

Museums, *Launching Pads for the Future.*

A Reflection of Downtown Values.

Museums can be about anything; mostly they are about the values of the host community. The local history museum is a great place to pass on the values and importance of the town from one generation to the next. Museums can celebrate people and events that need to be honored; they carry messages across time from the past to the people planning the future. Every small city and town deserves a local history museum, no matter how modest, legacy demands it; an important main street asset.

Variety.

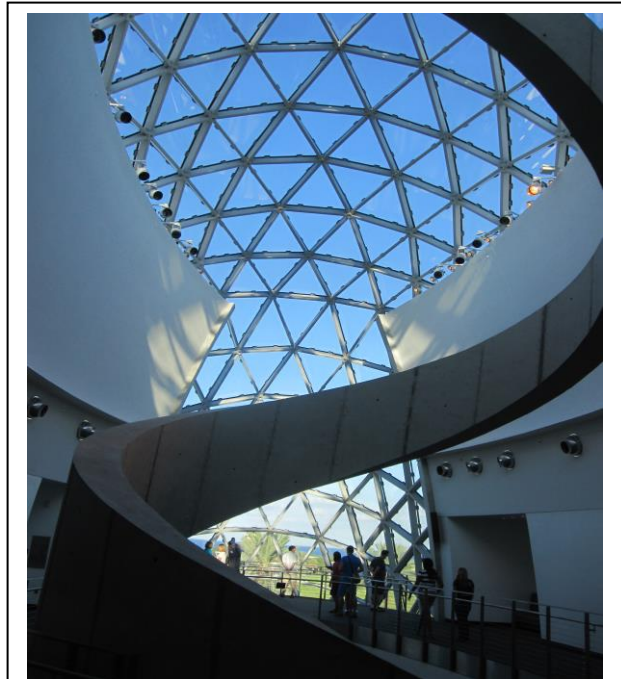
Museums are one of the visible city assets that can express the town's personality. Museums can present local history, art, unique natural resources or home grown events, such as "cardboard boat regattas." As every town searches for some uniqueness, some bit of authenticity, museums are the delivery vehicle of choice.

Education.

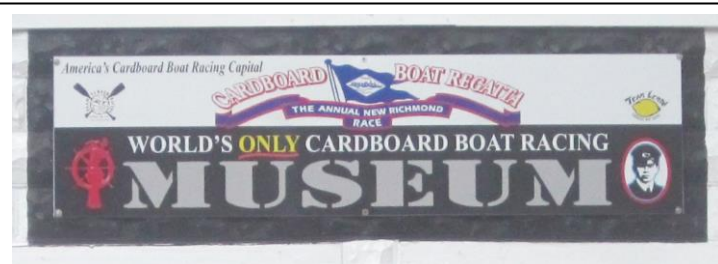
Teachers look for places to take school children to enrich their education. The local history museum, the science center or an art museum offer places where learning and appreciation can take place in an "entertainment" mode that enhances learning.

Historic Preservation.

Museums are great reasons to raise monies to preserve historic houses or buildings. Co-locations with active post offices or theaters leverage one worthy effort with others.



The Salvador Dali Museum, anything but boring.



Authenticity takes many forms, New Richmond OH.



Gold always attracts attention; especially in the center of town.

Museums On or Near Main Street.



Central Florida Railroad Museum: heritage on display.



A Mineral and Lapidary Museum.



Historic on East Main Street.



Second floor: Florida Museum for Women Artists.



A downtown storefront.



A re-purposed 1920s courthouse with a local icon.

About the Museum of the City



The web-based Museum of the City publishes exhibits about the past, present and future of cities, humankind's greatest artifact. Museum visitors — thousands per month from over 40 nations — experience ideas, images, and interpretations that illuminate the design, health, and sustainability of cities worldwide. Using the Museum's electronic exhibit-building tools, citizens, students, and professional curators create their own exhibits on hundreds of topics displayed in twenty galleries. The Museum of the City also serves as a teaching/learning platform at Portland State University (Oregon USA), where students use the Museum to study and engage in the activities of museum administration and interpretive programming. Students at PSU and other universities engage with citizens — fellow students and faculty, senior citizens and younger students, architects and planners — within their own cities to explain and mentor the creation of digital exhibits, publishable in the Museum of the City for exploring, explaining, and enlightening diverse issues of community history, design, health, and sustainability. A member of UNESCO's International Council of Museums' Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities, the Museum of the City invites contributors to create exhibits about cities — their own and or any of the thousands of cities elsewhere. We invite you to be a citizen curator, not only taking care of your own city, but offering your own knowledge and urban insights to fellow city dwellers around the globe.

[About the Museum](#)

[Partners of the Museum](#)

[Museum Board](#)

[Donate to the Museum of the City](#)



OTHER RELEVANT MUSEUMS...Like the Museum of the City, cities and towns can celebrate, educate and influence important actions in a number of ways, for example:

© 2023 National Building Museum
401 F Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
info@nbm.org
202.272.2448

The Tenement Museum
103 Orchard Street
New York, NY 10002
Telephone: [1-877-975-3786](tel:1-877-975-3786)

Commentaries.

The following articles have been collected to present the views of experts about the importance of museums on or near main streets in small cities and towns. The sources cited represent but a few of the many articles on the subject which reinforce the thought that museums, along with public libraries, urban parks and community theaters, are important civic assets that warrant care and long-term thoughtfulness. Technology is expanding the reach and scope of small city and town museums.

Kunshan Phoenix Cultural Mall
Places like the Phoenix Cultural Mall in China have multiple museums, libraries, theaters and galleries co-located in a single building or space providing a prominent cultural destination for patrons and shared expenses for the venue operators. **Read more at:**
<http://joelsandersarchitect.com/project/kunshan-phoenix-cultural-mall/>



**The Lake Alfred Historic Society,
A modest small town history museum near main street.**



Lakeland FL [2021 population: 115,425] and Daytona Beach FL [2021 population 74,437] have museums in their downtowns on active main streets. The “in your face” locations of these museums express the importance the town gives to culture, history and education.

What role do museums play in a small city?

Interview with Patrick Urich

Rebecca Herz / November 2, 2015

Patrick Urich is the City Manager of Peoria, Illinois. As City Manager, he is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day activities of the City of Peoria, including the budget and all city departments and employees.



What role do museums play in Peoria?

Museums provide cultural vitality to a community of our size. They provide an experience that is both local and global. They offer some of the experiences that you might find in larger communities.

Museums help to provide an experience for people so that when they come to visit our community, or are moving into this region, they feel like there is a sense of vitality and sense of place and sense of vibrancy. This experience also includes a strong set of neighborhoods with distinct characteristics. A central city that gives you a sense of where you are. Amenities that attract people from a recreational standpoint, so that they are able to ride a bike on a trail, run along the riverfront, walk or play in open spaces. Museums add that spice that is part of what makes a city unique.

One of the ideas put forth in the book [Cities, Museums and Soft Power](#) is that museums can challenge the status quo, including the status quo embraced by the city. Thoughts on this? Museums can certainly play a role in challenging the status quo. In fact, there is no better place than a museum to do that in a small community.

For example, in Peoria, we have a complicated history with Richard Pryor, who is from Peoria, and a similarly complicated history with Peorian Betty Friedan. Museums can help us to rethink these histories, which are not just about these people but about the social structure and inequalities that surrounded them. If museums do more to talk about local experiences and local history in a way that may make people feel uncomfortable, that's a good thing.

Source: <https://museumquestions.com/2015/11/02/what-role-do-museums-play-in-a-small-city-interview-with-patrick-urich/>

Best Small-Town Museums in the U.S.

Annie Bruce | February 20, 2017

All too often, the museums that get all the attention are those in big cities with blockbuster collections, like MoMA in New York City, the Field Museum in Chicago, and the Getty Museum in Los Angeles. But hidden away in America's small towns are equally fascinating, more unique museums that are home to coveted works of art and historical items. Whether you travel to Cooperstown, New York; Biloxi, Mississippi; or Bainbridge, Washington, you'll find no shortage of treasures inside our favorite small-town museums. Check out the website below for a list of 15 of the best small town museums.

Source: <http://www.fodors.com/world/north-america/usa/experiences/news/photos/15-best-small-town-museums-in-the-us>

Charleston, as an example

Charleston, South Carolina, is a historic city that has gotten a lot of recent buzz as a travel destination. Older exhibit halls, like the Charleston Museum, which was founded in 1773 and bills itself as "America's First Museum," provide plenty of options for history buffs, while venues with a more modern focus, like the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, will appease creative-minded visitors.

[Charleston has a "Museum Mile"](#) area with period mansions like the Aiken-Rhett House Museum (an 1820s home filled with artifacts) and traditional spaces like the Gibbes Museum of Art (housed in the oldest museum building in the South). Niche options like the Postal Museum and Old Exchange & Provost Dungeon provide diversity to the Charleston museum scene, while a host of historic churches will delight both architecture lovers and history buffs. Other attractions, like the Charleston Aquarium and the North Charleston Fire Museum, will fit well on family itineraries.

Source: <https://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/eco-tourism/photos/surprising-cities-great-museums/charleston#top-desktop>



CITY MUSEUMS AND CITY DEVELOPMENT

City Museums and City Development – September 26, 2008

Essays edited by [Ian Jones](#) (Editor), [Robert R. Macdonald](#) (Editor), and [Darryl McIntyre](#) (Editor)

A Point about Small City Museums.

In Chapter 11, “Defining a Research Agenda for a City Museum in a Peripheralizing World”, Geoffrey Edwards and Marie Louise Bourbeau observe a shift from megacity museums to smaller museums in smaller towns with smaller budgets. “This is especially important as the economy shifts away from a nation-state focus, which favors megacities, to a more city-based approach.”

Source: <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0759112320>

T MAGAZINE, THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

Small Museums

By [ORHAN PAMUK](#), MARCH 20, 2014

In the age of mega-institutions and competitive building, the Turkish novelist [Orhan Pamuk](#) pays homage to the more personal places, like his own Museum of Innocence, whose character and content evoke a deeper experience.

My favorite museums tend to be small, the kind that showcase the inventiveness and the life stories of private individuals. Though I admire national museums like the [Louvre](#) or the [British Museum](#), when I’m traveling and whenever I set foot in a new city, the first places I rush to see are not these institutions that fill me with a sense of the power of the state and of the history of its people, but those that will allow me to experience the private world and the vision of a passionate individual. I have so much respect for the efforts of those creative people who devoted the final decades of their lives to the task of turning their homes and their studios into museums for the public to visit after their deaths. These small museums are usually hidden on side streets just outside the center of large Western cities. They have the power to make us rediscover a feeling that the big national museums, looking more and more like fun-filled shopping malls with each passing day, can no longer make us feel, and that we have begun to forget. Museums must not confine themselves to showing us pictures and objects from the past; they must also convey the ambiance of the lost time from which those objects have come to us. And this can only happen through personal stories.

Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/20/t-magazine/small-museums.html?mcubz=0>

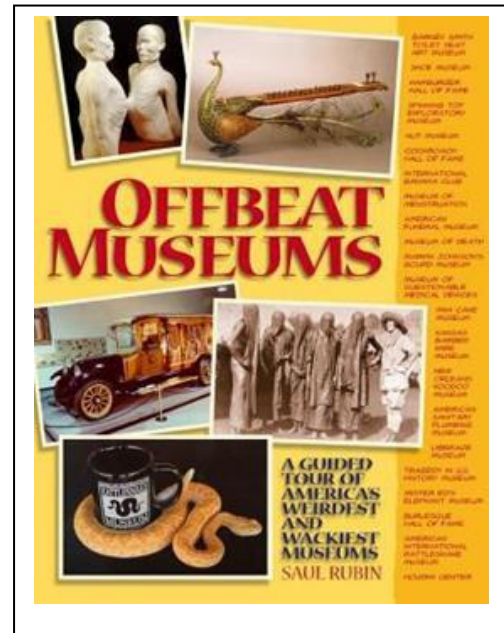
A BOOK...

Offbeat Museums: A Guided Tour of America's Weirdest and Wackiest Museums.

Saul Rubin, Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2002.

Book Overview

"From the Liberace Museum in Nevada to the Banana Museum in California to Leila's Hair Museum in Missouri, this illustrated guide carries readers into the most unusual collections ever gathered and put on display--and into the minds of the men and women who obsessively assembled them. Think you've "been there, done that?" Well maybe you haven't quite seen it all. Saul Rubin's enthusiastic journey through the showcases of our country's weirdest wonders suggests that there are modern cabinets of curiosities all around--if you just know where to look. So take a step into these pages and be amazed to find The Cockroach Hall of Fame, The Museum of Questionable Medical Devices, Mister Ed's Elephant Museum, The UFO Enigma Museum, The Museum of Bathroom Tissue--and forty-five others. Each entertaining listing features photos, descriptions, history, profiles and all of the essential information you need to plan a visit to one of these unique sites."



LINK: https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/offbeat-museums-the-collections-and-curators-of-americas-most-unusual-museums_saul-rubin/568114/item/3495149/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAyracBhDoARIsACGFcS6vhwIFRgwB8bVLcBJSucln37esFLMc11dkCofu1ni_mbW-zoWZ22gaAtiKEALw_wcB#idiq=3495149&edition=3715098