San Antonio Museum of Art

2024-2029 Strategic Plan

July 2024

September 12, 2024

Like its namesake city, the San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA) is deeply rooted in history, tradition, and innovation, poised to take advantage of tremendous opportunities ahead for its city and region.

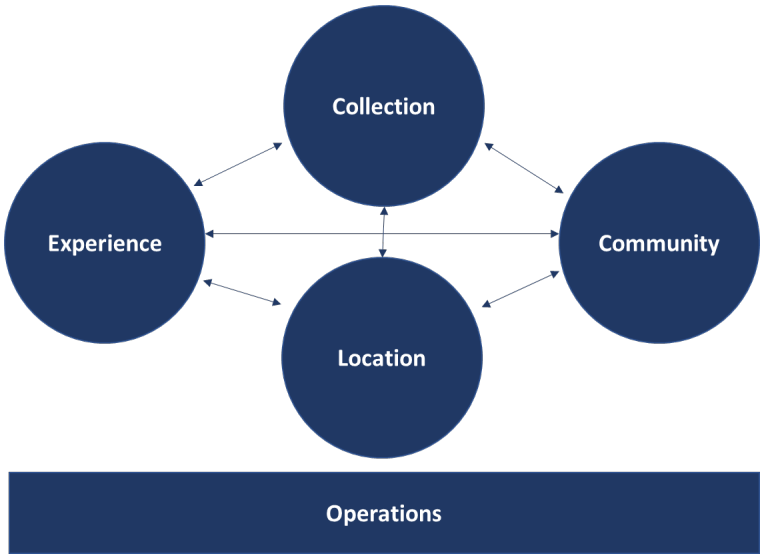
The year 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the formation of the San Antonio Museum Association and the establishment of an art collection that has formed the core of SAMA's identity. Since then, the museum has built its holdings into an encyclopedic museum of international renown in key areas of strength for which it is known.

SAMA's historic building and campus, which were renovated for the primary purpose of displaying the museum's collection, have likewise become central to its identity and place in the community. In 2026, the museum will celebrate 45 years since opening on Jones Avenue, having now become a destination for millions of visitors over the years.

These milestones underscore SAMA's resilience and relevance as one of San Antonio's most treasured cultural institutions. As the museum continually strengthens its ability to provide outstanding experiences with art for all, its leadership has recognized that the growth and sustainability of its mission and programming will require intentional focus and effort on its most important strategic priorities.

Between January and May 2024, a board-led strategic planning task force undertook an intensive planning process, informed by input from the museum's full board, staff, and a number of key community stakeholders. Over the summer, the museum's senior leadership team extended this work, creating detailed action steps to accomplish the strategic commitments, goals and objectives identified by the task force.

The outcome of this process will guide SAMA's work between 2024 and 2029, and beyond. The museum's activity will be built around five interdependent strategic commitments, shown through the following illustration.



Through this plan, SAMA has underscored its commitment to shaping and strengthening its collection to ensure it best represents a global story of human expression over time, through thoughtful deaccessioning and acquisitions, emphasizing proactive strategies for provenance research and increased digitization. The museum will offer compelling experiences for visitors through a dynamic schedule of permanent and temporary exhibitions and enhanced digital technology in the galleries. Community engagement will be deepened by expanding marketing efforts, forming strategic partnerships, and reaching out to underserved areas in South Texas to better position SAMA as a destination for leisure and learning in the region.

Improvements to the museum's campus and operational excellence were also identified as essential elements of the plan. Over the five-year period, the museum will develop and begin to implement a focused campus plan to address how its historic building and grounds can functionally accommodate a museum of the scale SAMA has become and better serve an increased number of visitors. Operationally, the museum will take steps to optimize its staffing, professionalize its HR infrastructure, streamline processes, and secure the financial resources to support ongoing and new strategic initiatives.

The San Antonio Museum of Art has emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic era invigorated, with a sense of confidence and optimism for the future. Through its accomplishment of the forward-thinking vision outlined through this plan, SAMA will enter its sixth decade on Jones Avenue from a position of strength, prepared to take advantage of opportunities on the horizon and over the long term.

MISSION STATEMENT*

The San Antonio Museum of Art brings people together with art by collecting, preserving, and presenting significant works of art representing a broad range of history and cultures, advancing human connection and understanding, and inspiring curiosity, creativity, and discovery.

VISION STATEMENT**

We enrich the lives of people in our community and beyond through art.

STATEMENT OF VALUES**

Committed to excellence and integrity, the San Antonio Museum of Art values collaboration and community engagement, making art accessible and relevant for all in a welcoming space where lifelong learning and culture are celebrated, preserved, and advanced.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

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*The Mission Statement and strategic objectives was approved by the SAMA Board on May 20, 2024.
**The Vision Statement and Statement of Values to be presented for approval to the Full Board on September 23, 2024.

STRATEGIC COMMITMENT: COLLECTION

STRATEGIC GOAL

The museum will continue to shape and strengthen the museum's collection by acquiring collections and individual works of art of high quality, deepening its holdings within areas of strength for which the museum is known and taking advantage of opportunities to acquire objects that allow the museum to better illustrate the story of human expression through art over time.

OBJECTIVES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

- Focus on strategic, thoughtful acquisitions and judicious deaccessions that together both grow and refine the collections, maintaining the museum's commitment to the highest ethical standards and best professional practices for acquisitions and collections care, in accordance with its Collection Policy and informed by ongoing collection reviews
    - Define and articulate a plan outlining the museum's proactive strategy for the continued development of its collections
    - Review alignment of curatorial, registration and preparator staffing in relationship to the museum's workload and ambition
    - Complete collection review for all remaining curatorial areas and begin to implement outcomes
    - Collaborate with subject experts to activate orphan collections into exhibitions and gallery installations
    - Continue and accelerate deaccessioning process based on collection reviews
    - Conduct an increased level of provenance research on the collection and new acquisitions each year and efficiently respond to requests for returns and ownership claims to works in the collection as they arise

- Prioritize digitizing the collection and making this information accessible online, defining and accomplishing a realistic goal for an increased percentage of the collection that will be online by 2029
    - Continue with a goal of having 50% of the collection of nearly 30,000 objects online by 2029

- Explore options for the potential collaboration with a consortium of institutions to formally interact with and/or create and support a conservation studio
    - Engage in a conversation with several key institutions in San Antonio and other conservation studios in Texas

STRATEGIC COMMITMENT: COMMUNITY

STRATEGIC GOAL

The museum will deepen the museum's relevance and role in the lives of people of all walks of life who live in San Antonio and the greater Central and South Texas region by emphasizing the museum's significance and unique value through increased marketing and strategic partnerships, strengthening the perception of the museum as a place where people naturally go for leisure and learning.

OBJECTIVES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

- Establish and attain measurable goals for strategic attendance growth and the expansion of its audience beyond San Antonio
    - Clearly define the scope of the museum's expanded geographic focus area for potential audience growth
    - Set appropriate attendance goals by year

- Expand advertising reach to include additional placements in general publications in San Antonio and Central and South Texas and in regional and national tourism publications
    - Review and appropriately increase marketing budgets for general advertising and marketing for specific exhibitions budgets in the context of increased annual attendance goals
    - Establish presence at tourism conferences

- Broaden PR efforts to secure increased coverage in San Antonio, in regional Texas publications and nationally
    - Hire a regional PR firm

- Expand efforts to intentionally take the museum outside its walls and into the community
    - Create a new SAMA-led festival or event
    - Identify and have presence at existing festivals and community events
    - Explore the development of a new “art bus” for local and regional outreach
    - Explore opportunities for public display of art

- Implement a plan outlining SAMA's strategy for supporting student education and its work with PK-12 schools
    - Develop infrastructure for in-school outreach, including additional staffing as needed
    - Expand involvement with Communities in Schools
    - Develop the infrastructure for and convene a community education think tank
    - Reimagine traveling trunks for school outreach and learning opportunities

- Develop a Continuum of Learning education plan that addresses programming for people of all ages, with an emphasis on intergenerational learning
    - Write plan and implement as part of ongoing departmental activity

STRATETIC GOAL: EXPERIENCE

STRATEGIC GOAL

The museum will offer dynamic and compelling experiences with art aligned with 21st century visitors' experiential expectations, through the presentation of the museum's permanent collections; a schedule of temporary exhibitions balancing broad popular appeal, educational value and advancing scholarship within the field; and by providing a robust, varied schedule of programming consistent with the museum's educational mission that attracts new audiences and deepens its ongoing engagement with visitors and members.

OBJECTIVES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

- Develop and implement a 3-year exhibition plan informed through cross-departmental input that includes traveling exhibitions and SAMA-organized exhibitions that draw upon the museum's collections and curatorial expertise
    - Accelerate the planning process for exhibition ideas, especially those to be produced at least 18 months in advance

- Develop and implement a plan for the regular reinstallation and reinterpretation of the permanent collection galleries, displaying the maximum amount of the collection possible by utilizing all available gallery space in the museum
    - Identify the spaces where permanent collection reinstallations will happen and how they will happen alongside exhibitions

- Curate, promote and manage traveling exhibitions drawn from the museum's collection
    - Draft and implement a five-year plan to introduce as an ongoing program

- Develop and implement a plan to develop exhibitions and programs in collaboration with community partner organizations and university institutions
    - Draft and implement a five-year plan to introduce as an ongoing program

- Implement digital technology as appropriate in the museum to support visitor learning and experience
    - Research and identify opportunities appropriate for SAMA's culture and learning objectives

- Continually improve visitors’ overall experience with the museum, in line with efforts to expand digital access to its collection and supportive interpretive content
    - Create graphic standards for in-gallery interpretative material in line with the museum's brand standards
    - Increase training of frontline staff about the content in the galleries to better inform and assist visitors with their experience
    - Redesign the museum's website after an overall brand refresh process

- Implement a plan to integrate an enhanced bilingual experience throughout the museum
    - Draft and implement a five-year plan to introduce this program as an ongoing program
    - Redesign website to include bilingual copy
    - Provide ongoing customer service training to provide culturally sensitive standards of hospitality

- Deepen donors' engagement and financial support of the museum through their enhanced understanding and commitment to the collection
    - Introduce a reimagined collections-based fundraising affinity group program

STRATEGIC COMMIMENT: LOCATION

STRATEGIC GOAL

The museum will prioritize the capital enhancement of the museum's facilities through the development of a focused campus plan and the completion of initial phases of the plan, addressing the museum‘s need for additional gallery and storage space for exhibitions and collections, deferred and ongoing maintenance, facilities that allow for the appropriate management of the museum, and other enhancements that make its campus more attractive and accessible for visitors, taking advantage of the museum’s iconic and historic building, neighborhood, and place on the river.

OBJECTIVES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

- Develop an actionable space and facility plan and make measurable annual progress toward its long-term fulfilment, prioritizing the completion of specific projects through a phased strategy
    - Conduct an initial space program assessment, working with an outside consultant
    - Establish a framework to measure progress annually toward the overall plan
    - Create a priority list of "must do" campus capital improvements to be accomplished by year

As an initial guide, the strategic planning task force identified the following potential capital enhancements for consideration:

- Developing Arden Grove into an attractive, accessible green space
- Reevaluating opportunities to develop the historic buildings on the museum’s campus, including the Warehouse and Stables, taking advantage of the buildings currently facing the river
- Improving the museum’s current gallery spaces to better display the collections without internal obstructions
- Providing additional space for art storage, taking into consideration the opportunity to showcase the museum’s collection through open storage and viewable work areas
- Creating functional office space appropriate for the museum’s current and anticipated staff size and working teams
- Conceiving and building a new facility for the museum’s library and archives
- Creating new studios for conservation and photography
- Enhancing landscaping across the entire campus, with a focus on Jones and improvement of river side approach
- Improving the lighting of parking lot and the overall campus

- Improving wayfinding and signage to enhance the visitor experience and better identify the museum's location
- Upgrading and improving the function and attractiveness of the Great Hall
- Increasing the amount and quality of seating in galleries to extend and enhance the visitor experience
- Investigating ways to make the campus more sustainable, i.e., through recycled water for landscaping, solar panels on the roofs and/or above the parking lot, etc.

STRATEGIC COMMITMENT: OPERATIONS

STRATEGIC GOAL

The museum will strengthen the operational infrastructure that enables the museum to successfully carry out its mission through a focus on human resources, effective governance, operating systems and processes, and financial resources.

OBJECTIVES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

- Identify specific opportunities for streamlined operations, including optimized staffing
    - Conduct a formal assessment of the museum's operational infrastructure
    - Develop and implement a plan to intentionally cross-train staff to strengthen the museum's organizational resilience

- Continue to professionalize the museum's HR infrastructure consistent with a corporation of its size and scale
    - Implement a new intranet portal for staff with links to frequently accessed information, such as the museum's master calendar, HR forms, finance-related materials, and a master calendar
    - Implement a formal process through which the museum regularly reviews and adjusts salaries and benefits at all levels of staff to stay on par with industry and local standards and to be competitive within the marketplace

- Implement a board self-evaluation process to review involvement and compliance with fiduciary responsibilities
    - Work with the governance committee to determine the metrics for evaluation and a process through which the information is learned and communicated

- Articulate the expenses and cash flow required between 2024 and 2029 for the museum to accomplish its ongoing mission most effectively and undertake new initiatives outlined in the strategic plan

- Evaluate the redistribution or increase of the institution's annual operating budget and/or additional fundraising that will be required to accomplish specific objectives
    - Review final strategic plan for one-time and ongoing expenses identified
    - Build a five-year financial model projecting expenses and cash flow needs by year
    - Determine the institutional priorities that will require specific fundraising initiatives beyond ongoing annual fundraising

- Develop and implement a plan to endow the museum's ongoing operations and institutional priorities, such as funding for ongoing rotations of the permanent collection, temporary exhibitions, conservation, acquisitions, and leadership staff positions
    - Draft case for potential campaign to endow institutional priorities

Resources

Most of the activity scheduled during the first year of the five-year plan are related to planning and research and will not require additional resources to be accomplished.

The museum's Senior Leadership Team incorporated proposed expenses required during SAMA's 2025 fiscal year into the FY25 proposed budget (subject to approval on September 23, 2024). These expenses are related to the alignment of the museum's curatorial, registration and preparator staffing, the completion of collection reviews in process, and the completion of a program space assessment.

Appendix

Detailed Strategic Objectives & Actions Worksheet