

Museum Assessment Program

Organizational Assessment Final Report



The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is supported by a cooperative agreement between the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the American Alliance of Museums.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is a national, voluntary program which helps museums strengthen operations, plan for the future and meet standards through self-study and a consultative site visit from an expert peer reviewer. The program offers several assessment types that focus on multiple aspects of museum operations, allowing participants to work on various methods of self-improvement. Since 1981 over 5,000 museums have participated in over 6,500 assessments. MAP is supported through a cooperative agreement between the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and administered by AAM. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org and www.imls.gov.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report reflects the Peer Reviewer's knowledge and perspective based on what was provided in the museum's MAP Application, its MAP Workbook and what was observed or communicated while on the site visit. The report is a snapshot in time—from when the reviewer was there and what they saw and heard. The museum may have already addressed some issues discussed with the Peer Reviewer or made progress on some items listed in the report. The Peer Reviewer conducted this assessment on an individual volunteer basis, not as a representative of their employer, and was selected by AAM in consultation with the museum.

MAP Organizational Assessment Report

American Alliance of Museums

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Wiregrass Museum of Art

Dothan, Alabama

Site Visit: October 27-28, 2021

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Executive Summary

The Wiregrass Museum of Art (WMA) and its staff is currently poised on the precipice of potentially transformational change. WMA is currently facing three significant interconnected challenges: facilities, capacity, and management of the art collection.

The current facility is an impediment to expansion of programmatic areas and the possibilities envisioned by the Board of Trustees and staff. Like many repurposed historic buildings, the facility does not meet current museum standards or needs. Water intrusion into the building is common with evidence of past and current problems throughout. One large upstairs classroom located directly off the staff offices serves as the only onsite classroom. Both staff and Board members indicated this space is insufficient to meet their vision and aspirations for the education program.

The City of Dothan is in the midst of a formal revitalization program of the downtown area. The museum occupies a city-owned building in the targeted area. Due to the existing facility's shortcomings and maintenance concerns, the WMA staff and board are eager for a new home. Given the uncertainty of the WMA's future location, it would be premature to make any concrete recommendations for improving the current facilities beyond immediate health and safety concerns. The Board should give serious thought to the WMA's future facility needs.

Small but mighty should be the official motto of the group of dedicated staff and Board of Trustees at the Wiregrass Museum of Art. Their dedication and belief in the Museum's mission and ability to achieve great community change is a credit to them. Staff create and host an impressive array of onsite and virtual programs. The pandemic only intensified their efforts to reach audiences.

Like most small museums, every staff member wears multiple hats and willingly pitches in across operations. The Board of Trustees and Executive Director need to critically examine if current staffing levels can meet their ambitious goals for the WMA. There are currently only five (soon to be six) full-time staff members with other key museum functions performed by contractors.

As the WMA responds to the changes on its horizon, staff and the Board will need to determine what is achievable given their current capacity. Staff will not be able to maintain business as usual while also responding to these challenges.

While staff and Board members spoke about the importance of the collection and the need for additional storage, the WMA collection suffers from an unclear vision and underutilization. Without a clearly articulated vision and collecting plan, it is too soon to determine what are the storage needs. The Board needs to have a thoughtful and specific discussion about what role, if any, the collection plays in their overall vision for the museum. Simultaneously, staff must get a better handle on what is currently in the collection and broad themes represented, determine ownership status, and identify what tools they need to effectively manage the collection. Once these two concurrent courses are complete, a process by which the current collection is brought into alignment with the vision needs to be determined.

Introduction

The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is a confidential, peer consultation and self-analysis tool that helps museums strengthen operations, plan for the future, and meet and benchmark against standards. MAP is one component of AAM's Continuum of Excellence, which also includes the Pledge of Excellence, Core Documents Verification, Accreditation, STEPs, CAP and other field-wide standards-based programs. Over 5000 museums have participated in MAP since its inception in 1981. MAP is supported through a cooperative agreement between the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the American Alliance of Museums.

The onsite visit occurred between October 27-28, 2021, with introductory calls and discussions occurring via email, phone and Zoom prior to in-person discussions. Dana-Marie Lemmer, Executive Director and Curator, was the primary contact point. However, ample time was allotted to speaking with staff, available Board members, city officials and a community leader. Meetings occurred in person, except where noted. These include (alphabetically):

- Kevin Cowper, Dothan City Manager
- Troy Fountain, President, Wiregrass Foundation
- Robin Johnston, Special Projects Administrator, WMA Staff
- Sharla Jones, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair, WMA Board of Trustees
- Dana-Marie Lemmer, Executive Director and Curator, WMA Staff
- Mark McCain, WMA Board of Trustees
- Brook McGinnis, Education Director, WMA Staff
- Destiny Oliver, Secretary and Governance Committee Chair, WMA Board of Trustees
- Melissa Rea, Director of Advancement (via Zoom), WMA Staff
- Mark Saliba, Mayor of Dothan
- Sophie Skipper, Special Events and Marketing Coordinator, WMA Staff
- Collins Trott, President, WMA Board of Trustees

Mission

The Wiregrass Museum of Art inspires a lifelong appreciation for the visual arts by providing innovative educational programs that engage diverse audiences through the collection and exhibition of quality works.

Vision

As a cultural anchor, the Wiregrass Museum of Art inspires creativity to enhance the everyday lives of its community and leads the regional conversation on the importance of the arts.

Building on from their stated mission and vision, the Wiregrass Museum of Art staff and Board self-identified the following objectives for their *MAP Organizational Assessment*:

Objective #1

Wiregrass Museum of Art (WMA) seeks to receive outside feedback on its operations as a method of

progression in the national accreditation process. We hope to build on objectives outlined, and currently in progress, from a recent CAP program assessment and we seek to work with a peer reviewer to review ongoing collections and facilities management objectives that will need to be accomplished prior to the accreditation process. Additionally, accreditation would allow the museum to leverage that qualification to increase community support and advocacy for its role and mission in the Wiregrass region.

Objective #2

WMA seeks to work with a peer reviewer to review goals and objectives outlined in its most recent strategic plan, including internal and external strategies. Collaboration with a peer reviewer will help inform staff and board members' understanding of museum best practices and industry standards as we address short- and long-term goals.

Objective #3

WMA seeks to work with a peer reviewer to analyze its readiness (strengths, weaknesses, etc.) for strategic financial growth, including prospective endowment and capital campaigns, positioning with key stakeholders in the community, and future expansion of staff and programming.

Brief Institutional History

In response to a magazine article naming Dothan, Alabama as one of the worst places in the United States to live, the City of Dothan Board of Commissioners authorized the first step in what would become the Wiregrass Museum of Art (WMA) on December 22, 1987. This city ordinance established a museum board charged with creating and maintaining a municipal museum of art. Out of this ordinance grew the Wiregrass Museum of Art. The WMA is operated by the Wiregrass Museum of Art, Inc., a not-for-profit 501(c)3. Staff are employees of the not-for-profit rather than the city.

Since 1988, WMA has evolved from a pop-up art exhibition in a commercial mall space into an active, vibrant museum with a focus on contemporary art. In the early 1990s, the WMA moved into their current building located in the city of Dothan's former power and water plant. This building was listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage in 1990 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

Having emerged from a period of high leadership turnover (five executive directors in four years), the WMA and its staff have found their footing under the leadership of Dana-Marie Lemmer, Executive Director and Curator. Ms. Lemmer has been the Director since September 2015. She has stabilized the institution and is guiding the WMA into its next chapter. The WMA has become a platform for artists to tell their stories and a community gathering space where cultural sharing is encouraged among residents and visitors in the region. WMA's programs fulfill their aim to unify, inspire and educate audiences, and are created to reflect a diversity of ages, races, genders, cultures, and ideologies.

Mission & Planning

Related Core Standards:

- The museum has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits as a result of its efforts.
- All aspects of the museum's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.
- The museum's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the museum.
- The museum engages in ongoing and reflective institutional planning that includes involvement of its audiences and community.
- The museum establishes measures of success and uses them to evaluate and adjust its activities.

Across the board, staff and Board members were able to clearly articulate the mission and goals of the museum. This understanding is shared formally with the public through various media, including the website and publications. Informally, the mission is conveyed through their exhibitions, educational offerings, and social media. Staff and Board members are deeply vested in the success of the museum. City officials also expressed their support of the museum's mission and programs.

The WMA's current *Strategic Goals and Objectives* were formally adopted by the Board of Trustees in January 2021. Within this document is a clearly articulated mission and vision along with identified core values. Staff and Board members reported extensive involvement by both groups in the construction of this document. The general public was engaged in the process through surveys conducted at the museum entrance, surveys to the membership, and discussions with key stakeholders.

The purpose of strategic planning is to set overall goals for the museum and to develop a plan to achieve them. It involves stepping back from the day-to-day operations and asking where the museum is headed and what its priorities should be. In its current format, WMA's strategic plan does not seem to adequately fulfill this role. It is a running list of tasks loosely grouped under themes. This document lacks clear high-level goals that help to further the mission and vision of the museum. Instead, it is more similar to a to-do list. Ms. Lemmer provided an additional strategic plan that is given to the public and prospective donors and is available on the museum's website. This second document is organized along more traditional plans with prioritized goals and tasks to achieve those goals. These two documents should be reviewed and condensed with the goal of creating a single document which guides the staff and board. There are a variety of formats that could be used, ranging from broader plans with limited details to more comprehensive documents that include budgetary details, time frames and responsible parties. The Board and staff should determine which format best serves their purposes. However, time frames for reviewing and evaluating should be included.

The WMA is fast approaching an important crossroads. Three elements are converging to make the next five to seven years a critical moment for the WMA. The City of Dothan is in the midst of a formal revitalization program of the downtown area. The museum occupies a city-owned building in the

targeted area. Due to the existing facility's shortcomings and maintenance concerns (see *Facilities & Risk Management* for further discussion), the WMA staff and board are eager for a new home. Given the current dependence on the City for a building, museum staff and board members are in discussion with the City's consultants and planners. These voices are fewer among the larger concerns and stakeholders involved. Any discussions around the WMA's mission within the larger cultural landscape should be undertaken cautiously and deliberately. Regardless of the outcome of these discussions and the City's planning process, the WMA will need to make critical decisions about their future. This revitalization program could be a transformational moment for the WMA, setting the museum up for expanded capacity and continuing to center it in heart of the city. While many of these decisions are outside of the WMA's control, how the museum responds will decide its future.

The second component is internally driven. The WMA's first stated objective of this assessment is "to receive outside feedback on its operations as a method of progression in the national accreditation process." An accredited museum must demonstrate a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources and fulfill its educational mission while striving to operate according to national standards and best practices. Accreditation is an admirable goal, requiring commitment and resources. The WMA should not undertake this process lightly or without sufficient thought to the time requirements.

The third consideration is the sustainability of the current staffing structure. There are currently only five full-time staff members with other key museum functions performed by contractors. A recently awarded IMLS grant combined with increased city appropriations (see *Administration & Finance* further discussion) allows the WMA to hire a Registrar/Collections Manager. This will help spread the workload and increase capacity related to collections functions. The WMA staff achieves an ambitious array of exhibitions and programming. Ms. Lemmer is the Executive Director and only on-staff curator. She curates and installs exhibits with the assistance of the rest of the staff. While contract curators are also used, these arrangements still require extensive oversight and involvement. Staff create and host an impressive array of onsite and virtual programs. The pandemic only intensified their efforts to reach audiences. Like most small museums, every staff member wears multiple hats and willingly pitches in across operations. The Board of Trustees and Executive Director need to critically examine if current staffing levels can meet their ambitious goals for the WMA.

Individually, any of these three factors would require thoughtful discussions and careful planning, combined they create a critical moment. The WMA Board will need to examine the sustainability of the current staffing levels within the larger context of their goals and the changing landscape. WMA staff should reach out to AAM Accreditation staff to discuss the challenges of seeking accreditation while potentially renovating and/or moving facilities. Staff and Board members will need to have realistic discussions around what core functions and activities can be maintained when the museum is in transition. The current level of activity cannot be sustained while also taking on these additional challenges. Revisiting the WMA's strategic plan is critical to ensure alignment between the staff and board.

Primary Recommendation(s):

- Continue to advocate for the WMA's interests in the larger conversation around the

revitalization of the downtown area.

- Identify short- and long-term paths should the City of Dothan's plan not align with the WMA's vision.
- Revisit the current strategic plan(s) considering upcoming challenges to create a single cohesive plan which guides the museum's activities. Include time frames for completion and then reassessing plan.
- Reach out to AAM Accreditation staff to discuss the feasibility of seeking accreditation while potentially renovating and/or moving facilities.

Governance

Related Core Standards:

- The governance, staff, and volunteer structures and processes effectively advance the mission.
- The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.
- The composition and qualifications of the museum's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.
- There is a clear and formal division of responsibilities between the governing authority and any group that supports the museum, whether separately incorporated or operating within the museum or its parent organization.

On December 22, 1987, the City of Dothan Board of Commissioners authorized a Museum Board through a city ordinance (Ordinance #9006). Ultimately, this Museum Board became the Board of Trustees of the Wiregrass Museum of Art, Inc., a not-for-profit 501(c)3, setting up a private-public partnership. This relationship is managed through a Memorandum of Understanding (dated 8/16/2016). The WMA occupies a city-owned building. The WMA is operated under bylaws adopted on August 10, 1992, and revised on July 20, 2018.

The MOA with the City of Dothan is abbreviated, with most of it outlined via bullet points. Between that document and Ordinance #9006, ownership of the collection is unclear. Loans (short and long term) to the institution are also not mentioned within either document, leaving final legal authority and responsibility in a gray area. In discussions with the Mayor and City Manager, both were open to clarification of the MOA as needed.

The Board of Trustees has up to 21 people with 14 appointed by the city. The remaining seats are filled through a nomination and election. Currently, the Board has 10 active oversight committees: Executive, Audit, Governance, Collections, Development, Finance, Long Range Planning, Personnel, Programs & Exhibitions, and Building & Grounds.

The Board of Trustees recently adopted a Code of Ethics on April 26, 2021. As required by the Code of

Ethics, every director, principal officers, and committee member must receive a copy of the Code, read and understand, and agree to comply (through a signed acknowledgement) with the Code. As this document also covers activities of the full Board, staff and volunteers, the Board should review to determine if a signed acknowledgement would be appropriate for those positions as well. Perhaps this document can be added to the current WMA personnel handbook.

Board terms are not sufficiently staggered to allow for continuity of knowledge. Half the Board switches out at one time. To compensate for this loss, the Board has instituted a robust recruitment and onboarding process. Board members and staff report an engaged and involved Board with a clear understanding of their role and boundaries. Within their means, every Trustee must commit to financially supporting the WMA. The Executive Committee members report the Director pushes them to think in longer terms and to ensure the sustainability of the WMA. The relationship between the Board and Director appears to be healthy and mutually beneficial.

Recently, the WMA created a Community Advisory Committee. Its stated purpose is to *“invite residents of the Wiregrass region to become more involved and invested in the museum’s work and impact...WMA aims to deepen its understanding of its community’s needs through authentic conversation and participation, and to infuse its day-to-day operations and strategic planning with responses to these conversations. Through this committee, WMA aims to strengthen our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, and to become more responsive to our community’s needs as we advance our mission.”* This committee is a forward-thinking approach to involving the larger community in its mission and expanding the WMA’s reach. While the WMA offered members a stipend for their participation, all current members declined. Many of the Trustees view this Committee as a pool of future Board members. While the current makeup of the Board is impressively diversified, cultivating the Community Advisory members for future Board inclusion will ensure continued broad community representation (age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic).

Primary Recommendation(s):

- Undertake a legal review of founding documents to determine the legal authority of the permanent collection and loans (short and long term).
- Review MOA in its entirety to determine if further clarification is needed on other points.
- With the City of Dothan, modify the operating MOA as needed.
- Review Code of Ethics to determine if it should be provided to the full Board, staff, and volunteers with an annual signed acknowledgement of compliance.

Public Trust & Accountability

Related Core Standards:

- The museum is a good steward of its resources held in public trust.
- The museum identifies the communities it serves and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them.

- Regardless of its self-identified communities, the museum strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.
- The museum strives to be inclusive and offers opportunities for diverse participation.
- The museum asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.
- The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- The museum is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.
- The museum complies with local, state and federal laws, codes and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.

The WMA plays a pivotal and central role in the budding arts and cultural field in the region. The staff and Board do an admirable job in fulfilling their mission with their current resources. They have emerged as a hub for community engagement and artistic development. As such, the community might look to the WMA and Ms. Lemmer to take a leadership role in the potential expansion of other cultural attractions. The staff and Board will need to tread carefully in these waters. Being a resource and model for other institutions is one way of fulfilling their educational role, diluting their own mission to be all things to all people will help no one.

In addition to the public trust inherent in all museums, the WMA occupies a city owned building as well as receiving public financial support via City appropriations (see *Administration & Finance* and *Facilities & Risk Management* for further discussion.) This makes it especially necessary to demonstrate their value to the community. The high regard in which this museum is held is demonstrated by both the increased city financial support and the willingness of the Mayor and City Manager to meet with this reviewer during the assessment. Both were highly complimentary of the Museum and its leadership. They view the museum as a good neighbor and partner, belonging at the heart of the city. The WMA is viewed as enhancing the quality of life of the community. There is a desire to see the WMA expand their offerings to families on weekends and children. As the area recovers from the pandemic, the staff should continue to examine their offerings to ensure it continues to properly identify their community and are meeting that community's needs.

As of 2019, 18.8% of the population in Dothan, AL (12.6k out of 67k people) live below the poverty line, a number that is higher than the national average of 12.3%. In both online reviews and discussions with staff and board, the free admission offered to all visitors was mentioned as being particularly important for providing broad community access.

The WMA provides a space for dialogue and the forging of important relationships to solve local concerns. The Museum's Community Advisory Committee (discussed in *Governance* section) encourages broad public access and involvement. The group consists of 10-12 members and three staff. The Director deliberately takes a hands-off approach. As a group they decided the lack of local affordable housing was the most pressing issue facing the community. They will be taking a self-appointed advocacy role around this issue. They will also be providing feedback on exhibitions and educational programming. The creation and support of this engaged group demonstrates the WMA's

commitment to public service. As a museum advisory group, it can become a key sounding board for the board and staff to ensure public accountability and meeting the needs of their community. However, the WMA must strive for a balance between providing a space for community dialogue and taking on issues outside the current mission.

Primary Recommendation(s):

- Be intentional about any potential expansion or change to the WMA's mission.
- Continue to examine educational offerings to ensure it is meeting community needs.

Administration & Finance

Related Core Standards:

- The museum legally, ethically and responsibly acquires, manages and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.
- The museum operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability.
- The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.
- The composition and qualifications of the museum's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.
- The museum complies with local, state and federal laws, codes and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.

The WMA Board and staff take the museum's sustainability very seriously. This was a reoccurring theme during interviews throughout the assessment. The WMA has taken concrete steps to ensure the financial stability of the institution. This includes advocating for an increase in the City of Dothan appropriations. City support was roughly 55% of the WMA overall budget in 2016 and decreased to 37% in 2020. The upcoming fiscal year will see a return to roughly 55-60%. City funding increased from \$242,500 to \$378,750 per year.

The WMA recently received a significant grant to support core functions. Currently, the Executive Director covers three main job responsibilities at the WMA: director, curator, and collections staff. This broad coverage by Ms. Lemmer is not sustainable nor does it allow for her to provide the depth of attention needed for any one of these areas. The museum received \$50,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) American Rescue Plan Grant Program to hire a permanent, full-time registrar/collections manager. The WMA will use the grant to cover costs until the City's funding starts in the new fiscal year. After that, the increased City funding will provide for the ongoing operational costs for this position. As of the writing of this report, this position was being advertised. The WMA will soon be adding health insurance to staff benefit packages. This is a significant benefit for current staff and increases the WMA's ability to attract quality candidates.

While the museum has taken several smart approaches to diversify their revenue streams, there are

still areas for growth. The addition of a corporate membership program has expanded business sponsorship from one-off projects to ongoing overall support. As part of their corporate membership benefit package, businesses offer memberships to their staff. This provides an added employee benefit for the businesses and an opportunity for the WMA to convert them to ongoing individual supporters. A previous director disbanded the membership program. As a result, financial support and engagement from members is still recovering. Approximately 3.5% of the annual budget is funded from membership dues. This is an area for continued prioritization and expansion. Generally, museums earn 5 to 6.6% of their overall budget from membership dues.

The WMA has a robust venue rental program, including their Green Leaf and Art After Hours initiatives. An onsite conference center and other mixed-use spaces also offer opportunities for rental revenue. A third-party company manages the conference center and adjacent spaces with a portion of the revenue coming back to the WMA. Museum staff run the Green Leaf and Art After Hours programs, which offer personalized, after-hours private museum experiences which include food, drink, a bartender, customized museum experience, and art activities. These rentals help fund a portion of the museum's operational budget. These programs are double-edged. While providing for earned revenue and personalized informal museum experiences, the WMA's current facilities do not allow for a separation between the exhibits and the food/drinks. This is counter to museum best practices. It introduces significant risk to the artwork on display and the increased potential for pests. Most museums will not loan to institutions where food and drinks are allowed in exhibit galleries. This practice must be clearly articulated on loan agreements and facility reports, so all lenders are aware and agree to this risk.

The WMA has an online gift shop where branded products and relevant books are available for sale. The system is easy to use and allows for guests to support the WMA from a distance. The onsite gift shop is less impressive. A small unobtrusive bookshelf in the corner by the front desk (see Appendix B) currently serves as the onsite gift shop. There are no signs or other indicators on the intentions of this material. Given the current facility limitations, a larger space to offer a wider selection of goods is not possible at this time. However, better branding and signage for the current space would make the WMA's efforts around the gift shop more impactful and increase earned revenue.

The WMA Board and Executive Director are currently in discussion around the feasibility of a joint capital and endowment-building campaign. A well thought-out and run campaign can make a significant long-term impact on an institution. In addition to reaching targeted financial goals, campaigns can also increase membership rates and engagement. Should the WMA take this path, the Board should consider consultation or use of a campaign specialist to supplement the capacity of the current staff to run a campaign. It would be premature to have these discussions until the City of Dothan finalizes their plans.

Primary Recommendation(s):

- Continue to prioritize expanding membership at all levels to increase operational support from dues.
- Create a strategy for converting corporate employee members to individual supporters.
- Increase visibility of the onsite gift shop.

- Once the City finalizes plans for the WMA's future facility, work towards a capital and endowment campaign.

Collections Stewardship

Related Core Standards:

- The museum owns, exhibits, or uses collections that are appropriate to its mission.
- The museum legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.
- The museum's collections-related research is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.
- The museum strategically plans for the use and development of its collections.
- Guided by its mission, the museum provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.
- The museum is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.
- The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- The museum complies with local, state and federal laws, codes and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.

With over 1,100 objects in its care, the WMA's permanent collection of approximately 700 works consists primarily of works on paper, including pieces by Robert Indiana, Josef Albers, Victor Vasarely and the largest public collection of Frank Stella prints in the state. Prominence is also given to the work of acclaimed Alabama artists, including Dale Kennington, John Kelly Fitzpatrick, Beverly Erdreich, Gary Chapman, Carolyn Sherer and Scott Stephens, among others.

As discussed in the Governance section, the legal status of the collection is unclear. Deeds of gift for works collected early in the history of the WMA are unclear on the legal owner. Legal experts will need to weigh in on Ordinance No. 9006, which states: *The management, custody and control of any sculpture, paintings, and other objects of art belonging to the City of Dothan which the Board of Commissioners of the City of Dothan may by resolution place under the control and management of said Museum Board shall be vested in the Museum Board of the City of Dothan, and said Board shall exercise, subject to the control of the Board of Commissioners of the City of Dothan, all the powers of the City with respect to establishing and maintaining a Museum of Fine Arts. All property and property interest accruing to said Museum Board shall be vested in and held for the City.* Later deeds state the Wiregrass Museum of Art, Inc. is the legal owner of donated works. Should it be determined that the City of Dothan owns all or parts of the collection, a MOU concerning the care and management of these works will need to be clearly articulated. Questions around authority to accept new donations, deaccession and approve outgoing loans will also need to be addressed.

The WMA collection suffers from two connected problems: an unclear vision and underutilization. Both staff and Board members spoke about the importance of the collection, but no one could give concrete

examples about what purpose it served or how the WMA would be diminished should it not be there. It is the reviewer's opinion that this stems from an unclear vision for the collection combined with not having a clear idea of what exactly is in the collection. The current collecting plan outlined in the collections management policy is vague and too broad. There is no articulated overall guiding philosophy about why an artwork would be collected. The WMA has three collection categories: permanent, education and non-accessioned. Roughly 36% of the artworks currently in the WMA's care and custody are not in the permanent collection. The Board needs to have a thoughtful and specific discussion about what role, if any, the different collections play in their overall vision of the museum. Not all museums collect.

Currently, two small galleries at the front of the museum, in addition to a hallway, display 20 - 30 works from the collection. This underutilization is understandable given the current staffing limitations. Staff is stretched too thin to effectively manage the works in the WMA's care. The new registrar/collections manager will help to rectify this situation. Concurrent to the Board discussion, the newly hired staff member should conduct a physical inventory of objects, cataloguing, and digitization of objects and records. Once the staff and Board have a clear and specific understanding of the legal status of the collection, what is currently in the various collections and any broad categories represented, curation of the collection can occur. This might include the deaccession of unsuitable works and the return of long-term loans that do not fulfill the WMA's mission. Thoughtful curation of a collection could also assist with the lack of space observed and mentioned by staff and Board.

Like most museums, the WMA is currently facing a shortage of space for their collection. Collecting has essentially come to a halt due to space constraints. The WMA Collections Committee accepts only exceptional works since there is no suitable storage available. Once accepted, staff must think creatively to locate a space to store the work. The limited compact painting storage system is old and difficult to move. The remaining storage consists of bins and flat files. All of which are at or above capacity. Staff recently purchased additional flat files.

Another hinderance to the management of the collections is the lack of proper tools. The WMA uses a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to digitally manage the collection. Ms. Lemmer reports paper files are inconsistent. Staff, external researchers, and contract curators are unable to access the collection given the deficiencies of the digital and paper collection management systems. The WMA will need to address this obstacle.

A grant received by the WMA for \$25,000 from the Henry Luce Foundation will support three collections-based exhibitions in 2022. These permanent collections-based exhibitions allow for an increased prominence to the works at the WMA, as well as highlighting the museum's ongoing stewardship of art objects held in the public trust. This funding will connect the museum's regional audience more closely the works contained in the WMA's permanent collection. WMA will provide public programming and extended interpretive components for these exhibitions, including artist talks and workshops, digital and app content, and virtual tours and videos. It is unclear how effectively the WMA staff will be able to fulfill the promise of the grant with the current obstacles.

As previously mentioned, current WMA policy allows food & drinks in the exhibit galleries (Green Leaf,

Art After Hours, etc.) during rentals and programs. This is counter to museum best practices. The WMA should review all associated paperwork and insurance policies to ensure proper coverage is in place should damage occur. As the WMA looks to a new facility, it would be advisable to program the new building with these functions separated.

Primary Recommendation(s):

- Determine the legal status of different works in the collection and, if appropriate, create a MOU with the City of Dothan outlining legal responsibilities and duties for their care and management.
- Review if the WMA would benefit from a MAP Collections Stewardship assessment with new Collections Manager/Registrar.
- Undertake a complete inventory of the collection, identify unaccessioned items, long-term loans, and 'found in collection' materials.
- Staff should research resources available (internally & externally) to upgrade their current paper and digital collections management systems.
- Collections Committee should discuss the role the permanent collection plays in their vision of the WMA and whether the current collection fulfills that role.
- Create and formally adopt a more detailed collecting plan and then evaluate all current items in the collection to determine if they fit within the plan.
- Staff and Board should deaccession any items and return loans that do not fit within the collecting plan with any realized funds used to fill gaps in the collection.

Facilities & Risk Management

Related Core Standards:

- The museum is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.
- The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- The museum complies with local, state and federal laws, codes and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations and administration.
- The museum allocates its space and uses its facilities to meet the needs of the collections, audience and staff.
- The museum has appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and objects and the facilities it owns or uses.
- The museum has an effective program for the care and long-term maintenance of its facilities.
- The museum is clean, well maintained and provides for visitors' needs.
- The museum takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.

The WMA is currently located downtown in the city of Dothan's historic 1912-1913 power and water plant. From the museum's website: *A committee of thirteen citizens was later appointed to study the feasibility of establishing a municipal museum. After a two-year study, the committee recommended to the City Commission that a museum focusing on the visual arts be established. Twelve sites were evaluated for the prospective museum and the overwhelming choice was the historic Water and Electric*

Building located in downtown Dothan. This building was built in 1912-1913 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The City Commission converted the original committee to an official Museum Board and an appropriation of \$50,000 was made to the Board to begin planning the new museum. In February 1988, the board hired Sam Kates as the project's director. Twenty-one invitations were then mailed to local architectural firms to submit proposals for designing the museum. The local firm of Joseph L. Donofro and Associates was awarded the job. In 1988, schematic designs for a 30,000 square foot museum were unveiled with a projected cost of 2.8 million dollars to complete the project. The City Commission expressed concern over the amount needed to complete the museum in one phase. The Museum Board submitted a revised plan to the City Commission to divide the building program into four phases. The Commission agreed to accept this new plan. Since 1988, the museum has completed three of the four phases of the original construction plan. All of the contributions for these three phases were raised by the museum board and employees with support from the private sector. The first three phases have created 18,000 square feet of gallery space, an exhibit preparation area, a vault, as well as a conference center.

Both internal and external stakeholders stated throughout the site visit that the current facility is a major challenge and impediment to expansion of programmatic areas. The building's shortcomings were evident during the site visit. Like many repurposed historic buildings, the facility does not appear to meet current museum standards or needs. Per the MOU with the City of Dothan, city staff is responsible for most of the building upkeep and maintenance needs. This has not always occurred in a timely or adequate manner. Temperature and humidity control is limited. Staff use small portable dehumidifiers to attempt to control high humidity levels. Staff must manually empty these portable systems. Not designed for continual use, these units require frequent replacement.

Water intrusion into the building is common with evidence of past and current problems throughout. Many areas of the building have a damp musty smell. Areas of black staining on the walls and ceilings could be mold and should be evaluated for both the health and safety of staff, visitors, and the artwork. Sandbags at doorways are commonplace to guard against floods during heavy rainstorms. Dothan is in an area prone to hurricanes and tornados. Exterior doors show signs of deterioration from water (holes due to rusting). Downspouts drain water directly against the building's foundation, likely accounting for some of the water intrusion in the lower levels and will ultimately undermine the structure.

The exhibit track lighting is ageing. The manufacturer of the existing system no longer makes the light cannisters. As they stop working, the WMA cannot replace them. A complete replacement and upgrade of the lighting system is inevitable.

Only one set of gendered public restrooms are available, with the sinks unable to produce hot water. This is a public health issue, especially as the world is still grappling with an ongoing pandemic. Hand sanitizing stations are located throughout the facility but do not fully compensate for the lack of adequate handwashing facilities. There are no family or gender-neutral restrooms which limits capacity around attracting families with children. No public restrooms are available on the second floor near the WMA's only classroom. Children attending programs in the classroom must travel downstairs to access bathroom facilities.

One large upstairs classroom located directly off the staff offices serves as the only onsite classroom. Both staff and Board members indicated this was insufficient to meet their vision and aspirations for the education program. The facility does contain a small conference center and other mixed-use spaces. These spaces are located to the rear of the building and access is not straightforward or easy for patrons. Should the museum continue to use this building long-term, the staff should evaluate to possibility of repurposing these spaces for WMA programmatic needs rather than as rentals. An architect should be able to assist in improving the flow between the spaces.

Staff work in cubicles directly adjacent and open to public spaces. The director's office is in the basement, completely separated from the rest of the staff. Staff cannot have sensitive conversations in these open spaces. Even with signs, visitors often wander into the staff offices. Long extension cords and power strips litter the floor in the staff workspaces. These are tripping hazards and most likely fire code violations (local ordinances should be referenced).

A building-wide security system is active. Doors into the collection spaces and loading dock have adequate controls. Staff use the security cameras to compensate for their limited numbers. Camera monitoring stations allow them to complete other tasks away from the front desk. A contract company provides onsite security guards and system monitoring. Ms. Lemmer reports the security company is usually responsive to their needs, however, some days or events have no security guards due to no-shows. This is not an uncommon problem with contracted staff. A rotating stable of security guards does not allow for consistency or continuity of service. New guards will not have the knowledge or training to work in a museum setting. An advantage to staff security personnel is the ability to cross-train as gallery attendants.

As part of the City of Dothan's revitalization of the downtown, a different facility is probable for the WMA. City officials indicated they were interested in locating the museum in a city building in the heart of the city. However, at the time of the site visit, it was not yet settled what direction the City would take regarding the future home of the WMA. With the WMA's future unresolved, it would be premature to make any concrete recommendations for improving the current facilities beyond immediate health and safety concerns. Should the Board decide the WMA will be moving facilities regardless of the City's decision then it would be advisable to hire an architect experienced in building programming to assist in identifying current and future needs.

Primary Recommendation(s):

- Conduct both spot and air quality tests for mold.
- Request the City repair the hot water in the public restrooms.
- Identify a list of facility requirements and a list of desires for any new building.
- When/if the City of Dothan offers a different facility to the WMA, create a realistic plan for implementing the facility requirement list.
- Conduct a capital campaign to raise funding for a new building or renovation of the existing one.
- Determine the feasibility of hiring staff security guards that might double as gallery attendants.

Education & Interpretation

Related Core Standards:

- The museum clearly states its overall educational goals, philosophy and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.
- The museum understands the characteristics and needs of its existing and potential audiences and uses this understanding to inform its interpretation.
- The museum's interpretive content is based on appropriate research.
- Museums conducting primary research do so according to scholarly standards.
- The museum uses techniques, technologies and methods appropriate to its educational goals, content, audiences and resources.
- The museum presents accurate and appropriate content for each of its audiences.
- The museum demonstrates consistent high quality in its interpretive activities.
- The museum assesses the effectiveness of its interpretive activities and uses those results to plan and improve its activities.

The WMA generally showcases between 12 and 16 exhibits per year. The WMA's executive director is also the only in-house curator. To accomplish such an ambitious exhibition exhibit schedule, the WMA relies on additional contract curators, and most exhibits are installed by the whole staff as there is no preparator. Two permanent collection galleries are located directly off the lobby and front entrance of the museum. When the temporary exhibits are rotated, most of the museum is closed to the public as galleries cannot be segregated. This is both a visitor and logistical challenge for staff. This impact would be distributed more if specific galleries could be rotated individually. As the WMA looks to new facilities, these concerns should be considered.

WMA staff's dedication to the principles to DEAI are clear through several very specific choices. Exhibit labels include photographs of the artists and are reproduced in both English and Spanish. These choices humanize and broaden the accessibility of the works. Photographs of the artists range from current images to historic and are provided by the artists. Artists are paid for exhibiting at the WMA, expanding the ability of artists to make a living with their talents and broadening economic support. The WMA website offers opportunities for guest curators and artists to submit proposals for consideration, increasing the number of voices represented at the WMA. The WMA staff should also contemplate if the Community Advisory Committee could play a role in exhibition and educational programming.

Under the leadership of Brook McGinnis, Education Director, the WMA offers a wide-ranging selection of programs, between 70 and 80 most years. Staff distributed over 12,000 art kits during the pandemic, funded by a community foundation. They plan on continuing this endeavor even as they offer more in-person programming. Two programs were regularly singled out by Board members, staff, and city officials as impactful community engagements: Art After Hours and Yard Party for Art.

The newly formed WMA Teens offers yet another opportunity for community engagement. Up to 12 Juniors and Seniors work together to create and implement museum programming for teens.

Participants are offered stipends for their year-long involvement. This is a great way to engage a younger audience and build future museum supporters. The current batch of students come from diverse backgrounds and the surrounding counties.

The WMA lacks a broad and dedicated volunteer pool. Staff report they can depend on volunteers from the local community for one-off projects but have a small docent pool for more reoccurring programs or needs. This is an area for growth. Docents and volunteers can play a vital role in supporting the operations of museums. According to AAM's website: *The last national financial survey AAM conducted (published as 2009 Museum Financial Information) reported a median figure of about 6 volunteers for every paid staff member for museums overall. That ratio soared to 18:1 in museums with budgets under \$250,000, but even in the largest museums, volunteers generally outnumber paid FT staff two to one.* Volunteers could be used as docents, educational program assistants, front desk greeters, and in collections. While volunteers require training and management, a robust pool can assist the WMA in achieving their goals while also providing an enriching and positive experience for the volunteers. Enthusiastic volunteers become community ambassadors and a museum's biggest cheerleaders.

Staff use a consistent strategy for surveying their stakeholders and audience. Visitors are asked to participate in a survey available via an iPad at the front entrance which asks basic demographic questions as well as questions about how they heard about the museum. With COVID concerns and with visitors that have trouble with this type of technology, museum front desk staff enter the data themselves. Post-program evaluations are also conducted.

Primary Recommendation(s):

- During the planning for new facilities, consider configuration of galleries to help disperse the impact rotating exhibits.
- Consider if the Community Advisory Committee could play a role in exhibition and educational programming.
- Determine if a larger committed volunteer pool could assist with staff capacity concerns.

Marketing & Communications

Related Core Standards:

- The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- The museum is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.
- The museum strives to be inclusive and offers opportunities for diverse participation.
- The museum clearly states its overall educational goals, philosophy, and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.

The WMA has a consistent brand throughout their printed and digital communications. The WMA uses a contract graphic designer for their exhibition and printed materials. Social media posts are the

primary responsibility of Sophie Skipper, Special Events and Marketing Coordinator, with oversight from Melissa Rea, Director of Advancement, and in collaboration with other staff.

Staff use social media to generate excitement and community engagement around exhibitions and programs. While a thorough examination of the analytics for the WMA's social media accounts were not completed, a review of their most recent Facebook postings indicate room for growth in this area. The public is not engaging with posts in a consistent or high numbers. Many posts have limited to no 'likes'. Staff might need to adapt their marketing and publications to communicate with a diversity of audiences, perhaps through adapting their voice in different platforms.

Primary Recommendations(s):

- Review social media analytics to determine areas for growth.
- Consider hiring a contract social media specialist to guide discussions around the WMA's effectiveness in this area.
- Add social media account handles to exhibit walls and the entrance of the WMA to increase awareness.
- Consider if using a more informal 'voice' or tone in different social media platforms is appropriate.

Summary

The Wiregrass Museum staff, and Board are dedicated and passionate about this institution and its mission. They are currently at a crossroads where both internal and external forces are coming together to determine the next chapter in their history. The Board will need to take a proactive role in guiding the institution into future. They face significant opportunities and challenges that will require thoughtful discussions, careful planning, and realistic expectations. By being clear and focused on their mission, the Board will be able to guide the small staff.

Key recommendations include continuing to advocate for the WMA's interests in the larger conversation around the revitalization of the downtown area; undertake a legal review of founding documents and modify the operating MOA, if needed; and be intentional about any potential expansion or change to the WMA's mission.

The WMA has weathered their fair share of storms and challenges and has emerged as a small but vital cultural hub in Dothan, AL. The next five to seven years will be their next great challenge. They will need to balance growth and change while maintaining core functions with a small staff.

Recommendations

(Prioritized by topic)

Mission & Planning

1. Continue to advocate for the WMA's interests in the larger conversation around the revitalization of the downtown area.
2. Reach out to AAM Accreditation staff to discuss the feasibility of seeking accreditation while potentially renovating and/or moving facilities.
3. Identify short- and long-term paths should the City of Dothan's plan not align with the WMA's vision.
4. Revisit the current strategic plan(s) considering upcoming challenges to create a single cohesive plan which guides the museum's activities. Include time frames for completion and then reassessing plan.

Governance

1. Undertake a legal review of founding documents to determine the legal authority of the permanent collection and loans (short and long term).
2. Review MOA in its entirety to determine if further clarification is needed on other points.
3. With the City of Dothan, modify the operating MOA as needed.
4. Review Code of Ethics to determine if it should be provided to the full Board, staff, and volunteers with an annual signed acknowledgement of compliance.

Public Trust & Accountability

1. Be intentional about any potential expansion or change to the WMA's mission.
2. Continue to examine educational offerings to ensure it is meeting community needs.

Administration & Finance

1. Prioritize expanding membership at all levels to increase operational support from dues.
2. Create a strategy for converting corporate employee members to individual supporters.
3. Increase visibility of the onsite gift shop.
4. Once the City finalizes plans for the WMA's future facility, work towards a capital and endowment campaign.

Collections Stewardship

1. Determine if the WMA would benefit from a MAP Collections Stewardship assessment with the new Collections Manager/Registrar.
2. Undertake a complete inventory of the collection, identify unaccessioned items, long-term loans, and 'found in collection' materials.
3. Staff should research resources available (internally & externally) to upgrade their current paper and digital collections management systems.
4. Collections Committee should discuss the role the permanent collection plays in their vision of the WMA and whether the current collection fulfills that role.
5. Create and formally adopt a more detailed collecting plan and then evaluate all current items in

the collection to determine if they fit within the plan.

6. Staff and Board should deaccession any items and return loans that do not fit within the collecting plan with any realized funds used to fill gaps in the collection.

Facilities & Risk Management

1. Conduct both spot and air quality tests for mold.
2. Request the City repair the hot water in the public restrooms.
3. Identify a list of facility requirements and a list of desires for any new building.
4. When/if the City of Dothan offers a different facility to the WMA, create a realistic plan for implementing the facility requirement list.
5. Conduct a capital campaign to raise funding for a new building or renovation of the existing one.
6. Determine the feasibility of hiring staff security guards that might double as gallery attendants.

Education & Interpretation

1. Consider if the Community Advisory Committee could play a role in exhibition and educational programming.
2. Determine if a larger committed volunteer pool could assist with staff capacity concerns.
3. During the planning for new facilities, consider configuration of galleries to help disperse the impact rotating exhibits.

Marketing & Communications

1. Review social media analytics to determine areas for growth.
2. Consider hiring a contract social media specialist to guide discussions around the WMA's effectiveness in this area.
3. Add social media account handles to exhibit walls and the entrance of the WMA to increase awareness.
4. Consider if using a more informal 'voice' or tone in different social media platforms is appropriate.

Resources

Print Materials

- Chmelik, Samantha, editor. *Sustainable Revenue for Museums: A Guide*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.
- Quesenberry, Keith A. *Social Media Strategy: Marketing, Advertising, and Public Relations in the Consumer Revolution*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2021.
- Simmons, J. and Kiser, T. editors. *Museum Registration Methods*. 6th ed. Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2020.
- Young, Anne M., editor. *Rights & Reproductions: The Handbook for Cultural Institutions*. Washington, D.C.: American Alliance of Museums, 2015, 2nd edition 2018.

Web materials

- <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/resource-library/human-resource-resources/volunteer-recruitment/>
- <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/resource-library/human-resource-resources/volunteer-orientation-and-training/>

Appendix A: Site Visit Agenda

October 26, 2021

Michelle travels to Dothan

October 27, 2021

9am - Welcome and Introduction w/ Dana-Marie Lemmer

- *See program in action, if possible*

9:30am - Facility Tour

12pm - Lunch with Troy Fountain from Wiregrass Foundation re: arts/downtown initiative

4pm - Meetings with Board Members - *Executive Committee*

Collins Trott - President

Dan Johnston - Vice President and Long Range Planning Committee Chair

Destiny Oliver - Secretary and Governance Committee Chair

Sharla Jones - Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair

Destiny Hosmer - Advancement Committee Chair

William Nichols - Collections Committee Chair

6:30pm - Dinner/wrap up

October 28, 2021

9am - Staff meetings, approx. 30 minutes each

- Melissa Rea - Director of Advancement (via Zoom)
- Sophie Skipper - Special Events and Marketing Coordinator
- Brook McGinnis - Education Director
- Robin Johnston - Special Projects Administrator

11:30am - Meeting with Mayor and City Manager

12:30pm - Lunch

2pm - complete group activity

3pm - Meeting with board members, including new

Wrap up

October 29, 2021

Michelle returns to New Mexico

Potential individual meetings or Zoom meetings:

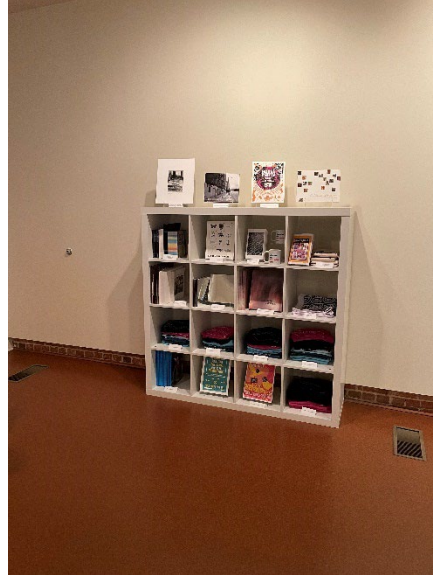
- Community Advisory Committee
- Docent groups
- Community partners
- Other stakeholders
- Founding board members

Appendix B: Photographs

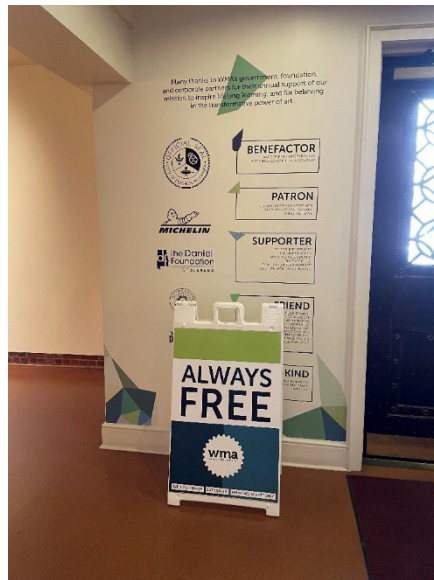
Lobby / Front Entrance



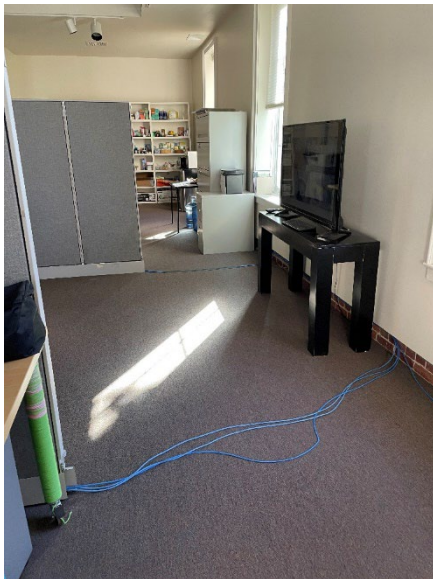
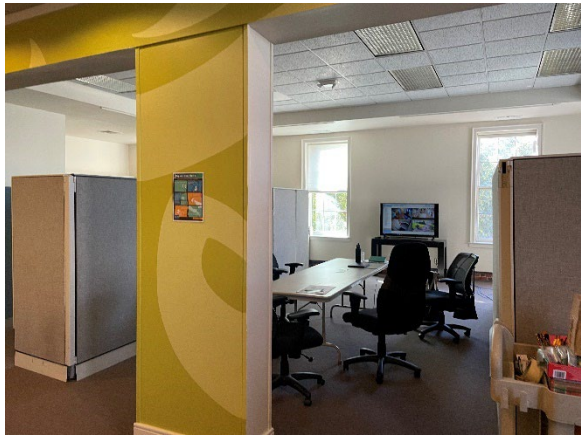
Visitor Survey



Onsite Gift Shop



Staff Offices



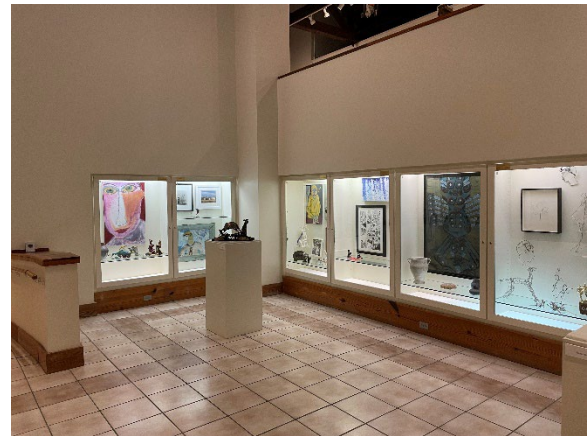
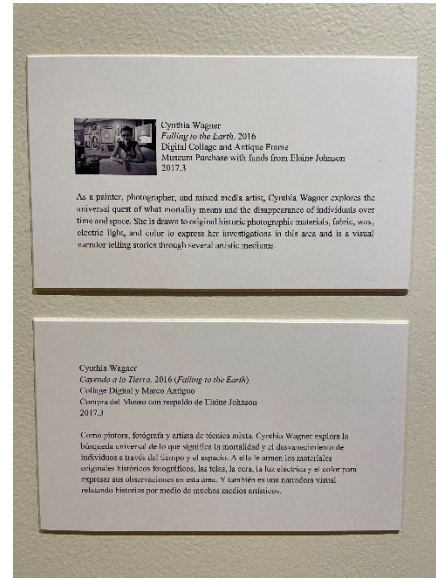
Classroom



Exhibition Spaces



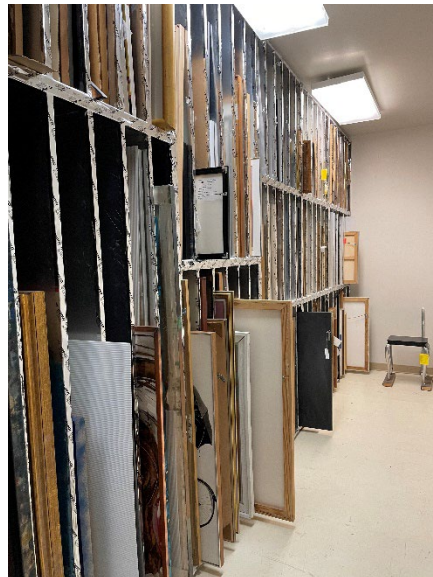
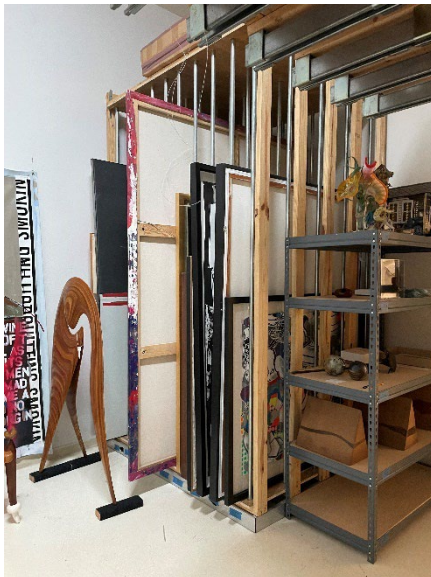
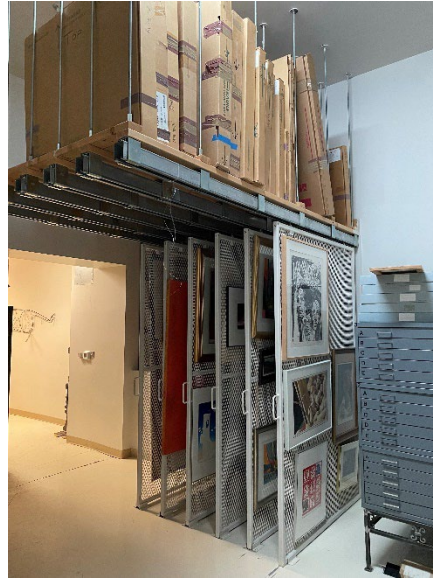
Bilingual gallery labels with photo of artist



Lower galleries with built-in dated cases, making adapting the needs of specific galleries difficult



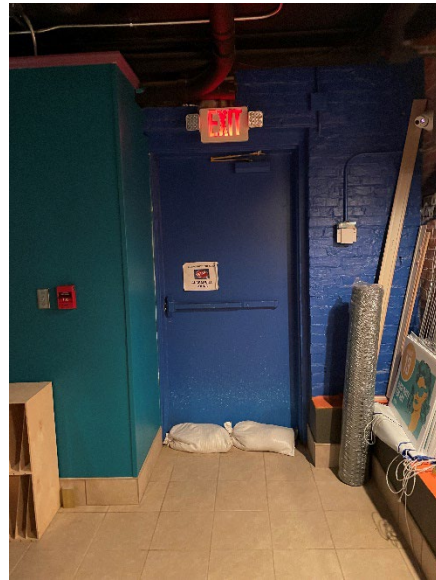
Collection Storage and Work Areas



Water Penetrations



In-gallery dehumidifer under evidence of past water penetrations



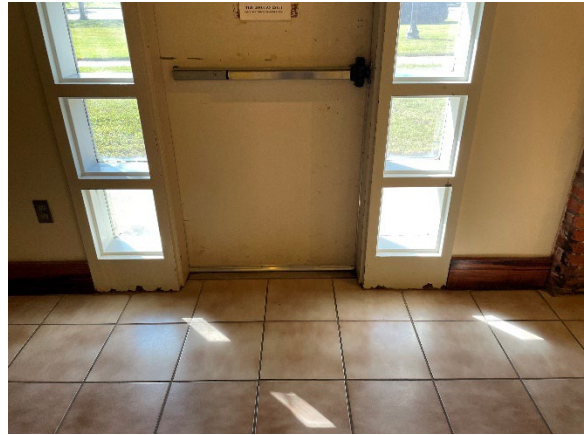
Sand bags at lower level emergecny exit



Evidence of past water



Sandbags at exterior exit



Deterioration of doors and door frames from water



Downspouts draining directly against building foundation with evidence of damage to surrounding soil

Appendix C: List of Documents Shared with Peer Reviewer

Annual Reports

- FY2017
- FY2018
- FY2019
- FY2020

Board of Trustees

- FY2022 Committee Calendar
- FY2021 End of Year Self-Study
- FY2022 Annual Paperwork Reporting
- Bylaws
- Candidate Process
- Candidate Profile Reporting
- Committee Descriptions

City of Dothan

- Ordinance No. 9006-2
- City of Dothan and Wiregrass Museum of Art Memorandum of Understanding
- Arts Downtown Conceptual Design

Core Documents

- Code of Ethics
- Collections Management Policy
- Disaster Plan
- Organizational Chart

Financial Documents

- FY22 WMA Budget
- Wiregrass Museum of Art, Inc. Financial Statements and Supplementary Information (September 2021)
- Case for Support Appeal (February 2021)

Staff Job Descriptions

- Art Educator and School Programs Coordinator
- Director of Advancement
- Education Director
- Executive Director
- Special Events and Marketing Coordinator
- Special Projects Administrator

Strategic Plans

- Long form
- List form

Core Standards For Museums*

1. PUBLIC TRUST & ACCOUNTABILITY

- 1.1 The museum is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.
- 1.2 The museum identifies the communities it serves, and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them.
- 1.3 Regardless of its self-identified communities, the museum strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.
- 1.4 The museum strives to be inclusive and offers opportunities for diverse participation.
- 1.5 The museum asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.
- 1.6 The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- 1.7 The museum is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.
- 1.8 The museum complies with local, state, and federal laws, codes, and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.

2. MISSION & PLANNING

- 2.1 The museum has a clear understanding of its mission and communicates why it exists and who benefits as a result of its efforts.
- 2.2 All aspects of the museum's operations are integrated and focused on meeting its mission.
- 2.3 The museum's governing authority and staff think and act strategically to acquire, develop, and allocate resources to advance the mission of the museum.
- 2.4 The museum engages in ongoing and reflective institutional planning that includes involvement of its audiences and community.
- 2.5 The museum establishes measures of success and uses them to evaluate and adjust its activities.

3. LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- 3.1 The governance, staff, and volunteer structures and processes effectively advance the museum's mission.
- 3.2 The governing authority, staff, and volunteers have a clear and shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- 3.3 The governing authority, staff, and volunteers legally, ethically, and effectively carry out their responsibilities.
- 3.4 The composition, qualifications, and diversity of the museum's leadership, staff, and volunteers enable it to carry out the museum's mission and goals.
- 3.5 There is a clear and formal division of responsibilities between the governing authority and any group that supports the museum, whether separately incorporated or operating within the museum or its parent organization.

4. COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP

- 4.1 The museum owns, exhibits, or uses collections that are appropriate to its mission.
- 4.2 The museum legally, ethically, and effectively manages, documents, cares for, and uses the collections.
- 4.3 The museum's collections-related research is conducted according to appropriate scholarly standards.
- 4.4 The museum strategically plans for the use and development of its collections.
- 4.5 Guided by its mission, the museum provides public access to its collections while ensuring their preservation.

5. EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION

- 5.1 The museum clearly states its overall educational goals, philosophy, and messages, and demonstrates that its activities are in alignment with them.
- 5.2 The museum understands the characteristics and needs of its existing and potential audiences and uses this understanding to inform its interpretation.
- 5.3 The museum's interpretive content is based on appropriate research.
- 5.4 Museums conducting primary research do so according to scholarly standards.
- 5.5 The museum uses techniques, technologies, and methods appropriate to its educational goals, content, audiences, and resources.
- 5.6 The museum presents accurate and appropriate content for each of its audiences.
- 5.7 The museum demonstrates consistent high quality in its interpretive activities.
- 5.8 The museum assesses the effectiveness of its interpretive activities and uses those results to plan and improve its activities.

6. FINANCIAL STABILITY

- 6.1 The museum legally, ethically, and responsibly acquires, manages, and allocates its financial resources in a way that advances its mission.
- 6.2 The museum operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability.

7. FACILITIES & RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The museum allocates its space and uses its facilities to meet the needs of the collections, audience, and staff.
- 7.2 The museum has appropriate measures to ensure the safety and security of people, its collections and/or objects, and the facilities it owns or uses.
- 7.3 The museum has an effective program for the care and long-term maintenance of its facilities.
- 7.4 The museum is clean and well-maintained, and provides for the visitors' needs.
- 7.5 The museum takes appropriate measures to protect itself against potential risk and loss.

Core Standards for Museums In Plain Language

Public Trust & Accountability

- » Be good
- » No really—not only be legal, but be ethical
- » Show everyone how good and ethical you are
- » (don't wait for them to ask)
- » Do good for people
- » Know which people
- » And to be on the safe side
- » Be nice to everyone else, too
- » Especially if they live next door
- » Avoid cloning
- » Look something like the people you are doing good for
- » And maybe a bit like your neighbors
- » Let other people help decide what games to play
- » And what the rules are
- » Share your toys

Mission and Planning

- » Know what you want to do
- » And why it makes a difference to anyone
- » Then put it in writing
- » Stick to it
- » Decide what you want to do next
- » When you are deciding what to do, ask lots of people
- » for their opinion
- » Put it in writing
- » Then do it
- » If it didn't work, don't do it again
- » If it did work, do

Leadership and Organizational Structure

- » Make sure everyone is clear about who is doing what
- » The board knows it is governing
- » The director knows she is directing (and the board knows it too)
- » The staff know they are doing everything else
- » And have it in writing

Collections Stewardship

- » Know what stuff you have
- » Know what stuff you need
- » Know where it is
- » Take good care of it
- » Make sure someone gets some good out of it
- » Especially people you care about
- » And your neighbors

Education and Interpretation

- » Know who you are talking to
- » Ask them what they want to know
- » Know what you want to say
- » (and what you are talking about)
- » Use appropriate language (or images, or music)
- » Make sure people understood you
- » And ask them if they liked it
- » If not, change it

Financial Stability

- » Put your money where your mission is
- » Is it enough money?
- » Will it be there next year, too?
- » Know when you will need more \$
- » Know where you are going to get it from
- » Don't diddle the books

Facilities and Risk Management

- » Don't crowd people
- » Or things
- » Make it safe to visit your museum
- » Or work there
- » Keep it clean
- » Keep the toilet paper stocked
- » And if all else fails, know where the exit is
- » (and make sure it is clearly marked)