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Fact Sheet

Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum

Director: Lori D. Yarrish

Total full-time employees: 17

Annual budget (federal and trust) FY 2017: \$2.6 million

Number of artifacts: 3,380 items

Archives: 1,500 cubic feet

Visitors (2017): 37,000

Background

The Anacostia Neighborhood Museum (original name) was established in a converted Southeast Washington movie theater in 1967 to bring the Smithsonian off the National Mall and into a local, inner-city environment. The initial mission evolved under the leadership of the first director John R. Kinard, as the museum became a means for people to voice their concerns about city life while encouraging local forums of cultural expression. In 1991, the museum became simply the Anacostia Museum, adding collections and opening major exhibitions focused on African American history and culture.

In 2006, the name was changed to the Anacostia Community Museum to reflect the change from ethnic themes to broader social and cultural issues faced within urban communities. In light of communities transformed by economic issues, technological advances, gentrification and displacement, the museum has renewed its mission and reimagined its focus and operations to better align with today's audiences. Exhibitions, collections and public program examine contemporary themes through the eyes of diverse community members.

Research

For the first time in human history, more than half of the world's population lives in cities. As the world urbanizes at an unprecedented pace, the Anacostia Community Museum continues its five-decade tradition of researching, documenting, and engaging with urban communities, with an emphasis on the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area and other urban centers across the country and the world. Specific areas of focus are civic and community life, everyday traditions, art and creativity, and the built and natural environment. Through community-based documentation and research—including extensive oral-history interviewing, photo-documentation, community surveying and mapping—the museum offers insights about the wide range of historical, social, political, economic and environmental forces shaping urban areas.

Collections

The museum's collections consist of objects and archival materials that document urban communities and the lives of urban residents, from home life and everyday activities to the community-building efforts of artists, activists and others. Holdings range from folk art and hand-sewn quilts to political banners, audiovisual materials, photographs and personal and institutional papers. Strengths include family and community history, the Washington metropolitan area and African American history and culture. The collections and library are available to researchers by appointment.

Exhibitions

The museum presents changing installations and exhibitions that explore such issues as urban waterways, urban community development and immigration and migration. Recent major exhibitions have included "Reclaiming the Edge: Urban Waterways and Civic Engagement," "Twelve Years that Shook and Shaped Washington: 1963–1975," "Gateways/Portales" and currently, "A Right to the City."

Education/Outreach

Education programs at the Anacostia Community Museum are multidisciplinary in their design and are developed to engage diverse audiences in the greater metropolitan area. While most programs relate directly to current exhibitions, research and collections, others engage specific audiences in recognition of the community and cultural diversity. For example, the museum celebrates Chinese New Year, National Poetry Month and Earth Day. Its community forums focus on issues with broad regional, national or international resonance, and are developed in collaboration with local partners. The STEAM-based urban gardening project connects to the museum's broader urban waterways initiative and introduces students to water ecology and river conservation.

About the Museum

The Anacostia Community Museum is located at 1901 Fort Pl. S.E. in Washington, D.C., and is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (closed Dec. 25). Admission is free. Information: (202) 633-4820; public programs: (202) 633-4844; tours: (202) 633-4868; website: <http://anacostia.si.edu>. For more information, visit anacostia.si.edu.

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