

## ABOUT THE PROCESS

The Taft Museum of Art launched a strategic planning process in spring 2023, retaining the Winkler Group of Charleston, South Carolina to conduct an in-depth engagement to usher the museum into its next era. This plan succeeded a two-year bridge plan that guided the museum through its completion of the Bicentennial Infrastructure capital project, post-pandemic re-opening, and hiring of the museum’s new President & CEO, Rebekah Beaulieu, PhD.

The museum’s planning process included an intensive review to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and strategic focuses for the museum. Additionally, the museum conducted individual interviews with members of the Board of Directors and other stakeholders of the museum including volunteers, donors, and members. An electronic survey was also sent to the museum’s audiences to invite feedback. In total, nearly 700 responses were received offering candid reflection on the museum.

Under Board and staff leadership, these stakeholder responses were amalgamated into our draft of the museum’s strategic goals. The plan now stands with four strategic aims (outlined at right and on page 19), endorsed by the working group and the Board of Directors beginning fall 2023. Moving forward, we will share examples of how we are advancing our plan in future editions of *Portico*.

## OUR PROGRESS

Just a short way into this three-year plan, the museum is receiving numerous accolades from new and returning visitors alike: “Wow! This was my first visit to Taft Museum of Art. Why did I sleep on it?”; “The museum offers such a rich and deep experience that is unlike anything I’ve experienced at an art museum”; and “I feel like I belong here.”

This enthusiastic buzz lets us know we are on the right track in becoming a leading arts hub. The Marketing & Engagement team has been crucial in developing relationships with such influencers in the industry as *Forbes*, *Travel + Leisure*, *ArtForum*, and many others that have been elevating the prominence of the museum in the greater cultural landscape. Our Learning & Outreach team has set the critical foundation in expanding the Duncanson Artist-in-Residence program to a full-year activation and engagement with our community (learn more on page 10).

The addition of a Director of Visitor Experience has enabled us to improve the quality and consistency of service, ensuring we are putting our visitors first. This includes incorporating the work of additional independent and local artisans in our Museum Shop, collaborating with local suppliers for our café, and providing ongoing customer service training and support for our museum team. This support for our visitors is also made possible thanks to our volunteer ambassadors—this year alone they gave over 450 hours of their time to the museum.

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### BECOME A LEADING ARTS HUB

- Center inclusivity in interpretive materials
- Cultivate new partnerships
- Deepen engagement with our collection
- Bring meaningful art exhibitions
- Highlight our scholarly resources and industry-wide thought leadership



### PUTTING THE VISITOR FIRST

- Identify reasons for visiting the Taft Museum of Art
- Ensure positive experiences to cultivate donors and ambassadors
- Support the team in providing exceptional experiences

We have recently been awarded important grants to help expand the Taft’s reach and accessibility. The Institute of Museum and Library Services funded the photographing of more than 500 objects—a project spearheaded by the Curatorial & Collections team—to make the collection available online. And an Art Bridges Foundation’s Access for All grant has underwritten free admission on Mondays, as well as new programs to enhance access for underrepresented and underserved groups. The Safety & Security team also helped us extend our offerings. The average officer spends nearly 1,500 hours a year ensuring the museum is ready for visitors and will be happy to assist with any need that may arise. On your next visit, be sure to ask our team members about their favorite work of art!

In addition to our grants and increased engagement, our community dazzled at our annual gala. 2023’s theme, The Enchanted Garden, drew more than 400 people to the dance floor in celebration of our education and school programs. Proceeds from the gala, as well as the support we received from many generous individuals, foundations, and organizations over the past year, makes a big difference in the museum’s financial stability, and will enable the Taft to thrive as an institution and community asset for years to come.

Learn more at [taftmuseum.org/About-Us](https://taftmuseum.org/About-Us).

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

#### Institutional Planning Working Group

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#### TAFT ON THE NATIONAL STAGE

On September 22, our President & CEO Rebekah Beaulieu, PhD spoke at an event hosted by the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation in conjunction with Climate Week NYC. The panel discussion “Expanding Climate Action in the Visual Arts” featured past grantees of the Foundation’s Climate Initiative, including the Taft Museum of Art. This initiative was an ongoing \$15 million grantmaking program that helped arts organizations take steps to reduce energy consumption.

### PROVIDE INCLUSION AND ACCESS TO THE ARTS

- Enhance access for underrepresented and underserved groups
- Strengthen partnerships and collaborations within our communities
- Ensure all community members have enjoyable and meaningful art experiences
- Build a network of community representatives



### SECURE THE MUSEUM’S FUTURE

- Build intergenerational financial support
- Equip trustees to serve as ambassadors on our behalf
- Cultivate and empower new board leadership
- Welcome potential supporters and future board leaders

