

The West End Museum

Boston's Neighborhood Museum

Joe McDonald Named West End Museum President *Native West Ender Brings Years of Community Experience, Dedication to Position*

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Boston, MA—Joe McDonald, a third-generation West End native and longtime community activist, has been named President of [The West End Museum](#) Board of Directors. McDonald served as a Board member for two years and as President of the West End Civic Association (WECA) in 2012. Now, as Museum President, he aims to help the nonprofit achieve a more secure financial position. *(Media note: Download photo of McDonald [here](#).)*

“The Museum is such an asset to the West End and, over the past several years, has grown to focus on far more than urban renewal. It has expanded to embrace other periods all the way through to the present day, giving a wider historical perspective that’s been very enlightening for old and new West Enders alike,” McDonald said. “I’m pleased to take on this new role and help bring the best of the old neighborhood to today’s West End.”

Community advocacy and engagement are in Joe McDonald’s DNA. He has proudly followed in the footsteps of his father, also named Joseph, who dedicated much of his life to improving circumstances for residents of the West End. Sadly in 1953, the family had to move to Jamaica Plain when the destruction and displacement of urban renewal hit the community. Although just 12 years old at the time, the younger McDonald has vivid memories that drive his commitment to the neighborhood to this day.

McDonald lived in many places around the world while working for the US Government and first retired to Rockport, but he yearned to return to his childhood community. In 2005, he bought a condo literally 50 feet from his birthplace and happily made his homecoming to the West End. Within days, he visited the Museum and was so impressed by the efforts to preserve memory of the old neighborhood—including his own father’s papers in the permanent *Last Tenement* exhibit—that he became a member on the spot. McDonald also wanted the new West End to be a real neighborhood, so he joined the WECA in 2005, was elected Vice President in 2011 and President the following year. He continues to be an active member.

McDonald sees The West End Museum as, in part, filling the role of the Elizabeth Peabody House, the West End House and the church groups of old. By hosting neighborhood-focused events and exhibits that highlight various historical and cultural aspects of the area, the Museum provides multiple opportunities to celebrate the West End and bring together former and current residents and business people to foster a renewed sense of community.

“We’d like to get a little closer to what the old West End was—a vibrant, close-knit, family-oriented and very tolerant community,” said McDonald, “and that’s exactly what we’re aiming to do.”

Dr. Susan Hanson has served as both Museum President and Director since July of 2015. McDonald’s appointment effectively splits those responsibilities so that Hanson can focus on the role of Director, expanding the Museum’s programming and visibility within Metro Boston and throughout New England.

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About The West End Museum:

The West End Museum is dedicated to the collection, preservation and interpretation of the history and culture of the West End neighborhood. The Museum’s permanent exhibit, “The Last Tenement,” highlights the immigrant history of the neighborhood through its decimation under Urban Renewal in 1959; the main gallery features multiple rotating exhibits. The Museum is located near North Station. Its entrance is on Lomasney Way. Hours: Tuesday - Friday 12:00pm - 5:00pm; Saturday 11:00am - 4:00pm. Admission is free.

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