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Discovery Place Announces Plans to Renovate Tryon Street Museum

New exhibits and facility upgrades to launch in 2010

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Discovery Place, the Carolinas’ leading science and technology center, has announced plans to renovate its 26-year-old Tryon Street facility. The renovation, scheduled to begin in January 2009, will reinvent the visitor experience, filling the Museum with new science and technology exhibits and interactive displays. The redesign also will improve the building’s traffic flow and general infrastructure.

“Renovations to Discovery Place’s Tryon Street facility will help us bring science to life in a topical and contemporary way that we hope will inspire and educate visitors of all ages,” said John Mackay, president and CEO of Discovery Place.

“The renovation will allow us to create a museum that changes more frequently and can more easily host world-class exhibitions like *BODY WORLDS*, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* and the upcoming *A Day in Pompeii*. We also will upgrade resident exhibits that are favorites among our Members and visitors and add many new hands-on displays and activities,” Mackay continued.

The renovation to the building will help Discovery Place better serve the Museum’s growing and diverse audience through exhibition space upgrades and visitor amenities improvements.

Built in 1981, expanded in 1986 and again in 1991 to include an IMAX® theatre, Discovery Place serves nearly 1,500 visitors daily including many school groups from throughout the Carolinas. The current exhibition, *Gunther von Hagens’ BODY WORLDS: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies*, has drawn more than 250,000 visitors to the science center since June.

Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc. and Little Diversified are leading the architectural design; renderings and more details on the plans will become available during 2008. Elm Engineering, Inc. is overseeing the engineering and Rodgers Builders Inc. is the construction manager at-risk for pre-construction services.

The renovation is part of the **City of Charlotte’s Cultural Facilities Master Plan**, the vision and implementation of business, civic and cultural leaders for new and expanded museums and performance centers in the community. The cultural development plan includes the renovation of Discovery Place, a new Afro-American Cultural Center, the creation of the Knight Theater, a new home for the North Carolina Dance Theatre, the creation of the Bechtler Art Museum, an endowment for the Charlotte Symphony and a new home to The Mint Museums.

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Renovations to Discovery Place's Tryon Street building are scheduled to begin in January 2009 and anticipated to reach completion in March 2010. The Tryon Street building, including *The Charlotte Observer* IMAX Dome Theatre, will not be open to the public during the renovation period. Discovery Place will maintain operations of Charlotte Nature Museum and expand ScienceReach, the center's museum on wheels, which provides science programs at schools, community centers and local events.

The Museum has created a **Charter Membership**; a special benefit package for Members joining or renewing during 2008. The Charter Membership package offers 26 months of membership to Discovery Place and Charlotte Nature Museum, which includes unlimited admission at both locations. The Charter Membership package includes a guarantee of 12 months of membership when the Tryon Street facility is open to the public, either before or after the renovation. Charter Members also receive special recognition in the renovated Museum along with additional Member-only discounts and invitations to special Member-only events. A Charter Membership is \$100.

"This renovation is an exciting milestone for Discovery Place and one that will enable us to continue to be our region's best resource for hands-on learning about science and technology," Mackay said. "This facility update will allow us to design a science museum that always has an element of something new mixed with the familiar, interactive exhibits that our Members want to return to again and again."

Discovery Place's Tryon Street facility will present a unique mix of special exhibitions in 2008. ***BODY WORLDS*** closes January 6. ***Rockwell's America: Celebrating the Art of Norman Rockwell***, an interactive exhibition depicting American life during the first half of the 20th century, opens January 19. ***Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries***, a cutting-edge look at the newest ideas, discoveries and technologies that are changing the existing understanding of dinosaurs, opens April 18. Finally, ***A Day in Pompeii***, an extraordinary look at life in the ancient city before the unthinkable eruption of Mt. Vesuvius occurred, opens July 11. The exhibition features authentic artifacts from Pompeii that have been seen in only four U.S. cities. Discovery Place is the last and final stop before the artifacts are returned to Italy. The IMAX theatre will feature ***Mummies: Secrets of the Pharaohs***, ***Dinosaurs Alive!***, ***Greece: Secrets of the Past*** plus several new-release, full-length feature films.

About Discovery Place

Discovery Place is located in uptown Charlotte at 301 N. Tryon Street. Convenient parking is available in the science center's parking garage – the Carol Grotnes Belk Complex – at the corner of Sixth and Church streets. For more information about Discovery Place, guests should call 704-372- 6261 or visit discoveryplace.org.

One of the top hands-on science museums in the nation, Discovery Place provides ever-changing, entertaining facilities that foster experiences in areas that range from life science to space exploration. More than a half-million people from all over the United States visit Discovery Place, its IMAX® Dome Theatre and Charlotte Nature Museum each year. Discovery Place is supported, in part, with a Basic Operating Grant from the Arts & Science Council.