

Community Engagement Report.

Be curious. GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC MUSEUM



2020

Vision

To inspire passionate curiosity and a deeper understanding of the world around us.

Mission

We exist to be a living monument of artifacts, ideas and stories told through exhibitions, events and educational programming designed to inspire, motivate and celebrate our human bond.

We enrich the life of our community through experiences of the wider world in a uniquely Grand Rapids context.

For 166 years, the Grand Rapids Public Museum has been a source of inspiration and a place to cultivate curiosity. From its beginnings as a cabinet of curiosities to its affiliation with Grand Rapids Public Schools, the Museum, at its core, is a learning institution dedicated to accessibility and knowledge for all.



Thanks to your support, the Grand Rapids Public Museum adapted to major challenges in 2020 and continues to serve the community!

So much has changed in a year, and the GRPM, like the entire world, has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Museum has adapted by creating content and programs that will allow us to continue to offer highly engaging educational experiences to the local community and beyond. Camp Curious Summer Camps went virtual this year, and we wondered whether we would be able to make a connection with the campers in a virtual setting. Participation was higher than anticipated, and students connected by sharing images of their projects and accomplishments.

The GRPM quickly digitized our educational resources to accommodate the Museum's four-month closure and eventual limited capacity reopening, offering free and affordable experiences available through a new, dedicated web page, grpm.org/HomeMuseum. Free resources and community programs, including exhibit tours and distance learning materials, were created and continue to be available to our community. Museum-created academic content was also shared with D.A. Blodgett and the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital, through new partnerships with these institutions, in service to their patients and students.

Our community has donated digital and physical materials to the Museum's Collections related to COVID-19 and their experiences with it, which will document this pandemic for future generations. While continuing to add relevant artifacts to our Collections, the GRPM supported local artists of color by purchasing three large-scale paintings from the Windows GR project. The project offered artists an opportunity to paint plywood that covered the broken windows of downtown businesses that resulted from the social justice protests in the spring. The paintings are currently on display and will become part of the Museum's permanent Collections.

We are building a stronger community by inspiring curiosity, and learning is central to everything we undertake at the Grand Rapids Public Museum. Thanks to the sustaining support and involvement of so many individuals and organizations, we were able to serve our community while being more inclusive with exhibits, programs and virtual experiences designed to pique and celebrate the curiosity of those engaged.

The Museum has embraced these trying times by putting the community first. None of this could happen without you. On behalf of every visitor — in person and virtual — and the entire Museum team, thank you. Your support truly makes a difference.

Sincerely,



Dale A. Robertson
President & CEO

Best Egg Designs

Printing



3D Print

Community Engagement & Partners

The Museum's close partnerships with local educational institutions, organizations and government agencies provide the community with significant enrichment opportunities and educational events.

Community Documentation of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic will certainly go down in history as a significant event of the 21st century. During this health crisis, the GRPM collected digital submissions of community stories, videos, photos and objects to ensure our local experience is recorded for future generations. Submissions were featured in the *Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World* exhibit the Museum hosted in the summer and can also be explored at grpmcollections.org. Submissions can be made at grpm.org.

Asset Framing with Trabian Shorters

The GRPM, in partnership with Grand Valley State University, Michigan Futures, Inc., and The Skillman Foundation, hosted a virtual workshop with Trabian Shorters, the international authority on an award-winning cognitive framework called "Asset-Framing for Equity." Over 60 leaders representing government, nonprofit, corporate and economic development entities throughout the West Michigan community participated in the program. Participants learned how asset-framing defines communities by their aspirations and contributions rather than their challenges and deficits.

GRPM in the Community

GRPM Staff Received Award from Michigan Museums Association (MMA)

Six GRPM staff were recognized with an award from the MMA for their efforts in assisting with cleanup at the Midland and Sandford museums after the disastrous flooding in Central Michigan this spring.



GRPM Curatorial staff help clean up in Midland

Donations of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The GRPM donated nearly 4,000 gloves, Tyvek suits, personal respirator masks and other PPE to Spectrum Health in March during the start of the pandemic, when our local healthcare systems were experiencing a PPE shortage. These were materials the Museum had on hand for everyday work in Collections, as well as for emergencies.



Museum visitor

Inclusivity & Belonging

In partnership with Camp Shout Out, the GRPM hosted a film screening and panel discussion of the award-winning documentary *When I Stutter* in February. The program brought awareness to stuttering by addressing how the community can be cognizant of the challenges individuals who stutter face on a daily basis. The Museum continuously works to be a place of inclusivity and belonging.

Windows GR

The Museum purchased three paintings by local artists of color as part of the Windows GR project. Windows GR was a public activation project created to paint boarded-up windows in downtown Grand Rapids over the summer. In response to the death of George Floyd, police brutality and systemic racism, this project aimed to highlight black voices and stories. Three of these works are now part of the GRPM's permanent Collections and will be on display at the time this report is printed.



Windows GR project, photo by Leandro Lara



Museum visitors

Spectrum Health Experts

In partnership with Spectrum Health, two of their infectious disease physicians, Russ Lampen and Liam Sullivan, visited the GRPM's *Outbreak* exhibit and created video content shared by both organizations on infectious diseases like COVID-19 and on the effectiveness of wearing masks during an outbreak like the one we are currently experiencing.

Giving Back

The Museum donates tickets annually to various Kent County nonprofits and schools for their fundraisers.

As a service to the community, artifacts from the Collections are loaned to museums, schools and other organizations.



\$3,000+

Ticket Donations
in 2020



121

Objects on Loan
to 17 organizations



368

Artifacts
used for 45 Museum
School projects



4,549

Students
experienced artifact-based
learning thanks to 153 Discovery
Kit school reservations



255

New Donations
to the Collections consisting
of artifacts and specimens
received from 27 donors

NASA Scientist Partnership

Incoming!, a new show at the GRPM's Chaffee Planetarium, explores asteroids, comets and meteors. To make this experience out of this world, the GRPM partnered with NASA scientist Brent Bos to create a complementary live show. Bos is a West Michigan native and is currently studying asteroids. He also advised the Museum on the creation of new interactive experiences outside of the Chaffee Planetarium, including a lunar crater station, meteors under a microscope and a meteor pinball machine. *Incoming!* was launched with the reopening of the Chaffee Planetarium, in the fall.

Cultural Programming with Community Partners

This year, the Museum was unable to host the annual Anishinaabe Culture Days or the annual Ethnic Heritage Festival in person due to COVID-19 restrictions. Instead, the Museum focused on providing virtual experiences and content for the community in partnership with many local organizations. Mayor Bliss declared Indigenous Peoples' Day on October 12, and for this occasion, the GRPM partnered with the City of Grand Rapids Community Relations Commission and Anishinaabe Circle on a video designed to encourage people to celebrate the values and contributions made by indigenous people as they continue to share their way of life in their communities. Additional resources featuring the cultures that call West Michigan home were created and compiled to be shared across the Museum's website and social media channels for the community and schools to utilize.



Grand River Research

The GRPM participates in various scientific research projects along the Grand River with local partners including the John Ball Zoo, Grand Valley Metro Council, Grand Valley State University and Grand Rapids White Water.

The future restoration of the Grand River will include restoring the namesake rapids and activation of sites along the Grand River identified as key locations for public engagement, including the Museum. To tell the river restoration story, there are data and knowledge gaps that the Museum and our partners are working to fill, including information about the historic and current fish community, how humans interact with the river and how the restoration actions may change human behavior.

Fish Community Assessment

This annual assessment of fish species will provide a baseline dataset of fish communities in the area of the proposed restoration project. Fish communities are counted through electrofishing surveys.

Lake Sturgeon Juvenile Assessment

Research is underway to document young lake sturgeon in the lower Grand River. If found, these fish would indicate successful reproduction and recruitment into the Grand River population.



Macroinvertebrate Assessments

Annual macroinvertebrate (aquatic insects) surveys are conducted near the Museum's Spillman Carousel in the Grand River. This project was completed in partnership with the Grand Rapids White Water Summer Science and Leadership program in 2019. Due to COVID-19, the GRPM completed the work in the summer of 2020.

The Citizen Science Project

This research project will help document the long-term changes that will occur when the City of Grand Rapids begins the river rehabilitation project, which will add two miles of rapid habitat throughout downtown Grand Rapids, as proposed by Grand Rapids White Water.

The research uses a citizen science technique where professionals and the public work together to document the number of people fishing in the downtown reach, how they are fishing and the general locations where they are fishing.

Data gathered will show how the restoration opens new opportunities for enjoying the downtown area by building a baseline of information that can be used to compare how the river is used before and after the restoration.

Citizen scientists will collect data on those fishing in the river daily. This provides an opportunity for the community to participate in scientific research.



Museum visitors

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“It was an amazing experience and really made my teaching of the standards come alive. I was able to connect my grade-level standards to the curriculum that I designed for the week. One week benefited my students in so many ways. My students were able to make connections with what we have learned in our classroom. They were able to also make memories that will last a lifetime.”

– Rebekah Klonowski,
5th grade teacher, Stocking Elementary



Student using augmented reality in the Museum

Educational Impact

As a vital educational resource, the Museum offers learners opportunities to stimulate their curiosity through hands-on activities, access to 250,000+ artifacts, free distance learning content and guided explorations, both in person and virtually.

Virtual Programs & Distance Learning

The GRPM has curated new digital content, including Virtual Discovery Kits, database-led Virtual Scavenger Hunts and exhibit tour videos, allowing all ages to engage with the Museum’s Collections in deep and meaningful ways. As many families adjusted to blended or virtual learning throughout school closures, these resources helped them augment lessons and foster curiosity. Through engaging activities and questions, virtual visitors have been able to gain a deeper understanding of curriculum and have fun while learning.

The GRPM nimbly responded to the times by developing almost a dozen facilitated virtual programs, with options available for grades K-12. Interactive programs are presented via Zoom by Museum educators and astronomy experts, bringing artifacts, exhibit content, planetarium technology and more into classrooms and homes throughout West Michigan.

Crystal Flash Partnership

Fuel supply company Crystal Flash made it possible for students from rural schools to visit the Museum for educational programs by underwriting bussing costs. Thanks to this generosity, during fiscal year 2020, 4,888 students took a field trip to the Museum to learn about history, science and culture. Learners from 79 rural schools across more than 50 school districts, many of whom had never before taken a field trip to the Museum, were able to benefit from Museum learning. The Crystal Flash donation removed some barriers that many schools face in planning for educational opportunities outside the classroom.



Museum educator presenting artifacts virtually



Educational Impact

New Educational Partnerships

The GRPM has partnered with YETi CGI to develop a state-of-the-art digital learning platform to connect Museum learners with exhibit stories. An augmented reality experience is being built within the GRPM exhibits, allowing learners to explore and interact with the history, culture and science of their environment through smartphones or tablets equipped with an internet connection and a camera. Upon the Museum's closure in March 2020, the project team rolled out a web-based game experience, Sturgeon Excursion, that targeted the same learning outcome for students accessing the game off-site. Students can play from any location on any browser. Within this game, learners meet the mighty lake sturgeon, learn about the cultural history of this area and find out a few ways to care for the quality of the Grand River watershed. Players answer questions and gather food for their lake sturgeon avatar, allowing it to grow and travel down the Grand River on its journey to Lake Michigan. The goal is to have both in-person and off-site versions available.



Sturgeon Excursion digital game

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“I love watching our students learn new things and make connections in their learning! I love the opportunity for real-world learning and building background knowledge they wouldn't get otherwise. Kids and parents LOVED this experience!! Thank you for this amazing opportunity for learning and development.”

– Allison Diaz,
4th grade teacher, Godfrey Elementary



277
K-12 Groups

from Kent County schools
visited the Museum



13,523
Students

participated in guided
education programs



27
On-Site Tours
of the Archives



1,206
Students

accessed the Collections,
including Museum
School students



After-school educational program



After-school educational program

2019/2020 Immerse Program

One of the flagship educational programs of the GRPM, Immerse is a weeklong learning experience for schools from the West Michigan region. The learning is crafted and led by the visiting teachers, leveraging exhibition spaces, Museum artifacts and various enrichment programs.

Teachers are trained and supported through a rigorous orientation program and individualized planning. Immerse provides students with local, hands-on examples of history, science and culture. These experiences connect them deeply to their curriculum and community.

“

I brought my son to engage in the Museum activities. We thought it was a really cool opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes look at the things that go on here at the Museum. You never know just what you want to be when you grow up, so it's interesting to get a look at a lot of different things and maybe expand your horizon.”

– Brian Woodin,
parent, July 2020

The Immerse Cohort Included:



52
classes, grades 2-7



1,291
students



29 schools | 7 public school districts
4 private schools
2 charter schools

Camp Curious

Over 200 campers participated in the first-ever virtual Camp Curious. The Museum was able to offer engaging and educational camp experiences for families through web-based interactions. From behind-the-scenes tours to experiments and exploring artifacts, campers were able to participate in a wide variety of activities. Camp content was also shared with new partners D.A. Blodgett - St. John's residential care clients and Helen DeVos Children's Hospital.



Virtual Camp Curious





Under the Arctic exhibit

New & Enhanced Programs & Exhibits

Through the generosity of donors and support from our community, the Museum was able to explore new worlds, spark curiosity and bring exhibits to life with our 2020 programming.

Virtual Stargazing Programs

Virtual visitors journeyed to the depths of the universe alongside the GRPM's planetarium experts to learn about the Perseid meteor shower, tips and tricks on how to spot planets and constellations in the night sky and more. Programs were offered starting in March and continue today on a routine schedule.

Curator Battle

The GRPM launched a Curator Battle competition featuring three of its curators, held via Facebook Live, to connect with our online community in a fun and unique way, while also showcasing the Museum's artifacts and specimens. Since the launch, the Museum has partnered with two local cultural organizations, Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park and John Ball Zoo, to continue the friendly competition to educate and entertain each organization's online audience. The GRPM looks forward to continuing to partner with local cultural organizations to garner more exposure and interest for the Curator Battles.

New Way to Enjoy the Mighty Wurlitzer Theater Organ

Virtual organ concerts were brought into the homes of ticket holders this fall with a fantastic screen presentation highlighting the 1928 Mighty Wurlitzer Theater Organ, with various views including an up-close view of the organist playing the keys. Virtual concerts opened up new opportunities for Museum programming to reach communities that currently cannot visit the GRPM in person.

Museum from Home

Developed in response to the pandemic closures, the GRPM's Museum from Home web page features free activities and experiences that can be done outside the Museum walls, appropriate for learners of all ages. Experiences include downloadable Scavenger Hunts and Discovery Kits that guide visitors through the GRPM's online Collections, a tutorial on how to curate digital exhibits, coloring pages inspired by the GRPM's Collections and astronomy activities. Since March, the Museum from Home web page has had thousands of visitors, and the GRPM has received various testimonies from parents commending the resources. Explore it today at grpm.org/HomeMuseum.



Curator Battle

Traveling & Special Exhibits 2020

TOYS!

Design Zone

Bodies Revealed

Under the Arctic

*Sean Kenney's Wild Connections
Made with LEGO® Bricks*

Outbreak: Epidemics in a Connected World



Bodies Revealed exhibit



Museum visitors

“

“This is probably the best non-children’s museum for kids. I’d put this up with the Smithsonian options in DC. Just a great set of exhibits with lots to touch and do. Everything felt clean and safe. Great place to take the kids whether in town for a visit or if you live in Grand Rapids.”

– Museum Visitor,
July 2020

2020 Engagement

The GRPM engaged with visitors both in person and virtually this year through additional digitally accessible programs, access to the GRPM’s digital Collections and more.

2020 Attendance

Total visitors:
186,334*

Website visitation:
466,807

Kent Co. visitation:
48,463

School group attendance:
29,944

Virtual program attendance:
482

GRPM Digital Collections visitation:
35,000

Planetarium attendance:
43,903

Submissions to the GRPM COVID-19 digital archive:
381

Museum members:
4,737



Herpolsheimer Train, part of the GRPM’s Holiday Displays

Fiscal year: July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

*Closed March 14 - June 30, 2020, due to COVID-19



Driggs Skylark Biplane

OOK



Grand Rapids Public Museum entry

Facilities Updates

Thanks to the generous support of our community along with private donations and grants, the Museum was able to make investments that provide better experiences for visitors and also improve the efficiency and sustainability of our operations.

Van Andel Museum Center

- Replaced set of front doors to offer a second set of accessible doors
- Elongated hallway behind second-floor exhibit space to create storage and access for exhibit installation and maintenance
- Replaced walk-in cooler floor in Cafe
- Upgraded Cafe kitchen lighting to LED
- Added retaining fence to the Voigt Mill Wall on the grounds
- Completed annual roof assessment and repaired minor blisters and leak in security roof
- Completed building plumbing assessment; repaired and replaced pipes, cleaned out valves and added new venting to fourth-floor school plumbing

Ramp

- Upgraded parking ticketing in partnership with the City of Grand Rapids; made PCI compliant
- Completed ramp structural assessment: sealing surfaces, painting handrails, concrete repairs, and drain pipe replacement

Mounds

- Oil well capped and planted over; electric lines and plumbing still to be removed in 2021

Voigt House

- Flat roof repaired

Investing in Kent County

By shopping local whenever we can, we made purchases from Kent County vendors this year totaling more than \$3 million for goods and services ranging from insurance and administrative needs to securing the skills of local designers, carpenters, artists and other craftspersons. The total 2020 spend on Museum facilities was \$5.6 million.



Museum entry

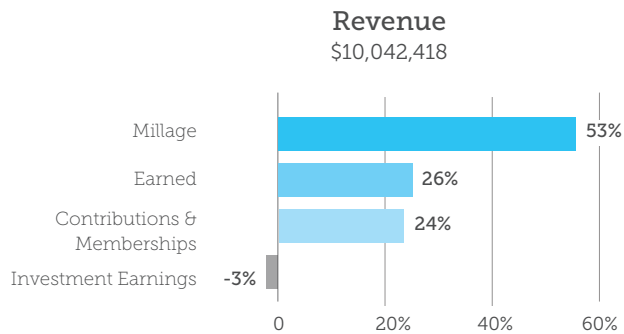
COVID-19 Related Upgrades

- Installed Global Plasma Solutions Imod ionization units into nine air handles throughout the VAMC building to clean and disinfect the air through ionization
- Altered interactive displays throughout the building
- Closed drinking fountains, communal water coolers, coffee and soda fountains
- Installed signage and plexiglass barriers encouraging social distancing
- Added sanitizer and wipes throughout the VAMC and CARC
- Added a second set of automatic door operators to front doors; created one-way flow of traffic in and out
- Added a traffic counter to exit doors to ensure accurate occupancy counts

2020 Museum Budget

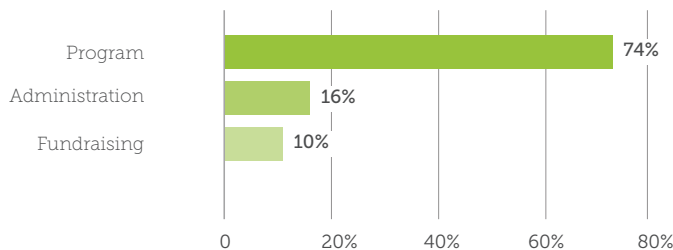
The Museum is grateful to the voters of Kent County for the millage that covers core operational costs including caring for 250,000+ community artifacts, allowing for facility improvements and previously deferred maintenance, and enhancing educational programs and exhibits.

Budget Breakdown



Expenses

\$8,453,566



Total Net Assets

\$49.3 million

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Thank you to these individuals and corporations who have made contributions to the Museum in 2020.

\$100,000+

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City of Grand Rapids
DTE Energy Foundation

\$50,000+

13 ON YOUR SIDE
David & Carol Van Andel Family Foundation
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TowerPinkster
Townsquare Media
West Michigan Credit Union
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\$1,000+

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Allegra Marketing • Print • Mail
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Richard & Teresa Amann
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please let us know by emailing us at
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How to Donate

Online at grpm.org/donate or
by calling 616.929.1728

Accreditation

The GRPM was the first public museum to be accredited
by the American Alliance of Museums. www.aam-us.org

Contact Info & Hours

Monday – Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
616.929.1700 | info@grpm.org



Grand Rapids Public Museum
272 Pearl Street NW
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504
grpm.org