



THE FUTURE OF PLAY

MARBLES KIDS MUSEUM EXPANSION



Response to Wake County RFI #19-001
For Hospitality Projects in Wake County
January 10, 2019

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Project Purpose

Marbles Kids Museum is among the top family destinations in North Carolina, with more than **6.2 million visitors since 2007**. Marbles provides unique, innovative and FUNdamental play experiences that attract children, families and groups of all sizes. With a national reputation for hands-on, minds-on fun, Marbles draws families near and far. From local accolades like the *Best Place to Entertain Kids* to rave reviews and favorable comparisons from visitors across the country, Marbles ranks as the **6th most visited museum/historic attraction in North Carolina**.

Last year, Marbles served more than 690,000 guests in spaces originally designed for a predecessor institution to accommodate less than half that number. Already crowded, Marbles is expected to see tremendous growth in the years ahead with the city of Raleigh projected to grow 60% by 2035 and Wake County to double in size over the same period. Applying these projections to museum visitation, Marbles will hit close to one million annual visitors by 2025. To accommodate not only existing crowds, but also a **potential visitation growth of 45% in the next six years**, Marbles must expand to respond to local stakeholder demand for improved facilities and to add capacity and interest to attract more visitors to Wake County.

Facilities

Marbles is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit formed in 2007 through a merger between Playspace and Exploris museums. The Marbles campus at 201 E. Hargett Street is comprised of three buildings:

- 1) Museum Facilities (83,000sf); constructed in 1999
- 2) IMAX Theater and Cafe Facilities (28,000sf); constructed in 2001
- 3) Play Annex: former school building purchased by Marbles in 2017 (16,000sf); constructed in 1950

Wake County owns the Museum and Theater facilities, which Marbles operates under a long-term lease. The Play Annex is wholly owned and operated by Marbles.

Description of Unmet Need

A Visitor Experience Assessment conducted by ORCA Consulting in December 2018 reveals that Marbles **exceeds capacity by more than 31%** on busy days and reaches an estimated **92% utilization of public areas** on “typical days” confirming the museum is “currently reaching crowded conditions and... additional capacity is needed.” Additional analysis by external experts ranks Marbles at the top in visitors per square foot among comparable museums and identifies many persistent problematic challenges including narrow entryways and limited purpose-built spaces for young families that result in crowded exhibits, caps on field trips, enrollment limits for camps and long lines for entry in peak season and on special educational event days.

In addition to serving as a learning destination for children and families, Marbles’ inspiring and uplifting environment is an ideal venue for corporate and educational meetings and events. In 2018, Marbles was selected as host museum for the Association of Children’s Museums international conference; in partnership with GRCVB, welcoming peers from 46 states and 11 foreign countries to Wake County. However, our ability to serve as a host site is greatly restricted by inadequate facilities. Expanding our facilities will strengthen Marbles’ capacity to attract and serve both families and groups of all sizes, from our own neighborhood and nationwide.



Design Concept

Marbles began expansion planning in 2016 with a community-driven Master Plan Study of campus growth potential. The process included comprehensive stakeholder engagement, expert research and analysis, resulting in several community priorities for future Expansion:

- (1) Improve visitor entry and flow
- (2) Expand early childhood exhibit spaces and add new spaces for older children
- (3) Enhance exterior with playful, iconic elements and outdoor play opportunities
- (4) Activate streetfront and improve restaurant and retail presence
- (5) Improve connectivity to surroundings
- (6) Add more program and flex space

Building on the Master Plan, Marbles developed a Strategic Implementation Plan in Spring 2017 to prioritize needs for the next 10 years and develop a plan for implementation. The Plan conceptually identifies an expansion/renovation of nearly 60,000sf on the Marbles campus as follows:

- (1) New multi-story expansion of ~27,000sf in the center of campus to provide iconic entry and serve as a hub connecting all campus buildings (Museum, Theater and Play Annex). It is envisioned that the first floor will welcome visitors with a spacious entry and inspiring flow, with additional floors serving as exhibit, program, administrative and multipurpose spaces.
- (2) Renovations to existing museum and theater of ~33,000sf to accommodate new exhibits and programs.
- (3) Connecting the campus and expanding the facilities footprint will require a new consolidated central plant.

Visitation analysis reveals that “the proposed additions to the public areas will readily accommodate expected attendance growth AND provide more comfortable visitation conditions.” (ORCA CONSULTING DECEMBER 2018)

Marbles entered the initial design phase of the Expansion project in November 2018 under the leadership of Wake County FDC and the architectural services of local firm Clearscapes and national museum expert HGA. Project design will be implemented in two phases: Phase 1 – Programming, Conceptual Design and Schematic Design (space evaluation, site planning, workshops, public meetings and development of documents and graphics to be used in fundraising capital campaign); and Phase 2 – Design Development and Construction Documents. (Phase 2, followed by bidding and construction, will proceed as available funding is identified).

ANTICIPATED USERS

Marbles visitors represent diverse backgrounds and demographics, visiting from all 100 NC counties, all 50 states, and countries around the world. Approximately half of 690,000 annual campus visitors are Wake County residents (345,000/year), with another 25% coming from within 50 miles of the museum (172,500/year) and the remaining 25% coming from 50 miles or more (172,500/year). Following expansion, Marbles estimates that between 850,000 and 1,000,000 guests will visit our campus each year.

Marbles serves a wide range of ages, with core museum exhibits designed for children birth to 10 and their adults. Museum field trips serve students pre-K through grade 3; and IMAX educational field trips serve students ages 9-14. Award winning youth volunteer programs serve middle- and high-school students. Regular programming for young professionals attracts our community’s growing millennial population, while special events, feature films and corporate/community events attract adult audiences throughout the year. Marbles is steadfast in our commitment to access and affordability, welcoming over 32,000 free access visitors annually and recently receiving the National Inclusion Project’s Founders Award and Distinguished Service Award from the ARC of Wake County.

REGIONAL BENEFIT

In alignment with the Wake County Destination Strategic Plan (DSP) and the Raleigh Downtown Plan, Marbles is approaching expansion with an eye for quality programming, one-of-a-kind exhibit spaces and iconic architectural development that will attract visitors from across our county, state, country and world. **In the DSP, Marbles is identified as a Key Attractor, with potential to serve as a catalyst for boosting Wake County's appeal as a destination.** Marbles' expansion will incorporate creative, colorful and prominent art and architecture to make our campus more inviting, exciting, memorable and newsworthy – providing unique guest experiences that draw visitors from out of town while simultaneously enhancing quality of life for local families.

As we reimagine our street presence, Marbles will take the lead in physically connecting neighboring downtown museums – NC Museum of Natural Sciences and NC Museum of History – through creative wayfinding and playful design elements. As identified in the DSP, deepening connections and collaborations with nearby destinations will benefit the region as a whole.

Marbles expansion will address existing capacity challenges and prepare for growth while also contributing to the revitalization of our downtown district. While Marbles has seen significant growth in the last several years, the east side of downtown has lagged behind other areas in desirability. Two major civic infrastructure improvements – Moore Square Park and Moore Square Transit Station – have already provided a jolt of public investment to the area. The Downtown Plan states that Marbles provides an important regional benefit by bringing children and families to the area. However, Marbles current street presence is unwelcoming. A reimaged street front and new expansive iconic entry will add vibrancy to the entire Moore Square district and provide connectivity to the transformed Transit Station and Park.

ROI

Marbles closely tracks visitor zip codes. We estimate local visitors as those who travel fewer than 50 miles and overnight visitors as those from outside the 50 mile radius. Using a \$50 meal rate estimate and a \$95 room spending estimate, we anticipate a 7-year ROI for our project as follows*:

Visitation Year	Visitors	Estimated F&B Spending	Estimated F&B Tax Collected	Estimated Room Spending	Estimated Room Tax Collected	TOTAL ROI
2018	720,077	\$36,003,864	\$360,039	\$14,297,134	\$857,828	\$1,217,867
2019	748,880	\$37,444,019	\$374,440	\$14,869,020	\$892,141	\$1,266,581
2020	778,836	\$38,941,779	\$389,418	\$15,463,781	\$927,827	\$1,317,245
2021	809,989	\$40,499,450	\$404,995	\$16,082,332	\$964,940	\$1,369,934
2022	842,389	\$42,119,428	\$421,194	\$16,725,625	\$1,003,538	\$1,424,732
2023	876,084	\$43,804,206	\$438,042	\$17,394,650	\$1,043,679	\$1,481,721
2024	911,127	\$45,556,374	\$455,564	\$18,090,436	\$1,085,426	\$1,540,990
7 Year TOTAL	5,687,382	\$284,369,120	\$2,843,691	\$112,922,978	\$6,775,379	\$9,619,070

**Formula provided by Wake County. Assumes full operation during construction.*

LEAD ORGANIZATION + PARTNERS

Marbles is the lead organization for Expansion, working closely with Wake County and Clearscapes/HGA on each phase of the project. Additional consultants will provide targeted expertise, including ORCA Consulting, a national firm specializing in the visitor experience and Andropogon, recipient of the 2018 Landscape Architecture Firm award from the American Society of Landscape Architects. A Steering Committee of corporate and community leaders, Marbles board members and executive staff will provide guidance and oversight throughout the project. Wake County, Marbles and Clearscapes/HGA will also oversee a competitive process to select a construction management firm.

Since opening in 2007, Marbles has operated with an entrepreneurial and collaborative spirit. Valued partners listed below, along with neighborhood groups and business districts, will provide input during expansion design.

- Corporate partners: ABB, PNC Bank, Duke Energy, Red Hat, ABC-11, MetLife...
- Educational institutions: NC State, Duke, Wake Tech, WCPSS, Goddard School...
- Community organizations: NC Science Museums Network, John Rex Endowment, Wake Up and Read, Carolina Hurricanes, NC Community Foundation, Triangle Community Foundation...
- Government agencies: Wake County, City of Raleigh, State of NC, National Institute of Museum & Library Services, National Science Foundation...

PROJECT LOCATION

The Expansion will take place at Marbles' downtown Raleigh campus (201 E. Hargett Street; Raleigh, NC 27601).

ANTICIPATED PROJECT CAPITAL/DEVELOPMENT COSTS AND TIMELINE

Anticipated Capital and Development costs below are based on a *Preliminary Predesign Order of Magnitude*. More accurate estimates of anticipated cost will be available in Q3 2019 following schematic design.

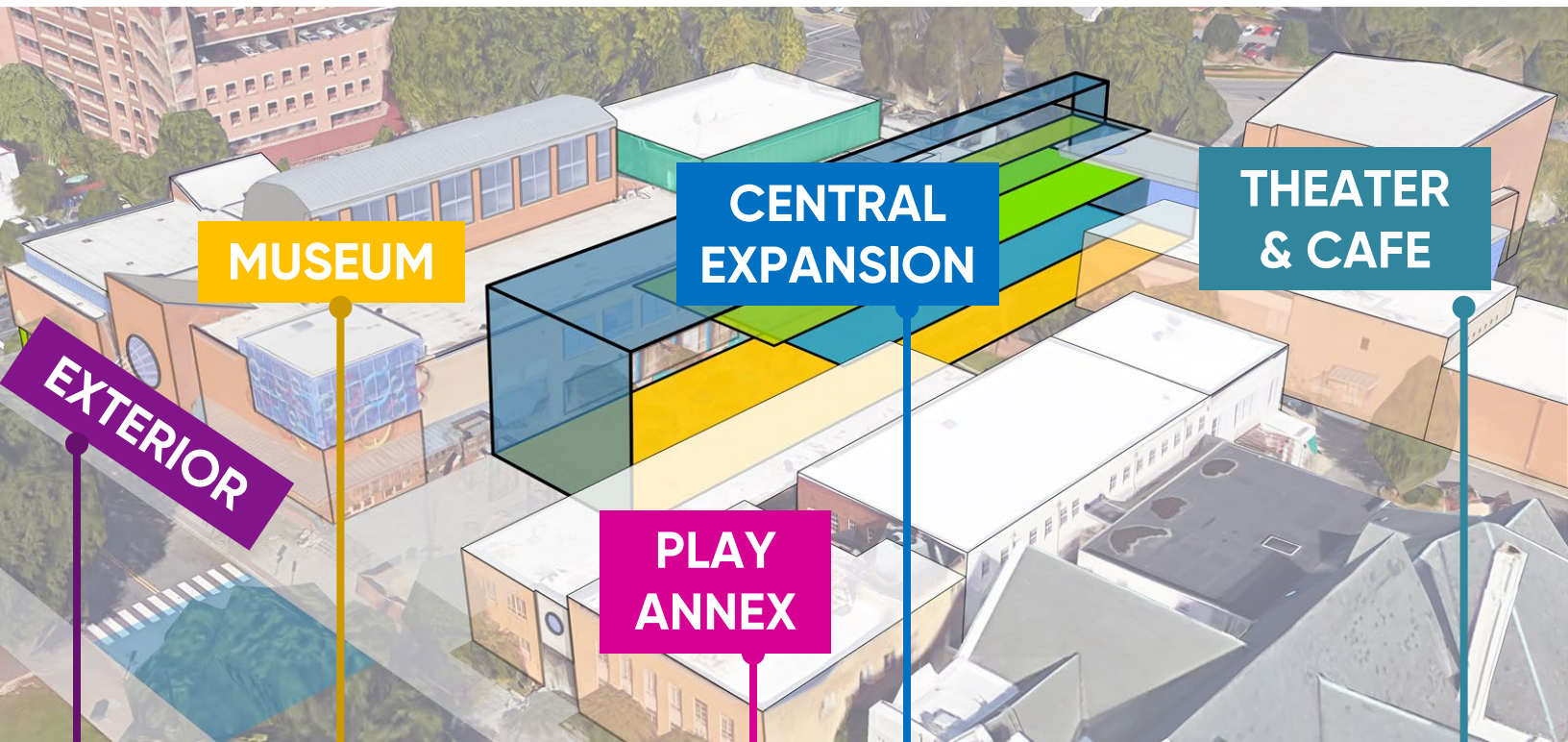
Preliminary Predesign CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING COST ESTIMATES	
New Construction / Infill Connections	\$15,000,000
Renovation and Improvements	\$4,500,000
Central Plant	\$2,000,000
Subtotal - Projected Facility Construction Cost	\$21,500,000
Professional Services	\$2,500,000
Contingency	\$3,000,000
Total - Projected Construction/Building Budget	\$27,000,000
Preliminary Predesign EXHIBITS AND FF+E COST ESTIMATES	
New Exhibits	\$11,000,000
FF+E Program, Restaurant, Retail, Theater	\$5,500,000
FF+E Administration and Service	\$1,500,000
Total Projected Exhibits and FF+E Costs	\$18,000,000
TOTAL ANTICIPATED PROJECT COST	\$45,000,000

PROJECTED TIMELINE	
Stakeholder-Driven Master Plan completed	February 2016
Strategic Implementation Plan completed	October 2017
Schematic Design	November 2018 – July 2019
Capital Campaign and Feasibility Planning	April – August 2019
Design Development and Construction Documents	September 2019 – July 2020
Launch Capital Campaign	September 2019
Construction and Renovation	Target: September 2021 (15-18 months duration)

Marbles is grateful for our long and mutually beneficial relationship with Wake County. As we look to our future, we will continue to operate a successful public-private partnership to fund operating costs and facility maintenance.

THE FUTURE OF PLAY

MARBLES EXPANSION



MUSEUM

CENTRAL EXPANSION

THEATER & CAFE

EXTERIOR

PLAY ANNEX

RENOVATE MUSEUM

Improve flow, expand exhibits, solve operational challenges and meet visitor needs.

REIMAGINE EXTERIOR

Enliven façades to showcase Marbles mission, add iconic appeal, activate the street front & talk to Moore Square Park.

INTEGRATE ANNEX

Renovate and connect newly acquired building to add capacity and gain street front presence.

EXPAND & CONNECT NEW CENTRAL BLDG

Improve visitor flow, expand capacity, connect campus buildings and deliver on desire for iconic architecture and rooftop outdoor play!

RENOVATE CAFÉ & THEATER

Improve visitor flow, add capacity, solve operational challenges, offer aged-up play and enhance visual appeal on north and east façades.