

**CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY PIONEERS
A NEW MODEL FOR NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS
THROUGH COMPLETE RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF ALL EXHIBITS**

**Groundbreaking Reinstallation Links Museum Exhibitions and Collections
To Contemporary Life and Human Health**

**50,000-Square-Foot Expansion Will Add New Public Spaces and Animate Connections between
Museum Exhibits and the Natural World, Including CMNH's 11,000 Acres of Preserves**



Cleveland Museum of Natural History Rendering © DLR Group

Cleveland, OH—June 22, 2021—Pioneering a new model for natural history museums, the **Cleveland Museum of Natural History (CMNH)** will break ground on June 24, 2021 on a **\$150-million expansion, complete reinstallation of its exhibitions, and development of new public spaces**. The project marks a rare opportunity for a natural history museum to reinvent its entire complex to tell a unified story of life and the forces that shape the universe. The use of the Museum's outstanding historical and living collections, the latest scientific research, and immersive technologies will enable visitors to see

themselves as part of a continuum of life on Earth and part of the universe. Various areas of the Museum will remain open throughout the expansion and phased openings of the new and reimagined spaces will begin in 2022.

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History—now celebrating its 100th anniversary—holds more than five million artifacts and specimens, and stewards more than 11,000 acres of nature preserves. It is one of the country’s leading research institutions across diverse fields, with premier collections ranging from the evidence of human origins to ancient ecosystems during catastrophic extinction events.

“The events of the past year have underscored the ways in which human life is inexorably bound with natural forces, and how a robust understanding of current science is needed to make critical choices in our daily lives,” said **Sonia Winner, Cleveland Museum of Natural History President and CEO**. “We are creating a new model for natural history museums that uses the past to inform our present to build a better future together. Our reimagined museum will illuminate the interconnectedness of human life and the natural world, and how science is essential to our lives.”

The physical and programmatic transformation of the Cleveland Museum of Natural History is underpinned by a vision to promote scientific literacy and empower individuals to be a voice for the planet in their communities. In tandem with the expansion, the Museum is adding new curatorial posts, including an assistant curator of environment and an assistant curator of planetary systems, that reflect CMNH’s approach of dismantling the structure of traditional, siloed scientific disciplines to more effectively link research to education, public programming, and the work of other researchers nationally and globally.

Sally Sears, Museum Trustee and Campaign Co-Chair, said “When I took my own children to the Museum, I saw the power of its collections and educational programming to spark wonder and discovery. Our reimagined exhibits will put visitors at the center of the experience and make the Museum even more accessible, relevant, and fun.”

“It is of paramount importance for scientists to communicate the relevance of their work to the public,” said **Gavin Svenson, Director of Research and Collections**. “The research we conduct and the collections we study provide a unique window into the health and well-being of our planet and our own lives. By transforming our exhibitions and our entire program, we can reveal these connections to advance public scientific literacy, increase people’s understanding of their role in the environment, and foster people’s agency in the vital decisions they face every day.”

THE EXPANSION

The redesigned exhibits, developed by **Gallagher & Associates** in tandem with the Museum’s curatorial, collections, and educational teams, will take a new approach to natural history, avoiding traditional compartmentalization by time period, geography, and types of living things to form integrated storylines of planetary and biological processes and make these powerful forces tangible and relevant to contemporary life.

As the exhibits holistically integrate and interpret the collection, the **architectural design by DLR Group** weaves together the original museum building and six disparate expansions from the past century into a unified complex. Drawing on the history of glaciation on the Museum's site and in the region, the design's curving white forms of glass fiber reinforced concrete evoke the alluvial forms shaped from the glaciers that created Lake Erie and the Great Lakes, while revealing how the forces at play in the region have also shaped the planet and the universe and continue to affect life today. Massive new exterior glass walls wrap around the building's façade to open sightlines between the exhibits and the surrounding landscape of Wade Oval, embodying the Museum's mission of revealing the dynamic interdependencies between people and the world around them.

A new **50,000-sq.-ft.** addition constructed on what is currently a parking lot will be seamlessly interwoven with the existing structures to create a central welcome and orientation area and serve as a gateway into the Museum. This new Visitors Hall will feature signature specimens, from a reconstruction of "Lucy," the 3.2-million-year-old human ancestor first discovered by a team led by CMNH scientists, to a geological sample collected from the moon, and specimens of modern-day animals illustrating evolutionary change, biological diversity, and human impact on the natural world and will be open to the public, free of charge. From this expansive visitor center, the exhibitions will be organized in two wings, one dedicated to planetary processes and the other to biological processes, respectively anchored by the Nathan and Fannye Shafran Planetarium & Ralph Mueller Observatory and the Ralph Perkins II Wildlife Center & Woods Garden – presented by KeyBank.

A new self-guided interactive space, The Ames Family Curiosity Center, made possible by the B. Charles and Jay G. Ames Foundation, will foster real-time connections between CMNH's collections, visitors' lived experiences, and science-related news from across the world. By engaging in activities from specimen identification to designing their own experiments, participants will use the fundamentals of the scientific process to answer questions about the world around us, and better understand how sciences can inform actions they can take in their lives and communities. In addition to exhibitions, the transformation will feature new labs for educational programming as well as expanded visitor amenities and event spaces.

CMNH's transformation builds on the recently completed Gateway Projects, including the creation of a Current Science Area in the main lobby, where the Museum is testing new concepts and approaches to engage visitors with its collections and research; a reconfiguration of the Thelma and Kent H. Smith Environmental Courtyard, to reflect Northeastern Ohio's native flora, geology, and watersheds; and an upgrade of its 450-seat Murch Auditorium.

About CMNH

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History illuminates the natural world and inspires visitors to engage with the scientific forces that shape their lives. Since its founding in 1920, the Museum has activated the strength of its collections, which have grown to encompass more than five million artifacts and specimens, and pioneered scientific research to advance knowledge across diverse fields of study. In revealing the dynamic connections between people and the surrounding world, the Museum invites new perspectives

and cultivates lifelong learning. Through its [Natural Areas Program](#), the Museum stewards more than 11,000 acres of protected ecosystems across northern Ohio. A community gathering place, educational center, and research institution, CMNH is a vital resource that serves the Cleveland community and the nation. For more information, visit cmnh.org.

About DLR Group

DLR Group is an integrated design firm delivering architecture, engineering, interiors, planning, and building optimization for new construction, renovation, and adaptive reuse. Our promise is to elevate the human experience through design. This promise inspires sustainable design for a diverse group of public and private sector clients, local communities, and our planet. DLR Group is 100 percent employee-owned and fully supports the initiatives and goals of the 2030 Challenge and is an initial signatory to the China Accord and the AIA 2030 Commitment. For more information, visit dlrgroup.com.

About Gallagher & Associates

Gallagher & Associates (G&A) is an internationally recognized museum and cultural institution planning and design firm. With interdisciplinary studios in Washington, D.C., New York City, Portland, and Asia, G&A brings a highly regarded collaborative style, design excellence, and unparalleled service to clients around the world. The firm's projects have been recognized repeatedly for ingenuity, creativity, and immersive storytelling. For more information, visit gallagherdesign.com.

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