MEMORANDUM

Birmingham Historical Museum & Park

DATE: **December 12, 2014**

TO: **Joe Valentine, City Manager**

FROM: **Leslie Pielack, Museum Director**

SUBJECT: **2014 Museum Year in Review Report**

I'm pleased to attach a copy of the 2014 Museum Year in Review Report recently shared with the Museum Board at their December 4, 2014 meeting. The report was provided as part of a review of museum progress for the past year and planning for the upcoming fiscal year and beyond.

The Museum Board would like to share this report also with you as a way of communicating all that has been achieved by the museum in the past twelve months. I am therefore forwarding a copy of the report to you on their behalf.

2014 Year in Review

The Museum has made significant strides in its objectives for this year. This is a result of good communication and coordination between the following:

- City Commission and city administration, including other departments
- Museum Board activities and committee work
- Friends Board efforts, including active projects and committee work
- Museum staff, including volunteers and unpaid interns
- Community interest, including the participation of key donors and partners

The 2013-2016 Strategic Plan has been a focal point in providing the direction that has enabled this great progress. Below is a breakdown of the major achievements in various categories. They are all related to objectives identified in the Strategic Plan. In every way, the Plan has been a success, and we are ahead of schedule in every goal area.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS

1. A comprehensive draft Collections Policy was written. It will require revision because of legal issues that need clarification, but is otherwise is complete. It includes important proposed language to change the nature of the collection from capitalized to non-capitalized assets and clarify that they are held in the public trust. A Collections Committee has been established, which is an important part of a functioning collections policy.

2. A draft Disaster Preparedness Policy was initiated. It needs additional work, but includes specific directives for intervention for various types of disasters that threaten the collection or the people who are on site, including various types of damage and interaction with other departments such as Police and Fire.

3. Both the Museum Board and Friends Boards participated in board development activities to help acquaint them with fundraising strategies and development of other sources of financial support. The Friends added two new board members and made significant changes that improved their financial management. The Museum Board has actively worked to seek new members to fill open positions. Both boards participated in various committee work and have enhanced their communication and collaboration. Additional work in orientation of new board members and recruitment for the Museum Board will continue.

4. A Case Statement for fundraising was developed. This was the outcome of the Board Development Committee and is an essential first step in working toward strategic fundraising.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS/INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Gallery lighting has been increased to proper levels. New track lighting and dimming functions now allow proper display in the large Horton Gallery, North Porch, and the entire length of Hallway.

2. Paint and repair of the water damaged plaster and woodwork in the Horton Gallery and the North Porch. The plaster damage was created by water leak in the windows above and couldn't be addressed until after that repair was properly completed.

3. The process is underway to convert an unused room on the second floor yielding almost 100 square feet of fire-protected archival space for sensitive documents and artifacts. This project will provide enough safe storage space for the existing archives, as well as the CREEM and Steelman Collections, with additional storage for especially important objects and documents that currently are not stored in fire-proof areas.

4. Public Wi-Fi now available in Allen House and proximity; to be expanded to Hunter House in 2015. This will enable enhanced programming and interpretive possibilities. Planning is underway to improve our internet server connection to fiber-optic to enhance all staff activities and public access options.

COLLECTION ACHIEVEMENTS

1. A donation of the highly significant Charlie Auringer CREEM Collection was negotiated and finalized between the donor, the Friends, and the museum. This is one of the key accomplishments for the museum since it opened in 2001. It will have important implications for the museum for years to come through loans, research, and online access opportunities. A traveling version of the CREEM exhibit is being explored that will take the collection out to other museums, perhaps nationally in addition to locally, and generate some revenue for the museum.

2. The Jack Steelman Collection of many hundreds of photos, school memorabilia, and valuable clippings, files, and ephemera was donated to the museum. It is awaiting processing, but has the potential to be another very significant acquisition with rare photos and invaluable information unique to Birmingham.

3. Collection and archival records have been corrected and collection object processing backlog has been reduced dramatically. Hundreds of collection records have been corrected or completed, and archival vertical files have been fully inventoried as part of a planned re-organization to make them easier to use. This is important for staff research, but particularly important for response to citizen research requests, which are increasing.

4. Video Recorded Oral History Project-Former CREEM Staff. Two hours of group discussion and reminiscing by nine former members of the CREEM staff, including editors,

writers, and office staffers. This valuable recording documents events and other details of CREEM's Birmingham years.

5. Video Recorded and Transcribed Local Oral History Project (Friends sponsored). Over 30 local individuals have now been recorded and several transcriptions have been completed for incorporation into our archives of local history. This project was spearheaded by Diane Bert of the Friends and involved donated funds from the community. Working with museum staff, Diane has made sure that proper releases are in place to make the information optimally useable.

EXHIBITS

- **Sounds of Birmingham,** whose scope permitted a year-long run and partnerships with multiple organizations, including a museum, local collectors, community organizations and schools

EVENTS

- **March,** Reception for Opening of Music Exhibition featuring Ken Calvert (ticketed)
- **June,** *Afternoon Backstage with Chad Smith* with Silent Auction (ticketed) and evening performance with Axis Academy and Birmingham Bloomfield Community Coalition
- **November,** *Get CREEMed* brought new audiences to the museum

PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- **March,** Adult Learning Institute Program (Auburn Hills Campus) (Museum Director)
- **May,** Instrument Farm (Museum) (hosted by McCourt's Music)
- **May-June,** School tours; best attendance ever, over 600 students and adults.
- **July-Aug-September,** Young Singer Songwriter Saturdays (Museum)
- **September,** Hunter House Harvest garden program (Museum)
- **October,** Historic Mask Making activity (Museum)
- **October,** A History of Music Education in the Schools, Ron Berndt
- **October,** Adult Learning Institute Program (Auburn Hills Campus) (Museum Director)
- **November,** Presentation by Susan Whitall, former editor of CREEM (Baldwin Library)
- **November,** Candlelight Ghost Tours of Hunter House (city employees)
- **November,** Baldwin House (Bham) "Traveling Exhibit" to residents-old photos
- **December,** Frontier Christmas Story Time (Museum) with Baldwin Public Library
- **Special Group tours—**numerous; Boy Scouts, pre-school, etc. Specialty tours for Smith family friends, public television executives, and staff from other museums, among others

OTHER OUTREACH

- **February,** Improved/expanded museum website (with city's conversion to new format)

- **August,** Hosted local small museum directors for informal discussion and networking
- **September,** Conference presentation by Museum Director and Museum Assistant on displaying Native American artifacts, Michigan Museum Association annual conference **September,** Museum Director presentation to Parks and Recreation Board RE: park improvements and coordination of park planning efforts and initiatives
- **September, November and December,** Museum staff reciprocal visits to Cranbrook Institute of Science, Detroit Historical Museum, Arab American National Museum, networking and collaborating, exhibit development and joint programs
- **October,** Museum Board members' presentation to school board, Hill School Bell Project
- **November,** Museum Board Chair to Principal Shopping District Board, board opening

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

- **Michigan Museum Association Award of Excellence,** Best New Experience
- **City Commission,** recognition of Museum Director for successful Chad Smith event

FUNDRAISING, MARKETING, and MEMBERSHIP

- **Hill School Bell Project,** developed relationship with donor for matching funds and Museum Board and Friends Board formed active Joint Fundraising Committee to develop campaign with collaboration from school to complete the funds
- **Friends Annual Festive Tables Luncheon,** filled to capacity in third year
- **Logo modification, f**reshened and added text with emphasis on 'Museum'
- **Membership outreach,** development of new approach to annual appeal for Friends
- **DIA 'Inside Out' Site for art installation,** in development for 2015
- **Visitation increase (site),** approximately 30% on average
- **Facebook Likes increase,** more than doubled since the beginning of the year, with interesting content changing all the time and increasing re-posts. We will hit the magic 500 mark soon, a big Facebook threshold associated with even greater reach

PERSONNEL/STAFFING

- **Volunteer program and structure development,** unpaid summer internship programs yielding high quality staff assistance, have been developed and networked
- **Paid staffing improvements,** short term/seasonal staffing program for school tours was initiated and proved successful, and museum staff received needed pay increases
- **Staff professional development,** museum staff, Museum Board, and Friends Board members participated in professional development workshops and activities

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie Pielack, Museum Director