

## **The History Center of Olmsted County: A Capital Investment Request**

The History Center of Olmsted County (HCOC) is requesting \$4,000,000 in FY2026 to rehabilitate, modernize, and expand its museum, education, and archival spaces (collectively, the “museum”). This request, matched by \$2,000,000 raised locally from non-state funds, will fulfill the HCOC’s \$6,000,000 museum project. This bonding request has the support of the Olmsted County Board of Commissioners.

The museum project is part of an overall 10-year, \$14,000,000 rejuvenation of the entire HCOC’s campus, including 3 farmstead structures on the National Register of Historic Places. To date, the HCOC has raised \$4 million for restoration of the historic farmstead, and that project is already underway.

### Rehabilitation

The museum was built in 1973 with a projected 35-year life expectancy. In the past 15 years, non-routine maintenance of the facility has been nearly continuous. Water ingress in heavy precipitation, heating/cooling variations, and difficulty in controlling humidity have been particularly challenging in this museum and archive facility. As the designated repository for Olmsted County’s historical materials and archives, a significant rehabilitation of the museum is required to prevent loss.

### Expansion

When the museum was developed, Olmsted County’s population and annual visitors numbered 84,000 and 800,000, respectively. Today, the population is nearly 170,000, and the county has more than 3 million visitors each year. The HCOC mission is to “give people of all ages and backgrounds access and opportunity to learn about the past through interpretive programs and exhibits, research, publications and events.” As such, the HCOC needs to update its museum, and studies recommend expanding its space for classrooms, exhibits, and archives. The HCOC is a destination for a growing segment of the county’s 3 million visitors, and there is an unmet need to better serve them and Olmsted County and southeastern Minnesota communities.

### Modernization

The museum was built using 1970s materials. Its electrical, heating, cooling, humidity control, lighting, and plumbing systems need to be upgraded, as do its bathrooms and sewer systems. The roof is flat and oil-based, typical of that time-period, and subject to repeated leaks and repairs. The facility’s drainage systems need to be upgraded to avoid water ingress problems that can damage archived materials and exhibits.

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