

Wiregrass Museum of Art

Space Needs Assessment

November 29, 2022



MGMP

Process & Acknowledgments

From June through November 2022, the Wiregrass Museum of Art's Planning Committee, staff and trustees, participated in a series of in-person and remote meetings to assess the current state of the WMA, and to chart its future.

Over 100 people played a part in creating this study.

The planning process began with a comparative review of the museum's performance and space use with data collected from a group of 10 peer institutions. WMA's leadership explored big-picture dreams and aspirations, as well as the acknowledgment of shared challenges. WMA's staff, trustees and the Planning Committee worked together to develop a Project Visioning statement and determine future staffing needs.

Online questionnaires were distributed to the museum's extended community of supporters. Stakeholders and City leaders were interviewed in individual meetings.

Together, this input guided the planning team's process of determining the optimal approaches to programming and operations, identifying the space types and sizes that would best support the achievement of these goals, and assessing the feasibility of locating the museum within the proposed downtown redevelopment project.

This Needs Assessment is a result of a concerted effort from a committed staff and Board, with support from an enthusiastic community of members, volunteers and friends.

This study would not have been possible if not for the dedication and support of the following people.

Needs Assessment Planning Committee

Dana-Marie Lemmer, Executive Director & Curator

Collins Trott, President, Board of Trustees

Daniel Johnson, Board Vice President and Chair of Long Range Planning Committee

Destiny Oliver, Board Secretary and Chair of Governance Committee

Michael McCann, Trustee and Finance and Advancement Committees member

Sharla Jones, Board Treasurer and Chair of Finance Committee

Melissa Rea, Director of Advancement

Brook McGinnis, Education Director

The WMA's staff

WMA Board of Trustees

The City of Dothan, Alabama

Community leaders and supporters, in dialogue

Dozens of community questionnaire respondents, members and volunteers, whose comments and feedback are featured throughout this document

The Wiregrass Museum of Art

“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.”

Since its founding in 1987, 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. Today, the museum is a platform for artists across the Southeast to tell their own unique stories, and is a community gathering space where cultural sharing is encouraged among residents and visitors in the region.

As the only museum with a collection within a 100-mile radius, WMA today is positioned as the leading visual arts organization in the Wiregrass region. WMA believes that ‘art elevates the everyday’, and deploys its exhibitions and programs to improve the quality of life for residents of Dothan and the Wiregrass.

Free admission is a core aspect of WMA’s mission to serve its communities, providing no-cost art experiences for every visitor that walks through its doors.

WMA’s education programs provide an essential service to the Dothan and Houston County communities, serving 2,239 Dothan City Schools and regional students each year, and providing free transportation to the museum for 1,850 students annually through its Bus On Us program.

Importantly, the WMA operates as a professional museum that adheres to industry-wide best practices. It is a landmark institution and a point of pride for the City of Dothan and the Wiregrass region, outperforming significantly larger museums across the Southeast and around the US.



Offers free admission to all visitors



Receives over 28,000 annual visitors, 35% of whom originate from outside of Dothan



Is the only museum with a collection within a 100-mile radius



Provided 1,850 students with free transportation to the museum in 2021-22



Welcomes over 2,239 K-12 students on tours each year

Success for WMA is success for Dothan.

WMA is the cultural and educational anchor for downtown Dothan, offering exhibitions and arts-focused programming that activates the City through social gatherings and events. It also serves as a draw for visitors from outside of Dothan, with over 35% of its approximately 28,000 annual visitors originating from outside Dothan's zip codes.

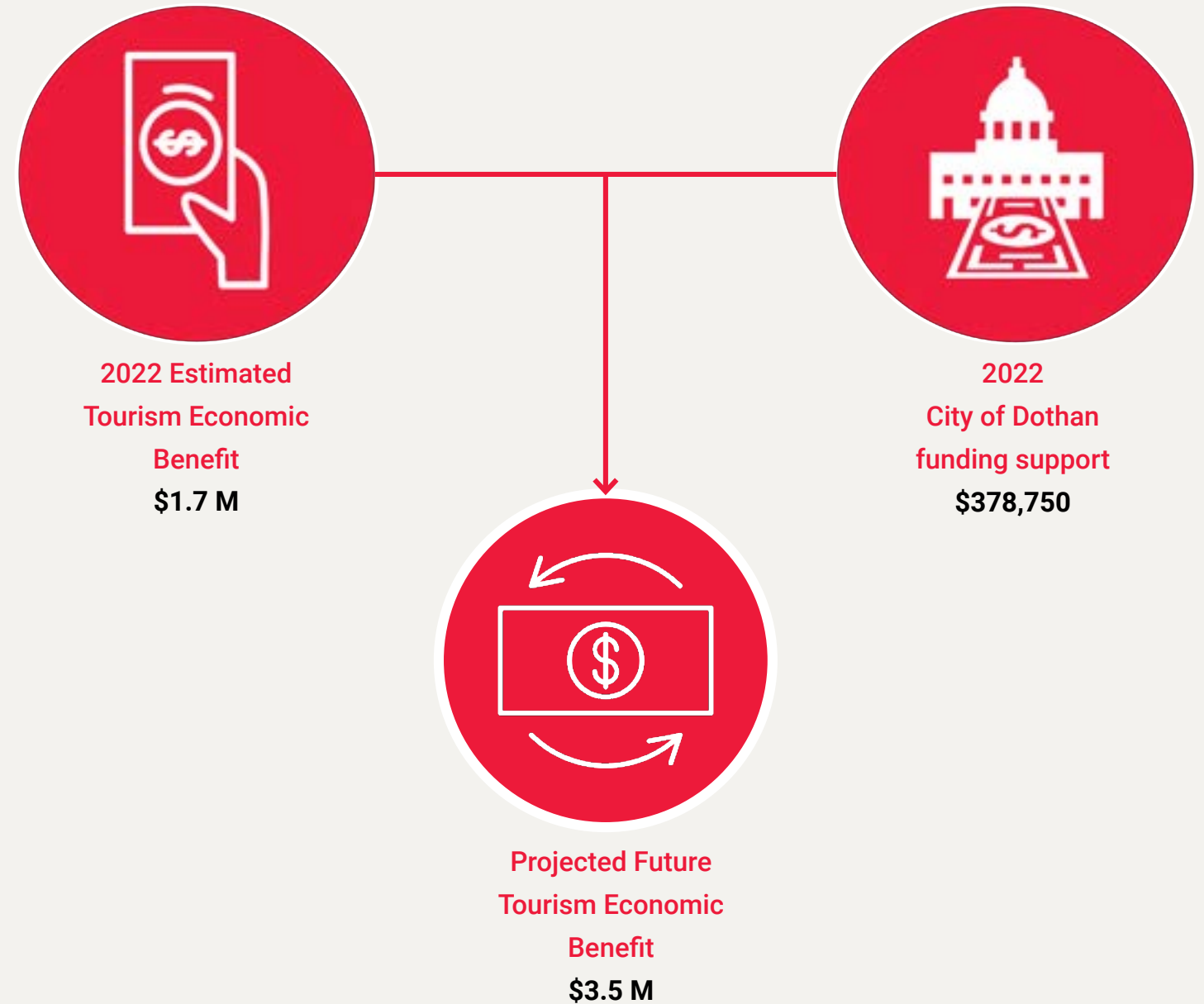
In the four-month period from July through October 2022, WMA served more than 10,593 people. While 5,023 visitors came from Dothan's zip codes, the remaining 5,570 visitors originated from outside the City:

- Day-tripper parties from the five-county Wiregrass region: 3,101
- Overnight parties from outside the Wiregrass: 209

In this three-month period, the total tourism economic benefit of these visitors to WMA was \$593,720.

Extrapolated over the course of a calendar year, we can estimate that WMA offers a tourism benefit to the City of Dothan valued at more than \$1.7 M each year.

In the future, the museum wishes to double its current visitation levels, to achieve 56,000 annual visitors. The estimated tourism economic benefit from the facility expansion model described in this Needs Assessment is projected to exceed \$3.5 M annually.



Comparable Institutions Studied

To assess the Museum’s performance and space utilization, we studied the visitation, operations, finances and space allocation at museums across the country.

The primary consideration for selecting museums for study is overall facility square footage. This is because, in a museum, **square footage is the driver** for much an organization can achieve.

Museums selected range from facilities at or slightly below the WMA current facility’s 23,115 gross square feet, up to nearly double the Museum’s facility square footage.

Each museum selected in this peer group is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, with the exception of the Pulitzer Art Foundation, which operates and was built to accreditation standards but has not sought to be accredited.

We also selected a group of four regional museums for comparison.

Regional



LaGrange Art Museum
LaGrange, GA
16,672 sf



Albany Museum of Art
Albany, GA
25,000 sf



Huntsville Museum of Art
Huntsville, AL
71,000 sf



Montgomery Museum of Art
Montgomery, AL
61,652 sf

National



Laguna Art Museum
Laguna Beach, CA
16,500 sf



Clyfford Still Museum
Denver, CO
28,500 sf



Pulitzer Art Foundation
St. Louis, MO
34,500 sf



Boise Art Museum
Boise, ID
38,400 sf



Bass Museum
Miami, FL
40,671 sf



Boca Raton Museum of Art
Boca Raton, FL
44,000 sf

Museum Performance

WMA receives over 28,000 annual visitors per year. When performance is assessed on a per-square-foot basis, WMA exceeds peer averages in annual visitors per square foot, in some cases outperforming museums two and three times its size.

The peer museums we studied also have significantly higher annual operating budgets than does WMA.

WMA's peers had average annual operating expenses of \$2.7 M, three-and-a-half-times larger than WMA's annual budget of \$764,113 in FY21.

WMA is able to achieve these results with staffing levels three times lower than the peer average.

This condition is unsustainable. The museum's staff are working beyond their capacity and expansion of existing programs is limited due to current staffing levels.



Accreditation

Both the Museum's leadership and City leadership have identified the goal of achieving accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums as an essential component to any future Wiregrass Museum of Art facility.

The benefits of accreditation—to facilitate large-scale, important and timely loaned exhibitions that draw greater numbers of visitors, to improve the Museum's reputation among its peers and regional art collectors, and to attract the professional staff needed to deliver its programs and exhibitions—are all critical to the Museum's ability to take the next step forward in its programmatic and financial growth.

Two core questions guide every accreditation review:

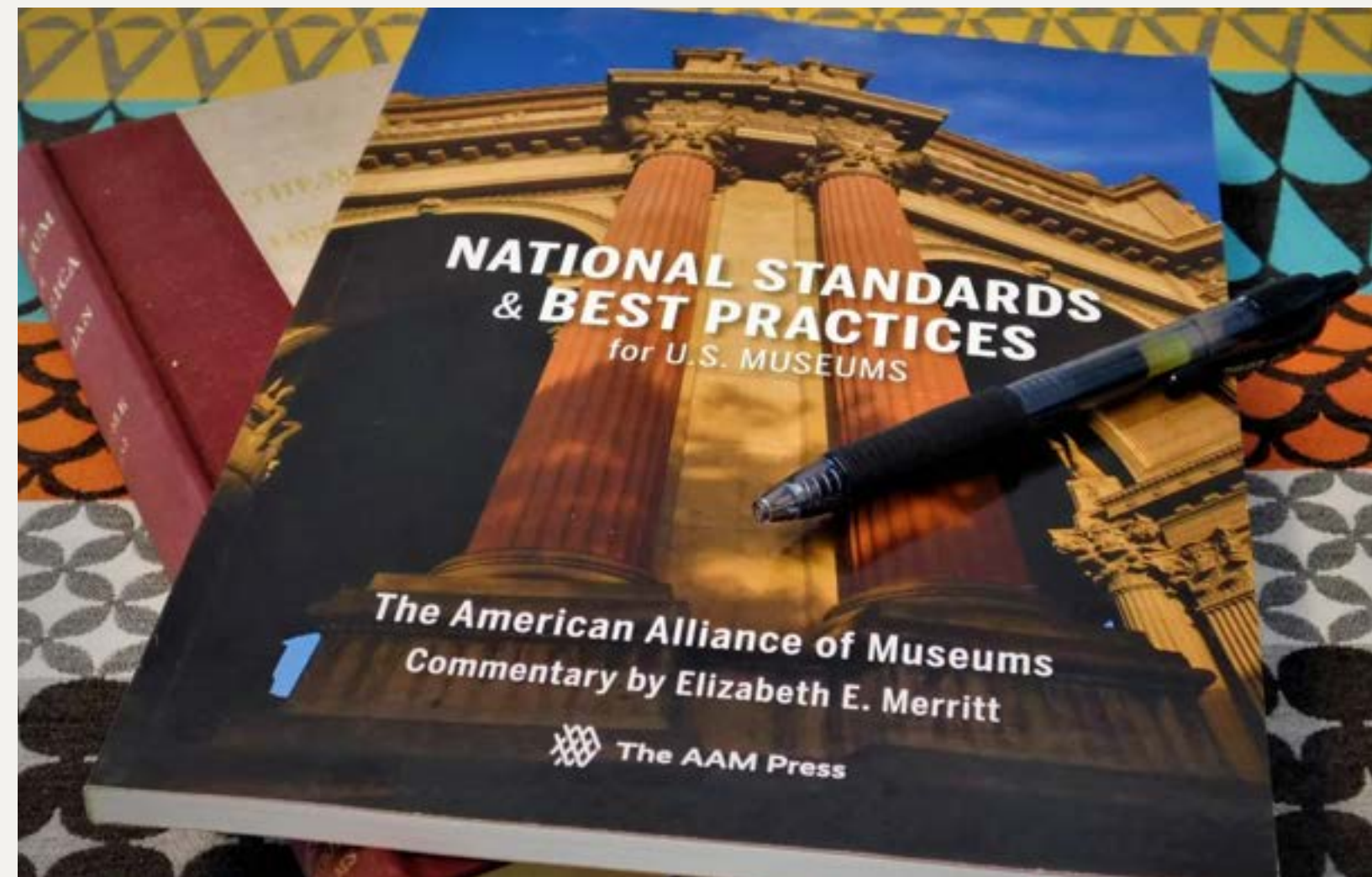
- How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals?
- How well does the museum's performance meet standards and best practices as they are generally understood in the museum field, as appropriate to its circumstances?

The AAM bases its accreditation determination upon the following categories of Core Standards:

- Public Trust and Accountability
- Mission & Planning
- Leadership and Organizational Structure
- Collections Stewardship
- Education and Interpretation
- Financial Stability
- Facilities and Risk Management

While other factors represent important considerations to the vision for a future WMA facility, the Museum and City's goal to become an accredited Museum is the single greatest driver for all facility planning and recommendations.

It is important to note that the WMA is now operating, organizationally, at performance standards and best practices acknowledged by the AAM and peer institutions across the country. Staff and Board are both working and achieving at levels at, or exceeding, other art museums around the country.



Program Area Allocation

The Wiregrass Museum of Art's building today comprises the following square footages:

- **23,115 Gross Square Feet (gsf)**
Gross square footage indicates the exterior perimeter of the building as measured on each floor
- **16,228 Net Square Feet (nsf)**
Net square footage indicates the actual functional, "programmable" spaces within a museum

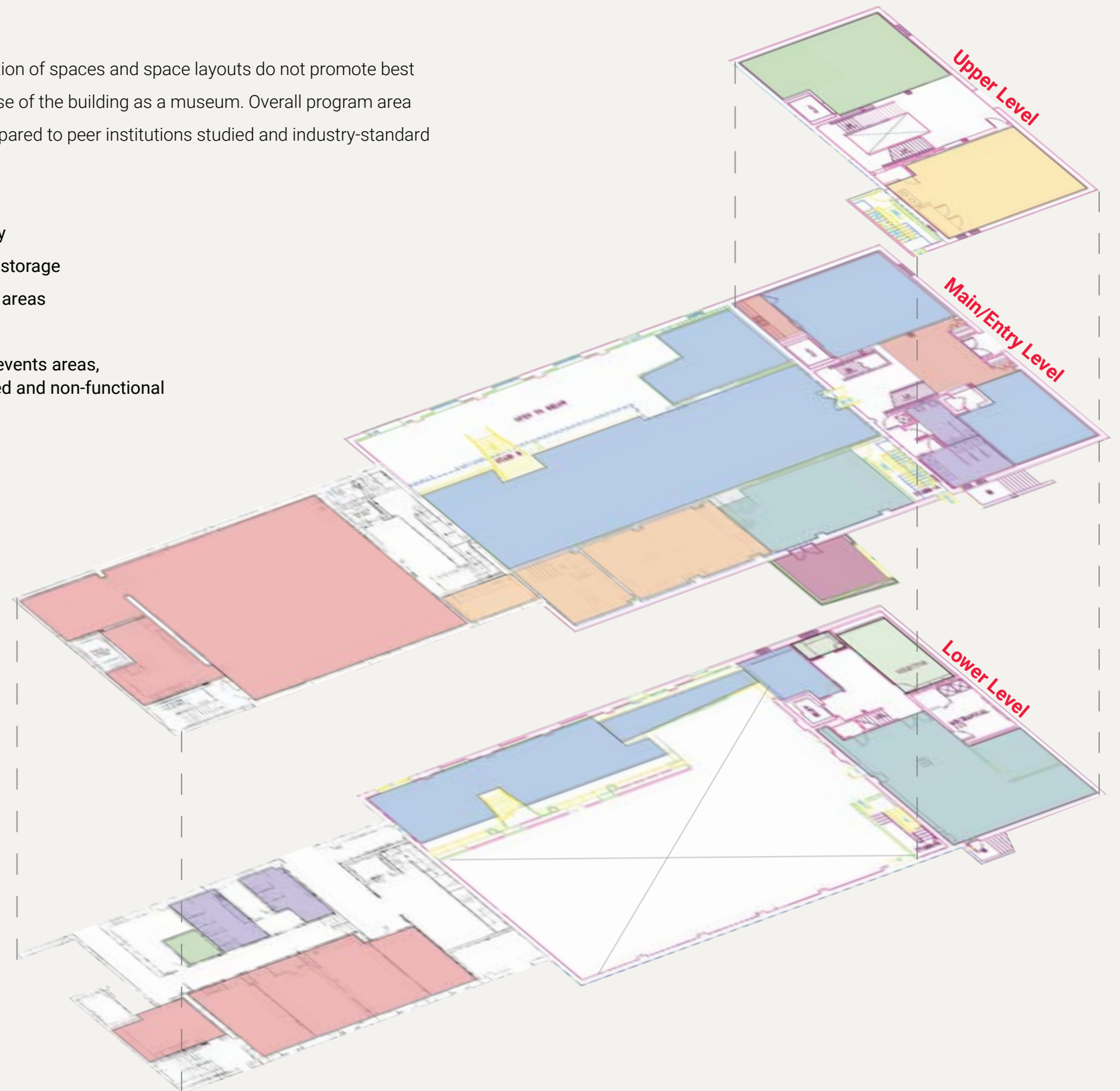
The Museum's program areas are divided across all three levels of the facility, with the bulk of gallery and program-delivery areas located on the Main / Entry Level.

Program Area	NSF	% of NSF
Front Entry Areas	324	2%
Galleries	5,301	32%
Collection Storage & Art Handling	1,080	7%
Education	830	5%
Staff Offices	1,161	7%
Preparation & Installation	1,809	11%
Special Events	4,922	30%
Restrooms	636	4%
Loading & Receiving	265	1%
16,328 nsf or 23,115 gsf		

The current layout of the building presents significant challenges to re-allocating space to meet best practices.

The existing configuration of spaces and space layouts do not promote best practices or efficient use of the building as a museum. Overall program area allocation is poor, compared to peer institutions studied and industry-standard rules of thumb

- Limited entry lobby
- Limited collection storage
- Limited education areas
- Limited galleries
- Too-large special events areas, but poorly-designed and non-functional



The WMA Building

The WMA's current facility has many deferred maintenance, building systems, safety and accessibility challenges that represent significant barriers to accreditation.

- 1 Water intrusion**
First-floor spaces prone to water intrusion and mold build-up
- 2 Environmental / Climate Control**
Inability to maintain stable temperature and humidity in most interior areas, especially art display, storage and handling spaces
- 3 Fire & Life Safety**
No dedicated security control room
No pre-action sprinkler system
Failing roof in Main Gallery
- 4 Accessibility**
Phased building construction results in numerous trip and fall hazards at grade changes

Because many of deficiencies within the WMA building are not just deferred maintenance issues, but also include limitations and failure of core building systems and construction type, it is our assessment that remediating or modifying the current WMA facility, at tremendous cost, may still result in a facility that does not meet professional or accreditable standards.



Facility-related accreditation needs:

- Museum operated security control program and hardened security spaces
- Fully-secure, professional loading dock and art transit path
- Museum-quality, 24-hour humidity and temperature control
- Museum-quality sprinkler system with zoned controls
- Fully-sealed perimeter wall construction, with a vapor barrier and 1.5 to 2-hour fire burn through duration
- Floor loading sufficient to support installation of heavy-artwork in galleries, and art storage equipment/furniture in collection storage areas
- Gallery ceiling heights supportive of a lighting grid and fixtures that will not damage artworks

Project Vision

In planning for the Museum's next facility, the planning committee worked to ensure that all future Museum spaces and functional use were planned to be supportive of achieving its core Strategic Priorities.

The vision for the Museum's future space use is to:

- 1 Develop a facility plan supportive of achieving American Alliance of Museums accreditation.**

Each component of the Museum's future facility should incorporate AAM accreditation and professional practice requirements.
- 2 Support the growth of WMA's exhibition program by increasing the square footage allocation and quality of galleries.**

The Museum must be able to present significant and timely temporary exhibitions, especially large-scale exhibitions that are a draw for visitors from outside the Wiregrass. Larger, more-functional galleries are also needed to showcase and develop narratives based upon the Museum's most prized resource—its permanent collection.

The Museum should also be further empowered to support, creatively and financially, contemporary artists across the South in the development and experimentation of new work, elevating the Museum's professional reputation and positioning it as a regional destination for viewing unique and new artistic expression.
- 3 Support WMA's educational mission.**

The Museum will need additional and larger-scaled education classrooms to support existing, and expanded, school tour and class offerings and outreach.
- 4 Incorporate purpose-designed and appropriately-scaled event and amenity spaces.**

To elevate the museum as a social / gathering space for Dothan and Wiregrass residents and visitors, the Museum needs the space types and sizes to support both event-based programs and casual use.
- 5 Expand WMA's operational and physical capacities to generate earned income.**

Because the Museum does not, nor has any plans to, charge admission, it will need to incorporate revenue-producing and visitor amenity spaces to sustain itself financially. New retail and food service areas will improve WMA's ability generate earned income from visitation while keeping its commitment to offer free admission to all visitors.

Because the Museum is currently significantly understaffed, commensurate staff will be needed to plan, supervise, deliver and maintain expanded program offerings and opportunities available in a larger facility.
- 6 Grow and increase access to the museum's collection.**

To facilitate the growth of its collections, the Museum will need to develop professional-standard collection storage spaces that meet or exceed accreditation standards, and provide additional collection storage square footage to sustain this additional growth.

Current Staffing Levels

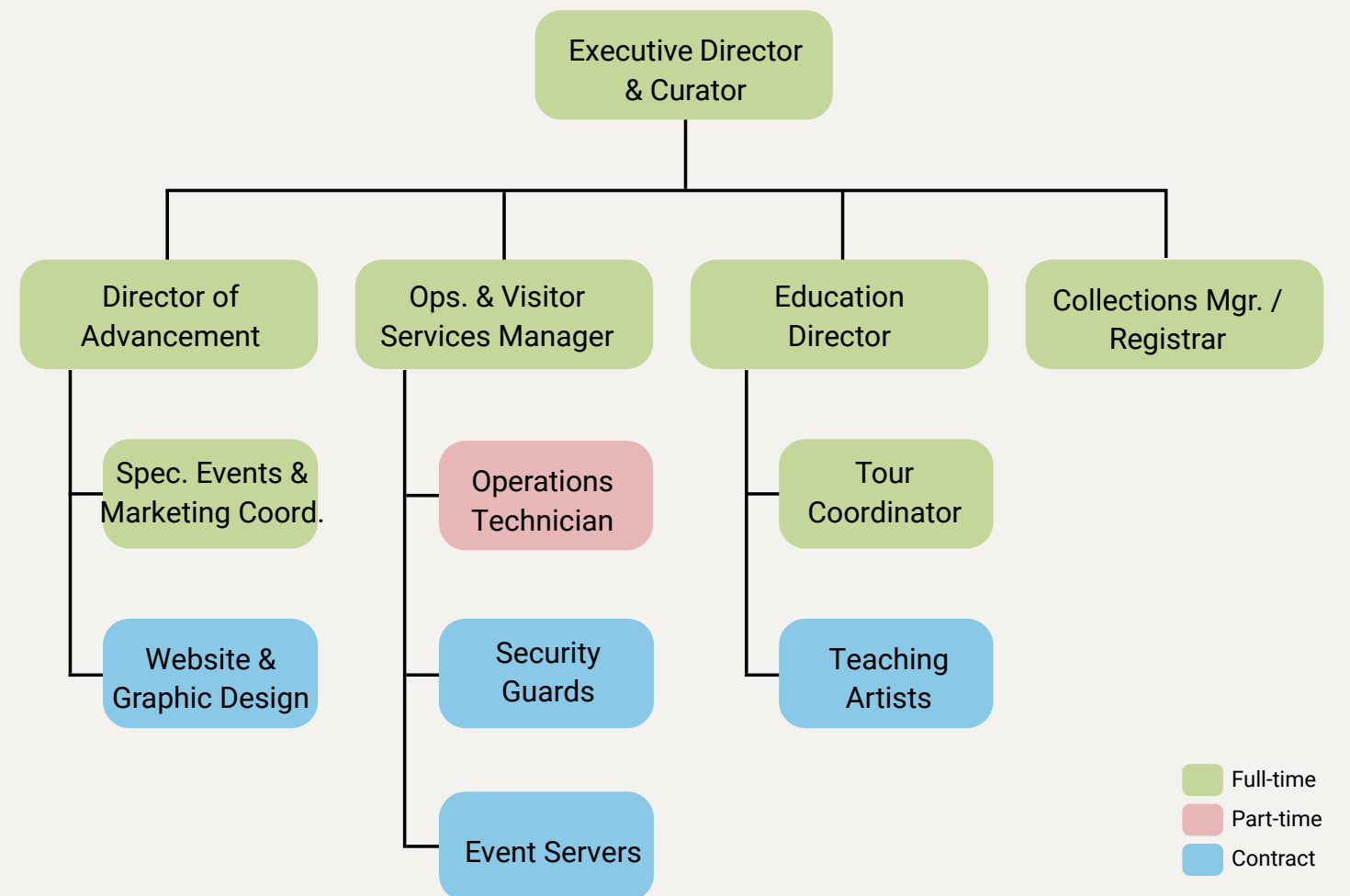
In comparison to peer institutions studied for this project, WMA is significantly understaffed. Its total of seven full-time employees is 10 employees below the studied peer average of 17.

Despite this understaffed condition, the Museum's staff outperform staff at peer institutions, with an employee-to-square-foot ratio of 1 staffer per 3,250 sf, and an employee-to-visitor ratio of 1 staffer per 4,667 visitors. This exceeds peer averages by 441 sf and a remarkable 2,149 visitors.

However, we note that current staffing levels are unsustainable, especially as the Museum seeks to expand and develop new programs and exhibitions to serve the needs of the regional community. Additional staff are needed today simply to keep up with immediate needs and projected short-term programmatic growth.

In addition to the staff needed today, WMA will need to add additional staffers prior to opening day of a new, larger facility.

In order to achieve future desired visitation, participation and revenue goals outlined in the previous section of this report, additional staff will be needed to operate a larger facility, as well as to deliver additional mission and strategic plan-driven programs and initiatives. Thus a strategic investment in higher staffing levels is key to meeting the Museum's programmatic goals and operational needs.



Future Staffing Levels Needed

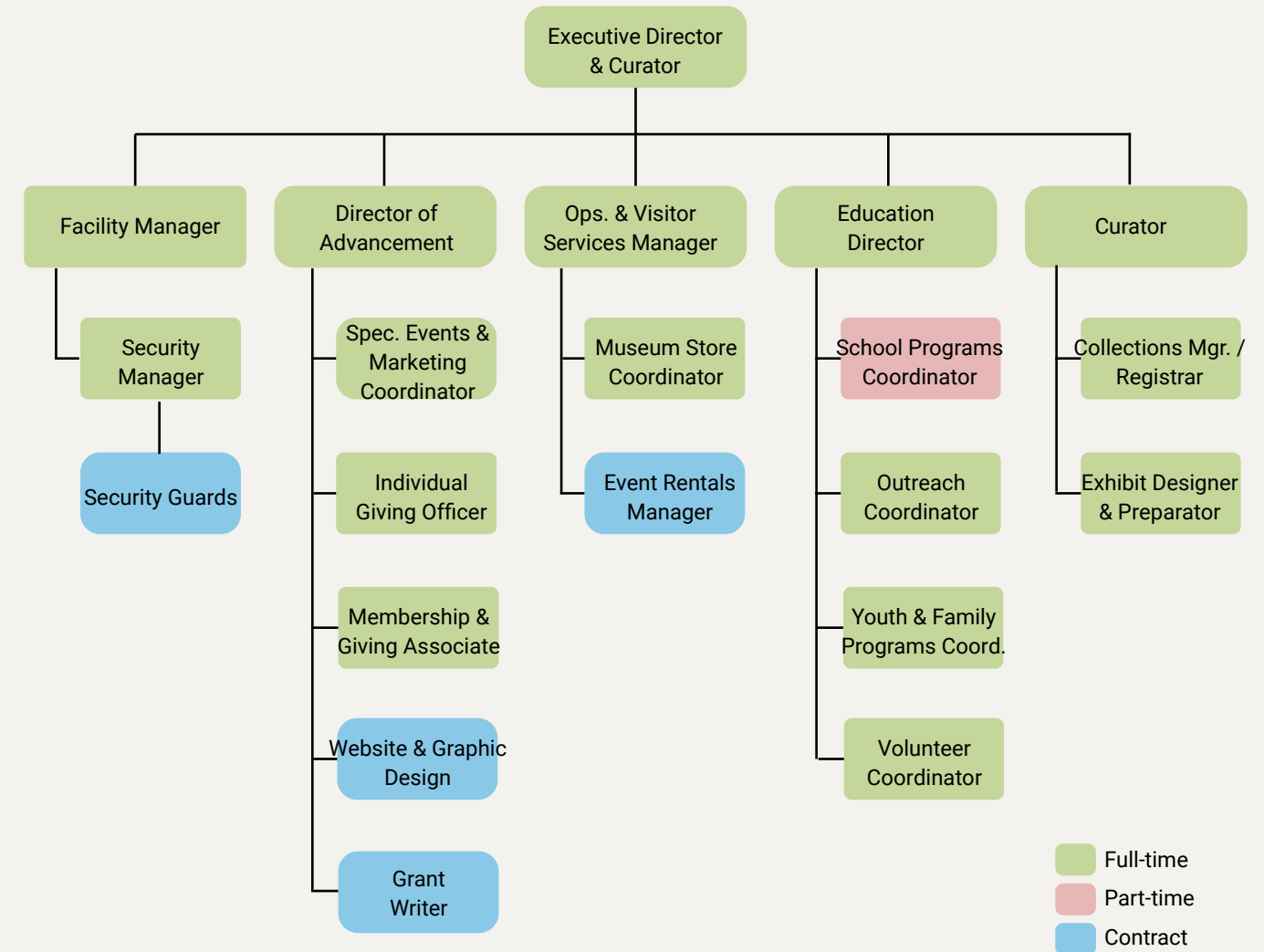
Working with the Museum's staff and leadership, we created the following projections outlining the staff needed to support existing and short-term programmatic growth, as well as the staff needed to support the operations of a larger museum facility in the future.

	Existing	Needed Now	Opening Day
Total Full-Time	7 FT	8 FT	13 FT
Total Part-Time	1 PT	5 PT	1 PT

The Museum today requires an additional two full-time and three part-time staffers to implement modest programming expansion and sustain operations.

In a new, larger facility, the Museum will require an additional five full-time staffers, while reducing the total number of part-time staff to one employee..

We note that while adding these staff positions would result in a 33% increase of existing full-time staff in the short-term, and a 62% increase of full-time staff in a new facility, the resulting total 13 full-time staff will still be four staff short of the peer average. This indicates that, while an increase in staffing is needed, staff growth projections have been made judiciously and realistically to manage the Museum's overall budget and percentage of budget allocated to staffing.



Space Planning Guidelines

Using the six primary drivers for the Museum's future space use as a starting point, we developed a core set of space allocation planning guidelines to achieve the desired long-term programmatic and operational outcomes.

- 1 Incorporate professional-grade back-of-house, security and support spaces**
Ensure the Museum facility meets accreditation standards, and empower the hiring and retention of experienced, professional staff.
- 2 More than double the amount of publicly accessible space**
Extend the average visit duration and significantly increasing overall visitation capacity by increasing publicly-accessible gross square and making over 60% of the building available to visitors.
- 3 Create welcoming and amenity-supported entry areas**
Support the museum's ability to generate earned revenue, and reinforce the Museum's identity as a welcoming, social gathering space.
- 4 Double the total gallery square footage**
Provide sufficient space for large-scale temporary and permanent exhibitions, while increasing the percentage of the overall museum allocated to galleries to meet peer averages.
- 5 More than triple education classroom square footage**
Significantly increase WMA's capacity to serve families, adults, and pre-K, K-12, and college-level students.
- 6 Quadruple collection storage square footage**
Provide new opportunities to grow the collection, increase scholarship, and generate new exhibitions that highlight the collection's unique strengths.
- 7 Right-size the dedicated special events square footage**
Appropriately scale events spaces to meet functional needs and demand. Maximize the return on space allocation and capital investment by offering additional opportunities for flexible use for non-dedicated event spaces (e.g. lobby and site).

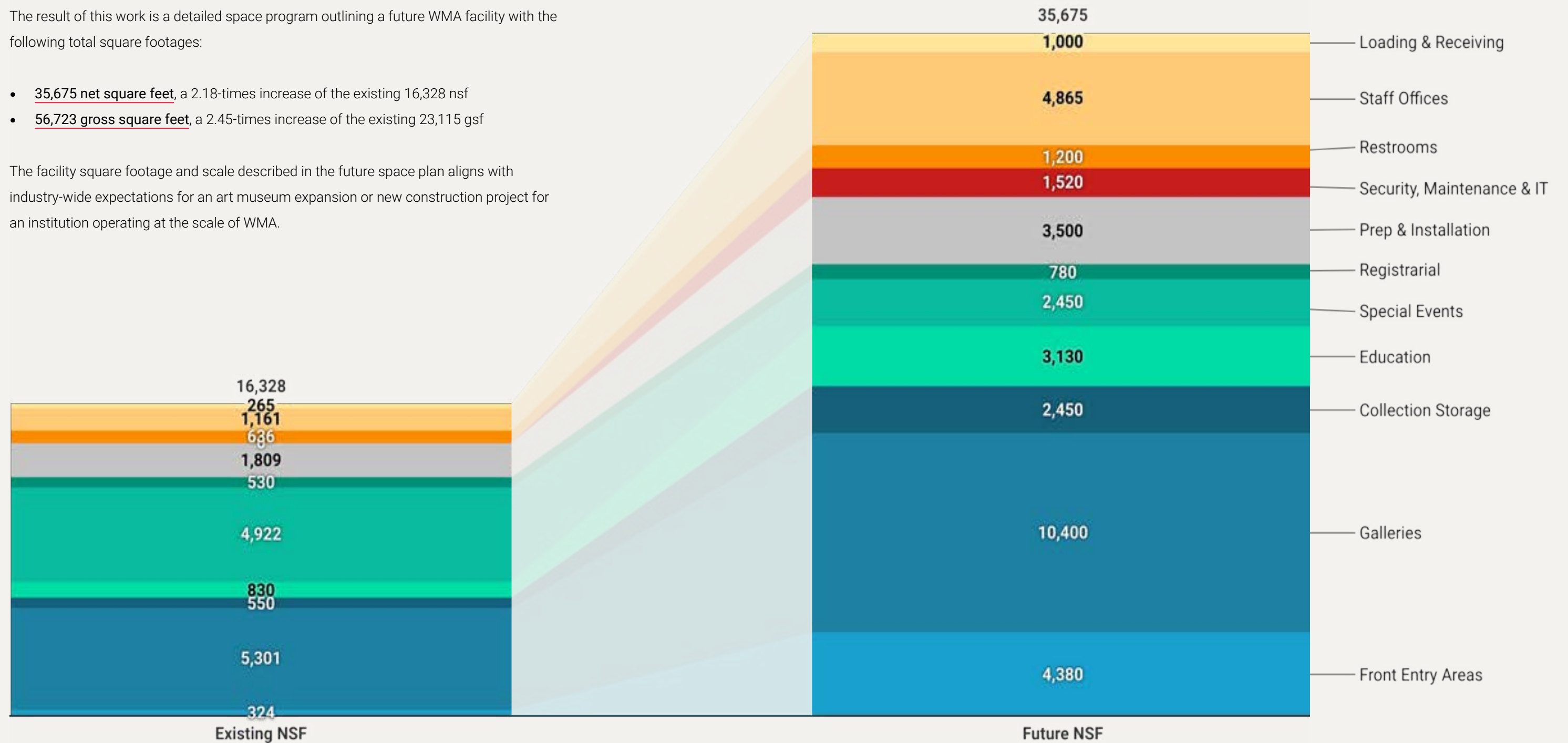
Space Needs Summary

Working with Museum staff to apply these core considerations on a space by space basis, MGMP developed a list of every future WMA interior space.

The result of this work is a detailed space program outlining a future WMA facility with the following total square footages:

- **35,675 net square feet**, a 2.18-times increase of the existing 16,328 nsf
- **56,723 gross square feet**, a 2.45-times increase of the existing 23,115 gsf

The facility square footage and scale described in the future space plan aligns with industry-wide expectations for an art museum expansion or new construction project for an institution operating at the scale of WMA.



Adjacencies

After working with the WMA staff to identify future space types and square footages needed in a new facility, MGMP had additional discussions with staff regarding the desired future physical adjacencies of each interior space.

The adjacency plan developed by MGMP locates the majority of non-gallery, public-accessible space on the Museum’s ground floor. This includes the front entry lobby and amenities, multi-purpose events space and education areas. Back-of-house support spaces, such as the loading dock, security control room and carpentry workshop are also located on the first floor.

Because accreditation and museum best practices suggest that water intrusion is a primary hazard to art and collection objects, the Museum’s galleries and collection storages, along with art-handling areas, are optimally located on a floor higher than the ground level.

Staff offices are located on a third floor to create more-efficient space use and lower construction costs.

Floor 1

Carpentry & Prep Back-of-House

Secure Loading & Receiving

Events Back-of-House Support

Education Classrooms & Offices

Community / Teaching Artists Gallery

Multi-Purpose Event Space

Education Drop-In Space

Museum Retail

Entry Lobby

Museum Café

Floor 2

Collections & Exhibitions Support

Temporary Exhibitions Gallery

Collections Storage

Works On Paper Storage

Permanent Collections Gallery - Small Rotating

Permanent Collections Gallery - Large Rotating

Permanent Collections Gallery

Gallery Floor Lobby

Floor 3

Staff Offices & Support

Site Needs

The Museum's future site requires the following features and corresponding square footage allocations.

Area	SF
Building footprint	25,000
Entry / Arrival courtyard	5,000
Education areas	1,200
Family play area	1,000
Loading dock drive	700
Identity sculpture installation	900
Special events area	6,000
General visitor parking	8,850
Staff parking	4,425
Volunteer parking	1,475
Long-term expansion area	22,500
	77,050
	or 1.76 acres

The Museum site should be a minimum of 2 acres, with a 2.5-acre site or larger preferred.

With a two-acre site, core requirements and parking needs will occupy the bulk of the parcel, leaving only 10,000 sf for setbacks and circulation. With a 2.5-acre site, the Museum would retain approximately 31,000 gsf for site circulation and additional use.

If the Museum wishes to incorporate a sculpture park component significant additional acreage (i.e. a minimum of two additional acres) will be needed.



Space Plan Impacts

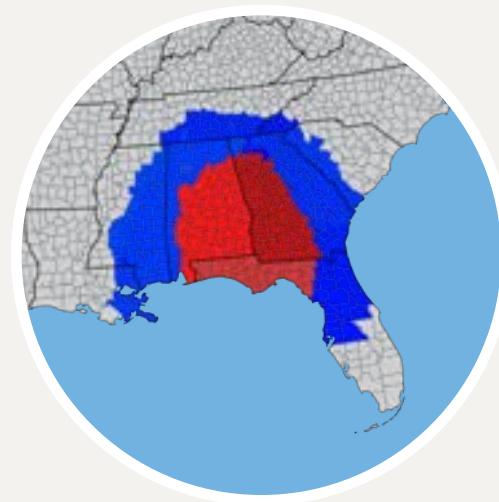


Create a major regional destination for world-class art experiences, and an anchor institution for downtown Dothan

Achieve 56,000 visitors each year. Create event, food service and retail amenities that create a gathering and social space for residents & visitors.



Double the tourism economic benefit to the City of Dothan
Increase WMA's tourism-related economic impact to over \$3.5 M annually



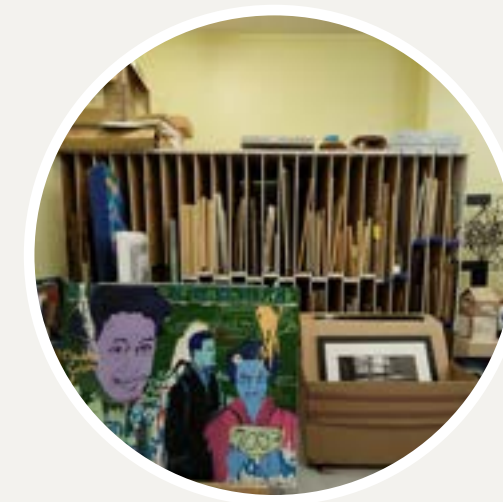
Extend the visitor radius to 300 miles

Extend the typical visit duration from 45 minutes to 2 hours by doubling the amount of publicly-accessible space, and presenting large-scale temporary exhibitions that draw visitors from farther away.



Expand the reach and impact of museum art education programming

Increase the capacity to serve K-12 students visiting annually on field trips and tours with city, county, private and home schools to 10,350 students. Provide drop-in education areas that encourage use by local families



Activate and grow the collection

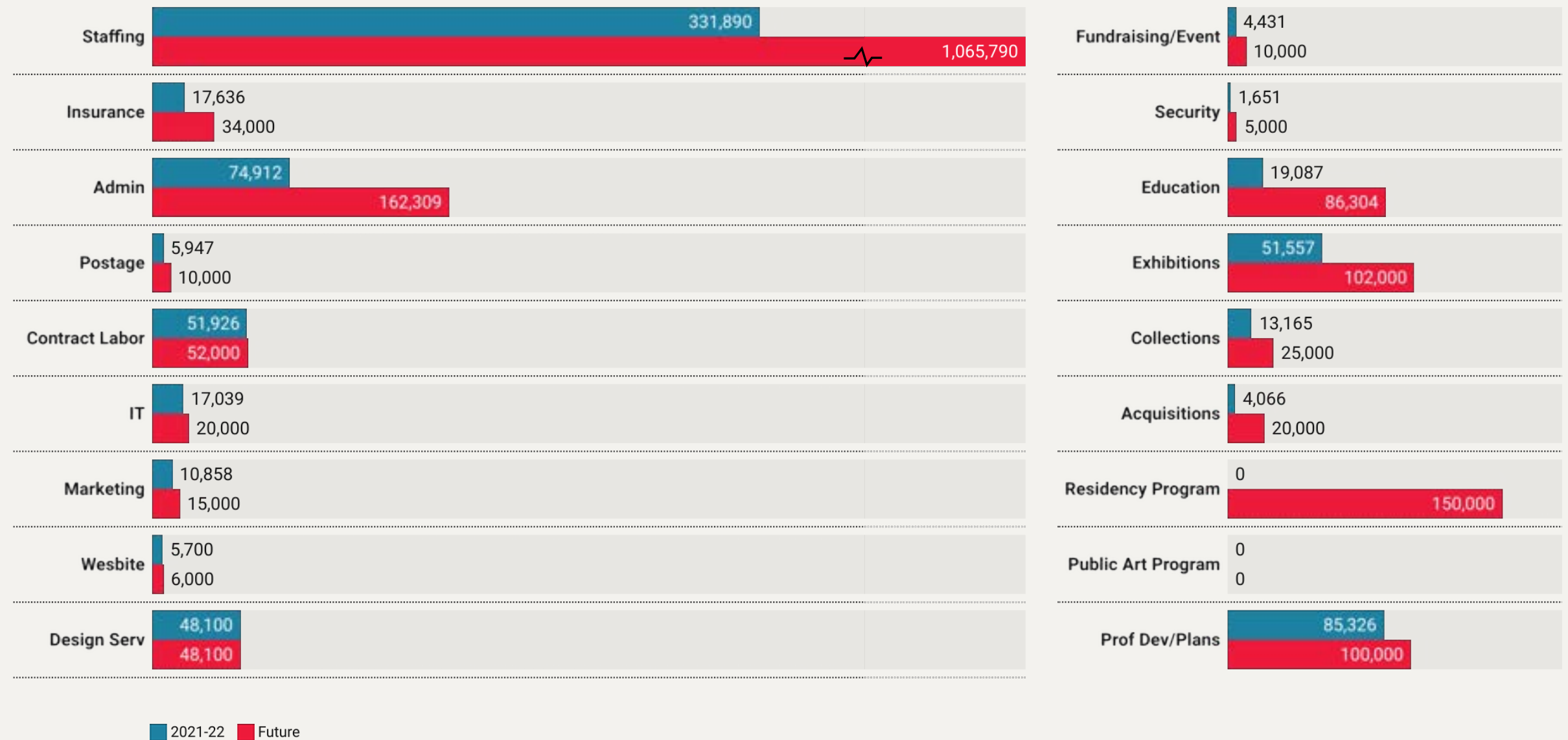
Provide larger galleries to showcase the collection and build narratives that connect people to creativity. Position the museum as an attractive destination for art from regional collections, especially Works On Paper and Southern Vernacular art

Financial Impacts

Future Annual Operating Expenses

The Museum's total operating expenses in a new, 56,723 gsf facility are projected to be **\$1.91 M.**

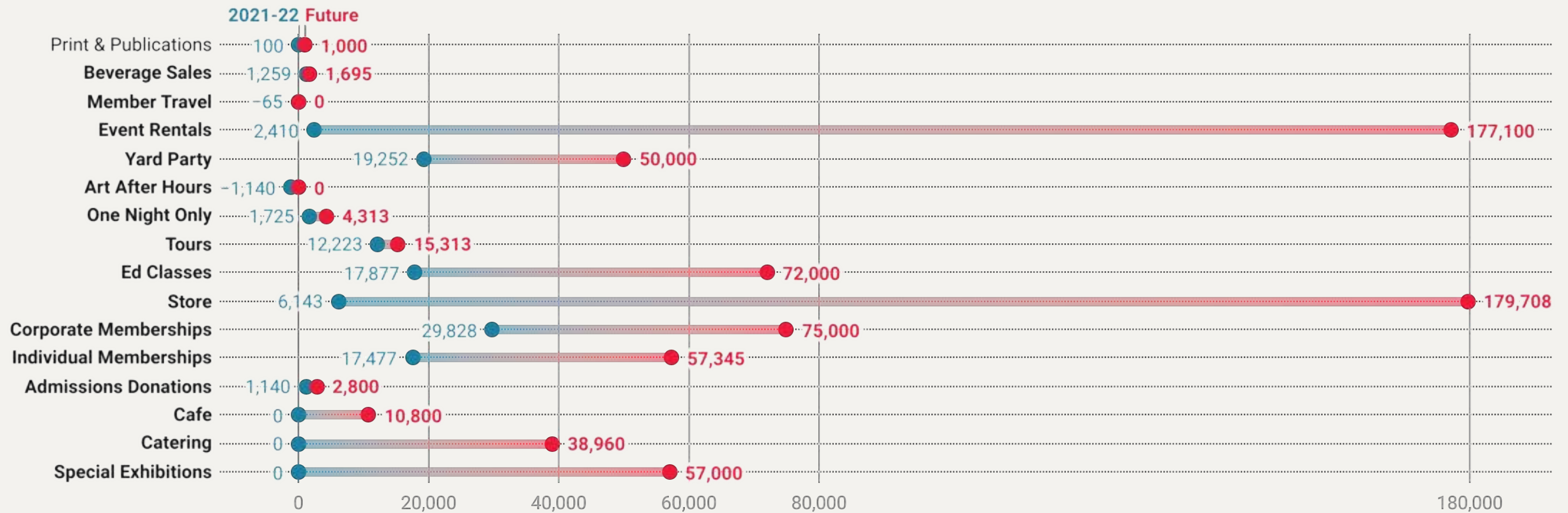
This represents a 160% increase from 2021-2022 annual operating expenses of \$743,291, with the bulk of the increase in expenses coming from increased staffing levels.



Financial Impacts Earned Revenue Comparison

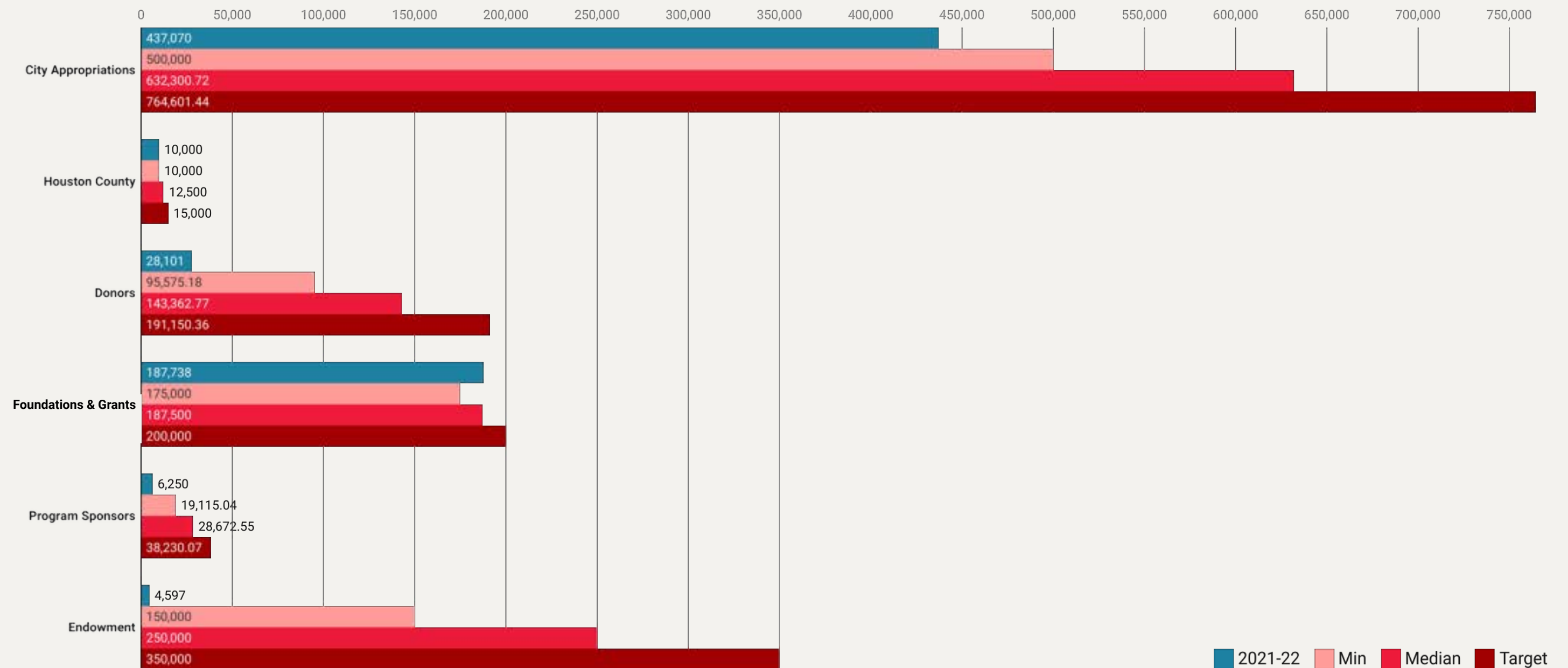
In 2021, WMA's total annual revenue, only \$108,229, or 13.5%, is earned revenue. The recommended facility plan incorporates a business and operating model that seeks to generate additional earned revenue.

The result is a projection of \$743,032 in earned revenue, representing nearly 40% of the Museum's operating budget, and a significant increase from the \$108,229, or 13.5% of operating expenses, earned in 2021-22.



Financial Impacts Contributed Income

Due to staffing increases in the Advancement department, the Museum's prospects for securing contributed income will be greatly improved, notably from individual donors and program sponsors. Incorporating an endowment component in a future capital campaign will provide the Museum with greater long-term financial security.



Financial Impacts Summary

Total operating expenses are expecting to increase significantly, from \$743,201 in 2021-22 to \$1.91 M in a new facility.

Increased operating costs are primarily a function of increased staffing levels, as well as the costs associated with operating a much-larger facility.

If the Museum is able to achieve median or target goals for contributed and earned revenue, WMA will be able to operate with a small margin of profitability:

- Net profit from reaching target revenue goals: \$390,511
- Net profit from reaching median revenue goals: \$85,865

However, if the Museum is only able to achieve minimum or baseline levels of performance, it will likely operate at a deficit of as much as \$218,781.

In order to reach median or target revenue goals, the Museum will need to be appropriately staffed to deliver programming, fundraise and provide a high-quality visitor experience. Similarly, the Museum’s facility will need to be built to achieve AAM accreditation, and incorporate the revenue-producing areas and desired adjacencies required to maximize earned revenue.



Feasibility Assessment

The City Dothan has initiated a conceptual study for a downtown revitalization project for the area encompassing and surrounding the Dothan Civic Center.

A major feature of the proposed project is the creation of a Wiregrass Arts and Innovation Center, which has been suggested by the City as the future home of the Wiregrass Museum of Art. The Arts and Innovation Center will be located within the rectangular form of the existing Civic Center building, which will be adaptively reused and renovated.

The purpose of this feasibility assessment is not only to determine whether the proposed WMA will “fit” into the proposed re-envisioned Civic Center / Wiregrass Arts and Innovation Center. MGMP also worked to explore possibilities of modifying the existing RDG and City concept to incorporate the Museum’s accreditation, programmatic and operational requirements.

This assessment reflects several core assumptions:

- **Accreditation**
The City and RDG design team are committed to supporting WMA’s accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums. Any construction, building system and operational requirements for accreditation will be incorporated into a future facility design program.
- **Project Costs**
Costs associated with the design and development of the project were not available and are therefore not factored into our feasibility work.
- **Work In Progress**
The design concept as shared with the Museum and MGMP has yet to be finalized. Plans, graphics and other materials included in this assessment are assumed to be in-process, draft documents that are subject to change.



Feasibility Assessment Square Footage

The Wiregrass Arts and Innovation Center represents three distinct yet connected sections:

- **The core Museum facility, part of the existing Civic Center building**
13,824 gsf on Floor 2, 6,900 gsf on Floor 1 (collection storage and “gallery” space), plus 5,767 gsf of “shared” education space
- **The black box theater and back-of-house support areas, a new construction project**
Approximately 10,800 gsf per floor, or 21,600 gsf across two floors
- **The shared atrium, part of the existing Civic Center building**
6,048 gsf per floor, or 12,096 gsf across two floors

A core planning mandate of this project is to maximize the efficiency of available square footage and limit costs associated with new construction by “sharing” space between these three core functions, including:

- Atrium circulation and access to the Museum, black box theater and Arena
- Loading and receiving for the Museum and black box theater
- Education classrooms for the Museum, potentially shared with other community organizations
- Meeting, rehearsal and convocation space for the black box theater, the Museum and other community organizations
- The black box theater itself, which could potentially be used by SEACT, the Museum and other community organizations



Feasibility Assessment Square Footage

The total space under direct and sole Museum control is estimated at approximately **20,924 gsf**.

The Atrium has been offered for shared use by the Museum, but the Museum will likely not have full programming and security control of this space as currently envisioned. Similarly, the black box theater and new construction spaces will not be under full Museum control, with the possible exception of the new loading dock interior.

The projected space needs for a future WMA facility as outlined in this report is 56,723 gsf, or 35,675 nsf. The facility option proposed by the City and RDG is estimated at 20,924 gsf, or approximately 13,159 nsf, calculated using a grossing factor of 1.59 x net = gross.

If these future space needs are applied to the proposed Museum-controlled space in the Wiregrass Arts and Innovation Center, the result is a **net deficit of 35,799 gsf or 22,515 nsf** from the projected future space need.

In this scenario, additional square footage will be needed to meet the Museum's future space, functional, programmatic, operational and business plan needs.

The existing WMA facility represents a total of 23,115 gsf, or 16,328 nsf. Locating the future Museum within the RDG and City-proposed facility results in a **net deficit of 2,191 gsf or 1,377 nsf**, from the existing WMA facility.

While the modest increase in facility square footage may appear to be a positive outcome for the Museum, additional factors may inhibit, and in some cases prohibit, the successful design and use of the facility to meet its operational goals.



Feasibility Assessment

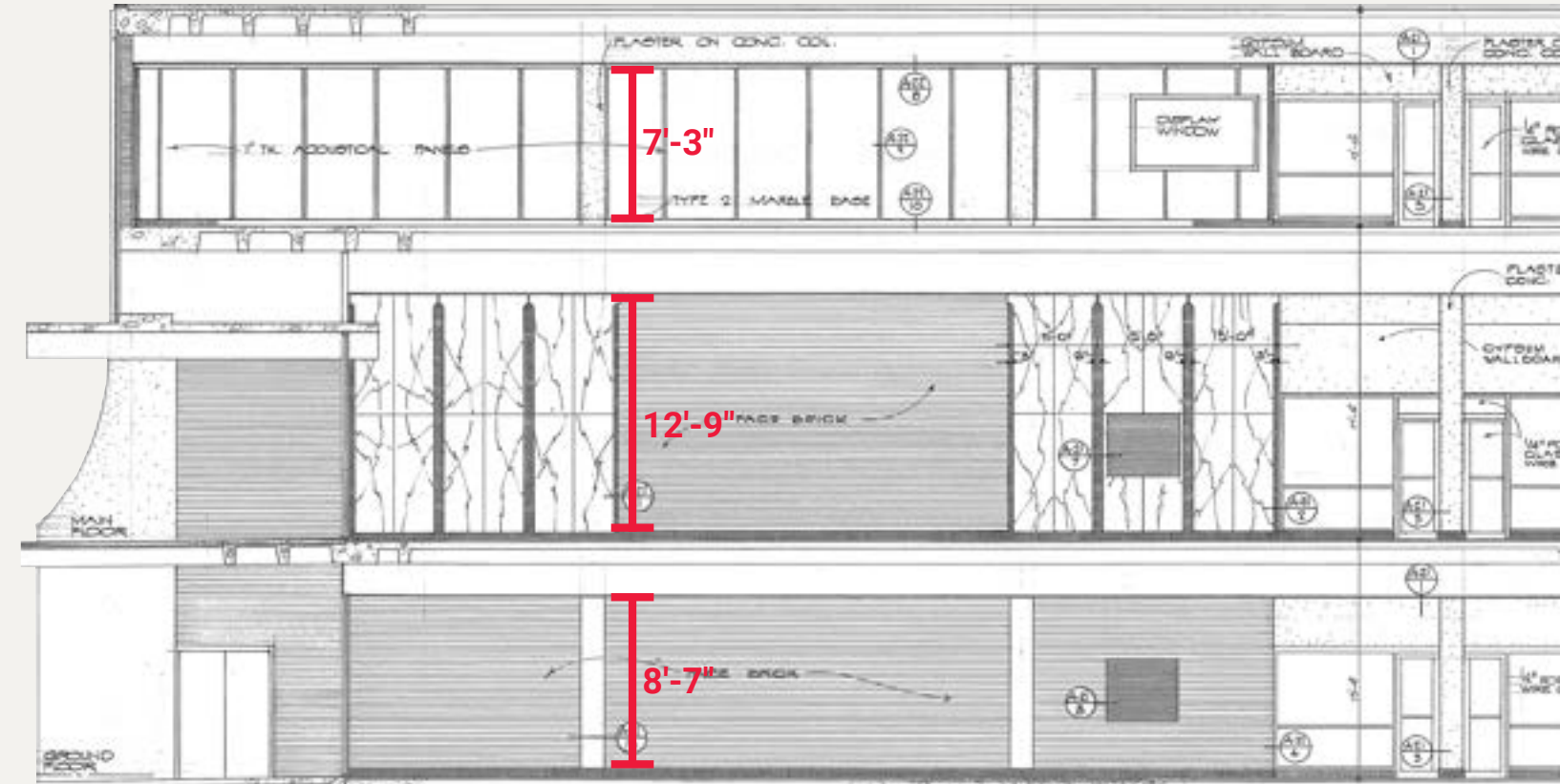
Ceiling Heights | Column Grid

The clear-span ceiling heights available within the building are significantly lower than the Museum’s requirements for functionality and to achieve accreditation, especially for gallery and art display areas.

For some spaces, such as the entry lobby, amenity spaces and event areas, high ceilings encourage visitation and position the museum as a social gathering space, encourage their use for large-scale, museum-generated events and programs, and offering greater potential for facility rentals to outside parties.

For art display and installation, storage and handling spaces, high ceilings are baseline requirements for accreditation. Accreditation also requires that the Museum must be able to move a 12’x12’x12’ art object or crate securely from the loading dock to art handling and gallery spaces.

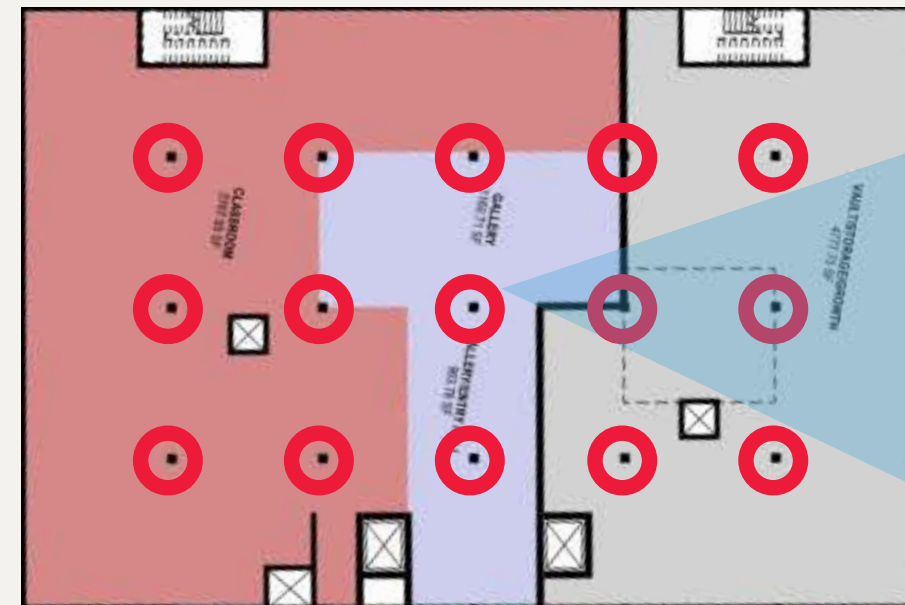
The building program developed for this report projects an estimated 21,100 nsf of high-ceilinged spaces.



Within the envelope proposed for occupancy by the Museum are 15 structural columns, spaced evenly at 24’ intervals, which are core components of the existing building’s structural support system.

The presence and inflexibility of the column grid has significant impacts to the Museum’s space use. While the existing WMA facility’s gallery spaces are significantly hampered by their layouts, the existing column grid may have a similar impact on the Museum’s ability to successfully deliver exhibitions and art experiences to visitors.

Of the 57,623 gsf cited as a future space need for the Museum, approximately 31,880 gsf, or 20,050 nsf, is optimally designed as column-free space.



Feasibility Assessment Site Use

The current RDG design concept proposes a 70,000 sf exterior program area, the Porter Park Connection & Events Plaza.

The Museum currently has approximately 87,000 sf available for exterior and site-based education and event programming. Although the proposed Porter Park Connection & Events Plaza represents a reduction in usable exterior space, it may be utilized to support the Museum's occasional large-scale exterior events, like Yard Party for Art and Pumpkin Patch.

However, the current concept does not allocate any dedicated exterior space for the Museum's regular site-based education classes, programs and workshops. These spaces are essential to the success of the Museum's education and public programs.

Additionally the Museum and City may wish for the Museum to have a limited site-based sculpture program. We recommend the Museum engage with the City and RDG to identify potential locations for future site-based sculpture installations early in the design process.



Feasibility Assessment Expansion Potential | Façade Design

The current concept does not indicate whether long-term expansion is possible given the proposed location of the Museum.

Museums at the scale of WMA typically expand in 20 to 25-year cycles. Thus, the Museum will likely need to expand its physical facility again as it experiences continued growth and success.

Long-term expansion will be especially important if the Museum's proposed new home in the Wiregrass Arts and Innovation Center does not provide the full square footage recommended for the next stage of its development.

The design of the Wiregrass Arts and Innovation Center, especially the design of the Museum's exterior façade, is an essential feature to a successful WMA identity and marketing program.

The current design concept does not incorporate a design aesthetic commensurate with WMA's typology as a contemporary art museum. While the project is still early in the design process, we note that employing a façade design that reinforces the Museum as a contemporary, social place for art experiences and creativity should be a baseline requirement for any future facility design program.



Feasibility Assessment

Financial Impacts

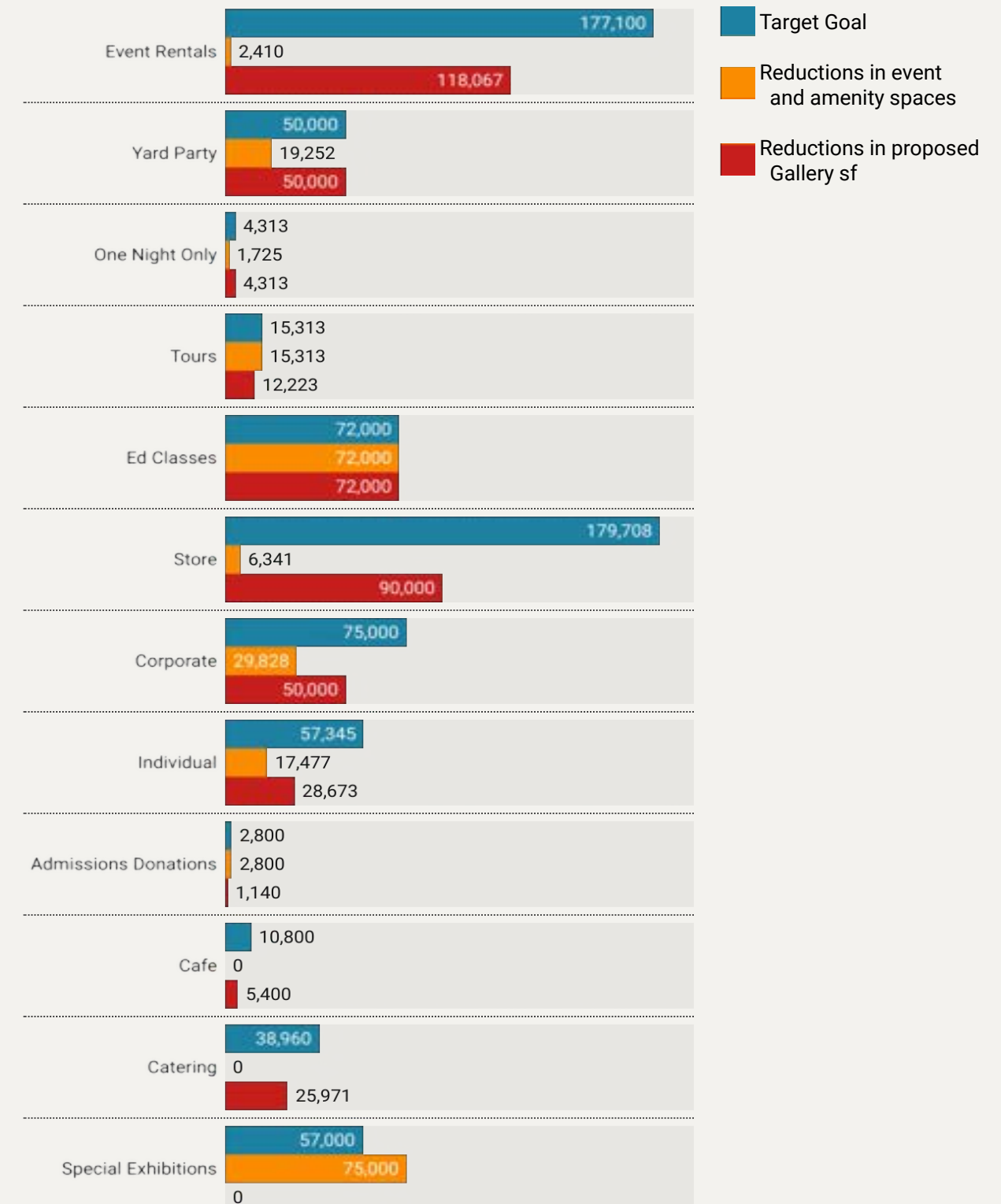
Reductions in target square footage and publicly-accessible space, a facility design that is inconsistent with the Museum’s desired identity and public image as a social gathering space and contemporary art museum, and any restrictions to public access will have significant impacts on the visitation projections developed from the proposed space program.

Shared use or access to program-delivery spaces typically allocated to a museum entity, such as the lobby, education and event spaces, further diminishes the Museum’s visible impact on and service to the community, and will have similar impacts on projected visitation levels.

If the Museum occupies only the estimated 20,924 gsf allocated within the current design concept, it is likely that the Museum will receive visitation on par with current levels, or 28,000 annual visitors.

While the Museum does not, and will not, charge for regular admission, the future space plan seeks to maximize revenue from in-person visitation, especially via retail and café sales.

The net result of reductions in retail, food service, special events and gallery square footage and, thus, revenue-producing capacities, is to retain, or possibly worsen, the Museum’s existing financial conditions. Because WMA already operates with a significantly lower operating budget than peer institutions studied, this condition would effectively stagnate or reverse the Museum’s programmatic growth, and thus its impact.



Feasibility Assessment Conclusions & Recommendations

While the current, as-drawn concept does not meet the criteria to develop a successful, accreditable art museum within the parameters outlined in this report, we note that there are avenues for mitigating some of, if not all, the negative impacts identified in this assessment.

We propose the following set of recommendations and considerations for the Museum's leadership, the City and RDG to discuss as the project continues to take shape.

- Maximize the full height of the building by selectively removing floor level portions to create the ceiling heights necessary to support Museum programs and activities
- Reconsider and relocate the Museum's primary visitor entry to outside of the shared atrium, to reinforce its identity as a standalone entity, promote visitor access and maintain perimeter security control
- Explore the possibility of reconfiguring or expanding the new construction footprint to accommodate column-free, high-ceilinged and climate-controlled Museum spaces
- Identify exterior program areas that can be dedicated for the regular delivery of Museum-generated education and event offerings
- Identify potential long-term expansion area(s)
- Incorporate façade design approaches consistent with the Museum's identity as a contemporary art museum





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