

Public Museum of Grand Rapids

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Role: Design Architect and Museum Planner for New Museum

Building Area: 150,000 sf

Description: The 150,000 sf Public Museum of Grand Rapids, which opened in late 1994, interprets the cultural and natural history of Grand Rapids and the region. Located on a highly visible riverfront site adjacent to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum and directly across the Grand River from downtown Grand Rapids, the museum contains 49,500 sf of long term exhibit areas, a 9,500 sf temporary exhibition gallery, a restored 1920's carousel, a Digistar planetarium, and a variety of other education and visitor service facilities.

We designed the building to maximize its visibility from downtown Grand Rapids. The glass facade of the long exhibition galleria, which houses several of the museums' major "icon" exhibits, and the glass-enclosed carousel pavilion which extends out over the river both signal the presence of the museum to people across the river. For visitors inside the building, views out of the river and the Grand Rapids cityscape provide an exciting backdrop from the exhibition areas, balconies, stairways, and circulation paths.

The public areas are distributed among three levels. On the first floor are ticketing and orientation areas, lockers, a coat room, the museum store, the exhibition galleria, the carousel, and a major exhibit re-creating 1890's Grand Rapids. Extensive exhibit areas, the cafe, the planetarium, a science demonstration area, and a multi-media auditorium with a historic 2,000-pipe Wurlitzer organ are located on the second floor. The third floor houses more exhibits, the temporary exhibitions gallery, and classrooms. Staff offices and exhibit project budget includes building construction, furnishings and equipment, exhibits, design fees, and fund raising/financing expenses.

Prior to providing basic architectural services, we prepared a Comprehensive Master Plan that included development of a new mission, roles, and activity programs for the expanded museum, projected staffing and space requirements, a conceptual building design for fund raising, and an operational feasibility assessment.



