

THE WEST END MUSEUM

Annual Report

2025



WEM

THE WEST END MUSEUM

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Welcome Message

From Lois Ascher, Board President

Greetings,

This year was The West End Museum's first full year since re-opening in May 2024. As President of the Board of Directors, I have witnessed how we have continued to expand our reach, deepen our connection to the community, and advance the central goals of our organization. Our work has immense impacts both in our neighborhood and beyond that would not be possible without our dedicated supporters. As we reflect on 2025, I would like to share some key updates with you.

The West End Museum has been recognized as a prominent historic institution and modern advocate when it comes to urban renewal in and outside of The West End. This is the result of strategic planning efforts implemented in 2025, the most notable of which is our new mission statement. It now reads "The West End Museum interprets and presents the history of Boston's West End, along with the broader history of urban planning, renewal, development, and activism. It engages people in the West End; promotes respect for people and places past and present; advocates for responsible urban growth; preserves cultural artifacts; and encourages citizens to consider the legacy they leave for their communities." This change has emboldened us to continue the important work we have been engaged in while also expanding the area and subject matters we can cover.

There has been a continued increase in the recognition of our institution which has simultaneously spread awareness about our neighborhood. In 2025, we had our second highest visitorship ever, deepened our relationship with local organizations such as the Museum of African American History (MAAH), and were invited to present at this year's North East Museum Association (NEMA) conference. Our rising profile has led to historic milestones such as North Slope being recognized as part of the historic West End for the first time since urban renewal and successfully advocating for the expansion of residential zoning use in the Bullfinch Triangle.

Thank you to our staff, Board Members, volunteers, supporters, and partners. Your collective efforts fuel our mission and ensure that the Museum continues to thrive as a space for learning, reflection, and community. With your continued support, we will expand our programs, deepen our historic research, and strengthen our impact to share the history of the West End and build a better tomorrow.

As we look forward to the coming year, I am filled with excitement for how WEM will continue to evolve and grow. Together, we will ensure that future generations understand our neighborhood's history alongside the past and present impact of urban renewal. On behalf of The West End Museum, I want to thank you all for your unwavering commitment to our mission. We are honored to have you with us on this remarkable journey.

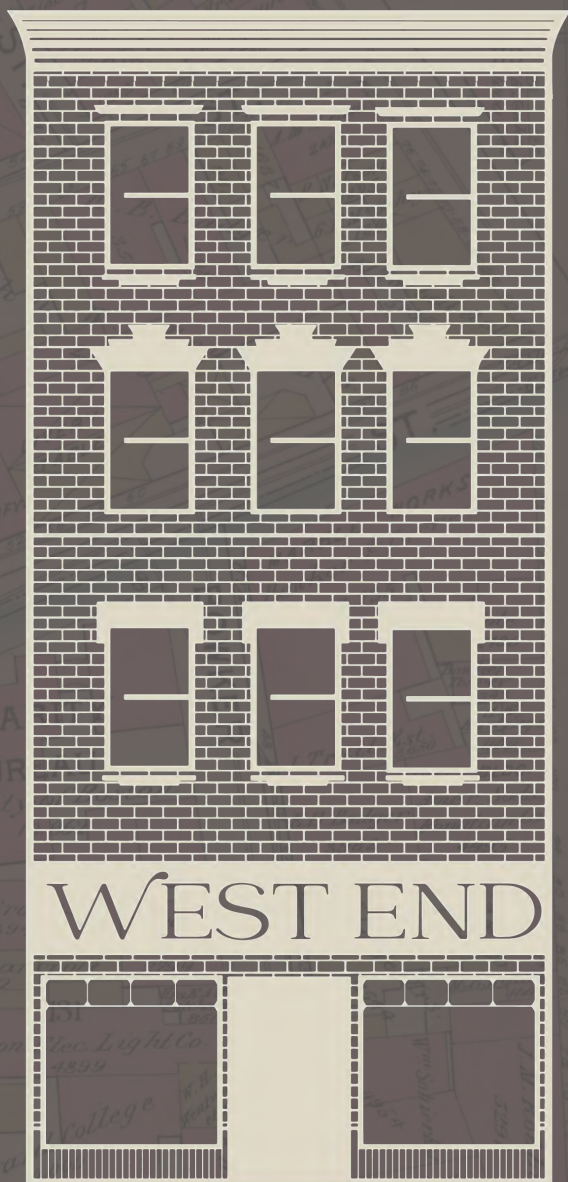
With Deep Appreciation,



Lois Ascher
President, Board of Directors
The West End Museum

Our Mission

The West End Museum interprets and presents the history of Boston's West End, along with the broader history of urban planning, renewal, development, and activism. It engages people in the West End; promotes respect for people and urbanization; and preserves its material history and growth; preserves cultural artifacts; and encourages citizens to consider the legacy they leave for their communities.



Organization Overview

The West End Museum preserves the history of the modern neighborhoods that once composed the West End and West Boston. As the United State's only museum dedicated to the growth of urban spaces, we highlight the West End's destruction and the varied experiences of Bostonians building, planning, developing, and fighting for a better city. We apply lessons learned in the City on a Hill on a global scale, emphasizing the importance of community voice in place making, the innate right we hold to our places, and our shared responsibility to maintain our great cities for following generations.

In 2025, WEM acquired several significant artifacts that expanded our collections and enhanced our collections.

A notable acquisition in 2025 was author Dave Kruh's donation of material from his time with the Central Artery Tunnel Project (Big Dig) as a public relations manager.

This collection of maps, photographs, original documents, and ephemera are used extensively in the 2026 exhibition *The Story of Boston's Big Dig*.

Jody Troiano donated a myriad of items from her great grandfather's West End corner store, Mike's Variety, that was located at 49 Barton Street.

This collection includes a Wurlitzer jukebox, deli slicer, meat scale, and syrup dispensers.

We also acquired another work by West Ender Bashka Paeff. A Russian immigrant who became a prominent female sculptor in the 20th Century. The new piece is a white plaster bust of a young girl created in 1932.



Achievements of 2025



Exhibitions

This year's special exhibitions highlighted a multitude of themes that attracted a diverse array of visitors. We began the year with "An Illusion of Freedom: Boston and the Fugitive Slave Laws". WEM showcased one of Boston's early green spaces through "The Charlesbank." The museum collaborated with Miguel Rosales to create the hit mini-exhibit "Birdges as Structural Art in Boston." Art from the community was featured in "Trees of Thoreau Path Art Show." Finally, "Voyages of Hope: Immigrant Journeys to Boston" discussed the journey of immigrants traveling to start a new life in Boston.



Events

The West End Museum hosted dozens of events that were attended by many patrons. WEM has endeavored to connect with new audiences and expand our offerings. Our lecture topics ranged from Boston's pioneering sports history, to barrel pianos, the use of concrete, and more. Walking tours covered murder mysteries, architecture, and women's history among other subjects. We engaged with local non-profit partners to produce a community art show and host a book club. This year, we celebrated the past and present of our community while forging new relationships through our events program.



Volunteers

Our community of volunteers continues to be invaluable to our work. Our Volunteers welcomed 4,866 visitors into our space while demonstrating admirable hospitality and expertise. They participated in numerous special projects such as researching and writing 30 articles that included *Rum, Molasses, and Enslavement in Boston* and *The Greatest Political Enemies of 20th Century Boston: West End's Lomasney Vs. Mayor Curry*. In 2025, we also began using Bloomerang Volunteer to streamline the process of scheduling and logging our hundreds of volunteer hours. Thank you volunteers, for all that you do!

Financial Summary

Statement of Activities

2025 REVENUE

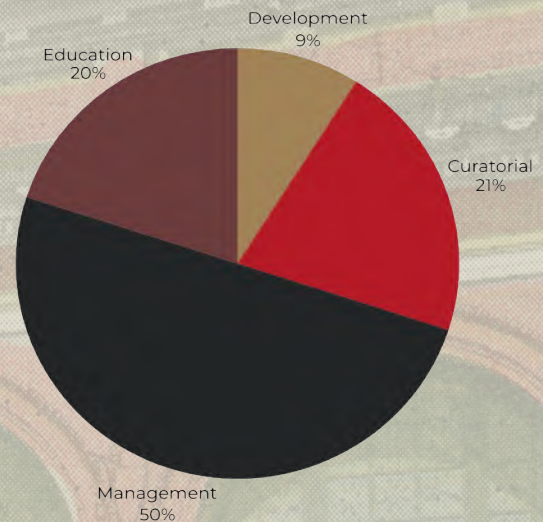
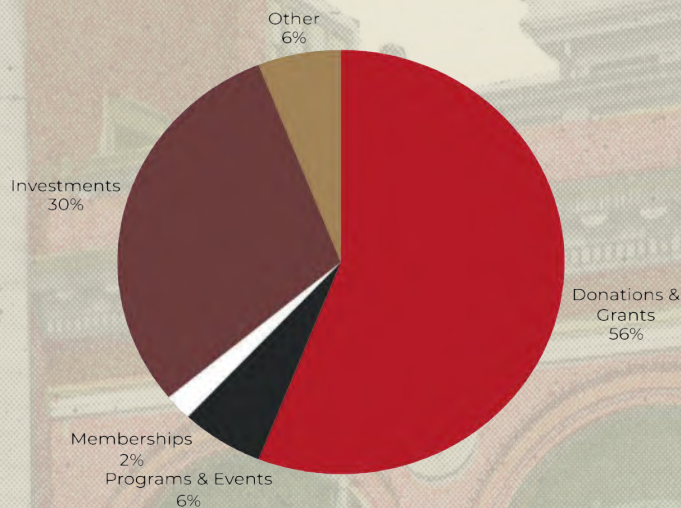
| | Amount | Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| DONATIONS & GRANTS - | \$337,000 | 56% |
| PROGRAMS & EVENTS - | \$33,500 | 6% |
| MEMBERSHIPS - | \$13,200 | 2% |
| INVESTMENTS - | \$183,000 | 30% |
| OTHER - | \$35,300 | 6% |

TOTAL: \$602,200

2025 EXPENSES

| | Amount | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| CURATORIAL - | \$95,900 | 21% |
| EDUCATION - | \$92,600 | 20% |
| MANAGEMENT - | \$231,200 | 50% |
| DEVELOPMENT - | \$39,700 | 9% |

TOTAL: \$459,400



Statement of Financial Position

Assets:

Cash \$701,400
 Accounts Receivable \$209,000
 Other Current \$4,000
 Fixed Assets \$999,400
 Pledges Receivable \$1,040,300
 Right of Use (Lease) \$161,400
 Long term Investments \$1,349,500

TOTAL Assets:
\$4,465,000

Liabilities:

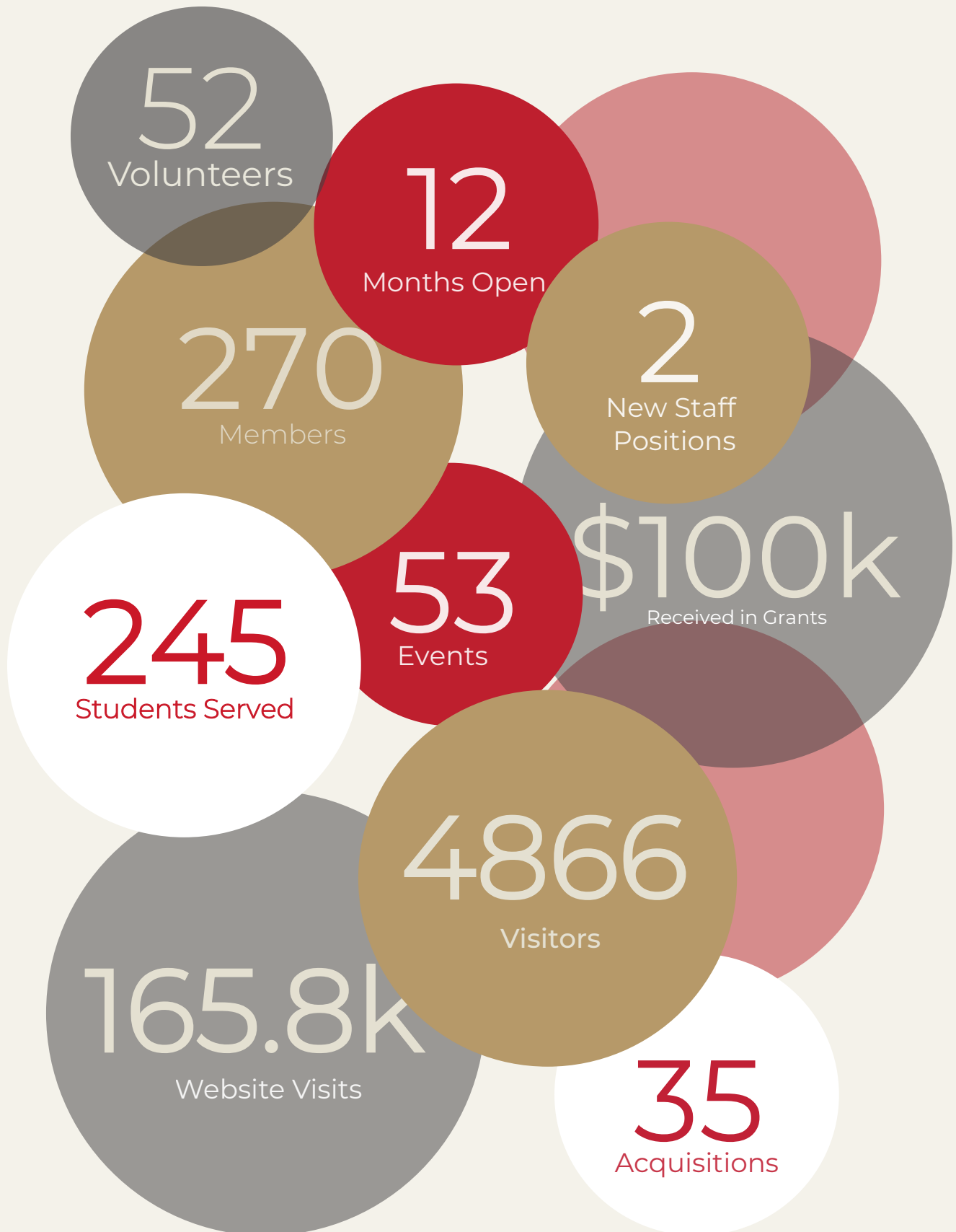
Accounts Payable \$21,100
 Credit Cards \$3,300
 Other \$123,800
 Long-term Liabilities \$134,200

Equity:

Retained Earnings \$4,039,900
 Net Revenue \$142,700

TOTAL Liabilities and Equity:
\$4,465,000

Our Year in Numbers



A Look Forward

Education

This year, WEM solidified and expanded our educational reach. Students from across the region, ranging from 2nd grade to graduate school, had educational experiences in our spaces. We strengthened our partnerships with programs from Boston University and Northeastern University while forging a new relationship with Wentworth Institute of Technology.

In 2026, we will focus on implementing state-standard informed curriculum. This will be available on our website and utilized during educational visits by Fall 2026. Additionally, we have made inroads with the Boston Public School (BPS) system with the goal of having our curriculum, lesson plan, and neighborhood history available to BPS teachers soon. We appreciate the time and support of the BPS administrative team.

WEM impacted 245 students this year. We are excited to see how this continues to grow and evolve in 2026.

Special Exhibitions

WEM hosted 5 special Exhibitions. The topics these explored varied from Black history, to urban planning, immigrant history, and more.

Voices from the community were featured in a partnership with WE Tree Boston where the public was invited to make art inspired by Thoreau Path. WEM plans on bringing more community voices into our space in 2026!

Coming up in 2026

The Story of Boston's BIG DIG
(Guest Curated by David Kruh)
Feb 2026 - June 2026

Wild Times in the West End
(A True Crime Exhibition Guest Curated by Emily Sweeney)
Planned June 2026

The Queer History of The West End - Working Title
Planned June 2026

Partnership with Artists for Humanity
Planned Oct 2026

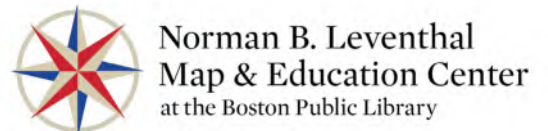
Partners



chan ascher architecture



DOWNTOWN NORTH ASSOCIATION



Board Members, Staff, and Volunteers:

Staff:

Sebastian Belfanti -
Executive Director

Bob Potenza -
Cultural Preservation
Manager

Jaydie Halperin-
Interpretation Manager

Kaylee Redard-Cryan -
Operations Coordinator

Officers of the Board:

Lois Ascher -
Board President

Michael Gropman -
Vice President

Tom Palmer -
Treasurer

Duane Lucia -
Clerk

Members of the Board:

Leland Alexander

Katie Burke

Bob Campanella

Samantha DiMauro

Julia Forbes

Bruce Guarino

Chad Kindregan

Bill Kuttner

Andy Matteis

Dan McGrath

N'Dia Reigler

Jane Wilson

Ex-Officio:

Richard Hartnett
Nick Haney

Volunteers

Alanis O.
Amir T.
Arielle M.
Ava G.
Beatrice F.
Benjamin T.
Brendan K.
Brendan W.
Bruce G.
Caleb P.
Charles C.
Cherita C.
Chrstina H.
Cindy S.
Dan S.
Daniel D.
Deepa T.
Eldana H.
Fannie C.
Geraldine M.
Helen E.
Helen H.
Illana A.
Janelle S.

Julia F.
Lois A.
Lorraine D.
Meyer A.
Michael G.
N'Dia R.
Nancy D.
Neil S.
Nicholas L.
Nicole B.
Olivia F.
Patrick R.
Paul S.
Queenie C.
Robert A.
Robet S.
Ryan K.
Samantha D.
Sara W.
Sumaya N.
Thomas P.
Trisha O.
Victoria S.
William K.
William S.

Interns

Eldana H.
Jaydie H.
Jenn L.
Julie B.
Paris W.
Amadine C.

Thank You!

Donations

Our sincerest gratitude to the dedicated individuals who make up The West End Museum's vibrant community. Thank you to our donors, partners and volunteers, and to the wider community, for your unwavering support.

In Kind Donations

Boston Athenaeum
Brattle Book Shop
Ciao Roma
Cobblestones
Emack & Bolio's
Five Iron Golf
Historic New England
JP Licks
Malloray Portraits
Mary Howarth
Modern Pastry
Old North
Paul Revere House
Robert Kohen
Samantha DiMauro
Sebastian Belfanti
Star Market
Swan Boats, Inc.
Tavern Tales
Thomas Palmer
West End Market

\$501-\$999

Duane Lucia
Michael Maler
Daniel McGrath

\$5000+

Boston Properties
Equity Residential Foundation
Joseph Cancelleri
Forbes Family
Council on Library Information Resources
Institute of Museum and Library Sciences
Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism
Massachusetts General Hospital

\$1000-\$5000

Holly Laurent
John A. Cucinotta
Joseph McDonald
The Robert Cushman
Woods Van Nostrand Fund
Michelle Desveaux
Richard Vogt
Allison Ryder
Kambiz Shahbazi
Miguel Rosales
Gene Lawrence Kroner
Andy Matteis
City of Boston

\$250-\$500

Jessie and Bill Younker
Barbara Kaplan
Patricia Dick
Helen Betsy Munzer
Christine Hann
Lois Ascher
Beacon Hill Civic
Association
Rebecca Unruh
Robert Campanella
Star Market
Virginia Caruso Bove

\$1-249

Abigail Averbach
Alan Siegal
Alexandra Tisdale
Alexis Hambrick
Alison Barnet
Ann Ruma
Ann Tartre
Ashley Rine
Beverly Hector-Smith
Brendan Kent
Brent Cliveden
Bruce Guarino
Caitlin Burke
Charities Aid Foundation
America
Charles Gargiulo
(Continued Below)

Thank You!

Andrew Zelermyer &
Dan Romanow
Dena Barisano
Deniz Ozturk
Dennis Freezer
Diane Mercer
Dianne Royle
Donna Edison
E Jo-Anne Wyndham &
Jeffery Kaufman Fund
Elizabeth Parry
Elliot H. Gertel
Emack & Bolio's
Eric Winter
Frank Delvecchio
Geoffrey O'Brien
Gerald Richman
Guy Hermann
Harrison Paul
Helaine Davis
Henry Bain
Howard Cowan
James Aurelio
James P. Donley
Jan Donley
Jane Papa
Janelle Rabbottino
Janice Pinto

Jeffery Kaufman
Jill Klingenstein
Johanna Halperin
John Wilson
Karla Eusebio
Katherine Dander
Langway Family
Leah Dearborn
Leland Mercer
Alexander
Linda Ellenbogen
Lorenz Finison
Louise Thomas
Lynne Levine
Young
Margaret Geller
Mary Sugden
MaryGaye Grizwin
Maura Farber
Meet Boston
Michael Gropman
Michael Wyson
N'Dia Riegler
Nancy Dennis
Nella Potenza
Palma Caron

Pamela Doyle
Patricia Landers
Patrick McEldowney
Paul Brewer
Paul Levy
Paul Sherman
Paula Andreottola
Paula D Scopa
Richard McCarthy
Richard P. DiMare
Robert S Bengen
Robert Stricker
Roslyn Diamond
Sally Ebeling
Samantha DiMauro
Steven Andrade
Susan Davidson
Tara Joyce
Tomas A. Connors
Thomas Damigella
Troy Gilman
Vanguard Charitable
Giving
Vic DiGravio
William H Wagner
William Kuttner

Closing Remarks

From Sebastian Belfanti, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

The West End Museum's successes are the direct result of our strong and devoted community. Your advocacy, contributions, engagement, and involvement ensure that the West End's legacy continues to play a vital role in Boston and beyond. Throughout of first full year re-opened, so many of you provided irreplaceable support that allowed us to recover to our pre-COVID levels of visitorship while vastly expanding events, fundraising, and special exhibitions.

This was a year of change. We are beyond grateful to the hundreds of you who have helped affect this evolution. While continuing to collect, preserve, and share the history of the West End, we have begun expanding our scope to include the planning and development of Boston Proper, alongside urban renewal and planning further afield. WEM facilitated conversations about development in the West End and beyond, hosted its first educational programming about the modern West End, and engaged students in research about transit induced gentrification. Your generosity has enabled us to apply the West End's legacy to the modern day and become advocates for responsible and informed urban change. Thank you for helping the Museum continue to serve as a steward of this neighborhood's legacy as we continue this journey together.

WEM received a \$150,000 grant from The Cummings Foundation in honor of the Stephens family to raise awareness of the Museum and sustain its ongoing growth. A Community Preservation Grant from the City of Boston, and a Recordings at Risk grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources, contributed \$18,000 to facilitate digital preservation and access to the West Ender newsletter and West End Video Newsletter. Both collections carry national significance, constituting the only long-term community-led effort to sustain the culture and connections between members of a displaced community in the history of the United States. We also won \$25,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to share the queer history of the West End. Unfortunately, it was one of the many federal grants terminated in 2025. Nevertheless, we are intending to publish an adjusted exhibit celebrating the LGBTQIA+ history of our neighborhood in 2026. Loss of federal support is a setback for WEM. It is also a reminder that the stories you help tell matter- your support helps continue a Bostonian legacy pioneered by O'Conner, Handlin, Gans, Anderson, Fried, and numerous others to create a more truthful record of the past and present.

Thank you to everyone who supported the Museum this past year: for your contributions to the archive; your donations; your memberships; and your presence at our events. Thank you to our Board Members, volunteers, partners, and staff, whose efforts turn all that support into action. All that we have accomplished—and all that is yet to come—is only possible because of you.

Many thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SAB', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Sebastian Belfanti
Executive Director
The West End Museum

In Loving Memory
Herbert Gans
May 7, 1927 - April 21, 2025



A refugee from Nazi Germany, Herbert Gans was one of the United States' most influential Sociologists. He lived in the West End from October 1957 to May 1958. Here, he conducted research on the culture and lifestyles of residents in the neighborhood.

His findings culminated in the publication of *The Urban Villagers: Groups and Class in the Life of Italian Americans* (1962). His work asserted that city planners were incorrect in defining the West End, a vibrant community despite widespread poverty, as a slum and deemed Boston's urban renewal process inhumane.

Gans continued to teach and write throughout his life, demonstrating his commitment to social justice-oriented research. May his legacy serve as a reminder of the importance of human-centric research and advocacy both in academic work and beyond.

WEM

THE WEST END MUSEUM