UNDERGROUND RAILROAD EDUCATION CENTER (UREC)

# Board Strategic Planning Retreat & Facilitation Agenda

*Resolving Core Strategic Decisions, Governance Boundaries & Implementation Sequencing (2027–2029)*

> **Purpose:** Review the updated cross-referenced 2027–2029 Strategic Plan Draft, synthesize anonymous stakeholder feedback, resolve open governance/identity questions, and assign realistic implementation timelines.
> **Recommended Format:** 3.5-Hour Facilitated Working Session (can be split into two 2-hour Board meetings if preferred).
> **Pre-Read Packet:** (1) Updated Strategic Plan Draft (2027–2029); (2) Anonymous Stakeholder Feedback Summary; (3) Timeline Assignment Worksheet.

## 1. Facilitator Ground Rules & Conflict-of-Interest Protocols

- **Confidentiality & Psychological Safety:** Staff feedback was collected anonymously to ensure candid operational insights. Board discussion should focus on systemic solutions rather than identifying individual commenters.
- **Governance Recusal Protocol:** During Agenda Item 4 (Succession & Post-Founder Planning), Co-Founders Paul and Mary Liz Stewart will share their desired transition horizon and exit vision, then step out or recuse themselves while the Board deliberates on the Transition/Search Committee charter and governance boundaries.
- **Decision-First Focus:** Every agenda block is structured around specific motions or consensus determinations needed to finalize the 2027–2029 Strategic Plan for formal adoption.

## 2. Timed Session Agenda & Facilitation Guide

| Time / Duration | Agenda Block & Facilitator Prompts | Key Decision / Deliverable |
|---|---|---|
| **0:00 – 0:20 (20 min)** | **Block 1: Welcome, Context & Anonymous Feedback Synthesis**<br>• Review the evolution of the 2027–2029 draft and how stakeholder themes were integrated.<br>• Highlight major consensus areas: prioritizing organizational policies/staff capacity first, aligning with Capital Campaign installment realities, and restoring UREC's core historical pillars. | Shared understanding of baseline constraints and staff/board priorities. |

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| **0:20 – 0:55 (35 min)** | **Block 2: Core Identity, Scope & Vision Alignment**<br>• Prompt 1: Affirm UREC's core identity as a history-based educational institution that connects past struggles to modern civic engagement (e.g., voter registration, historical workshops) rather than direct social work/legal aid.<br>• Prompt 2: Review and adopt the revised Vision Statement and geographic terminology ('Northern part of Albany' vs. 'North Albany').<br>• Prompt 3: Confirm the five updated Strategic Pillars. | Formal consensus on Vision Statement, geographic phrasing, mission boundaries, and 5-Pillar structure. |
| **0:55 – 1:35 (40 min)** | **Block 3: Capital Campaign Pacing & Interpretive Center Priorities**<br>• Prompt 1: Review current Capital Campaign pledges (typically paid over 5-year installments) and realistic construction/occupancy milestones for the $12M–$15M Interpretive Center.<br>• Prompt 2: Confirm Phase 1 facility build-out priorities (exhibit/program spaces, collections storage, staff offices, indoor ADA restrooms) versus Phase 2 secondary assets (commercial kitchen, Harriet's Kitchen, studio apartments). | Approved Facility Phasing Order and Capital Campaign dependency framing. |
| **1:35 – 1:50 (15 min)** | **Break** | Refreshments & informal reflection. |
| **1:50 – 2:35 (45 min)** | **Block 4: Succession Planning & Post-Founder Governance (Pillar V)**<br>• Part A (15 min - With Co-Founders): Paul and Mary Liz Stewart share initial thoughts on their target transition horizon (e.g., 3–5 years vs. 5–10 years) and preferred post-executive roles.<br>• Part B (30 min - Board Executive Session / Co-Founders Recused): Approve charter for a 5–7 member Board Transition & Search Committee (excluding Co-Founders), establish Emergency Succession Plan steps, authorize oral history knowledge capture, and confirm post-hire separation boundaries. | Chartered Board Transition Committee, Emergency Succession mandate, and target transition window. |
| **2:35 – 3:15 (40 min)** | **Block 5: Timeline Assignment Workshop & Resource Calibration**<br>• Work through the Timeline Assignment Worksheet across all five pillars.<br>• Separate immediate 'Foundation-First' priorities (HR policies, staff retention/pay, fundraising restructuring, existing programs) from 'Facility-Dependent' initiatives.<br>• Review Board governance targets (T3 expectations, skills matrix, local representation without tokenism, and $100 Founders' Tour vs. broader earned income/membership models). | Completed Timeline Assignment Worksheet with target quarters/years and Board committee owners. |
| **3:15 – 3:30 (15 min)** | **Block 6: Next Steps, Final Edits & Adoption Schedule**<br>• Confirm date for final redline circulation.<br>• Assign Board officer/consultant to incorporate assigned timelines into the final 2027–2029 Strategic Plan.<br>• Set formal Board vote date for plan adoption. | Final adoption calendar and assigned action owners. |

## 3. Open Governance & Policy Questions for Board Resolution

- **1. Leadership Transition Horizon:** Will the Board plan around a 3–5 year planned executive transition or a 5–10 year horizon, and how will search agency fees be funded?
- **2. Guest Studio Apartments Policy:** Will the two Interpretive Center studio apartments be dedicated strictly to mission-aligned visiting scholars/artists and grounds/security staff, or marketed for short-term earned rental income?
- **3. Annual Public Conference:** Should UREC restart the Annual Underground Railroad Public Conference immediately at existing/partner venues, or wait until the Interpretive Center event space opens?
- **4. Board Composition & T3 Benchmarks:** Does the Board approve the proposed Time, Talent, Treasure (T3) give-or-get tiers and skills recruitment priorities (Legal, Finance, Development, Hospitality), while framing neighborhood representation around authentic skills and community ties?