



**THE CHARLES H. WRIGHT
MUSEUM OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN HISTORY**




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THEWRIGHT.ORG

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mary Waters, Council Member At-Large

FROM: Neil A. Barclay, J.D., President and CEO 

DATE: March 21, 2023

RE: 2023-2024 Budget Hearing-Charles H. Wright Museum

Attached are the written responses to the questions you submitted following the budget hearing for the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

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RESPONSES TO 2023-2024 BUDGET ANALYSIS ISSUES/QUESTIONS

1. What plans has the MAAH put into place to increase membership for the museum?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

The museum has increased its membership marketing and outreach efforts. Membership drives have been going on all over the city with churches, community groups, and social clubs. Corporate membership programs make it easy for organizations to make membership at The Wright an employee benefit. The African World Festival has become our largest membership drive. Admission to the festival is free for members. With an admission cost of \$15 per day it is more economical for people to become members of the museum and enjoy free admission for the festival and 1 year free admission to the museum.

2. What are some of the grants that the museum applied for, and to date have the MAAH have received any funding and if so, what?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 2

Below is a list of several of the six-figure general operating support and programmatic grants that the museum has secured since 2020-2021 to date. Some of these are multi-year grants where disbursements are received over two to three years.

Ford Foundation – Act	\$350,000
Ralph Wilson Foundation General Operations Support	\$300,000
DTE Energy Foundation General Operations Support	\$100,000
Fifth Third Bank - Youth And Family Program Support	\$100,000
General Motors Corporation-Theater Renovations	\$550,000
Fisher Foundation - Camp Africa Program Support	\$250,000
Kresge Foundation – Detroit Art Support General Operating Funds	\$335,000
Hudson Webber Foundation - Detroit Art Support General Operating Funds	\$325,000
	\$2,310,000.00



3. Approximately, how many guest, visit the MAAH on quarterly?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 3

The number of guests that visited the museum in the past quarter was 13,317. 2023 marks a return to normalcy for many as they begin frequenting public places with confidence. However, we know that COVID remains a real threat to public safety and The Wright continues to recommend COVID protocols be observed and capacity limits to ensure a safe experience for our visitors.

4. How many exhibitions are held at the Museum of African American History on yearly basis?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 4

The number of Exhibitions will vary from year to year. This year we will have 9 exhibitions on view.

5. From the exhibitions, what will be the approximate revenues from the exhibits?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 5

Exhibitions at The Wright are selected based on their educational merit occasionally we will have an exhibition that due to the cost and public appeal, warrants the charge of a special admission fee to offset the cost and raise additional revenue. The King Tut exhibit required additional security and handling fees however, the timeless appeal of Egypt drew people back to the museum in 2022 increasing our exhibition admission revenue by more than \$330k over the previous fiscal year.

6. Within the near future, what are their plans to expand the museum and if so, and what is the projected cost?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 6

As part of the Cultural Center Initiative, led by Midtown Detroit, the museum has explored the expansion of the museum which would require that we raise an



estimated \$85 million over the next 10 years. Although we are reviewing expansion and technology upgrade plans, we must focus on the repairs to the building and its systems, that, due to years of deferred maintenance, will cost \$20 million over the next 5 years. Please note that this is \$20 million in funding on a building that the museum does not own. As you are aware the building belongs to the City of Detroit.

7. Recently, has the museum completed any upgrades or renovations and what was the cost associated with these renovations?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 7

In late 2021 The Charles H. Wright Museum with the City of Detroit's blessing began what is a four-year project of overhauling the museum's failing HVAC mechanical system. This project is ongoing and will end around the 2nd quarter of 2025. With an estimated overall cost of \$8.5m. To date the city has contributed about \$3m. Additional major capital projects scheduled for the FY24 are estimated to cost \$10m. They include:

- Complete Overhaul /Replacement of the Passenger Elevator
- Upgrades to the Freight Elevator
- Replacement of Failing Exterior Vertical, Directional Lighting
- Museum Grounds
- GM Theater Upgrades
- Repair of Structural Damage to the Wright's classrooms
- Repair of Structural Damage to the Wright's Orientation Theater.

We have been advised that repair to structural damage to the building should be addressed as expeditiously as possible to avoid further deterioration of the buildings core structural envelope.



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8. What is the plan to bring more revenue into the MAAH?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 8

The Wright, in partnership with the Detroit Historical Society, is pursuing a millage in Wayne and Oakland Counties to secure a 10-year millage that will provide transformational funding for both organizations.

9. What are the current Capital Improvement Projects for the MAAH?

RESPONSE TO QUESTION 9

See Response to Question 7