

## The Cleveland Museum of Natural History raises nearly \$39 million and plans expansion start in 2016

Cleveland Museum of Natural History expansion.JPG

An earlier version of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History's expansion plan, shown here, will evolve as a design team finishes plans between now and 2016. (*Fentress Architects*)

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Now it's another museum's turn for a big makeover.

Just a few months after the Cleveland Museum of Art **finished** an eight-year expansion and renovation, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History has announced it will finalize architectural plans for a similar physical transformation and break ground in 2016.

The museum has also announced that it has raised nearly \$39 million in cash and pledges toward the \$125 million project since it **began a capital campaign** 16 months ago.

"There's good momentum going with the project," Evalyn Gates, the museum's director since 2010, said Tuesday in an interview. "The response continues to be one of excitement and enthusiasm for what we're doing. This is a beloved institution and it is universally recognized. It's time to bring our facilities up to the level that our collection and research demand."

Working with a design team headed by Fentress Architects of Denver, Col., the museum is aiming for an environmentally sustainable expansion and renovation that transforms the institution's gloomy, outdated appearance.

And, like the art museum, the natural history museum will demolish about half of its existing, 226,000-square-foot complex and then add new construction.

Kirtland Hall, built in the late 1950s to house the museum's collection of dinosaurs and prehistoric life, will be removed, along with Sears Hall, built in the 1970s to house what is now called the human ecology collection.

On Tuesday, the museum held a panel discussion to introduce members of its newly assembled design team to about 200 supporters. But Gates emphasized that it was too soon to show any



specific designs for the museum's future.

Instead, she said it was likely that a previous conceptual design by the Fentress firm, unveiled in late 2012, would likely evolve in a process that will involve community participation and feedback.

"Exactly what it looks like and how much of the [building] mass is in different places - that's what we're working out," she said in an interview before the panel discussion.

She said the museum aims to transform its architecturally drab appearance on Wade Oval in University Circle, and its equally uninspiring rear facades facing the traffic circle at East 105th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.

"We want a new presence that invites visitors into the building," she said. "We want to integrate indoor and outdoor spaces to invite people to reconnect with nature through the exhibits themselves.

And, yes, there will be parking. The museum plans to remove a surface parking lot along Wade Oval Drive and replace it with a garage with approximately 300 spaces. Visitors will be able to walk under cover directly into the museum.

The museum planned an expansion and renovation with Fentress **earlier in the 2000s**, but held off when the recession hit in 2008.

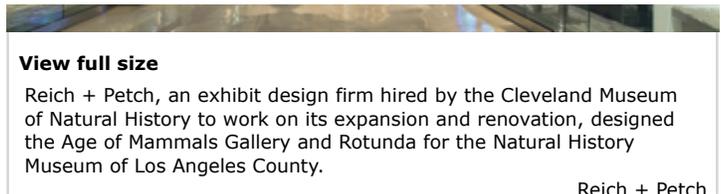
Gates, a particle physicist who previously worked as assistant director of the Kavli Institute for Cosmological Physics at the University of Chicago, decided when she came to Cleveland that the previous plans for the natural history museum's expansion weren't bold enough.

Since then, the museum completed a new rough conceptual design with Fentress, and quietly launched its capital campaign.

With a \$140 million endowment and a long history of balanced budgets, the museum is confident it can expand without straining its resources or the community's support, Gates said.

She said the museum's design process will integrate architects, engineers, sustainability experts, exhibit designers and cost estimators in a unified team that will resolve points of friction as they come up by working closely together.

Gates said she did not want to complete an



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Reich + Petch, an exhibit design firm hired by the Cleveland Museum of Natural History to work on its expansion and renovation, designed the Age of Mammals Gallery and Rotunda for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Reich + Petch



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The giant globe outside the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences is part of a design conceived by Fentress Architects, the firm leading the renovation and expansion of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Courtesy Fentress Architects

architectural design first, and then hand it off to the exhibit designers, engineers and cost estimators, only to discover problems with the initial design downstream.

Project Management Consultants LLC of Cleveland will oversee the process.

The firm's managing director, Jeffrey Appelbaum, represented Cuyahoga County in its oversight of the design and construction of the new Cleveland Convention Center and Global Center for Health Innovation, and is performing the same role in planning the county's new convention hotel.

URS Cleveland will be the project architect of record, and Osborn Engineering of Cleveland will be the engineer of record - firms responsible for carrying the design through construction documents.

Other members of the design team include Buro Happold of New York, the engineering firm that helped architect Moshe Safdie realize his design for the new Crystal Bridges Museum of Art in Bentonville, Ark.

That project called for several exhibit pavilions to be built like bridges over two ponds that needed to be dammed and kept at a consistent level.

The firm's task in Cleveland will be to help the natural history museum achieve a high degree of environmental sustainability.

"We are aiming to be as green and sustainable as a museum of our kind can be," Gates said.

The museum chose two exhibit designers - Reich + Petch of Toronto and Thinc Design of New York.

Reich + Petch designed the recently installed Age of Mammals gallery at the Los Angeles Museum of Natural History and has worked on other high profile commissions for the Smithsonian Institution and the Royal Ontario Museum.

Thinc Design's credits include exhibit design for the National Sept. 11 Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center in New York, a building designed by the Oslo-based architectural firm, Snohetta.

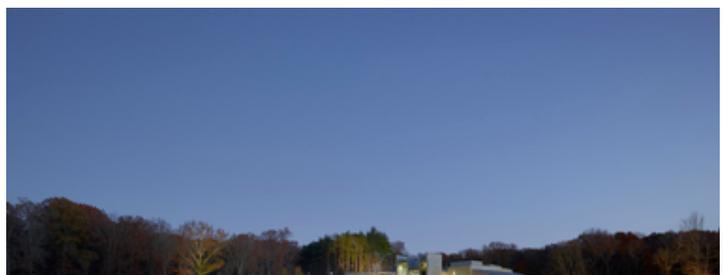
"My hope is people will find the experience [of the new Cleveland museum] to be welcoming and accessible and exciting and that they'll come away wanting to come back," said Tom Hennes, principal of Thinc.



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A sample of Thinc Design's work at the Steinhart Aquarium at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. The firm is part of the design team for the expansion and renovation of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Tom Hennes



He said his goal was not to have his firm's work noticed by visitors, but to let the museum's collections speak for themselves.

"If we do our job really well, they won't say, 'wow the exhibitry was really fabulous,' " he said.

Gates said the museum wouldn't start construction until it has raised 75 percent of the construction cost in cash and pledges – a goal it plans to achieve by 2016.

The institution also plans to remain open throughout the construction process, and to make the work visible to visitors in a way that links the process to the museum's educational mission.

The museum's goal is to finish construction by 2019, just in time for its centennial in 2020.

"I think it's an investment in the future of the community," Gates said. "This is going to touch the lives in a very real way of all the children of this region."

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Architect Moshe Safdie's Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art was engineered by Buro Happold, a firm on the design team of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History.

Timothy Hursley



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