

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: May 21, 2026

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Celia Benton, Economic Development Director, Department of Administrative Services

Subject: From the Director, Economic Development, Department of Administrative Services, providing an informational report on the Charles Allis Art Museum and Charles Allis Art Museum Inc., 2025 Annual Report

File Type: Informational Report

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**REQUEST**

The Department of Administrative Services – Office of Economic Development and Real Estate Services is providing an informational report regarding the successful transfer of the Charles Allis Art Museum from Milwaukee County ownership to the Charles Allis Art Museum, Inc. nonprofit organization, the nonprofit’s 2025 Annual Report, and an update on the museum’s continued operations and organizational progress.

**POLICY**

The County Board previously directed staff to explore options for terminating Milwaukee County’s ongoing operational and capital support for the Charles Allis Art Museum and evaluate transition opportunities. This effort culminated in negotiations that resulted in the separation of the Charles Allis and Villa Terrace institutions and the transfer strategy approved by the County Board.

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| Wisconsin State Statutes:                    |              |
| Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances: |              |
| Specific Adopted Budget:                     | 2024         |
| Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:           | Amendment 39 |
| Specific Adopted Capital Project:            |              |

**BACKGROUND**

In 2024, Milwaukee County began formally evaluating the future of its direct involvement in operating and financially supporting the Charles Allis Art Museum, consistent with 2024 Adopted Budget Amendment 39. That policy direction reflected broader County fiscal realities and a strategic objective of reducing direct County operating and capital obligations associated with cultural institutions while preserving public benefit.

Following extensive negotiations between Milwaukee County, the Charles Allis organization, and related stakeholders, the County Board approved a framework that

separated the Charles Allis Art Museum from the Villa Terrace Museum and established a path toward independent nonprofit ownership and operation (File No. 24-490).

Implementation of the transfer required significant legal, operational, and transactional coordination. This included organizational restructuring, due diligence, title review, probate proceedings, transaction document preparation, and coordination among the Department of Administrative Services, Corporation Counsel, external counsel, and nonprofit leadership.

On April 17, 2026, Milwaukee County successfully closed the transfer of the Charles Allis Art Museum property to Charles Allis Art Museum, Inc., marking the completion of a significant multi-year strategic initiative. This milestone represents the successful execution of County policy goals while preserving the museum’s future as a cultural asset for the community.

The Charles Allis Art Museum has demonstrated resilience and organizational progress throughout this transition period as highlighted in its 2025 Annual Report. The museum underwent significant restructuring following separation from the Villa Terrace, including implementation of a new staffing model, recruiting new Board members, a name change, expanded programming, strengthened partnerships, continued exhibitions, renewed membership efforts, and achievement of revenue targets established with Milwaukee County.

The successful transfer of ownership now positions the museum for greater operational flexibility, stronger fundraising capacity, and long-term sustainability outside direct County ownership.

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| Related File No’s:                                    | 23-889, 24-470, 24-767, 24-940, 25-466 |
| Associated File No’s<br>(Including Transfer Packets): |  |
| Previous Action Date(s):                              |  |

**ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

**FISCAL EFFECT**

None

**TERMS**

None

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Carly Neil, Interim Executive Director, Charles Allis Art Museum,  
cneil@cavtmuseums.org  
Marquayla Ellison, President, Charles Allis Art Museum Board,  
quay@ellasticdesigns.com

**PREPARED BY:**

Erica Goblet, Economic Development Project Manager, Dept. of Admin. Services

**APPROVED BY:**

*Celia Benton*

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Celia Benton, Economic Development Director, Department of Administrative Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Charles Allis Art Museum 2025 Annual Report

**CC:**

David Crowley, County Executive  
Liz Sumner, Comptroller  
Parks and Culture Committee Members  
MaryJo Meyers, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive  
Aaron Hertzberg, Director, Department of Administrative Services  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, County Board of Supervisors  
Kelsey Evans, Committee Coordinator  
Sandy Saltzstein, County Board Research Analyst