



# Smithsonian

*Anacostia Community Museum*

## Strategic Plan

2019 to 2024

*Our Communities. Our Stories.*

### Manifesto

#### *We Believe*

- In the collective power of communities to transform their worlds
- That people's everyday lives and work have crucially shaped history
- That knowledge opens minds, and conversations build common ground
- That diverse ideas and opinions generate better solutions

#### *We Love*

- Hearing your stories and learning from you
- Activating meaningful and thought-provoking dialogue around real-time issues relevant to your lives and experiences
- Building creative collaborations and partnerships that support and strengthen community

#### *We Are Committed To*

- Sharing authority with and respecting the expertise of our community collaborators
- Amplifying peoples' voices and using a local lens to tell stories that resonate nationally and globally
- Fostering a sense of belonging, connection, and rootedness among DC metro area communities
- Providing a platform for inclusive idea-sharing and community action
- Inspiring sustained civic engagement

## Vision Statement

**Urban communities activate their collective power for a more equitable future.**

We envision healthy neighborhoods that are empowered to work together to solve urgent issues. As a trusted and inclusive center, the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum seeks to inspire communities to take action, and is an incubator for the next generation of civically engaged citizens. By illuminating the intersections of history, culture, and contemporary social issues affecting DC metro area communities, including where they are in flux across urban/suburban boundaries, ACM uses a local lens to tell stories that resonate nationally and globally.

## Mission Statement

**Together with local communities, the Anacostia Community Museum illuminates and amplifies our collective power.**

As our neighborhoods undergo social, economic, and environmental changes that individuals alone cannot address, there is a need for communities to bring together their combined knowledge and strengths. As a museum that convenes people and ideas, ACM documents and preserves communities' memories, struggles, and successes, and offers a platform where diverse voices and cultures can be heard. We believe that bridging disparate parts of our communities can bring collective action to bear on forging a better future together.

## Values

At the heart of all we do is:

**Inclusivity:** We believe in a diversity of ideas and opinions.

**Creativity:** We foster creative engagement to find solutions to problems.

**Trust:** We respect and rely on one another.

**Empowerment:** We unlock the power within ourselves to envision and build a better future.

**Collaboration:** We recognize our interconnectedness and share authority with our communities.

## Introduction and Background

The Anacostia Community Museum (ACM) was founded in 1967. Under the leadership of its first director John Kinard, the museum became a means for people in an urban neighborhood to voice their concerns about city life, examine their role in society, and encourage local cultural expression. The Anacostia Museum model resonated around the world, spawning local museums as centers for community representation, discussion, and artistry.

ACM has a rich legacy of community-engaged curatorial work. Its collection supports and speaks to the museum's connection with communities in the DC metro area and beyond. Holdings range from folk art and hand-sewn quilts to political banners, personal papers, and historic archives. Documentary photography collected over several decades illustrates local people, places, and events. On display and online, the collection reveals accessible stories familiar to many visitors, and an opportunity to reflect on daily life and contemporary urban experiences. It highlights the importance of local, family, and community history, and the value of both ordinary and extraordinary things in shaping our society.

Through its community-based planning model, ACM research, exhibitions, and collections are shaped by Greater Washington DC communities. The museum explores urban trends through a hyper-local lens, collecting artifacts and historical documents about civic leadership, community activism, and everyday life. It works to identify new sustainable methods for environmental conservation. It celebrates all forms of artistic expression. Its community approach uniquely positions ACM to achieve two major goals outlined in the new Smithsonian strategic plan: catalyzing conversations, and understanding and impacting 21<sup>st</sup> century audiences.

From this strong foundation of community-based exhibitions, collections, and programs, ACM is now poised to undertake its next great challenge – a challenge that will face both community and mainstream museums in the coming years: Beyond encouraging individual civic engagement and personal action, how can communities tackle complex and systemic issues that individuals cannot address alone. What role can a museum play in activating this collective action toward change?

As the Smithsonian's community museum, ACM is uniquely positioned as a trusted convener to serve as a bridge between organizations, academia, government, businesses, and community members in order to challenge old paradigms, give voice to untold perspectives, and uncover new solutions.

## Goals

### Goal 1. Connect with our audiences<sup>1</sup>

Objective 1.1: Understand our audiences' interests, backgrounds, and perspectives so that every visitor feels welcome at the Museum.

Objective 1.2: Provide opportunities to build community<sup>2</sup> around urgent issues and connect audiences to larger networks.

Objective 1.3: Meet people where they are by increasing access through the availability of content on-line and off-site programming.

Objective 1.4: Reach and empower Greater Washington DC youth to be more civically engaged<sup>3</sup>.

### Goal 2. Deepen relationships with external and internal partners

Objective 2.1: Build relationships strategically through alignment of mission and intent, and articulation of the Museum's philosophy, methodology, and practice.

Objective 2.2: Collaborate and co-create<sup>4</sup> with communities in the development of the collection, exhibitions and programs.

Objective 2.3: Engage strategically in Smithsonian initiatives, committees, and other activities.

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<sup>1</sup> ACM staff currently operates under a shared definition of "audience" as three broad psychographic types: 1) *D.C. History Lover*, representing local and international visitors who are interested in urban community history and the DMV; 2) *Multigenerational Activists*, families and individuals who are working and learning together to achieve larger community impacts; and 3) *Traditionally Underserved*, those who have historically be underrepresented and do not see themselves in other institutions. Further refinement of and research into these audience types will be part of the Objective 1.1.

<sup>2</sup> ACM knows it is succeeding in building community when: community members self-select to join and chose to engage by sharing their stories, time, and support; diverse participants are being heard/listened to within the community; and over time the community holds itself together and accountable when needed.

<sup>3</sup> ACM defines *civic engagement* as active participation in civic life. While this participation may include traditional civic activities, such as policy development and politics, it also includes engagement in art and culture as a way of expressing identity and issues through creative means.

<sup>4</sup> Staff recognize that partnership, collaboration, and co-creation are often used as synonyms that lead to confusion. For the purposes of this plan and day-to-day work, ACM has defined the terms as follows. *Co-creation*: Individuals or organizations who are involved equally in the research and development of a product such as a project, program, or exhibition with ACM or whose involvement helps ACM present a more equitable narrative. *Collaborate*: The sharing of effort and expertise and/or information and networks in order to advance a project, program, or exhibition. *Partnership*: A formal agreement between ACM and another organization, which may involve collaboration, co-creation, or the sharing of space and/or funds.

### Goal 3. Document and present community stories with social impact<sup>5</sup>

Objective 3.1: Document and evolve a model of community-driven process in collections and exhibitions.

Objective 3.2: Design and present content in a layered and accessible way relevant to a range of ages and abilities<sup>6</sup>.

Objective 3.3: Build strategic and targeted collections and exhibitions that build on the mission and document stories of individuals living and working together.

Objective 3.4: Conduct mission-driven research and produce scholarship in various formats.

### Goal 4. Communicate our impact

Objective 4.1: Define and better document our impact.

Objective 4.2: Increase content-rich communications focused on our progress, networks, and impact.

Objective 4.3: Increase engagement across platforms by thinking multi-channel.

Objective 4.4: Rebrand<sup>7</sup> to increase ACM's visibility.

### Goal 5. Strengthen our organization

Objective 5.1: Align the organization to our new mission and goals based on resources.

Objective 5.2: Implement multi-year plans, budgets, and measures, with follow-up to ensure plans and budgets are met.

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<sup>5</sup> Goals 3 and 4 acknowledge the need for ACM to better define, measure, document, and communicate its impact, both on its audiences and on Anacostia. Additional facilitated discussions and convenings are planned to start the definition process around ACM's impact, which will help to lead to a further articulation of metrics for this Plan.

<sup>6</sup> *Abilities* recognize the wide range of cognitive and physical ableness represented within ACM's audiences and communities.

<sup>7</sup> *Brand* is understood to be more than ACM's current visual representation. For the purpose of this Plan, brand or rebranding involves a more inclusive look at ACM's identity, which may include potential changes to ACM's name, logo, graphic look-and-feel, online presence, positioning, etc. Objective 4.4 is inclusive of printed materials, online presence, marketing, and communication.

Objective 5.3: Share responsibility at all levels for resource development and stewardship/management, including determining return on investment, identifying cost savings, and participating in fundraising.

Objective 5.4: Increase teamwork within ACM and across SI.

Objective 5.5: Revamp evaluation<sup>8</sup> of programs to align with the new focus, including data collection and market research about ACM's current and potential audiences.

Objective 5.6: Begin AAM Accreditation process.

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<sup>8</sup> In order to evaluate programs effectively, ACM must first define its desired impact and programmatic goals. ACM staff acknowledge that Objective 5.5 must follow extensive work on Goals 3 and 4 in articulating impact and goals before measurement and evaluation can occur successfully.