



June 7th, 2024

CAVT Museums  
1801 N Prospect Ave  
2220 N Terrace Ave  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Milwaukee County Staff and Supervisors,

The CAVT Museum's supports the Charles Allis Art Museum and the Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum. As a private nonprofit, CAVT came into existence during a restructuring of the Milwaukee County War Memorial and MAM in 2012. CAVT Museums Inc. maintains the general operations, the grounds, and runs the existing museums on behalf of Milwaukee County.

Since 1945, non-profit volunteers, later joined by staff, have programmed the Charles Allis Art Museums to educate, delight, and challenge audiences to understand the history of our region's most illustrious industrial and cultural leaders, how their work fueled changes in our community, and supported generations of businesses and families.

The Charles Allis Museum has been witness to dramatic changes around it, including new high rises, multi-family structures, the waxing and waning Brady Street, Farewell, and North Avenue commercial districts, and today, a new gold rush to erect high rises along the shore of Lake Michigan.

The Charles Allis staff organizes exhibitions in response to Sarah Ball Allis's County-owned Collection, exhibitions that confront our country-wide legacies of segregation and gender discrimination, host community meetings, and serve as a polling place during elections. The staff's reach into the community fulfills the County's mental wellness and equity goals. These educational opportunities have particular meaning in historic buildings that demonstrate our past—and allow students to dream about how they will shape the future of their home. In addition to programs, the staff of the Charles Allis Museum have protected, preserved, and interpreted the Collection left by Sarah Ball Allis to the citizens of Milwaukee County via the City of Milwaukee.

Similarly to the Charles Allis, the Villa Terrace is a former private home that welcomes exhibitions, educational programs, yoga, chess clubs, school visits, weddings, and field trips from visitors of all ages. The Villa Terrace became a decorative Arts Museum in 1966 when it was donated to the Milwaukee Arts Center, today, the Milwaukee Art Museum. It functions as a de facto County Park with its elegant design that spreads from the top of the hill down towards Lake Michigan.

The building and grounds are a dream for all who visit: who doesn't wish they could live on the sunny Italian Adriatic coastline with never-ending sunlight and palm trees swaying in the breeze when faced with the reality of Wisconsin's winters? Because of the Villa Terrace's beauty and neighborhood, the Villa Terrace is much-loved by its neighbors, and visitors and popular rental destination in Milwaukee.

The Museums welcomed 23,000 guests in 2022, and 28,000 in 2024. CAVT projects over 35,000 guests in 2024, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Villa Terrace. In CAVT's most recent survey, the museums have found that at the Villa Terrace:

- 49% of guests live in Milwaukee County
- An additional 22% live in Wisconsin
- 27% of museum guests live out of state
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With current programming increases, and the success of weekly and monthly programs, CAVT projects that there has been an increase of nearly 13% of individuals from Milwaukee County, this increase to an estimated 62% of guests has been driven through hyper-local programming and focus on CAVT alignment with Milwaukee County initiatives.



Charles Allis • Villa Terrace  
**ART MUSEUMS**

The Charles Allis sees guests from Milwaukee County, and globally with the following attendance:

- 52% of guests are from Milwaukee
- An additional 22% of guests are from Wisconsin
- 21% of guests reported being from out-of-state
- Nearly 2% are from out of the country

The Charles Allis also projects a 3-5% increase in guests from Milwaukee County, accounting for education programming increasing local attendance in 2024.

Programs have been a CAVT focus in a post-COVID-19 world. Largely, art museums and cultural institutions have been called upon to serve the public in greater ways to finance the resurgence of the civil rights movement and needs created in the wake of the pandemic. CAVT museums increased public attendance from 2022 to 2023 by over 41%. This success was followed by:

- 23% increase in program attendance from 2022 to 2023
- Alignment with REBT, diversifying contractors and attendees by nearly 400%
- Mental health initiatives include sold-out yoga, breathwork, tai-chi, and “work from home”
- Expansion of Arts@1801 to include four MPS high schools
- 100 programs for the Villa Terrace’s 100th year in 2024

We estimate that volunteers who have supported both facilities—today the Charles Allis Villa Terrace Board and the Friends of Villa Terrace Board, with a former Friends of Charles Allis Board—have raised approximately three dollars to one dollar contributed by the County for the management, stewardship, interpretation, conservation and protection of the County’s two assets. The typical multiplier for non-profit dollars is that for every dollar a museum raises, it generates nearly \$2 in value for its community. Thus, we estimate the multiplier effect for our contribution to the region’s economy is \$24,000,000. The economic impact of the Villa Terrace and its event rentals conservatively reaches over \$1.2 million annually. These numbers prove how generations of Milwaukee residents have supported the two institutions.

The resources provided by the county to the two museums are dwarfed by the funds its volunteers have secured for exhibitions, educational programs, collection conservation, grounds management, and community engagement. Currently, the biggest threat to the CAVT Museums is the deferred maintenance both both the Charles Allis and Villa Terrace Museums. At the time of this letter, Milwaukee County has released a Request for Information, allowing for private and public interests to submit proposals for the use of the properties. This, with the deferred maintenance, is the largest threat to two beloved cultural institutions.

CAVT has supported the Museums with approximately \$5,700,000 of operational funds since 2014 to support the two County-owned facilities, this number does not include staffing, exhibition, or programmatic fees. This includes the replacement of a water main at the Villa Terrace, ongoing maintenance, elevator repairs, restoration efforts, and much more. The current VFA report, issued in 2024, cites nearly 6 million dollars (at each museum) of costs that CAVT currently cares for, in its estimate of deferred maintenance spending over the next 20 years. CAVT has raised over 12 million in programmatic, and operational funds to maintain doors open and community support since 2012.

The Charles Allis Art Museum was donated to the City of Milwaukee with a \$45,000 gift, to be invested and used by the City of Milwaukee to maintain the museum. If these funds had been invested well by the City of Milwaukee, and later Milwaukee County, these funds would be worth over 3.47 million. Today, this endowment is estimated at around \$240,000 and is held by Milwaukee County. These funds are not currently used to support the Charles Allis Art Museum.



## Charles Allis • Villa Terrace ART MUSEUMS

In the next 5 years, CAVT will raise and spend:

- Year // Expense // Revenue
- 2024 // \$1,021,772 // \$1,115,953
- 2025 // \$1,087,450 // \$1,135,928
- 2026 // \$1,117,900 // \$1,282,303
- 2027 // \$1,157,300 // \$1,353,803
- 2028 // \$1,208,900 // \$1,443,803

Budget linked here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/14lqKHlWw5S697j90LqLO7RCf5bcPCXj/view?usp=sharing>

This 5-year outlook does not include the need for a capital campaign to account for the deferred maintenance accrued while Milwaukee County was responsible for the buildings. Additionally, the projections are created assuming CAVT as a whole, continues to exist and operate both the Charles Allis and the Villa Terrace Museums under it's existing structures.

It is crucial to understand that Milwaukee County supervisors, the CAVT and it's supporting bodies, have been strong, reliable stewards of the homes, their collections, and the caretaking of the public as taxpayer-supported institutions. CAVT has aligned its objectives with Milwaukee County's goals of ending racism and improving the mental health of Milwaukee County citizens. This alignment and dedication to our role in Milwaukee County, as well as the strong stewardship, operational excellence, and dedication to art as a powerful tool to improve the lives of our community, needs to be fully realized in all future actions taken by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. The steadfast support of Milwaukee County initiatives demonstrates how incredibly powerful of a tool the museums are in tackling the initiative laid out are priorities by the Milwaukee County Executive.

CAVT and its partners are submitting an RFI and respectfully request an understanding of the incredible work we have done, in the context of shaping the future of both the Charles Allis and Villa Terrace Art Museums.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jaymee Willms". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that extends upwards and to the right.

Jaymee Harvey Willms, Executive Director

CAVT Museums Inc. Board of Directors

Claudia Egan, Marquaylla Ellison, James Stearns, Micheal West, Marilu Knode, Nicole Acosta, Andrea Taxman, Cindy Moran, Megan Holbrook, Thomas Haslett