



# THE WOMAN'S CLUB OF ALBANY, INC.

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2023

### Introduction

The Woman's Club of Albany's 2021-2023 Strategic Plan is the result of the efforts of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) working in consort with WCA members, committees, and the Board of Directors. Input from the 2020 Member Survey was key to identifying strategic initiatives, setting organizational goals, and determining steps to complete those goals. In addition, SPC members interviewed committee chairs to collect information about accomplishments and goals. The plan looks to the future while honoring past accomplishments.

In discussing the initiatives and goals outlined in the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan, the SPC focused first on whether desired outcomes were achieved and if not, why not. We do not consider a lack of achievement a failure, but rather an opportunity to improve and understand the operation of the organization as a whole. Indeed, some initiatives remain as continued challenges for 2021-2023.

In developing this new 2021-2023 plan, several over-arching themes became evident. These include the need to:

- Create a framework for improving communication among the Board, Committees, and membership;
- Streamline processes and procedures for planning and implementing projects and programs;
- Increase membership, community relationships, and visibility with a comprehensive marketing plan;
- Ensure effective transitions for Board members, Officers, and new committee chairs through training and mentoring;
- Raise sufficient funds to support committee work and administrative costs; and
- Maintain the integrity of our historical building by implementing assessment and maintenance routines and raising sufficient funding through grants, sponsorships, etc.

The Strategic Plan should be viewed as a living document, our “North Star,” in planning for the future. This plan intends to elevate efforts to develop and retain membership, serve the community, and maintain the physical beauty and integrity of our historic building.

We encourage the WCA Board, all committees, and ad hoc committees to keep these initiatives at the forefront of planning and development. To this end, we have provided a spreadsheet that indicates each committee's involvement in the initiatives set forth in this plan.

### Background and History

The original Strategic Plan (2011) and subsequent plans can be reviewed for the background and history of this organization. Reports and materials preserved by the WCA Archives Committee contain additional information. The WCA currently has approximately 150 members of varying ages, interests, and professions. WCA member recruitment, programming and activities are unique and designed to meet a range of member interests. These include social, educational, community service, and entertainment activities, as well as charitable contributions to organizations in the region. The WCA strives to create a sense of community for our members.

Maintenance of the physical structure and interior of our historic house is critical as the WCA continues to rebuild and improve the structure for safe access and accessibility for all members and the public.

### **Organizational Structure**

The WCA is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization. It was incorporated in NYS in 1913, pre-dating the current corporate structure. The Club was brought into full compliance with current laws and regulations in 2009 with the assignment of tax-exempt status by the IRS. It is governed by a board of 11 to 15 members who are elected by the general membership at annual meetings. The Board of Directors includes officers (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, President Elect, and immediate Past president) and five to nine Directors. Committees of the Board include the Executive Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Governance Committee. Committees of the Corporation include, but are not limited to: Archives, Building, Communication, Community Service, Development, Garden and Grounds, Membership, Programs, and Rentals. Additional committees for emergent events or special projects are designated by the Board of Directors on an *ad hoc* basis.

### **Financial**

The WCA Finance Committee and Treasurer develop an annual operating budget that is approved by the Board. The fiscal year for the WCA runs from July 1 to June 30.

Income is derived from a variety of sources: membership fees, building rentals, program fees, fund raising events, donations, and grants. Expenses include administration, insurance, utilities, programs, and building maintenance and restoration. The WCA expenditures are reviewed annually by a CPA, who also prepares required state and federal annual reports.

### **Mission Statement**

*The Club's mission is to provide a center where Capital Region women can pool their time, expertise, and energy in activities that support the well-being and cultural enrichment of women and children in the region, and to preserve the historic building that is our home.*

The WCA carries out its mission by:

1. Maintaining a vibrant and diverse membership;
2. Presenting programs that appeal to a diverse population and raising awareness of issues that affect women and children in our community;
3. Promoting leadership within the club and sharing ideas to initiate new projects, programs, and activities;
4. Operating efficiently, with effective committees and broad participation;
5. Embracing differences in WCA membership;
6. Fundraising and volunteering for community organizations and programs that support women and children;

7. Working with other non-profit organizations to share programs and promote activities that improve conditions for women and children in the community; and
8. Raising funds and engaging in activities to preserve its historic building.

### **Vision Statement**

The WCA is an organization of women with diverse backgrounds and talents who strive to work together effectively and respectfully to enrich our community and care for and preserve our historic building. The WCA :

- Honors and promotes diversity and tolerance, openness, and inclusion;
- Encourages teamwork, participation, and commitment;
- Asks members to support each other with friendship and caring, support each other's passions, interests, and initiatives;
- Communicates respectfully with open minds and hearts; and
- Acknowledges all members' contributions.

These efforts support the WCA's core values and honors our past, while preserving the organization and building for future members.

### **Current Assessment: Member Survey**

The Communication Committee delivered an online and paper survey of member interests and opinions on the state of the organization. The survey questions were elicited from the Board and from committee chairs. Since 57% of the membership responded, this effort was a clear success and provided WCA leadership with valuable guidance to plan for the future. This data has assisted the Strategic Planning Committee in developing the new plan.

### **Current Assessment: Committee Reports**

SPC members interviewed WCA committees to review past work, challenges, and priorities. Reports are included in the packet of background information.

## **2021-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **The updated Strategic Plan focuses on six strategic initiatives:**

- 1:** Build WCA capacity by strengthening our governance and operations.
- 2:** Increase stability through financial management and development of funding streams.
- 3:** Expand public awareness and visibility of the WCA.
- 4:** Expand and retain membership.
- 5:** Conduct programs and activities aligned with our mission.
- 6:** Maintain, restore, improve, and enhance our historic building.

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**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 1: BUILD WCA CAPACITY BY STRENGTHENING OUR GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS.**

**Desired Outcome:** The written policies and procedures will help maintain an effective organization and ensure that the Board fulfills its legal, ethical, and functional responsibilities through adequate governance.

**Goal One:** Improve planning and implementation processes, continuity of leadership, and the capacity and skills of Board members and Committee Chairs.

**Action 1:** Continue to develop the skills needed to operate an effective board.

**Action 2:** Review the current board structure, requirements for service, and term limits to assess need for improvements. Seek outside guidance, such as the New York Council of Nonprofits (NYCON), for information on best practices and recommendations.

**Action 3:** Use tools and resources available from organizations that support not-for-profit organizations. Maintain membership in NYCON and take advantage of their technical and policy advice and online resources to build board capacity and recruit new members.

**Goal Two:** Ensure that Bylaws and Policies and Procedures are current, provide a good framework for the functioning of the WCA, and comply with New York State guidelines for not-for-profits.

**Action 1:** Draft bylaw revisions that update structure and procedures following Goal 1/Action 2. Consider which roles and procedures must be defined in the Bylaws, which require approval by membership vote, and which procedures can be addressed in Policy Statements and Procedures, which do not require approval by membership vote.

**Action 2:** Arrange periodic review of Bylaws and Policies and Procedures, using outside technical assistance when needed, to ensure compliance with state guidelines for not-for-profits.

**Goal Three:** Ensure that current Bylaws, Policies, Procedures, administrative forms, and the Strategic Plan are available to the Board, Committees, and WCA membership.

**Action 1:** Determine the best approach to maintaining and storing official documents so that the most recent, approved version is universally accessible, likely in both printed and electronic form.

**Action 2:** Continue to work with the Communication Committee to upload resources to the WCA website.

**Action 3:** Highlight components of the Strategic Plan and accomplishments in WCA newsletters and other communications.

**Goal Four:** Plan for leadership succession and increase continuity of leadership.

**Action 1:** Take advantage of programs, including online sessions, that provide training for new and current board members and committee chairs.

**Action 2:** Review and examine Nominating Committee and election procedures. Seek opportunities to reinvigorate the nomination process through broad outreach and clear descriptions of expectations. Find new avenues to find board recruits.

**Goal Five:** Ensure that committees operate effectively to meet their goals and complete their tasks while complying with all legal obligations and the WCA's Bylaws and Policies and Procedures.

**Action 1:** Routinely review roles and responsibilities for all committees. Encourage regular meetings among chairs to increase collaboration and decrease duplication of effort.

**Action 2:** Share the Strategic Plan with Committee Chairs and members to help align their annual plans with stated goals and action steps.

**Action 3:** Increase members' participation by taking steps to acknowledge the value of volunteer time and improve efficiency. Revise the approval processes for committee planning to make roles and tasks less daunting and to allow committees to make decisions that fall within articulated priorities and guidelines.

**Action 4:** Review the internal structure and make up of committees for effectiveness, considering the optimal size for a committee and how many committees can members serve on in a meaningful way. Ensure that participation, leadership, ideas, and labor are shared to create successful outcomes.

**Action 5:** Ensure that new members feel that they are being heard and have equal standing. Encourage new approaches and avoid "automatic" rejection of ideas that have been tried or considered in the past.

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## **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 2: SUPPORT ORGANIZATION OBJECTIVES THROUGH FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF FUNDING STREAMS**

**Desired Outcome:** The WCA will maintain financial solvency and not-for-profit accreditation through proper budgeting and accounting practices that support administrative and program needs as well as special initiatives.

**Goal One:** Develop a sustainable, balanced annual budget.

**Action 1:** The Finance Committee will work with each committee to develop a specific, sustainable annual budget that meets administrative and programmatic needs.

**Action 2:** The WCA board and committee chairs will monitor expenses throughout the fiscal year to gauge effectiveness of the budget.

**Goal Two:** Work collaboratively to create fundraising efforts to support operational expenses, programs, and charitable giving.

**Action 1:** Develop annual goals and actions to increase avenues for funding via membership dues, pledge campaigns, and programs. For example, continue the donor recognition plaque.

**Action 2:** Increase rental income through promotion and marketing, keeping in mind the capacity of the historic building and the resources needed for successful rentals; continue to maintain a list of rental clients to use as contacts for marketing and fundraising initiatives.

**Action 3:** Continue to broaden outside funding sources by researching new sponsorships, donors, and other opportunities.

**Goal Three:** Research and develop grant proposals to fund organizational development, charitable contributions to other organizations, and building restoration, repair, and maintenance.

**Action 1:** Continue to research funding opportunities that can be pursued in a phased approach once the current grant-supported projects are completed.

**Action 2:** Continue to work with resources such as the Capital Region Community Foundation to develop strategies.

**Goal Four:** Ensure that a WCA marketing plan supports fundraising efforts by strengthening the public image of the WCA.

**Action 1:** Continue to publicize the WCA's accomplishments and community engagement.

**Action 2:** Articulate the goals of fundraising for particular needs and the corresponding benefits to the WCA and community.

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### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE # 3: EXPAND PUBLIC AWARENESS AND VISIBILITY OF THE WCA.**

**Desired Outcome:** The WCA's public image, or "brand" will be that of an active, social, and community-minded organization with a strong reputation for excellence in programming, community service, and historic preservation. This will result in increased membership and funding.

**Goal One:** Build the capacity of the Communication Committee.

**Action 1:** Provide a "roadmap" for working with Communications when planning events, including a timeline for submission of informational materials.

**Action 2:** Work to streamline the Communication Committee review process for internal and external communications.

**Action 3:** Continue to document programs and success stories with brief written summaries and photos that can be used for publicity. Solicit testimonials and photos from rental clients that can be used for marketing.

**Goal Two:** Using a variety of resources, develop and implement a marketing/branding plan that will increase awareness of the WCA as an organization that cares for the community, a

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social gathering place for women, a rental venue, and an historically significant building.

**Action 1:** Engage WCA members and community resource people to develop and implement a marketing plan. Partner with carefully selected resources in marketing and public relations, such as college marketing resources, to assist in plan development. Budget funds to strategically engage paid professionals.

**Action 2:** Create updated materials that are versatile and can be used for a variety of initiatives such as membership, rentals, and capital campaigns.

**Goal Three:** Implement a marketing and public relations plan. Ensure that all committees have input and can utilize materials and procedures.

**Action 1:** Prioritize marketing recommendations.

**Action 2:** Provide guidance to committees on implementing the marketing plan, for example, by using boilerplate language, model press releases, stock photos, etc.

**Action 3:** Continue to develop and keep current a comprehensive list of PR targets: community email addresses, websites of daily and weekly newspapers, online calendars, and event listings. Identify community organizations who might assist with reciprocal publicity.

**Action 4:** Routinely evaluate club public relations materials to keep them fresh and current.

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#### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #4: EXPAND AND SUSTAIN THE MEMBERSHIP.**

**Desired Outcome:** By understanding and supporting the reasons why people join the organization, the WCA will increase and maintain WCA membership.

**Goal One:** Recruit new and diverse members of various ages, cultures, and backgrounds.

**Action 1:** Work collaboratively to develop a recruitment strategy that expands membership. This includes creating public awareness and member outreach. Continue to engage non-member program participants and renters with e-news and event announcements.

**Action 2:** Periodically review dues structure to ensure accessibility.

**Action 3:** Track member participation in WCA activities.

**Goal Two:** Engage and retain members.

**Action 1:** Encourage committee collaborations on programs, fundraising and other activities to meet the interests and needs of current members.

**Action 2:** Periodically survey membership to gain insight into how to meet their expectations. Give members a voice in the WCA.

**Action 3:** Engage membership participation in activities and committee work through outreach and recognition of service.

**Action 4:** Keep members informed of activities through frequent communications.

**Action 5:** Continue personal “buddy” system for new members, which also helps to engage existing members.

**Goal Three:** Promote diversity and inclusion in club membership.

**Action 1:** Strengthen outreach and recruitment strategies by marketing the positive aspects of membership through social networking, joint activities with other community organizations, and word of mouth.

**Action 2:** Develop events and programs that draw a variety of community members to the organization.

**Action 3:** Increase the geographic distribution of the membership. Seek opportunities for programs and community service activities and collaborations outside of Albany.

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#### **STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #5: CONDUCT PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES ALIGNED WITH OUR MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS.**

**Desired Outcome:** Events will be well-attended and profitable and will engage both WCA membership and the community at large while supporting our mission.

**Goal One:** Develop a variety of programs that enhance WCA’s ability to meet the objectives outlined in this plan.

**Action 1:** Coordinate plans for complementary programs among committees, thereby avoiding duplication or “blurred lines”. Promote shared planning and production.

**Action 2:** Promote attendance by offering programs and activities that are meaningful, productive, creative, and/or fun.

**Action 3:** Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and events using a variety of feedback instruments.

**Action 4:** Attract new members and increase WCA visibility by developing partnerships with other organizations to deliver programming and provide community service.

**Action 5:** Target community organizations with shared interests with publicity for particular programs.

**Goal Two:** Streamline the process of planning, Board approval, and program presentation.

**Action 1:** Develop policies and guidance for committees preparing programs/events that ensures adherence to WCA priorities and ethical standards.

**Action 2:** Empower committees to deliver programs within their budgets by eliminating unnecessary steps for approval.

**Action 3:** Work effectively with the Communication Committee to market and publicize programs to all members, and to the general community where appropriate.

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**STRATEGIC INITIATIVE #6: MAINTAIN, RESTORE, IMPROVE AND ENHANCE OUR HISTORIC BUILDING.**

**Desired Outcome:** The WCA building will be restored, well-maintained, and accessible.

**Goal One:** Restore and rehabilitate the building exterior and interior.

**Action 1:** Complete current work on the exterior.

**Action 2:** Continue to work with preservation professionals to prepare an updated comprehensive, phased plan for overall restoration and repair of the building to achieve ADA compliance balanced with preservation objectives. Include funding mechanisms within the plan.

**Goal Two:** Maintain the exterior and interior of the building.

**Action 1:** Complete the development of a Building Manual that outlines best practices and sets up scheduled maintenance. The manual will provide guidance for WCA use and provide “back up” for the rules and procedures the Rental Committee requires of clients.

**Action 2:** Implement routine cleaning and maintenance of the building.

**Action 3:** Develop a quarterly schedule of building inspections for the Board, Resident Caretaker, and others as needed.

**Action 4:** Monitor the impacts of programs and potential increased rentals on the building and maintenance requirements. Assess whether they are within or exceed personnel capacity, including volunteers and Resident Caretaker.

**Action 5:** Work to replant and redevelop the garden area after the completion of the porch reconstruction.

**Goal Three:** Review building safety and liability issues.

**Action 1:** Ensure that committees provide adequate notice for set up and other services needed.

**Action 2:** Undertake an annual review of insurance coverage for building and grounds and resident caretaker.

**Action 3:** Implement a periodic walk through of the entire building for emergent problems and to ensure compliance with City of Albany regulations This includes the caretaker apartment.

**Action 4:** Evaluate the caretaker role and responsibilities on a periodic basis to assess how WCA needs are being met. Consider the eventual need for transition.

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**This Strategic Plan was submitted to the Board on July 19, 2021, and conditionally approved with minor changes on \_\_\_\_\_, with further Board review.**