



For Immediate Release: June 2016

Bringing Southwest Florida’s “Museum of the Future” to Life

The South Florida Museum has been helping visitors explore the world for generations — engaging audiences, encouraging understanding and inspiring all ages to connect to the past, present and future of the planet we all share.

In 2015, the Museum announced plans to transform the region’s leading cultural institution into a museum of the future, home to:

- Exciting new exhibitions;
- New programs built on innovative technological advances;
- New spaces that connect us more deeply to our community.

The South Florida Museum’s ambitious Master Campus and Programming Plan positions the Museum as a regional leader in the museum field and focuses on creating new, dynamic experiences for all of our visitors while enhancing the size, scope and beauty of our public spaces.

We’re excited to announce that we have assembled a special team that is now in place to help us accomplish our goal of creating an even more exciting and innovative hub for learning and exploration and an extraordinary educational resource for the region.

“The changes we are planning for now will enhance the services we already provide to the community and to the Gulf Coast region — to its beauty, to its economy and to residents, visitors and our many educational partners,” said Brynne Anne Besio, Museum CEO.

The nonprofit Museum, which opened in 1947, today serves more than 90,000 people annually, making it the largest cultural attraction in the county and an anchor bringing visitors to downtown Bradenton. It also provides a vital natural science learning environment for more than 11,000 school children from 12 Florida counties, including Manatee County where field trips to the Museum are an essential part of the fourth-grade STEM curriculum.

The ambitious new Master Campus and Programming Plan the Museum is now implementing includes the vision for developing a new hands-on learning center focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) concepts for youngsters ages 2 to 8; a new gathering space for community and public programming; upgrades to Snooty’s home and the Stage 2 manatee rehabilitation facility; renovation of existing exhibit spaces and administration offices and the development of new dynamic programming that will use technology being developed by the Museum’s own experts to transform the way students and visitors interact with and experience history, space and the natural sciences.

The early priorities of the Plan will be paid for by funds raised through the Connect Campaign. Fully implementing the Master Campus and Programming Plan will require meeting additional fundraising goals.

“We’re excited to announce that we have finalized the team that will help us with this transformation,” said Connect Campaign Chair Bill Blalock, a longtime Museum Trustee. “We solicited proposals from architects around the country and found two with complementary strengths. We asked Doug Mund and the late Rick Fawley and Fawley Bryant Architects if they would consider working together. Fortunately for us, they liked the idea of working in partnership, demonstrating their enthusiasm for innovation from the start. With Willis Smith in the role of Construction Manager at Risk, we’ve assembled a team that will help build something that Bradenton — and all of Southwest Florida — can be proud of.”

Meet the South Florida Museum Dream Team:

Fawley Bryant Architects, our architect of record, will manage and lead all phases of design and assist in construction administration working closely with the construction manager. With offices in Bradenton and Sarasota, Fawley Bryant creates smart and beautiful spaces by bringing together a unique variety of people, services and technology.

“The South Florida Museum is a cultural icon in our community, and we are thrilled to work with this talented project team and contribute to the growth and development of downtown Bradenton,” said President Mike Bryant. “A successful design is more than great architecture. Our team wants to create a place that will inspire learning and provide a unique and meaningful experience for each visitor.”

Doug Mund of dmdg2 owns the internationally respected firm that is focused on designing museum spaces that help fulfill each individual organization’s mission. dmdg2 is expert at creating connections between museums and visitors, making projects relevant and meaningful to the community. Fawley | Bryant will support Doug and dmdg2 in the creative process of design for the exterior and interior of the renovated and new building spaces. dmdg2 will provide all exhibit and lighting design.

“The Museum recognizes its ‘place’ in Bradenton and the larger Gulf community as a source for fun learning, civic engagement and the place that all who visit are inspired and engaged,” said Mund. “The South Florida Museum will continue to serve all ages and help people comprehend their history, their place in it, our world, and how we are all part of this special place.”

Willis A. Smith Construction, Inc., is serving as our Construction Manager at Risk. Utilizing this project delivery approach allows for the input of crucial constructability knowledge and expertise into the project planning and design development process, and will provide more accurate cost estimates and scheduling during this process. This will allow the Museum to focus on the highest quality while tightly evaluating project costs. Willis Smith, headquartered in Lakewood Ranch, has been managing public and private projects in Manatee County for more than 44 years. The firm has extensive experience with museum construction, aquariums and renovations to existing facilities under occupied conditions. They have successfully completed numerous high profile projects in this area including multiple projects at The Ringling Museum and Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium. Their specific expertise in this project type will be an integral part of maintaining excellence while meeting South Florida Museum’s cost and schedule requirements.

“We are honored to have been selected to join the team of professionals that will be tasked with transforming the South Florida Museum,” said President David Sessions. “Willis Smith Construction is well-known for building community landmarks, and the South Florida Museum is truly that. We are anxious to begin the work that will link the museum’s wonderful history in our community with its amazing future.”

Connect Campaign Update

The South Florida Museum's new Master Campus and Programming Plan is being made possible through the Connect Campaign, which publicly launched in January 2015. The \$12 million Campaign is supporting the Museum's early priorities of the Master Plan and is building on the community's investment in the organization. To date, the Museum has raised \$11.35 million, or roughly 95 percent of its goal.

Early gifts have come from the Mosaic Company Foundation, the Manatee County Tourism Development Council, the Bradenton Kiwanis Foundation, Frank E. Duckwall Foundation, Ralph S. French Charitable Foundation Trust, the Sarasota Founders Garden Club and a number of individuals in the region.

"Now is the community's opportunity to join in and help the South Florida Museum meet its goal," said Campaign Chair Blalock, whose grandfather was one of the Museum's founders.

"The South Florida Museum has been an important community asset since its creation," he said. "It was created by a group of men and women who cared about their community and wanted to provide a source for learning and excitement. The Connect Campaign and the Master Campus and Programming Plan will help us continue that tradition of providing inspiring experiences to visitors and students. It will also grow our role as a vital resource for educational partners like the Manatee County School District, USF Sarasota-Manatee, New College, Ringling College of Art + Design and State College of Florida."

To learn more about the Connect Campaign or the Master Campus and Programming Plan, please contact Martha Wells, Director of Community Engagement, at 941.746.4131, ext. 135 or MWells@SouthFloridaMuseum.org.