



Date: May 21, 2026

To: Chairperson Sheldon Wasserman, Jr., Committee on Parks and Culture
 Vice Chairperson Anne O'Connor, Committee on Parks and Culture

CC: Kelsey Nyen, Committee Coordinator

Subject: P 26-46 Report from the President of the Milwaukee Public Museum, providing an informational report regarding programs and financial statements.

The Mission of the Milwaukee Public Museum is to inspire curiosity, excite minds and increase desire to preserve and protect our world's natural and cultural diversity through exhibitions, educational programs, collections, and research.

Attendance and Programming –Attendance is tracking about 6% ahead of our projections to date. Some of this is due to the programming that we are offering during this last year of operations in this building. *Streets of Old Milwaukee* was bustling as nearly 4,800 people visited the Museum on Saturday, May 2, for the final *Streets Alive* in the current building. MPM docents were in the exhibit dressed in period wardrobe, sharing stories and fascinating insights about life and work in Milwaukee at the turn of the 20th century. Visitors of all ages enjoyed chatting with the different characters, including a pharmacist, a maid from the Pfister Hotel, a tavern owner, a trolley conductor, and others.

As part of our Diorama-RAMA Greatest Hits celebration, MPM hosted the 10-year anniversary of the 1st National Diorama Month Diorama-Rama on Tuesday, March 31. The theme this year was “NDM/MPM: Dioramas Revisited, Reinvented, Reimagined,” encouraging participants to put their own spin on MPM's famous Milwaukee-style dioramas. Many local artists participated in the competition with pieces inspired by familiar favorites like *Hell Creek*, *Silurian Reef*, and more.

MPM is taking visitors on a journey to the tropics May 7 through June 6 for the *Rainforest & Butterflies* Greatest Hit—the third of five exhibit celebrations in 2026 in honor of our final year open before moving to the Nature & Culture Museum of Wisconsin. During this month-long tribute to two of MPM's innovative and immersive exhibits, *Rainforest* and *Puelicher Butterfly Vivarium*, visitors can go on guided tours and stop by interactive stations to learn about the amazing biodiversity found within tropical rainforests, test their trivia knowledge about everything from pollinators to primates, and get up close with—and even handle—live creepy-crawlies that call this important ecosystem home.

Our last *Inside Out* in the current building took place on Friday, April 17. This exclusive, members-only evening gave attendees the opportunity to learn from Museum staff, researchers, students, and volunteers about what's happening behind the scenes at MPM. This year, attendees enjoyed 25

presentations throughout the Museum. Nearly 1,400 people came to the event despite severe weather that day.

Manager of Tribal Relations James Flores hosted the quarterly meeting of the Wisconsin Intertribal Repatriation Committee (WITRC) on March 19 at MPM. This committee is made up of Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) from Tribes across the state. They meet throughout the year to connect with various stakeholders, such as museums, universities, and lawmakers, to discuss repatriation and the protection of cultural sites.

Giving Day 2026 on March 12 was a tremendous success, thanks to the collective efforts of our staff, supporters, and community. Together, we unlocked the full \$300,000 match and set a new Giving Day record! With this match, we raised a total of \$644,450 with the help of 445 donors. These funds help to support our final year in the current building, packed with unique experiences and learning opportunities.

MPM's final farewell Gala, "Legacy: Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future," took place on Saturday, May 16. This last MPM Gala celebrated the Museum's rich history and how it led us to our exciting next chapter in the new Museum. Guests enjoyed a cocktail hour surrounded by stories of MPM, followed by dining throughout the Museum in some of our most iconic exhibit spaces.

Research – The museum's research staff published five scientific papers in the last quarter and continued to conduct research, in addition to overseeing the packing and move of the collections. An example is Research Curator of Anthropology, Dr. Aaron Atencio's research in Calo Me Lare in Lira, Uganda. He is conducting ongoing photovoice research where Camp San brand cameras were distributed among mothers and orphaned youth to document daily life and mission-based experiences through self-produced imagery. The project compares internal and external image-making practices to better understand cultural perception, value attribution, and representation.

Status of Current Facility

The passenger elevator that failed on January 19 was out of service for more than two months. During that time, visitors experienced wait-times for the elevator of up to 30 minutes as we had only one small elevator for wheelchairs, strollers and wagons. Also, during that time, an escalator was taken out of service for one week because the handrail was getting hot and needed parts and service. In addition, the 38-year-old, 350-ton water-cooled chiller is at end of life and needs bearing replacement to keep it limping along. This work is being done ahead of the hot season.

MPM Fiscal Summary - 9/1/2025 To 3/31/2026 (FY2026)

For the seven-month period ended March 31, 2026, MPM consolidated financial statements reported an operating surplus of \$2,519,000 compared to \$2,360,000 in income from the same period as the previous year.

Consolidated operating revenue was \$10.6M, just slightly lower than the \$10.7M last year. Consolidated operating expenditures decreased to \$8.1 million compared to \$8.3 million in the prior year. The lower revenue was because we moved our Gala from November 2025 to May 2026 and thus have not yet realized that income.

In other non-operating activity, MPM and the Endowment unrestricted investments reported an investment gain of about \$635,000.

Restricted net assets decreased \$556,000. After taking into account all financial unrestricted and restricted activity, the consolidated net assets of MPM increased by approximately \$1,487,000 during the 7 months ended March 31, 2026. (see financials at the end of the report).

New Museum Progress

Exhibit Progress – Exhibit fabrication continues. There are five fabrication companies, from Wisconsin and across the country, that are hard at work fabricating the exhibit components that will be installed in the new museum. At the end of May, some of the in-place work began in the building, such as construction of rock walls and scenic elements. Labels are in their final review. This has been a monumental task – creating labels for 5 floors of exhibits and hundreds of labels with thousands of photos and graphics. Media elements are also underway. This includes original footage from cultures around the world, new interactives and lighting and sounds that bring exhibit spaces to life. All collection items that will go on exhibition have been chosen and exhibit mounts for thousands of objects are being fabricated.

6th and McKinley Site - Construction continues to move along on-track. Electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and HVAC work continues to progress. The freight elevator and a passenger elevator have been installed and are functional while two more are being installed. Framing work for all walls continues with several floors completed. The lightwell's 4th level is framed in, drywalled and painted. Work is proceeding on level three. The monumental staircase's steel structure is complete and framing work has begun. Tile work has begun in bathrooms. Office spaces are nearly complete. All systems are moving forward. We continue to exceed our goal (50%) for onsite workforce residing in Milwaukee County. We are proud to be at 58%. (see photos at the end of this report)

Collections Move – The collection staff continue to make progress inventorying, barcoding and packing and unpacking the collections. We now have 29 staff working in all collection areas – botany, fishes, amphibians & reptiles, mammals, birds, nests & eggs, invertebrates, vertebrate fossils, invertebrate fossils, plant fossils, archaeology, ethnology, history. Work is progressing well.

Disposition Process for Non-collection Items – As reported in March, MPM and the County have established a transparent and orderly process for disposition of surplus personal property through a tiered priority system. Priority will go to County Departments, then Museums and Tribes, then non-profits and Educational Institutions. The cost of moving the items will be borne by the entity or person receiving the item. This will be communicated in advance.

The tentative plan for touring priority groups through the museum is as follows. Tours will take place on the **first and third Tuesdays at 11am and 1pm** from August through December 2026. Items will be identified but not removed until 2027. MPM will reach out to groups to inform them of the tours.

Tentative tour dates for eligible groups are as follows:

- Milwaukee County Departments– August to December
- Museums and Tribes – September to December
- Nonprofits and Educational Institutions – October to December
- Exhibit Companies – after December

The final disposition method will be a public auction. The auction date and platform have not yet been determined, but it will take place after the new museum opens and after the move out of the old building, likely in the fourth quarter of 2027. MPM will notify Supervisors in advance of the public offering.

We are happy to take questions during our appearance before the Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Censky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E'.

Ellen Censky, PhD
President/CEO

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas M. Oechler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

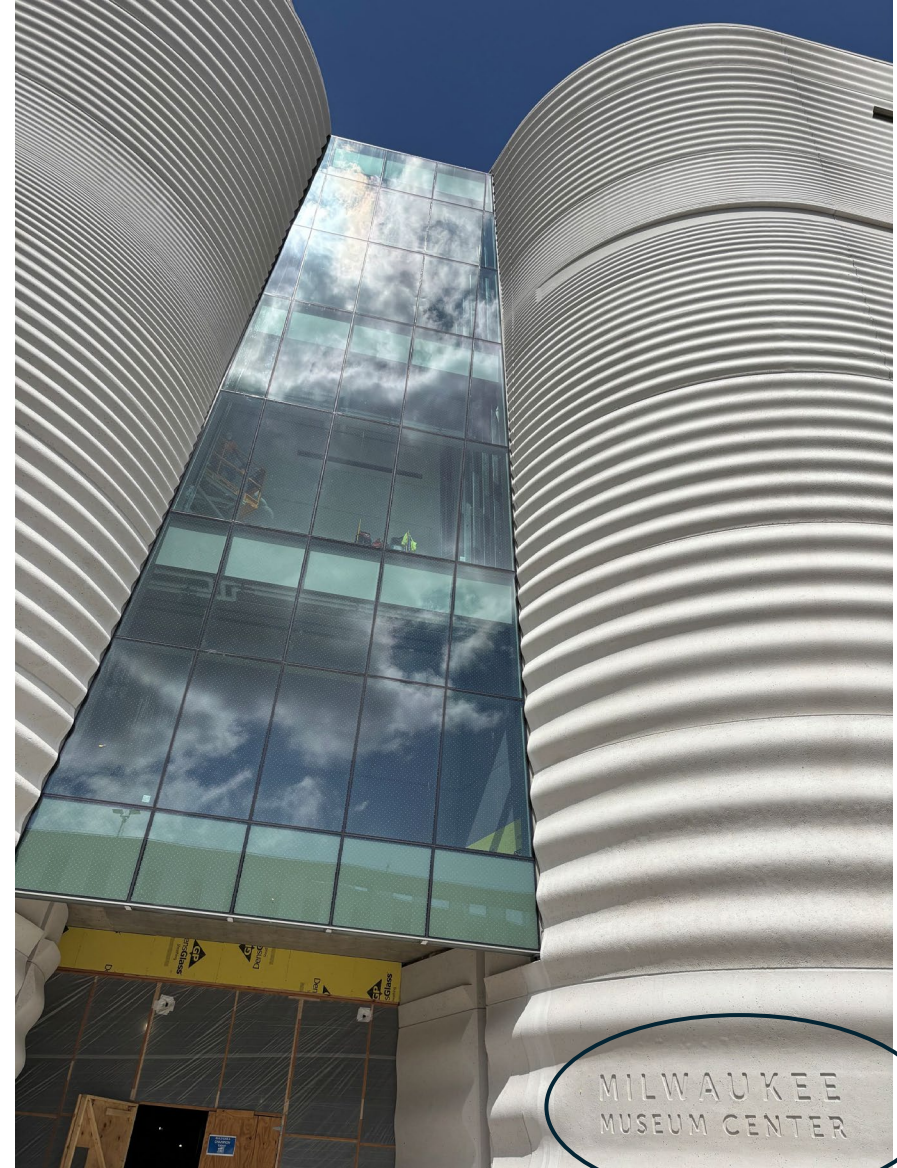
Thomas M. Oechler
VP Finance and Operations

MPM Consolidated Statement of Activities for the Seven Months Ended 3/31/26

	<u>YTD</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>YTD</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>Dev</u>	<u>Prior Year</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>Prior Year</u> <u>Change</u>
Revenue:					
Contributions	2,714,592	1,619,027	1,095,565	2,301,795	412,797
Membership	836,762	793,374	43,388	842,853	(6,091)
Special Event Revenue	237,418	220,500	16,918	986,785	(749,367)
Public Support	2,041,667	2,041,667	0	2,043,621	(1,954)
Admissions	1,546,590	1,437,435	109,155	1,436,166	110,424
Theatre/Planetarium	93,047	114,015	(20,969)	100,009	(6,963)
Programs	82,487	52,380	30,107	67,266	15,221
Restaurant and Facility Rental	110,746	99,370	11,376	147,995	(37,248)
Retail	632,317	528,742	103,575	536,728	95,589
Other income	205,904	246,703	(40,799)	88,537	117,367
Net Assets released from restrictions	2,133,229	549,948	1,583,282	2,126,698	6,532
Total Operating Revenue	10,634,758	7,703,160	2,931,598	10,678,452	(43,693)
Operating Expenses:					
Cost of Goods Sold	271,115	223,148	47,968	232,930	38,185
Supplies	445,090	583,581	(138,491)	443,679	1,411
Salaries and Wages	4,360,117	4,539,075	(178,958)	4,277,540	82,577
Benefits	1,026,369	1,089,176	(62,807)	934,424	91,945
Travel	49,363	58,642	(9,279)	33,925	15,438
Insurance	47,640	46,272	1,368	43,967	3,673
Marketing/Public Relations	240,325	309,887	(69,562)	397,391	(157,066)
Member/Donor Development	61,111	80,399	(19,288)	33,263	27,847
Subscriptions/Memberships	34,623	40,658	(6,035)	32,971	1,651
Maintenance	409,376	352,673	56,703	418,800	(9,424)
Utilities	741,444	719,353	22,091	687,026	54,418
Professional Fees	297,551	381,194	(83,643)	665,929	(368,378)
Interest Expense	1,536	1,947	(411)	1,873	(337)
Miscellaneous	130,556	112,139	18,417	111,025	19,531
Tax Expense	0	0	0	4,016	(4,016)
Total Operating Expenses	8,116,215	8,538,144	(421,929)	8,318,761	(202,546)
Inc/(dec) from Net Assets in Operating Activities	2,518,544	(834,984)	3,353,527	2,359,691	158,853
Non-Operating Items:					
Investment Earnings (Loss)	635,177	119,000	516,177	104,474	530,704
Transfer to Endowment	0	0	0	(111,389)	111,389
Pension & Post Retirement Expenses	(210,000)	(210,000)	0	(210,000)	0
Depreciation & Amortization	(900,742)	(900,741)	(1)	(903,579)	2,838
Total Non-Operating Items	(475,564)	(991,741)	516,177	(1,120,495)	644,930
Inc/(dec) in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions	2,042,979	(1,826,725)	3,869,704	1,239,196	803,783
Changes in With Donor Restricted Net Assets:					
Contributions	1,204,999	147,000	1,057,999	2,084,597	(879,598)
Investment Earnings	372,603	0	372,603	6,048	366,555
Net Assets released from restrictions for operations	(2,133,229)	(549,948)	(1,583,282)	(2,126,698)	(6,532)
Inc/(dec) in With Donor Restricted Net Assets	(555,627)	(402,948)	(152,680)	(36,053)	(519,574)
Inc/(dec) in Net Assets	1,487,352	(2,229,672)	3,717,024	1,203,143	284,209
Total Net Assets at Beginning of Period	34,040,221			30,889,986	3,150,235
Total Net Assets at End of Period	35,527,573			32,093,129	3,434,444

MPM Consolidated Statement of Financial Position as of 3/31/26

	<u>3/31/26</u>	<u>3/31/25</u>	<u>8/31/25</u>	<u>Change</u>
Assets:				
Cash and cash equivalents	2,089,892	2,992,576	2,251,823	(161,931)
Investments	4,634,571	4,434,350	4,511,559	123,012
Accounts Receivable	288,557	249,487	99,162	189,395
Contributions Receivable -Current	1,755,900	1,084,266	2,785,866	(1,029,966)
Inventories, net	104,206	84,337	68,542	35,664
Prepaid Expenses	102,863	49,745	70,350	32,513
Total Current Assets	8,975,989	8,894,759	9,787,302	(811,313)
Other Assets:				
Cash and investments held for endowment	23,122,652	16,844,344	19,590,082	3,532,570
Contributions Receivable - Long Term	3,471,755	5,524,212	3,732,820	(261,065)
Pension Benefit Asset	189,404	0	184,404	5,000
Total Other Assets	26,783,811	22,368,556	23,507,306	3,276,505
Property & Equipment:				
Building Additions	19,875,741	19,875,741	19,875,741	(0)
Furniture, equipment and other improvements	13,177,078	13,177,078	13,177,078	(0)
Right to Use Asset	65,637	65,637	65,637	(0)
Gross Property & Equipment	33,118,455	33,118,455	33,118,456	(1)
Less-Accumulated depreciation & amortization	(29,427,524)	(27,882,251)	(28,526,783)	(900,741)
Net Property & Equipment	3,690,931	5,236,204	4,591,673	(900,742)
Total Assets	39,450,731	36,499,520	37,886,281	1,564,450
Liabilities and Net Assets:				
Accounts Payable	435,422	404,947	362,492	72,930
Accrued Payroll & Benefits	764,540	674,209	734,147	30,393
Deferred Revenue	940,885	757,479	1,003,587	(62,702)
Lease Payable - Current	13,630	13,056	13,630	0
Current Portion of Post Retirement Benefits	149,526	235,626	149,526	0
Total Current Liabilities	2,304,003	2,085,316	2,263,382	40,621
Accrued Postretirement Benefits	1,533,858	2,211,614	1,479,301	54,557
Annuity Payment Liability	77,734	87,934	87,934	(10,200)
Lease Payable	7,564	21,526	15,444	(7,880)
Total Liabilities	3,923,159	4,406,391	3,846,061	77,098
Net Assets:				
Without Donor Restrictions	20,337,065	16,954,034	18,294,086	2,042,979
With Donor Restrictions	15,190,507	15,139,095	15,746,134	(555,627)
Total Net Assets	35,527,572	32,093,129	34,040,220	1,487,352
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	39,450,731	36,499,520	37,886,281	1,564,450



McKinley Street Entrance to Building



Butterfly Vivarium – 5th floor

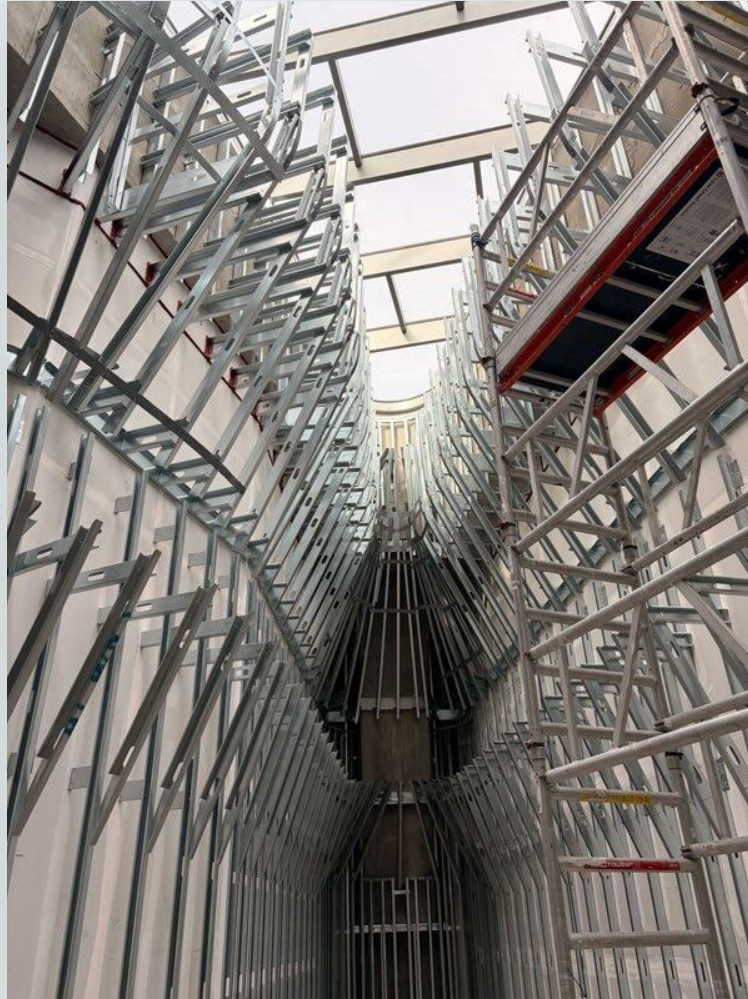


View from southeast

Lightwell

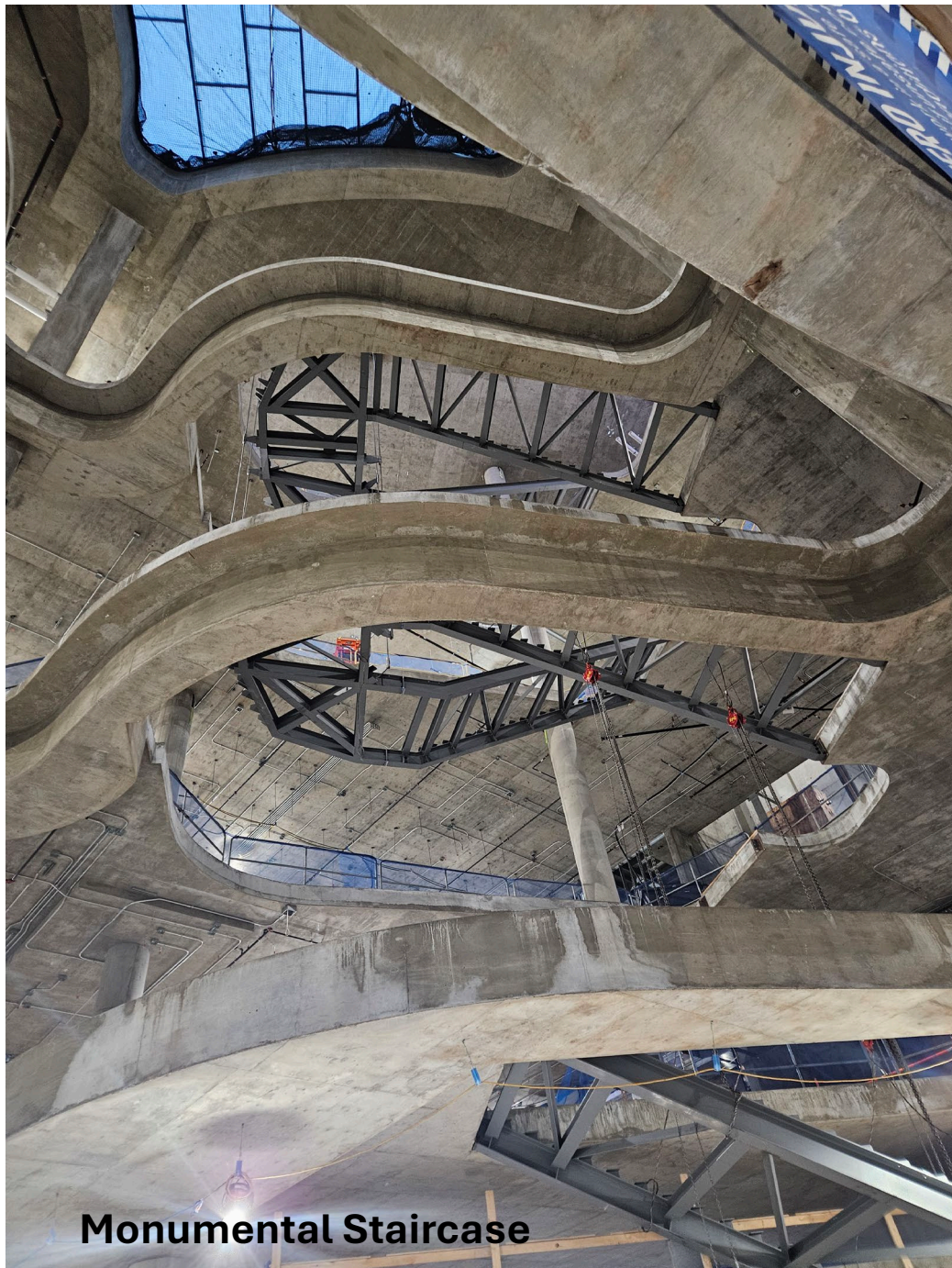


Framed lightwell



Drywalled lightwell





Monumental Staircase



Staircase landing on first floor



Planetarium



Temporary Exhibit Gallery



Current Museum Storage



Offsite Storage

