



WAM WICHITA
ART
MUSEUM

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023 – 2026

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES ON
NOVEMBER 14, 2023



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wichita Art Museum was founded in 1935 by Louise Caldwell Murdock, who bequeathed her estate to create a trust for the acquisition of works by “American painters, potters, sculptors, and textile weavers.” Her extraordinary vision helped establish one of the premier collections of American art in the United States.

From 1939 to 1962, Elizabeth Stubblefield Navas, Louise Murdock’s friend and business associate, selected works of American art for the museum, building the foundation of the collection that today exceeds 10,000 objects. The city purchased 65 acres that became the site of the original 1935 building, followed by expansions in 1963, 1977 and 2003, to accommodate the growing collection, education programs and visitor needs.

In 1947, Navas wrote these prescient words to a city official:

“My greatest worldly interest is this Wichita Art Museum. It offers a unique opportunity for educational work. Never in the history of our country has understanding been so necessary. That could be enhanced through a broad program of education offered democratically by municipalities. It is my hope that the gift of Mrs. Murdock may be an inspiration toward such a program.”



Navas' sentiment holds true today as art museums around the country reimagine their role in society. Traditionally, art museums have collected, preserved, conserved, and presented what they believe to be the best examples of visual arts. Their role has been more monologue than dialogue, but that is changing. Today, museums are being challenged to expand the notion of who is the gatekeeper and judge of quality, to be in dialogue with their community, to consider who benefits, and to evaluate the ethics of their operations.

These national trends in museums, the COVID pandemic, the George Floyd killing, the retirement of a respected longtime director, and the fresh perspective of a new director all provide context for these recent major decisions by WAM leadership:

Creating a comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion policy, with measurements and accountability for museum leaders, staff and volunteers to enlarge the number of people we listen to and serve and the quality of experiences we provide.

Beginning free admission to the permanent collection, so that all, regardless of income, can have their lives enriched by visiting the museum.

Deaccessioning a well-regarded British sculpture to greatly increase the funds available to purchase, exhibit, and preserve American art.

Freshly curating and redesigning gallery spaces to display the existing collection in new ways, highlight significant and diverse additions to the collection, and establish designated spaces and programs for local artists to be spotlighted and for children to exercise their creativity.

Top image: J. Floyd Yewell, *The Wichita Art Museum* (detail of an architectural rendering for Clarence S. Stein, architect), about 1929. Watercolor on shade cloth, 26 x 51 1/8 inches. Wichita Art Museum, Gift of the Edgar E. Turner, Jr. Estate

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process began in November 2022, guided by a committee of board and staff leaders, and facilitated by Kathy Graves of Parenteau Graves and Paul Johnson of Creative Fundraising Advisors. Both firms have extensive experience in the museum field.

Surveys of board and staff preceded half-day retreats with both groups to elicit vision for and meaningful input about the museum's future. During these retreats, the museum centered the following:

Access to the arts is a right, not a privilege. Every Wichitan deserves access to WAM, but we understand that free admission to the permanent collection is not the only answer; some barriers are not financial.

We are part of the solution. We build authentic and trusting relationships with individuals, artists, and community and civic organizations who represent the diversity of this region and nation and use the arts as a catalyst for change.

We invest in the collection. WAM was founded with a phenomenal collection of art for the City of Wichita, which has grown over the decades. The collection inspires us to create a dynamic rotation of exhibitions, innovative forms of interpretation, and intentional programming so that all who visit WAM can see themselves, as well as windows into other lived experiences.

We advance the field. WAM will continue to bring in a diversity of temporary exhibitions, but also advance a diversity of topics in American art history and culture by generating our own traveling exhibitions and publications.

We support our local and regional artists and foster the next generation of creatives by providing a platform for exhibition, exchange, and education.

We invest in the staff and capacity of the organization to ensure a diverse, inclusive, and collaborative workforce and culture.

The strategic planning process was also informed by community listening sessions with dozens of young professionals, local artists, Friends of WAM, community leaders, and community partners. Participants shared their experiences with WAM, named the distinct value the museum provides the community, and offered their views on WAM's future programming and activities. Facilitators also met with the city manager, the director of the division of arts & cultural services, and several city council members.

Existing policies, including the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy, were also interwoven into the operating plan.

In **March 2023**, the board approved WAM's new mission, vision, and values.

MISSION

The Wichita Art Museum connects people, ideas, and art through remarkable experiences.

VISION

To be an essential cultural leader in a thriving region, fostering creativity, joy, and belonging

VALUES

Our welcome is real. All people have a place at WAM as we strive to be an organization of authentic kindness, joy, access, and inclusion.

Our community is our guide. Nothing happens without collaboration and true partnership with our community.

We aim high. We dare to deliver breathtaking art and experiences that spark creativity, conversation, and empathy.

We care for our people. We respect the talent that powers our organization and promote a positive, problem-solving work environment.





Following the board's adoption of the strategic plan, WAM's staff leadership team worked with the planning consultants to build the operating plan, a detailed road map to articulate how the organization will pursue its three strategic priorities over the next three years: Engagement and Impact, Facilities and Campus, and Resources and Fundraising. Facilitators also helped WAM leaders establish key performance indicators and a companion financial plan that names the resources required for WAM's strategic direction.

A commitment to inclusion and change permeated the planning process, as did a deep reverence for a collection that belongs, at heart, to the people of Wichita.

These abbreviations are used in for Who (is responsible) for implementing the actions described in the Operating Plan:

ADMIN – Administrative Department, which includes the Assistant Director/Chief Finance Officer, Accounting Coordinators, Welcome Desk Coordinator, Store Manager and Store Associates.

ART – Art Department, which includes Curator (head), Registrar, Exhibition Production Manager, Preparators, and Photographer.

DEV – Development Department, which includes Director of Development, Annual Giving Manager, Event Coordinator and Event Assistant, Membership Coordinator, and Development Operations Coordinator.

DIR – Office of the Director which includes the Director/CEO and Executive Assistant.

LEAP – Learning, Engagement and Partnerships Department, which includes the Director of Learning, Engagement and Partnerships, the manager of Youth and Family Programs and the Coordinator of Learning, Engagement and Partnerships.

MARKET – Marketing Department, which includes a Director of Marketing and Manager of Digital and Social Media.

SECFAC – Security and Facility Department, which includes the Director of Security and Facilities, Facility Supervisor, Security Coordinator, and Security Staff.

**when included, staff also include with board level committees for that action item.*

OPERATING PLAN 2023-2025

Engagement & Impact

Deliver remarkable experiences and deepen meaningful engagement with diverse communities to expand our audiences and impact.

EXHIBITIONS & ACQUISITIONS • PROGRAMS & PARTNERSHIPS • DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

EXPERIENCES BEYOND THE MUSEUM WALLS • SENSE OF WELCOME

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
1a. Create a dynamic and diverse exhibition program that engages and reflects the community.	i. Develop and implement an interpretive planning process that defines audience learning goals, creates opportunity for interactivity (low and high tech) and provides adequate time for front-end visitor evaluation.	LEAP/ ART	Q1'24 – Ongoing
	ii. Develop a rotation of exhibitions from the permanent collection with an emphasis on inclusion that are anchored with a theme such as new acquisitions, relevant issues, or an anniversary (i.e., Brown v. Board) in all permanent collection galleries.	ART	Ongoing
	iii. Host diverse high-quality exhibitions (media, artists, and subject) that further expand the American art historical narrative in the featured exhibition program.	ART	Ongoing
	iv. Provide a platform for local artists with a dedicated regional artists gallery space and artist led programming.	LEAP/ ART	Ongoing
	v. Produce exhibitions and accompanying catalogues that have scholarly impact in advancing the American art historical canon.	ART	Q3'23 – Ongoing
	vi. Provide bilingual (English and Spanish) translation in exhibitions, collateral, and interpretation materials.	LEAP/ ART	Ongoing

Engagement & Impact:

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
1b. Acquire more diverse American art.	i. Update the Collection Management Policy that clearly articulates the role of staff and board in the care and management of the collection including deaccessioning.	ART*	Q4'23
	ii. Update the Collection Plan to provide a roadmap and rationale for future acquisitions with an emphasis on acquiring works that are underrepresented in the collection. Carefully consider and research potential deaccessions.	ART*	Q1'24 – Q2'24
	iii. Grow the acquisition fund with a sound investment strategy.	ADMIN*	Q4'23
	iv. When acquisition is cost prohibitive or unavailable, leverage loans from partnerships with other art museums.	ART	Ongoing
	v. Cultivate current and future collectors including opportunities to learn and diversify their personal collections.	DEV/ ART	Q2'24 – Ongoing



Engagement & Impact:

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
1c. Create meaningful programs and activities to engage and connect audiences of all ages to WAM's exhibitions and collections.	i. Develop an educational philosophy that guides Learning, Engagement and Partnership (LEAP) programming.	LEAP	Q4'23
	ii. Create adult programming that ranges from scholarly (i.e., formal art historical presentations) to less formal and more interactive (i.e., dancing docents, sketching in the galleries, creating writing prompts, etc.) inspired by permanent collection and featured exhibitions.	LEAP	Ongoing
	iii. Activate Friday WAM Nights with engaging in-gallery driven programming that highlights partnerships.	LEAP	Ongoing
	iv. Redesign and rebrand the "Living Room" space to engage families with children of all ages through self-guided, but high-quality creative, play activities.	LEAP	Q3-Q4'23
	v. Create robust camp program (full-day) for elementary and middle school students.	LEAP	Q2'24 – Ongoing
	vii. Expand K-12 Teacher programs to include professional development towards maintaining certification.	LEAP	Q3'23 – Ongoing
	viii. Expand K-12 student reach to districts outside of US259 (suburbs and rural communities) and establish cohort of paid gallery teachers that reflect the diversity of the students in the region.	LEAP	Q3'23 – Ongoing
	ix. Develop a program evaluation plan.	LEAP	Q2'24

Engagement & Impact:

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
1d. Develop plan that increases museum's outreach and presence in the community and engages partners with intention and mutuality.	i. Audit current partnerships to identify gaps and articulate level of investment.	LEAP	Ongoing
	ii. Assess staffing needs related to outreach and access.	LEAP/ ADMIN	Q4'23
	iii. Deploy cohort of teaching artists at festivals, community events, etc.	LEAP	Q4'23 – Ongoing
	iv. Explore partnerships with organizations that serve individuals with disabilities and other unique needs (visual impairment, Alzheimer's, youth in foster care or the juvenile justice system, etc.)	LEAP	Q4'23 – Ongoing
	v. Develop and implement marketing plan to reach new audiences (younger, racially diverse, etc.).	MARKET	Q4'23 – Ongoing

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 10% increase in collection diversity (*BIPOC, Gender, LGBTQ+, etc.*) as reflected year-over-year in the Annual City Report
- 20% increase in visitation by 2025 (*80,000 to 96,000*)
- Increase in visitation is representative of Wichita metro area as reported in COVES data (*demographics, income, education, family composition, etc.*)
- Visitors report meaningful interactions with exhibitions as reported in COVES data
- Net promoter score is above 85 across all demographics as reported in COVES data



OPERATING PLAN 2023-2025

Facility & Campus

Provide for an exceptional experience in a facility that protects and elevates the collection.

**CARE FOR THE COLLECTION • SENSE OF WELCOME & ACCESSIBILITY
TECHNOLOGY • OUTSIDE SPACES**

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
2a. Improve design of galleries.	i. Redesign the 1977 permanent collection galleries including new walls and cutaways to improve visitor flow and enable smaller thematic designs within the space.	ART/ SEC/ FAC	Q3'23
	ii. Continue to work with professional exhibition designer for featured exhibitions and permanent collections changes.	ART	Ongoing
	iii. Determine if lighting and carpeting can be replaced.	SECFAC	Q1'24
	iv. Make a new gallery out of storage space by commissioning an artwork that can safely be exhibited in that area despite its climate control limitations.	ART/ SECFAC	Q4'23 – Q4'23



Facility & Campus

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
2b. Improve navigability & accessibility of the building and grounds to provide a welcoming experience.	i. Improve outdoor signage and wayfinding inside the museum.	LEAP/ SEC FAC/ MARKET	Q4'23 - Ongoing
	ii. Improve the welcome desk including height and placement.	ADMIN/ SEC FAC	Q1'24
	iii. Develop printed wayfinding map and visitor guide that includes elevations with QR codes to additional information and links to current exhibition and other timely content and provide bi-lingual (English and Spanish) translation.	LEAP/ SEC FAC/ MARKET	Q3'24 - Ongoing
	iv. Develop digital wayfinding in English and Spanish.	LEAP/ SEC FAC/ MARKET	Q1'24 - Ongoing
	v. Conduct visitor experience audit to determine needs for accessibility, additional signage, gallery seating, training for frontline staff, etc.	LEAP/ SEC FAC/ MARKET/ ADMIN	Q2'24 - Ongoing
	vi. Maintain and enhance beautiful outdoor spaces including renovating the stairs on sculpture terrace and activating that space.	SEC FAC*	Ongoing
	vii. Utilize walking path to encourage wellness in community through outdoor programming.	LEAP	Ongoing



Facility & Campus

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
2c. Use technology to improve the non-physical visitor experience.	i. Conduct website audit for accessibility and navigability. Make necessary changes to improve the experience (tied to veevart) for ticketing, etc.) and plan for full re-design of website.	LEAP/ MARKET	Q3'24
	ii. Replace security camera system from analog to digital.	SECFAC*	Q4'23
	iii. Implement digital signage for the front desk and new “Living Room” space.	LEAP/ SECFAC/ MARKET	Q1'24
	iv. Identify a new collections database.	ART/ MARKET	Q1'24 – Ongoing
	v. Develop a process and plan for creating digital assets from on-site programming as well as digitally specific programming.	LEAP/ MARKET	Q4'23
2d. Develop long-term plan for a future building.	i. Define the problems WAM is facing with the current facility to inform case for support.	ALL	Ongoing
	ii. Explore potential sites for a new facility including the old downtown library.	DIR	Ongoing
	iii. Solidify relationships with the city and county commissioners and other elected officials to ensure WAM is included in major revitalization and development initiatives.	DIR	Ongoing
	iv. Develop master plan (pre-design) to assess current and future needs.	ALL	Q2'24

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Visitors report exceptional experiences with the permanent collection galleries as reflected in COVES.
- Visitors report ease of navigability as reflected in COVES.
- 5% increase in traffic to website, social channels, and digital assets as reflected in Google and Hootsuite analytics.
- Case for support and full donor report completed and used for potential campaign.

OPERATING PLAN 2023-2025

Resources & Fundraising

Build financial strength to realize the museum's aspirations and ensure its future.

FUNDRAISING • MEMBERSHIP • EARNED INCOME • ENDOWMENT

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
3a. Build capacity with a diverse staff, board, and volunteer corps and invest in their professional development.	i. Assess staffing needs across all departments and develop staffing strategy tied to fundraising goals.	ADMIN/ DIR	Ongoing
	ii. Develop recruitment process that yields diverse applicants.	ADMIN	Q3'23 – Ongoing
	iii. Invest in staff professional development to ensure engagement and staying apprised of current trends across the cultural sector.	ADMIN/ DIR	Q3'23 – Ongoing
	iv. Assess staff engagement through meaningful annual evaluations and belonging surveys.	ADMIN/ DIR	Q3'24
	v. Develop a paid summer internship program (2-3).	ADMIN/ ALL	Q2'24
	vi. Continue to recruit board members that are reflective of the City of Wichita and include opportunities for professional learning from other art museum boards and the Association for Art Museum Directors.	DIR*	Ongoing
	vii. Ensure staff and volunteers have robust training including DEI.	ADMIN/ DIR*	Ongoing
	viii. Establish a volunteer program for other museum needs.	ADMIN/ LEAP	Ongoing
	ix. Partner with The Friends to develop strategies to fundraise for the museum and fill other volunteer needs.	DIR/ DEV	Ongoing

Resources & Fundraising

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
3b. Use data to measure progress and make decisions for resource allocation.	i. Implement veevart Customer Management System for donor management, ticketing, reservations and rental, point-of-sale, and e-communications including program and membership surveys.	DEV/ ADMIN/ LEAP	Q1'24
	ii. Implement COVES (Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Evaluation Study) to understand demographics and motivations of general visitation and change over time to be reflective of the Wichita and regional community make-up.	ADMIN/ MARKET	Ongoing
	iii. Implement reports for marketing investments to measure reach and ROI of earned, owned, and paid media.	MARKET	Q3'23 – Ongoing
	iv. Implement annual fundraising plan	DEV/DIR*	Q4'23 – Ongoing



Resources & Fundraising

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
3c. Grow membership, planned giving, and grant revenue.	i. Implement and refine systems and processes for prospect and donor management (tied to veevart) including hiring Development Operations Coordinator.	DEV/FIN	Q1'24 – Ongoing
	ii. Use member survey results to develop multi-channel plan (direct mail, major exhibitions related, welcome desk, etc.) to grow membership.	DEV/MARKET	Q1'24 – Ongoing
	iii. Revise pricing strategy and membership language, using survey results as guide	DEV	Q3'24 – Ongoing
	iv. Develop tiered, member-only communications.	DEV	Q1'24
	v. Grow Murdock Memberships with moves management strategies including expansion of international Murdock trips for higher level Murdock members and board recruitment.	DEV	Ongoing
	vi. Engage and grow younger members with tailored program.	DEV	Q1'24
	vii. Hire Annual Giving Manager to grow gifts including planned giving.	DEV	Q3'24
	viii. Aggressively seek local, state, and federal grants to support restricted projects.	DEV/ALL	Ongoing



Resources & Fundraising

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
3d. Increase opportunities for earned income.	i. Fully staff the events department to maximize opportunities for rentals during non-public hours.	DEV	Q3'23
	ii. Create non-profit rate/criteria and allocate how many non-profit rentals can be granted annually.	DEV	Q1'24
	iii. Develop a marketing package that includes rental and catering options with targeted social paid marketing.	DEV/ MARKET	Q1'24
	iv. Renovate Beren room to increase attractiveness for renters.	SECFAC/ DEV	Q1'25
	v. Utilize data from veevart system to maximize financial performance of museum store.	ADMIN	Q1'24 - Ongoing
	vi. Expand consignment program in store with a diversity of artisans to minimize excess inventory.	ADMIN	Q1'24 - Ongoing
	vii. Expand ticketed program offerings for audiences of all ages.	DEV/ LEAP	Q4'23 - Ongoing
	viii. Expand marketing to visitors through partnerships with hotels, visitor bureaus, and large businesses.	MARKET	Q1'24 - Ongoing



Resources & Fundraising

STRATEGIES	ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
3e. Plan for the future of operating a new facility.	i. Implement feasibility study to determine capacity for a large capital campaign.	DIR/DEV	Q3'23 – Q1'23
	ii. If feasible, create Capital Campaign Committee that includes an endowment campaign.	DIR/DEV*	TBD
	iii. Determine future operational needs in a new facility.	ALL	TBD

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- Staff report feeling fully supported with the resources to do their job well.
- 50% increase in membership over next three years.
- Growth in operating revenues from \$1.2 million to \$1.8 million in next three years.
- Growth in restricted project support from grants to between \$500k-\$1million annually.



