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## California Science Center Backgrounder

*We aspire to stimulate curiosity and inspire science learning in everyone by creating fun, memorable experiences, because we value science as an indispensable tool for understanding our world, accessibility and inclusiveness, and enriching people's lives.*

The California Science Center, located in historic Exposition Park, is a destination where families, children and learners of all ages can explore the connections between science and everyday life. Innovative interactive exhibits, hands-on demonstrations, fascinating films shown on a giant movie-screen help create an environment that makes science learning fun and memorable.

The Science Center was created out of an ambitious plan launched in 1988 to reinvent the former California Museum of Science and Industry. Through collaborations with educators, scientists, business leaders, community residents and elected officials, a 25-year Master Plan was developed to create a place that would change the way children, and adults, learn about the world around them.

The plan, to be implemented in 3 phases, called for an integrated approach with the development of a world-class science center, a neighborhood elementary school with a focus on science, math and technology, and a professional development resource center offering best practices in science learning for teachers, parents and community organizations – all at one location

### **Milestones**

Phase I of the newly reinvented California Science Center opened February 7, 1998. By June, more than 1 million people had visited the new facility. Current annual attendance is 1.4 million, including 400,000 students on field trips. Here are some of the components of Phase I and the milestones accomplished since the opening:

- 1998 California Science Center opens with 2 permanent exhibit galleries, World of Life and Creative World, 2 preview exhibit areas for future phases, a gallery for special exhibitions, and iconic exhibits such as the High Wire Bicycle and Tess, the 50-ft. human body simulator and star of BodyWorks. The IMAX Theater, with a movie screen 7 stories tall, shows films that tie in with the exhibits program. Additional highlights include a retail shop, the ExploraStore, and a meeting facility, the Donald P. Loker Conference Center.
  
- 2002 Re-opening of SKETCH Foundation Gallery – Air & Space Exhibits with new exhibit program
  
- 2003 Opening of Roy A. Anderson Blackbird Exhibit and Garden, and expanded parking facility with exhibits such as the Giant Lever
  
- 2004 Wallis Annenberg Building for Science and Innovation opens at the site of the former Armory Building.  
 Amgen Center for Science Learning, which conducts Science Center education and professional development programs, opens with summer camp (June).  
 Dr. Theodore J. Alexander Science Center School, a K-5 affiliated charter school, opens (September). The school is a unique partnership between the Science Center and Los Angeles Unified School District.  
 Both the Amgen Center for Science Learning and Science Center School occupy space in the Wallis Annenberg Building; the school also occupies the adjacent building to the north.

In addition to these milestones, the Master Plan also called for the revitalization of Exposition Park by preserving its beautiful qualities and building on its legacy. New walkways, expanded lighting and improved directional signage, added green space, picnic areas and the new Expo Center, not only provide a regional resource but enhance the Park for all of its occupants including the California African American Museum, the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and Los Angeles Sports Arena.

**Phase II Grand Opening – March 25, 2010**

Phase II expands the current Howard F. Ahmanson Building to accommodate Ecosystems. The major expansion nearly doubles the volume of exhibition space and features an unprecedented blend of live plants and animals, and hands-on science exhibits in 11 immersive environments – unique among science centers in the United States. From walking through a living kelp forest to experimenting on a polar ice wall, explorers will investigate some of the Earth's most fascinating ecosystems. Highlights include a 188,000-gallon kelp tank populated with more than 1,500 live fish, kelp and other marine life; a desert flash flood; and a special gallery dedicated to the urban ecology of Los Angeles. Ecosystems occupies 45,000 square feet, and contains more than 250 species of plants and animals. The launch of this new destination completes the centerpiece of Phase II of the Science Center's Master Plan.

Phase II also expands the *World of Life* exhibition hall, and provides new administrative offices and animal support facilities.

The California Science Center has become a national model for successful public/private partnerships. A comprehensive \$165 million Campaign is still underway to help support the construction of Ecosystems. The Campaign is led by five exceptional community and business leaders: Wallis Annenberg, G. Bradford Jones, Melanie Lundquist, Margo Leonetti O'Connell and John Sussman. As of February 2010, \$136.3 million has been raised with the support of individuals, foundations and corporations.

**Looking to the Future: Phase III**

The final phase of the Master Plan, Phase III, will expand the Science Center's facilities to include facilities for the *Worlds Beyond* (current working title) exhibition, increase space in the *Creative World* gallery, and add additional programming for both areas.

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