



THE  
BUFFALO  
HISTORY  
MUSEUM

1 JUL 1982

2020 MASTER PLAN



THE BUFFALO  
HISTORY MUSEUM

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CREATIVE

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“

You must study and learn the lessons of history because humanity has been involved in this soul-wrenching, existential struggle for a very long time. People on every continent have stood in your shoes, through decades and centuries before you.

The truth does not change, and that is why the answers worked out long ago can help you find solutions to the challenges of our time.”

**JOHN LEWIS**

*Civil Rights Leader and Congressman*

## Dear Friends,

During my two decades with The Buffalo History Museum, I have seen us welcome diverse Western New Yorkers in ways that truly connect them to our region's shared history.

I recall the glee on a mother's face when she discovered a document in our library that unlocked her family tree. I was touched by the determined fourth grader on a school trip who left the Pioneer Gallery inspired to revive the craft of weaving. The guests who come to our Museum gain new appreciation for the richness of their heritage, even in the toughest of times.

Today, our region is facing significant challenges. While a pandemic separates us physically, deeper wounds from our nation's history flare up in the streets. Many Americans seek to make sense of this moment by returning to history – looking back to the 1918 flu pandemic, the upheaval of the 1860 presidential election, and uprisings in the wake of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

As in other difficult moments, Western New Yorkers look to The Buffalo History Museum to provide perspective, comfort, and hope. In the wake of 9/11, our *Spirit of the City* exhibit gave guests a place to gather, bridge differences, and commemorate the highs and lows that make Buffalo a place for both visionary fighters and peaceful dreamers.

This Master Plan builds on our nearly one hundred and sixty year commitment to Western New York by establishing a new vision for the future Museum, and by re-focusing on how we engage with communities to share their histories – from their perspectives.

Together, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to re-imagine how our guests experience the Museum, and to prepare for another century of service.

**Please join us on this incredible adventure.**

Warmly,



**Melissa Brown**  
Executive Director



Photo: Jeffrey T. Barnes

## Executive Summary

**Based on several months of research and deliberation, the Museum identified the following essential goals:**

- **Sharing local history to build and foster community, and create a stronger sense of place.**
- **Utilizing collections in dynamic and sustainable ways to inspire emotion and connection.**
- **Cultivating and promoting the value of history, while reflecting the region's diverse cultures and perspectives.**
- **Implementing strategic actions that ensure community engagement and access to Museum experiences for future generations.**

Between November 2019 and September 2020, The Buffalo History Museum embarked on a collaborative process to envision the Museum's future for the next ten years.

Despite the challenges of a global pandemic, the staff and Board of Managers remained committed to the process and the work needed to make this vision a reality.

**At the center of these goals is a pragmatic vision to advance our mission by:**

- **Attracting and engaging more visitors**, in-person and online, to create connection and a larger community of support.
- Inspiring more **engaging, personal, and relevant experiences** for guests.
- Making the Museum **more welcoming, accessible, and comfortable** for all people.
- **Working more collaboratively with diverse communities** across the region.
- **Expanding the reach and impact** of exhibits and programs.
- Rousing and motivating more educators, students and researchers to consider the Museum a **go-to educational resource**.
- **Becoming a central hub for the preservation** of Western New York heritage.
- **Building the Museum's capacity and resources** through a phased approach.

**The Master Plan identifies many actions for the Museum's advancement, which are detailed throughout this document. They include:**

**A more engaging guest experience:** Creating memorable storylines for a slate of future exhibits and programs that attract guests and utilize more of the collections, while providing amenities that make guests feel welcome and visit more often.

**A new level of commitment to diverse communities:** Creating culturally competent partnerships with more groups across the region and co-creating projects with them that are relevant and meaningful to their audiences and constituents.

**Campus enhancements:** A bold re-imagining of the Museum Building and relocation of the Library to the newly renovated Resource Center, which will be the heart of all-things-collections. The Resource Center will become a key access point and dynamic companion to the Museum Building.

**Expanding beyond the walls:** Personalizing the guest experience in more ways offsite and online by creating collections-driven content, as well as new education and research tools. We will also continue to explore and activate alternative public spaces, bringing our resources out into the community.



# About the Museum

## About the Museum

### Overlooking Mirror Lake in Delaware Park, The Buffalo History Museum is distinctively situated at the crossroads of past and future.

The Museum is a vibrant, historic destination set at the heart of a re-energized cultural corridor. Now a national landmark site, our Museum Building was made to be a lasting legacy of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition.

Today, the Museum is helping to shape the region's future by **working with diverse communities to frame history through present-day issues and concerns.**

Through a collection of nearly 500,000 objects and an ever-changing array of exhibits and programs, we share the stories of our region's triumphs and struggles. When people embrace history on a personal level and come to the Museum to discover more of themselves, the effect is powerful. These stories engage guests, placing them in the shoes of key figures and everyday people who have called Western New York home.



## Mission Statement

**Experiencing history with you,** by safekeeping, remembering, discovering, and sharing our stories; learning and exploring together; sparking emotional and social connections within our unique community.



## Values and Voice of the Museum

### Our Values

In the 2019-2021 Strategic Framework, the Museum developed a series of Core Values to guide our actions:

- **Collaboration:** We work across disciplines and communities to ensure that other's perspectives are heard.
- **Conversation:** We are active listeners who facilitate open, honest, and culturally engaged dialogue.
- **Diversity:** We prioritize diversity, accessibility, and inclusion in everything that the Museum does.
- **Engagement:** We work enthusiastically to ensure that all people feel welcome and have opportunities to participate.
- **Excellence:** We are always growing, improving, and investing in our people, programs, and resources.
- **Integrity:** We demonstrate the highest level of ethics, authenticity, credibility, and transparency in our interactions with all people.
- **Storytelling:** We are passionate about keeping and sharing our community's stories.
- **Stewardship:** We are here to preserve our region's history and to help others do the same.

### Our Voice

We express our Core Values through everyday actions and messages that attract guests, and inspire them to spend their valuable time with us.

*Our aim is to make every guest and partner see the Museum as...*

- **Warm, intimate, and welcoming**  
(like a favorite sweater)
- **Genuine, sincere, and trustworthy**  
(the real deal)
- **Knowledgeable, reflective, and empathetic**  
(like a good teacher)
- **Encyclopedic, thought-provoking, and passionate**  
(a place to geek-out on cool stuff)
- **Whimsical, entertaining, and memorable**  
(the life of the history party)

## Our Audiences: *Who We Serve*

On the following pages, the Museum has identified its core audience segments prioritized by their importance to our mission and the goals of this Master Plan. They include...

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### Residents and families, as well as tourists visiting Western New York

Families are the backbone of Western New York's communities. We want to foster more connections among them, while also reaching individual history lovers at different stages of life and from different parts of the world – from young people starting their careers, to older people seeking new opportunities in retirement, to cultural tourists visiting the region.

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### Students and teachers across the region

School groups are an essential audience. Connecting the Museum's content to new forms of teaching and curriculum is one of the best ways to ensure our communities' histories are experienced and understood.

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### Researchers and history buffs

Providing researchers and history enthusiasts with access to our collection ensures that our stories are remembered and shared.

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### Regional community partners and their constituents

The Museum has committed to engaging communities in ways that give them a voice in our exhibits and programming. By investing in long term partnerships, the Museum will spark connections and collaborations that lead to new audiences, support, and deeper insights.

## Our Audiences: *Who We Serve*

### Residents, Families and Tourists in Buffalo and Western New York

#### Who are they?

- Families with children, mostly ages 9-12.
- People living in the city and its suburbs.
- People living in rural parts of Western New York.
- People and families who are new to the region, or building a new life in Buffalo.
- People across incomes, but especially those in median annual income ranges.
- Older adults looking for ways to socialize and get involved.
- People and families of all abilities.
- Former Buffalonians and tourists visiting regional residents.
- New visitors to the region and tourists seeking destination experiences.

#### Why do they visit?

- Opportunities to share their heritage across generations.
- To learn about their community and see their family's heritage and current experiences reflected in the museum.
- A fun way to spend time together that is also educational.
- Seeking creative ways to learn and express their interests with others.
- Opportunities to experience new historical resources and collections.

#### What amenities do they need?

- Access and information that makes it easy for people to visit and participate.
- Exhibits and programs that are appropriate for a wide span of age groups.
- Staff who are sensitive to cultural differences and help you feel welcome.
- Places to eat a snack, have a coffee, and relax.
- Family friendly and accessible restrooms.
- Seating in or near galleries.

#### What experiences are they looking for?

- Social activities that promote inter-generational and multi-cultural connections.
- A balance of low-fi analog experiences with tech-forward interactive elements.
- Universal design that enables all people to experience the Museum and that supports multi-sensory ways of interacting.
- Digital content and online experiences.
- New ways to learn about and connect with history.

## Our Audiences: *Who We Serve*

### Students and Teachers Across the Region

#### Who are they?

- Fourth through sixth grade public school students.
- Private, charter and parochial school students.
- High school students learning to research.
- Homeschoolers and teachers.
- School teachers focused on new ways to engage students in curriculum requirements.

#### Why do they visit?

- To supplement school curricula with artifacts-based activities.
- Access to primary sources and reference materials for personal research.
- Opportunities to explore how history has contemporary relevance.
- Seeking ideas for new research.

#### What amenities do they need?

- Teaching aids and digital resources.
- Places to store book bags and coats during tours.
- A comfortable place to eat lunch as a group.
- Ample restrooms.
- Space for workshops and presentations.
- Quiet spaces to study and reflect.
- Parking for school buses.

#### What experiences are they looking for?

- Exhibits and programs that bring the past to life in personal ways.
- Creative teaching tools and digital resources that get students involved.
- Opportunities to engage with real artifacts, primary sources and experts – especially opportunities to go behind the scenes.
- Flexible programming that engages students of all abilities.

## Our Audiences: *Who We Serve*

### Researchers and History Buffs

#### Who are they?

- Undergraduate and graduate students.
- University professors and independent scholars of history.
- Genealogists.
- Preservationists.
- Casual researchers seeking house history.
- Journalists, reporters, and digital content makers.

#### Why do they visit?

- Access to primary source materials and collections.
- Guides, tips and tricks for finding interesting sources.
- Opportunities to socialize and share with other researchers.
- Opportunities to incorporate digitized copies from the collections into their work.

#### What amenities do they need?

- More options for times when they can visit in person.
- More options for doing research online.
- Comfortable workspaces with power outlets.
- Ample light.
- Easy to locate, effective finding aids.
- Knowledgeable staff to guide their research.

#### What experiences are they looking for?

- Quiet spaces to work.
- Fast and seamless access to research materials.
- Opportunities to go behind the scenes or explore the collections in greater depth with staff experts.
- Incentives to do research at the Museum over other regional options.

## Our Audiences: *Who We Serve*

### Regional Community Partners and Their Constituents

#### Who are they?

- Culture and heritage groups.
- Community and economic development organizations.
- Businesses and corporate sponsors.
- Foundations and policy makers.
- Native American groups.
- African American groups.
- Hispanic/Latinx groups.
- LGBTQ+ community groups.

#### Why do they visit?

- The Museum is invested in their community's values and initiatives.
- To see their community included in regional history.
- To gain historical perspectives and tools needed to frame contemporary issues.
- To build bridges with other community organizations.

#### What amenities do they need?

- Gallery and meeting spaces to share stories and host events, with support from Museum staff.
- Opportunities and support to build awareness about current issues that matter to them.
- Events and social gatherings to connect with others through history.
- Assistance and tools to help preserve their heritage sites and collections.

#### What experiences are they looking for?

- Opportunities to co-create history experiences with the Museum.
- Opportunities to combine forces and leverage shared resources for common goals.
- A friendly and supportive working relationship with the Museum's culturally competent staff.
- Ways to communicate with Museum audiences and guests.
- Opportunities to engage with Museum content in their communities and neighborhoods.



# Vision for the Future Museum

## Our Guiding Purpose

**History is a journey we take together, an act of exploration and information that helps us define our values and shape our future course.**

For more than 150 years, The Buffalo History Museum has been a place where people could come together to experience history in Western New York – stories brimming with passion, ingenuity, and hope but fraught with struggle and conflict.

This Master Plan reflects the Museum's ongoing efforts to preserve diverse experiences in meaningful ways and to continue the work of generations committed to making history a vital and relevant part of our region's cultural landscape.

As the world and the Museum's role within it continue to change, our work and institution must evolve to better meet the needs of our community.





## Our Guiding Purpose

When we embarked on this master planning process in November 2019, we saw it as a defining moment for the Museum – a time to re-envision our future and challenge us to develop new and better ways of thinking and working.

### We began by re-framing challenges as opportunity-focused questions:

- *How might we create **new history experiences that are engaging and accessible** for all of our guests?*
- *How might we **express our welcoming, guest-centered focus** through improved facilities and amenities?*
- *How might we **share our collections in ways that inspire guests** to explore the many stories we have to offer?*
- *How might we **better collaborate with more diverse community partners**, to share their stories within the Museum and generate increased awareness, understanding, and appreciation across Western New York?*
- *How might we **transform our research experience**, making it more user friendly, comfortable, and enjoyable for novices and professionals alike?*



## Our Guiding Purpose

Over the next year, we explored a myriad of possibilities – identifying critical areas for growth, challenging ourselves to become more engaged across the region, and **working to connect history with the issues impacting Western New York today.**

With the input of the Museum's Board of Managers, staff, and existing community partners, we researched and developed a range of creative solutions to our questions. This new Master Plan is the result of that thoughtful process. **It begins a much larger endeavor to engage more communities and partners, to amplify diverse voices, and to transform the Museum.**

Ultimately, this Master Plan serves as a practical guide for implementation, as well as an invitation to co-create the future museum with others. It is not prescriptive, but open to opportunity and change with the help of current and future partners and audiences.

Help us make The Buffalo History Museum a place where you and the many communities of Western New York can explore story-filled exhibits, dive into unexpected collections, discover hidden gems of research, and share memorable experiences with others.



## Goals for the Future Museum

Through many workshops and conversations, master planning participants established four key goals to shape this vision for the future Museum:

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### **Sharing local history to build and foster community, and create a stronger sense of place.**

The Museum will focus resources on **attracting and engaging guests in-person and online**. We will embrace creativity and innovation to explore imaginative approaches for exhibits, programs, and activities. We will seek new ways to improve and deepen connections with guests, encourage more meaningful interactions, and inspire others to join us as collaborators, advocates, volunteers, members, and donors.

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### **Utilizing collections in dynamic and sustainable ways to inspire emotion and connection.**

The Museum will strategically curate our collections in sustainable ways that preserve them for future generations. With community partners, we will activate the collections by making them more accessible and meaningful to all guests.

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### **Cultivating and promoting the value of history, while reflecting the region's diverse cultures and perspectives.**

The Museum will foster an appreciation of the complexity and nuance of local history. Using our resources to engage Museum partners, advisors, participants, and co-creators, we will work together to build a deeper community understanding of the past and its connection to, and relevance for, our present lives.

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### **Implementing strategic actions that ensure community engagement and access to Museum experiences for future generations.**

By implementing strategic actions and phased improvements over time, the Museum will ensure its long-term sustainability and relevance. This includes engaging new audiences and community partners in ways that inspire them to invest in our mission – by being Museum ambassadors and serving as financial partners to enable delivery of enhanced experiences for guests and stakeholders across the region.

## Areas for Immediate Action

By leveraging the Museum's existing resources, the following areas of focus offer the greatest potential for guest engagement and revenue growth:

- Improving the guest experience
- Expanding history & education programming
- Building partnerships for community programs and events

All three areas of focus will help the Museum grow audiences and build support in more communities across the region. These focus areas will also be supported by implementing the following strategic priorities:

- **Expanding marketing and outreach** activities to support program growth.
- **Leveraging increased community engagement and partnerships** to help secure future resources for exhibits, capital improvements, and growing staff capacity.
- **Focusing on programming, events, and education services that grow revenue in the short-term.** We will develop long-term revenue strategies such as endowment and planned giving as more audiences and stakeholders become invested in the Museum's mission.

The next three pages outline a summary of key actions that the Museum will take in the **short, medium, and long-term.**



## Short Term Priorities (1-2 Years)

In the next two years, the Museum will prioritize:

- **Expanding audiences** via community engagement, marketing, membership, and advancement efforts,
- **Engaging closest friends and supporters** in early capital campaign efforts,
- **Enhancing educational programs**, creating more teaching resources and digital content,
- **Developing a strategy** to digitize the collections,
- **Optimizing existing exhibits and programs**, while preparing for future improvements,
- **Implementing achievable improvements to facilities and guest amenities** while planning for future infrastructural needs,
- **Refreshing the Museum's brand** and establishing a consistent brand voice.

A detailed list of all short-term actions is **located in the supplementary [Action Plan](#) document.**

### Goal 1:

Sharing local history to build and foster community, and create a stronger sense of place.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Finish lower level Portico improvements and add guest amenities.
- Create new exhibits: State Court Orientation + Erie County Bicentennial.
- Build educational materials and activities for target audiences.

### Goal 2:

Utilizing collections in dynamic and sustainable ways to inspire emotion and connection.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Complete a Collections Assessment Report.
- Use more collections to enhance education, exhibits and marketing.
- Use the Collections Assessment Report to re-focus priorities and plan for re-organizing collections storage based on long-term goals.
- Enhance and increase access to collections.

### Goal 3:

Cultivating and promoting the value of history, while reflecting the region's diverse cultures and perspectives.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Redefine the Museum's role among heritage partners as a hub for communication, preservation, and collaboration.
- Prioritize select community issues and identify key partners.
- Initiate a culture-changing community engagement process.
- Build relationships with key partners and co-create relevant projects.

### Goal 4:

Implementing strategic actions that ensure community engagement and access to Museum experiences for future generations.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Focus staff efforts towards priority projects.
- Create a new marketing and communications plan and refresh brand.
- Expand marketing efforts, create targeted digital content.
- Align financial and advancement goals with the Master Plan.
- Create a capital campaign plan with support of new leaders & partners.
- Improve facility rentals, taking a more purposeful, mission-driven focus.
- Create new opportunities for community engagement and volunteering.
- Develop a campaign vision book, revised campaign pyramid, and timeline to prepare for an optimized public launch.

## Medium Term Priorities (3-5 Years)

In the next five years, the Museum will prioritize:

- **Developing signature exhibits** guided by the Master Plan.
- **Pilot-testing exhibits and new projects**, especially in collaboration with community partners.
- **Implementing collections digitization** strategy.
- **Executing the capital campaign plan** with the support of Board leadership and partners.
- **Growing the Museum's earned revenue** via new guest experiences and digital-native strategies.
- **Implementing the next stage of accessibility improvements** at the Museum.
- **Planning for move out of the Reinstein**, and exploring partnerships to repurpose the property.
- **Preparing for collections consolidation and relocation** of the Library to the Resource Center.

A detailed list of all medium-term actions is located in the **supplementary *Action Plan*** document.

### Goal 1:

Sharing local history to build and foster community, and create a stronger sense of place.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Continue to enhance existing exhibits, implement achievable signature exhibits, and plan for future signature exhibits.
- Continue to build audiences via marketing and memberships.
- Implement plans for improved guest experience, including an accessible front entrance to the Museum.
- Continue to build digital-native approaches to content and revenue.

### Goal 2:

Utilizing collections in dynamic and sustainable ways to inspire emotion and connection.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Continue to provide digital access to the collections.
- Implement new collections management policies and consolidate the collections.
- Use collections to support co-created exhibits and programs.

### Goal 3:

Cultivating and promoting the value of history, while reflecting the region's diverse cultures and perspectives.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Continue to plan and develop issue-driven strategic projects with key community partners.
- Measure outputs and outcomes of recent community engagement efforts to demonstrate the Museum's impact with funders.
- Continue growing skills in cultural competency and design new ways for guests to participate in exhibits and programs.

### Goal 4:

Implementing strategic actions that ensure community engagement and access to Museum experiences for future generations.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Continue marketing initiatives and enhance the Museum's value proposition for education, attendance, and memberships.
- Continue to build staff and Board capacity for growth & engagement.
- Execute the capital campaign plan.
- Identify partners to discuss redevelopment of Reinstein property.
- Execute a study to move the library to the Resource Center.
- Prepare Resource Center for consolidation of collections, including removal of exhibit and addressing structural engineering.

## Long Term Priorities (6-10 Years)

In the next ten years, the Museum will prioritize:

- **Fulfilling capital campaign goals to complete facilities improvements**, while pursuing new guest experiences beyond the current campus.
- **Completing new exhibits and amenities at the Museum** to amplify the guest experience.
- **Creating a new Library and collections experience** at the reactivated Resource Center.
- **Co-creating more community projects and programs** beyond the walls of the Museum.
- **Continuing to cultivate greater diversity** among Museum leaders and stakeholders.
- **Achieving growth in audiences and continuing to expand access to the Museum** and its unique educational resources.

A detailed list of all long-term actions is **located in the supplementary [Action Plan](#) document.**

### Goal 1:

Sharing local history to build and foster community, and create a stronger sense of place.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Convert the former library space into a new signature exhibit, guest hospitality area with refreshments, and extra office space.
- Implement plans for all remaining signature exhibits and continue to create a variety of other exhibits and programs.
- Welcome more students on-site and via new digital resources.

### Goal 2:

Utilizing collections in dynamic and sustainable ways to inspire emotion and connection.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Relocate the library and all stored collections to the Resource Center.
- Increase and enhance use of the collections through changes to facilities, exhibits, and programs.
- Renovate and re-organize collections storage facilities, becoming an exemplar of best practices.

### Goal 3:

Cultivating and promoting the value of history, while reflecting the region's diverse cultures and perspectives.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Continue to plan and develop issue-driven strategic projects with key community partners.
- Continue growing skills in cultural competency and design new ways for guests to participate in exhibits and programs.

### Goal 4:

Implementing strategic actions that ensure community engagement and access to Museum experiences for future generations.

#### Select Key Actions:

- Complete the capital campaign.
- Optimize revenue strategies and marketing to support new guest experiences and the campaign.
- Diversify Museum leadership, staff, and volunteers through culturally competent recruitment and cultivation practices.
- Measure outputs and outcomes of recent community engagement efforts to demonstrate the Museum's impact with funders.



# The Guest Experience



## Goals for the Guest Experience

- **Interpreting history through intimate personal narratives** of everyday people and key historical figures. Guests will learn how personal stories relate to larger historical trends, and vice versa.
- **Participating in signature exhibits, programs and research.** We help Western New Yorkers share their stories in creative and unexpected ways that reflect their identities and values.
- **Experiencing history in the Museum and off site through immersive activities,** multi-sensory exhibits, guided research, hands-on learning materials, and a growing selection of co-curated activities and digital content.
- **Finding more ways to help guests access the Museum's collections and digital resources,** which offer everything from one-of-a-kind documents and artifacts of national importance, to quirky local memorabilia.
- **A feeling of trust,** knowing that we are a meaningful source of historical materials and knowledge about Buffalo and Western New York.
- **A warm and welcoming staff and great guest amenities** that give all people access and make them feel comfortable.



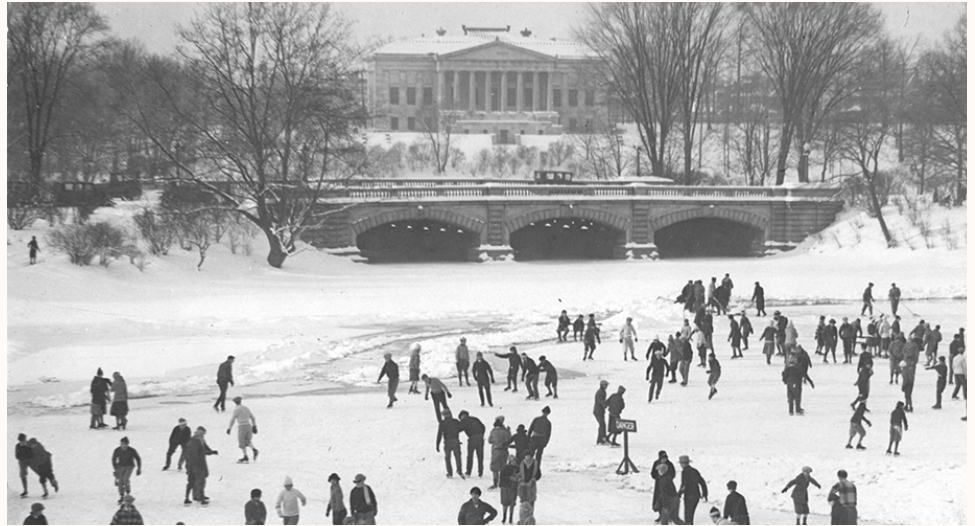
## Our Guiding Theme

The Museum's mission of “experiencing history with you” hinges on our ability to share meaningful stories.

**Every good story starts with a theme.** It might be something important, or something that helps us make meaning in our own lives.

To that end, **the Museum needs a guiding theme** to inspire meaningful and interconnected narratives across exhibits, programs, and content.

**The history of Western New York is filled with stories of diverse people striving to create a place that they can call home.**



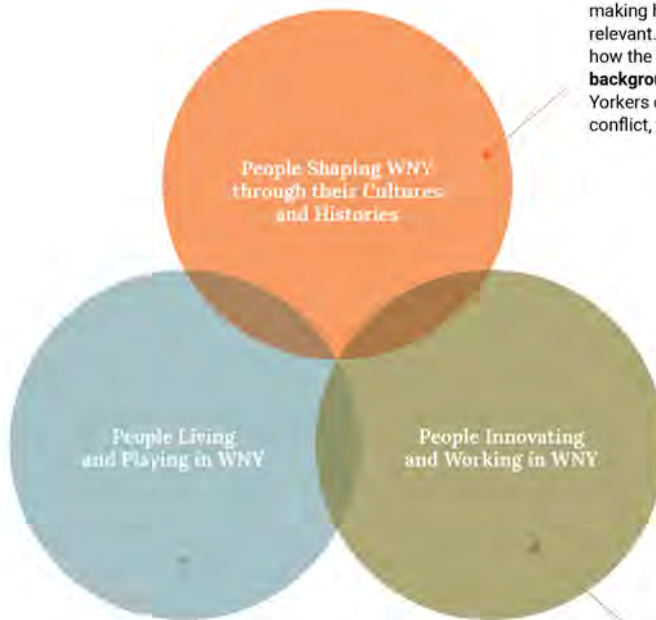
## Core Themes of the Museum

The Museum will use three related core themes to focus on stories that guests want to hear and that our collections uniquely support.

**Why these themes?** People. They focus on stories about people... told by people. They encourage us to find the personal and emotional aspects of history and draw them out for our guests.

**These themes are also intended to give more people a voice in the stories told, and to make their voices heard.**

Think of these core themes as a frame of reference, not the actual story told. They help the Museum create and interpret exhibits and programs in a consistent way that reinforces our guiding theme on the previous page. *They are not the exhibits themselves.*



This core theme focuses on making history feel personal and relevant. It suggests stories about how the **diverse cultures and backgrounds** of Western New Yorkers come together, and often conflict, to define our region.

This core theme focuses on the daily lives of Western New Yorkers, inviting stories about **family, community, customs, and activities** at work and play.

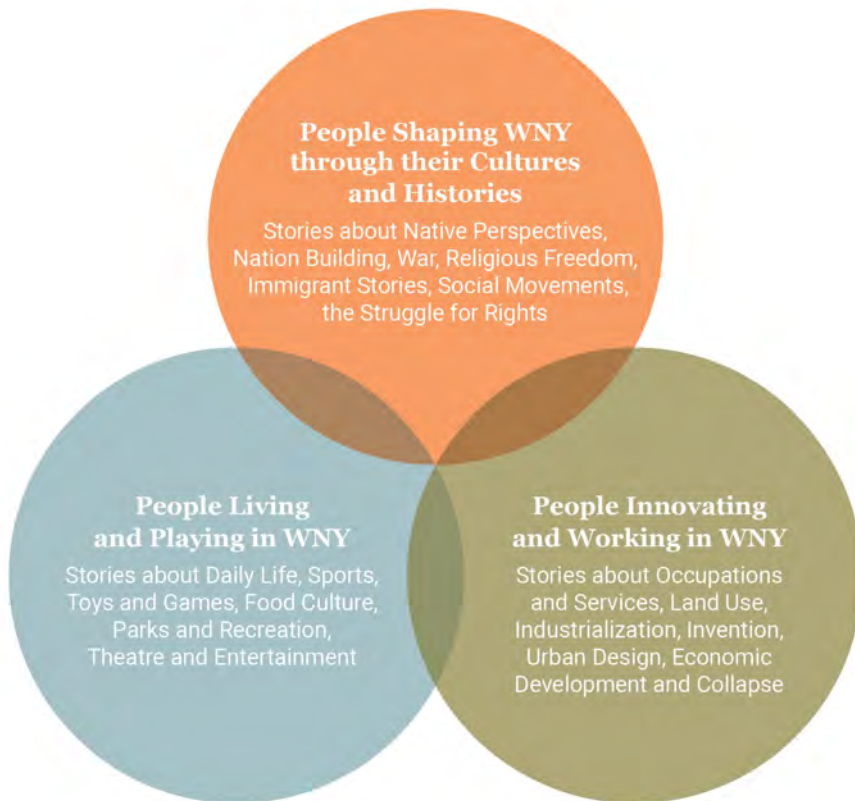
This core theme focuses on the many ways Western New Yorkers have **used their ingenuity to find innovative solutions** in the face of challenges and adversity.

## Story Possibilities Based on the Museum's Core Themes

This diagram shows a range of story topics inspired by the Museum's collections and the history of Western New York. **They are ideally suited for bringing out the Museum's core themes in future exhibits and programs.**

Thematic stories might also be used to create a new **orientation exhibit**, write scripts for videos, develop new additions to existing exhibits, experiment with single-focus temporary displays, or as a way to organize content for educational programs and digital resources.

The aim of using thematic storylines is to reinforce the Guiding Theme that we want every guest to experience and understand.



## Using Chronology Strategically

While historical timelines are an efficient way to organize events, they tend to make history feel like a textbook – a single linear story without variation in voice or tone.

Here, the Museum's key storylines are organized by timeline, diminishing the effectiveness of core themes and creating divided narratives.

However, there may be moments within exhibits or program content where historic timelines need to be presented to better understand the story. In those cases, the Museum will keep core themes present in the chronological structure.

In short, **chronology will be used selectively, rather than as a default content organizing structure.**

### 18th century

- English immigrants of the 18th century
- Sagoyewatha (Red Jacket)
- Native Perspectives on Land Use and Commerce

### 19th century

- Native perspective on the War of 1812
- Native response to land companies, dispossession, and reservations
- Slavery as Forced Migration
- Religious diversity in Western NY
- Irish, German, Jewish, Polish, and Italian Immigration in the late 19th century
- The Struggle for Equality by Black Western New Yorkers
- Women's Rights
- Mobilizing for War from 1812 to Afghanistan
- Media: from broadsides to the internet
- Buffalo Food and Beverage History

### 20th century

- Chinese immigration in the early 20th century
- The Great Migration
- Urban Decline and Emigration
- Mobilizing for War from 1812 to Afghanistan
- The Struggle for Equality by Black Western New Yorkers
- Yemenite immigration of the mid 20th century
- Women's Rights
- Innovations in Urban Planning and Design
- WNY's "Golden Age" and the Pan-Am Exposition
- Labor and Industry
- Medicine and Disease
- Sports Icons and Memorabilia
- Theater and Entertainment in Western NY
- Buffalo Food and Beverage History
- Toys Made and Used in Western NY
- The Fight for LGBTQ+ Equality

### Contemporary

- Modern Refugees
- The Six Nations today: Stories told in their voices
- The Fight for LGBTQ+ Equality
- The Struggle for Equality by Black Western New Yorkers
- Women's Rights
- Acknowledging the Museum's Past, Remaking its Future
- Mobilizing for War from 1812 to Afghanistan
- Innovations in Urban Planning and Design
- Urban Decline and Emigration
- Stories of family life (collections and guest contributed)
- Lost leagues, trailblazers and renegades of Buffalo sports
- Sports Icons and Memorabilia
- Buffalo Food and Beverage History
- Media: from broadsides to the internet

Storylines that appear in the contemporary period focus on many present-day issues that matter to guests.

#### Core Themes Key



## Example Storylines for Exhibits and Programs

This diagram explains how core theme related storylines may be clustered to create standalone exhibits, zones within larger exhibits, or program topics. The stories presented here were selected to help guests explore the collections through exhibits that connect to their personal values, abilities, and experiences. Other storylines are also possible.

**This approach also gives the Museum a stronger way to connect history to current regional issues.** Based on theme-related storylines, Museum staff may identify and engage relevant community partners and create content with them. Similarly, thematic storylines inspire us to invent creative approaches for guest participation.

**Note how this approach creates connections between exhibits and different programs.** It also encourages a transition away from isolated exhibits or content about a single culture in favor of exhibits that blend many cultures and perspectives together.



## Thought-Provoking Juxtapositions Bring Out the Museum's Personality

When creating new exhibits and programs, stories may also be created with **surprising or unexpected juxtapositions that help guests see core themes from a fresh perspective.**

Examples appear on the next few pages.

**Juxtapositions may supplement a larger exhibit or program structure.** They might be used to present an alternative to a more common narrative in a permanent exhibit, or used to create temporary exhibits that relate to other parts of the guest experience.

Juxtapositions might be **serious** to show how certain histories are excluded from dominant narratives. They might also be **playful** to reflect the Museum's more quirky side or eclectic collections.



Core Themes Key

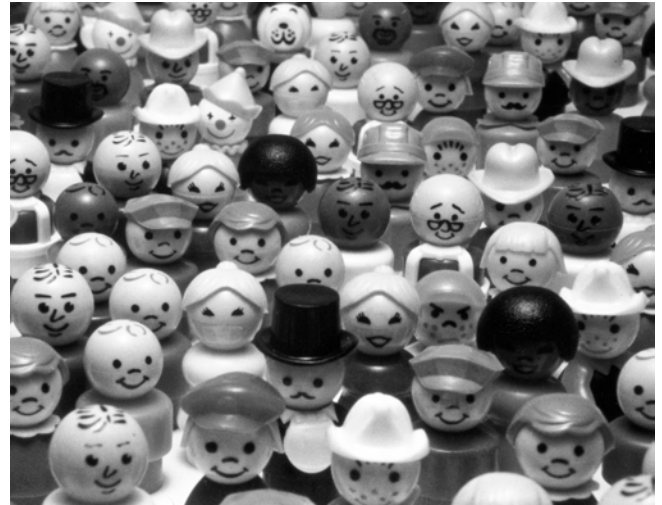
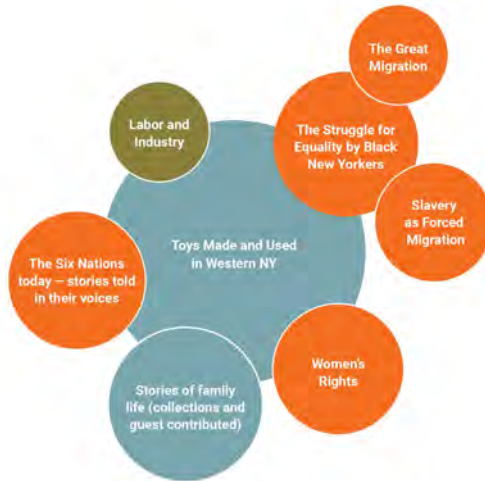
Innovating  
& Working

Cultures  
& Histories

Living  
& Playing

## Toys and How Children View Race and Gender

The toys we make for our children reflect how we want them to view themselves and others.





Core Themes Key

Innovating  
& Working

Cultures  
& Histories

Living  
& Playing

## Branding Native Americans

The brands, marks, icons and products created from depictions of Native people reflect changing perceptions about Native American life and values.



Core Themes Key

Innovating  
& Working

Cultures  
& Histories

Living  
& Playing

## Feeding Social Movements

Food brings people together to make change.



## Planning Guest Journeys Every Step of the Way

To ensure that the Museum's goals for the guest experience are achieved, we need to imagine their journey... and plan for it.

**This five-step process helps us devise actions that will attract and inspire guests as they travel through exhibits and programs.**

**This process can be applied to nearly any aspect of the Museum at any scale.** It can be used to design moments of guest interaction within a single exhibit, or their engagements with the Museum over a lifetime.

**As a public-will-building strategy, this process can also help the Museum create greater public interest and support for history and historic preservation among guests and stakeholders.**

**You attract others to experience history with you.**

The journey gives you an opportunity to add something to the experience or take action in a way that helps attract others – your family, friends, and community.

*So now then we begin again this history of us. - Gertrude Stein*

**You renew history by making it a part of your future.**

Your encounter with history changes you because you carry the stories of other people's lives with you. You recall their experiences to inform your future actions.

*History cannot give us a program for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves, and of our common humanity, so that we can better face the future. - Robert Penn Warren*

**1 You are attracted by an invitation to enter.**

Something draws you into the story by triggering a memory, a feeling, a sensibility, or a value that is familiar.

*One can study only what one has first dreamed about. - Gaston Bachelard*

**2 You discover history by rediscovering what others have experienced.**

Along the journey path, you are drawn into the thrill of historical inquiry with tools that enable self-guided exploration.

*Why study history? The answer is because we virtually must, to gain access to the laboratory of human experience. - Peter Sterns*

**3 Like making a play, you "rehearse" history to understand it.**

The journey immerses you in history. As with theatre, the experience is real, but also imagined.

*The reenactment of the past in the present is the past itself so far as that is knowable to the historian. - R.G. Collingwood*



## Proof of Concept: People of Erie County Exhibit

The content map on this page demonstrates how core themes and related storylines might be organized and overlap to create a new exhibit experience.

In this case, we used the Museum's current outline of content to imagine a proposed exhibit about Erie County and its people.

Using the core theme storylines presented on pages 28-30, one can **organize content in a way that supports guest experience goals.**

**This also creates opportunities to work with partners to identify co-created community-focused content.**



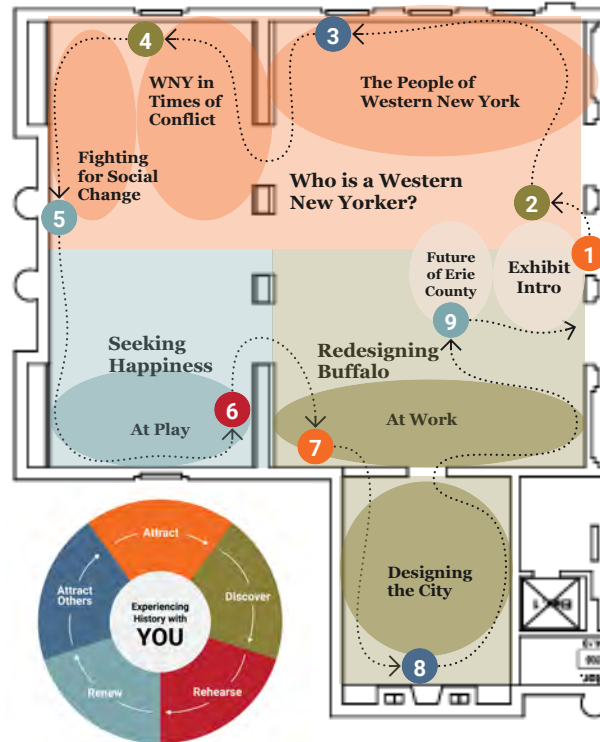
## Guest Journey Map for People of Erie County Exhibit

Now that we have seen how core themes and storylines might organize an exhibit, we can apply our five-step guest journey to develop ideas for making the exhibit more personal, participatory, and interactive.

This page demonstrates **one way that an exhibit's content might be organized by storyline in a gallery.**

It also provides a few examples of how **the five-step guest process could make the Erie County exhibit content more engaging and personal.**

**Notice that the five-step process isn't always linear...** it adapts to the interpretive needs of the Museum and its partners.



- 1 You see a display mixing historical photos of Erie County with contemporary ones. **You recognize the places where you had your first kiss or broke your leg** and you remember...
- 2 An interactive game features an Erie County timeline. Next to it are images of artifacts from the collections. **You arrange them in the timeline, revealing more about the connections.**
- 3 At a recording kiosk, **you are invited to tell a story about your favorite food or restaurant in Erie County.**
- 4 You examine artifacts and documents from past wars and are asked to **make inferences about common experiences that soldiers have had across time.**
- 5 You watch short videos from community groups about social change. You take a card and write down an action that you commit to taking.
- 6 **You play the role of a sports team owner who has to negotiate for a star player against another city.** What will you do?
- 7 A life-size graphic on the wall features robber barons and factory laborers lined up opposite each other. **You stand with them to take a selfie.**
- 8 An interactive invites you to **redesign the expressway that divides Olmsted's Delaware Park.**
- 9 As you leave the exhibit, **you are invited to send a photo from your phone to a virtual time capsule** that will be passed on to future Erie County residents.

An aerial photograph of a campus featuring a large, winding road, a circular track, and several buildings, all overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text "Campus and Facilities" is centered in white, bold, serif font.

# Campus and Facilities

## Vision for Campus and Facilities

A long-standing question has been how to create a more connected campus that unifies the guest experience across all locations.

The Museum operates three facilities: The Museum Building, the Reinstein Center, and the Resource Center. Only the Museum Building, and occasionally the Resource Center, are currently used by guests.

Given the distance of the Resource Center from the Museum's main property, and the funds needed to improve the Reinstein Center, a physically connected campus is difficult to create with existing resources.

This plan proposes that the best way to create a connected campus is through the specific journeys of our guests, regardless of location.

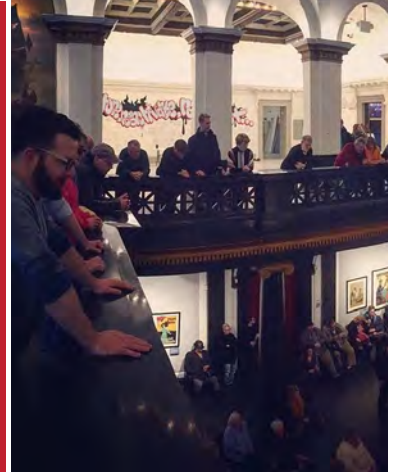


## Vision for Campus and Facilities

Think of what unifies the Museum campus less spatially and more socially – as a family of siblings with unique personalities, each catering to different kinds of guests.

### From this perspective, priorities for improving facilities are driven by guest experience goals:

- **More spaces for exhibits and programs**, many co-created with community partners.
- **Universal access** for all guests with clear pathways to explore and participate.
- **Warm and welcoming environments** focused on guest amenities and personalized service.
- **Quiet spaces** for focused research, relaxation, and contemplation.
- **Active spaces** for large and small groups to gather, collaborate, and commemorate.
- **Multi-purpose spaces** that support Museum programs, education, community events, and private rentals.
- **Optimized spaces for collections** storage, maintenance, and preservation.





## Vision for Campus and Facilities

The following pages indicate changes across all facilities phased over the short, medium, and long-term.

This phased approach allows the Museum to focus in the **short-term** on essential elements that enhance the guest experience and exhibits at the Museum Building, while preparing the Organization for major changes in the future.

The **medium-term** will focus on more extensive changes to exhibit and program spaces at the Museum Building, while reducing use of the Reinstein Building and moving toward the consolidation of all collections, as well as the Library, at the Resource Center.

The **long-term** will fulfill our vision for a guest-centered Museum Building, enable exploration of new uses for Reinstein site, and pursue a long-desired goal – reaching a larger market with a signature exhibit experience at a future site in Buffalo, suitable for expanded exhibits geared more specifically at tourists.



## Vision for the Reinstein Center

Built in the 1920s as a private home and music studio, **The Reinstein Center currently houses staff offices and the Howard D. Beach Photography Studio Collection in a water-damaged basement.**

Our Facility Study estimates the restoration of the Reinstein Center could exceed \$3 million, requiring significant improvements beyond that initial investment to make it a more accessible public space.

Given the Reinstein Center's limited use for the guest experience and its projected long-term costs, the Museum will reduce its use of the building over time. We will explore other options for the site, ideally in collaboration with an appropriate partner (such as a developer or another nonprofit organization).

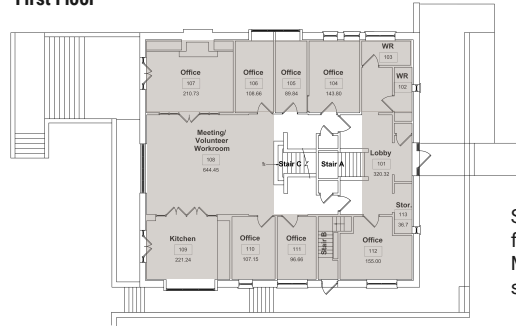


## Goals for the Reinstein Center

Over the next decade, offices and collections will be moved as the Reinstein Center is phased out of use.

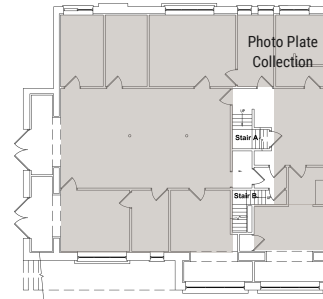
- **Short-term (1-2 years):** Prepare the Howard Beach Photo Collection to move to the Resource Center.
- **Medium-term (3-5 years):** Move the Howard Beach Photo Collection and begin transitioning staff offices to the Museum Building. Begin conversations with potential partners about alternative uses for the Center or its site.
- **Long-term (6-10 years):** Repurpose or redevelop the Center and its site with new partners.

First Floor



Staff offices on the first floor will be moved to the Museum Building as space becomes available.

Basement



All basement collections storage will be moved to the Resource Center in conjunction with the relocation of the Library.

● Staff, Storage & Maintenance

## Vision for the Resource Center

The Resource Center currently serves a dual purpose as an exhibit space and central storage facility for the Museum's collections. It also serves as overflow storage for low demand library collections.

The Resource Center's only exhibit – *Spirit of the City* – has reached the end of its life cycle. The Center also experiences very limited foot traffic. Given these and other factors, **the exhibit will be deinstalled and the space made ready for future use as the new location of the Museum's library**, where all research activities and collections may be unified, while creating a better guest experience for researchers and students.

Before this can happen, **significant resources will have to be cultivated through a phased capital campaign**. Basic preparations for the relocation of the library and collections will also include the removal and replacement of the existing floor slab and other repairs.

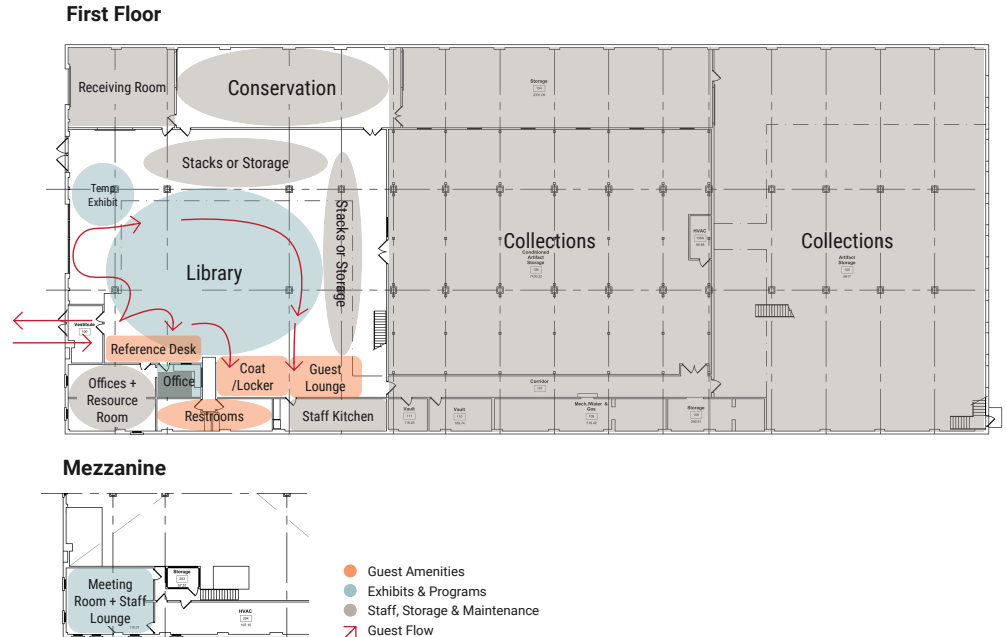
To make this possible, while enabling Museum staff to focus on the guest experience at the Museum Building, the current Resource Center exhibit space will be closed until the Library remodel and relocation can take place.



## Goals for the Resource Center

Over the next decade, the Resource Center will be transformed into a library with comfortable research spaces and a consolidated, accessible collections storage facility.

- **Short-term (1-2 years):** Deinstall the *Spirit of the City* exhibit and prepare for replacement of the floor slab.
- **Medium-term (3-5 years):** Replace the floor slab and initiate planning and design of the new Library.
- **Long-term (6-10 years):** Move the manuscript collection and Howard Beach Photo Collection to the Resource Center. Renovate and relocate the Library and all library/collections staff to the Resource Center. Rebrand and market the Center's new public purpose.



## Vision for the Museum Building

For the foreseeable future, **the historic Pan-Am Building will be The Buffalo History Museum's primary site for a reinvigorated guest experience.**

The landmark Museum Building offers the most achievable opportunities to attract new guests and generate more support and revenue, which will enable larger capital projects and changes to other facilities in the future.

Presented on the following pages are proposed changes to the building phased over the short, medium and long-term.



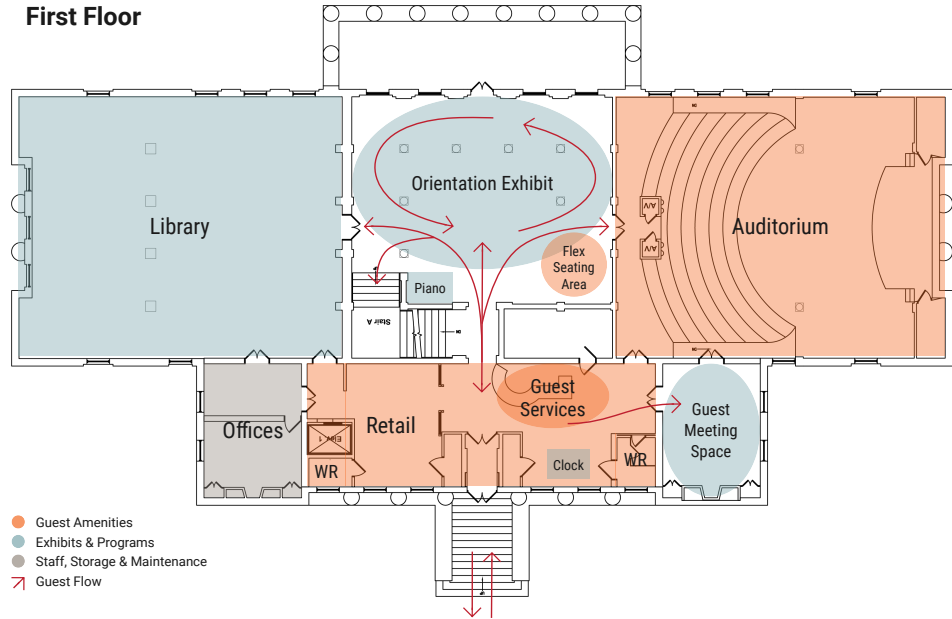
# Museum Building:

## SHORT-TERM GOALS (1-2 YEARS)

## Museum Building Short-Term Goals (1-2 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's first floor in the short-term will include:

- **Creating a new orientation exhibit** in the State Court that includes an introductory video and shares the story of our building's history.
- **Continuing use of State Court for events and stand-up receptions.** Sit-down meals will move to under the Portico (see the *Action Plan* supplemental document for more detail).
- **Expanding the use of the Board Room as a community gathering space** with flexible seating and improved A/V for meetings.
- **Increasing the number of events and programs** co-created with partners hosted in the auditorium.
- **Upgrading restrooms, and creating plans to improve additional entrance amenities** in the future.



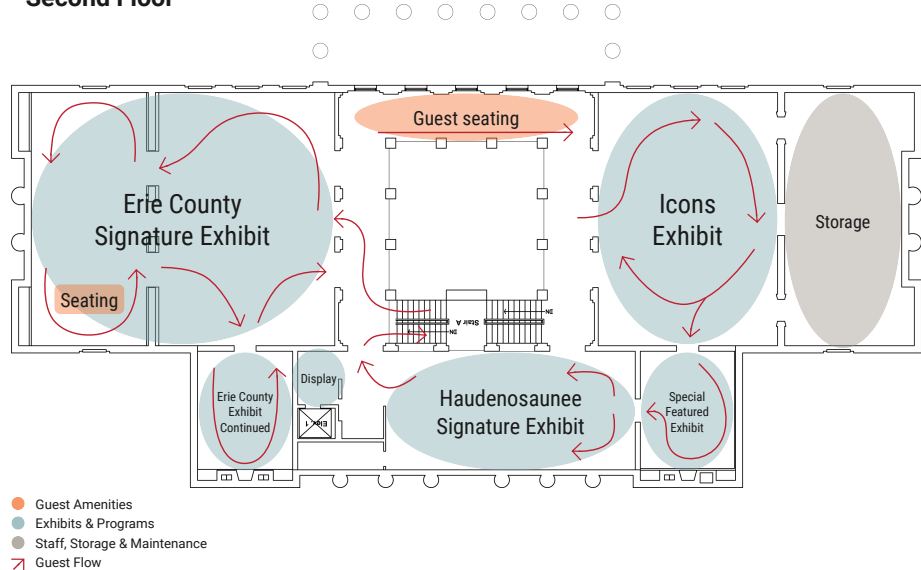


## Museum Building Short-Term Goals (1-2 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's second floor in the short-term will include:

- A casual seating area installed on the Mezzanine where visitors can rest and relax. Outlets will be available for phone charging.
- The new **Erie County signature exhibit** to replace *Neighbors*.
- The **Tim Russert exhibit will be removed** and the gallery repurposed to support adjacent exhibits.
- The **Community Gallery** will be expanded in a new location on the Ground Floor in 3-5 years. The former gallery space will be incorporated into an expanded Erie County Signature Exhibit.

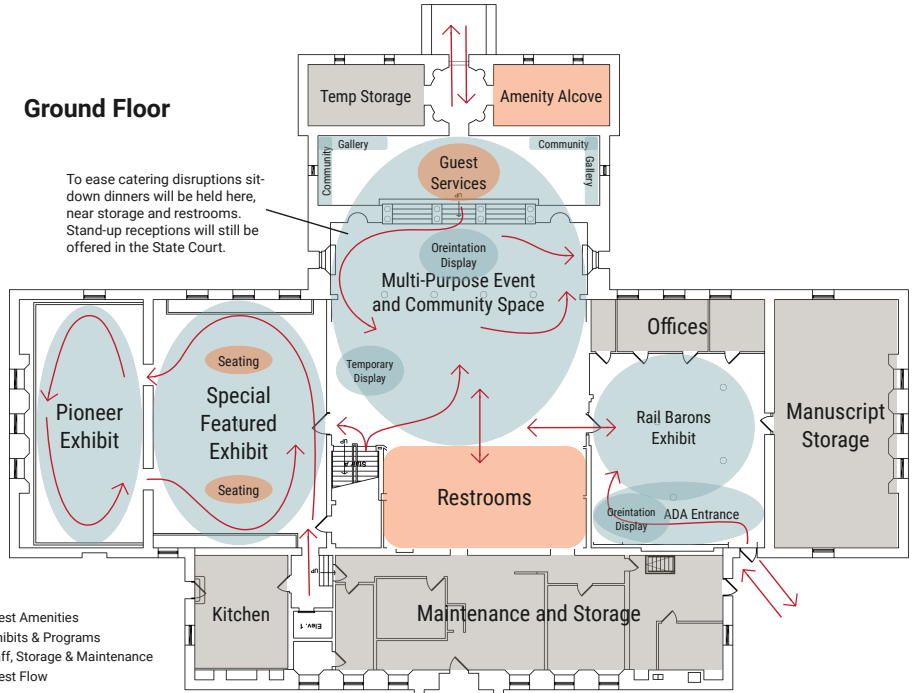
### Second Floor



## Museum Building Short-Term Goals (1-2 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's ground floor in the short-term will include:

- **Completion of planned restroom remodel and multi-purpose space** under the Portico.
- **New guest amenities**, including a temporary guest services desk for the park entrance and an amenity alcove (ex: healthy vending machine, self-service coffee bar).
- **Temporary storage** for catering and event furnishings will be moved to this level.
- Creating **welcome displays** to make the park and accessible entrances feel more inviting.
- Converting the Erie County room into a **special featured exhibit space**.
- **Relocating the Community Gallery** to a larger space in the lower level of Portico Gallery.



# Museum Building:

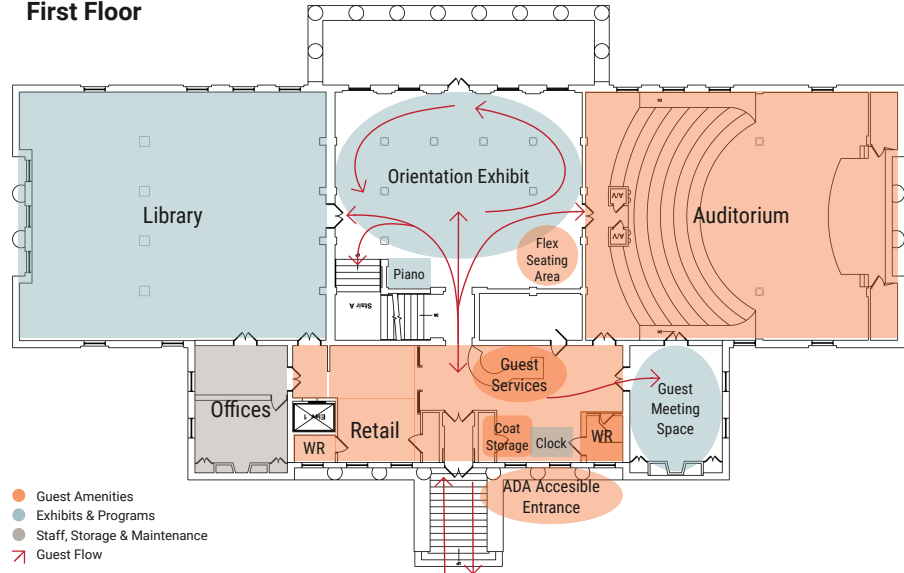
## MEDIUM-TERM GOALS (3-5 YEARS)

## Museum Building Medium-Term Goals (3-5 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's first floor in the medium-term will include:

- **Renovation of the entrance** to make it universally accessible.
- **Expanded coat storage.**
- **Zoned HVAC** will be incorporated into exhibit and guest spaces.
- **Review of the auditorium** to determine if any upgrades are needed to accommodate more programming and community events.
- **Preparations and planning to move the Library** to the Resource Center.

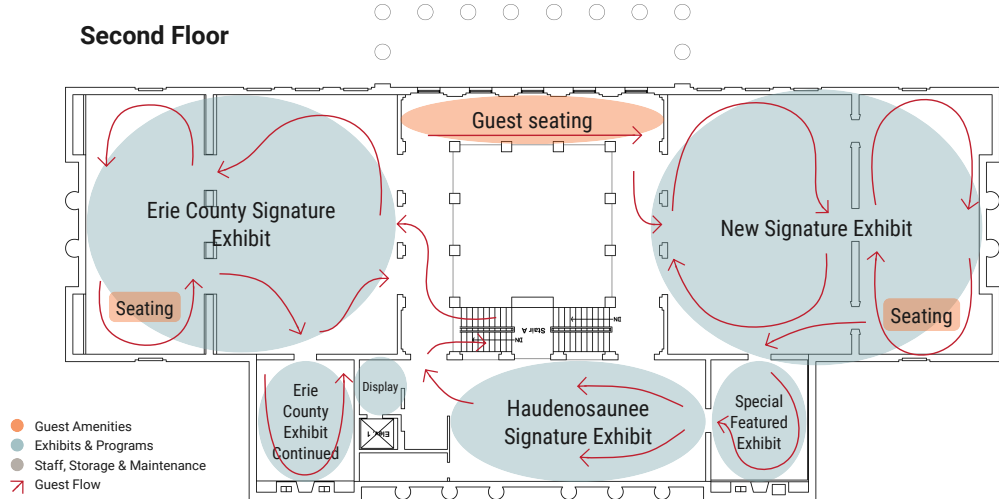
### First Floor



## Museum Building Medium-Term Goals (3-5 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's second floor in the medium-term will include:

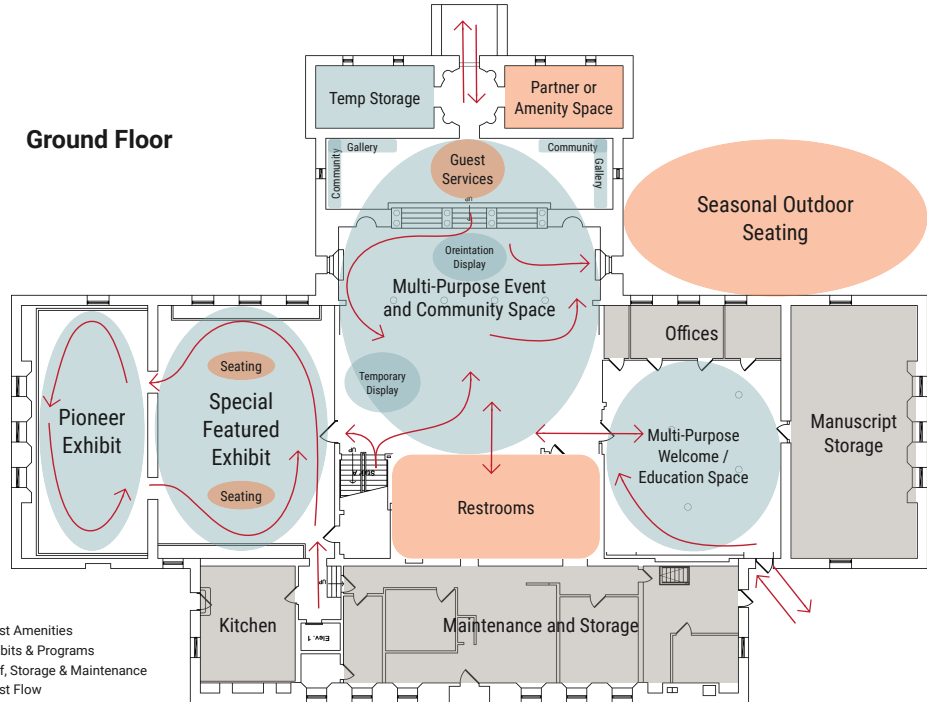
- **Creating and installing a new signature exhibit** related to Master Plan core themes.
- **Activation of special featured spaces** where the Museum can co-create exhibits with community partners.
- **Creating a stunning viewing experience from our Mezzanine:** guest seating with newly restored portico ceiling and reinstallation of six historic murals.



## Museum Building Medium-Term Goals (3-5 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's ground floor in the medium-term will include:

- New guest amenities including **seasonal outdoor space with seating**.
- **Deinstalling the Rail Barons train exhibit and repurposing space** for secondary welcoming and orientation space, particularly for educational and group experiences.
- **Preparing to relocate the manuscript collection** to the Resource Center in the long-term.



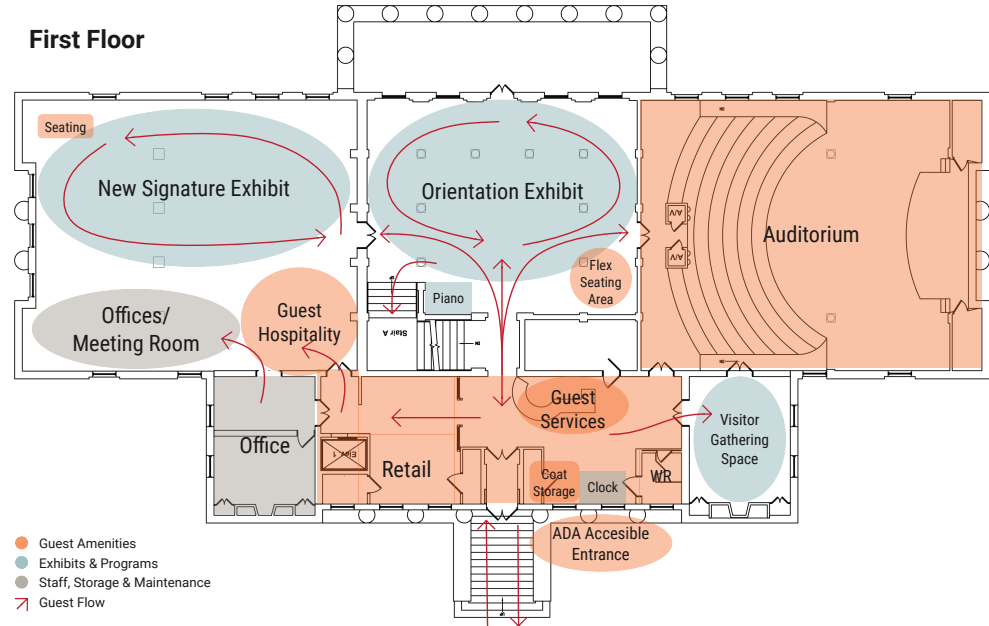
# Museum Building:

## LONG-TERM GOALS (6-10 YEARS)

## Museum Building Long-Term Goals (6-10 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's first floor in the long-term will include:

- Relocating the Library to the remodeled Resource Center.
- Installing a new signature exhibit based on Master Plan core themes.
- Creating a guest hospitality area with refreshments, comfortable seating, and phone charging stations.
- Adding new offices and a meeting room or lounge for staff.

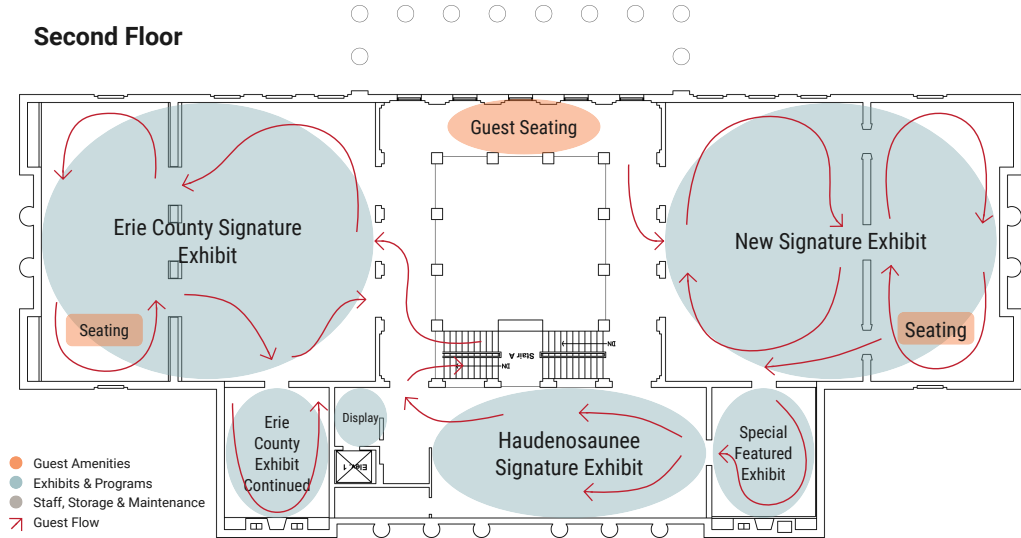




## Museum Building Long-Term Goals (6-10 Years)

Changes to the Museum Building's second floor in the long-term will include:

- Updating special featured exhibits and displays.
- Updating the Erie County and Haudenosaunee Signature Exhibits with community partners to reflect changes over the past decade.



## Growing the Museum Campus

Buffalo's two main clusters of cultural attractions fall along the Elmwood Avenue museum corridor and the downtown waterfront.

In its 2003 Master Plan, the Museum explored the possibility of establishing a new exhibition space in a revitalized DL&W Terminal Building near the Cobblestone District. This ambitious idea proved elusive at the time, yet remains a compelling option for increasing attendance and access to the Museum's distinctive collections. With revitalization unfolding across the region – including some developments focused on heritage-inspired experiences – our options for reaching new audiences have grown.

From Canalside, to Central Terminal, to the Richardson Olmsted Complex, new place-making investments are capitalizing on local history and inviting a key heritage role for the Museum.

To pursue and develop these new hubs of history will require investment and support from state and local governments, as well as the private sector. It will also require a strong level of community engagement to ensure that the project is equitable and inclusive. Regardless, this remains a long-term goal of the Museum – awaiting the right partners and moment to pursue.



Concept drawing from the City of Buffalo's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

A group of diverse people are gathered in a well-lit room, possibly a community center or church. In the center, a woman with her arms raised is smiling, surrounded by others who are also smiling and some with their arms raised. In the foreground, several people are seated at tables with open books or papers, suggesting a study or discussion session. The room has large windows and framed pictures on the walls.

# Community Engagement

## A Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion

Community engagement is at the heart of The Buffalo History Museum's mission to experience history with people from across the region.

This is reflected in the Museum's desire to create content and experiences with people of diverse backgrounds who have different perspectives on history and contemporary issues.

During the master planning process, great focus was placed on preparing the Museum to engage more communities across Western New York. This included conducting extensive research on how future-focused museums are approaching community engagement in a changing world, especially through the concepts of cultural competency and participatory museum practice.

To facilitate a robust conversation during the pandemic, Luci Creative assembled a blog for understanding and discussing a variety of ideas and examples. The blog also served as a starting point for a two-day workshop where participants developed ideas for future partnerships.

Concurrently, museum staff sent a survey out to more than sixty Buffalo community leaders to gather preliminary information about how they want to see the museum evolve.



## A Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion

All of these efforts were designed to ensure that community engagement would be a critical component of achieving Master Plan goals. If successful, good things will happen:

- **Engaging more guests and audiences**
- **Focusing on issues that matter to guests** from their perspectives and informed by our historical collections
- **Building relationships** with communities that have been historically marginalized by museums – **as equal partners**
- **Improving the quality of life** for people in Western New York
- **Strengthening the Museum's credibility as a convener** around history that informs present-day issues
- **Building more relationships with local leaders, funders, and policymakers** by amplifying issues that are part of broader community agendas
- **Attracting more funding** that exceeds museum-related sources, including funds for broader community initiatives and regional development
- **Creating more personal contacts and relationships, helping the museum diversify its staff, board, and pool of donors** over time



## Community Engagement Goals

To help the Museum engage more diverse audiences across the region, planning participants identified the following key objectives:

- **Becoming a community-driven hub of history** where diverse people gather to share experiences of regional significance.
- **Helping guests amplify their voices** about issues that affect Buffalo's future.
- **Supporting the missions of partner community organizations** by giving their constituents a way to express their history.
- **Defining and measuring** how communities will be improved as a result of our work.
- **Enabling guests to take action** on issues that are affected by history.
- Giving guests and partners **new ways to participate.**
- **Reframing how we interpret history** by relating with groups, not translating for them.

The next few pages outline how the Museum will achieve these goals, which are documented in greater depth in the Master Plan's *Community Engagement Report and Toolkit*.

**Moving forward, Museum staff and leadership will use the report and toolkit as a reference for how to:**

- **Prioritize efforts and coordinate** internal resources.
- **Identify community issues** of relevance to the region.
- **Build skills in cultural competency** and multicultural communication.
- **Pursue strategic partnerships** in more relational ways.
- **Develop co-created projects** that leverage partner resources in concert with our own.
- **Evaluate projects** with better metrics and self-assess areas for future organizational development.

## A Strategic Process for Building Partnerships

During the community engagement workshop sessions, participants developed a five-stage process for co-creating projects with community partners.

### Abandon

Abandon what you think you know about potential issues and partners.

- 1 **Set aside your assumptions** and ask questions that lead to new knowledge.
- 2 Determine **where you can go to find answers** and identify experts who can help forge new relationships.

### Prepare

Prepare to ask questions, look for new knowledge, and frame issues from the perspectives of others.

- 1 Begin to **frame one or more community issues** that are relevant to your potential partners.
- 2 **Organize an internal team** to create buy-in and pursue your idea.
- 3 Find out **what you don't know** about potential partners and their worldviews.
- 4 **Do your homework** to identify cultural contexts, behaviors, and values of the people and communities involved.
- 5 Prepare for **future evaluation**.

### Engage

Use your knowledge to establish and invest in new community relationships.

- 1 **Reach out and get involved** to introduce yourself and demonstrate your interest in their work.
- 2 **Invest before you request**.
- 3 **Craft an invitation** to form a collaborative project.

### Co-Create

You and your partner have agreed to work together on a project.

- 1 **Assemble the bigger project team** that will work together to share responsibilities and pool your organizations' resources.
- 2 **Create a working process** and decision-making protocols.
- 3 Gather intelligence and **evaluate incremental progress**.
- 4 Define your **project goals and action plan**.
- 5 **Design for participation**.
- 6 Plan your communications and **anticipate questions**.
- 7 **Extend the project's reach** through your partners.
- 8 **Celebrate success** with your team and audiences.

### Evaluate

Build evaluation into your project from the start.

- 1 **Gather more intelligence while the project is happening** and check in to see how your partners and visitors are responding.
- 2 **Capture the inputs:** Record what you did to make the project happen.
- 3 **Capture the outputs:** Document what happens as a result of the project.
- 4 **Capture the outcomes:** Frame the difference that your project really made.
- 5 **Self-assess:** Let the project change the Museum.

## A Culturally Competent Approach

Participants in the community engagement planning process recognized two important facts:

- The Museum's core audience is less diverse and aging, while **the population of Western New York is becoming more diverse**, especially among growing immigrant populations, working class neighborhoods, and people of color.
- To remain relevant, the Museum needs to reach new audiences by **understanding more diverse worldviews and values**.

The concept of 'cultural competency' is helping Museum staff and leadership frame the problem through the lens of multicultural communication.

At its core, cultural competency is understood as an ongoing social practice that affects how the Museum approaches new audiences, how it interprets and creates history experiences for *and with* them, and how staff and leadership participate in the social life of communities beyond the walls of the museum.

**A culturally competent Museum is constantly learning about their own worldview and biases, the worldviews of others, and the ways people see things differently.**

By making a focused effort across the Museum to recognize our own implicit biases, we may begin to re-frame them under the basic assumption that no single worldview is better or worse than another.

The Master Plan's *Community Engagement Report and Toolkit* addresses six ways that the Museum will practice cultural competency:

- **Avoiding assumptions** about other people's experiences.
- **Practicing active listening** and meeting people where they are.
- **Understanding the values of others** and looking for the strengths of their views.
- **Recognizing and dismantling power dynamics** in social and institutional settings.
- **Changing language and historical interpretations** that have unintended effects.
- **Recognizing the expertise of others** and giving them a voice in the Museum.



## Embracing Cultural Intersections

Cultural competency starts by understanding that **every Museum guest is more than a demographic**. We recognize that our guests and partners associate with multiple communities and forms of identity.

In order to understand their identities and values, the Museum aims to find new ways to connect with their personal experiences and values through the community engagement process.

**Guest personas help us plan and personalize Museum journeys to enable participation, inviting guests to share their perspectives.**

**While these personas are not real people**, they give us a way to anticipate and plan for the differences that real people bring to the Museum. Guests may represent a particular community, or one of the Museum's many partners.

By focusing on the intersections that make up individual people, we identify new ways to co-create stories about their converging and diverging histories.



**Kate**

Empty nester,  
book worm,  
wife of a history buff



**Norma**

Teacher, grandma,  
genealogist, historian



**Ja'Marcus**

Physician, dad,  
baritone in church choir



**Hailu**

Ethiopian,  
restauranteur,  
musician



**Kelly**

Paralegal, mom, born  
and raised in Buffalo



**Josephina**

Mexican-American,  
high-school senior,  
ice hockey player



**Joe**

Italian-American,  
architect, Bills fan,  
uses a wheelchair



**Peggy**

Haudenosaunee/  
Seneca, teacher,  
mom, gardener



**Stacy**

UB Professor,  
married mom,  
Chinese-American,  
LA transplant

## Prioritizing Potential Partners

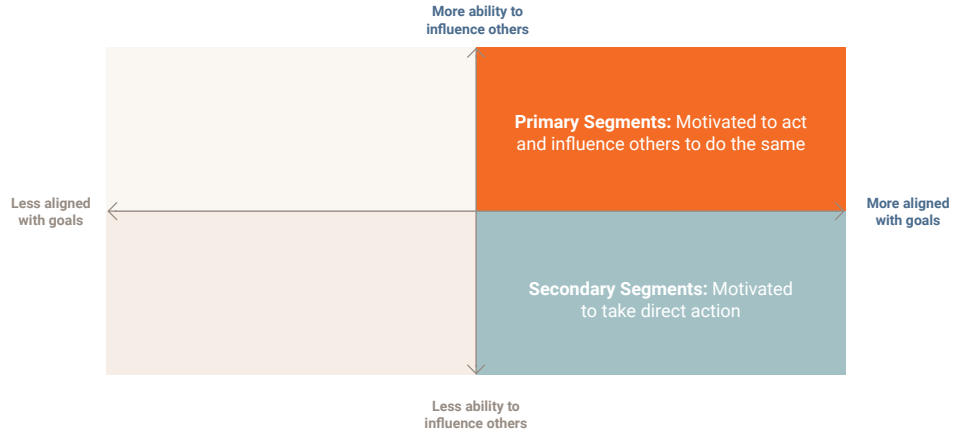
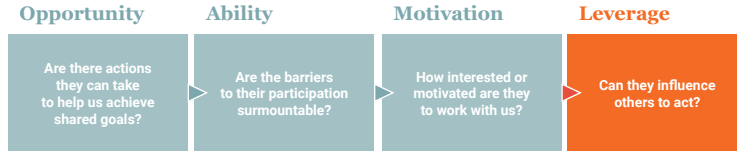
By prioritizing which community partners we seek first, the Museum will focus on those who have the strongest potential and ability to influence others, enabling us to reach more communities and guests in the near future.

During the community engagement workshop, participants worked to determine which community partnerships to prioritize based on key factors:

- 1 A potential partner's **ability and motivation** to take action with the Museum and,
- 2 The Museum's ability to **leverage** the potential partner's influence with more audiences across the region.

The matrix is included in the Museum's *Community Engagement Report and Toolkit* for future partner development efforts.

### Key questions to ask when prioritizing potential partners:



## Key Community Partners

As part of the community engagement planning process, staff and Board members worked together to prioritize a list of potential community partners for immediate action.

A comprehensive spreadsheet of potential partner contacts and their information was compiled throughout the master planning process. Staff and leadership will continue to develop and use for future outreach.

**An annotated list of current prioritized partners** can be found in the *Community Engagement Report and Toolkit*.

*They include the organizations listed here.*

### Key Education Partnerships

- Buffalo Public Schools
- Other regional school districts
- University at Buffalo
- Buffalo State College
- Buffalo and Erie County Public Library

### Key Cultural & Heritage Partnerships

- Olmsted Parks Conservatory
- Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transport Council
- Preservation Buffalo Niagara
- Visit Buffalo Niagara
- Richardson Olmsted Complex
- Afro-American Historical Organization of the Niagara Frontier, Inc.
- Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor
- Assembly House 150
- Seneca Iroquois National Museum
- Indigenous Women's Initiatives
- Western New York Peace Center
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy
- Hispanic Heritage Council of Western New York
- Hispanic Women's League
- Pride Center of Western New York
- Embrace Western New York

### Key Economic & Community Development Partnerships

- Partnership for the Public Good
- Westminter Economic Development Initiative (WEDI)
- Journey's End Refugee Services
- International Institute of Buffalo
- Empire State Development
- Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable
- Buffalo Urban League
- PUSH Buffalo
- Native American Community Services of Erie & Niagara Counties, Inc.
- Buffalo Go Green, Inc.

### Key Foundations, Corporations, and Policy Leaders

- John R. Oishei Foundation
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- M&T Bank
- The Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- City of Buffalo
- Erie County and New York State Legislators



# Appendix

## Summary of the Master Planning Process

### Task 1: Planning Workshops and Project Framework Development

In November 2019, Luci conducted an **online survey** with more than two dozen participants to gather information and insights about the Museum's campus, collections, exhibits, and community programs.

This data generated topics for discussion during a facilitated **day-long workshop** that the Museum's planning partner, Luci Creative, facilitated on December 3 at the Pan-Am Building with more than 20 staff, volunteers, and Board members.

On January 25, 2020, TBHM's Board and staff came together to participate in another **half-day Board retreat** focused on re-imagining the guest experience. Luci researched and presented a range of comparable visitor experiences for discussion at the retreat [website](#).

Workshop activities were supplemented with additional research, a campus tour, visits to other cultural sites around the region, topic-driven meetings with Museum staff, and informal conversations held with various stakeholders.

Luci synthesized the results into two documents: a **Preliminary Project Framework and Site Visit Report** delivered on January 7, 2020 and the **2020 Board and Staff Retreat Workshop Report**, delivered on February 14, 2020.

### Task 2: Community Engagement Research and Training

To initiate a robust organization-wide conversation about community engagement, Luci developed a **community engagement blog** (password: tbhm) that provided extensive research about how museums are approaching community engagement in a changing world, especially through the concepts of cultural competency and participatory museum practice.

While staff and Board members read and discussed topics on the Blog, Luci and TBHM staff sent a **survey to more than sixty Buffalo community leaders** to capture insights on community needs and perceptions about the Museum. Responses were incorporated into topics for further discussion.

On June 18-19, 2020, Luci facilitated a four-part remote **community engagement workshop** for staff and Board Members that reviewed results of the survey, established community engagement goals for the Master Plan, and engaged participants in developing a long-term process for cultivating new partners, co-creating future community projects, and creating more participatory and culturally competent exhibits and programs.

The Luci team synthesized the results of the workshop into a final **Community Engagement Report and Toolkit** that accompanies this Master Plan document.

### Task 3: Master Plan Synthesis and Documentation

In the final task of the master planning process, Luci facilitated a **two-day Master Plan workshop** for staff and Board members on June 29-30, 2020. The workshop focused on creating alignment around the Master Plan's primary goals and strategies for action. This was a challenging task to perform in a remote meeting (due to the pandemic), but participants overcame the limits of remote communication and had a robust conversation about the future of the Museum, as well as identifying more immediate strategies for re-opening and addressing how the Master Plan will change as an organization through implementation.

In a **final work session** on July 24, 2020, staff leadership and the Master Planning Committee convened with Luci to review in-progress components of the Master Plan to ensure that major decisions and key actions were aligned with the Museum's vision. Synthesis of this work, along with subsequent moments of review and discussion with the broader staff and Board of Managers yielded the final Master Plan.

## Museum Milestones

1862



The Buffalo Historical Society was founded by regional leaders and historians. Our first home was in the Dorschheimer office building, later the home of Western Savings Bank. As time passed, many more citizens realized the importance of securing local history's scattered remnants.

1960s & 70s



An early innovator in exhibit design, the Museum converted galleries filled with furniture cases into interactive exhibits during the 1960s.

In 1974, the Museum received its accreditation with the American Association of Museums.

1890



The Buffalo Historical Society moves to its next home within the Buffalo Public Library building.

1901-1902



The International Pan-American Exposition was held in Buffalo from May to November, 1901. The Exposition's only planned permanent structure, the New York State Building, was dedicated on September 30, 1902 and became the permanent home of the Historical Society.

1927



Construction began on an expansion of the Museum Building by its original architect, Buffalo native George Cary, to increase space for exhibits and the library.

1990-1993



The Museum acquired a former trolley maintenance garage across from the Richardson Olmsted Complex and renovated it to become the main collections facility. To celebrate the centennial of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition, the Resource Center donned a replica of a building façade from the Exposition's original Midway.

1992



In 1992, the Museum acquired the 1920s residence and music studio of Leonard Adams, located adjacent to the Museum Building. Named after the longtime Historical Society Member Julia Boyer Reinstein, the Reinstein Center now houses Museum staff.

2012



The Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society celebrated its 150th Anniversary by rebranding itself as The Buffalo History Museum.

## The Buffalo History Museum Today



**9,000+**  
**participants**

for programs and events,  
including students,  
researchers, and the public.



**100,000+ objects**

in the collections, including ancient  
artifacts, objects from the founding  
of the Nation, one-of-a-kind sports  
memorabilia, and eclectic examples  
from two centuries of people living,  
working, and playing in Western  
New York.



**175,000+**  
**manuscripts,  
books & media**

including manuscripts  
of regional and  
national importance.

**200,000+ photographs**  
of life in Western New York.



**42,000**  
**annual visitors**

Including 1,200+ members.



**7,000+**  
**searches**

across library  
databases and  
digital resources.



**60+ community partners**

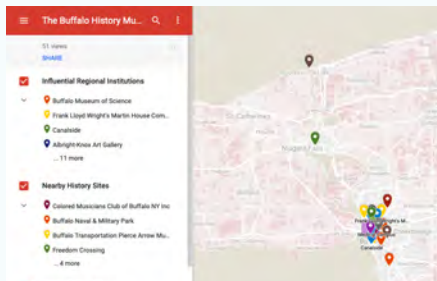


including cultural institutions,  
historical societies, public schools,  
colleges and universities, local  
businesses, and government.

## Buffalo and Erie County Cultural Landscape

The City of Buffalo expects a significant change to come out of the [2020 census](#). If estimates are correct, the Buffalo region will record even greater diversity and its first population growth since the 1950 census.

As part of its **Preliminary Project Framework and Site Visit Report**, Luci Creative conducted research on the Erie County cultural landscape. Luci compiled this research on an [interactive online map](#) of cultural sites and resources.



Following is a partial list of the Museum's many partners and community neighbors.

### Key Regional Historic Sites

- Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor
- Buffalo Naval and Military Park
- Pierce Arrow Museum
- Forest Lawn Cemetery
- Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site
- Seneca Iroquois National Museum
- Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center

### Local Community Organizations

- Partnership for Public Good
- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- International Institute of Buffalo
- Assembly House 150
- Friends of the Night People
- The Foundry
- Westminter Economic Development Initiative (WEDI)
- Journey's End Refugee Services
- Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable

### Influential Regional Institutions and Sites

- Albright-Knox Art Gallery
- Buffalo Museum of Science
- Richardson Olmsted Campus
- Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House
- Buffalo RiverWorks
- Canalside District
- Buffalo Central Terminal
- Delaware Park
- Larkinville
- Niagara Corridor
- Canalside Village
- Medical Campus
- Grant Street
- Delaware Avenue

### Nearby Cultural Institutions

- Olmsted Parks Conservancy
- UB Anderson Gallery
- Explore Buffalo
- Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens
- Uncrowned Queens Institute
- Buffalo Religious Art Center
- Burchfield Penney Art Center
- Explore and More Children's Museum
- Elmwood Village Contemporary Art Center
- The disABILITY Museum
- Niagara Arts and Cultural Center
- The Buffalo Zoo



## Community Feedback and Future Input

As part of the community engagement process, TBHM sent a survey to approximately **60 key community contacts** to ask what different communities might value about the Museum and what they might like to improve.

While the survey was hampered by the global pandemic, a limited response of less than 20 participants also suggested that the Museum must do more to invest in communities it wants to engage.

Survey responses did offer valuable insights that confirmed many ideas that staff and Board members articulated during the master planning process.

### Respondents encouraged the Museum to:

- Tell stories about **Buffalo's growing cultural and racial diversity**.
- Tell stories about **resilience in the face of urban decline**.
- Tell stories about the **everyday perspectives** of all kinds of people who have made Buffalo their home.
- Make it easier for visitors to have a **focused and comfortable experience**.
- Put **contemporary issues in historical context**.
- Build **awareness and collaboration for social change**.
- Tap into creative ways to **bring history to life**.
- Create **memorable experiences** that go **behind the scenes**.

### Staff and board members considered how they might seek input from communities in the future by:

- **Making evaluation a more frequent activity** in smaller contexts beyond moments of strategic planning.
- **Making evaluations more informal, friendly and conversational** as part of building community relationships.
- **Using surveys that are shorter, focused on a particular issue**, directed toward a specific audience, and perhaps more visual.
- **Employing a mix of evaluative methods** that include both qualitative and quantitative measurements as part of project planning end evaluation.
- **Re-framing evaluation goals** from a position of **equal partnership**.
- Conducting **more internal evaluations** of the Museum's culture, operations, and services.

## Institutional Assets and Current Offerings

The Buffalo History Museum offers an abundance of physical assets, digital resources, and programming.

The following list represents some of the key assets and offerings that have informed the master planning process.

### Facilities

- Museum Building
  - Exhibits
  - Library
  - Rental Spaces
- Resource Center
  - Collections Storage
  - *Spirit of the City*
- Reinstein Center
  - Offices
  - Collections Storage

### Library Collections

- FRANK Online
- Genealogy collections
- Newlywed Project
- Buffalo business institutional records
- Howard Beach Photo Collection
- Photographs & negatives
- Cookbooks & menus
- Millard Fillmore Archive
- Seneca Nation Archive
- Postcards
- Manuscripts & microfilms
- Books & Scrap books
- Oversize posters, maps, plans & drawings

### Key Artifact Collections

- Iconic artifacts including Red Jacket's Washington Peace Medal and the President McKinley assassination gun
- Presidential items belonging to Millard Fillmore, Grover Cleveland, and William McKinley
- Greg D. Tranter Buffalo Bill Collection
- Haudenosaunee and Western Plains Native American objects
- Weapons and uniforms from various wars
- Erie Canal commemorative items
- Artifacts of industrialization: tools, products, patterns
- Personal effects of Erie County immigrants
- Textiles
- Paintings and portraits
- Glass and ceramics

### Existing Exhibits

- Pioneer Life Gallery
- History Makers
- Street of Shops
- State Court Women's Suffrage exhibit
- Icons of Sports exhibit
- Tim Russert's office (temporary exhibit)
- Hauenosaunee Native American Gallery (long house diorama, daily life in 1550 diorama)
- Rotary Rail Barons Train Room
- Neighbors exhibit
- Spirit of the City exhibit
- Buffalo Business First Hall of Fame display

### Planned Exhibits

- Erie County Exhibit and Bicentennial commemoration
- Display of Pan-American Expo Architectural Drawings
- Furniture and Decorative Arts
- Permanent children's exhibit

### Programs & Events

- Buffalo Public School 4th grade tours
- Cherry Blossom Festival events
- Pan-Am Weekend
- Wednesday Evening Lecture Series
- Party on the Portico
- M&T Third Fridays
- Food Truck Rodeo
- Jazz on Second Sundays
- Japan Culture Day
- Giants of Buffalo (business professionals program)
- Evening With an Icon (sports professional)

## Prioritizing Strategic Actions

**The Master Planning Team evaluated how to achieve the Museum's goals through strategic and incremental growth.**

By prioritizing essential strategies that enable more guests, partners, and communities to experience history through our distinct collections and programs, the Museum will make history a more meaningful part of daily life in Western New York.

**To achieve our goals, we will use our current resources, talent, and creativity to:**

- **Develop new and increased interest** throughout the region, and;
- **Turn partners and guests into ambassadors** for our mission and vision – making it possible to cultivate resources and support in the present, as well as the future.

**Our first step was to analyze the cost and impact of our current activities.** Understanding where existing resources could make the most difference for our mission helped the Museum prioritize strategies and determine where the greatest potential for future growth would lie.

On the next page you will find all of the Museum's mission-related activities mapped according to two key criteria.

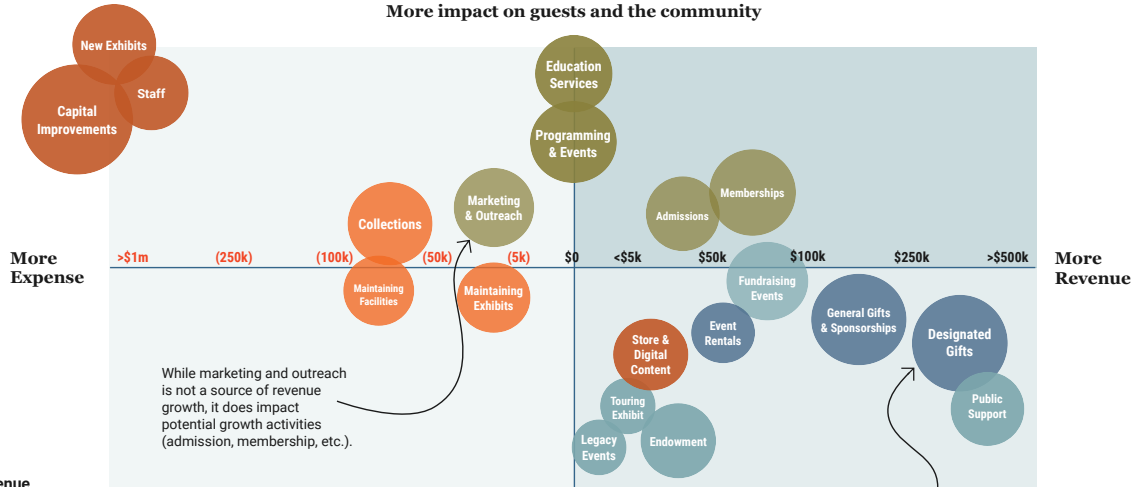
- The **impact activities make** in fulfilling the Museum's mission,
- The annual **expense or revenue** that activities currently generate.

## Museum Activities Measured by Impact and Revenue

This map shows all activities that currently have a direct or indirect effect on the Museum's ability to fulfill its mission. Certain activities obviously affect others. **Over time, we can change this map to better achieve our goals.**

### Things to Note...

- Current annual revenues that could grow with long term effort.
- Current annual expenses that help maintain daily operations.
- Activities with strong potential for **impact and revenue growth** in short-term (1-2 years).
- Activities with somewhat strong potential for **revenue growth** in short (1-2) and medium-term (3-5 years).
- Strong potential for **impact and revenue growth** in medium (3-5) and long-term (6-10 years), but at **greater expense**.



## Master Planning Resources and Research

Following is a summary list of resources and best practices that informed research and dialogue during the Master Planning process.

Additional references and examples appear in other Master Plan supplementary documents, including the community engagement blog, the Board Retreat website, and the *Community Engagement Report and Toolkit*.

### Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Resources on cultural competency and [training models for organizations](#).
- Understanding cultural competency as a [life-long process for public institutions professionals](#).
- Cultural competency and [inclusion in museums](#).
- How to address [social justice in museum content and practices](#).

### Community Partnerships and Co-Creating Exhibits

- How to become a [Smithsonian Affiliate](#).
- Nina Simon's [The Participatory Museum](#) explains why museums should be more participatory and how to become more participatory.
- How to [motivate visitors](#) to come to your institution.
- Examples of [how museums have become more participatory](#).
- How participatory practices [improve outcomes](#) for all visitors.

### Digital Preservation and Access

- [Smithsonian case study](#) on using digital preservation to collaborate with artifact source communities.
- Getty Research Institute article on [Digital Preservation in Practice](#).
- Columbia GSAPP colloquium on [Data, Technology and Experimental Preservation](#)
- [Indiana Historical Society](#) example of simplifying access to digital content.
- The [Maine Memory Network](#) and Statewide Digital Museum.

## Master Planning Resources and Research Continued

### Admissions and Membership Strategies

- A [data-driven perspective](#) on free admissions.
- A data-driven perspective on the impact of [free admissions during the pandemic](#).
- How the San Francisco Orchestra [transformed their membership model](#) by focusing on more relational aspects of the guest experience.
- Creating [exclusive online content for members](#).

### Performance Metrics and Financial Planning

- What are [Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPI) and how to use them in a nonprofit.
- Resources about [creating performance dashboards](#).
- Models and components of a great [nonprofit dashboard](#).
- Conduct a [Covid-19 financial survival analysis](#) based on the shutdown's effects in WNY.

### Touring Exhibits

- [AAM's Traveling Exhibitions Network](#) providing insights into best practices.
- How traveling exhibits [make money for the companies and institutions that produce them](#).
- A data-driven perspective on [the negative impact of blockbuster exhibit cycles](#).
- Why [museums should focus more on permanent collections](#) than special exhibits.
- [Touring exhibits](#) from the New York Historical Society.
- [Touring exhibits](#) from the Smithsonian Institution.
- [Touring exhibits](#) from the Traveling Exhibits Organization (many comparable exhibit touring groups exist).

### Monetizing Digital Content

- AAM article on how museums can [generate revenue](#) through digital content and virtual experiences.
- [Barriers to monetizing your Museum](#) during a shutdown.
- Forrester Research's [Eight Models](#) for monetizing content (behind paywall).
- [Six strategies](#) digital publishers use to monetize content.
- Information on digital content and the rise of the [sharing economy](#).
- [Paywalls](#) and monetizing online content.
- [Peter Gallagher](#) of Deloitte Consulting on monetizing social media and user-generated content.
- [Monetizing a meme](#) and the shifting landscape of copyright attribution.
- ROI of converting to a [digital membership platform](#).
- How can museums [make money online](#).
- [Staff from various museums](#) discuss generating revenue online.

## Acknowledgements

Luci Creative would like to thank the many people whose hard work, dedication, and creativity made this Master Plan possible.

First and foremost, we appreciate the many hours of work that the Museum's Master Planning Committee put into shaping this document.

The Board of Managers also provided invaluable guidance, ensuring the Master Plan reflected the priorities of the Museum and the Western New York Community.

Staff also deserve high praise for their commitment to this planning process during the pandemic and closure of the Museum. The planning process would have been far less effective without their insights, institutional knowledge, and focused participation.

### Master Planning Committee

- **Cassie Irish**, Committee Chair, Board Member
- **Greg Tranter**, Board Member
- **Mark Taylor**, Board Member
- **Kevin Brady**, Board Member
- **Jennifer Liber Raines**, Board Member
- **Barbara Seals Nevergold, PhD**, Board Member
- **Melissa Brown**, Executive Director
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- **Walter Mayer**, Senior Director of Museum Collections
- **Anthony Greco**, Director of Exhibits & Interpretive Planning
- **Kimberly Luangpakdy**, Director of Advancement
- **Lori Robinson**, Director of Finance

### Board of Managers

- **Greg Tranter**, President
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- **Anne Conable**, Secretary
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- **Barbara Seals Nevergold, PhD**
- **Jennifer Liber Raines**
- **Alexander Schimert**
- **Nicole Tzetzto**
- **Rachel Weissfeld**
- **The Honorable Penny Wolfgang**

## Acknowledgements Continued

### Staff

- **Melissa Brown**, Executive Director
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