

About this Plan

Background

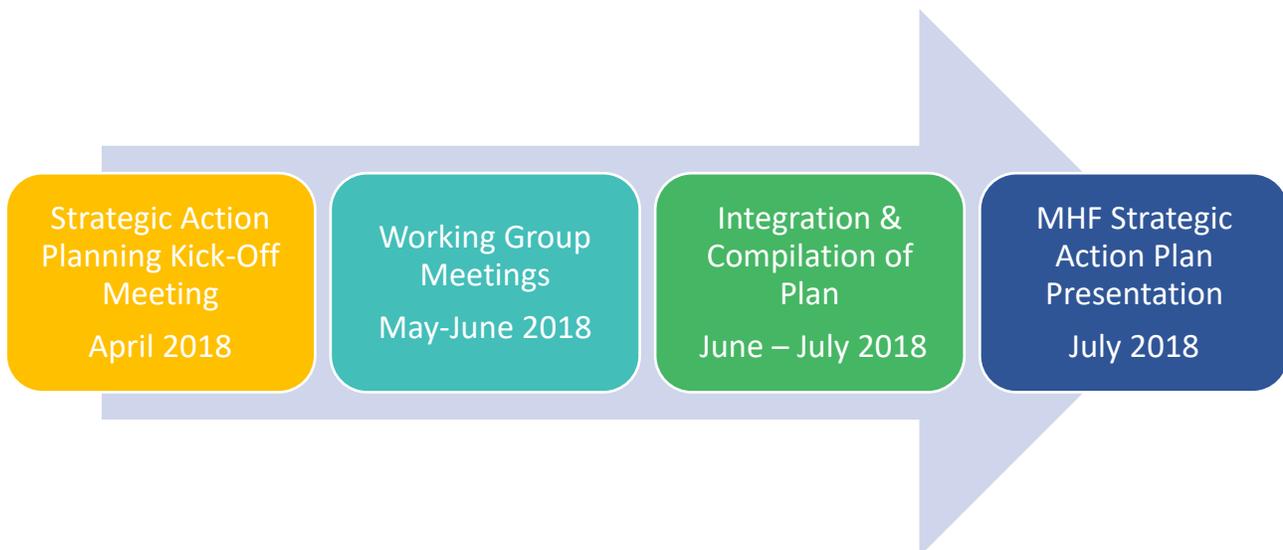
The mission of the UVM Morgan Horse Farm is unchanging, (the promotion, preservation, and perpetuation of this historic Morgan herd), and the wellbeing of our horses is paramount. Additionally, we aim to realize the incredible opportunities for educational programming for students of all ages, and to enrich the offerings for the public.

To accomplish these goals and address critical facility needs, the UVM Morgan Horse Farm leadership and Board of Advisors undertook a strategic action planning effort to guide the Morgan Horse Farm onto a path for a sustainable future. This Strategic Action Plan provides the basis for program development, facility upgrades, investments, and a capital campaign as we enter the next chapter in the rich story of this unique place.

The Process

Various strategic planning efforts have guided farm operations over the more than 65 years of the University of Vermont's stewardship of the Morgan Horse Farm. Recognizing both the opportunities and challenges of operating a farm that has been in operation since 1878, this current effort sought to engage a diverse, cross-sector group of stakeholders that could help chart a sustainable future by leveraging the farm's key strengths. Participants included representatives from Morgan horse organizations and owner/breeders, different programs at the University of Vermont, tourism and economic development organizations, and representatives from the equine industry in Vermont.

The Strategic Action Planning Process began with a kick-off meeting held on April 13, 2018 with over 40 attendees. Following remarks to set the context in the Farm Lobby and a brief tour of the farm's current facilities, the attendees divided into 3 working groups to focus their conversations on 1) Herd Preservation, 2) Educational Opportunities, and 3) Community and Outreach. Each of the three groups continued to meet actively between May and June to develop a deeper understanding of the relevant challenges and opportunities as well as brainstorm strategic actions. After many meetings, phone calls, and even a few field trips, the Working Group Chairs transferred the findings to the leadership team for integration into a comprehensive plan. Within the span of 3.5 months, the Strategic Action Plan was presented to the Board of Advisors and Working Group Participants on July 30, 2018 – a very ambitious timeline.



The Strategic Action Plan consists of the following components:

- Plan Preface
- Core Priority Areas
 - Apprenticeship Program
 - Building Community
 - Educational Opportunities
 - Herd Preservation
 - Visitor Experience
- Table of Actions
- Appendices
- Resources

The range of actions vary in terms of scope—from installing picnic tables on the grounds to developing a new breeding center. The plan will serve as the foundation for identifying priorities for deferred maintenance activities as well as the upcoming capital campaign. It also highlights the critical elements necessary for ensuring a sustainable future for the Morgan Horse Farm: staffing, financial health, and leadership.

Next Steps

The Strategic Action Plan is a living document that will be regularly consulted and updated. The practice of reviewing the plan will become part of the quarterly Board of Advisors meetings as a way to monitor progress as action items become reality. Additionally, to maintain momentum, committees dedicated to each of the five core priorities will be launched in August 2018. These core priority committees will work with farm leadership to move action items from planning into implementation. The overall plan will be revisited in 2021, which coincides with the centennial of the statue installation honoring *Figure*.

Core Priority: Apprenticeship Program

Background and Current Conditions

The Apprenticeship Program at the Morgan Horse Farm has offered participants a year-long hands-on learning experience while providing the farm with valuable support and capacity. Since the program first began in the 1970's, over 220 apprentices have gained experience in all aspects of life at the UVM Morgan Horse Farm: breeding program management, young horse handling and early training, horse health, and farm operations. Applications have waned in recent years, resulting in reduced labor to support daily farm functions. The decline in apprentices has resulted in the hiring of temporary workers. Currently, the Apprenticeship Program offers participants on-farm housing accommodations and utilities with no financial remuneration.

Vision for the Future

The Apprenticeship Program has a rich history of producing the next generation of equine professionals and enthusiasts. Reconfiguring this keystone program is vital to supporting both the farm's daily operations and legacy of providing early career equine professionals with valuable learning experiences and connections. We envision an Apprenticeship Program that offers two tracks depending upon applicant experience and time commitment with a one-year long Apprenticeship opportunity and a six-month Internship opportunity. Both apprentices and interns would live in residence on the farm and receive a living stipend. Apprentices would be graduates from 2- or 4-year equine studies, animal science, or similar programs and support all aspects of farm operations while Interns would be current college students seeking experience in one of two focus areas: 1) Breeding Management and 2) Training and Equine Management. Interns would have the ability to earn up to 15 academic credits. Ideally, the farm would host 2 staggered Apprentices and 6 staggered Interns each year.

This approach to the Apprenticeship Program has the potential to create a more sustainable workforce to support operations by adapting to current compensation models in the equine industry. It also offers opportunity for college students to gain focused experiences within a time commitment that makes it possible for matriculated students to participate. Farm leadership will need to allocate time for developing the tracks to enable marketing and recruitment efforts as well as ensure supervision of the program. The living units will need to be upgraded to meet ADA requirements and increase comfort for on-farm residents. Offering paid stipends will be offset by reductions in current temporary labor expenses.

Priority	Action Item	Status
Apprenticeship	Create a paid stipend for apprentices and interns	High
Apprenticeship	Boost promotion and advertising to recruit apprentices and interns	High
Apprenticeship	Develop program curriculum for apprenticeship & equine internship	High
Apprenticeship	Upgrade living units for apprentices and interns	Medium

Resources: Kentucky Equine Management Institute Internship Program

Core Priority: Building Community

Background and Current Conditions

The University of Vermont Morgan Horse Farm has a long history of being a pillar in the local and Morgan Horse communities. As an epicenter of Addison County, many people can trace roots of some kind to the MHF; be it a summer job, a relative who was employed by the government, or as someone who visited with an elementary class or with parents on a summer vacation. At the same time, since the Morgan Horse Farm has been tucked away in the bucolic countryside it has to some extent been forgotten by locals. Inspiring the name “hidden gem,” the UVM Morgan Horse Farm has so much to offer but needs to bolster its role as a valued community member.

Community support is critical to an organization like this. It takes a village to maintain the grandiose grounds and structures, let alone the working herd of 40 horses. As people come to the MHF and have a meaningful experience, be it as a student, someone purchasing a horse, or as a tourists, the more positive the impact bestowed on them, the more likely they are to return. As the reputation and community significance of the UVM Morgan Horse Farm grows, as does its public value, leading to a greater community of financial support.

Vision for the Future

Many locals know that the UVM Morgan Horse Farm is a resource for horse owners; every year there is at least one call from an area veterinarian looking for extra colostrum for a young foal. The UVM Morgan Horse Farm has so much more to offer the community, so long as the infrastructure and appropriate scaffolding is in place to allow it.

For example, the sweeping lawns and open space are wonderful for family picnics & staff retreats, so long as there is appropriate bathrooms and parking. A new construction welcome center could be used for art exhibitions of local artists, conferences, and events. Representatives from the Vermont Horse Council and Vermont Morgan Horse Association have asked to rent space for staff meetings & horse clinics, however the limited usable indoor space and bathrooms remain a sticking point. There have been requests for us the property for weddings, which would have incredible appeal for Morgan enthusiasts and UVM Alums. There have been two outside stallions in spring 2018 alone who have utilized the stallion station breeding services currently offered by the MHF.

Aside from generating revenue, these sorts of experiences build relationship. A quarterly newsletter to Friends of UVM Morgans would keep the community connected to the MHF. The additional area to sign up for newsletters on the raffle foal tickets have led to some 550 new sign ups in the past two years.

To be a major community pillar, the farm needs new construction in the form of a welcome center & equine reproductive center. If the UVM Morgan Horse Farm was able to market breeding services in a more public way, it is likely that revenue stream would increase significantly. In addition, it is a big pull for students & horse enthusiasts alike to learn more about equine reproduction. The welcome center would provide code-compliant, comfortable bathrooms that better meet the needs of the public. The opportunities for exhibition space really open doors for future programming and revenue generation.

Understanding the financial requirements of new construction, a capital campaign will be critical for the development of new construction & programs. Donors will also feel like they were a part of the beginning of something great, and this ownership is one of the strongest community ties.

Specific actions & timeline:

Priority	Action Item	Status
Community	Collaborate with UVM Event Management Services for third party rentals	Medium
Community	Create a partnership with VT Folklife Center on Oral History Project	Medium
Community	Develop stronger connection with local, regional, statewide community organizations	High
Community	Create and host a "UVM Day"	Medium
Community	Collaborate with UVM Communications to create promotional materials	Medium
Community	Increase frequency of Friends of UVM Morgans newsletters	High
Community	Schedule FAM Tours on a regular basis	High
Community	Plan for future space use for rentals, art exhibits, conferences, etc. market when ready	Medium
Community	Develop non-ansi internship program options for UVM students	High
Community	Increase presence on UVM campus (Activites Fest, Admitted Students DA, TREK, ASB)	High
Community	Host educational clinics for horseowners	Medium
Community	Market capital campaign	High
Community	conclude capital campaign	High
Community	host celebration	High

Resources:

UVM Event Services can assist with the requirements for 3rd party rentals

UVM Communications can help streamline advertising branding & cross promote

The historical precedence of a Stallion Barn to the north of the Main Barn lends design inspiration

Core Priority: Educational Opportunities

Background and Current Conditions

The UVM Morgan Horse Farm is well-positioned to become a valuable educational resource for a variety of audiences—from pre-school aged children to undergraduate students. Currently, the farm is mostly utilized for as a field trip destination by some local K-12 schools and as a lab experience for students from UVM’s Animal and Veterinary Science Department. There has been limited engagement with 4-H clubs and U.S. Pony Club chapters in the region. While there are many assets and documents at the farm that could be used as educational materials, there is very limited capacity for the necessary organization and curation.

Vision for the Future

Education is central to the mission of the UVM Morgan Horse Farm as part of the University of Vermont. Collaborating with faculty and staff to identify areas of alignment will demonstrate the commitment of the farm to the University’s mission. Beyond campus, there are many opportunities to offer for audiences of all types. Developing partnerships with educators of all types, community-based organizations, and the horse community would further enhance the educational role of the farm within the state. Topics could range from Vermont history and equine science to operating an agritourism destination and be delivered via multiple paths: internships, service-learning projects, exhibits, field trips, summer camps.

Expanding educational opportunities at the farm requires additional staff capacity and eventually improved learning facilities. The main lobby of the barn and small rooms in the Main House could be used as “classroom space” to accommodate small groups but lack standard classroom technology. There is potential to identify grant resources to support specific educational programs, such as the VT Arts Council and Vermont Community Foundation. Coordinating and hosting educational activities beyond what is currently being offered will require additional staff capacity.

Priority	Action Item	Status
Educational	Encourage greater collaboration between MHF, CALS Departments, and Extension to support a variety of educational activities at MHF	High
Educational	Create curriculum programming for service-learning and experiential learning opportunities for matriculated UVM students	High
Educational	Identify structured learning opportunities for 4-H members	Medium
Educational	Develop farm-based education experiences for youth (pre-school, K-12)	Medium

Educational	Expand education offerings on the farm for the general public audience	Medium
Educational	Explore potential for hosting educational summer camps for youth	Low

Resources: [VT Arts Council Cultural Facilities Grant Program](#)

Core Priority: Herd Preservation

Background and Current Conditions

Without the Morgan Herd, the Morgan Horse Farm is merely a name without a purpose. The Farm was established in 1878 as the incubator for what is now known as the government Morgans. A century and a half forward and the Farm continues in its original purpose. After the University of Vermont assumed stewardship of the Farm in the early '50s, the Farm and Herd were identified as teaching resources, for example, in the areas of historic preservation, equine husbandry, reproduction, training, and farm management, to fulfill the mission of the University.

Surely, not to be understated, the historical significance of the Morgan Herd and Farm is unparalleled by any equine herd or any horse farm anywhere in Vermont or the United States. The Morgan horse is likely the oldest *American* breed of horse dating back to the founding sire, Figure, born in 1789. The legacy Morgans at the UVM Morgan Horse Farm spring from the original Morgans and the government Morgan bloodline. The government bloodline is maintained to this day at this Farm by selective breeding under the guidance and stewardship of the University. Importantly, on the anvil of the government Morgan's dependability, durability, affability and courage, the ancestors of these U.V.M. Morgans played an unrivaled role in forging the American experience. Morgans carried families and their possessions during the American migration to settle the West, cleared land, plowed fields, and did essentially anything that was asked of this cooperative and able beast of burden. Moreover and importantly, it was the Morgan that was maintained by the federal government as the preferred military (U.S. Cavalry) mount-troop transporters leading soldiers into battle and, hopefully, carrying them home. Morgans, like their riders were injured and made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of the American cause. The Morgan is an army veteran worthy of recognition and memorialization at least because Americans entrusted their lives and futures in the Morgan horse, futures which we as Americans now enjoy. The government Morgans and the Farm are icons of American history to be preserved and enjoyed by future generations.

Vision for the Future

The historic Main barn, historic Broodmare shed and historic Remount barn will continue to serve as housing for the Morgan Herd that is not pastured. Stall dimensions will be adjusted to meet the university's animal housing requirements under AALAC. Stall doors, passageways, heating, plumbing, power, and mechanized equipment will be reviewed and addressed to improve conditions for the Herd and to address personnel safety and labor costs. With the assistance of the expertise at the University, pastures that have been underutilized in recent years will be improved, fenced and rotated as needed for efficiency and to reduce labor needs, and to enhance viewing of the Morgan in the fields of Vermont. Water sources will be identified. With assistance of University expertise, a nutrient management system audit will be conducted and adjustments to current management adjusted and implemented as needed. Standard operating procedures will be developed for all aspects of day-to-day and seasonal farm management and for farm emergencies including fire, weather, horse injury or illness, and personnel safety. The current reproductive facility will be updated to improve safety for horse and personnel. A market survey will be conducted to assess the viability of an advanced equine reproductive facility and equine reproduction service.

An inventory of the Herd will be initiated to permit an informed discussion directed to the number of foals needed, identification of Morgans to be maintained for educational purposes as well as breeding and maintenance of the government bloodline, availability of Morgans for sales and shows and as important ambassadors of the University and Farm for Farm visitors and tourist-related activities. A strategy for

horse shows to advance the U.V.M Morgan brand and to promote the U.V.M. Morgan Horse Farm apprenticeship program will be developed in preparation for 2019.

For certain, there is no lack of interest, admiration, love, or concern for the promotion, preservation and perpetuation of the Morgan Horse Farm and its government Morgans. Nonetheless, facility improvement costs, staff capacity and labor costs, and financial security are the greatest challenges for preservation of the Farm and the government Morgan. Some deferred maintenance will be addressed by generous funding from the University under a deferred maintenance plan. Expanded tourism, horse sales, commitment from the University, educational and historic preservation grants, volunteerism, and the interest and engagement of loyal Morgan and Morgan Horse Farm fans and donors are hoped to bring about a successful Morgan Horse Farm capital campaign that will perpetuate and preserve the Morgan government bloodline and the Farm as the icons of the American experience that they are for future generations to ponder, study, and enjoy.

Priority	Action Item	Status
Herd Pres	Create plan for farm security and safety	High
Herd Pres	Incorporate security plan into MSP and differed maintenance schedule	High
Herd Pres	Establish a deferred maintenance schedule & address facility need	High
Herd Pres	Audit Herd inventory & develop plan	High
Herd Pres	Develop a plan for Pasture Use and Development with best agricultural practices	High
Herd Pres	Improve current reproduction facility	High
Herd Pres	Develop standard operating procedures for herd management	High
Herd Pres	Create plan to address AAALAC requirements for barn & review with Historical preservation	High
Herd Pres	Plan breeding center in colt shed blueprint	Medium
Herd Pres	Plan new “historic stallion barn” building for welcome center, gift shop, public bathrooms, auditorium	High

Herd Pres	Develop a sustainable plan for showing UVM Morgans and advancing the brand	Medium
Herd Pres	Update lighting, electrical and ventilation in barns	High
Herd Pres	Commercial breeding services market analysis	High
Herd Pres	Introduce a Nutrient System Management consistent with best Agricultural practices	Medium
Herd Pres	Develop- "best agricultural practices" farm management plan	Medium
Herd Pres	Begin construction to address AAALAC plan	Medium
Herd Pres	Investigate feasibility of improving current arena	Medium

Core Priority: Visitor Experience

Background and Current Conditions

Tourism at the UVM Morgan Horse Farm is a significant component of the operations and is integral to the future development. Guests bring in revenue through admission, the raffle foal program, and gift shop sales, and is a major demographic for future donor solicitation. Arguably one of the most important benefits of being a public attraction is the exposure to the Morgan horse and their important role in the shaping of Vermont and the nation.

In the last decade, the tourism aspects of the farm operations were not seen as a priority and therefore stagnated and declined. With many opportunities to develop and expand, this is an exciting area for future growth. It begins with making guest feel welcome and comfortable, and to do that the MHF needs to start with better signage and wayfinding.

Vision for the Future

The core priority of tourism development is to increase programmatic offerings for tourists, improve the guest experience, and incentivize people to become repeat guests.

The action items identified as game changers by the BOA members and committee participant are to build a welcome center with improved amenities, to expand and grow the gift shop sales, to create a self-guided tour experience, and to better utilize the Morgan Horse Farm property by creating diversified spaces and appeals for guests. Signage, wayfinding, and a robust marketing campaign are critical for this growth. The creation of activities for young families could be the first step to engage a child who then builds a life-long connection with the Morgan Horse Farm; perhaps coming back as a student or an apprentice, and ultimately, replenishing the community of Friends of UVM Morgans.

Within the framework of visitor experience are many action items that can be readily acted upon. Some will be enacted in phases, and some like the welcome center and display kiosks for a self-guided tour are likely muse's for philanthropy.

The timelessness of the Weybridge farm is one of its best attributes; that visitors have that awestruck feeling of being transported to another age when they come up the driveway and see horses working on the land. This is a critical feature of the Morgan Horse Farm, and any improvements must consider the value of the historical fabric.

Priority	Action Item	Status
Experience	Create a Master Site Plan (MSP)	High
Experience	Identify "ambassadors" and will be handled/trained in a way to support public interaction; focus on older broodmares	High

Experience	A young horse will be identified as a future ambassador, and will be retained within the herd, with the idea that as it grows and is trained, it will be available for parades, events, UVM commencement, etc.	Medium
Experience	Temporary “A” frame signs will be placed in the driveway to help with directions.	High
Experience	purchase new picnic tables	High
Experience	Identify food vendor to attend events	Medium
Experience	Use MSP to identify the phases of development	High
Experience	Intro to Landscape Design- Fall 2018- will do a case study and make recommendations for the interpretive trails & wayfinding at the UVM MHF	High
Experience	Sell food items in gift shop (ice cream)	Medium
Experience	The walking trails will have signage and be cleared enough for visitors to use for the 2019 tourism season.	High
Experience	Update the tour script to be upper level Main Barn, potentially Remount, end in Gift Shop	Medium
Experience	Create “value added” tour experiences- i.e. guests can pay extra to go downstairs, witness up-close a training session, and help feed the horses hay & water under the supervision of farm staff.	Medium
Experience	Research with VT Dept. of Transportation to cost road signs in surrounding area; install	High

Experience	The main barn lobby display will be re-arranged and improved over the winter of 2018-2019.	High
Experience	CALS/Foundation/MHF staff will research available grants and/or state funding that could help complete the trails	High
Experience	Create plan for future kids activities area, (blacksmith shop)	High
Experience	Complete MHF video	High
Experience	Complete MHF slide presentation	Medium
Experience	Petting opportunities at scheduled times throughout the day, (e.g. 11am & 1pm).	Medium
Experience	Immediate goal of better lighting and new shelves for tourism season 2019	High
Experience	Design & Build class can help install in spring 2019	Medium
Experience	Cohesive creative design of kiosks and signage to ensure a cohesive product for interpretive trails and self-guided tour kiosks	Medium
Experience	The gift shop will continue to expand available products and improve displays; in time more space will be allocated once the MSP is completed.	Medium
Experience	online gift shop goes live	High

Resources:
Chamber resources
UVM Communications Department
Student Internships