

Bruce R. Watkins
CULTURAL HERITAGE CENTER

Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center

Executive Summary

The ROZ Group & ConsultEcon – Updated 11.27.23

Current Mission Statement for Bruce R. Watkins Center

To commemorate and interpret the African-American [sic] diaspora, particularly in the State of Missouri, the City of Kansas City, MO, and its surrounding areas through fostering educational and cultural programs regarding the past, present, and contemporary contributions of African Americans who served to shape the city and state's history and culture. A major component of contemporary and future interests involves the conscientious development of state environmental policies.



Background

01

For over 30 years, the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center & Museum has provided insight into the important legacy of Mr. Watkins and African Americans in Kansas City, MO.

02

The institution has been a great source of pride for the people and has exhibited African American artistic talent and African American excellence in numerous fields.

03

The elders of the community want to ensure that generations to follow know of the late Bruce R. Watkins contributions to Kansas City.

Current Situation

- BRWCHC is at a critical point in its life cycle, requiring transformative decisions to propel the Center forward and ensure sustainability for the years to come.
- There is an opportunity to consider a new business model.
- A new mission could take the Center in a contemporary direction, one that increases attendance, generates partnerships, and establishes educational and civic programming.





SWOT Analysis

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Strengths

- A committed community of long-term supporters
- Location in a central part of the community
- Long term sustainability
- A respected legacy of Bruce Watkins
- Support from African American elected officials
- Peer arts leaders who want to participate in the future success of the organization
- Kansas City has a robust African American presence
- Excellent rental/event space





Weaknesses

- Limited staffing
- Complicated managerial/organizational/governance structure
- No fundraising plan in place
- Lack of a plan to attract a contemporary audience
- Lack of resources to bring in attendance-generating exhibitions from around the country
- Lack of a three-to-five-year programming plan
- Inadequate public funding
- Insufficient private donations



Opportunities

- Develop a funding model that is more intentional and truly sustains a Black institution in the 21st Century
- Partnerships with peer institutions, universities & colleges, and Kansas City Convention & Tourism
- A new mission and vision dedicated to Civic Engagement
- The Center is one of few venues in Kansas City that can speak to the African American experience
- Multi-media programming that addresses historic and contemporary issues for African Americans



Threats

- Past funding models have not support Black institutions in earnest
- Fundraising is not present and is critical to an updated mission and vision
- Hard to retain staff
- Not enough equity in public funding
- Need to make the Bruce Watkins legacy relevant to youth
- Need for a contemporary vision for programming, events, and displays
- Lack of climate control is a threat to the preservation of important documents, artifacts, and dynamic exhibitions

Draft Recommendations

Please note: that these recommendations have not yet been approved by the Parks & Rec Board

Categories for Consideration



Organizational Structure



Governance



Fundraising



Archives



Programming



Mission & Vision



Marketing and Audience Development

Current Governance Structure

- There are three organizations' roles and responsibilities related in the management and operation of the BRW Center: The State of Missouri (State), Kansas City Parks and Recreation (Parks), and Friends of BRW Cultural Heritage Center & Museum (FBRW).
- The facility is owned by the State and KC Parks & Rec operates and manages the premises in collaboration with the support of FBRW. Agreement between State and Parks end on September 30, 2024.
- In 2021, Parks and FBRW have been operating based on a “plan to provide operational services and financial assistance for the Center & Museum,” through a MOU valid through December 31, 2027.



Governance Recommendations

- Consider a governance structure that creates the framework for autonomy, growth, and sustainability.
- Establish a board with fiduciary oversight and fundraising capacity, thus making the institution attractive to funders.
- Ensure that the Center is eligible to apply for significant grants and individual contributions to pay for a portion of operations.
- Explore the Kansas City Museum as a model.

The Friends of Bruce R. Watkins



- Consider a new advisory, non-voting relationship between the Center and the Friends.
- Establish term limits thus encouraging new people to join.
- Establish a newly defined role for the Friends and honor their being stewards of the legacy. This could be a major annual fundraising event.

Archives

- The Center lacks the proper climate control to house and display important documents and artifacts.
- Archiving requires specific skills and programming experience to create displays and/or loans to other institutions.
- Work with the Black Archives of Mid-America to assess the complete inventory of archives and determine what should be maintained.
- Consider Black Archives of Mid-America or a local university as a new home for the Bruce Watkins artifacts.
- Meet with local university history departments to explore additional opportunities.
- Determine a list of artifacts and documents that might go on loan to the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in DC.





Marketing & Audience Development

- Create a position that has oversight of marketing and audience development. Establish Public Relations and Communications relationships.
- Oversight of Community Engagement can be part of this role.
- Establish a partnership with Tourism and Conventions.

Kansas City Museum as a Model

Some of the contributing factors that allowed KCM to become its own 501c3:

- KCM leadership dismantled the advisory committee (similar to The Friends) in 2013 and maintained the advisory board's 501c3, which allows the Mayor to maintain control of board approval (this setup has certain challenges).
- The process for KCM to become a fully operating 501c3 took about seven years – building a new board, securing public vote for funding from the mil tax, developing new bylaws and policies, fundraising (private and government), and gaining public support.
- KCM had strong support from KC Parks & Rec leadership and the Mayor at the time.
- KCM has had a strong, visionary leader with deep museum experience since 2013.



Civic Engagement

A Potential New Mission





Civic Engagement

- Making sure people have a voice and are both heard, respected, and understood
- Voters' rights
- Civic responsibility in your community
- Knowing how to effect change locally
- Multigenerational storytelling and conversation
- Cultural heritage festivals and events
- Cross-cultural conversations
- Showcasing artists focused on social justice

Civic Engagement Mission

Focus the mission, vision, and programming on the intersection of **civic engagement, heritage, arts, and culture.**

Civic engagement attracts peer partnerships (as evidenced by group discussion with cultural arts peers).

Civic engagement is part of the national conversation about social justice and is at the core of many African American cultural institutions.



Benefits of a Focused Civic Engagement Center



- Honor the legacy of Bruce R. Watkins.
- Allow BRWC to become an important educational cornerstone for the City's youth programming.
- Appeal to new audiences, funders, and elected officials.
- Focus on the importance of voting and community involvement.
- Civic Engagement is part of a critical conversation for today's chaotic world.

Financial Analysis



Transition Funding: \$2.3M - \$3.5M/ Over three years

- Includes

1. Organizational development and transition
2. Governance study
3. Master plan
4. Fundraising feasibility/plan
5. Marketing/branding/ engagement plan
6. Program/exhibition plan
7. Early action implementation

- Does Not Include

- Capital improvements
- Full implementation of recommendations from the plans developed



Potential Funding Sources

- Parks & Recreation
- Dedicated mil or other tax
- City General and Capital Improvement Fund
- State
- African American Service and Faith-based Organizations
- Private Individuals
- Philanthropic Institutions
- Corporations

Operational Success Factors: BRWC will...

- Operate as a standalone 501[c][3]
- Become a cultural heritage center that offers, on-site, off-site, and online programs and services.
- Support the appropriate staff, management, and leadership infrastructure.
- Be well maintained, in terms of physical, financial, and programmatic structure, to minimize insurance risks and unexpected repair and maintenance expenses.
- Develop an aggressive marketing and PR program to achieve and maintain visitation and interest in the evolving program.. This strategy will leverage partnerships from the Visitor and Convention Bureau.
- Maintain an active fundraising plan that ensures that multiple groups contribute.
- Reflect a tightly operated project with a “bottom line” orientation.

Annual Operating Revenue & Budget

Earned Revenue: (11%)

Non-Earned Revenue: (89%)

\$1.14 million Total Annual Revenue

Salaries, Wages, Taxes, Benefits (65%)

Contractual Services (33%)

Commodities (2%)

\$1.14 million Total Annual Operating Budget

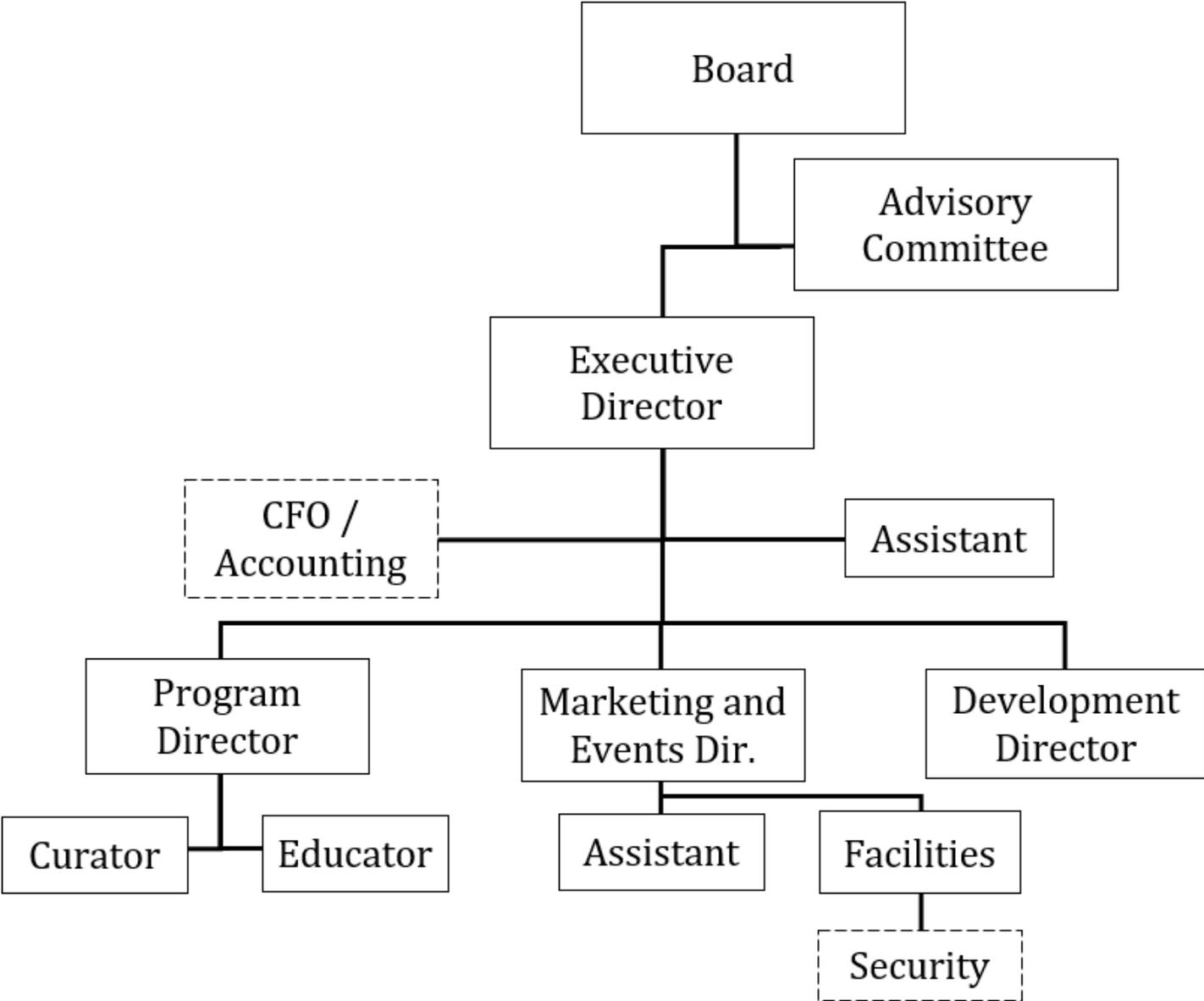
Operating expense estimates were prepared to reflect future growth in BRWC programs, exhibits, educational experiences, events, and facility rentals.

Reflects a stable year of operations after facility repositioning is implemented. In current dollars, does not reflect future inflation.

Conceptual Organizational Chart

7.8 full time equivalent
staff

Dotted outline indicates
outsourced positions



Our Next Steps



Await approval from Park Board to move to vote



Vote on January 23, 2023



Launch development of implementation plan

Thank you!

