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## **INNOVATIVE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN UNVEILED FOR FORT WORTH MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND HISTORY**

***Museum School to remain open during construction; Omni Theater to continue operations except a few months for upgrades; exhibits to be hosted at National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame***

*Fort Worth, Texas* – The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History today unveiled plans for its new building: an innovative work of architecture that blends with neighboring institutions and features a sweeping plaza and campus-like environment at the south end of the Cultural District.

Over the past year the highly acclaimed architectural firm, Legorreta+Legorreta, designed the new building, working closely with the museum’s leaders and exhibit creators. Groundbreaking on the \$65 million project is scheduled for the fall of 2007.

“We’re thrilled with the Legorreta plans,” said Van A. Romans, the museum’s president. “It is so exciting that our museum’s dynamic learning programs and rich collections will be enveloped by a truly remarkable building, one that will serve our community for another 50 years.”

Ricardo Legorreta described the new building as a “very happy environment, a building for kids, young people and adults.”

An iconic, 60-foot ‘urban lantern’ will serve as the main entrance to the 133,000-square-foot new building. The elegant entry, marked by clean lines, will invite natural

light into the building during the day and softly illuminate the surrounding area and grounds in the evening.

The new building will face the Will Rogers Memorial Center to the east and opens onto a broad plaza that will connect the museum more closely to its neighbors, both the Will Rogers Center and, in particular, the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.

The interior will embrace the natural world with courtyards and indoor-outdoor spaces, skylights, pergolas, and abundant natural light. “The light contributes to the beauty and the mystery of the inside, beginning with the urban lantern,” Legorreta said. “I want people to walk, to discover, and then by the changing of the natural light during the day and all the seasons, they will keep discovering the building every time they visit. We want people to know and feel it is *their* building.”

“I am convinced that what we architects need to do is to try to make better cities, not just make better buildings in themselves,” Legorreta said, referring to the plaza and his firm’s respect for the architectural style and scale of neighboring buildings.

The plaza represents the culmination of a long-standing master plan to anchor the south end of the Cultural District as a center for western heritage. The museum is partnering with the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Foundation to create a permanent new Cattle Raisers gallery housed within the new facility that will immerse guests in the dynamic history of the cattle and ranching industry in Texas and the Southwest.

The decision to build a new facility came after a two-year strategic planning process involving the museum’s trustees and staff along with LORD Cultural Resources of Toronto, Canada, one of the foremost museum planning firms in the world. The LORD group recommended a new facility, noting that more than five decades of service have taken a considerable toll on the building. “Over the next six months we expect some

elements of the building's design could change somewhat, but the overall concept is in place," Romans said.

Construction will begin in the fall of 2007. During the 24-month construction period, the Omni Theater will remain open except for a few months to renovate its seating and sound system. Museum School will offer its stellar learning programs for children in a temporary village just south of the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, thanks to a generous loan of portable buildings from the Fort Worth Independent School District. (Its preschool classes will be held beginning this summer in this temporary setting). A variety of hands-on exhibits of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History will be hosted along with continuing operations at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame during most of the construction period.

Fort Worth philanthropists Stacie and David McDavid are heading a team of community leaders in a capital campaign to fund the \$65 million project, including Dee Kelly Jr., Charlie Moncrief, Martha Williams and others. The campaign includes \$60 million to construct the new museum and a \$5 million cash reserve to sustain additional operating costs during the transition and the first few years in the new facility.

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***The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History's Mission:***

*Dedicated to lifelong learning and anchored by our rich collections, the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History engages its diverse community through creative, vibrant programs and exhibits interpreting science and the stories of Texas and the Southwest.*

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***New Fort Worth Museum of Science and History building to host dynamic learning studios, a new Fort Worth Children's Museum, exhibits exploring energy, cattle raising, regional history; Museum School and a state-of-the-art Noble Planetarium***

*Fort Worth, Texas* -- When the new Fort Worth Museum of Science and History reopens in late 2009, it will host familiar favorites such as Museum School, ExploraZone, DinoDig, a state-of-the art Noble Planetarium, and also several exciting new exhibits.

Moreover, the new building is designed to showcase many of the more than 175,000 historical objects and scientific specimens in the museum's permanent collection through visible storage and numerous display areas.

The central distinguishing feature of the new museum will be its highly visible **Studio Learning Galleries**, which guests will be able to see when they enter the building. Inside these five, glass-walled studios will be a veritable beehive of active learning. The studios will bring into public view several innovative programs currently tucked away in classrooms rarely seen by the guest: including the museum's DesignIT Studios program for teenagers; Discovery Labs for school children, educator workshops, telescope-building classes, and more.

Here, guests will be able to experience and learn about relevant history and science topics as they occur in real time, from breakthroughs in nanotechnology research to space travel and the discoveries of new species. Rotating *ExploraZone* exhibits from the San Francisco Exploratorium will be at the center of this dynamic learning space.

Another new exhibit space, the **Energy Adventure**, will integrate the museum's long-standing dinosaur collections with the story of Fort Worth's dynamic energy industry to illustrate important geological, scientific and historical concepts. Current Barnett Shale exploration throughout North Texas provides a perfect "teachable moment" to connect the story of natural gas production to a broader story about energy and how it originates. What is energy? Where do we get it? How do we produce it, and what is the impact? These questions will be probed, and a dynamic entry theater experience will take visitors on an unforgettable journey through geologic time. A confluence of academic experts and industry leaders are serving as advisors.

Museum staff and exhibit planners surveyed the best children's museums in the country in planning for the **Fort Worth Children's Museum** in the new building. Because this museum was originally called the Fort Worth Children's Museum when it was chartered by teachers in 1941, museum leaders wanted to bring that history forward. This bright, sunny "museum within a museum" will invite young children to play and explore, with science and art activities similar to those found in the museum's current KIDSPACE gallery and ample hands-on opportunities to learn from artifacts from the museum's collections. Just across the corridor will be the outdoor DinoDig area, where children can explore and dig for real fossils while their parents sit and enjoy a cup of coffee while watching them several yards away.

LORD Cultural Resources of Toronto, Canada, one of the foremost museum planning firms in the world, recommended to the museum that it strengthen its presentation of history through partnering with other entities. The new building will hold a major new center for the Cattle Raisers Museum, which relocated from its 7<sup>th</sup> Street

location near downtown Fort Worth. It is the result of a new partnership with the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Foundation. The Foundation is funding this project, and scholar B. Byron Price, director of the Charles M. Russell Center for the Study of Art of the American West, is the lead curator/advisor. A separate Fort Worth history gallery will present dramatic, real stories of the region and southwest, with rotating exhibits on topics ranging from aviation and the city's growth and development to Native American history and culture.

In the new building, the highly popular **Museum School**, which offers preschool and elementary school programs that combine science, history and anthropology with art, music and literature, will have its own campus area on the north side close to the Omni Theater. A new emphasis on the museum's vast collections – making them more visible and accessible – will create rich opportunities for adult learning as well as cross-generational programming. Museum School will have six sunny classrooms and an enclosed courtyard area for play and learning.

The new **Noble Planetarium** will be unequalled in the southwest region of the United States. Offering the first Zeiss-manufactured hybrid planetarium system, comprised of a star projector ball synchronized with a digital projection system using 3D software, the planetarium's guests will feel transported to the very edge of the universe.

Thousands of bright, clear stars in both southern and northern hemispheres will be visible, and special astronomical occurrences, such as a new asteroid, will be immediately viewable. A waiting/exhibit area will have four large viewing screens showing live, up-to-the-minute views of the Sun, both its visible surface as well as layers normally invisible except through special filters. Another screen will display a downlink with the Space Telescope Science Institute, giving guests the latest information from the Hubble Telescope. The planetarium will be able to communicate with other planetariums in the nation for programming, particularly New York's Hayden Planetarium, with whom it will share the same leading edge Uniview software. The museum's authentic Sputnik

and meteorites will also be on display. The Noble will be a leader among planetariums in its unique design, capable of displaying the universe as it is, not as it was.

The museum has retained one of the top exhibit design firms in the country, Bob Weis Design Island Associates, to assist the staff in developing new exhibits for the building. Over the years, Weis has worked with some of the most prestigious organizations in the country including the Smithsonian, National Geographic, Kennedy Space Center, The Walt Disney Company, the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, and the Rockefeller Center in New York City.

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