



YERKES OBSERVATORY

A NEW ERA OF DISCOVERY

OUR VISION

**Yerkes Observatory
shares astronomy as
inspiration for discovery
and expression.**

THE 2024–2034 STRATEGIC PLAN

A PLAN FOR THE NEXT DECADE

This summary of the 2024-2034 Yerkes Observatory Strategic Plan charts a course for the future of an institution that has served as a beacon of inspiration and enlightenment in astronomy for over 125 years.

The history of groundbreaking discovery and scientific excellence at Yerkes demands that we—today—be just as ambitious in our vision and plans as those who came before us.

At the heart of our contemporary mission lies a deep dedication to advancing humanity's understanding of the universe and our place within it through the cross-pollination of science, art and culture. We believe that by engaging with diverse audiences and cultivating a spirit of curiosity and inquiry we will unlock new realms of knowledge and inspire future generations of astronomers, scientists, and explorers.

Your support of Yerkes is the force behind our journey toward a future as a scientific and educational institution unlike any on Earth.

Please join us in bringing the future of Yerkes Observatory to life.

Sincerely,
Dennis Kois
Executive Director





OUR MISSION

Yerkes Observatory advances humankind's understanding of the universe and our place within it, igniting curiosity, facilitating exploration, and nurturing a deep sense of connection with our planet and each other.

OUR VALUES

Collaboration

We foster interactions between a diverse constellation of astronomers, artists, scientists, writers, and creatives that leads to unique work that could only flourish at Yerkes.

Creativity

We incubate bold ideas and innovative approaches to scientific research, education, and individual expression.

Stewardship

We value the people and ideas that brought our landmark Observatory and campus to life. We are stewards of the Observatory, its stories, and its legacy for future generations.

Accessibility

We welcome diverse perspectives and create an environment where every individual is valued and respected. We offer programs and experiences that actively seek to broaden our reach and ensure equitable opportunities for all.

Discovery

We work to advance astronomical knowledge and promote public understanding of science and research through our work, programs, and community outreach.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Position Yerkes as a **welcoming and unique destination**, catering to visitors of all ages and interests.

Create a world-class gathering place for experiences that **connect science, the arts, and landscape.**

Train the next generation of astronomers by providing access to Yerkes' telescopes and resources.

Amplify Yerkes' renowned legacy through **contemporary contributions** to astronomical research.

Preserve Yerkes' heritage and landscape while maximizing programming, visitation, and sustainability for a vibrant future.

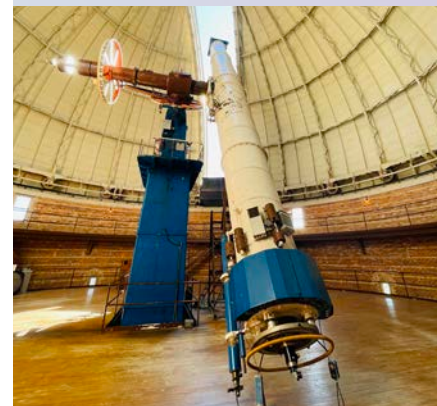
THINKING BIG

These **Five Pillars of Experience** distinguish Yerkes and are central to our strategic goals, ensuring every visit is an unforgettable journey connecting the wonders of astronomy, the arts, and the environment.

1

THE GREAT REFRACTOR

Still the largest refracting telescope in the world, the Great Refractor provides a signature experience of an Observatory visit. The telescope is housed in a larger-than-life dome, providing a unique physical environment that will be restored and leveraged to inspire and impart a sense of wonder in every visitor.



LANDSCAPE & ARCHITECTURE

Connecting visitors to the legacy of our Olmsted-designed landscape and historic building opens the door to fresh ideas and discussions about ecology, design and architecture, science, native species, and the Observatory's forward-looking commitment to environmental practice.

2

3

ARTS AND SCIENCE

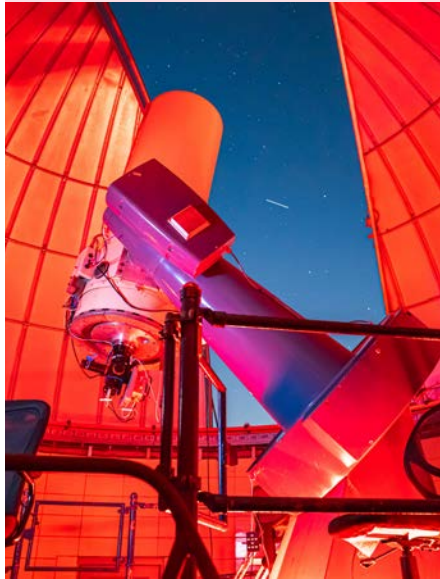
The Observatory connects innovative artists and scientists to new ideas, and to each other. We provide unique opportunities to collaborate, explore big ideas and create new work that couldn't exist anywhere but Yerkes.



4

RESEARCH

Aspiring astronomers and seasoned researchers alike amplify Yerkes' world-class legacy. Hands-on research opportunities for undergraduates and students of different levels introduces new skills; access to Yerkes' archival resources, including our rare glass plate collection, supports new discoveries and inspires innovation; and leading researchers and scientists gather to strategize and collaborate.



5

PUBLIC OBSERVING

Whether for astronomy professionals, undergraduate or graduate researchers, or educators and K-12 students, Yerkes fosters a dynamic learning environment that embraces curiosity and inquiry and creates pathways for research and lifelong learning. By harnessing the power of collaboration, Yerkes inspires the next generation of scientists, researchers, and innovators.



INSPIRING TODAY'S AUDIENCES

Students + Scientists

Whether for astronomy professionals, undergraduate or graduate researchers, or educators and K-12 students, Yerkes fosters a dynamic learning environment that embraces curiosity and inquiry and creates pathways for research and lifelong learning. By harnessing the power of collaboration, Yerkes inspires the next generation of scientists, researchers, and innovators.

The Public

At Yerkes, the spirit of exploration knows no bounds. The building, grounds, Great Refractor, and a world-class experience captivate audiences of all kinds—families seeking wonder, individuals hungry for knowledge, hobbyists eager to delve deeper, and tourists craving unforgettable experiences. Here, beneath the vast expanse of the sky, each visitor explores a place unlike any other—a place to connect, to wonder, and to dream.

The Community

Yerkes has been a point of pride for the local community since 1897. The Observatory is both an international icon as well as a local treasure for Williams Bay, Lake Geneva, and Wisconsin. We are enthusiastic boosters of our local community whether our staff are participating in the local homecoming parade, or driving hundreds of thousands of new tourism dollars to regional businesses. Combining revenue-generating initiatives with mission-driven endeavors, Yerkes strengthens the community and endeavors to serve our local schools, neighbors, and institutions.



VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

Inspire Curiosity

Transform Yerkes into a world-renowned destination that sparks a lifelong curiosity about the wonders of the universe through unforgettable visitor experiences.

Promote Lifelong Learning

Pioneer engaging, accessible opportunities at Yerkes for exploring astronomy and related sciences, serving audiences of all ages and enriching every visit.

Facilitate Exploration

Encourage exploration of Yerkes' entire campus fostering interdisciplinary experiences while expanding visitor engagement.

Enhance Meaningful Engagement

Amplify Yerkes' legacy through contemporary contributions to astronomical research, deepening understanding and appreciation of our mission.

Promote Community Connection

Build a sense of belonging among visitors, connecting them with Yerkes' vibrant community through immersive learning experiences and access to rich research resources.



A LIVING TAPESTRY YERKES' RENEWAL AND RESTORATION

Our efforts go beyond preservation; our aim is to create a dialogue between Yerkes' illustrious past, our shared present, and our future understanding of our world and our place in it as humans.

We do this by connecting as broad an audience as possible to the wonders of the cosmos through our multifaceted programs—bridging past and future, science and culture, and research and human experience.

Yerkes' ongoing restoration celebrates its historic past while also creating new experiences like exhibits, the arboretum and nature trails, art installations, and Play/Space—the first astronomy themed playground at an observatory in the world—that invite exploration and learning.

As stewards of this rich legacy, Yerkes is preserving this historic building and landscape, while also advancing contemporary educational, environmental, research and cultural practices that harmonize our history and create a Yerkes that will be just as meaningful to the future of astronomy as it has been to its past.

ROADMAP 2030

OUR PATH TO SUCCESS

1

2024–2027

Leverage Yerkes' legacy, physical and digital assets, and relationships to pilot and scale innovative programs and experiences that boost our impact, visibility, and audience.

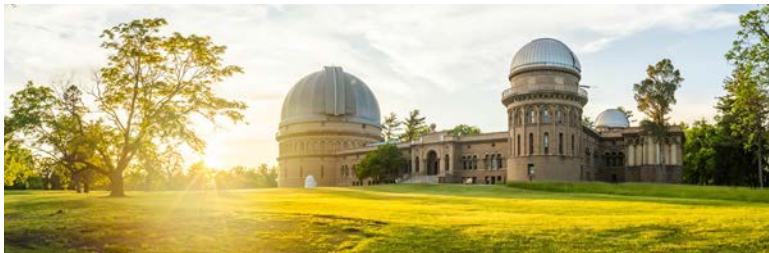
Build the Education and Visitor Center and Play/Space to provide class-leading public engagement and immersive educational experiences for that attracts national attention.

Advance our strategic business model, building revenue and annual giving that creates a sustainable, stable base of operational support from which Yerkes can grow.

Partner with colleges and universities to encourage student engagement and access to Yerkes' resources.

Digitize the rare glass plate collection to unlock their research potential, enabling remote access for scientific inquiry and public education.

Refurbish the 24" and 41" telescopes and establish robust data management to support advanced research and student training.



2

2028–2030

Expand research programs that utilize Yerkes' instruments and develop new technology, enhancing our scientific capabilities and leadership.

Install a modern telescope to enhance public engagement and astronomy education, and ensure equitable access.

Launch a Residency Program for top-tier artists, scientists, writers, performers, landscape designers, and cultural producers that enriches onsite visitor experience while producing culturally significant work that extends Yerkes reach to a national platform.

Establish Yerkes as a Dark Skies site to preserve natural nightscapes and promote astronomy and environmental stewardship.

Implement an environmental conservation plan to sustain Yerkes' unique landscape, ecology and biodiversity.

Establish an endowment to increase financial sustainability and support long-term initiatives in education, research, and outreach.



3

2031–2034

Ensure Yerkes is among the global leaders in our three areas of focus: astronomy and science education, arts and culture, and landscape and ecology.

Achieve a stable, positive annual operating budget that is supported by our target mix of 1/3 earned revenue, 1/3 philanthropic support, and 1/3 endowment income.

Yerkes inspires curiosity, fosters understanding, and cultivates appreciation for the wonders of the universe and our planet, ensuring a lasting impact on future generations.



125 YEARS, BILLIONS OF GALAXIES, AND STILL COUNTING

HELP YERKES INSPIRE A NEW GENERATION OF EXPLORERS.

More than a century ago a visionary founder, determined donor, masterful architect, and legions of skilled trades workers built Yerkes.

Brilliant scientists put it on the galaxy's map.

In 2020 a dedicated group of locals saved it for future generations.

And now we look to you.

Help us continue the legacy of Yerkes as we set a course for the next 127 years of education, discovery, and inspiration.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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