

THE BUFFALO HISTORY MUSEUM

2024

Annual Report





Our Mission

Experiencing history with you, by safekeeping, remembering, discovering, and sharing our stories; learning and exploring together; sparking emotional and social connections within our unique community.

Dear Members and Friends,

As we mark the midpoint of our ten-year Master Plan, I find myself filled with both gratitude and wonder. Gratitude for all that we've accomplished together over the past five years — and wonder at the possibilities that lie ahead.

When we first launched the Master Plan in 2019, none of us could have predicted how soon the world would shift beneath our feet. A global pandemic tested institutions everywhere, and The Buffalo History Museum was no exception. Yet through it all, your unwavering support, generosity, and belief in our mission carried us forward. Because of you, we not only endured — we found new ways to serve, to connect, and to imagine what a history museum can be.

Even amid profound uncertainty, we fulfilled the ambitious goals that felt bold then — and feel even more meaningful now. Together, we restored beloved spaces in our historic building, broadened our educational and digital offerings to reach more learners of every age, and deepened our commitment to sharing the full, diverse story of our region. Our exhibitions and programs invited reflection, dialogue, and joy — all at a time when connection felt more essential than ever.

These milestones aren't just checkboxes on a plan — they are love letters in their own right: tributes to your resilience, your vision, and the heart you bring to this Museum.

As we look to the next five years, our vision grows bolder still. We are preparing to reimagine more of our campus, elevate the visitor experience, and continue to center the stories that have historically been excluded. We're grounding ourselves in the belief that history is not just about what was, but about what's possible.

This next chapter is about deepening our roots and broadening our reach — creating a Museum that reflects the richness of our shared heritage and stands ready to welcome the generations to come.

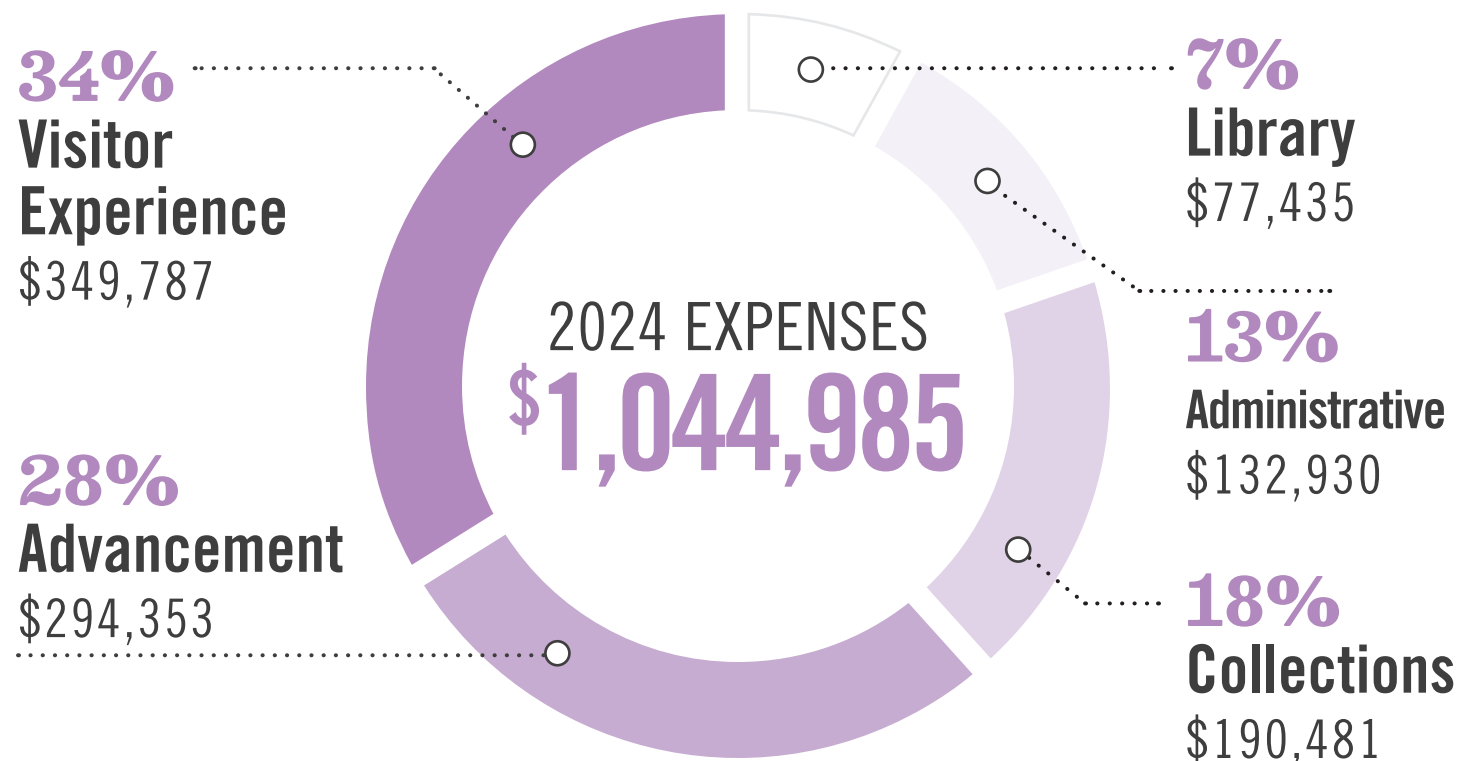
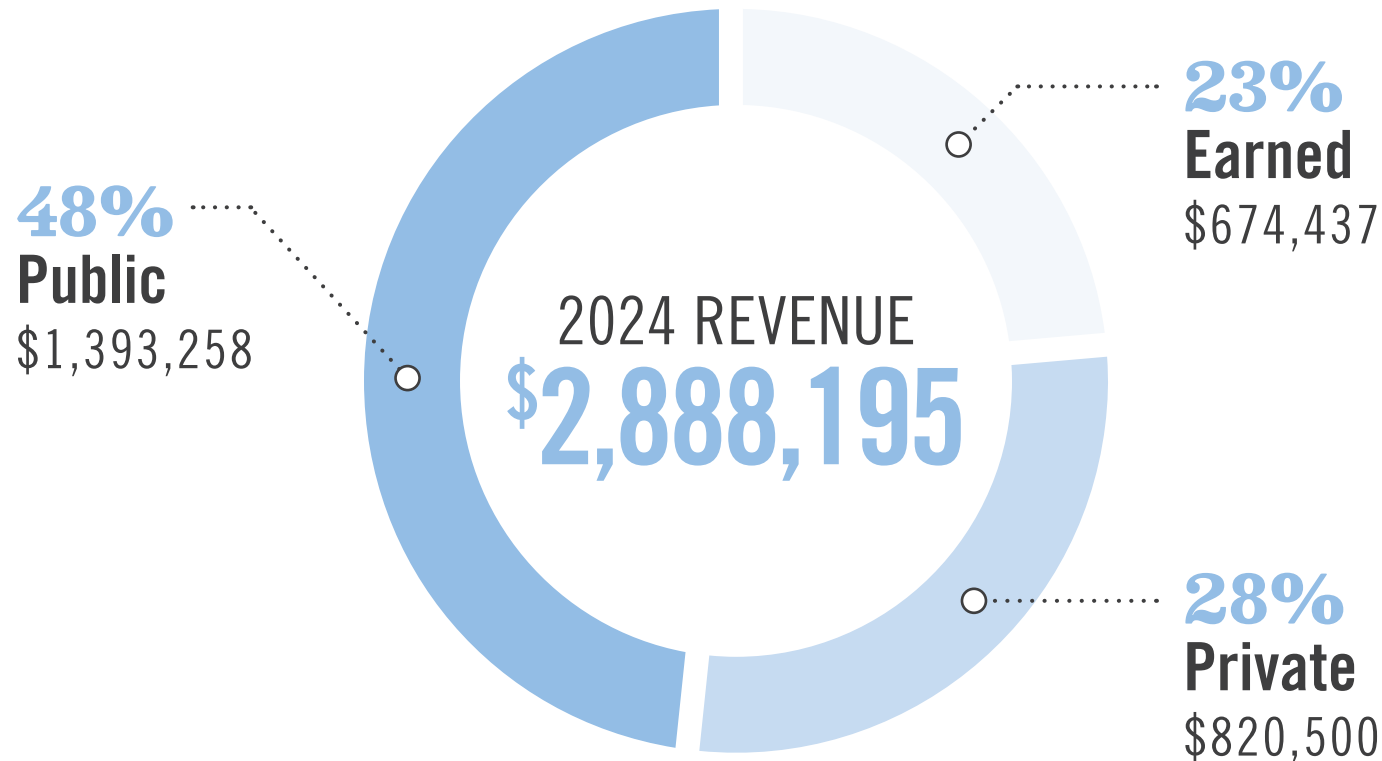
Thank you for walking with us — through the challenges, the changes, and the moments of joy. Your belief in this Museum, and in the power of history to bring people together, is what makes all of this possible. Because of you, we've done more than we imagined. And with you beside us, the best is still ahead.



Warmly,

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, The Buffalo History Museum

Financials



By the Numbers

162
years in operation

917
members

23
employees

16
docents

500,000+
items in our collection

40,000
guests annually

300+
guests given guided tours

65,000+
Buffalo History Museum Podcast downloads



2,085
students in 2024 visited us on field trips



3,019
people in 2024 experienced our programming



34
local merchants available in our gift shop

Community Impact & Partnerships

Deepening Roots and Expanding our Reach

In 2024 the Museum welcomed nearly double the number of events with local community partners and mission-aligned organizations. While maintaining accessibility to our spaces, we strengthened our existing relationships within the community and welcomed several new faces as well.

We look forward to continuing to be a welcoming venue for the community to gather, being a resource for our partners, increasing our outreach and visibility, and utilizing the Museum in new and exciting ways.

Community Partners Hosted

- Buffalo African American Museum
- Colored Musicians Club
- Asian Pacific American Public Affairs (APAPA)
- Erie County
- Buffalo Public Schools
- Trailblazing Women
- Smithsonian Institution
- Partnership for the Public Good
- Preservation Buffalo Niagara



5/14 Massacre Community Memory Coalition

In the wake of the tragic 5/14 massacre in Buffalo, the 5/14 Massacre Community Memory Coalition has emerged as a powerful force for healing, remembrance, and transformation. In partnership with Rose Jade Consulting Cooperative, the coalition has developed a shared mission, vision, and set of values that center the voices of victims' families and the broader community. Through quarterly retreats, affinity group dialogue, and relationship-building, the coalition is not only confronting the roots of white supremacist violence, but also cultivating long-term strategies for cultural change.

One of the coalition's most meaningful initiatives has been the development of a model for shared stewardship. Beginning with the respectful gathering of items from the spontaneous memorial outside Tops in November 2022, this work now includes collecting objects and ephemera that speak to the lived experiences of those impacted by the massacre, and to the broader history of segregation in Buffalo. Students from the Buffalo State Conservation program, in collaboration with collections staff from the Buffalo History Museum, have begun the careful process of archivally housing these materials—ensuring that this history is preserved with care, integrity, and community involvement.

From the creation of a community-wide oral history project to establishing inclusive participation pathways, the coalition is laying the groundwork for a more just and honest future. This work affirms that the 5/14 tragedy was not an isolated act, but a manifestation of deeply rooted injustice—and that remembrance, bearing witness, and collective action are essential steps toward healing.



- Empire State Development
- 5/14 Buffalo Massacre Community Memory Coalition
- Journey's End
- Buffalo Music Hall of Fame
- Preservation Buffalo Niagara
- Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
- Native American Community Services
- Visit Buffalo Niagara
- The Martin House
- New York Immigration Coalition
- Say Yes Buffalo
- FeedMore WNY
- Junior League of Buffalo
- Candles in the S.U.N.

Programming

In addition to our co-sponsored community events, we host unique programming for our community members including our Junior History Buffs series, Memory Café, and many more specialized programs.

Collections

Building a More Inclusive Record

Through thoughtful acquisitions and contemporary collecting, we are shaping a collection that reflects all of Buffalo—past and present.

Preserving Buffalo's Stories: A Year in Collections & Archives

Connecting with the Past—Digitally

More than 8,300 objects from our collection are now available to explore online through our PastPerfect database. From everyday items to rare artifacts, we're opening our archives to the world. We partnered with the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library to expand access to over 170 local newspapers dating back to 1811, now fully searchable online through Newspapers.com.

Collecting Today's History

This year, we continued building collections that reflect our community's diverse stories and lived experiences. New and ongoing initiatives include:

- Chronicling COVID-19
- 5/14 Buffalo Massacre Community Memory Coalition
- The Newlywed Project – the first of its kind in the U.S. to gather memorabilia from legally wed same-sex couples
- Blizzard of 2022, Remembering the Old Pink, and the new Celebrations and Cultural Traditions collection

New Acquisitions

Recent additions to our collection reflect Buffalo's cultural richness and evolving history:

- Local cookbooks, including *Gourmet the Kosher Way* and a 1951 Polish-American recipe book now online at Archive.org
- A rare St. Patrick's Day photo, ca. 1900
- That Brown Bag Directory, a listing of minority-owned local businesses
- *Sojourners and Settlers*, chronicling the Yemeni immigrant experience
- *60 Years of Friendship*, celebrating Buffalo's bond with Kanazawa, Japan
- *Imperial Court of Buffalo Protocol Manual*, documenting the local drag community
- Anniversary materials from Bethel A.M.E. Church and the Afro-American Historical Association

Resource Center

Shaping a Future Rooted in Our Shared History

With 16 decades of collecting, over 500,000 objects in our collection, and 33% of our total budget dedicated to their care, the Resource Center is at the heart of preserving Buffalo's rich history.

We envision a dynamic, accessible Resource Center that brings our full collection to life. Currently, only a fraction of our collections is on display, but with this transformation, we'll make the treasures within the Resource Center accessible to all.

Reimagining our Resource Center, located at 459 Forest Ave, will significantly enhance our capacity to serve the community, drive economic development, and boost cultural tourism by:

- Preserving Our Region's History
- Creating Dynamic Educational Spaces
- Responding to the Demand for Interactive Learning & Visitor Engagement
- Expanding Next-Generation Collecting
- Enhancing Signature Heritage Events

This project is a crucial step in revitalizing Buffalo's heritage and ensuring that history continues to inspire future generations. Together, we can transform the Resource Center into a vibrant, accessible center for discovery—shaping the future of our shared history.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

A New Era for the Resource Center

The Buffalo History Museum is transforming its Resource Center at 459 Forest Avenue into a vibrant hub of discovery and learning. This \$12 million project will enhance our ability to create a shared space for our community to explore Buffalo's past, interact with experts, and deepen visitor's personal connections to local history.

Location & Size

The 40,000-square-foot facility will be redesigned to house the Museum's library and collections, utilizing compact shelving and advanced storage systems for greater capacity and preservation.

Public Access

The new center will feature a larger reading room, scheduled tours, and expanded programs, making it a place where visitors can directly engage with the Museum's collections.



Climate Control & Security

New HVAC systems, fire suppression, and enhanced security will ensure that the collection is preserved in optimal conditions.

Community Support

A Fresh Stage for History and Community

This year, with the incredible support of our donors and partners, our historic auditorium got the spotlight it deserves. Thanks to **Empire State Development**, the **Perry Memorial Fund**, the **Cummings Foundation**, **DASNY** and **Senator Sean Ryan**, and a special gift from **Donald Ferguson**, we raised over \$730,000 to reimagine and refresh this beloved space.

Carmina Wood Design brought a thoughtful architectural vision to life, while RP OakHill kept the project moving as general contractor and project manager. Danforth added something the auditorium had never known before—air conditioning! (And much better heat, too.) With new AV systems by Diversified and updated lighting and electrical from Frey Electric, the space now shines brighter and sounds better than ever. Fresh, welcoming furniture from Millington-Lockwood ties it all together, creating a space as comfortable as it is beautiful.

And the results speak for themselves: not only have we created a more dynamic experience for lectures, performances, and museum events, but the newly renovated auditorium has opened new doors—greatly increasing rental income through partnerships with organizations across the community.

Because of you, our auditorium is more than restored—it's alive, thriving, and ready for whatever stories come next.



Because of you, history isn't something we just remember—it's something we celebrate, share, and bring to life every day.

As member and/or donor, you are part of every moment: every field trip that sparks a young mind, every exhibit that opens a window to the past, every gathering that fills these halls with energy and ideas.

Thank you for believing in the power of stories—and for helping us make sure they're told for generations to come. We're proud to have you as part of our Museum family.

Government and Foundation Support

- The County of Erie
- County Executive Mark Poloncarz
- Senator Sean Ryan
- Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation
- NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- Assemblyman William Conrad
- Children's Foundation of Erie County
- Legislator Michael Kooshoian
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- The Baird Foundation
- The City of Buffalo
- New York State Council on the Arts
- Foundation 214
- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- The Conable Family Foundation
- Humanities New York
- J. Warren Perry and Charles Donald Perry Memorial Fund
- James H. Cummings Foundation
- Linton Foundation
- Give 716
- M&T Bank Charitable Foundation
- Joseph R. Takats Foundation
- Marjorie and John Buyers Foundation Inc.
- Nicholas D. Patterson Perpetual Fund
- Phyllis W. Pierce Family Fund
- The Joseph and Anna Gartner Foundation
- The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation
- The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI)
- The Research Foundation for The State University of New York
- Tower Family Fund, Inc.
- United Way of Buffalo & Erie County
- Vogt Family Foundation
- The Western New York Foundation
- Insero & Co. CPAs, LLP
- Julie Muscato Interiors
- Keenan Communications Group
- Kohler Awning
- Lawley Service, Inc.
- Morgan Stanley Smith Barney, LLC
- Phillips Lytle LLP
- Roswell Park Cancer Institute
- RP Oak Hill
- Schneider Development, LLC
- Stanley Steel Service Co.
- Thermo Fisher Scientific
- Walsh Duffield Companies, Inc.
- Wegmans Food Markets
- West Herr Automotive Group

Corporate Support

- 26 Shirts
- Clinton Brown FAIA
- CCMA, LLC
- Community Beer Works
- Frey Electric Construction Co.
- Hadley Exhibits, Inc.
- Hodgson Russ LLP
- HSBC Bank

We count on hundreds of individual donors that support the Museum through membership and personal philanthropy. To view the full list of our members and donors, please visit our website at: buffalohistory.org

If you would like to learn more, please contact Katie McIntyre, our Director of Advancement, at: kmcintyre@buffalohistory.org

Capital Improvements

Reactivating the Reinstein Center: A New Chapter Ahead



“A historic home reimagined for a vibrant future—where learning, connection, and celebration come together in the heart of our campus.”

We are ready to turn the page. In summer 2025, we will break ground on an ambitious project to restore and reactivate the Reinstein Center—transforming it into a vibrant public space that strengthens our community ties, expands educational opportunities, and supports long-term financial sustainability.

The Reinstein Center has long been part of our campus story—quietly serving behind the scenes since the early 1990s. Originally built in 1920 as the private home and music studio of Leonard Adams, the building has seen decades of change. A 2016 facility study funded by The John R. Oishei Foundation revealed the growing urgency: though just 6,000 square feet, the Reinstein Center accounted for over a quarter of our critical capital needs, with repair costs double that of any other building on our campus.

The project will restore the historic Adams house to State Historic Preservation Office standards, creating an intimate setting for small events and programs for up to 50 guests. A new adjacent structure will thoughtfully connect to the historic home via a universally accessible entrance, tripling the available space and welcoming up to 100 guests for programs, educational activities, and catered events. A ground-floor catering kitchen and support space will serve both the Reinstein Center and our Pan-American Exposition Building, creating new

flexibility for hosting and hospitality.

New pedestrian pathways, restored terraces and gardens, enhanced wayfinding signage, and improved lighting will revitalize the arrival experience, strengthening our connection to the vibrant Olmsted Park and Jesse Kregel Bike Trail.

The impact will be transformational:

- A new indoor space for educational programming, field trip activities, and summer camps.
- Expanded offerings like our Memory Café for individuals with memory loss and their caregivers.
- Enhanced capacity for signature events like the Cherry Blossom Festival and Maker’s Market.
- Substantial increases in Museum revenue through expanded rentals and programming.

Already, we project at least a 15% increase in visitation, along with a doubling of both catering and programming revenue streams. This entrepreneurial project represents a bold step forward—combining historic preservation with a sustainable, community-driven future.

Because of your support, the Reinstein Center will soon be a place where new memories are made, stories are shared, and history continues to inspire.



The Future of the Reinstein Center

PROJECTED GROUNDBREAKING: SUMMER 2025

15%
increase in visitation projected

\$75,000
new annual programming revenue

\$100,000
new annual catering revenue

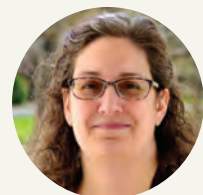
Museum Staff

Museum Leadership



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Melissa Brown

Collections



COLLECTIONS ASSISTANT
Sue Catrona



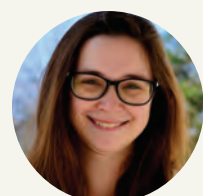
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MUSEUM STUDIES
Michelle Harris



DIRECTOR OF LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Cynthia Van Ness



REGISTRAR AND GRANTS COORDINATOR
Rebecca Justinger

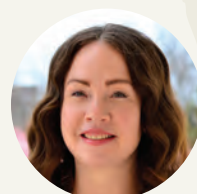


GREG D. TRANTER COLLECTION MANAGER
Kristin Glaspy

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Robin Foley



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & EXECUTIVE MANAGER
Desiree Peacock



GUEST SERVICES & RETAIL MANAGER
Kelsey Reed



CANALSIDE GUEST SERVICE & RETAIL MANAGER
Monica Pearson



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