



Fernbank Raises \$27M to Transform the Museum Experience

ATLANTA—Fernbank Museum announces that it will unveil new museum exhibits and learning galleries, thanks to a capital campaign that has raised more than \$27 million. The investment will revolutionize the guest experience, continuing Fernbank’s commitment to redefine how audiences engage with museums now and in the future.

Fernbank will invest in a landmark new signature exhibition, add another temporary exhibit gallery, create an interactive science discovery zone, expand content in the Star Gallery, and improve accessibility through both physical spaces and content connectivity.

“This is an exciting opportunity to build upon the diverse experiences that make Fernbank so unique, including the extraordinary way Fernbank has integrated content across a 3D giant screen theater, an old-growth forest, and a natural history museum,” said Fernbank’s President and CEO, Jennifer Grant Warner.

Re-imagining how guests engage with content, the museum team will establish connectivity that transverses the indoor and outdoor offerings, encompasses relationships among disciplines, and spans generations of visitors. Fernbank aims to set a new standard for museum experiences, forming connections across science, nature and human culture in dramatic, thought-provoking and entertaining ways. The museum will also add an elevator and more automatic doors to improve physical accessibility in the building and to the WildWoods nature area.

“We want to offer layered experiences that connect guests more holistically to science, nature and human culture, providing opportunities to engage all ages of learners in relevant and entertaining ways at Fernbank. The innovative vision of these projects reinforces the interconnected experiences across our campus and out in the world,” Warner said. “We’re approaching Fernbank’s future with this in mind. Guests are part of natural history, and we are engaging them in the conversation across the entire museum experience.”

The various projects will open in stages over the next two years, enabling new approaches to learning and programming across all three floors of the museum.



Changing Earth - Land - Geosystems Rendering



Changing Earth - Life - Biosphere Rendering

CHANGING EARTH

The revolutionary new signature exhibit, Changing Earth, will showcase our planet and its interrelated, dynamic systems. As Fernbank's largest permanent exhibit, it will reveal the beauty, phenomena and diversity across every part of Earth.

Real specimens, touchable objects, interactive opportunities, immersive features and sophisticated technology combine to offer a unique exhibit experience. Connected zones will allow guests to take a deeper dive into the systems that are the underpinning of our planet, through water, land, air and life, revealing how they influence each other, and how they continue to change. Across wildlife, human culture, and dramatic formations, the exhibit features incredible discoveries that tell Earth's story, which continues to unfold.

Highlights include the opportunity for guests to move earth's plates using the "Tectonic Dashboard," explore biodiversity with the "Tree of Life" interactive and engage in an immersive media experience where the interconnectedness of our planet and the life it supports beautifully and dramatically unfolds over time in the "Rollins Rotunda," celebrating the awe and wonder of the natural world.

ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY GALLERY

The new temporary gallery adjacent to Changing Earth will allow the museum to curate its own temporary exhibits and feature travelling exhibits to delve deeper into natural history themes. This additional rotating space will provide even more opportunities to offer members and repeat visitors new experiences.

ORKIN DISCOVERY ZONE

The new Orkin Discovery Zone will feature a hands-on, active learning environment on the museum's third floor. All ages will step into the role of a scientist and hone their observation skills while they explore authentic objects, live animals and interactives. As they explore, guests will learn about biodiversity, classification, communication and more.

Highlights include the opportunity to peer through scopes highlighting discoveries in WildWoods, see examples of biodiversity through real specimens, observe live animals in terrariums, and build a bug using a spinning activity that combines the traits of different insects. Guests will gain a deeper appreciation for the natural world and our connection to it as humans, including how nature has inspired human inventions.

OUR PLACE IN THE COSMOS

The Star Gallery, which features a fiber optic ceiling mapping the stars and constellations of the evening Georgia sky, will see a transformation with expanded content about the solar system and origins of our universe as well as cinematic media. With new interpretation and custom-produced video content, guests will explore how humans have connected to the constellations over time and how we are using science today to reconstruct our planet's 13.8-billion-year story.

Support for the fundraising campaign includes major gifts from The Gary W. Rollins Foundation, the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation and more than 80 other funders. Eight gifts were for \$1 million or more.

“We are proud to support Fernbank, our city’s destination for science and nature experiences,” said Kathleen Rollins, Executive Director of The Gary W. Rollins Foundation. “Fernbank’s unique approach to programming is uniquely aligned with our longstanding commitment to science education.”

Fernbank is a 120-acre, science education campus featuring a world-class museum, giant screen 3D theater and outdoor nature experiences in WildWoods and Fernbank Forest. The organization’s environmental legacy has evolved into a multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary approach that reflects our educational mission to ignite a passion for science, nature, and human culture through exploration and discovery.

Fernbank has invested in several other major initiatives over the years, including the Fantastic Forces exhibit and a new STEAM Lab that opened in 2019 and 2020, respectively, and creating WildWoods to physically and programmatically connect Fernbank Museum with Fernbank Forest in 2016.

Fernbank plans to open the new museum experiences in phases over the next two years. Our Place in the Cosmos is expected to open in late 2025, the Orkin Discovery Zone is anticipated to open in 2026, and Changing Earth is anticipated to open in 2027, alongside the new temporary gallery and expanded accessibility.

“This is an exciting time for Fernbank as we continue to grow membership and attendance, including expanding our programs and the audiences we engage,” Warner said. “We’re always looking toward the future of what will serve our visitors and how to engage them in new and exciting ways. We are grateful to our supporters who are making this expansion and modernization possible for our community so that we can create new experiences, connect with learners of all ages and abilities, and expand content so that it’s modern, relevant and approachable to today’s guest.”

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