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GEARING UP FOR GROWTH

RESOURCE GUIDE INSIDE
Expanding a Museum’s Role in Advancing STEM Education

Imagine a museum campus that inspires and inspires the next generation of critical thinkers, problem solvers and innovators — a place where young engineers are nurtured, where citizen scientists are activated and where learners of all ages are catalyzed to take action. Imagine a world-leading " Crucible" — a space where complex conversations and thorny problems are tackled by collaborations between industry, community and academia — inspiring action and igniting passions in young people for pursuing careers in STEM.

IMAGINE ALL THIS ON THE POUGHKEEPSIE WATERFRONT.

A MUSEUM ON THE RISE

The Mid-Hudson Children's Museum is the only children's museum between New York City and Albany. Since 2012, attendance at the Mid-Hudson Children's Museum (MHCM) has grown significantly from 20,000 to 76,000+ visitors per year. We now welcome families from all eleven counties in the Hudson Valley, western Connecticut, 46 other states and 11 countries. Attendance at MHCM is far exceeds industry benchmarks for interactive children's museums in terms of expected visitors per square foot, and we are now literally leaving the crowds and needing to expand.

AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY

MHCM was recently approved to acquire ownership of a piece of property adjacent to our current location on the Poughkeepsie waterfront known as Upper Landing. The property includes two historically significant but vacant buildings. That this property is being made available to us - at this very time - creates a rare and exciting opportunity as we consider our expansion possibilities. Together with the two buildings and our own site, we have the opportunity to develop a whole new museum campus to benefit our region.

A CONCEPT EMERGES: "THE MUSEUMS AT UPPER LANDING"

MHCM is looking to connect our need to expand our physical space with a growing regional need to advance STEM education. Early visions include a " think big" with respect to the possibilities, and as a result we are developing an innovative concept to create a vibrant, regionally-focused museum campus featuring four separate small museums nested into a beautiful waterfront park. Each museum will feature its own unique content and will be developed for a particular audience, but all will be grounded in science, technology, engineering and math education.

NEW PROGRAMMATIC SPACE

New programmatic space will include a classroom with an interactive demonstration kitchen to host family cooking programs, and an exhibits gallery, which will feature exhibits on all aspects of food, local agriculture, nutrition and food-related STEM careers. This space will also host an expanded year-round farmers market. (Target Audience: families with children ages 4-12, elementary and middle school groups.)

The Science Center at Upper Landing. Hoffman House in Upper Landing is one of Poughkeepsie's oldest buildings with a section of it dating back to 1717. In this adaptive reuse project, this building will become an interactive science center, housing exhibits archieved in the exploration of natural phenomena, with the educational philosophy of the constructivist science centers, which feature open-ended, self-directed, inquiry-based experiences with prolonged engagement as outcomes. The unique floor plan of Hoffman House provides opportunity to create neutrally, allowing for a wide range of hands-on experiences and discovery across a range of STEM topics. (Target Audience: families with children ages 5-12, elementary school groups.)

The Crucible. Reynolds Building in Upper Landing will be transformed into a vibrant "community curated museum" (The Crucible), offering exhibitions and programs that are determined and created by and, tightly connected and relevant to, our regional community. Loosely modeled after the MAH (Museum of Art & History in Santa Cruz, CA), where different constituents from within the community come together and co-create exhibitions and programs about complex topics and/or controversial issues. The Crucible will serve as an innovative convening space where new partnerships and connections are formed among middle and...
high-school aged youth, academia, industry, the arts, and the community at large. Content will be produced locally to inspire critical thinking, and will reflect multiple viewpoints, interests and interpretations of emerging science and advances in technology and their intersections with social and/or ethical considerations (e.g. big data and privacy; food systems and social justice [media and mental health]). (Target Audience: middle and high school aged youth, college students, adults, seniors.)

Upper Landing Park. The Park will continue to be made available for both private and public events, with management by MHCM. With interpretive signage already in place on science topics including water power, transportation, bridge engineering and glaciers migration, it is almost as if this Park was destined to be a gateway to immersive STEM experiences, such as those proposed by the creation of this Museum Campus. (Target audience: general public.)

NEXT STEPS

We are now actively evaluating the property for suitability for development and exploring how the buildings can be restored and repurposed for maximum impact. Specifically, we are looking to develop plans for separate and distinct "museums" that would provide families age-appropriate experiences designed to grow with their children and families.

Our next record of visioning sessions will be fall 2018 and winter 2019 as we look to map our museum context and to develop plans that depict each of these new learning spaces.

GETTING INVOLVED

We invite your participation! An exciting and ambitious project such as this will require:

Leadership. We are continuing to strategically grow our board and our planning committees so that we are positioned for success in our museum expansion efforts.

Partnerships. We are also looking to build relationships and key funding partnerships with local industries, colleges and universities that have an interest in advancing STEM education and in preparing tomorrow's STEM career workforce.

For more information on this project, I invite you to contact me directly at: (845) 471-0989 ext. 19 or LLKimber@mhcm.org.

Lace Litchfield-Kimber earned her B.A magna cum laude from Amherst College in Biology and her M.S. from Cornell University. Formally trained in the agricultural sciences as a plant pathologist, she left research and teaching to become an entrepreneur; starting Fertile Minds, Inc., an informal science education consulting group. She made the leap to higher education fundraising at Cornell University before joining the science center field in 2004 at the Scenecenter in Ithaca, NY. Ms. Litchfield-Kimber is a distinguished leader in the international science museum field, with a proven track record of transforming and growing museums and programs. She was named a Noyce Leadership Fellow in 2010 at the recommendation of the Association of Science Technology Centers, and in 2013 was the Athena Leadership Award Recipient for the Hudson Valley. She became the Executive Director of MHCM in September 2012 and has just been elected to the board of the Association of Children's Museums in Washington, DC.

Support. By making a charitable contribution to MHCM now, you will support our critical upfront planning and design efforts upon which this whole project will be built.

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