



# REPORT TO COUNCIL

## City of Sacramento

915 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814-2604  
[www. CityofSacramento.org](http://www.CityofSacramento.org)

CONSENT  
 May 20, 2008

Honorable Mayor and  
 Members of the City Council

**Title:** Discovery Museum History Center Exhibit Renovation Update

**Location/Council District:** Council District 1

**Recommendation:** Adopt a **Resolution**; 1) approving the Discovery Museum History Center exhibit content report and renovation design concepts; and 2) directing staff to continue with final content and exhibit plans and fabrication/installation.

**Contact:** Rebecca Bitter, Program Manager, 808-5047

**Presenters:** Rebecca Bitter, Program Manager

Jesse Siess, Curator, Discovery Museum History Center

**Department:** Convention, Culture & Leisure

### Description/Analysis

**Issue:** Staff is requesting City Council approval of the content report and design concepts (Phase I) for the exhibit renovation of the Discovery Museum History Center and direction to continue with final exhibit plans and fabrication/installation. The exhibit content report and design concepts as prepared by S2 Associates, Inc., are located in Attachment 1.

On May 23, 2006, the City Council authorized the 2006 Community Reinvestment Capital Improvement Program (CRCIP). One of the Tier I CRCIP projects is a \$500,000 grant to the Discovery Museum History Center for exhibit renovations. The MOU adopted between the City Council and the Discovery Museum in July 2006 for the CRCIP grant (Agreement 2006-0797) requires City Council approval of the design. Approval will enable the Discovery Museum to complete the final content and exhibit plans (Phase II) and fabrication/installation (Phase III) of the exhibit by July 2009, consistent with their current schedule.

**Policy Considerations:** This action is consistent with the City's Strategic Plan to preserve and expand arts and culture opportunities.

**Committee/Commission Action:** The concept development phase of this project includes the solicitation of input from major stakeholders and involves community members, city and museum staff in the development of exhibit

concepts and interpretive themes. A variety of stakeholder groups were consulted in the concept development as follows. A Core Advisory Group (Discovery Museum Board members and staff) and a stakeholders' group of historians, museum professionals, and interest groups helped form the recommendations to guide content development for the exhibits as detailed in the Renovation Progress Report prepared by Muse Consulting in September 2007.

Muse Consulting also conducted a focus group meeting on April 12, 2008 consisting of Old Sacramento visitors and tourists and two focus group meetings on April 17, 2008 consisting of members from local community associations, as listed in Attachment 2. Comments from the focus groups suggested that the proposed exhibit needed to include more ethnic/community diversity, include more information attractive to children, more interactive features, and more personal stories of the time. These concerns were integrated into the concept plan. In addition, the concept plan was reviewed a final time by some of the historians from the Core Advisory Group.

**Environmental Considerations:** This report concerns activities that do not constitute a "project" under the California Environmental Quality Act, CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(2).

**Rationale for Recommendation:** The Renovation Progress Report was prepared by Muse Consulting in September 2007 for the City and Discovery Museum to guide the content development of the exhibits. The report recommended the following minimum renovation requirements: 1) fulfill the Museum's mission; 2) enhance its identity and location in Old Sacramento; and, 3) attract new audiences as well as better serve its current visitors/members. Content related recommendations included the following:

- Create a unifying theme to provide coherence between galleries;
- Convert the lobby into an orientation area to create a context for what visitors will see in the rest of the museum;
- Exhibits should place more emphasis on stories that are unique to Sacramento as a microcosm for the history of the state of California, e.g. the after-effects of the Gold Rush, significant Sacramento individuals, and Sacramento's diverse neighborhoods and communities.

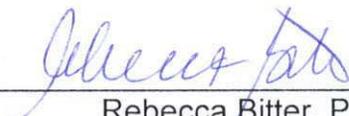
In January 2008, S2 Associates, Inc., was hired to provide content development and design concepts for the project. The content report in Attachment 1 outlines the interpretive story, **Sacramento: Forging a New City**, and presents exhibit designs to be refined in the final plans and finally, in fabrication and installation of the exhibits. In summary, the exhibit content will turn the lobby into an orientation area to give visitors a better understanding of the early influences that

shaped the city and helped it become a diverse, multicultural, vibrant, and important metropolis through the introduction of the opportunities and challenges beginning in 1850 that shaped the City. It will also give visitors a better idea of what to expect in the rest of the museum. The main themes of Land and Location, Politics and Power, Culture and Society, and Business and Commerce, will be carried through the rest of the museum as exhibits are updated. The McClatchy Gallery will continue to focus on the McClatchy family history, but as a recurring thread in how the City's history is reflected in, and shaped by, the wide variety of newspapers of the day.

**Financial Considerations:** On May 23, 2006, the City Council authorized the 2006 Community Reinvestment Capital Improvement Program (CRCIP). One of the Tier I CRCIP projects is a \$500,000 grant to the Discovery Museum History Center for exhibit renovations. As of April, 2008, \$142,265 of the CRCIP grant has been encumbered for content and exhibit design development. It is expected that the remaining CRCIP grant funds will be consumed by exhibit fabrication and installation.

In addition, the Discovery Museum allocated funds totaling \$56,250 in CIP M17300000 (MA91 - County contribution to Discovery Museum Improvements) for administrative and incidental expenses to the project.

**Emerging Small Business Development (ESBD):** None, since no goods or services are being procured through this action.

Respectfully Submitted by:   
Rebecca Bitter, Program Manager

Approved by:   
Barbara E. Bonebrake, Director  
Convention, Culture and Leisure Department

Recommendation Approved:

  
RAY KERRIDGE  
City Manager

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Forging A New City



**Discovery Museum History  
Center  
Forging A New City**

**Exhibit Concept Design Document**

May 1, 2008

S2 Associates Inc.



## **Sacramento: Forging a New City**

### **Project Background**

Seeing an opportunity to enhance its role in the community, the Discovery Museum History Center submitted a proposal to the City of Sacramento to fund a renovation of a portion of its galleries. The intent of this renovation project, approved in February 2006, is to “sustain cultural heritage” and fulfill the institution’s purpose as an educational institution and visitor attraction.

Toward that end, the initial phase of the project includes renovating the first-floor lobby and McClatchy Gallery to better serve Sacramento residents, as well as increase tourist awareness of the Museum. Accomplishing these goals also includes further defining and clarifying the role of the Museum in the region and in Old Sacramento, creating unique and authentic experiences, and increasing collaborative efforts with other area cultural organizations. This very positive starting point will set the stage for future renovations and improvements.

### **Introduction**

The Museum lobby will become an orientation area designed to give guests a better understanding of the early influences that helped Sacramento become the multicultural, vibrant, and important city it is today. This area will also provide guests with an idea of what to expect in the rest of the Museum.

Introduced here are the following main themes that embody Sacramento in 1850 and after:

- (3.00) Land and Location
- (4.00) Politics and Power
- (5.00) Culture and Society
- (6.00) Business and Commerce

Together, these areas introduce visitors to the reasons why the city is situated where it is, how it came to be, and why it persisted as the important California hub it is today.

The above themes will be carried through the rest of the exhibits as renovation continues, and provide a thread for examining and interpreting all of the region’s history, from before European and Mexican settlement to the present day. The McClatchy Gallery (7.00) focuses on its original intent of telling the McClatchy family history and its place within the history of Sacramento.

### **Structure and Design Approach**

The primary structure for **Sacramento: Forging a New City** is circular, with the gold (1.00) in the center. The four main theme areas are located around the perimeter of the circle, each housed on a double-sided, curving wall. Each of the outer walls, eight to ten feet high, introduces one of the four themes through graphics, images, and artifacts.

On the inside of each wall, facing the gold nugget, is a more in-depth presentation of a specific event relating to that theme. Behind the theme areas rises a three-story-high map of Sacramento in 1850 (2.00).

A circular tower made of translucent fabric extends over twenty feet above the theme areas. Projected onto the fabric from inside will be images related to the exhibit themes. These images can be viewed from the lobby as well as from the balconies above.

Each theme area will include a variety of exhibit techniques, from graphics, artifacts, and text to simple interactives, and possibly audio. Also, the text throughout can engage visitors in thinking more personally and deeply about the city's history by posing such questions as, knowing these facts about the difficulties and hardships of life in the city at that time, and the floods, fires, and epidemics that struck periodically, would *you* have stayed or gone home? This interpretation of the story of Sacramento begins in 1850, a pivotal year in its history, and uses that year as the jumping-off point to explore the rest of the decade through appropriate graphics and artifacts.

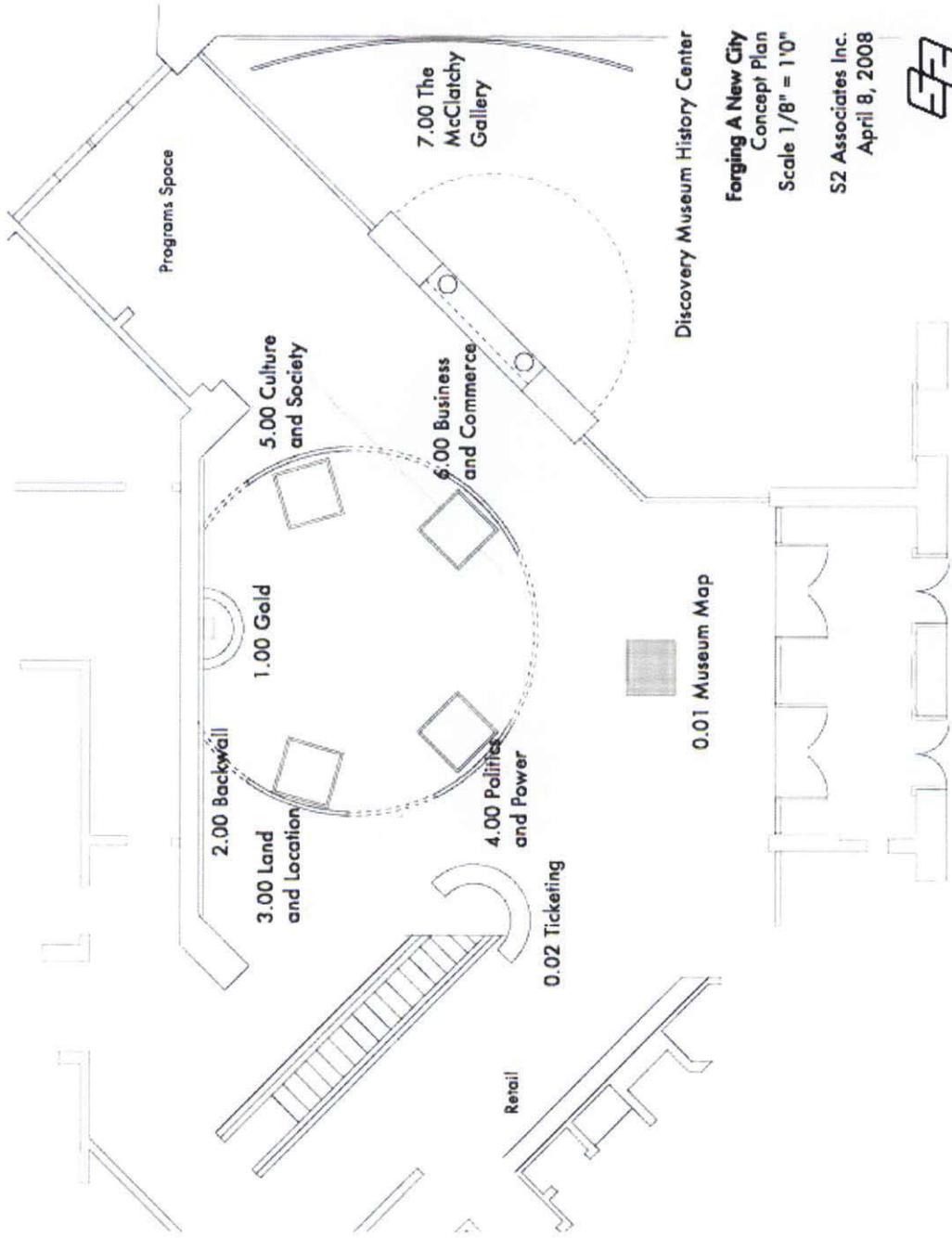
**The Big Idea:**

*The opportunities and challenges of 1850 shaped the city of Sacramento.*

Front and center in the space is an introductory panel that reveals that Sacramento's early history is much more diverse and complicated than just a story of miners seeking their fortune from gold. Through these and future exhibits, visitors will discover that the city's past is marked by colorful characters from a variety of cultures, vast wealth gained and lost and gained again, the quest for power and influence, personal achievement, and community development, all punctuated by catastrophic floods, fires, and epidemics. The message for visitors here is that Sacramento's people persevered and rebuilt the town again and again.

**Newspapers**

A recurring thread throughout all sections in this exhibition is how the city's vibrant history has been reflected in — and shaped by — the newspaper articles, editorials, headlines, and ads of the day. Making use of these abundant resources from various early newspapers not only ties the lobby exhibits more closely to the McClatchy Gallery, but shows visitors how the issues and events were viewed, reported on, and discussed in their day.



Discovery Museum History Center

Forging A New City  
Concept Plan  
Scale 1/8" = 1'0"

S2 Associates Inc.  
April 8, 2008



