



children's museum san diego museo de los niños

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NEWS RELEASE

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THE MUSEUM GETS A NEW PLACE TO PLAY

A New Vision: Art and Architecture Merge to Create a New Landmark for San Diego

May 16, 2003—At this exhilarating time in the revitalization of the city of San Diego's downtown area, the Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños San Diego is also at a critical point in its own evolution and stands poised for change. Expanding its vision and nourished by a collective of skilled and passionate professionals, the Museum is working to redevelop its current facility and to reshape its role and identity in the community. Construction of a new building is the first step and cornerstone for success. In the heart of a city endeavoring to share its wonders with the world, the Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños San Diego offers the city an opportunity to add another jewel to its list of assets. Through redevelopment, the Museum is ready to bring a new vision to life and serve San Diego as:

- > A civic asset for all ages
- > A premier world-class attraction
- > A top family-tourist destination
- > A valuable community resource
- > An architectural icon
- > A well-known brand
- > A successful self-sustaining model of corporate, educational, media, and non-profit partnership.

The Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños San Diego has watched from its antiquated warehouse building on Island Avenue as the city has transformed around it and is now ready to join in downtown's initiative of renewal and revitalization. Collaborating with civic, social, and business leaders, the Museum has created a Redevelopment Plan that will transform not only its facility but also its presence, image, and financial viability. The Redevelopment Plan for the Museum is congruous with the recent decision of the Board of Directors of the San Diego Convention and Visitors Bureau to focus on attraction enhancement as one of its top three areas of critical need.

The Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños San Diego is a cultural institution with a multi-national audience. Its mission is learning through the arts. The Museum seeks to enrich the Greater San Diego community by offering creative experiences that make a difference in the lives of visitors. The Museum is dedicated to serving as an interactive arts and education center for the children of San Diego and regional visitors and works to involve local, national, and

international creative and educational communities in developing programs and exhibits that respond to community needs and interests. The Museum also endeavors to strengthen multicultural understanding and respect and to build community through the language of art.

The new Museum facility will be constructed on a portion of the block it previously occupied and will be built along side a new high-rise condominium owned by Pinnacle International. The new Museum will be approximately 50,000 square feet. One level is below grade with 16' ceilings. There is also a main level at ground floor and a second level overlooking the exhibit space on the main level and the basement level below. The Museum will share underground parking with the Tower with 75 spaces dedicated to Museum guests. The New Museum will include gallery space, a main lobby, a charter school, a café, Museum store, Museum administration offices, operational and storage spaces, a work shop, a three story interior atrium with entrance bridge, and a dramatic "saw tooth" roof structure with photo-voltaic panels and extensive use of exterior glazing. "In essence, the Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños San Diego is creating a signature structure that enhances the community while changing its own image and identity to serve as a civic model for "green" architecture and practices, improve our aesthetic appearance in the neighborhood, join the redevelopment initiative of the Marina District and downtown, and impress the city with a unique architectural icon," says the Museum's Executive Director, Kay Wagner.

The organization has chosen to showcase some of San Diego's finest experts to design and build what will be a world-class facility both functionally and aesthetically. The award-winning architectural firm of Rob Wellington Quigley, FAIA is working to ensure the design integrates well with the sophisticated surroundings of the Marina District and provide visitors with a sense of inspiration and awe.

Unlike its science or play-based counterparts, the Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños San Diego has focused on the arts as a foundation for fostering creativity and building community. The scope and stunning variety of activities together with the extraordinary quality of the artists involved with the programming illustrates why the Museum has achieved a national reputation among children's museums and art centers. The Zeum in San Francisco and Los Angeles County Museum of Art's LACMA Lab are only a few of the national institutions influenced by the Children's Museum San Diego.

The Museum hosts performances, installations and exhibits by local and international artists and features a community gallery of work by youth artists from area schools and organizations. For visitors of all ages, the Museum offers a rare chance to explore the language and tools of art while experimenting first-hand with the process of creativity. The Museum provides the extraordinary luxury of experiencing high quality works in an informal environment that encourages personal interaction and opportunities to work with professional artists.

The exhibit philosophy is rooted in the Museum's mission and emerges from the distinctive need for children to learn through concrete interaction, touching, exploring, manipulating, and experimenting using all the senses. The Museum is also dedicated to integrating the unique character of our community with its extraordinary ethnic diversity, unique geographic border, emerging urban culture, innovative technologies and rich artistic resources. Through art,

the Museum cuts across all disciplines and encourages authentic experiences while providing opportunities for visitors to explore the relationship within and between the man-made and natural worlds. Our multicultural world is reflected and celebrated in Museum exhibits. The new Museum is designed to shape the aesthetic sense of growing youth nurturing their cognitive development and creativity and celebrating their role in our lives. As a center for creative play, discovery, expression and exploration, the Children's Museum/Museo de los Niños San Diego provides opportunities for all of us to see the world through the eyes of our children.

Museum Redevelopment

The new facility is modern, functional, aesthetically appealing and environmentally friendly to provide a high-quality setting with clear value to the community. An exciting list of new amenities includes 1,920-square-foot art studios, six indoor interactive galleries, two outdoor interactive galleries, a play theater, a public programs space to host meetings and performances, two birthday party rooms, a glass elevator and a garden. Some of the attractions that will reappear in the new building are the popular 1952 Dodge Truck, Cora's Rain House, the Double Decker English Bus and the Clay Play Station. New features are in the planning stage but spaces are being reserved for a new slide, a climbing tree, and a multi-media gallery.

The new building will allow the Museum to improve function and use. It will include basic amenities such as heating, cooling, lighting, and running water access, which have been inadequate until now. Improved handicapped access, stroller parking, diaper-changing tables and locker storage will be added. Integrated technology and communication systems, and state of the art lighting and acoustic treatments throughout will enhance its capacity to host major local and touring exhibits and events.

The Museum aims at boosting its educational offerings and expanding programs for each art form including music, dance, drama and puppetry as well as the visual arts. More space for visiting artists will enable them to work in residence for extended periods. A gallery exclusively dedicated to the display of children's art, as well as a permanent Spanish Language art gallery will be added. The facility in part or whole will be available for rent and to host Museum special events.

The award-winning Museum School and its curriculum will also grow through enhanced administrative, reception and learning spaces that will furnish adequate and specifically designed areas to meet learning and programming needs. Immediately in front of the new Museum, a new park will transform an unsightly asphalt lot into public space, which as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Promenade will improve the aesthetic appeal of Island Avenue, and provide play space for Museum School and youth visitors. Landscape architect Marty Poirier, whose firm, Spurlock-Poirier, designed the gardens at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, has joined the team to create a park plan. The park will be the only downtown park specifically designed for children. The design, directed by the Children's Museum, is a unique mix of art and interactive play opportunities blending function and aesthetics.

Redevelopment Timeline

Phase I: Preparation

January 2001–May 2003

Phase II: Construction

May 2003–August 2007

Phase III: Opening

January/February 2008

Interim Plans

The time during construction of the new Children's Museum is both an opportunity and a challenge. While ensuring that the building of the new Museum structure proceeds appropriately, it is also imperative that the infrastructure necessary for operating a world-class facility is in place. Extensive preparations including planning, exhibit development, operational details, fundraising, publicity, educational programming, outreach, and organizational restructuring will be vital to re-opening and operating the new facility.

"Launching a Capital Campaign to raise enough money to see this project to completion is critical to starting construction on time and providing the momentum needed to ensure the Museum redevelopment succeeds," says Mrs. Wagner. "The Museum's goal is to raise \$20 million dollars over the next 18 months to fund the construction of the new building and create an endowment that will secure the survival of the organization for generations to come. This is a prime opportunity for San Diego businesses, family foundations and individuals to invest in the future of a community landmark that already serves over 200,000 children annually." The development of a successful philanthropic income base through a Capital Campaign is an important interim objective necessary to finish the building project. "Strengthening our visibility and presence over the next two years is another high ranking priority." The challenge of maintaining a high level of public awareness and offering high quality programs without a facility are obstacles the Museum intends to overcome with ease and innovation.

The Museum is continuing its service to the community through its *Museum Without Walls* program during the Construction Phase. Designed to build public awareness, civic presence and media visibility while generating enthusiasm for the redevelopment of the Museum, this project brings the arts and artists directly to the community by providing local festivals and fairs, schools, shopping centers and public facilities with inexpensively accessible hands-on art activities, educational programs and performances.

The *Museum Without Walls* is an enhanced version of former outreach programming, which in the last year, while the Museum was still in operation served 100,000 children throughout San Diego." According to Wagner "our impact in the community is actually increasing to over 1.4 million per year during the construction phase of the project as we are able to devote time and resources previously allocated to rent and maintenance of the antiquated warehouse directly into programming. Offering quality arts experiences throughout the San Diego region over these two years is our best means of educating the public about the new Museum. So, in

fact we are creating a win-win situation, whereby our homelessness becomes a positive tool for enhancing community relations.”

The Museum School continues to operate from a temporary site that is also home the Museum's administration. The School has proven to be of great value to the community and the families it serves. Its presence and popularity serve as additional links to the community.

Architect Rob Wellington Quigley and the Museum's Executive Director, Kay Wagner, are available for interviews upon request. Renderings of the new facility are available in electronic format.