, and protecting the literary legacy of Theodore Roethke. The Roethke House is the most unique and important artifact under FOTR’s care. It was a nurturing family house to the poet when he was healing from manic episodes, and today it’s a teaching house. In a city that has lost nearly half its population since its peak in the 1960’s, the Home Museum now anchors the neighborhood with arts and culture, and it inspires through its power of place, its aura, and its sacredness. The Stone House next door protects and extends FOTR’s mission to offer cultural and educational opportunities related to the poet’s living legacy. The FOTR offers a robust seasonal



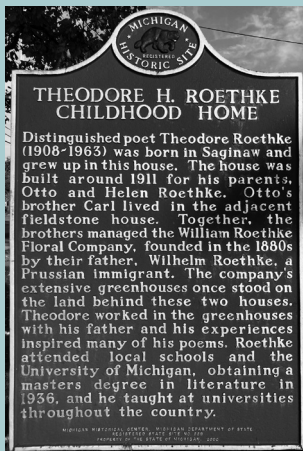
Theodore Roethke Home Museum



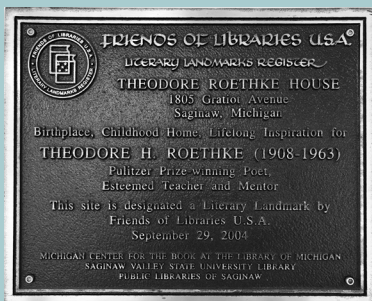
The Stone House



Roethke's piano



Michigan Historical Marker



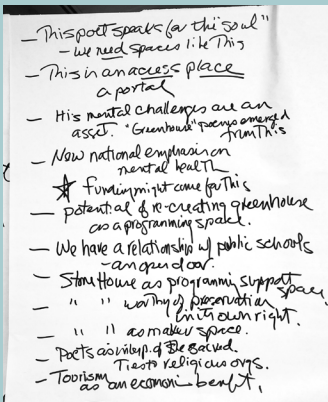
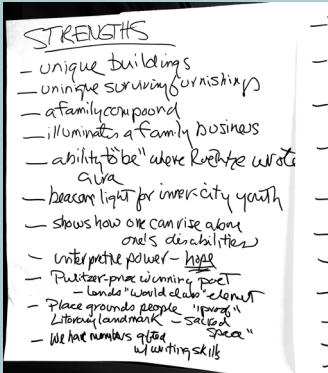
plaque hangs on exterior of the Roethke House

calendar of educational and literary programs for adults and children. Twenty years of high-profile grant funded interpretive programming for both children and adults has been developed and presented, setting a precedent for future program development and establishing a need and an audience for literary programs. The two properties await programs of renovation, preservation, and adaptive reuse.

Both houses are now owned outright and without debt. They have been granted recognition and status as a National Literary Landmark, have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and are official Michigan Historic Landmarks displaying a state historic interpretive marker. The Roethke Boyhood Home has been stabilized and furnished, and it functions as a house museum devoted to the biography of the poet and the interpretation of his literary work. The adjacent Stone House has escaped demolition and is now the subject of stabilization fundraising drive. It will be restored and developed into a visitor and programming center that will also eventually provide housing for guest poets and artists on the upper floor. Having the two houses, side by side, listed as state historic sites is true to the original mission, sustains the overall site's authenticity, provides needed visitor amenities, and doubles FOTR's program potential.

PLANNING PROCESS

This strategic plan sketches a long-term plan needed to achieve the strategic priorities using the five major goals that stem from the Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Strategic Priorities. This document breaks these goals down into specific tactics and a three-year timeline that identifies what the board expects to accomplish by the end of 2020, 2021, and 2022. This is meant to be a detailed three year plan, though in several places it also gestures toward longer-term major goals.



Notes taken during our Strategic Planning meeting January 2020

The goals and tactics were generated by board members, key community stakeholders and volunteers in a daylong retreat held in the conference room of the law offices of Braun Kendrick Finkbeiner, 4301 Fashion Square Blvd., Saginaw, Michigan, on Friday, January 24, 2020. The retreat was focused upon the future prospects of FOTR, a 501(c)3 nonprofit educational organization focused on the national literary legacy of the Saginaw-born poet Theodore Roethke (1908-1963); specifically, the preservation and celebration of his poems, literary legacy, his Saginaw origins and the two historic properties associated with him.

Museum consultant Timothy Chester of The Museum Group was the planning facilitator and note taker. A S.W.O.T. analysis was undertaken in preparation for an envisioning session that was held that afternoon. The generated input resulted in a written institutional strategic plan adopted by the FOTR board of directors. The planning retreat was supported by a grant facilitated by the Saginaw Arts and Enrichment Commission, with funds provided by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the Jury Foundation of Saginaw.

While grounded in the retreat input, the plan also reflects societal adjustments necessitated by the emergence of COVID-19 in March, 2020. Many of the FOTR regular initiatives and programming had to be re-envisioned as digital or online events, or they have been postponed to a later date. Due to so many current unknowns regarding Michigan's full re-opening, a certain amount of flexibility with the proposed timeline is expected.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Promote the literary legacy of Theodore Roethke and encourage a culture of literary excellence.

Restore and maintain Roethke residences as places of cultural and educational opportunities.

Build resilient, sustainable practices to preserve and protect Roethke's literary legacy and residences.

Promote the literary legacy of Theodore Roethke and encourage a culture of literary excellence.

GOAL

Demonstrate and communicate commitment to Roethke's legacy

2020–21

- 1 Generate content to be used in the website, newsletter, press releases, etc., that re-introduce the Friends of Theodore Roethke to the public and promotes literary excellence.

Outcome / *Generation of content, stored on the cloud account, published to the website, and/or posted on social media.*

2020–21

- 2 Develop brand identity standards

Outcome / *Marketing kit.*

2020–21

- 3 Empower board, committee, members, other stakeholders to serve as ambassadors and communicate mission, vision, goals, progress.

Outcome / *Formal presentation to board of new content and brand identity.*



Commemorative US postage stamp, 2012



Bay Area Review AD



Poster for May 2021 Virtual Speakers

2 GOAL

Maintain and grow community programs

2020

1 Continue established seasonal programs.

Outcome / *Creation of Seasonal Events Master Calendar.*

2020

2 Continue established school collaboration and expand partnerships and collaborations with other local, state, and national organizations, while maintaining an emphasis on outreach to underserved populations.

Outcome / *Creation of Partnership Events Master Calendar.*

Outcome / *Placement of a Roethke Ambassador in each school.*

2020

3 Provide public access to both houses by 2021.

Outcome / *Plan for scheduling, volunteer recruiting, and tour guide training.*

2021

4 Investigate resources required to extend seasonal programs into the Stone House.

Outcome / *Identification of seasonal program extension opportunities for 2022 implementation.*

2021

5 Investigate opportunities and resources required for future Stone House programs once house is open to the public.

Outcome / *Identification and prioritization of future program opportunities for board approval.*

2021

6 Raise funds for and recruit a qualified part-time public programs/ education coordinator.

Outcome / *Job description, salary requirements, and potential funding sources.*



Field trip to Boehlers Greenhouse



Art Workshop, afternoon group 2017



3 GOAL

Ensure the long-term sustainability of FOTR and properties by developing fundraising, marketing, and membership plans

2020	1	Develop a financial needs plan based on data detailed in approved strategic plan. Outcome / <i>Find person to create the Written Financial Needs plan.</i>
2020	2	Develop a grantwriting schedule for opportunities to apply for relevant local, state and federal grant programs. Outcome / <i>Excel spreadsheet with relevant data and networked folder with relevant documents, applications, etc</i>
2020	3	Grow Membership Program. Outcome / <i>Development of 2021 membership growth goals.</i>
2021	4	Demonstrate progress toward stated community goal of stabilizing the Stone House. Outcome / <i>Complete the short-term goal of raising \$50,000 and provide written report to board on monies raised, monies spent, timeline for completion, and resources still needed.</i>
2021	5	Increase awareness of community programs and increase membership. Outcome / <i>Develop a 2021 marketing plan.</i>
2021	6	Plan for both growth and preservation via a bundled capital campaign. Outcome / <i>Written Capital Campaign plan and consideration of endowment creation.</i>



Virtual Board Meeting 2021

Restore and maintain Roethke residences as places of cultural and educational opportunities

4 GOAL Engage in preservation and interpretive planning

2020

- 1 Complete stabilization and begin structural improvements of the Stone House.

Outcome / Complete roof for Stone House. Document estimated costs and projected timeline for 2021.

2021

- 2 Commission preservation assessment for both properties from qualified historic preservation expert.

2021

- 3 Investigate having historic district designation to ensure future protection for both houses.

2021

- 4 Create historic preservation/structural analysis and master plan.

2021

- 5 Maintain and expand the Roethke Home Museum programming and collections.

Outcome / Master plan to guide exhibition and programmatic development.

2022

- 6 Investigate opportunities and resources required for long term planning.

Outcome / Identification and prioritization of future program opportunities for board approval.



restoration continues on the Stone House 2020-21

Build resilient and sustainable museum practices to preserve and protect Roethke's literary legacy and residences

5 GOAL

Strengthen governance and operations

2020

1 Specify board members' responsibilities.

Outcome / *Written document detailing responsibilities.*

2020

2 Strengthen governance by continuing to grow our board and committees in numbers of members and in diverse skill sets.

Outcome / *Creation of a board development committee.*

2020

3 Formalize board policies, procedures, and fundraising goals.

Outcome / *Formal Policies and Procedures document.*

2021

4 Strengthen financial operations.

Outcome / *Document financial management plan and annual operating budget.*



Working on archiving artifacts, Roethke House, 2021