

Museum and Cultural Advisory Board – Meeting Minutes

The Museum and Cultural Advisory Board met in a regular hybrid meeting via Zoom and at the Old Council Upper Chambers on Thursday July 24, 2025.

Members Present:

Claudia Bloom
Katelyn Armbruster
Angela Buer
Jania Davis
Karen Rolston
Colleen Byron
Melvin Van Vorst
Brad Peterson
Todd Hanle
Greg DeSimone

Members Absent:

Annalisa Alvrus

Staff Present:

Illya Riske
Simon Tipene Adlam
Jarrad Bittner
Sarah Goedicke

Greg DeSimone called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Items from citizens present: There were no citizens present.

Introduction of New Board Members – Sarah Goedicke, Management Assistant, Jania Davis:

Sarah Goedicke introduced new Board Member Jania Davis, who gave a more detailed introduction of herself to the Board.

Take Action: Elect a Chair for FY 2025-2026 – Greg DeSimone:

Karen Rolston nominated Greg DeSimon for Board Chair and Todd Hanle seconded. There being no other nominations, Melvin Van Vorst made a motion to close nominations and Todd Hanle seconded. The Board voted unanimously to elect Greg DeSimone as Board Chair.

Take Action: Elect a Vice-Chair for FY 2025-2026 – Greg DeSimone:

Greg DeSimone nominated Karen Rolston for Board Vice-Chair and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. There being no other nominations, Todd Hanle made a motion to close nominations and Melvin Van Vorst seconded. The Board voted unanimously to elect Karen Rolston as Board Vice-Chair.

Approval of Minutes from the Regular May 22, 2025 meeting:

Melvin Van Vorst moved to approve the minutes as written and Angela Buer seconded. Board members voted unanimously to approve the minutes from May 22, and they will be posted on the city's website.

Hear a Presentation on Open Meeting Law – Illya Riske, Interim Arts & Culture Director:

Illya Riske gave a presentation (**Exhibit A**) on open meeting law as a refresher for the board. This will be done for the board on an annual basis moving forward. Karen Rolston asked what the board does if they don't know that a quorum will be present at an event or function and Sarah Goedicke explained that any time the department invites the Board to an event, they submit a public meeting notice in case that happens. Collen Byron thanked Illya for a concise summary of Open Meeting Law.

Hear a Presentation on Arizona Museum of Natural History's Master Plan – Simon Tipene Adlam, Museum Administrator:

Simon Tipene Adlam gave a presentation on Arizona Museum of Natural History's Master Plan (**Exhibit B**). He reviewed benchmarking data and SWOT assessment completed by Gallagher & Associates. Simon also shared that the museum is facing new and increasing competition in the valley. He stated that he would like to come back to the Board and ask for support during the community engagement process that will begin in March 2026. During construction for a new facility, staff will go into the community in satellite locations to deliver programming and recently added a mobile unit to help deliver programming.

Jania Davis asked what impacts construction would have on parking downtown and the Mesa Market. Simon will communicate parking impacts once identified and recognized that we will need more parking and ways to deal with school buses in the future. Jania asked if we are saving the dinosaur façade and Simon answered they will repurpose it somehow.

Todd Hanle asked if staff are working with the Economic Development Department. Simon said an executive team will work on this project with many departments involved.

Karen Rolston asked if this new building will replace the current building and Simon confirmed. She asked what staff will do when that is happening and Simon stated that this is when staff will go out into satellite locations across the community.

Melvin Van Vorst asked if the building has historic significance. Simon said it is historic but is not protected. Melvin asked if the Historic Preservation Board was aware and on board with this proposal and Simon said the team will have a community engagement process.

Discuss: Board Purpose – Greg DeSimone:

Greg DeSimone had a couple small updates. The Board will not be meeting at AZMNH this fiscal year because they cannot accommodate hybrid meetings and we have members who join by Zoom. He invited Illya Riske to talk about an idea that he shared with Greg. Illya referenced prior Board conversations regarding Board involvement and stated there will be more to come very soon.

Upcoming Events – Volunteer or Participation Opportunities:

Sarah Goedicke shared that Relaxed Hour at Día de los Muertos has expanded to both days this year and will need volunteers for that event. She shared that she will co-present at the Kennedy Center's Leadership Exchange in Arts & Disability (LEAD) conference with Sarah Dolens-Moon, Senior Program Assistant at Mesa Arts Center, in August about Relaxed Hour. Volunteer info isn't yet available for the overall festival but that will be shared with this group when it is.

Jarrad Bittner shared that the museum is now doing free evenings on the second Friday of even months, and most will incorporate resource fairs. Jarrad said anyone interested in helping at idea Museum can connect with him directly.

Sarah also shared that Educator Appreciation is coming up, as well as the opening at Mesa Contemporary Arts Museum.

Discuss projects or presenters of interest and report on events attended:

Karen Rolston and Greg DeSimone attended meet and greet sessions for the finalist candidates for the Director of Arts & Culture position. Karen found it an interesting experience. Greg said it was a low-key intimate setting with a follow up survey.

Kate Armbruster presented research from her doctoral program which focused on student employment, specifically internships, to people from AZMNH. She shared research and best practices on how to engage their interns. Kate also asked if the Board is interested in hearing from Falcon Field Airport's Museum at some point.

The next scheduled meeting date is September 25, 2025, and will be a hybrid meeting on zoom and at the idea Museum.

Melvin Van Vorst made a motion to end the meeting and Todd Hanle seconded. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:04pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Illya Riske
Acting Director of Arts and Culture

EXHIBIT A

Sept. 28, 2023
Museum and Cultural Advisory
Board

Open Meeting Law

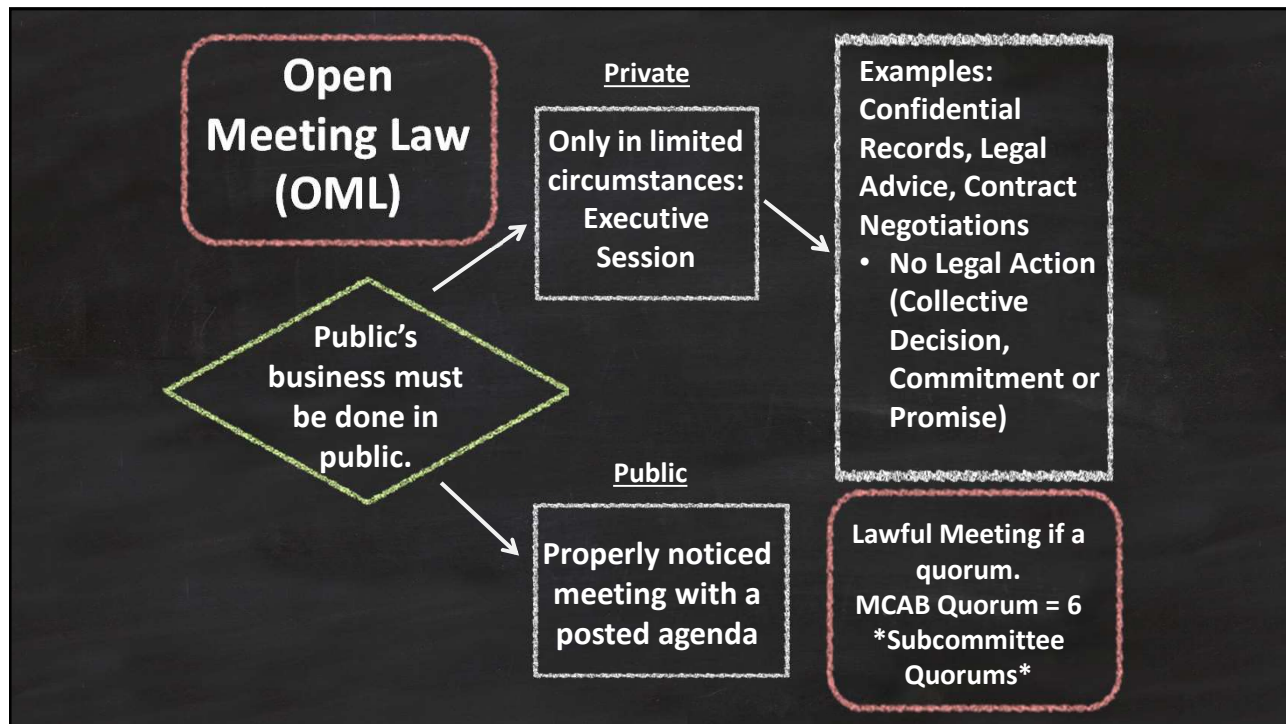
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Arizona Open Meeting Law
Arizona Revised Statutes
Title 38, Chapter 4, Article 3.1

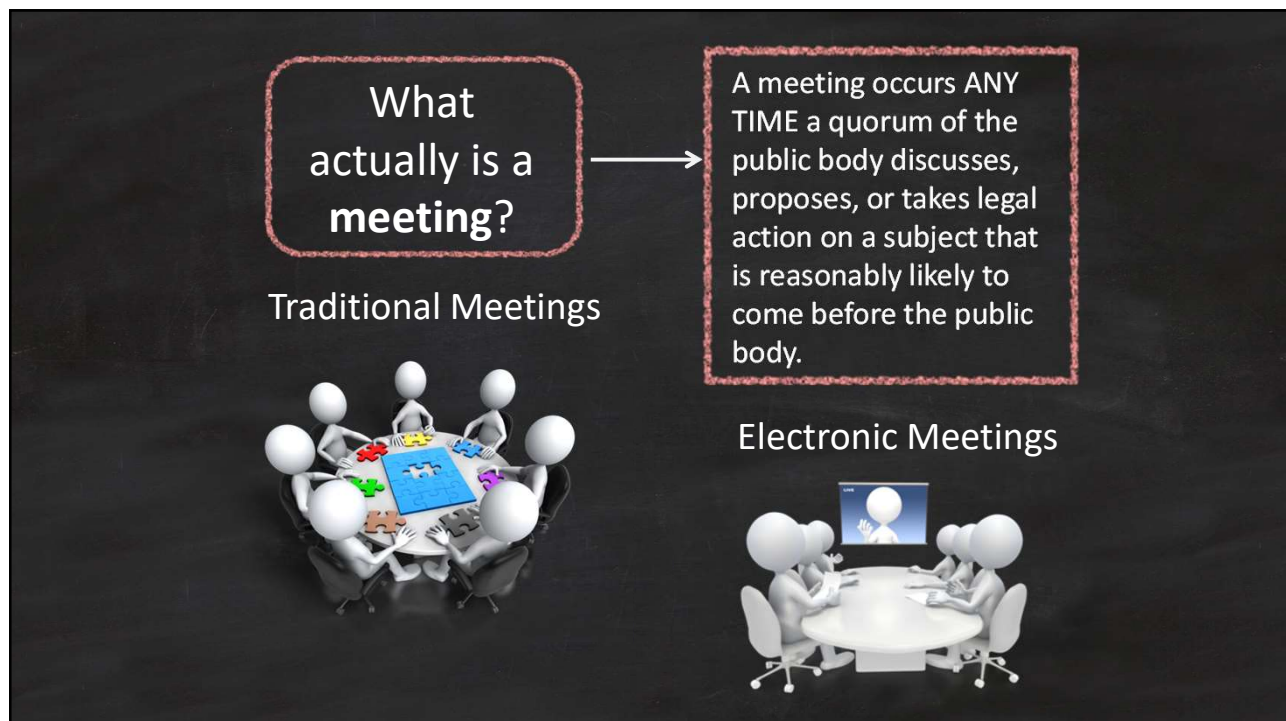
A.R.S. § 38-431.09

“It is the public policy of this state that meetings of public bodies be conducted openly and that notices and agendas be provided for such meetings which contain such information as is reasonably necessary to inform the public of the matters to be discussed or decided.”

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Pitfalls in OML

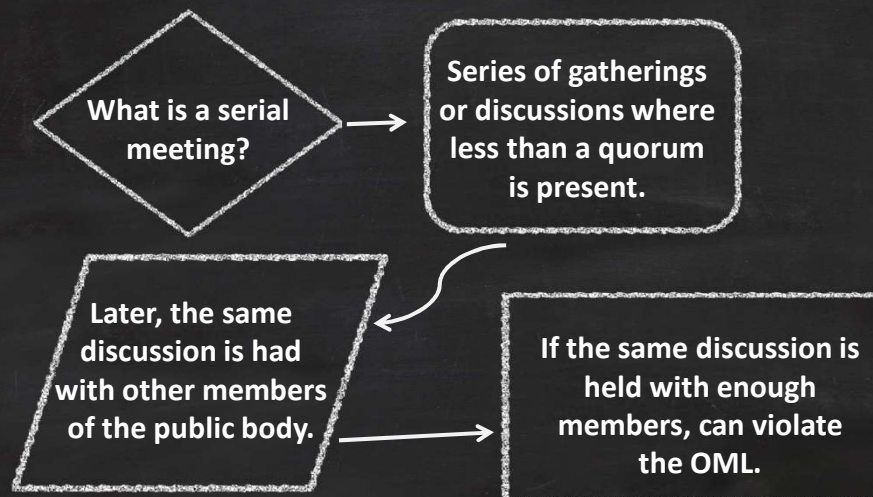
1. Social Events

- ✓ If quorum will be present at an event, post the event
- ✓ Identify date, time, location and purpose
- ✓ State no legal action will be taken

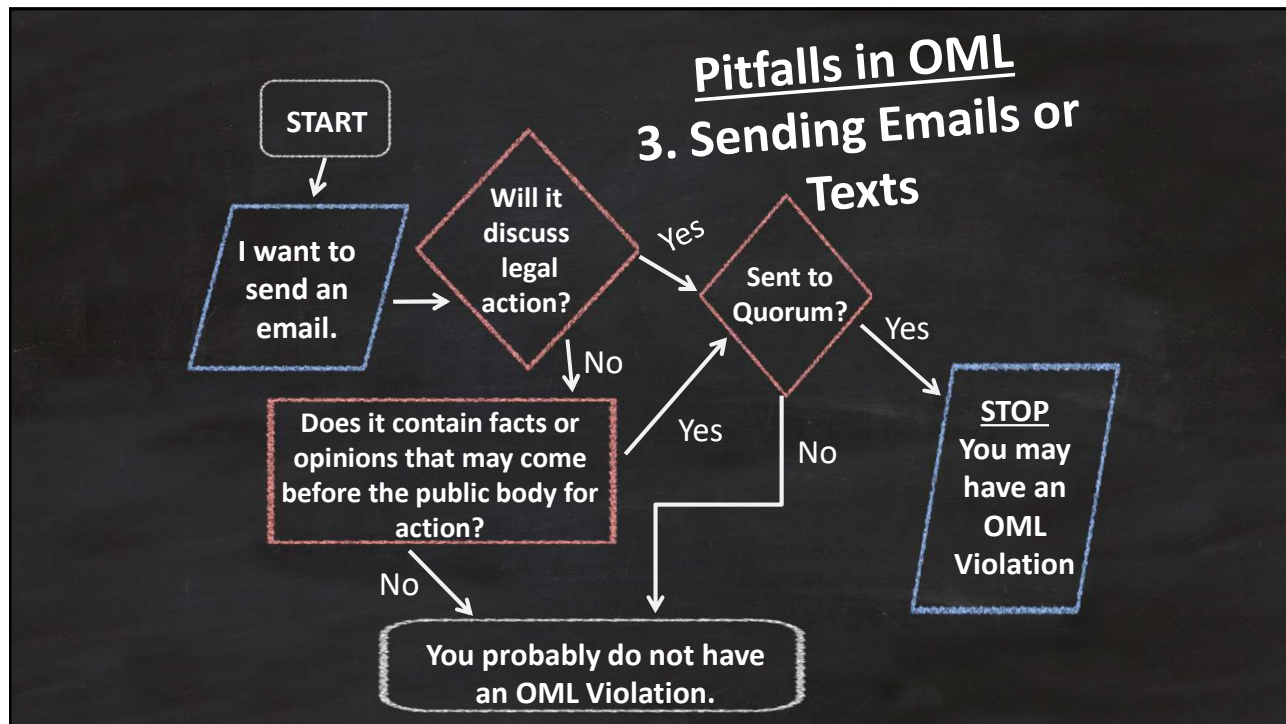
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Pitfalls in OML

2. Serial Meetings



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Lesson: Be careful responding to emails and text messages.

- Using “**Reply All**” & **Forwarding** Emails may lead to OML trouble.

Mass texts or forwarding text messages can lead to a serial meeting in violation of the OML.



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Pitfalls in OML

4. Social Media (emerging issues)

You post comments about the public meeting on your private Facebook page—where you just happen to be “friends” with other members of your public body.

OML
Problems

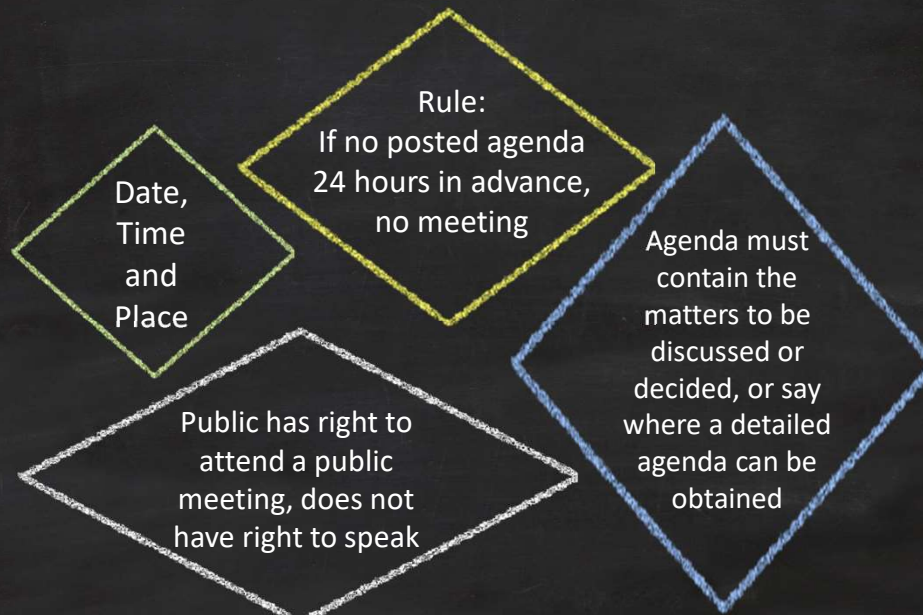
?

Not necessarily...

- Be careful “Liking” comments
- Do not direct comments to other board members

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Meeting Agenda



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*Can we discuss matters
not on the agenda?*

No, must be
reasonably
related to an
agenda item



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Violations of the OML

ACTIONS taken by the
Board are NULL and
VOID.



The Attorney General or
County Attorney may
INVESTIGATE.

Potential Penalties

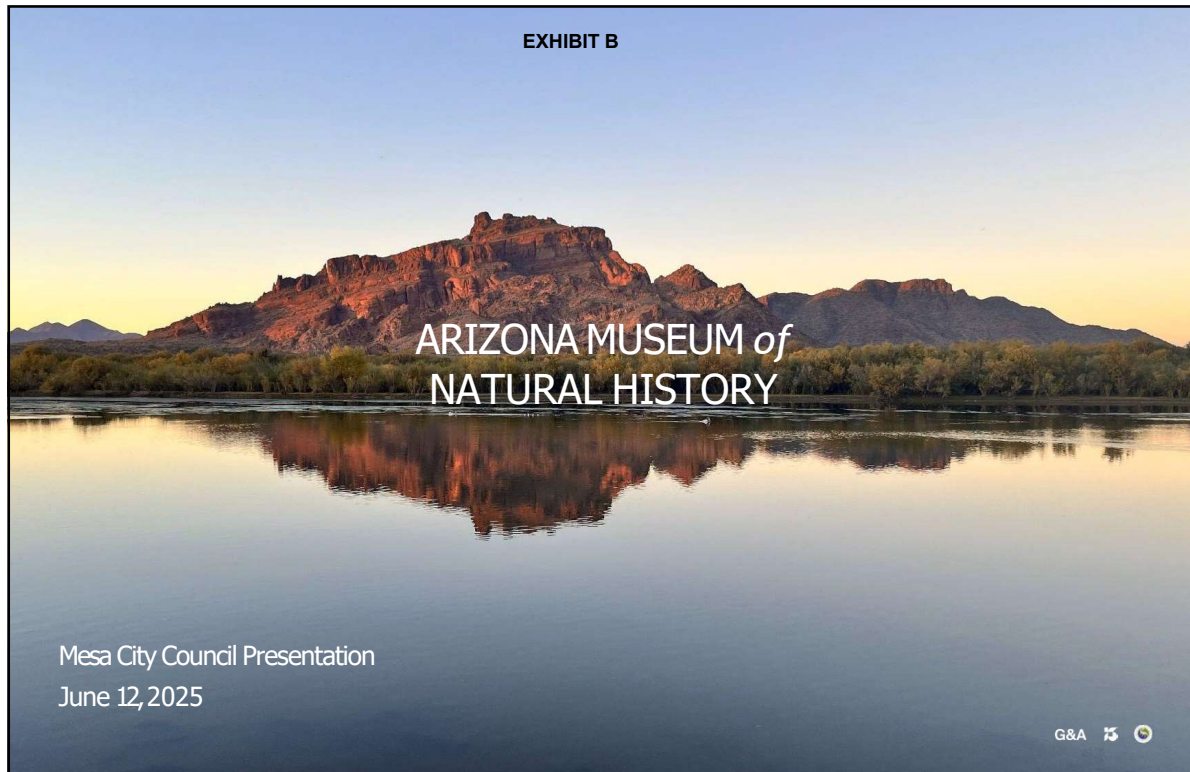
- ✓ \$500 civil penalty each violation
- ✓ REMOVAL of a board member if
the court makes a finding of intent
- ✓ Assess the board member with
ALL COSTS awarded to the plaintiff
- ✓ MAY NOT spend public monies
for legal counsel

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Questions



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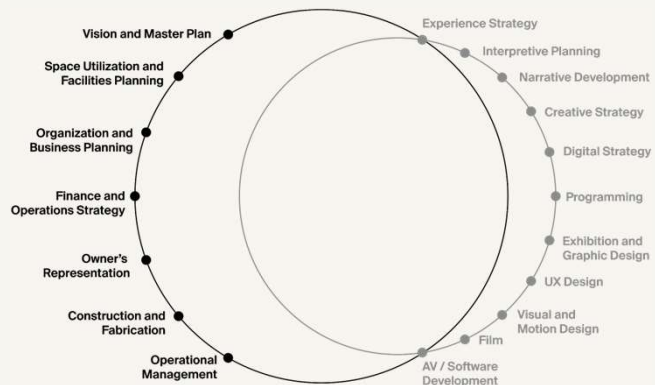
G&A Strategy & Design

G&A synthesizes physical and digital spaces to produce immersive storytelling experiences that engage, entertain, and create measurable impact.

Our services encompass the full scope of a project, including Stakeholder Engagement to help us (and you!) to make the best decisions throughout each of these elements of the work.

G&A
Experience is everythingSM

Our Services



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G&A

Proprietary and Confidential

2025

 Reach We have completed: 750 Projects To-Date	 Clients 30% of our work comes from repeat clients 30 States + 24 Countries	 Awards With more than: 250 Awards	 Design Excellence For more than: 26 Years Our projects have been recognized repeatedly for their ingenuity, creativity, and immersive storytelling.
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 The Witte Museum San Antonio, TX	 Nature Lab, Natural History Museum of LA County Los Angeles, CA
 Sant Ocean Hall, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History Washington, D.C.	

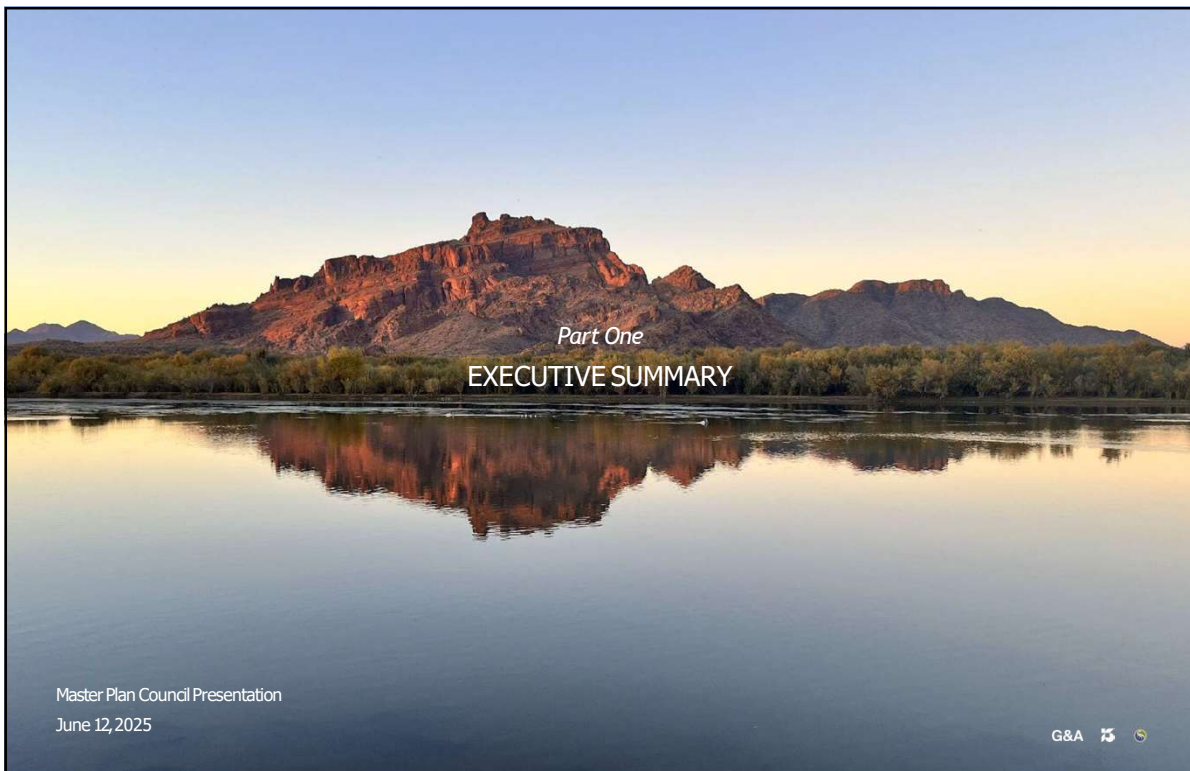
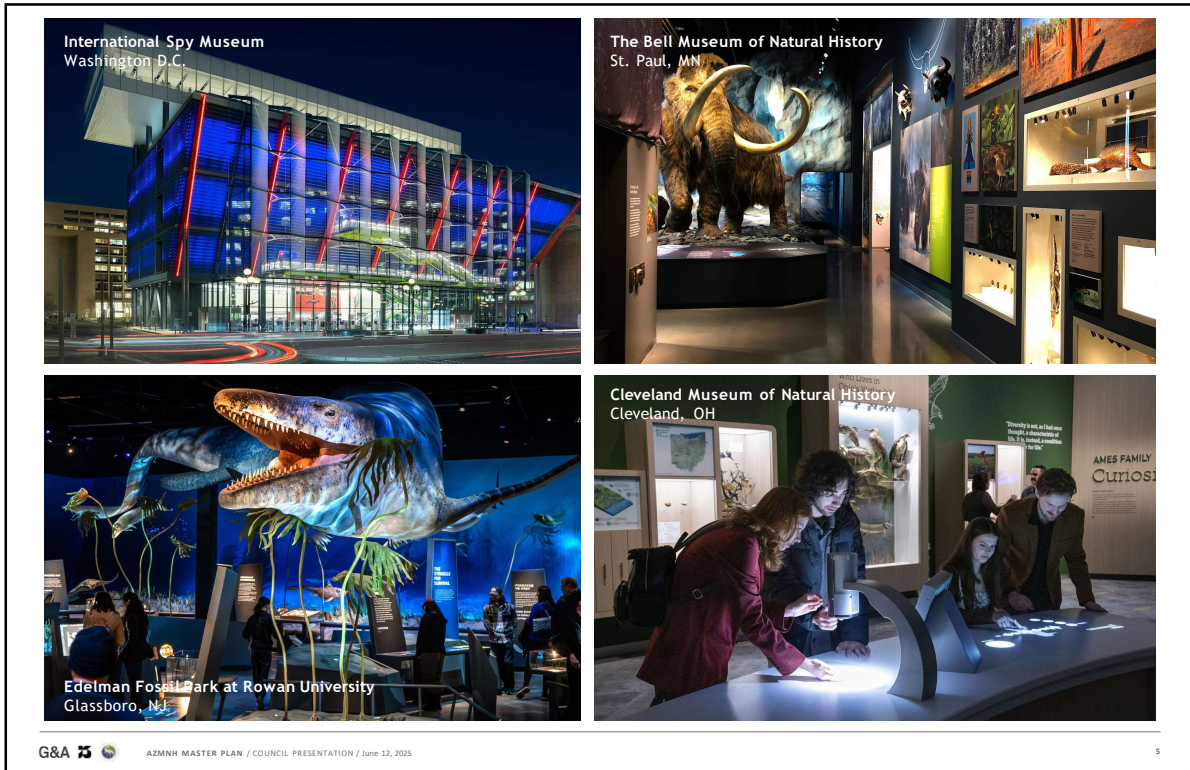
G&A

AZMNH MASTER PLAN / COUNCIL PRESENTATION / June 12, 2025

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MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW

G&A, in partnership with Jones Studio, Karen Wise, Mimi Quintanilla, and in close collaboration with the AZMNH Museum Team, is pleased to present this Final Report of the AZMNH Master Plan. This Final Report includes:

1. **Executive Summary** of the findings and recommendations from each area of research and planning
2. **A detailed report** of the the findings and recommendations from each area of research and planning:
 - * Business Case & Plan
 - * Architecture & Facility Feasibility
 - * Audience & Community Engagement
 - * Research & Collections
 - * Interpretive Planning
 - * Educational Programming
 - * Experience Design

MASTER PLAN KEY INSIGHTS

The museum is an important asset for the people and city of Mesa, but facility's limitations inhibit its opportunities for impact for residents, tourists, and nationally

Strengths

- AZMNH is a museum that **operates from the heart**, with a dedicated and passionate staff who are committed to bringing a love of science and culture, through the lens of Arizona's history and prehistory, to the families and students of Mesa
- AZMNH is **a museum with multiple unique and intangible assets at its disposal**
 - ◆ A story unique to Arizona that can't be found or replicated anywhere else on the planet
 - ◆ The name recognition and brand power of being Arizona's Natural History Museum
 - ◆ An extremely strong resident population and tourism base to pull from in one of the largest and fastest growing markets in the nation—with more growth to come
 - ◆ A reputation and institution beloved by its core audience base

Weaknesses

- However, the **current museum experience and operational results do not fully reflect or leverage the museum's unique strengths and extraordinary location**
- **AZMNH underperforms in terms of visitation, revenue generation, and experience offering** relative to its local Valley peers as well as national peers
- The current **AZMNH facility is not fit for purpose**—creating a cascade of challenges for a successful and sustainable future for the institution—and has **undoubtedly impacted its ability to maximize its Return on Investment and Return on Impact**



Business Case & Plan

- 9 Market Analysis
- 15 Benchmarking
- 21 Space Program & Capital Cost
- 30 Development Options

9

BUSINESS CASE: MARKET ANALYSIS

Market Research for Audience Types

Analyzing AZMNH's diverse audience types and their unique preferences for experience, duration of visit, values, objectives, and educational outcomes, will shape the project's development and influence the Arizona Museum of Natural History's future operating model.



Students



Local & Regional Families



Regional Tourists



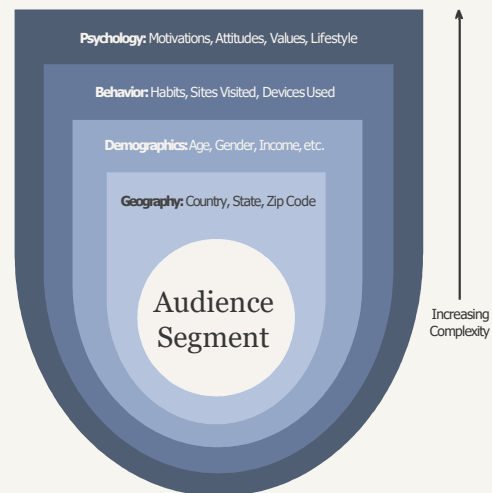
Natural History Scholars



State & Regional School Groups



Local Organizations



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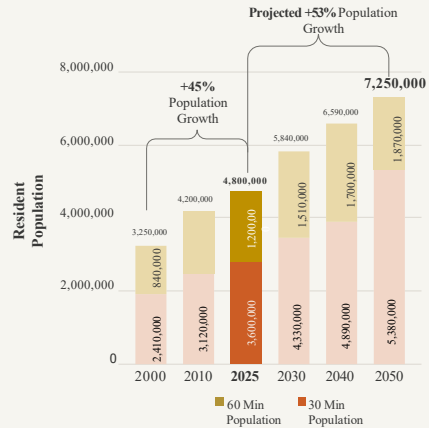
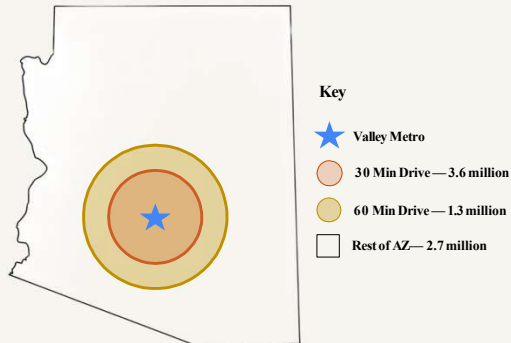
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Local Audiences

AZMNH has a robust local market of residents to draw from, not only in Mesa, but in the surrounding metro area containing most of the state's population and expected growth

The Valley Metro of 2050 is projected to have as many residents as Houston, Dallas, the Bay Area, and Philadelphia do today

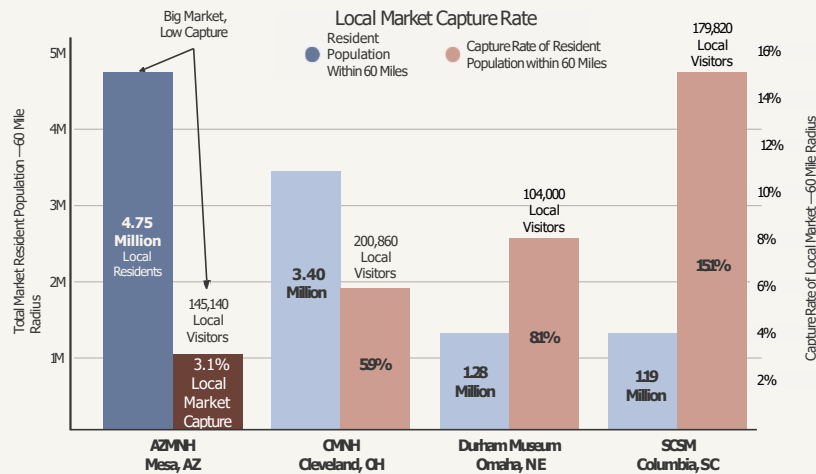
Approximately 65% of AZ residents are within a 60 min drive of the Arizona Museum of Natural History



Sources: U.S. Census; Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity

Local Visitation Performance

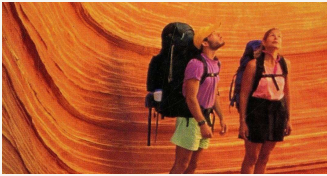
However, when you look at AZMNH's Local Resident Capture Rate —e.i. AZMNH's Total Visitation from Residents within 60 Miles divided by the Total Population within 60 Miles—it reveals that there is substantial opportunity to grow local visitation within its nearly 5 Million resident base



Sources: U.S. Census; Various Annual Reports; Various Interviews

Tourist Audiences

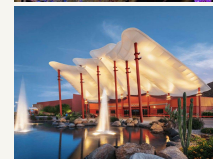
The Valley brings in over 46 million tourists, engaged in outdoor activities, sporting events, and other recreational and entertainment activities during their visits, **but only 13% report visiting museum's on their trip— far lower than other tourist activities in the region.**



Outdoor Activities / Recreation
50% of tourist participation



Sports Events / Activities
31% tourist participation



Social/Nightlife/Resort/Casino
Over 40% tourist participation

Sources: U.S. Census; Arizona Office of Economic Opportunity; Visit Phoenix

Market Outlook

01

The Valley's resident market has a proven track record of growth over the last 25 years providing confidence that the market can accommodate the growing resident base.

02

However, visitation has not reflected the opportunity AZMNH's resident market provides and they currently underperform their national peers in total visitation as well as visitation relative to market size

03

Tourism to The Valley provides additional upside for future attendance but as a Natural History Museum, AZMNH must be able to provide an experience unique to Arizona that its tourists cannot get at their local museum back home

04

The rapid growth of the semiconductor industry and other STEM industries in the market provide additional support for market growth as well as opportunities for corporate partnerships and sponsorship not currently leveraged at the Museum



Business Case & Plan

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Benchmarking

Business Case

Our benchmarking analysis looks at numerous facets of the comparable museum sample set, however, everything starts with market size...

Competition/Status

Relative position to cultural institutions operating in the market (e.g., Market Leaders)

Location

Proximity to population centers, schools, tourist attractions, etc.

Size

Amount of exhibit space or scope/scale of storytelling

Theme/Content/Experience

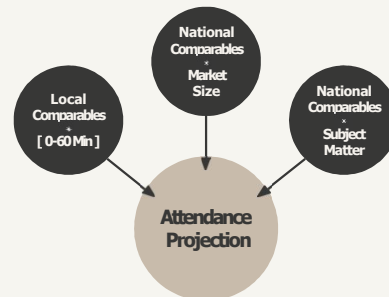
The partial and/or total similarity of a museum's subject matter to The AZMNH

Total Potential Audience

Total Potential Audience (TPA) is the combination of a market's total local resident population and total annual tourists

Target Audience Segments

Similarity of positioning towards potential audience segments (e.g., residents, tourists, students, military)

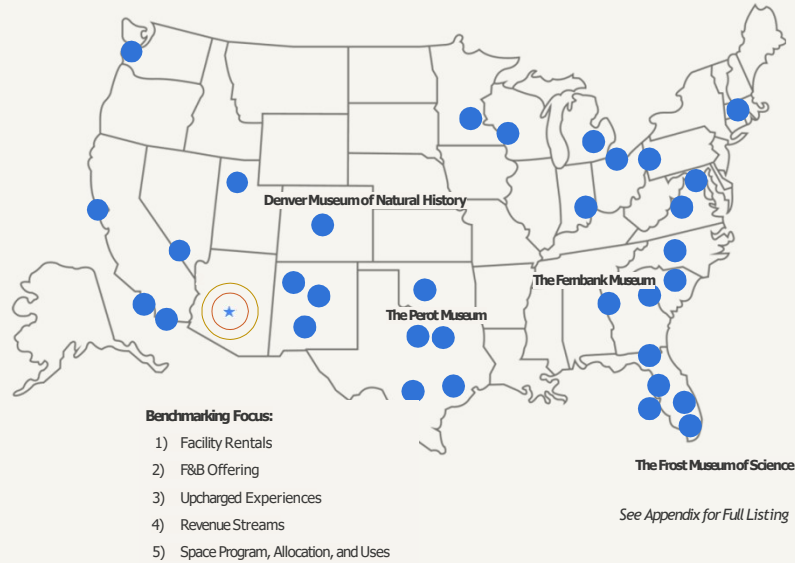


BUSINESS CASE: BENCHMARKING

National Benchmarks

Our national benchmarking analysis looked at samples across a variety of market sizes in the U.S. and found:

- 01 AZMNH underperforms as a science-based institution in a market of its size.
- 02 The museum does not provide the visitor experience offerings and amenities that a best-in-class science-based museum typically offers.
- 03 The museum is not maximizing revenue opportunities.



BUSINESS CASE: BENCHMARKING

Local Benchmarks

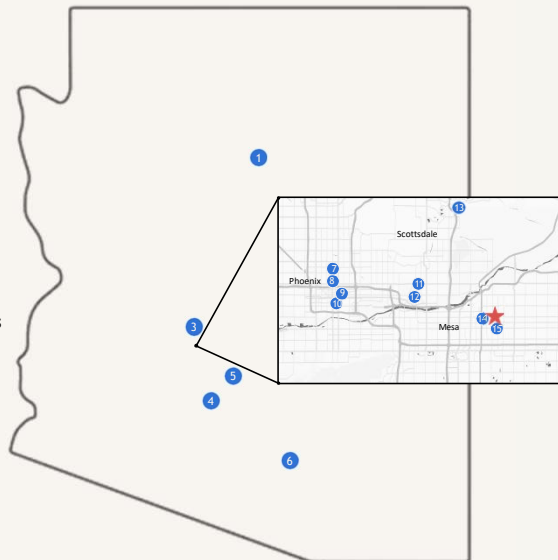
Our analysis of the local market for event space, food amenities, and upcharge experiences tells a similar story to our national analysis—AZMNH does not currently meet the expectations of the typical museum visitor

Select Comparables*

- ★ AZMNH
- 1 Museum of Northern Arizona
- 2 Wildlife World Zoo & Aquarium
- 3 Musical Instrument Museum
- 4 Casa Grande Ruins National Monument
- 5 Boyce Thompson Arboretum
- 6 Sonoran Desert Museum
- 7 Heard Museum
- 8 Phoenix Art Museum
- 9 Children's Museum of Phoenix
- 10 Arizona Science Center
- 11 Desert Botanical Garden
- 12 Phoenix Zoo
- 13 Pangaea Land of the Dinosaurs
- 14 i.d.e.a. Museum
- 15 Mesa Arts Center

Benchmarking Focus:

- 1) Facility Rentals
- 2) F&B Offering
- 3) Upcharged Experiences
- 4) Revenue Streams
- 5) Space Program, Allocation, and Uses



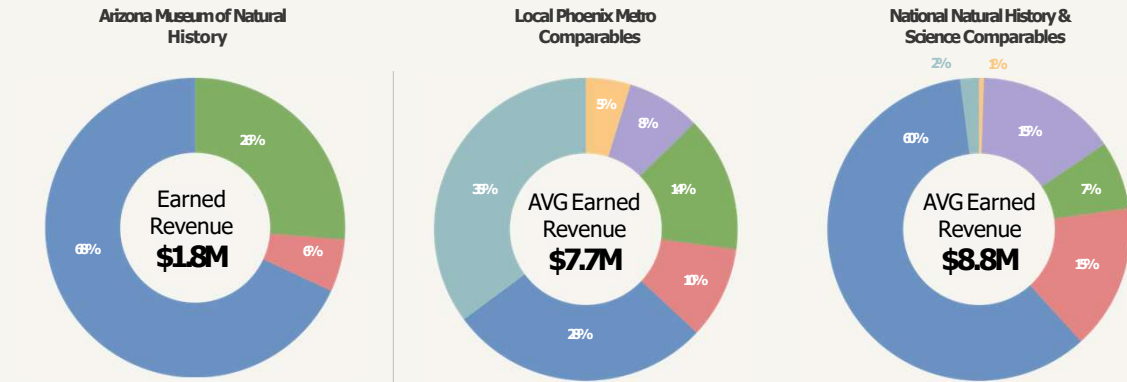
BUSINESS CASE: BENCHMARKING

Earned Revenue Streams

Most of AZMNH's comparables have more diverse offerings and are less dependent on one single earned revenue source.

Average Earned Income for Local & National Comparables

Other Revenue Food Service Facility Rental Retail Membership Admissions



Source: Tax Form 990s, Audits, and Annual Reports from Various Institutions

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BUSINESS CASE: BENCHMARKING SUMMARY

AZMNH lacks many of the amenities and earned revenue streams that its comparables offer



Does not offer facility rentals



Does not offer F&B or cafe amenities



Does not offer upcharged experience



Too reliant on undiversified revenue model



Building limits ability to fully integrate research assets with educational programming and experience

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Business Case & Plan

- 9 Market Analysis
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- 21 **Space Program & Capital Cost**
- 30 Development Options

It is critical to consider both development & operational investments when considering size.

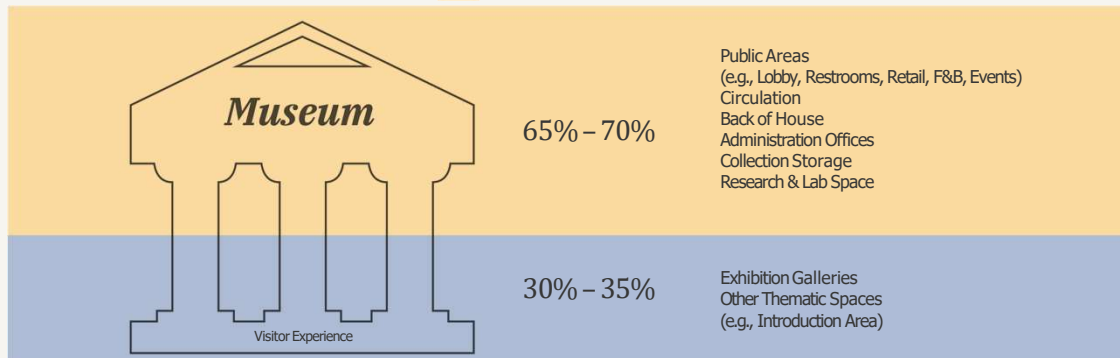
BUSINESS CASE: BUILDING & SPACE PROGRAM

Space Allocation

Museums typically balance their space allocation across three key areas: Experience, Public-facing Spaces, and Back of House Spaces, with each museum's situation influencing the mix based on individual need

Museum Building Space Use Allocation

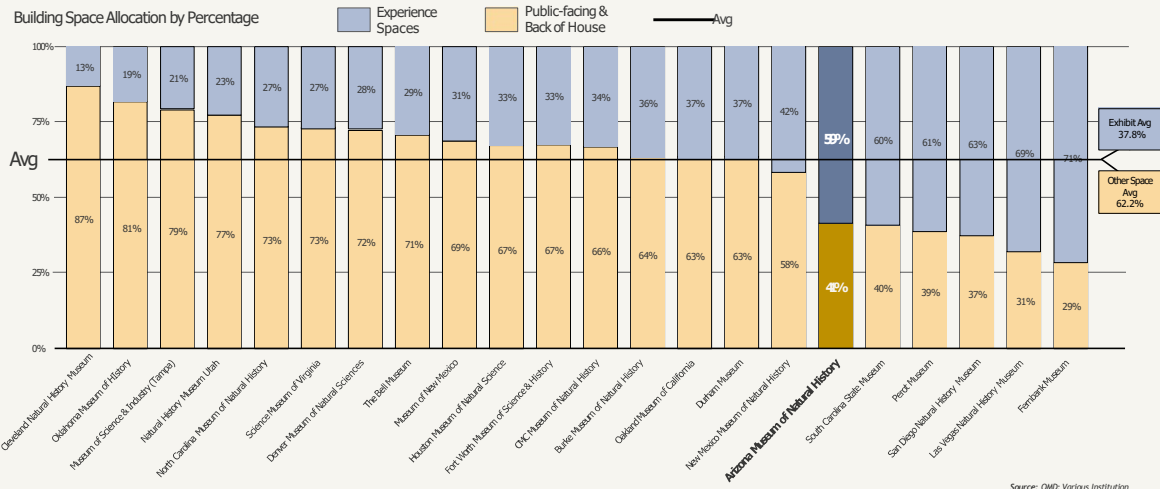
Exhibits All Other Spaces



BUSINESS CASE: BUILDING & SPACE PROGRAM

Space Allocation

In benchmarking AZMNH, the analysis found that AZMNH was overallocated in experience space, at the expense of space available for public-facing amenities and research and collection



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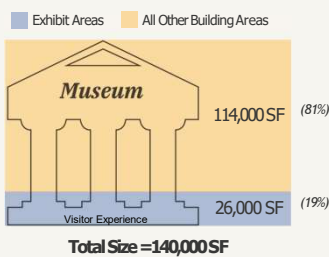
BUSINESS CASE: BUILDING & SPACE PROGRAM

The International Spy Museum

New Building (Existing Museum) - 2015 — 2018
History Museum
Physical Experience Design / Media Interactives
Washington, D.C.

Total Project Budget:
Time of Completion (2018) \$162,000,000
Adjusted to 2024 Dollars \$199,260,000

Building Composition



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BUSINESS CASE: BUILDING & SPACE PROGRAM

**Environment & Exhibits**

- Gamified interactive experience which builds a cohesive thread for individual visitors throughout their experience
- Extensive digital and analog interaction design
- Customized theatrical lighting

BUSINESS CASE: BUILDING & SPACE PROGRAM

**Digital Media & Interactives**

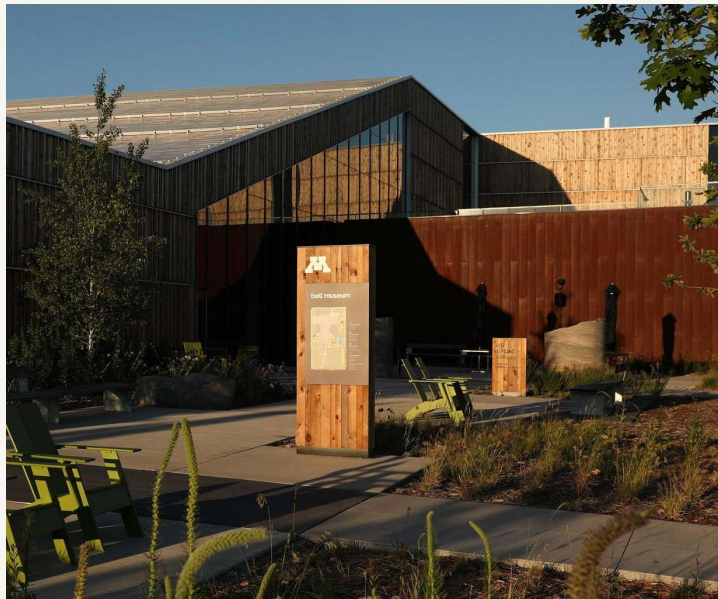
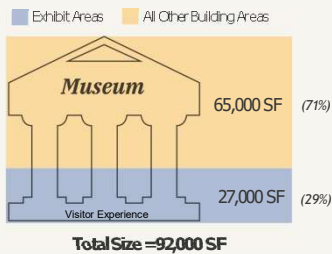
- Four immersive signature pieces (6-8 min dwell time, groups of 2-10).
- Hunt for Bin Laden is the first multiplayer branching narrative experience. Distilled tremendous amount of CIA-led content into participatory & theatrical experience.
- Red Teaming includes significant custom projection mapping, voting & CG & filmic experience synchronization.
- 21st Century Eavesdropping is a gamified "signal hunt" w/ film cutscenes in an immersive environment.
- Infinity room film experience
- Open-ended user experience design

The Bell Museum

New Building (Existing Museum): 2014 —2018
Natural History Museum
 Physical Experience Design / Signage / Wayfinding
 St Paul, MN

Total Project Budget:
 Time of Completion (2018) \$79,000,000
 Adjusted to 2024 Dollars \$95,590,000

Building Composition



Environment & Exhibits

- Graphics substrates were primarily switched to high pressure laminate graphics to meet budget.
- A signature exhibit item was "field notes" done by a local illustrator directly to the perimeter walls throughout the museum, we did not have to do any production work for these graphics.
- This was Design/Build which had an enormous impact on fabrication detailing. Huge modifications and VE were needed at the end of Design Development Phase.

BUSINESS CASE: BUILDING & SPACE PROGRAM



Media & Digital Interactives

- AV development was by Cortina.
- All dioramas had similar touchscreen treatments.



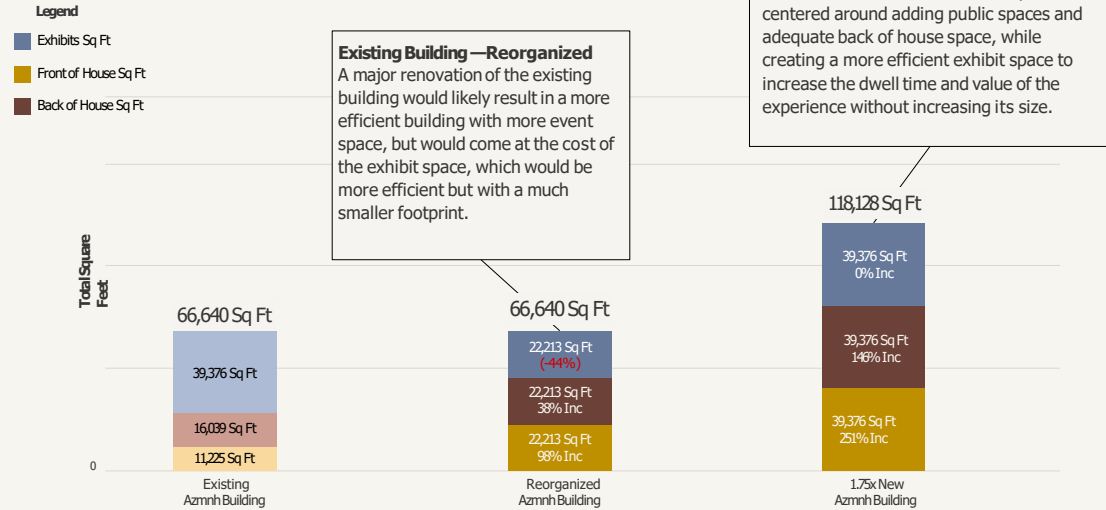
Business Case & Plan

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BUSINESS CASE: DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Future Options

The AZMNH future space allocation plan must align with AZMNH's strategic vision and available capital funding.



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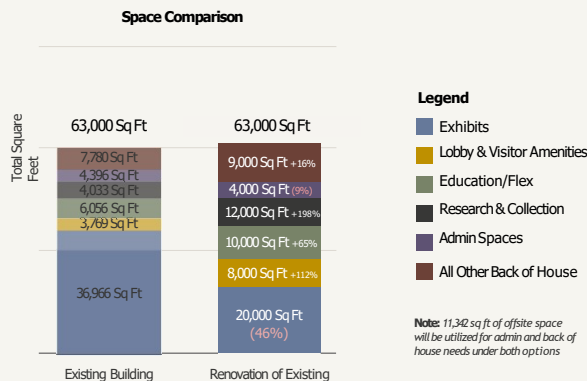
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BUSINESS CASE: BUILDING & SPACE PROGRAM

Building Renovation

A renovation of the existing building would provide AZMNH with an efficient space program capable of increasing visitation, revenue, and impact, but the building's small footprint will limit potential growth.



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Renovation Option

Total Capital Cost: **\$83.9M**Total Sq Ft: **74,342 Sq Ft**Total Cost/Sq Ft: **\$1,130 per Sq Ft****Notes:** Project Costs as of 2024 Dollars

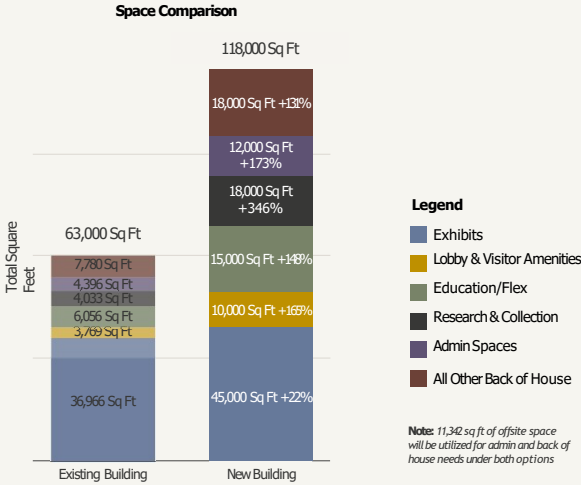
A renovation of the existing building provides AZMNH with:

- A small but high-quality, high-density experience; limited space for macro artifacts and signature experiences (skeletons, scale recreations, dinosaur mountain).
- Lobby capacity capable of hosting most private event group sizes.
- Education space with expanded capacity and integrated with R&C spaces.
- R&C space capable of integration into visitor experience and education space and support space capable of expanded but still limited scientific and mission oriented activities.
- Central admin with space for most of AZMNH staff needs; some staff will be located off-site and any future staff growth will likely require acquiring additional off-site office space.

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New Building Development

A new building would provide AZMNH with a right-sized space program and robust visitor experience with space for growth to pursue an ambitious mission and impact, research goals, and an expanded audience beyond Mesa.



New Building Option

Total Capital Cost: **\$169.6M**

Total Sq Ft: **129,342 Sq Ft**

Total Cost/Sq Ft: **\$1,310 per Sq Ft**

Notes: Project Costs as of 2024 Dollars

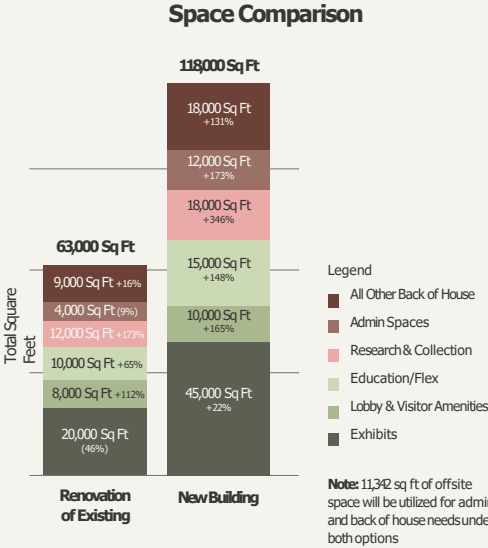
A new building development provides AZMNH with:

- Robust experience, space for macro artifacts, space for macro artifacts, and unconstrained visitor experience.
- Lobby with top tier-event space and ample public gathering space.
- Fully enabled education space integrated with R&C spaces and capacity fit for market and the future.
- R&C space capable of integration into visitor experience and education space and support space capable of next-level mission and scientific impact.
- Admin areas with sufficient space for growth and the ability to centralize all staff into a single building.

Option Comparison

Option Comparison	Renovation Option	New Building Option	Option Difference
Total Building Sq Ft	74,342	129,342	55,000
Total Project Budget*	\$83,920,000	\$169,580,000	\$85,660,000
Cost Per Sq Ft	\$1,130	\$1,310	\$180

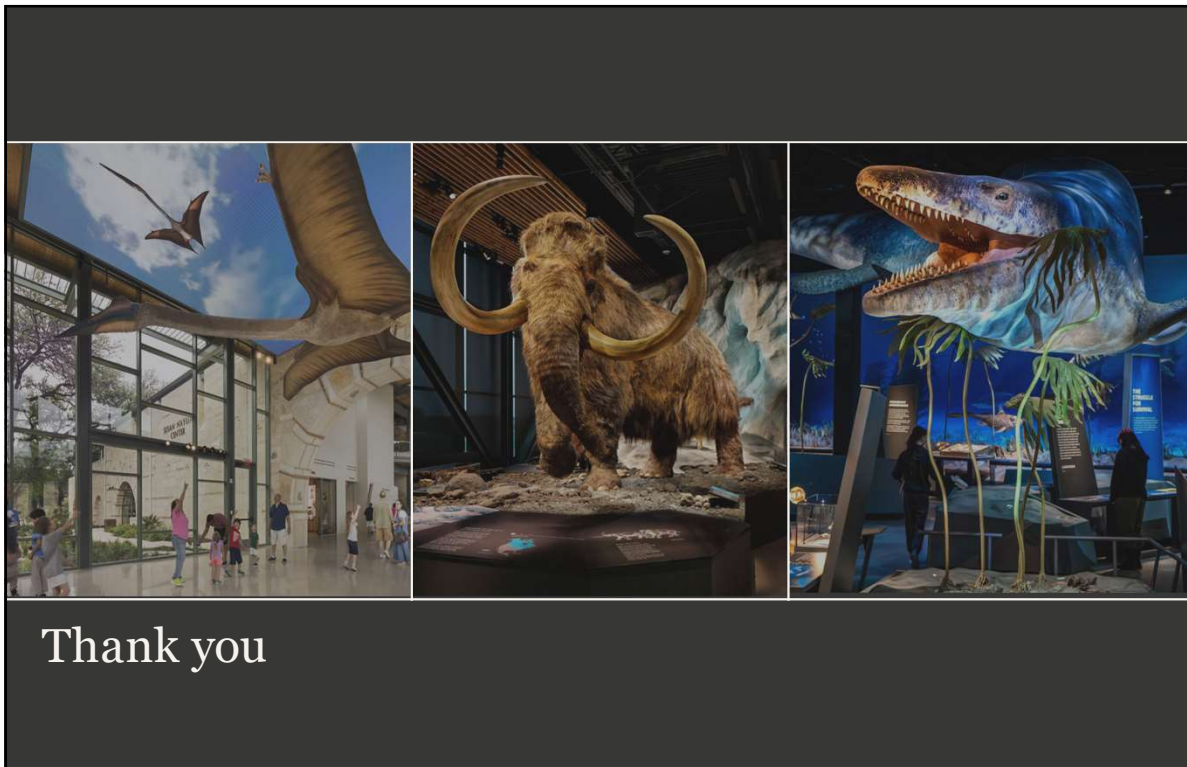
Renovation Option	Building Area	New Building Option
High quality but smallest footprint of the national comparable set; limited space for signature experience and limited space for macro artifacts	Exhibits & Experience	High quality and in line with visitor expectation for experience size; space macro artifacts and signature or upcharged experience
Lobby to host high-quality events, proper retail store & F&B space	Lobby & Visitor Amenities	Grand lobby capable of major events, lobby with other functional uses (programs, field trip staging, event programs)
Education space with capacity to serve market & flex space to expand programs	Education & Flex Space	Education space with capacity to serve market & future growth; enough space to add makerspace or learning labs; flex space capable of hosting large program and event groups
R&C Space capable of serving current needs and growth; R&C spaces integrated with experience and education to enhance visitor experience	Research & Collections	R&C Space capable of serving current needs & ambitious growth to put AZMNH on a state and national stage; space fully integrated with education & exhibits to enhance visitor experience
Efficient and co-located admin spaces for most of staff with some staff remaining off-site and little room for staff growth on-site; back of House space capable of supporting all building needs	Admin & Back of House	Efficient and co-located admin space with all staff in-building and space for future growth in building; back of house space capable of supporting all building needs



In Summary, a renewed AZMNH achieves the following for the City of Mesa:

- 1) Economic Impact & Job Creation to the City
- 2) More efficient and income generating operating model
- 3) Transformative cultural asset for local residents
- 4) Distinct one-of-a-kind tourist attraction
- 5) Nationally significant Natural History Museum

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Thank you

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