



Milwaukee Art Museum Strategic Direction

Last Revised November 1, 2019

MILWAUKEE
ART
MUSEUM



Strategy Context

The world we live in continues to change. The demographics of our community are shifting in parallel with changing expectations and definitions of cultural experiences. Pressing issues of the day are both mobilizing and dividing people and, as it has done historically, art is being created as a form of expression that reflects these times. “The only guarantee is that there will be changes, both wonderful and terrible. It’s worth considering how artists will respond to these changes, as well as what purpose art serves, now and in the future.”*

The Milwaukee Art Museum has an impressive collection, committed volunteers and staff, and a history of bold action, such as engaging Santiago Calatrava to design our iconic building. Our rapidly changing world demands that, for us to be relevant, we build on our legacy, strengths, and values with a strategy that allows us to be agile in all we do.

*Van Houten-Maldonado, D. (2019). “What will art look like in 20 years?” BBC News. <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20190418-what-will-art-look-like-in-20-years>.

Play Date with Art welcomes visitors ages 5 and under to dance, sing, make art, and explore on Friday mornings nine times a year.



Defining Sustainability

Though nonprofit organizations exist to deliver on their missions, they must do so in a financially viable manner. There is a deep interconnectedness between an organization's finances and its impact, and sustainability is strengthened when there is alignment between these two aspects. As such, sustainability encompasses both:

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

the ability to generate resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future,

AND

PROGRAMMATIC SUSTAINABILITY

the ability to develop, mature, and cycle out programs to be responsive to changing times.

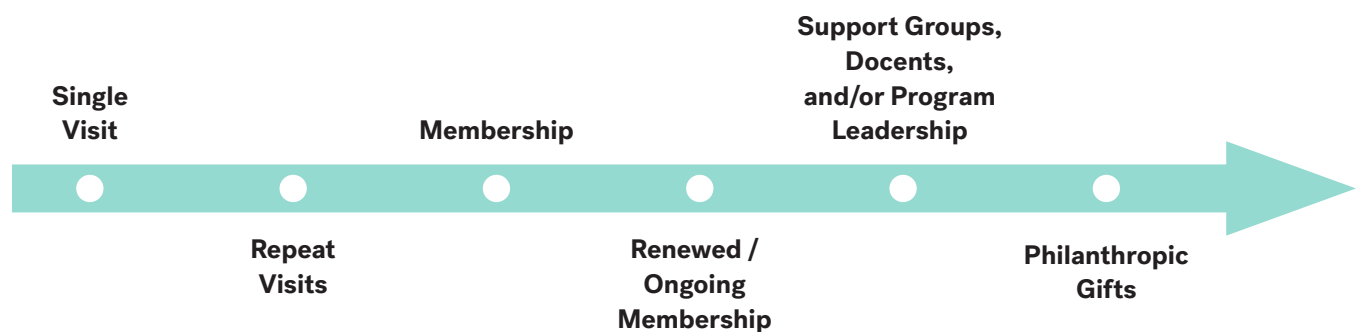
Sustainability is an orientation, not a destination. What worked ten years ago to generate resources and have impact will likely not be the same in the next ten years. The most successful organizations recognize that what is sustainable is constantly changing. This strategic direction considers shifts in the Museum's landscape and aligns impact and finances to strengthen organizational sustainability.

Tours are customized to meet the needs of the group, from curriculum-based lessons to corporate team building and bachelorette bonding.



Sustainability Statement

By offering dynamic and relevant experiences, including exhibitions, educational opportunities, family-friendly events, social activities, and reflective time, the Milwaukee Art Museum will become part of the fabric of people's lives. In the process, the Museum will create a broader sense of community ownership of the Museum and its collection, resulting in increasing engagement and loyalty along this continuum.



Expanding and deepening the Museum's impact will help cultivate a more robust pipeline for increased philanthropic support and earned revenue, strengthening the Museum's financial base. In this way, impact and revenue drivers fuel one another and support long-term sustainability.

The Kohl's Art Generation Studio invites families for hands-on art making every day the Museum is open.



Why We Exist

Art transforms and inspires people. It is, at its core, a celebration and expression of human creativity, and our experiences with it change all of us for the better and enrich society.

Through art, the Milwaukee Art Museum seeks to reflect, challenge, and bring together the community, enabling diverse audiences to see and understand themselves and others on deeper levels, fostering empathy for other cultures, encouraging dialogue around and respect for differing perspectives, and establishing a connection to our common humanity, past to present. In doing so, the Museum allows people to discover something in themselves which cultivates open-mindedness and appreciation for one another.

“Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.”

—Thomas Merton



What: Our Vision

The Milwaukee Art Museum has always collected art for and shared art with the people of Milwaukee. Over the next phase of the Museum's life, we will take bold steps to further extend our welcome mat, presenting art as a way for all individuals to better understand themselves, each other, and our world. We will reach a diverse audience across Milwaukee and beyond, meeting people where they are and offering various access points for engagement with the Museum.

We will activate the Museum's iconic campus in multiple ways, offering experiences that variously meet the personal needs, desires, and moods of guests—from reflective and solemn to interactive and celebratory. Above all, our collection and featured exhibitions will highlight cultural and social aspects of the works on view and play a central role in Museum programming, allowing visitors to see themselves and their lives in the Museum and to experience the transformative benefits of art, no matter their previous experience.

Art in Bloom welcomes florists from all over the region to reinterpret works in the collection in blossoms, drawing thousands of visitors each day.



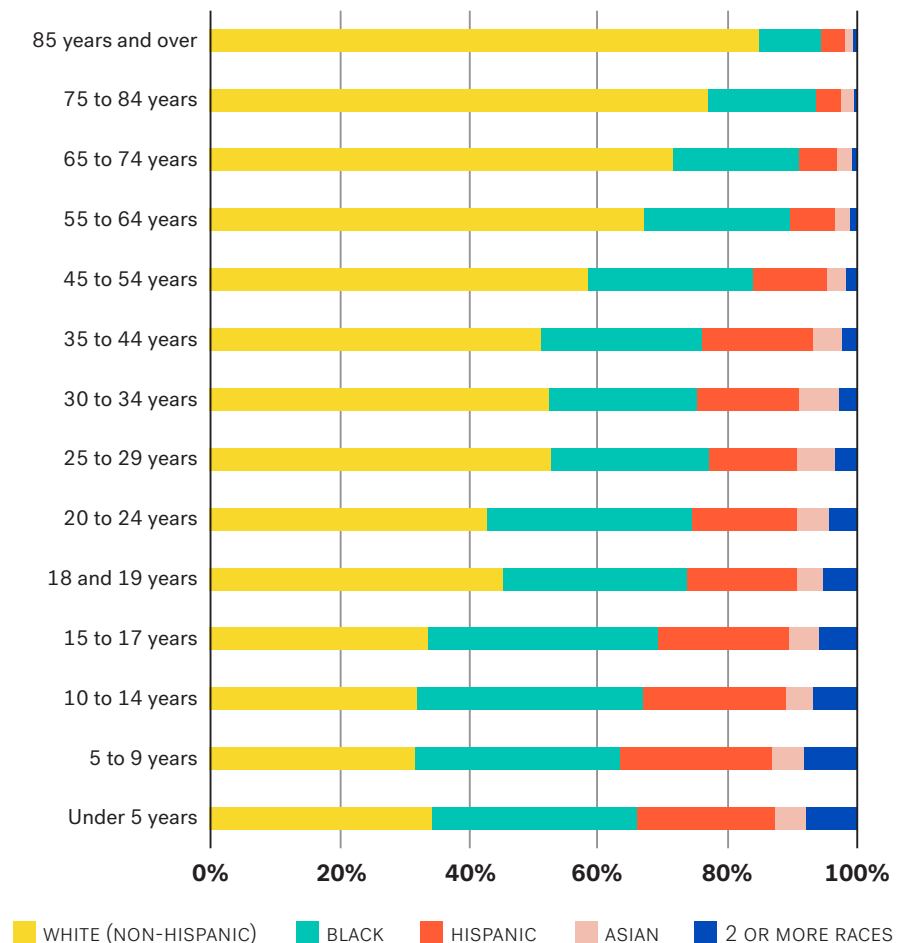
What: Definitions

DIVERSE AUDIENCES

The changing demographics of our region make it imperative that we better serve and appeal to more diverse audiences. The audience of the Milwaukee Art Museum will reflect the racial demographics of Greater Milwaukee, with a focus on increasing African American and Latinx audiences from Milwaukee neighborhoods, groups increasingly represented in younger age brackets. The Museum will also continue its focus, with this lens, on youth, families, and young professionals to diversify the age of audience members.

Racial Breakdown by Age (Milwaukee County)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates





What: Definitions

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with the Museum means more than a gallery tour and more than a single visit to the Calatrava-designed Quadracci Pavilion. It is a set of repeated interactions with the Museum's campus through multiple modalities—visiting the galleries, attending special events, dining, participating in a program or class, and sharing excitement with others by conversing, posting on social media, or bringing guests as a Member.

Thousands of visitors come to MAM After Dark ten Fridays a year to mingle, dance, and explore the Museum in a more casual, after-hours setting.



How: Strategic Pillars

There exists a sense of pride in what the Museum has been up to and done to this point, as well as excitement around what's to come. To accomplish this vision for the future, the Museum will leverage its history, build on its strengths, and implement the following strategic pillars:

- **Art Relevant to Our Community**
- **Robust Community Programming**
- **Expansive Hospitality**
- **Impact Aligned with Financial Strength and Discipline**

Art Relevant to Our Community



ACTIVATED COLLECTION

The works in the collection all have the potential to engage broad audiences and accommodate various moods. The Museum will work creatively, strategically, and collaboratively to nimbly connect the art to history relevant to the community discussions of today.

VARIED EXHIBITIONS

A broad range of subjects, media, and perspectives can be covered when the exhibitions presented are varied. Through our exhibitions and the intentional use of the collection, we will not only present broad variety but also feature underrepresented artists across history, including women and people of color.

FOCUSED GALLERIES

We will utilize the focused galleries and other programmatic spaces to complement or supplement major exhibitions, offering additional spaces for new narratives, counterpoints, and different perspectives.

INTENTIONAL ACQUISITION AND STEWARDSHIP

We strive to create a living collection, one that is built for and resonates with the people of Milwaukee. The Museum's acquisitions and stewardship of the art will serve to provoke thought and spark dialogue across multiple perspectives, thereby attracting and engaging new and existing audiences.

EXPANDED INTERPRETATIONS OF ART

In addition to art's artistic purposes and the different mediums, including painting, sculpture, and photography, we will explore its many social purposes. We will focus on who makes the art and why, discuss how it got to the Museum, and, where appropriate, draw connections between historic art and modern-day works. By uncovering and uniting layers of institutional knowledge using digital and human resources in new ways we will be more responsive and relevant to the community.

Robust Community Programming



Kohl's Art Generation Family Sundays features performances and activities with host schools and community partners five times a year.

ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES THROUGH ART

Using art to address social issues helps bridge what is happening in our world and the mission of (and expertise at) the Museum. While robust community programming applies to all aspects of the Museum, this plan focuses on thought-provoking adult programming. These programs will be inspired, driven, and informed by issues most important to Milwaukee; they will connect culturally relevant exhibitions and our collection with various community groups both in and outside the arts sector with the goal of fostering dialogue. Programming will be of different types and have multiple access points to accommodate and engage a range of participants. We will explore the issues and how they are

represented through art. Content Management Integration will allow for quick response to community issues with relevant collection information and in turn invite the community to contribute their own experiences, voices, and interests to the Museum's stories. By hosting community groups and joining in conversations happening outside the Museum, we embrace the expectations the community has of the Museum as a cultural leader in Milwaukee.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are the bedrock of the Museum's integration with the community. We will consistently engage with local artists, local arts organizations, and other groups—nonprofits, government agencies, and corporations—that connect us to Milwaukee's pressing issues.

We have successfully partnered with many groups in the past, but we will be more authentic, intentional, and committed to our partners moving forward, leveraging their strengths and offering ours. This will also include our partnerships with support groups. We will charter and align support groups to assist the Milwaukee Art Museum in fulfilling its vision and be advocates for the value of art in our lives, and to engage, educate, and cultivate those with specific interests.

GOING TO THE COMMUNITY

We will listen to the needs of Milwaukee's communities, and then seek opportunities to take art or art experiences to them. This may include pop-up stations or placing art in strategic locations across the city and beyond.

Expansive Hospitality

WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

Everyone is welcome at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Expansive hospitality means, in all aspects of the Museum, we go out of our way to make people feel at home. We will revisit our operations to ensure this goal is accomplished. This may include changing hours of operation, further training for staff, intentional physical/design changes, and more strategic use of space. Additionally, we will create locations throughout our campus that allow visitors to engage their different moods at the Museum: some spaces may be energized for celebration, contemplative for reflection, or collaborative for community building.

DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

Seeing oneself in the Museum, as stated in our vision, involves feeling welcome and represented. We will develop an overall diversity plan for staff, volunteers, board members, and all others engaged with the Museum. This includes actively recruiting, developing, compensating, and retaining a professional staff that reflects our community; it likewise involves recruiting and stewarding a diverse volunteer corps and exploring paid internships. The Museum will also review and develop a plan to diversify its vendor relationships.



RE-IMAGINED DOCENT PROGRAM

To create a corps of docents that more accurately reflects the diversity of the Milwaukee community, we will explore other docent models, such as creating several paid docent positions in order to make this opportunity more accessible.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

For many of Milwaukee's residents, transportation to the Museum by car or foot is not a viable option due to cost or distance. The Museum will work with the Milwaukee County Transit System—and potentially other community partners—to enhance public transportation options to the lakefront.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology enhances the visitor experience through both the online and offline journey. To the world, the website is the Museum. Investments in Content Management Integration, technology, and digital presence will help make the Museum more accessible and the art come alive.

PRICING

Pricing is a barrier for many people coming to the Museum. We will explore different pricing models, such as bundling with other cultural institutions or offering discounts on introductory memberships.

Rebekah Saunders is one of the over 250 employees that help create a welcoming atmosphere for visitors.

Impact Aligned with Financial Strength and Discipline



Lectures in Lubar Auditorium are now regularly livestreamed to accommodate more art lovers—within the Museum and on Facebook.

STORYTELLING AROUND IMPACT

The Museum has an important, compelling story to tell. With a focus on the transformative effect art has in people's lives, and more accessible institutional content, the Museum will more purposely share this story, while inviting others to share their stories of experiences with art. These efforts will be inextricably linked to the brand of the Museum.

BRAND

Our brand can showcase how the Museum's activities bring the community closer together and will serve to help clarify the Museum's identity as a place of personal betterment and transformation for all.

DONOR STEWARDSHIP

Development activities cultivate donors and show them the impact of their gifts, helping to build long-term financial strength. We will create a robust program to steward donor engagement with the Museum and that can respond to donor wishes.

COLLECTOR STEWARDSHIP

The Museum is built on collections. We will proactively cultivate new and steward existing collectors of all ages, races, and ethnicities to encourage collecting and to build connection with the Museum.

ENDOWMENT

The endowment is the bedrock of institutional financial strength. To meet the needs of this plan, as well as to safeguard the Museum for future generations, we will begin a dedicated endowment capital campaign.

FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE

Simply having resources does not strengthen our sustainability. We will responsibly steward these funds and the organization overall by deploying resources and making investments that are financially feasible and that align with our strategic goals.