



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA
556 W MAPLE
Thursday, October 9, 2025
5:00 PM**

Mission Statement: The Birmingham Museum will explore meaningful connections with our past, in order to enrich our community and enhance its character and sustainability. Our mission is to promote understanding of Birmingham's historical and cultural legacy through preservation and interpretation of its ongoing story.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

3. Approval of the Minutes

A. Minutes of August 7, 2025

4. New Business

A. Meeting Schedule for 2026

5. Unfinished Business

A. Museum Board "What's Your Story?" Oral History Project-updates/reports

B. 2026-2028 Strategic Plan Draft Document Review

6. Communication and Reports

A. Director Report-oral

B. Member comments

C. Public comments

7. Next Meeting: November 6

8. Adjournment

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**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD MEETING
556 W. Maple
Thursday, August 7, 2025
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Mike Ableson, Kristy Barrett (Alternate), Kamala Cummings, Alexandra Harris, Eva Kirkman, Marty Logue
Members Absent: None
Student Representative: Mercy Wisecup
Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack
Guests: Robert Moll, Jenny Roush

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by Ms. Logue. An amendment to the agenda was proposed to consider New Business Item "C" before Item "B," in order to accommodate Ms. Barrett's expected early departure from the meeting. Members agreed by consensus to consider Item C before Item B.

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of July 10, 2025**

MOTION: by Ableson, seconded by Kirkman:

To approve the minutes of July 10, 2025.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, 0

New Business

Members relocated to the Hunter House for an interpretive presentation by Museum Specialist Donna Casaceli featuring some of the newly acquired objects funded by the Friends of the Birmingham Museum. The reproduction and use objects have been added to help convey a pioneer-period kitchen and dining experience with sensory experiences (scent, touch, auditory, etc) for both children and adults. LED candlelight will be used to give more appropriate atmosphere and the plan is to tell more stories about daily life and the people of early Birmingham. Ms. Roush will be writing an article for the next issue of the Friends' Heritage.

Members considered the proposal to cancel the September meeting due to the holiday schedule and because the survey will not be completed and the data will not be available.

MOTION: by Ableson, seconded by Harris:

To cancel the September meeting of the Museum Board.

VOTE: Yeas, 6
Nays, 0

During 2026, the museum will be celebrating our local history for America's 250th by participating in two BSD events and tying them into our site.

- **September, 2026, Art Walk** – we will be featuring our Anishnaabek (Great Lakes tribes) basketry collection by known makers from in the Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi traditions. We are pursuing a collaborative exhibit with items from the Leelanau Historical Society's basket collection, and for Art Walk, will have museum staff on hand with demonstration materials to talk about the artistry of the baskets and their long traditions in quill work and split ash and died baskets.
- **April, 2026, Day on the Town**—this family-friendly event that focuses on young children takes place on Saturday and the museum will open the Hunter House and develop a "look and learn" activity for children and their parents to encourage them to find things in each room of the Hunter House with a one-way walk through and fun activity.

Unfinished Business

No updates to the 'What's Your Story' Museum Board project.

Communication and Reports

Director Pielack briefly reviewed the Director's Report. The EGLE permit has not yet come through, making it likely that the RFP for Phases 3 and 4 of the John West Hunter House won't be developed until later this fall or early winter, with possible construction in the spring.

Member Comments

Mr. Ableson asked that the board be able to visit the Hunter House again for another interpretive presentation by Donna Casaceli of another room, which will be planned potentially for the October or November meeting.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 9 , 2025, at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 6:05 PM.



MUSEUM BOARD
 556 WEST MAPLE, BIRMINGHAM, MI
 248.530.1928

**Proposed MEETING SCHEDULE
 2026**

**All Meetings Scheduled for 5:00 PM, first Thursday of the month,
 unless otherwise noted.**

MONTH	DAY	MEETING	LOCATION
January	8	Regular Meeting-ALTERNATE DAY DUE TO HOLIDAY	Birmingham Museum
February	5	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
March	12	Regular Meeting-ALTERNATE DAY DUE TO RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY SCHEDULE	Birmingham Museum
April		NO MEETING DUE TO RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY SCHEDULE	
May	7	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
June	4	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
July	9	Regular Meeting-ALTERNATE DAY DUE TO INDEPENDENCE DAY HOLIDAY	Birmingham Museum
August	6	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
September	10	Regular Meeting-ALTERNATE DAY DUE TO LABOR DAY HOLIDAY	Birmingham Museum
October	1	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
November	5	Regular Meeting	Birmingham Museum
December		NO MEETING DUE TO HOLIDAY SCHEDULE	



City of Birmingham



2026-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN



2026-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN

APPROVAL/ACCEPTANCE

Museum Board Approval
 City Commission Acceptance

November 6, 2025

CONTRIBUTORS

Museum Board Michael Ableson, Kamala Cummings,
 Alexandra Harris, Judith Keefer,
 Eva Kirkman, Marty Logue,
 Robert Moll, Kristi Barrett (Alternate)

Museum Director Leslie Pielack



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INTRODUCTION

History & Mission

History

The Friends of the Birmingham Museum (aka the Birmingham Historical Society) is a 501(c)3 organization formed in 1969 to preserve and celebrate Birmingham's history. This included saving the historic 1822 John West Hunter House and working with the Birmingham city commission to develop historic preservation ordinances and designate the Marion and Harry Allen House and grounds as a historic public park. In 2001, the Society joined with the City to create a public museum (now called the Birmingham Museum) to be operated by the City as a professionally staffed museum. The Birmingham Historical Society/Friends of the Birmingham Museum has continued to function as a supporting organization for the museum and its projects, including raising funds, seeking grants, and providing volunteer support.

Chapter 62.26-32 of the City's ordinances provides for the establishment and operation of the museum and of an advisory board, appointed by the City Commission. It specifies the duties of the Museum Board as follows:

- (1) Collect, arrange, catalogue and preserve historical material including books, pamphlets, maps, charts, manuscripts, papers, records and archives, paintings, statuary and other objects and materials relating to the history of the city and the surrounding area;**
- (2) Procure and preserve narratives of the residents of such area;**
- (3) Collect material of every description relative to the history, and culture of our Oakland County Native American tribes;**
- (4) Collect, prepare and display objects indicative of the life, customs, dress and resources of the residents of this area; and**
- (5) Make available from time to time source materials and historical studies relative to and illustrative of the history of the area.**

These duties are reflected in the museum's mission statement, its everyday operation, and in the 2026-2028 Birmingham Museum Strategic Plan.

Mission

The museum's mission statement is incorporated into the city's ordinance. It reflects an inclusive and contemporary approach to integrating Birmingham's history in meaningful ways for its audiences, strengthening its value to the community and its long-term sustainability.

The Birmingham Museum will explore meaningful connections with our past, in order to enrich our community and enhance its character and sustainability. Our mission is to promote understanding of Birmingham's historical and cultural legacy through preservation and interpretation of its ongoing story.

Background & Process

Background

The Birmingham Museum was created in 2001 as a joint effort of the City of Birmingham and the Birmingham Historical Society in an effort to collect, preserve, and share Birmingham's history. During that time, the museum has evolved to reflect changes in the community and museum best practices, and has adapted its strategic planning accordingly through making modifications every three years. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the museum field and standards for meeting community needs, so the Museum Board decided to undertake more comprehensive strategic planning to update the museum's plan for 2026-2028. The board decided to draw upon its members' broad expertise and strategic planning experience to create the plan with the facilitation of the museum director, who also has background in strategic planning for historical organizations.

Process

Beginning in July of 2024, the Museum Board approached the planning process first by studying research and current trends in the field at the national and regional levels. They considered information including: 1) changed museum audience expectations and community engagement, 2) increased emphasis on people over objects and personalized museum experiences, 3) digitization and public access to museum collections, 4) ethics and standards in collecting and interpreting materials, 5) the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in museum settings, and 6) workplace issues and museum board leadership.

In early 2025, the Museum Board moved into the next phase of plan development. This involved evaluating and analyzing strategic plans from numerous museums and historical organizations across the country and in our immediate area. Additional input was sought from museum staff and from the city's Parks Department, Planning Department, Baldwin Library, and Next. This provided helpful context and structure for the final phase of developing priorities for our plan that reflect our community, history, collection, relationship with other cultural organizations and city departments, and our mission.

After determining museum priorities, the board refined potential goals and objectives within each priority. In August and early September of 2025, public input was sought through an electronic and paper and pencil survey that was designed to assess the Birmingham community's sentiment and responsiveness to the museum and the priority areas for the plan. With public input and support, the Museum Board finalized the Birmingham Museum 2026-2028 Strategic Plan for presentation to the Birmingham city commission.

The final plan represents an 18-month, comprehensive effort to develop a document that incorporates current community expectations, professional museum standards, and the museum's needs in a changing cultural environment. It emphasizes engagement and public access through incorporation of multiple points of view, personal involvement, and meaningful and relevant stories that relate to Birmingham's history and its connection to surrounding communities.

The following definitions are used in the final 2026-2028 Birmingham Museum Strategic Plan:

- **Priorities:** Priorities in this plan reflect the direction that will predominate in Birmingham Museum activities. Priorities are overarching and establish a general direction toward a common vision and long-term effort.
- **Goals:** Goals in this plan state where the organization will focus its energies over a defined timeframe. They can be short or long term in nature. Goals are not necessarily directly measurable but reflect the alignment of resources that will be used to accomplish the purposes of the Birmingham Museum. Each priority has a specified goal designed to realize that priority.
- **Objectives:** Objectives in this plan are shorter-term milestones that support individual goals. Each stated goal has several tangible objectives that will move the museum toward reaching that goal. Objectives are concrete, measurable and focused on results.

OVERVIEW

Establishing Priorities & Direction

As the Museum Board studied national and regional trends, reviewed the plans of comparable organizations, and considered the Birmingham Museum's existing data and experience, specific patterns emerged that suggested forward direction for the museum. Priority areas convey long-term guidance and ongoing context for board activities and museum operations, and help determine the distribution of available resources. Three distinct priorities emerged for the Birmingham Museum:

- 1. Observe professional standards, ethics, and best practices for long-term preservation and care of the museum collection in the public trust.**
- 2. Use the museum and its collection to encourage greater equity and inclusion and to humanize history for the benefit of the community.**
- 3. Establish and strengthen collaborative relationships in the community to implement the museum's mission.**

The Museum Board determined that public input would be most valuable if it related to these identified priority areas, since they represent the overarching direction of the museum rather than specific tasks or activities.

Identified Priorities & Public Survey Input

A survey was developed to gauge public sentiment and support for the priority areas. Additional items about the museum's role and survey participant engagement with the museum were included. The survey was designed to be brief but yield valuable and quantifiable data relating to the information sought by the Museum Board. A comments area was also provided to allow additional input from survey participants.

The survey was available electronically as well as with a traditional paper-and-pencil option. Electronic versions were available through 1) *Engage Birmingham* and 2) with a Google Doc link accessible through the museum's social media and email distribution. Physical survey stations were set up at 1) and 2) the Treasurer's and City Clerk's counters at the Birmingham Municipal Building, 3) at the Birmingham Ice Arena/Parks and Recreation offices, 4) at the Baldwin Public Library, 5) at the Y.M.C.A., 6) at Next, and 7) in the Birmingham Museum lobby. Signage at the physical stations offered a QR code link to the online *Engage* option as well.

Surveys were collected from August 1 through September 15. A total of 155 surveys were completed; 101 electronic and 54 hard copies. Quantifiable data analysis is included below. Comments were included on 68 surveys (about 44% of all surveys) in response to a prompt about respondents' interests in regard to programming themes. Although the vast majority of comments were unique, some comments were shared by other respondents in small numbers.

Survey methodology involved the following:

- 1) Use of a yes/no option to assess contact with museum content and site
- 2) An open-ended question to solicit comments about museum programming themes
- 3) Use of a five-point scale to assess agreement/disagreement with strategic plan-related priorities:
 - a. Importance of museum role in the community
 - b. Collection-related priorities
 - c. Broad and diverse points of view to represent the whole community
 - d. Collaboration and outreach

Five-point survey items:

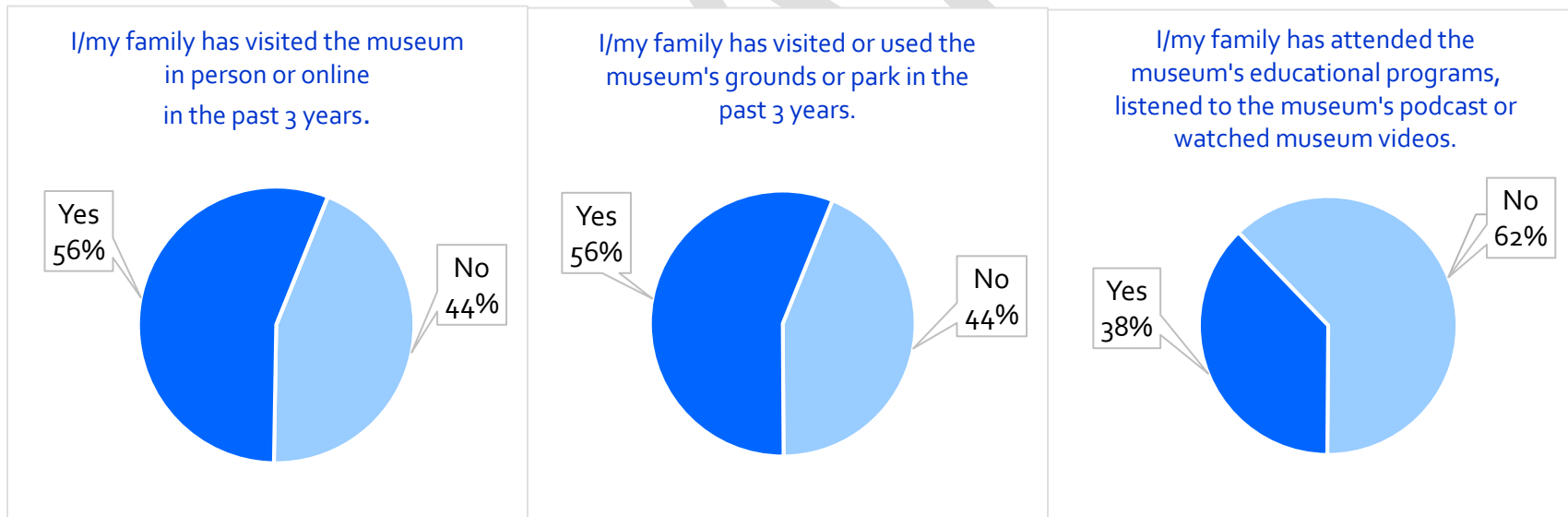
- **The museum plays an important role in the community.**
- **The museum should utilize best practices to preserve and exhibit historic materials that reflect the whole community.**
- **The museum should offer multiple points of view and encourage empathy and understanding.**
- **The museum should expand its virtual exhibits, online content, and access to digitized materials.**
- **The museum should expand its programs and exhibits in off-site settings around the city.**
- **The museum should collaborate with other cultural organizations to expand its reach and provide leadership in promoting local history.**

Identified Priorities & Public Survey Analysis

The number of survey responses, the range of locations, and the diversity of groups reached for input suggests that the data is an indication of sentiment across a broad representation of Birmingham's community. A sizable majority of respondents gave favorable ratings on all strategic plan priorities, thus supporting the Birmingham Museum in making these priorities its future direction.

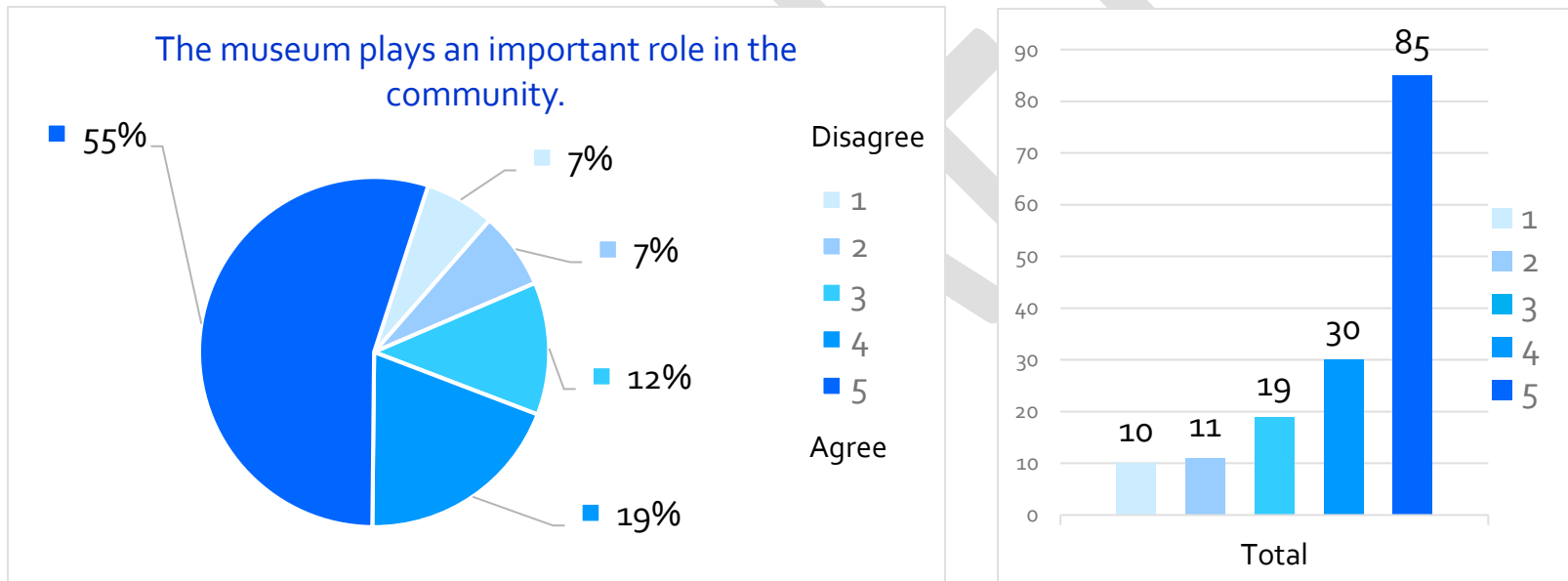
Interaction and Contact with the Museum

The survey assessed the type of interaction respondents have had with the museum in the past three years since the Covid-19 pandemic subsided. In general, a majority of respondents had visited the museum in person or online (56%) or had visited the park. Less than half (38%) indicated they had contact with the museum's podcasts, presentations, or videos during the period.



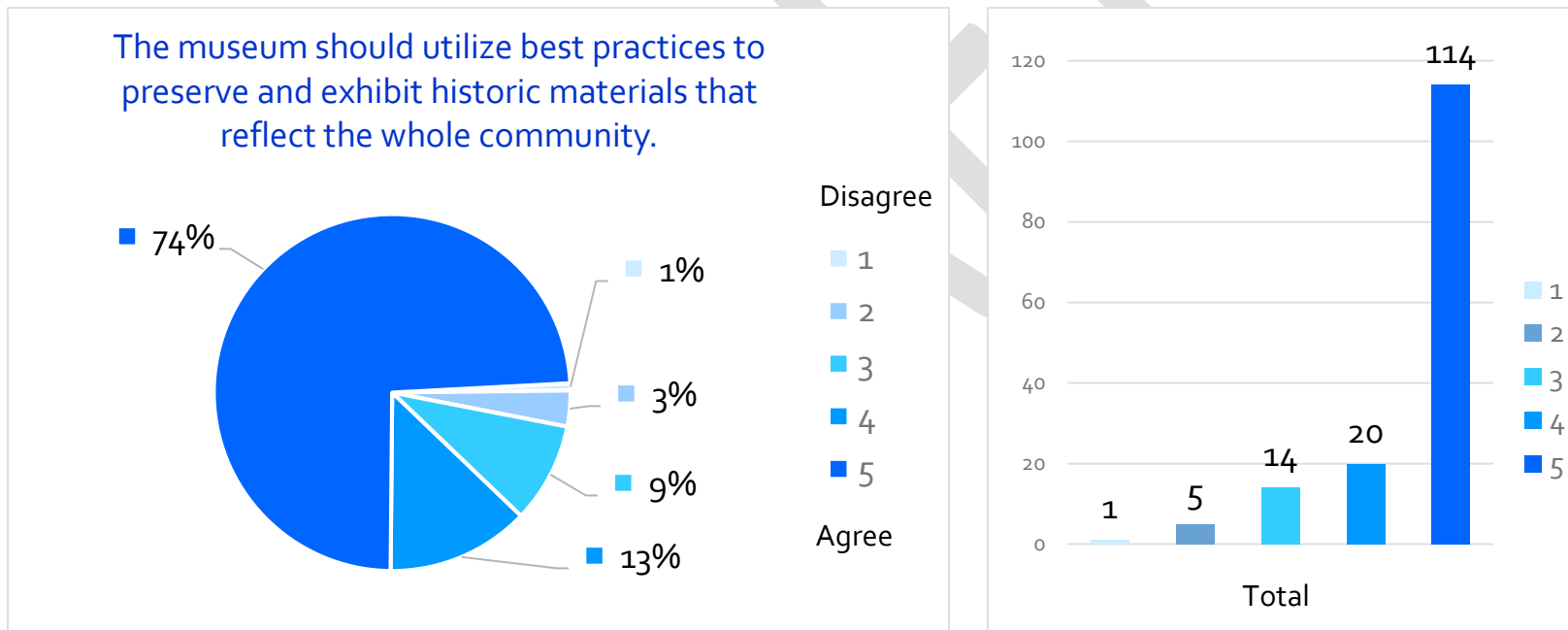
Museum Value to the Community

A large majority of respondents rated the museum high on its importance to the community (74% rating a 4 or 5). This finding was not dependent on direct contact with the museum or its exhibits; the percentage range of respondents who have interacted with the museum online or in person was much less, at 38-56%.



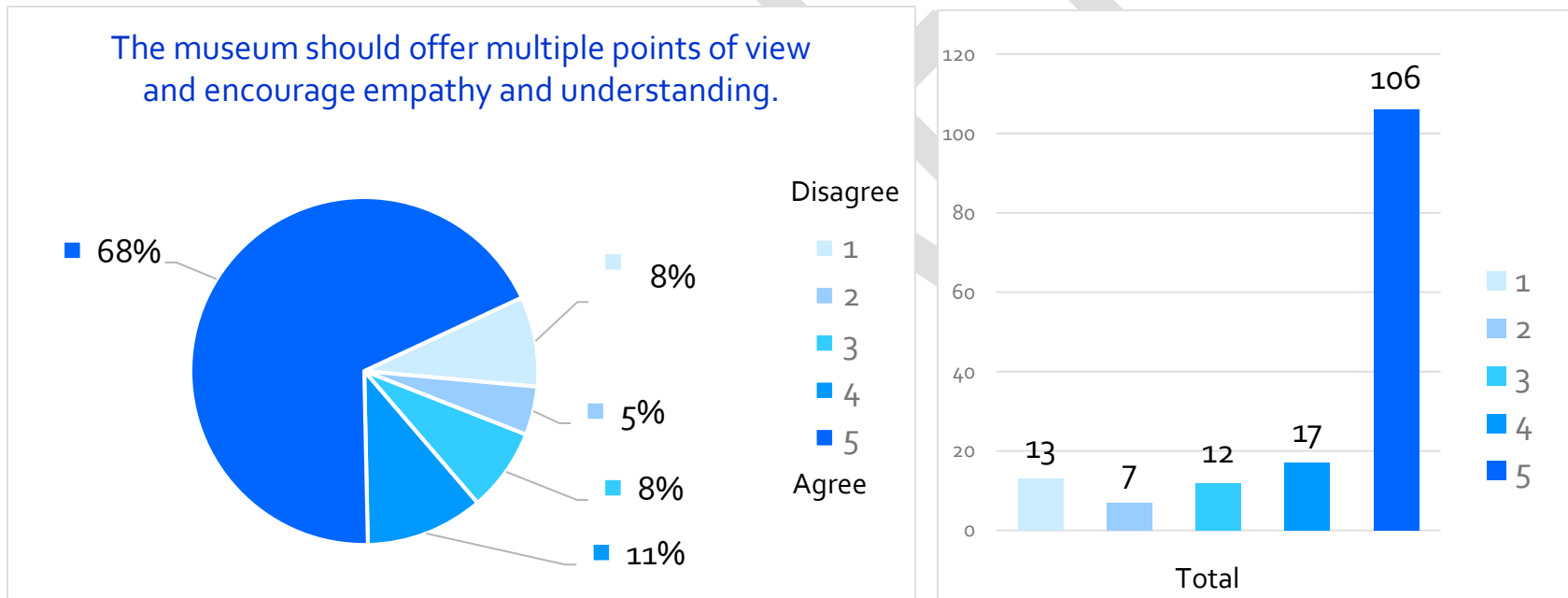
Collections and Exhibit Priorities

A very large majority (**87%** rating of 4 or 5) favor using best practices and standards to collect, preserve, and interpret materials that reflect the entire community spectrum. This finding is in agreement with the museum’s professional approach and collection maintenance, which is also reflected in its collection policy.



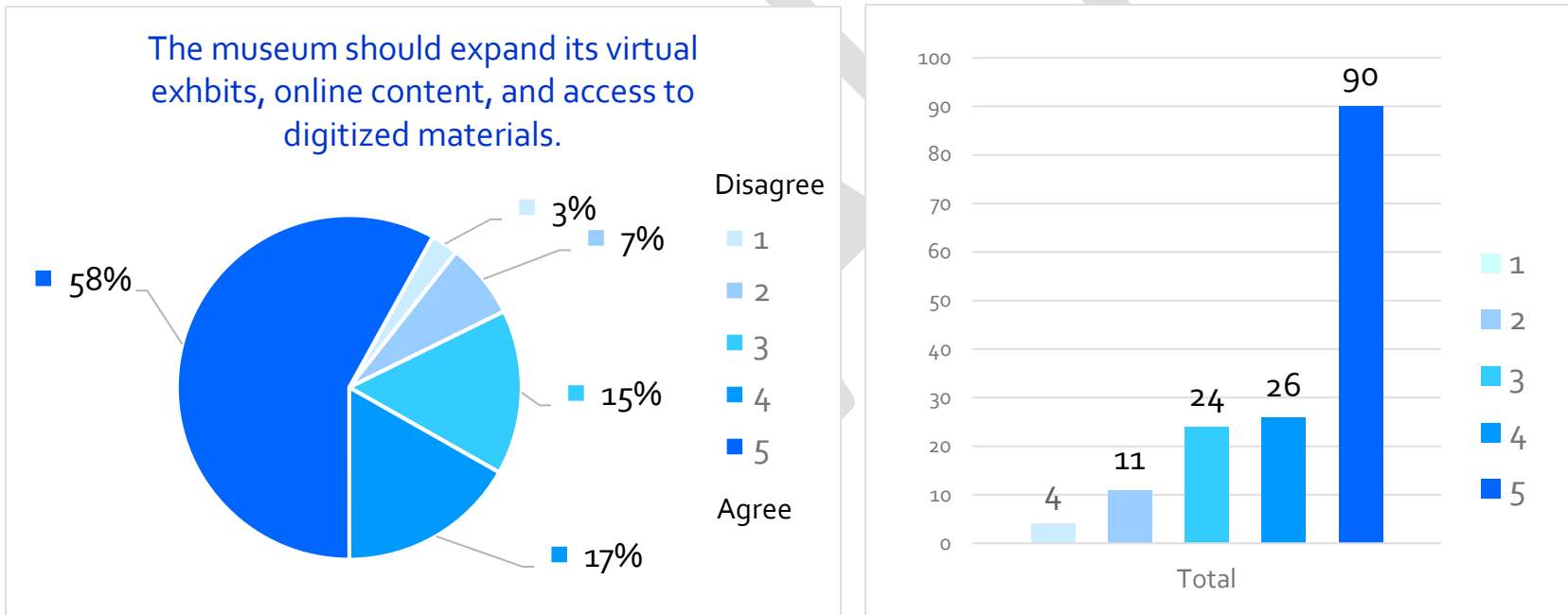
Balanced Point of View and Promotion of Understanding

A large majority of respondents supported the presentation of multiple points of view in museum exhibits and content. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents rated this priority 4 or 5.



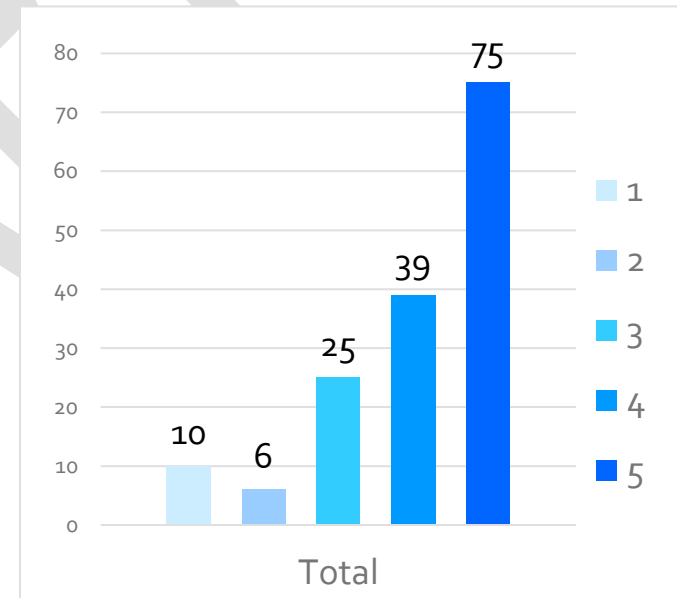
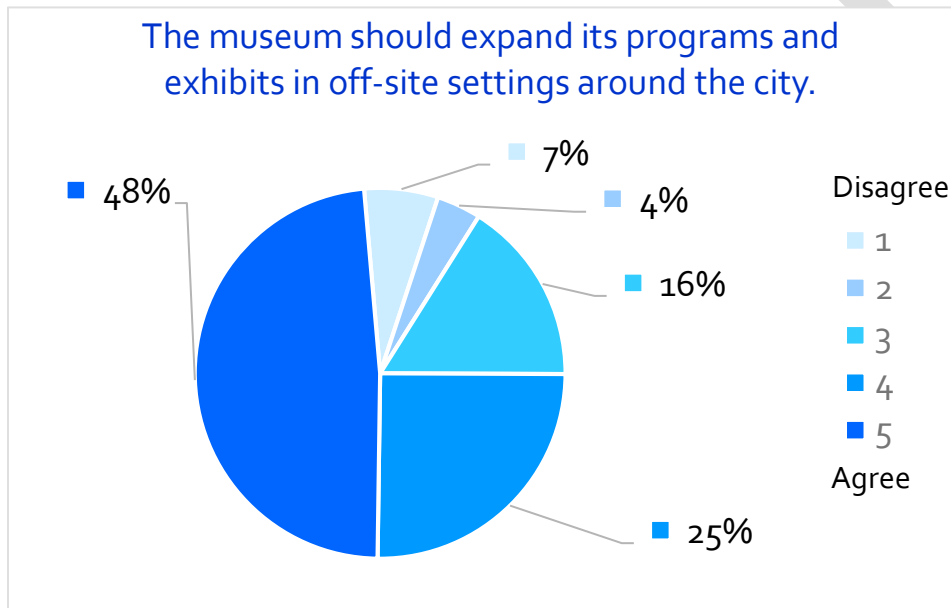
Public Access and Virtual Content

A large majority of respondents (**75%** rating of 4 or 5) also were in favor of the museum expanding digital access and virtual content, also in keeping with the museum’s ongoing approach to maximizing content availability across multiple platforms-social media, podcasting, video, and online exhibits.



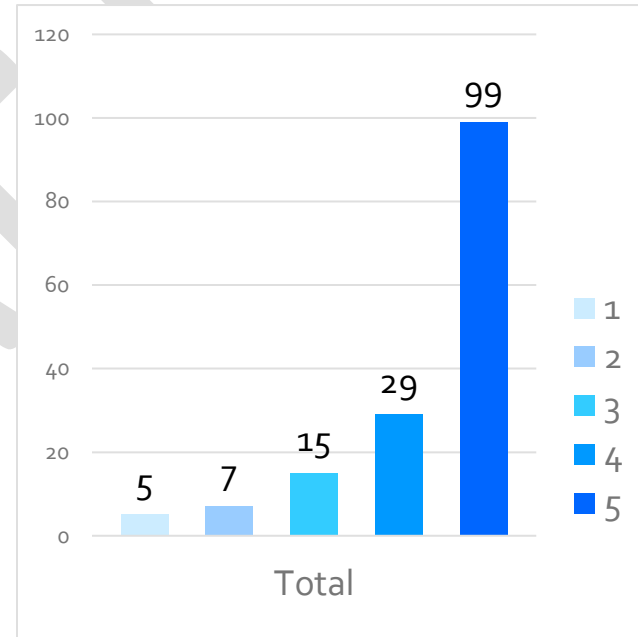
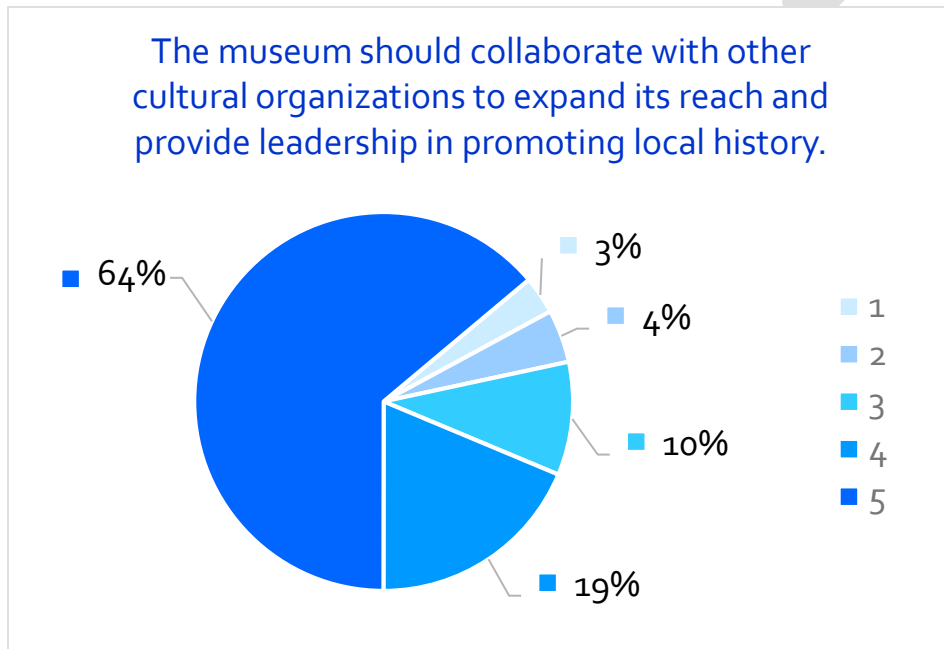
Off-site Expansion of Programs and Exhibits

A majority of respondents favored the museum expanding exhibits into other locations around the city, with **73%** rating this priority area 4 or 5.



Collaborative Approach and Leadership in Local History

A very large majority favored the museum utilizing a collaborative approach and providing leadership in promoting local history (**83%** rating a 4 or 5).



Survey-based Conclusions

The Birmingham community supports the role and value of the Birmingham Museum, and is in agreement with the priorities established by the Museum Board for its 2025-2028 Strategic Plan by a large margin. This sentiment is independent of whether the respondent has directly interacted with the museum or its content, suggesting that the museum is perceived as an important asset to the community whether or not it is utilized by individual respondents and/or their families.

Respondents enthusiastically embraced the concepts of collaborative museum leadership in local history and developing exhibits and collection practices that reflected the whole community and various points of view. Using best practices in preserving and interpreting materials in the museum's collection was identified as important regardless of a respondent's personal interaction with the museum or its materials. Respondents were slightly less enthusiastic about increasing the museum's reach through off-site exhibits and expanding digitized content, but a majority were clearly supportive of this approach.

Shared comments included the following:

- The desire for the museum to expand its programs and resources
- Important themes of local architectural heritage
- Emphasis on people, including underrepresented populations
- Birmingham's music and the art heritage

Other comments involved development of programs or activities that are personnel and resource-dependent, such as giving more community presentations and events, holding more events, and expanding public hours.

Some comments reflect incomplete information about museum services and ways to access staff and information. This suggests that, while recent efforts to make the museum more visible have been very effective, some information is not reaching some areas of the community as completely as it might. This suggests a review of outreach and communication approaches by the museum may be beneficial.

STRATEGIC PLAN

In developing the Birmingham Museum 2026-2028 Strategic Plan, the Museum Board was interested in a working document that could implement the current goals and objectives of the board and broader community as well as lead to a shared long-term vision of its function. It integrates the city's ordinance and museum's purpose with best practices in the museum field and in the public trust. The plan provides for the guiding principles and community benefits of the museum's activities while also suggesting structure for ongoing operations.

The resulting plan is adaptable while giving essential direction for Museum Board members and museum staff alike in current conditions or in the future. The intent of the plan is not to encompass all possible museum activities, but to identify those that are of greatest concern for the utilization of available resources. The plan is intended to work in coordination with the museum's Collections Policy and Hunter House and Allen House Interpretation Plans.

Priorities, Goals & Objectives

The Birmingham Museum 2026-2028 Strategic Plan incorporates levels of distinction that reflect general global direction to more specific and measurable actions.

A **priority** in this plan refers to a direction that will predominate in Birmingham Museum activities and operations. Three priorities were developed by the Museum Board and received strong support during the public input period of strategic plan development.

Each priority has a **goal** that specifies actions that can be used to accomplish that priority. A goal can be modified to meet changing conditions over time while still be aligned with a particular priority.

Each stated goal has several **objectives** that are shorter-term milestones supporting a goal. Objectives are concrete, measurable and focused on results. The tasks that support plan objectives require maximum flexibility. They are not detailed by the plan but will be implemented during day-to-day operations of the museum.

PRIORITY 1

Observe professional standards, ethics and best practices for long-term preservation and care of the museum collection in the public trust.

GOAL

Maintain, preserve, and enhance the museum's collection of artifacts, archives, digital content and buildings to make these resources available to the public in accordance with established professional museum practice.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Improve museum collection's organization, storage, and environmental controls to protect and preserve the collection
- 2) Improve efficiency, accuracy, and accessibility of collection object records and documentation
- 3) Implement collections-related policies and procedures for collections management for the museum buildings, grounds, physical collection and digital materials
- 4) Increase access to virtual exhibits, online content, and digital materials
- 5) Enhance the inclusivity of the collection

PRIORITY 2

Use the museum and its collection to encourage greater equity and inclusion and to humanize history for the benefit of the community.

GOAL

Utilize best practices to engage the whole community and encourage empathy and understanding of our diverse cultural and personal experience.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop exhibits and interpretive materials that facilitate engagement, relevance, and inclusion and offer multiple perspectives
- 2) Utilize specialized outreach programs and presentations in off-site settings
- 3) Investigate opportunities to enhance and expand virtual reach

PRIORITY 3

Establish and strengthen collaborative relationships in the community to implement the museum's mission.

GOAL

Leverage collaborative relationships to expand the museum's sphere of influence and provide beneficial outcomes for the community.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) Develop programs and projects that integrate the museum's strategic priorities and support the City's internal and public-focused functions and services
- 2) Pursue partnerships with local institutions that are aligned with the museum's mission
- 3) Provide leadership and support to area organizations in developing and promoting local history

Outcomes, Measures & Review

The 2026-2028 Strategic Plan is a living document whose purpose is to provide direction and guidance. It is designed to be flexible so that modifications can be made as objectives are accomplished or as conditions change and require new approaches. Ongoing modification is expected as changing needs dictate. The Museum Board has the role and responsibility of reviewing and making recommendations for plan modification.

Measures and review will involve a variety of levels and forms;

- 1) quantifiable data, such as that provided by online metrics in visitation and engagement, daily site visitation, or number of records that have been digitized or updated by the museum's collection management software
- 2) measures of community engagement and annual objectives and measures in the city's budget process
- 3) informal reports at monthly Museum Board meetings by the Museum Director.

Through these various methods, progress toward strategic plan initiatives can be gauged and modified as needed. The Museum Board will receive an annual report on strategic plan progress and will review the plan every three years for needed changes to the document. It is anticipated that adjustments to the objectives will take place as they are met or conditions merit. Goals may also be modified from time to time.

It is conceivable that the 2026-2028 plan will continue to be relevant and will be updated with minor changes for the 2029-2031 period, and possibly also the 2032-2034 period. If priorities need to be changed, the Museum Board will consider a full revision of the strategic plan.