

COUNCIL MINUTES

May 7, 2026

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in the Study Session room at City Hall, 20 East Main Street, on May 7, 2026, at 7:35 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mark Freeman
Scott Somers
Rich Adams
Alicia Goforth
Dorean Taylor*

COUNCIL ABSENT

Jennifer Duff
Francisco Heredia

OFFICERS PRESENT

Scott Butler
Holly Moseley
Jim Smith

(*Participated in the meeting through the use of video conference equipment.)

Mayor Freeman conducted a roll call.

Mayor Freeman excused Councilmembers Duff and Heredia from the entire meeting.

- 1-a. Hear a presentation, discuss, and provide direction on the Arizona Museum of Natural History (AZMNH) Economic Redevelopment Project, including the design concept, community engagement, economic impact, and funding strategy.

Arts and Culture Director Luis Ruiz introduced Museum Administrator Simon Adlam and displayed a PowerPoint presentation. **(See Attachment 1)**

Mr. Ruiz provided an overview of the proposed project and reviewed the purpose and importance of the AZMNH. He described the museum as a place of learning, discovery, and community identity with significant potential. He pointed out that the museum is part of the larger vision for Downtown Mesa and the Arts and Innovation District, with the opportunity to help anchor the district, connect residents and visitors to downtown, support surrounding businesses and public spaces, and strengthen the City of Mesa's (COM) sense of place. (See Pages 2 through 4 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Adlam explained that the vision for AZMNH is to be a uniquely Mesa, distinctly Arizonan, and globally significant institution. He described the museum as a hub for discovery, education, stewardship, economic development, and community connection, functioning as a high-performing City-owned asset. He highlighted the museum's recent growth and operational performance, noting increased attendance, expanded budget support, contributed and earned income through the AZMNH Foundation, and a cost recovery rate of approximately 70 to 80%. He expressed the unique opportunities the COM has with its municipally-owned natural history museum and noted that the vision reflects the COM's legacy, stewardship, and civic pride, while

ensuring the museum remains a lasting institution for future generations. (See Pages 5 and 6 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Ruiz acknowledged the collaborative team involved in advancing the project, including the consulting partners who provided specialized expertise throughout the planning process. He highlighted Gallagher & Associates (G&A), an internationally recognized design firm specializing in story-driven visitor environments that integrate physical and digital media. He introduced Clare Brown, Creative Director, and Spencer Downey, Senior Financial Analyst at G&A; Brian Farling, Principal and Co-Owner of Jones Studio, Inc. and Laura McDonald, Founder of the Benefactor Group, philanthropic leader, and certified fundraising executive. (See Page 8 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Brown provided an overview of the work completed to date, noting that G&A and Jones Studio began supporting the museum's development following completion of the strategic plan. She explained that the master planning process established the project's long-term vision and direction, while community engagement, audience research, market analysis, and demand projections confirmed strong community support and the potential for a distinctive, world-class museum concept. She stated that visitor experience planning and the interpretive framework helped shape the museum's storytelling approach, which will be implemented in phases consistent with the funding strategy. She added that the current phase includes architectural programming, continued community engagement, 50% design work, and visitor experience planning, resulting in a comprehensive concept for moving the project forward. (See Pages 9 through 13 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Downey discussed the project's goal of maximizing both return on investment and community impact. He noted that while the AZMNH has strong brand potential, community support, and market opportunity, the current facility and revenue model limit the museum's ability to increase visitation, revenue, and overall impact. He commented that a new, purpose-built facility would allow the museum to better serve residents and visitors while adding needed revenue-generating spaces, such as event space, food and beverage amenities, retail, classrooms, program areas, and support spaces. He stated that the proposed 118,000-square-foot museum would be the appropriate size for the project and could be further strengthened through a larger mixed-use development that includes hotel, retail, restaurant, commercial, and outdoor spaces. (See Pages 14 through 19 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Downey commented that the museum could serve as a cultural and economic anchor for downtown Mesa by increasing visitation, supporting surrounding businesses, attracting private investment, improving cost recovery, and expanding the COM's cultural and economic impact. He emphasized the project's potential to enhance quality of life, support tourism, strengthen the COM's identity, and create educational and workforce connections related to the region's growing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) economy. (See Pages 20 through 23 of Attachment 1)

In response to a question from Councilmember Goforth, Mr. Downey stated that examples of entertainment-related visitor spending might include activities such as performances, concerts, and similar venues or attractions where visitors choose to spend their time.

Mr. Downey highlighted the museum's potential to support the COM's growing STEM economy by serving as a connector between the COM, private sector partners, and the museum to create workforce development opportunities, industry partnerships, and broader economic outcomes. He stated that successful natural history museums in other communities have leveraged similar partnerships and philanthropic support to expand impact and diversify revenue. He explained that

increasing contributed income, in addition to earned revenue, will be an important part of the museum's future business model. He stressed that the project is intended to serve as an economic activator, investment catalyst, and tourism multiplier by attracting visitors to the museum and encouraging them to visit downtown businesses and other Mesa destinations. He declared that maximizing the project's return on investment and community impact will depend on delivering a world-class experience that aligns with the needs and interests of Mesa residents. (See Pages 24 through 27 of Attachment 1)

Responding to a question from Mayor Freeman, Mr. Downey clarified the existing museum's ranking of 25th out of 30 peer institutions and explained the criteria used to determine the ranking. He stated that the AZMNH has strong brand, market, and audience potential; however, the existing building lacks the amenities and revenue-generating spaces expected in today's cultural and experiential market.

In response to a question from Councilmember Goforth, Mr. Downey explained that the museum's existing municipal operating model had historically relied primarily on earned revenue, such as admissions, supplemented by City funding, rather than contributed revenue. He noted that while the Foundation currently provides contributed support, that revenue is not a significant part of the museum's operating budget. He commented that as the museum expands and transforms, the Foundation is positioned to grow its capacity and play a larger role in generating contributed revenue as part of a more diversified operating model.

Ms. Brown discussed the community engagement completed during the past six months and confirmed that approximately 650 people participated through surveys and an in-person event. She stated that the feedback confirmed strong community support and loyalty for the AZMNH and identified interest in more multigenerational programming. She reported that participants expressed a strong desire to preserve the museum's unique and beloved features, particularly its dinosaur exhibits, while also supporting a new facility that reflects Arizona's regional character, local Indigenous histories, and immersive, multisensory visitor experiences. She stated that the feedback reinforced the importance of creating a forward-thinking institution that remains uniquely Mesa and reflects the community's identity. (See Pages 28 through 32 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Brown introduced the proposed building and experience design, explaining that the project is intended to create a unique institution rather than follow a traditional museum model. She explained that the guiding principle for the design is "Journeys of Discovery," which is intended to allow visitors to move through the museum in a self-directed manner, similar to choosing their own path of exploration. She stated that visitors would experience the past, present, and future of Arizona and the planet through a design rooted in Arizona's landscape, history, and sense of place. She added that the storytelling approach is organized around the concept of "Braided Rivers," with four interconnected themes: cosmos, earth, life, and people. She stated that this approach moves beyond traditional museum storytelling that separates subjects such as geology or paleontology, instead showing how natural history, human culture, and the environment are deeply connected. She noted that the goal is to make complex topics more accessible, engaging, and meaningful for visitors. (See Pages 33 through 38 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Farling discussed the project's place-based architectural approach, explaining that the design is inspired by Mesa and Arizona's natural history, landscape, climate, and cultural heritage. He stated that the AZMNH is well suited for architecture that reflects its location and sense of place with regional features such as Red Mountain, Arizona's geologic strata, historic canal systems, earthen structures, native materials, and desert landscapes. He emphasized the importance of recognizing the history and wisdom of those who have lived in the region for centuries, particularly

in relation to water use and the canal system that helped shape life in the Valley. (See Pages 39 and 40 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Farling stated that the proposed building architecture would not only conserve water but also highlight and celebrate water as a precious resource. He explained that the landscape, ground plane, terraces, and rooftop areas could serve as educational opportunities to demonstrate responsible water use and the importance of native plants. He discussed the need for the building to respond to the desert climate through shaded areas, indoor-outdoor spaces, protection from heat and sun, and design elements that support visitor movement through a multi-story building. He pointed out that the proposed museum is intended to build upon the COM's downtown vitality and create a meaningful, powerful architectural experience inspired by the natural history and unique qualities of the region. (See Pages 41 through 45 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Farling reviewed the proposed concept for the ground plan that includes public-facing spaces such as a lobby, café, retail area, educational spaces, event space, restaurant, and back-of-house areas. He identified the central "canyon" as the heart of the building and explained that the ground plan is intended to be open, accessible, and welcoming, with shaded public spaces and multiple points of entry. He stated that the building design responds to the desert climate through a thermal barrier that helps protect visitors and exhibits from direct sun while supporting manageable utility costs. He explained that glass would be concentrated along the canyon area to bring carefully controlled, diffused daylight into the building. He added that the entry experience would provide a shaded respite and retain the museum's beloved dinosaur presence while enhancing the overall visitor experience. (See Pages 46 through 50 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Farling displayed the concept of the building exterior and explained that it is inspired by the qualities of Red Mountain, including its texture, movement, and the way sunlight changes its appearance throughout the day. He noted that the upper levels are envisioned to include a roof terrace, restaurant and retail area, referred to as the commons, and hotel spaces. He described the north side of the building as an arrival area for visitors, including school field trips, and explained that rainwater would be directed from the roof into garden areas to passively irrigate the landscape and highlight responsible water use. He further described the canyon as a shaded interior space extending upward through the building, with patterned glass inspired by geologic strata, solar panels providing shade, indoor-outdoor connections, and a flexible digital display that could support events and community programming. (See Pages 51 through 53 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Farling described the lobby as an indoor-outdoor space that uses diffused light from the canyon and serves as the first step in the visitor's "Journey of Discovery." He noted that the design includes double-height spaces to help guide movement through the building and create visual connections between levels. He also discussed the potential use of rammed earth and thermally efficient walls at the ground level to reflect regional building traditions while helping keep heat out and cool air in. He added that the building is organized into three primary functional areas: the museum; the commons level with restaurant, retail, and outdoor terraces; and upper-level hotel and observation spaces. He stated that the museum portion is planned across four floors, connected by a series of double-height spaces intended to create a flexible, self-directed visitor experience that can vary with each visit. (See Pages 54 through 59 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Brown explained that the visitor experience is designed to move upward through the building while also moving through time and space, telling the story of approximately 4.5 billion years of Earth's history. She stated that the museum floors would be organized around interconnected themes and time periods, beginning with the origins of Earth and life, moving through the Mesozoic and Cenozoic eras, continuing into human history and living memory, and culminating

at a rooftop observatory. She described the experience as immersive and self-directed to help visitors understand each new time period. She noted that water would be an important recurring theme, both symbolically and physically, reflecting its central role in the story of life on Earth. She discussed the use of double-height spaces to support large-scale collections and dramatic exhibits, including expanded dinosaur experiences that build upon the museum's existing Dino Mountain. She added that each floor is envisioned to include education lab spaces where visitors can engage with hands-on science, technology, and potential STEM partnerships, helping connect young people to future career pathways. (See Pages 60 through 64 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Farling described exterior views of the proposed project and stated that the project is intended to build on and enhance the existing vitality of downtown Mesa. (See Pages 65 and 66 of Attachment 1)

Discussion ensued regarding the placement of the lookout area in the building.

Ms. McDonald discussed potential funding strategies for the proposed museum project using a hypothetical \$300 million project scenario. She explained that funding could come from three primary sources: public investment, private commercial investment, and philanthropy, with the potential to leverage public dollars to attract additional private investment. She highlighted philanthropy as a significant funding source, noting that major campaigns are primarily supported by high-net-worth individuals, along with foundations and national funders. She explained that the museum aligns priorities such as scientific discovery, education, workforce development, public engagement, and community benefit, making it well-positioned for philanthropic support. She emphasized that successful fundraising would require dedicated staff, donor cultivation, and long-term relationship building to secure major gifts. (See Pages 67 through 74 of Attachment 1)

Mr. Downey presented case studies of comparable museum projects, including the Natural History Museum of Utah and the Milwaukee Public Museum, noting that both involved constrained facilities, transformational new buildings, and hybrid funding models using public and private investment. He explained that the examples demonstrate that major museum projects can be successfully advanced through different partnership and funding structures when the facility, location, visitor experience, and revenue opportunities are aligned. (See Pages 75 and 76 of Attachment 1)

Ms. McDonald commented that the proposed museum represents an opportunity for Mesa to create a world-class natural history institution that is authentic to the community, supports education and scientific discovery, generates public and private revenue, encourages career pathways, and provides long-term cultural and civic value beyond economic impact alone. (See Page 77 of Attachment 1)

Assistant City Manager Candace Cannistraro summarized the proposed next steps for the project. She stated that the next phase would occur over a two-year period, with annual updates provided to Council each May. She explained that the next phase as a full economic impact study, that would provide a more detailed understanding of the project's return on investment and community impact. She stated the next two years would include further analysis of the site, including community input and design feasibility to ensure the proposed concept can be successfully implemented. She confirmed that fundraising would begin in the first year, including establishing the necessary staffing, systems, processes, and technology to support a future philanthropic campaign. She said that in the second year, staff would focus on developing donor and partner relationships in advance of any public funding discussion. She emphasized that the AZMNH represents Mesa, Arizona, and the broader Southwest region, and concluded that the goal is to

return to Council with a validated project concept, economic and social impact information, and potential partners prepared to invest in the COM and the museum. (See Pages 78 and 79 of Attachment 1)

Responding to a question from Mayor Freeman, Ms. Cannistraro voiced that staff had been working with the City Manager's Office and Office of Management and Budget to identify funding for the next phase of the project. She reported that approximately \$6 million in one-time costs has been identified over a two-year period to continue the project, clarifying that the funding would come from one-time revenues and would not impact the ongoing forecast previously presented to Council.

In response to a question from Mayor Freeman, Mr. Adlam discussed the AZMNH Foundation's critical role as a strategic partner in the museum redevelopment project. He stated that over the past two years, the Foundation has committed more than \$760,000 to support planning and redevelopment efforts in partnership with the COM and he expressed confidence in the Foundation's ability to support the project moving forward and acknowledged Foundation representatives in attendance.

Mr. Ruiz added that similar projects have used a capital campaign cabinet to support major fundraising efforts beyond local sources. He stated that because the project may attract interest from regional, national, and potentially global donors, a campaign cabinet could include high-level leaders from across industries to supplement the Foundation's ongoing work. He advised that this hybrid model would allow the Foundation to remain a key partner without carrying the full fundraising responsibility alone.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Taylor, Mr. Ruiz replied that private equity is not currently part of the museum's funding model, which primarily consists of earned revenue, City support, and Foundation support.

Ms. McDonald explained that, depending on how private equity is defined, future opportunities could include private investment in hospitality or other commercial components of the project. She noted that the funding model presented was conceptual and could include private investment, impact investment, and private philanthropy. She added that some philanthropic donors may have generated wealth through private equity and may choose to support the project through charitable giving.

Additional discussion ensued regarding the potential funding sources for the proposed project.

In response to a question from Councilmember Taylor, Ms. Cannistraro clarified that while the museum receives earned revenue and City support, major capital improvements are typically funded through bond programs, like the current i.d.e.a. Museum renovation and expansion. She emphasized that the AZMNH is a working museum and research center, not solely an exhibit-based facility and that City scientists conduct research, publish findings, receive grants, participate in dig sites, and support ongoing collections work. She pointed out that the proposed lab spaces are a vital part of the future museum concept and could create opportunities for partnerships with universities, research institutions, and private entities. She further stated that potential partnerships could include impact investment, where outside partners help fund lab spaces and conduct research alongside museum staff, noting potential partnerships with colleges that have expressed interest in the museum's expertise.

Responding to a question from Councilmember Adams, Mr. Adlam advised that the project team has identified potential approaches to funding large civic projects intended to serve the community for the next 50 to 75 years. He noted that the storytelling, exhibit design, visitor experience, and architecture have been developed together from the beginning and that this integrated approach is intended to ensure the building can adapt over time as visitor expectations and museum experiences evolve, without requiring major renovations to the facility.

Additional discussion ensued regarding the potential operating costs and funding sources for the proposed project.

(At 9:42 a.m., Mayor Freeman excused Councilmember Adams from the remainder of the meeting.)

In response to questions from Councilmember Goforth, Ms. Cannistraro stated that the proposed two-year next phase would allow the COM to fully develop the funding strategy, partnerships, project details, and public case before moving forward. She emphasized the importance of taking the time necessary to get the project right for Mesa residents, the region, and the state, rather than rushing into a major civic investment. She explained that the goal is not simply to construct a building and fill it with exhibits, but to create a facility grounded in the museum's mission, education, research, visitor experience, and long-term adaptability. She pointed out that fundraising will require additional expertise and capacity to guide the COM and the Foundation through the process and position the project for success.

Additional discussion ensued regarding existing and potential partnerships.

Vice Mayor Somers emphasized the importance of considering the historic value of the existing building as future planning continues, including how the project is placed on the site and how the architect may be able to integrate the historic structure into the overall design.

Mayor Freeman read a letter submitted by Councilmember Duff that supported moving forward with the proposed AZMNH project.

Mayor Freeman noted Councilmember Heredia had expressed his support for the project also.

Mayor Freeman declared that it was the consensus of the Council to proceed with the next steps as discussed.

2. Current events summary including meetings and conferences attended.

Mayor Freeman and Councilmembers highlighted the events, meetings, and conferences recently attended.

3. Scheduling of meetings.

City Manager Scott Butler stated that the schedule of meetings is as follows:

Thursday, May 14, 2026, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

4. Convene an Executive Session.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Somers, seconded by Councilmember Goforth, that the Council adjourn the Study Session at 10:13 a.m. and enter into an Executive Session.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Freeman–Somers–Goforth–Taylor

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Adams–Duff–Heredia

Mayor Freeman declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

- 4-a. Discussion or consideration of employment, assignment, appointment, promotion, salaries of a public officer, appointee, or employee of the City Council. (A.R.S. 38-431.03(A)(1)); and discussion or consultation for legal advice with the City Attorney. (A.R.S. §38-431.03(A)(3)).

Interview of the following City Magistrate candidates:

a) Kevin Breger

b) Jacob Brown

c) Joan Sinclair

At 11:24 a.m. the Executive Session adjourned, and the Study Session reconvened.

5. Resume the public meeting, discuss, and provide direction on the nomination for the position of City Magistrate.

Mayor Freeman announced that the consensus of Council was to recommend Jacob Brown for appointment as City Magistrate, with confirmation to be considered at the June 1, 2026, City Council meeting.

It was moved by Councilmember Goforth, seconded by Vice Mayor Somers, to recommend Jacob Brown for appointment as City Magistrate.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Freeman–Somers–Goforth–Taylor

NAYS – None

ABSENT – Adams–Duff–Heredia

Mayor Freeman declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

6. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

MARK FREEMAN, MAYOR

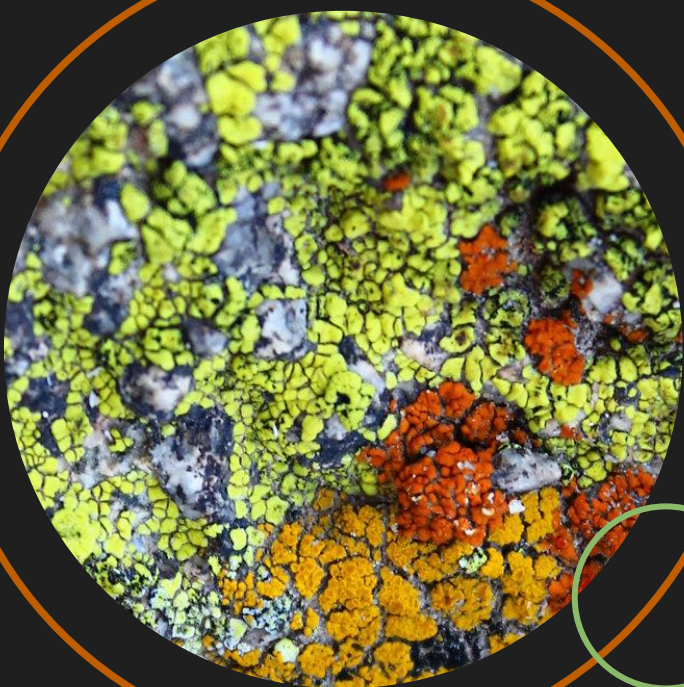
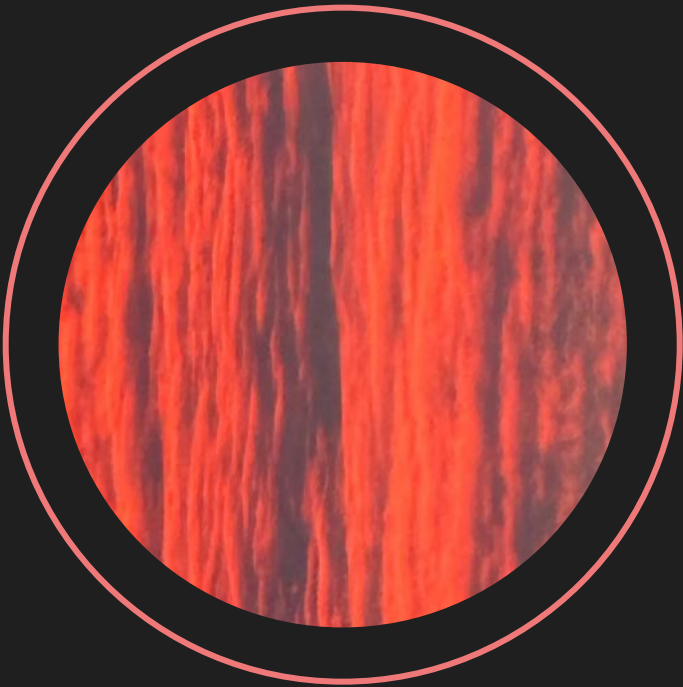
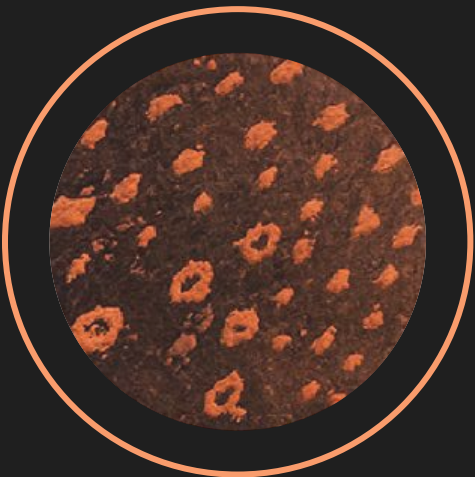
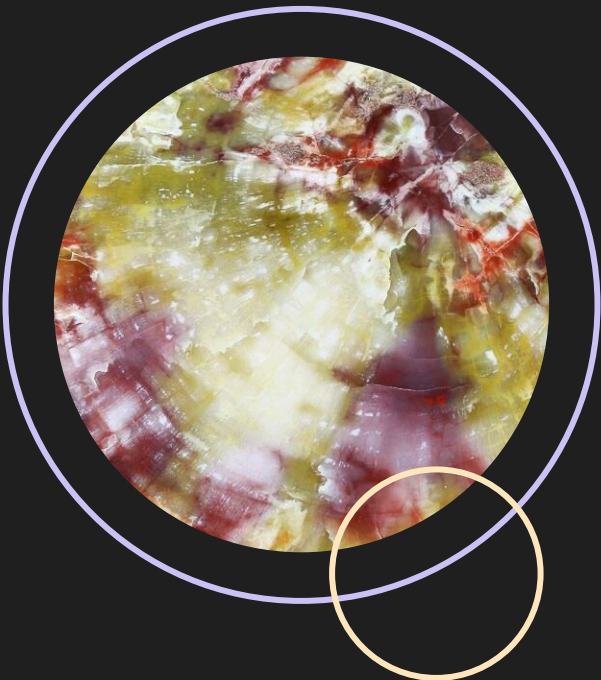
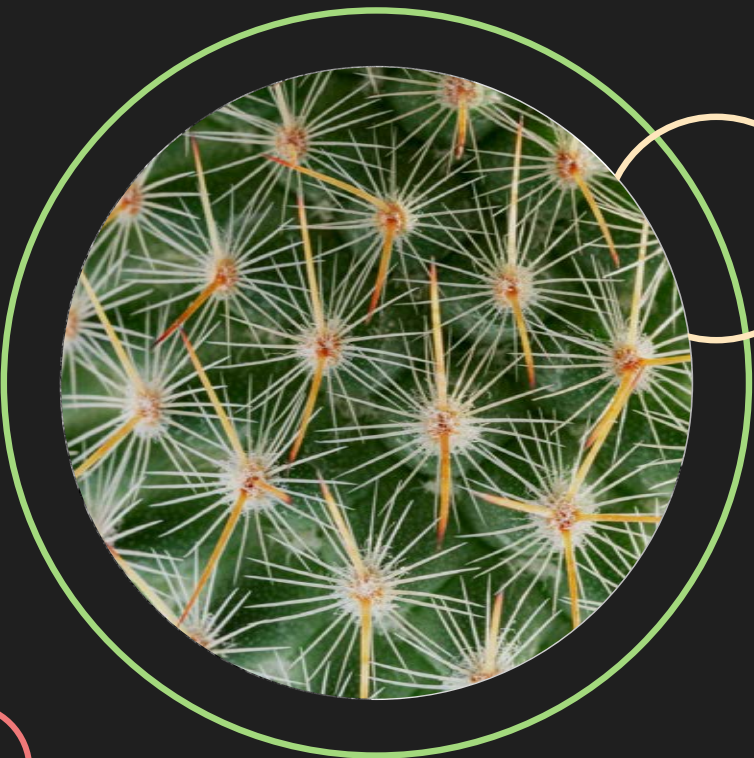
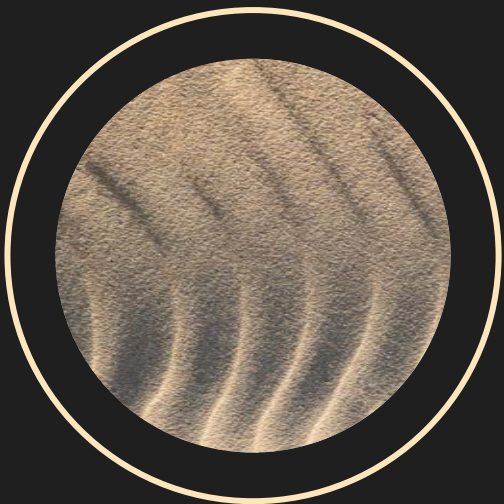
ATTEST:

HOLLY MOSELEY, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 7th day of May 2026. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

HOLLY MOSELEY, CITY CLERK

sr
(Attachments –1)



AZNMNH

Arizona Museum of Natural History

Mesa City Council Presentation

May 7, 2026

Agenda

1

Executive Summary

Introduction and Project Overview

2

Return on

Investment & Impact

Why invest in a world-class natural history museum in Mesa, Arizona?

3

Community Engagement

How do we understand community needs and motivations?

4

Architecture &

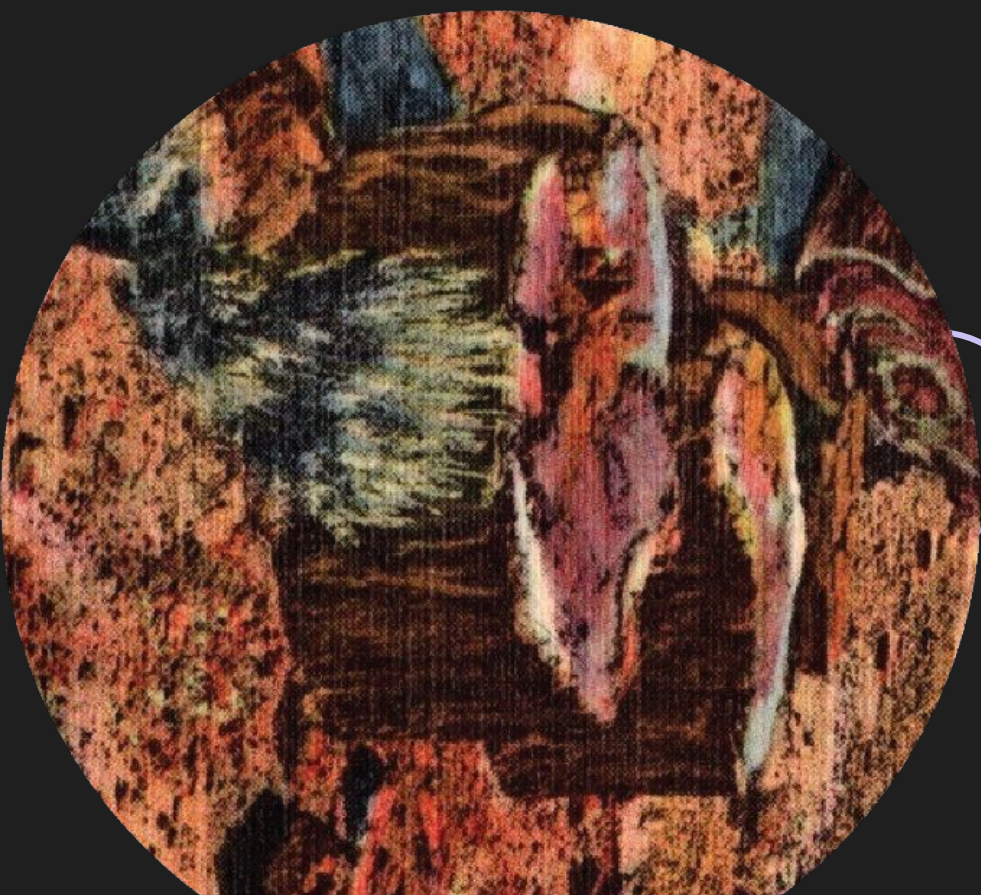
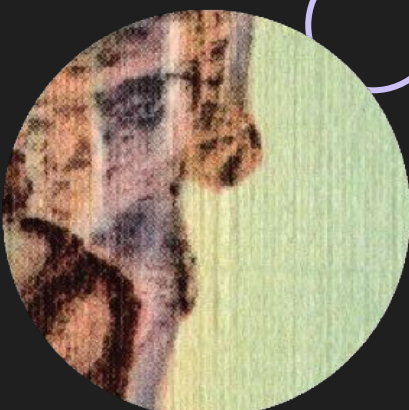
Experience Design

What is possible for the Arizona Museum of Natural History?

5

Funding Models

How will the Arizona Museum of Natural History realize its vision?



1

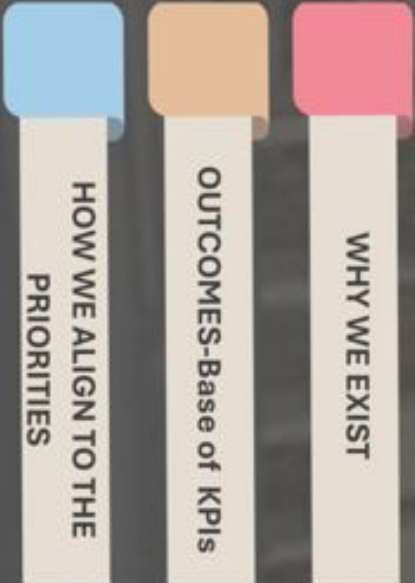
Executive Summary

Introduction and
Project Overview

ARTS & CULTURE

The Arts & Culture Department exists to **connect the public with dynamic, enriching experiences while stewarding community spaces and assets to strengthen Mesa's cultural vibrancy and economic vitality, advancing the City's vision of a thriving and prosperous community.**

PERFORMANCE
PLUS
ENVISION . ELEVATE
IMPACT .





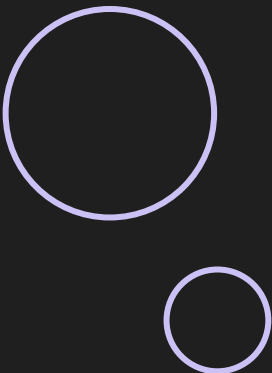
Project Vision

Arizona's history is world history.

Right here in Mesa, we stand in a place of continuous human presence, and that matters. In a 21st century economy, cities compete for talent, investment, and corporate headquarters. The AZMNH redevelopment turns that reality into an advantage, creating a global destination that delivers exponential return on the city's investment.

This is not a typical museum.

It is the first model of its kind anywhere, a self-sustaining cultural and economic engine. It will serve our residents, inspire future generations, and drive visitation, private investment, and job creation. It strengthens downtown, builds civic identity, and puts Mesa firmly on the map as a city that leads, competes, and wins.



Project Partners

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Arizona Museum of Natural History®

G&A



G&A Strategy + Design

Experience Design
Feasibility and Operational Planning
Community Engagement

Jones Studio

Architectural Programming
Architectural Concept

Benefactor

Philanthropic Planning
Funding Models

Mesa Arts and Culture

City of Mesa



Questions We Will Address Today

Questions We Will Address Today

Why invest in a world-class natural history museum in Mesa, Arizona?

Return on Investment and Impact

How do we understand the potential social and economic returns of a project like this one?

Market Research & Community Engagement

What is possible for the Arizona Museum of Natural History?

How will the Arizona Museum of Natural History realize its vision?

Visualizing the Future

Funding Models



Work Completed To-Date

Work Done to Date

Strategic Plan and
Master Plan completed



Clear long-term vision
and direction established

Community engagement and
audience research completed



Strong participation
and validated demand

Market analysis and demand
projections completed



Distinct, world-class
concept established

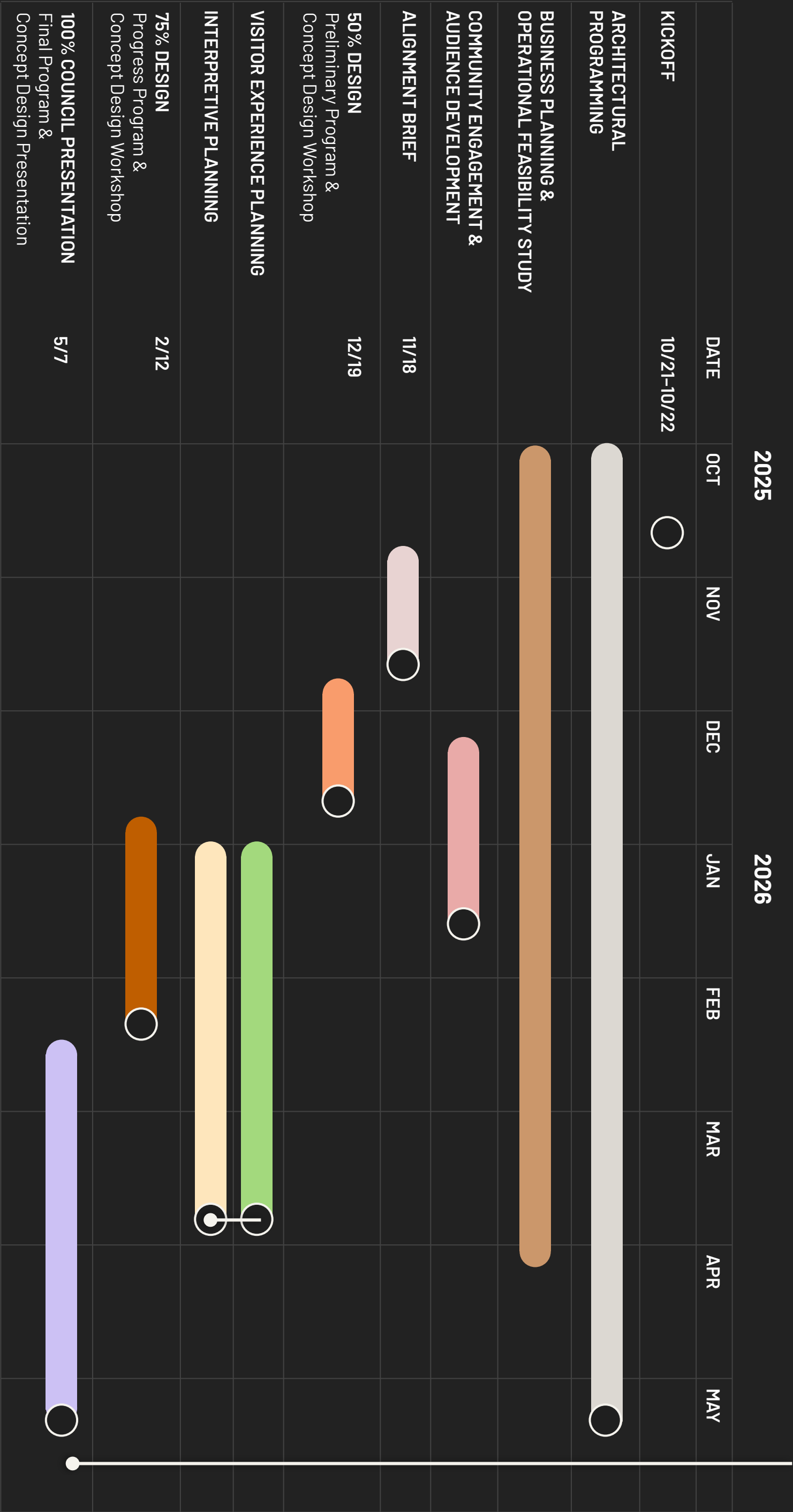
Visitor experience and
interpretive framework defined



Phased approach aligned
to funding strategy

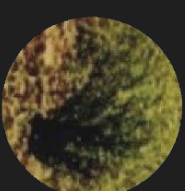
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY / OVERALL PROJECT WORKFLOW

We Are Here!



Return on Investment and Impact

Why invest in a world-class natural history museum in Mesa, Arizona?



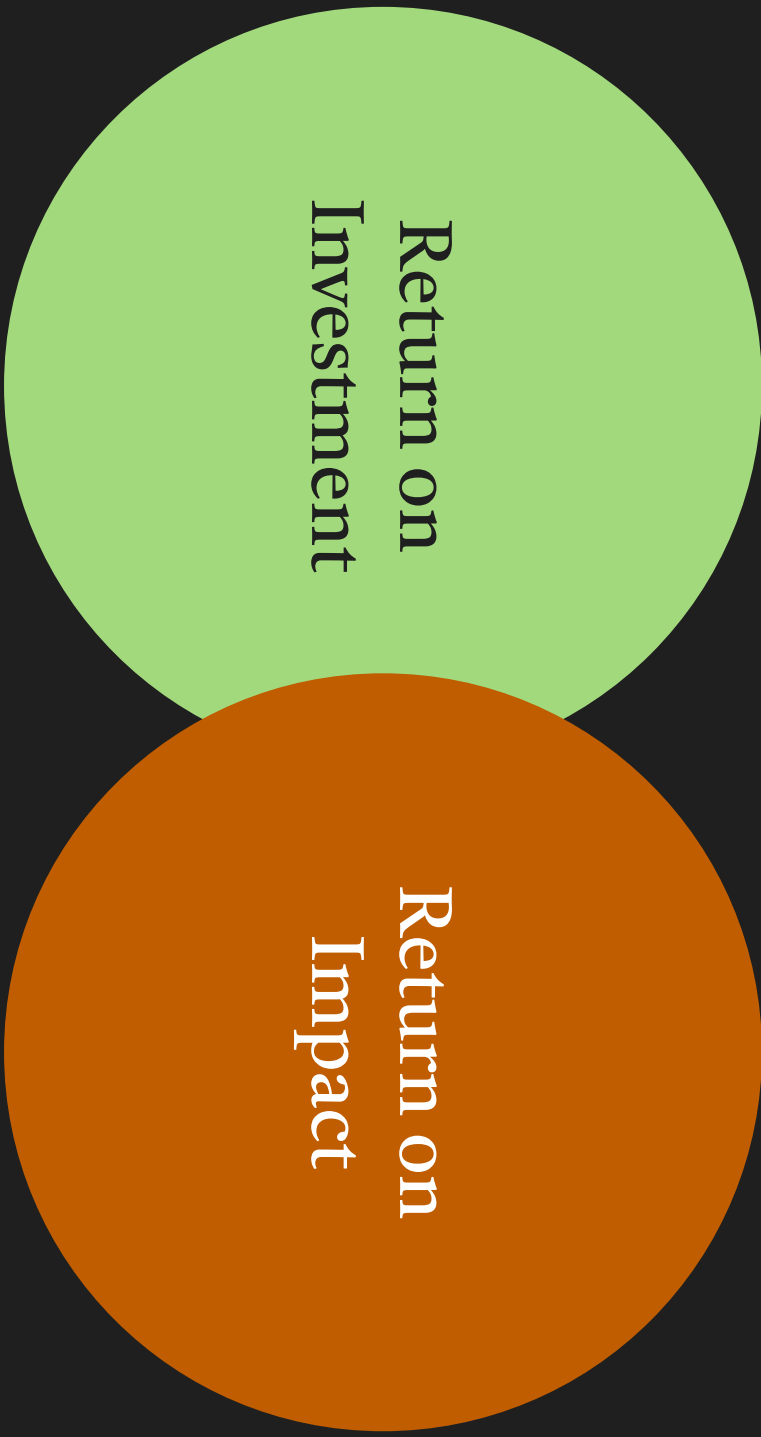
Maximizing ROI²

G&A Strategy’s approach for business planning is to maximize the museum’s return on impact and return on investment.

- Return on investment has two dimensions: the financial returns that sustain the museum and the broader economic and community impact that justify the investment.
- As a city-owned museum, Mesa can use AZMNH as an asset to deliver a return on investment for residents and taxpayers beyond the museum’s walls.

ROI²

Build for the greatest impact on our mission, impact, and audience while remaining financially sustainable



AZMNH Today has the brand potential, market, and audience to be a top Valley attraction.

- Sits in one of the fastest-growing markets in the U.S. for population, tourism, and STEM
- The only city-owned natural history museum in the country carrying the brand potential of an entire state
- A 63K SF aging facility has capped the museum's ability to grow visitation, revenue, and impact
- Minimal contributed revenues, leaving one of the largest income sources in the museum industry untapped

AZMNH's opportunity is clear, but the current building and revenue model prevent the museum from meeting it

Key Facts & Figures

Annual Visitors

175k

Largest city municipal Natural History Museum in the country

Earned Revenue

\$1.8m

Heavily dependent on gate revenue and public support

Capture Rate

0.73%

Ranking 25th of 30 peers in attendance capture relative to Total Potential Audience

Tourist Mix

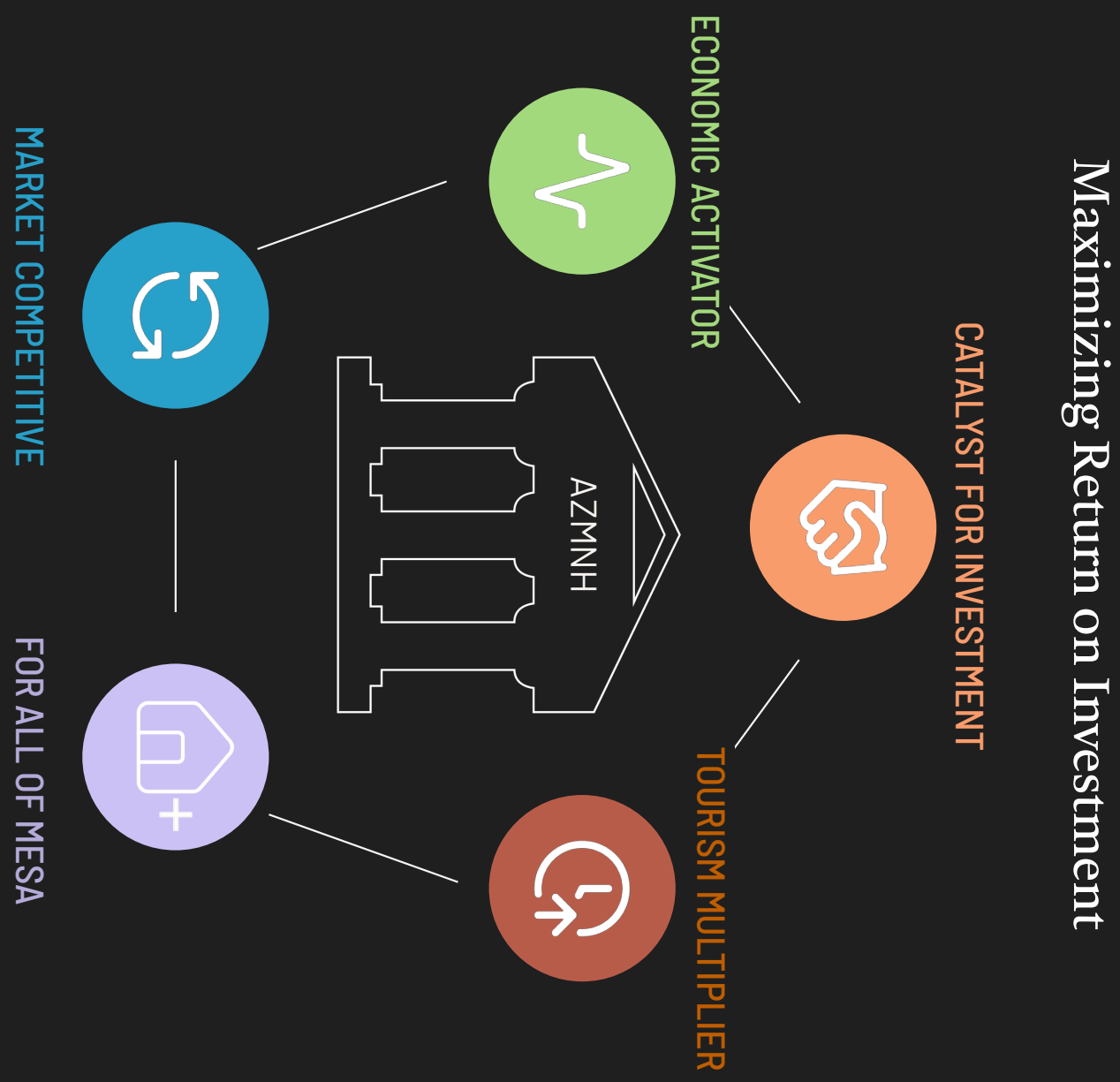
~10%

Tourists make up just over 10% of AZMNH's audience mix – far below the average of a typical Natural History Museum

Maximizing Mesa’s Return on Investment means designing a project that delivers beyond its own walls.

Maximizing ROI for all of Mesa requires:

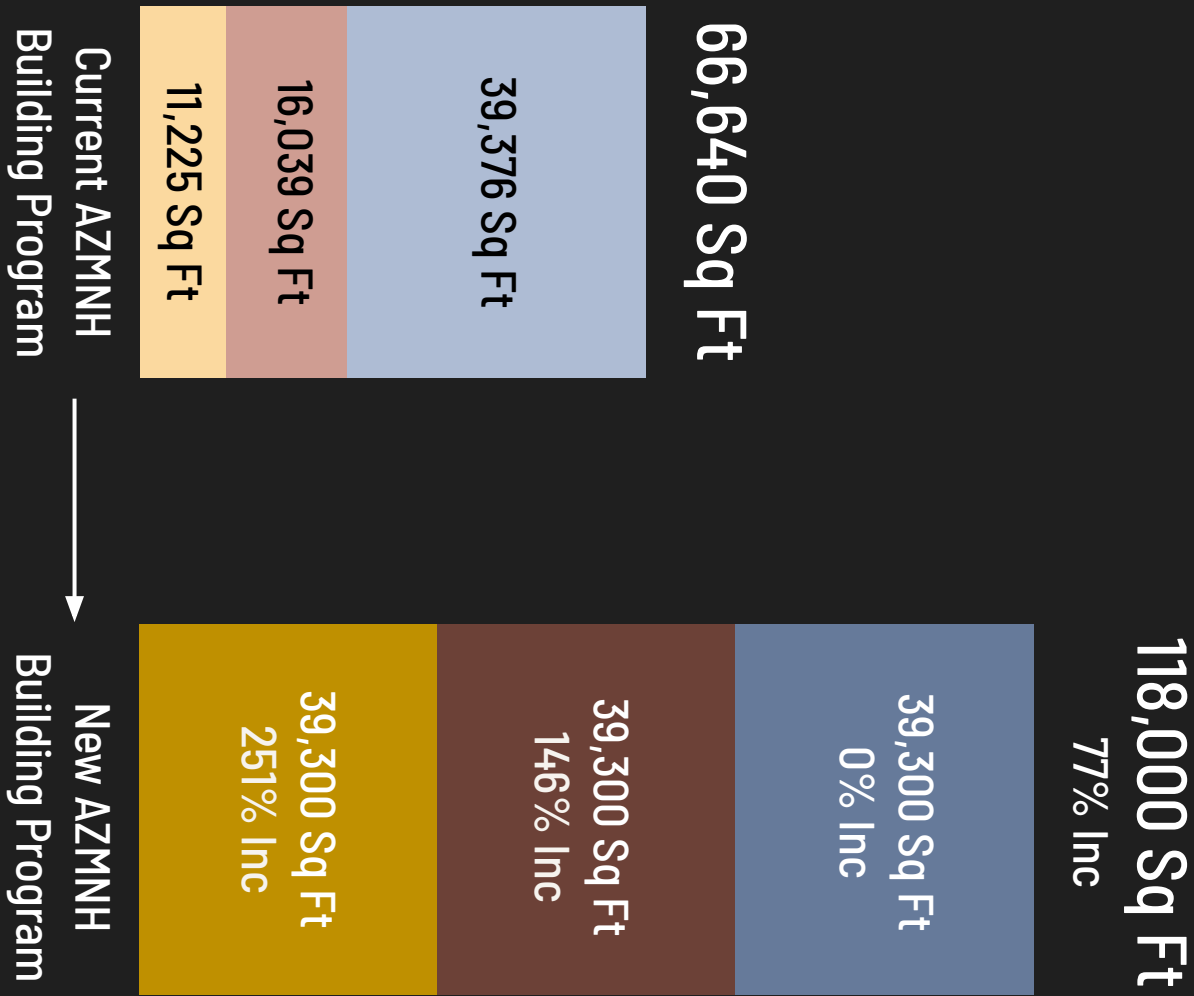
- A revenue strategy fit for the opportunity
- Driving new visitation from tourists and Valley residents to Mesa
- Turn museum visitors into Main Street customers for Mesa’s restaurants, shops, and nightlife
- Catalyze private investment in downtown Mesa
- Deliver a community asset that serves Mesa residents and meets their needs



Last year we showed AZMNH needs more amenity and support space to maximize the ROI of the Museum

The Future Museum

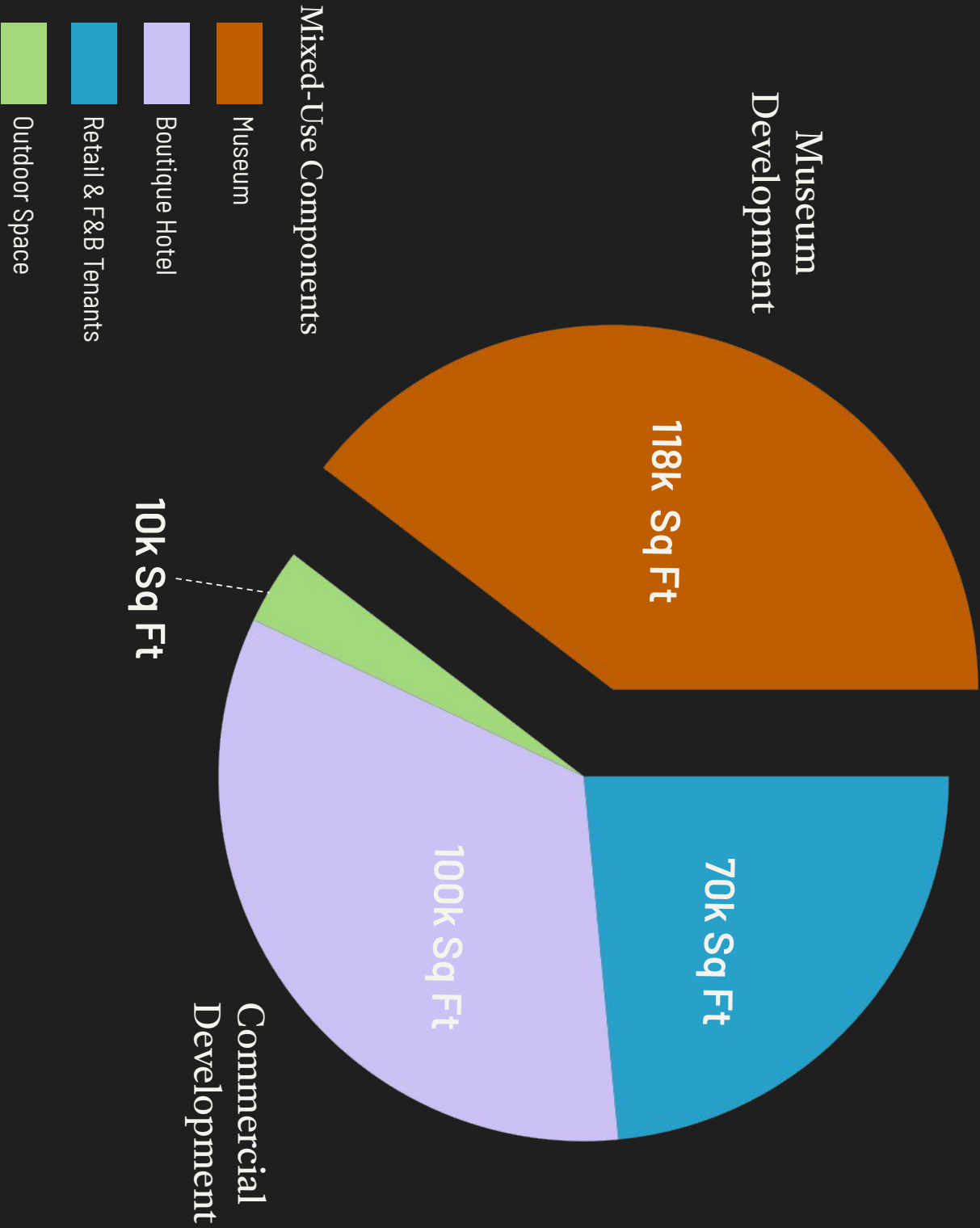
- AZMNH already has the necessary exhibit space, but it lacks the amenity spaces that are critical for generating more earned revenue
- The new building plan also adds the program and classroom spaces that are needed to grow programs, student visitation, and serve more of the Mesa community's needs.



AZMNH can meet this opportunity by delivering more to Mesa residents and Valley tourists.

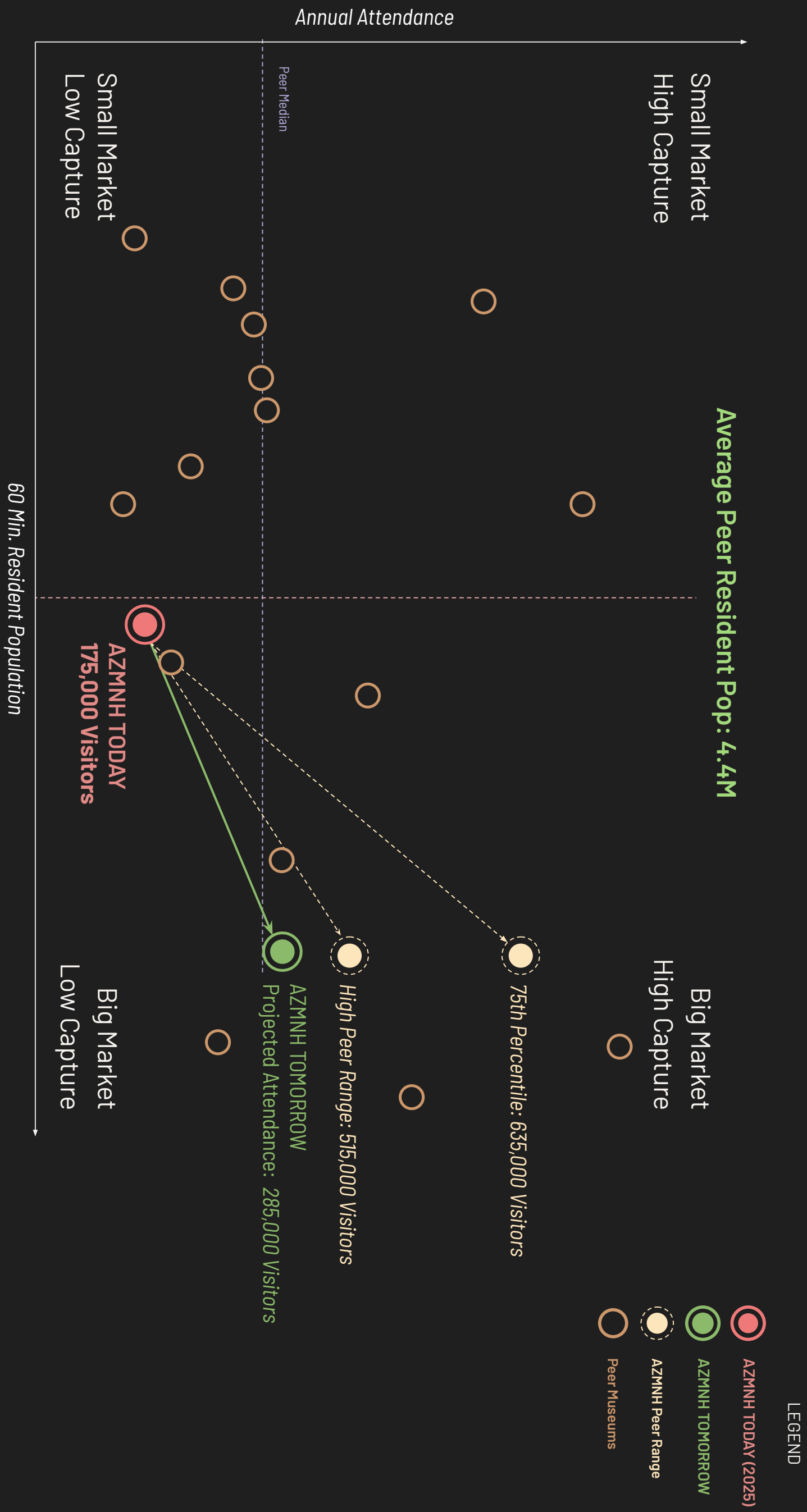
AZMNH’s Mixed-Use Development

- 118K SF museum right-sized for the market and competitive with the region’s top attractions
- Boutique hotel adds room nights that strengthen all of Mesa’s experiential assets
- Dining and retail amenities designed to compliment the rest of the market’s offering



** Commercial Footprint includes 170k sq ft of indoor space plus 10k sqft of commercial outdoor public space*

Designing for the Valley's future audience positions AZMNH to achieve future attendance levels competitive with national peers and with potential for even greater visitation.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Annual Reports; Form 990s; Various Tourism Reports

TURN ON INVESTMENT & IMPACT

The future AZMNH will return new revenue, new visitors, and new private investment to downtown Mesa, while delivering greater impact than ever before.

285,000+

Annual Museum Visitors

Total campus visitation is substantially higher with hotel, event, dining, and conference guests.

1.5M+

Annual On-Site Visitors

Total on-site visitation across museum, hotel, retail, dining, and public events.

3x to 4x

Increase in Economic Impact

Mesa's arts and culture sector generates \$35.3M today. AZMNH adds nearly \$14M in net new annual impact.

Financial & Operating Return

- \$9.5M in projected Y1 revenue from a diversified earned revenue model
- Increased cost recovery for the City of Mesa
- Ability to host over 300 private events/year with rentable space ranging in capacity from 50 –1,100 guests
- Experiential retail and F&B creates \$400K in revenue annually

Return on Impact

- Quality-of-life improvements that come with having a world-class cultural amenity
- Positions downtown Mesa as active science destination, visible to every visitor
- World-class amenities factor into where companies relocate and where talent chooses to live
- Direct STEM pipeline to Mesa's growing tech and aerospace employers

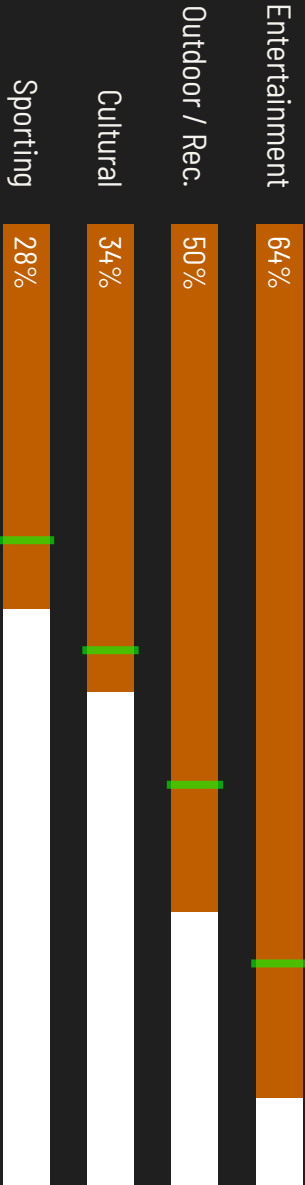
Sources: AEG Americans for the Arts

TURN ON INVESTMENT & IMPACT

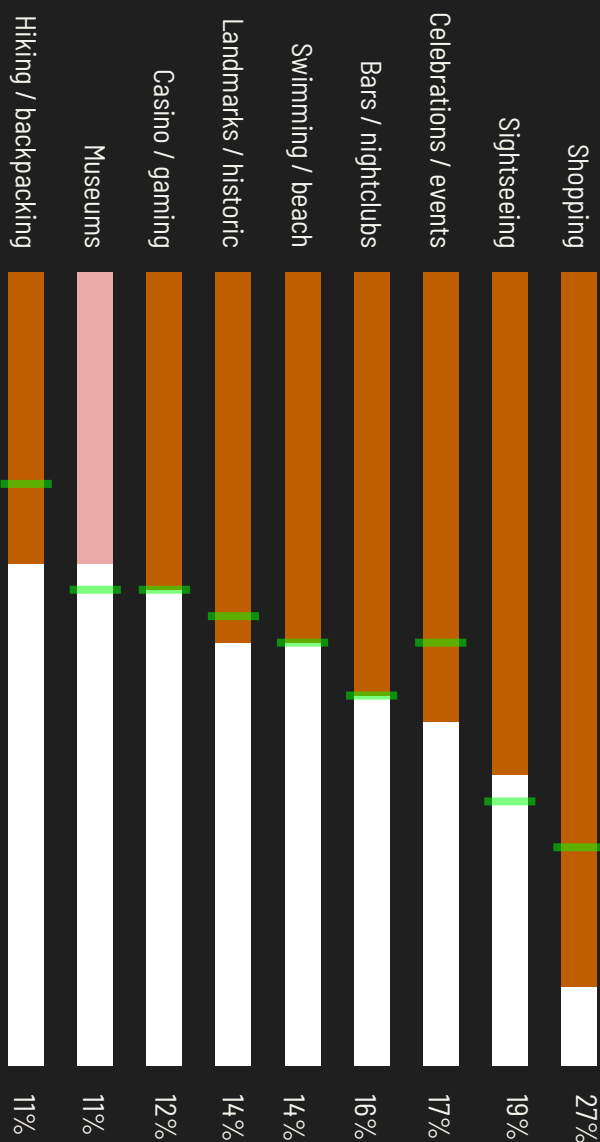
The Valley tourist is active, engaged, and spending money on a variety of offerings. The future AZMNH is positioned to drive a greater share of this spending to Mesa.

WHAT THEY DO

ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION (Valley vs U.S. NORM)



TOP ACTIVITIES (Valley vs U.S. NORM)



Orange Bar = Phoenix Valley Participation
Green Line = U.S. Norm

HOW THEY SPEND

\$170 /day

3.4 Nights Avg. =
~\$578 per trip

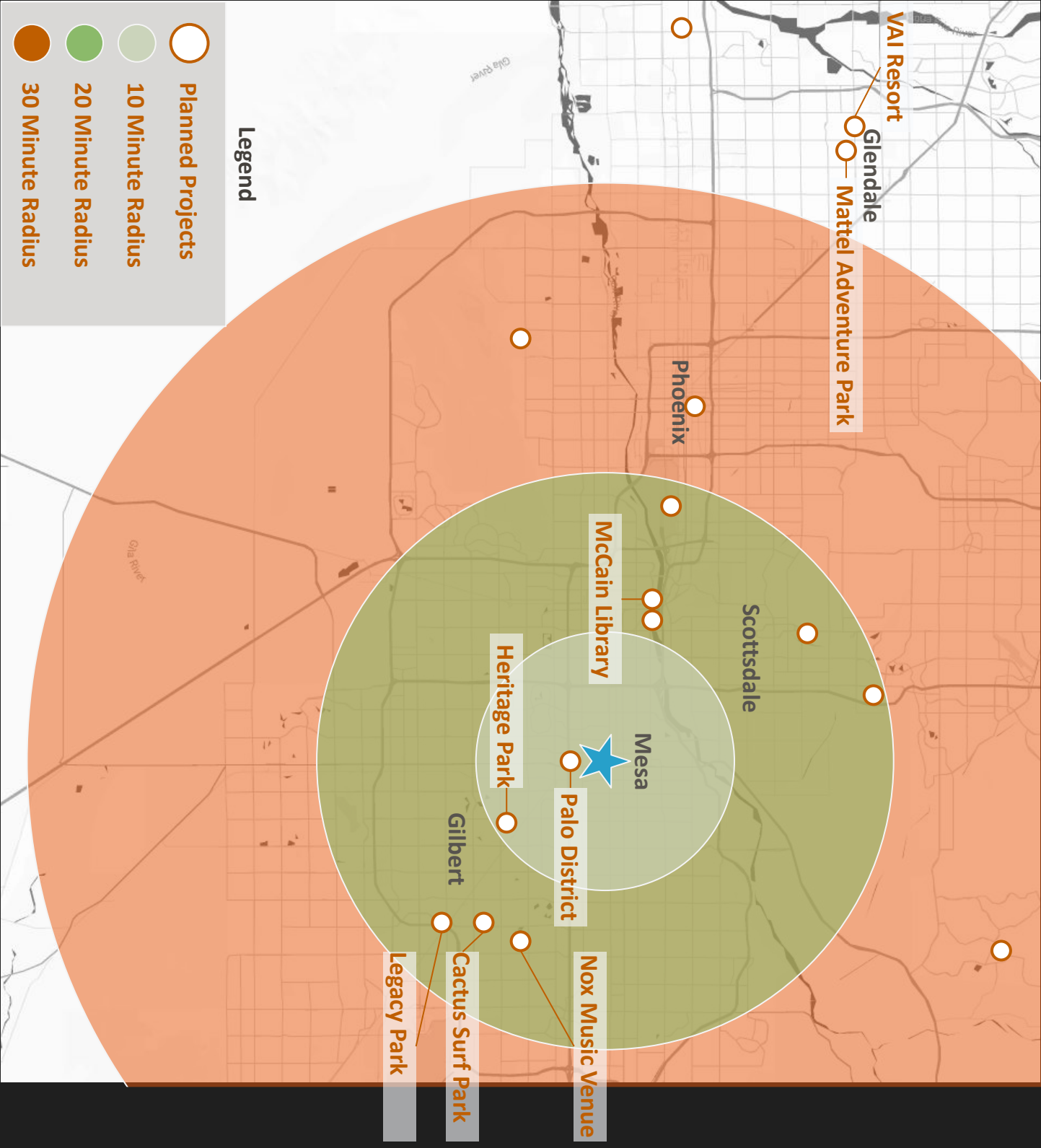
Lodging	\$59	34.5%
Food & Beverage	\$45	26.6%
Retail & Shopping	\$27	15.8%
Transportation	\$24	14.2%
Entertainment	\$15	8.9%

Sources: Arizona Office of Tourism; Longwoods International Travel USA; VisitPhoenix; VisitMesa

Over \$8B in experience investment is reshaping the Valley, proving the demand and ROI of the experiential economy.

Mesa’s downtown is missing the anchor attraction that turns pass-through visitors into overnight guests.

- The future AZMNH will drive new tourism to Mesa while keeping existing tourist dollars in Mesa longer.
- Cultural tourists spend 38% more per day and stay 22% longer than average travelers.



Sources: *Phoenix Business Journal*

Leveraging the Valley’s STEM Economy delivers on both Return on Investment and Return on Impact.

The Valley’s STEM Economy

\$300B+ Announced STEM capital investment since 2020 across semiconductor, data center, aerospace, biotech, and advanced manufacturing

#1 U.S. metro for semiconductor expansion investment; 35 manufacturers and 181 suppliers in the Phoenix ecosystem (CBRE 2025)

\$34B Projected new STEM-sector jobs across committed projects, at an average wage of \$95,928 (ACA FY2025)

212k+ New investment committed in FY2025 alone, setting a new annual record for the state (Arizona Commerce Authority)

\$24.2B Mesa’s active economic development pipeline alone: 202 projects, 39,319 jobs across semiconductor, aerospace, biotech, and manufacturing

AZMNH sits at the center of the fastest-growing STEM economy in the country and has barely scratched the surface of its strategic partnership potential.

Sources: *Phoenix Business Journal*

Case Study — Weiss Energy Hall

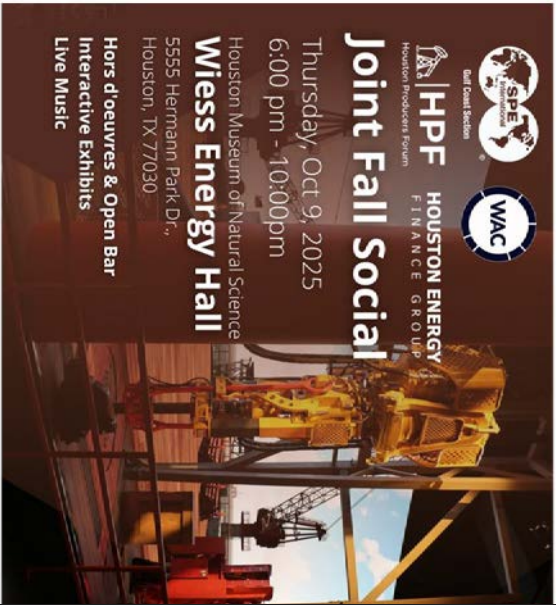
HMNS anchors a museum district where cultural investment drives private investment into residential, commercial, and hospitality developments across the district.

Project Facts

- \$40M Project Budget | \$1,335 per Sq Ft
- 30,000 Sq Ft Exhibit Expansion
- Funding from virtually every Houston-based energy company, 35+ in total including ExxonMobil, Chevron, Shell, and ConocoPhillips

Partnership Outcomes

- Careers in Energy — sponsored by Simmons & Company; interactive career aptitude quiz showing salary, growth, and job availability
- Corporate programs & industry events — energy companies fund workforce development programs, sustainability workshops, and host networking events in the hall
- STEM grants — Kinder Morgan: \$100K/yr x 5 years for underserved youth education



2026 Networking Reception

Thinking of becoming an HPF member, join our Fall Networking Reception & Membership Drive. Existing members are encouraged to participate and bring a friend!

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 | 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Petroleum Club of Houston

1201 Louisiana Street,

Houston, TX 77002

Registration Fee: \$15.00 Per Person

REGISTER NOW

COCKTAILS • LIGHT HORS D'OEUVRES • PRIZES

HOUSTON PRODUCERS' FORUM

G&A

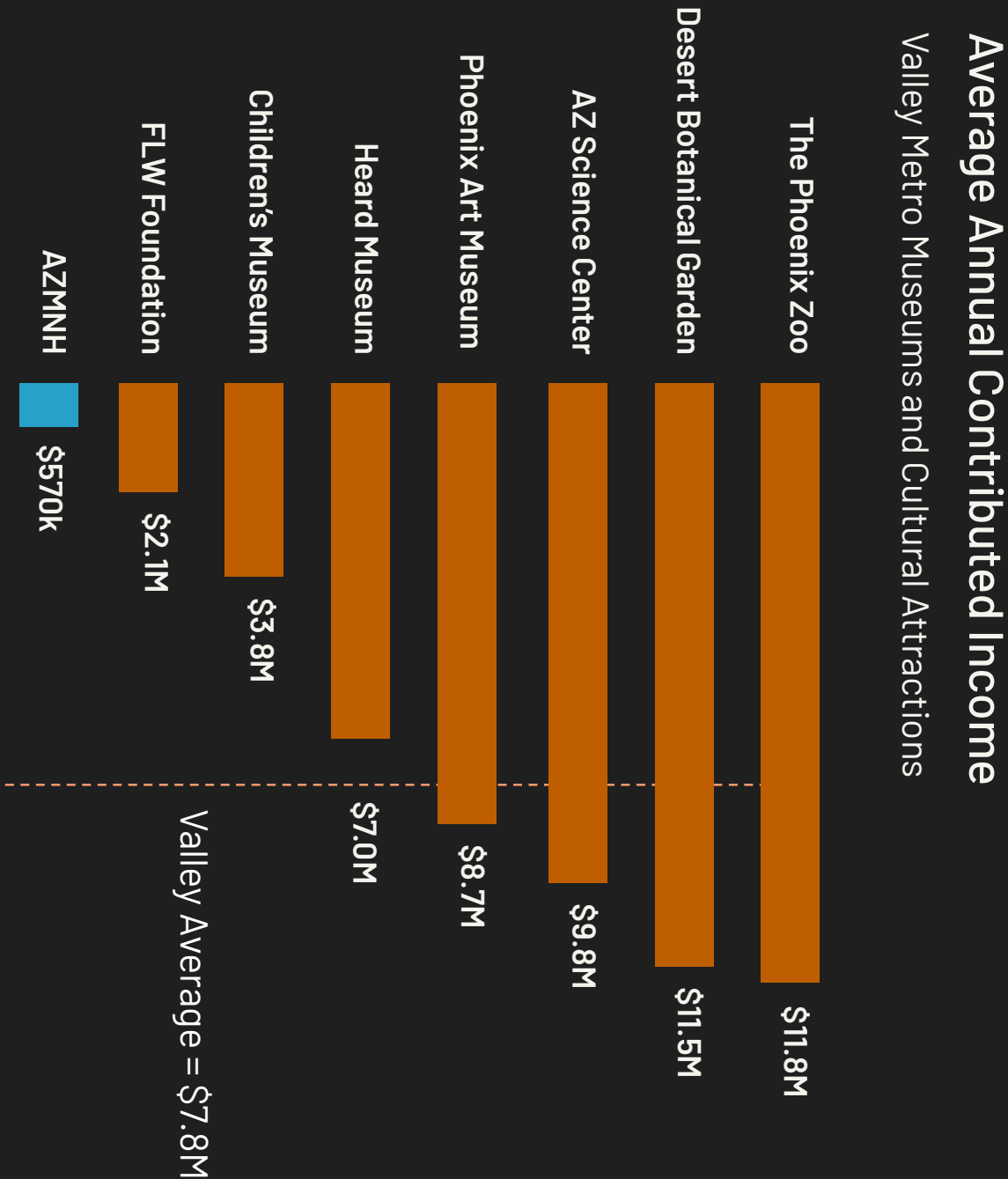
benefactor

AZMNH | Mesa City Council Presentation | May 7, 2026

25

AZMNH operates with virtually no philanthropic support, leaving one of the largest revenue sources in the museum industry untapped.

Without contributed income, AZMNH is overly reliant on admissions and city funding, suppressing both its financial performance and its impact potential.



Sources: City of Mesa; Tax Form 990 from FY22, FY23, and FY24

TURN ON INVESTMENT & IMPACT

How Investing in AZMNH elevates all of Mesa



ECONOMIC ACTIVATOR

New Demand Pushed Outward

Fills gaps in Mesas market and pushes new visitation outward to Main Street, dining, and nightlife.

- 500-person wedding releases guests onto Main Street nightlife at 10pm
- Private event spaces serving 50-1,100 – capacities that don't currently exist downtown
- Museum F&B and retail fill market gaps, not duplicating existing Mesa businesses



CATALYST FOR INVESTMENT

Drive new private investment for Mesa

A world-class museum is the anchor that attracts private investment in hotel, retail, and restaurants.

- Public-private partnerships allow the city to promote development and enable the private sector to flourish
- The MAC is a proven case study: a public anchor that unlocked 20 years of surrounding private investment



TOURISM MULTIPLIER

Half-Day to Full-Day to Overnight

Co-located hotel and conference infrastructure extend visits and create new overnight stays.

- Morning: museum → afternoon: Main Street dining and shopping → evening: nightlife & hotel stay
- New hotel makes Mesa a stronger, greater sell to larger potential conventions and AZMNH provides the experience space for off-site events and leisure time
- Allows for multi-day citizen science programs and conferences the current building can't host



COMPETITIVE POSITIONING

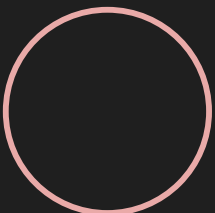
Mesa's Moment

Competitors are actively investing in this space — Mesas advantage is now, not later.

- Cultural and attraction investment in the Valley is as competitive as it has ever been
- The Valley cultural tourist is active and outgoing, but requires delivering a visitor experience
- Mesa becomes the only Valley city synonymous with the Sonoran Desert ecosystem

3

Community Engagement



**How do we understand
community needs and
motivations?**

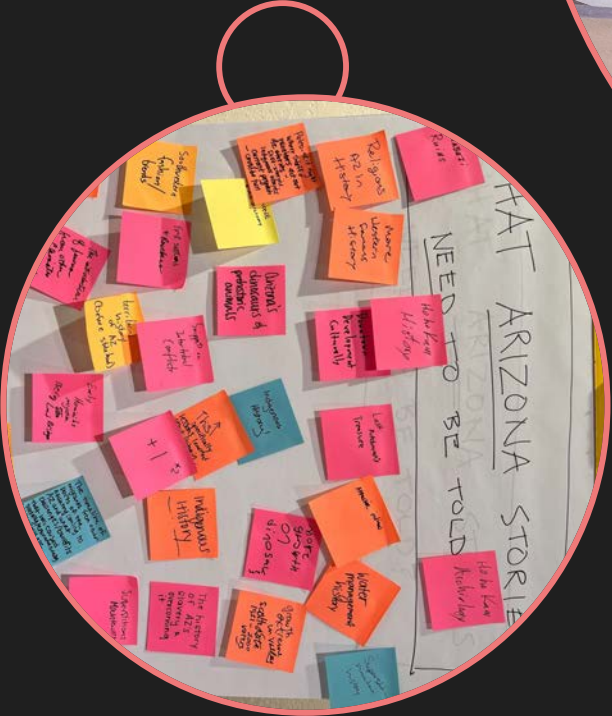
Community Engagement

Building on the Master Plan, this phase of work engaged 650 people through two surveys and one in-person event.

Outcomes of these engagements are supported by extensive market research and data-informed projections.

Outcomes reveal:

- AZMNH is highly valued by a strong, loyal audience.
- Visitors want more adult-focused programming while maintaining appeal for children.
- There is a strong desire to preserve the museum’s unique, beloved features: dinosaurs!
- At the same time, audiences support facility upgrades and new amenities.
- Cost of living concerns highlight the need to shape the project to maximize positive economic impact.



Two Surveys

518 responses indicate a strong and loyal audience base for AZMNH, reinforcing its reputation as a beloved institution. Visitors want to retain its distinctive character while recognizing the need for change and renewal.

Respondents are **avid and enthusiastic museum-goers** in a region where attendance at cultural institutions is lower than average.

Visitors feel that once they've seen everything the museum has to offer, there is little reason to return, **supporting the need for additional space for temporary exhibitions and the development of permanent exhibits designed to reward repeat visitation.**

Respondents prioritized the need to **appeal to children** while also expressing **desire for programming and experiences targeted to adults**, something they feel is currently lacking.

Visitors expressed strong interest in **preserving AZMNH's unique character** (and especially its dinosaurs) and were concerned that beloved features would be eliminated.

At the same time, respondents expressed **desire for new amenities and upgraded facilities**, recognizing the need for renewal.

Respondents want **stronger representation of Arizona's regional character** and expressed a desire for **deeper collaboration with and representation of local Indigenous groups.**

The survey highlighted the need for **targeted outreach to key audiences in future phases, specifically children, educators, out-of-state visitors, and Hispanic residents.**

In-Person Event

Visitors had clear preferences when it came to selecting among the images of other museums and exhibitions. The most popular images involved immersive, multisensory, and playful spaces involving movement and tactility (and, of course, dinosaurs).



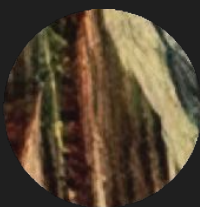
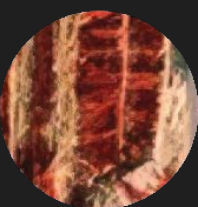
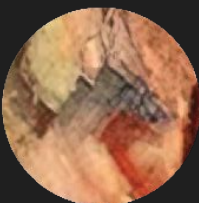


Focus on Future Audiences

While AZMNH has a strong local following today, we're building for tomorrow. The region is growing rapidly, museums are evolving, and AZMNH must position itself as a forward-thinking institution ready to serve the future generations of the region.

Preserve Uniquely Mesa

The museum will draw visitors from around the world while maintaining a distinctly local flavor—capturing Mesa's character and quirks while addressing global questions through a uniquely Arizona perspective.



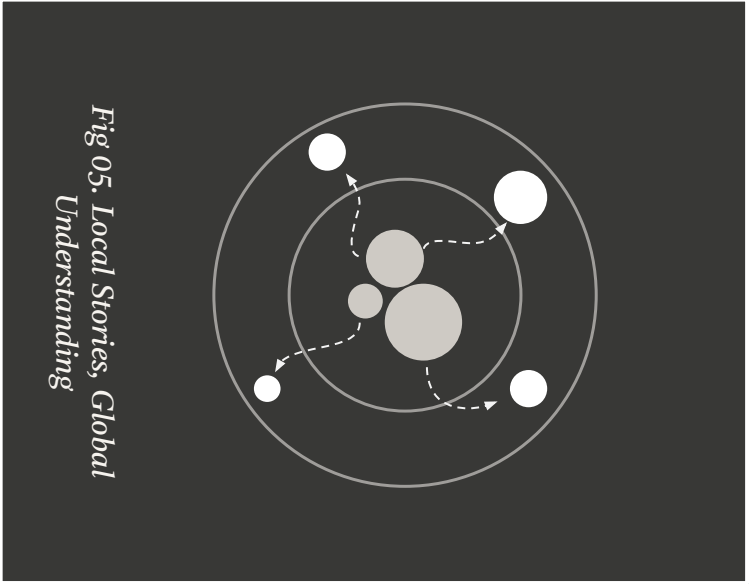
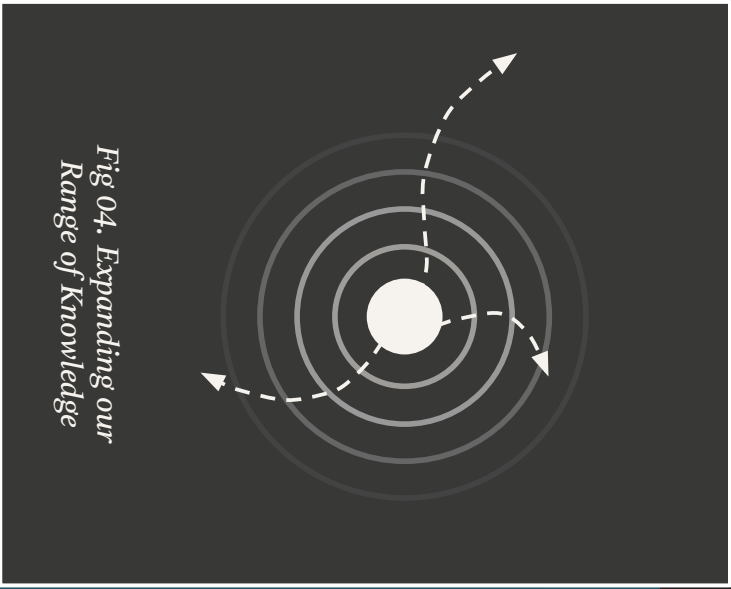
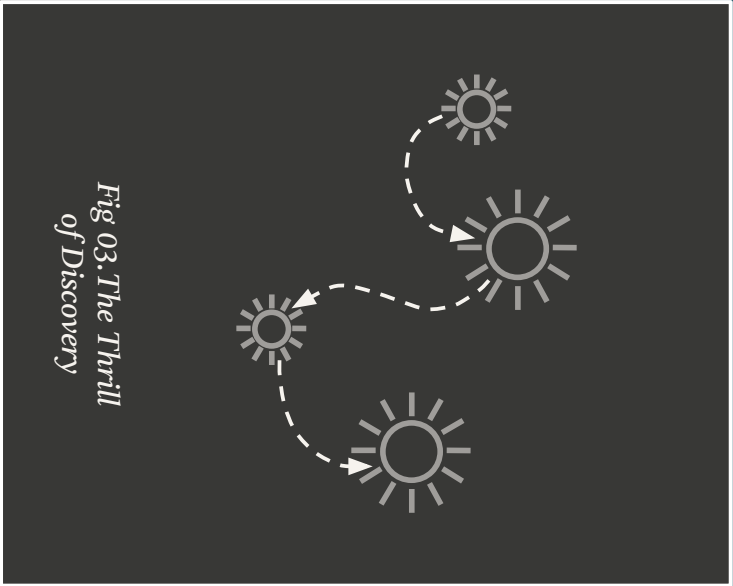
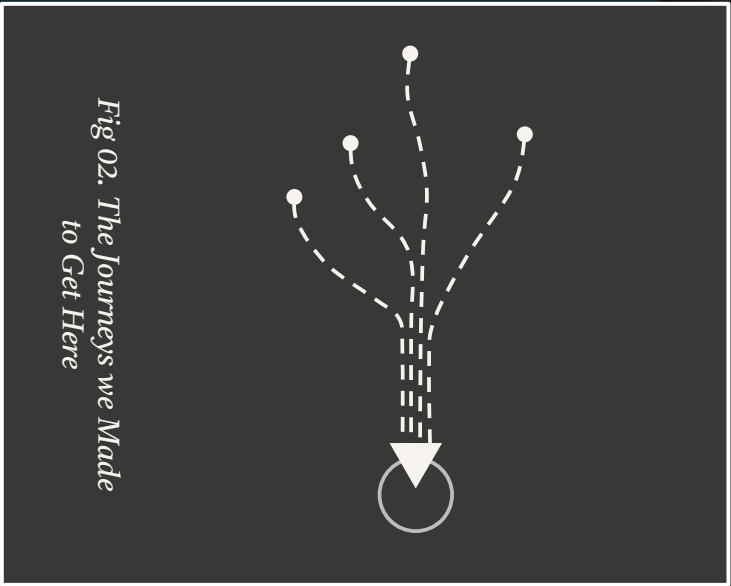
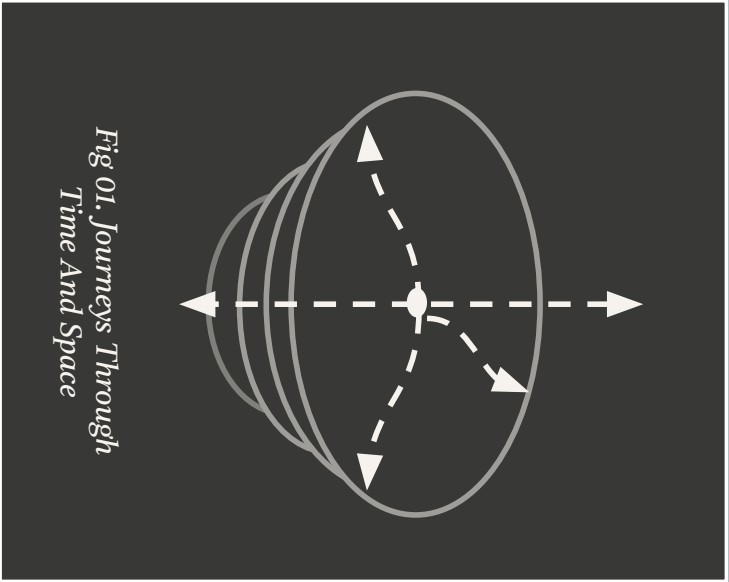
Architecture & Experience Design

What is possible for
the Arizona Museum
of Natural History?

This is not a typical museum.

This project is being shaped by a unique partnership between architecture, storytelling and exhibition design, generating a one-of-a-kind holistic museum experience.





Architecture + Experience Design + Storytelling

Journeys of Discovery

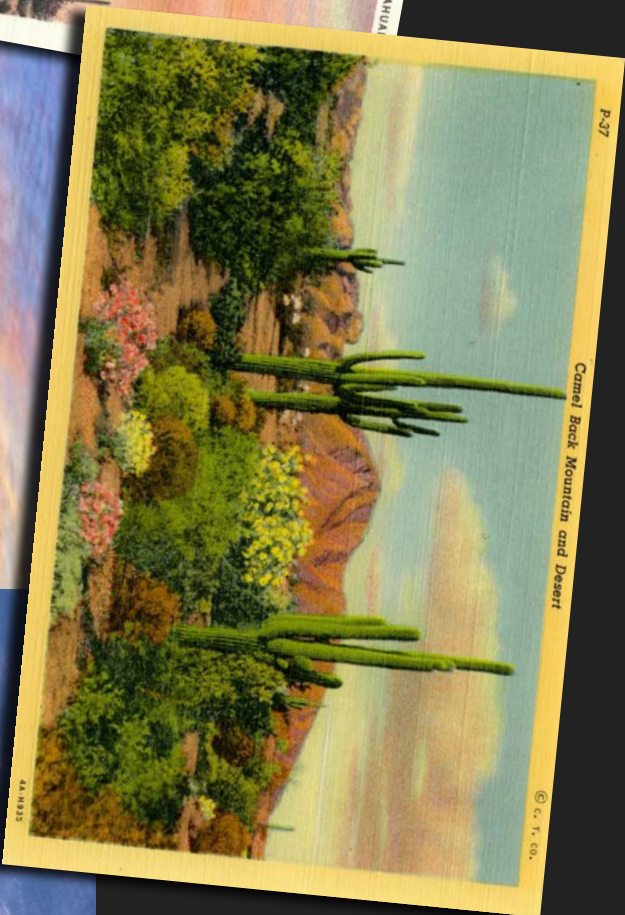
Past, Present and Future

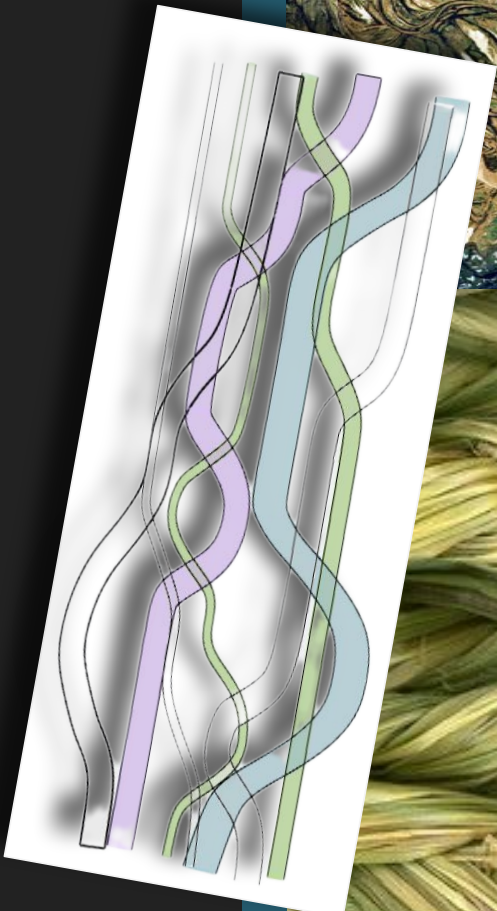
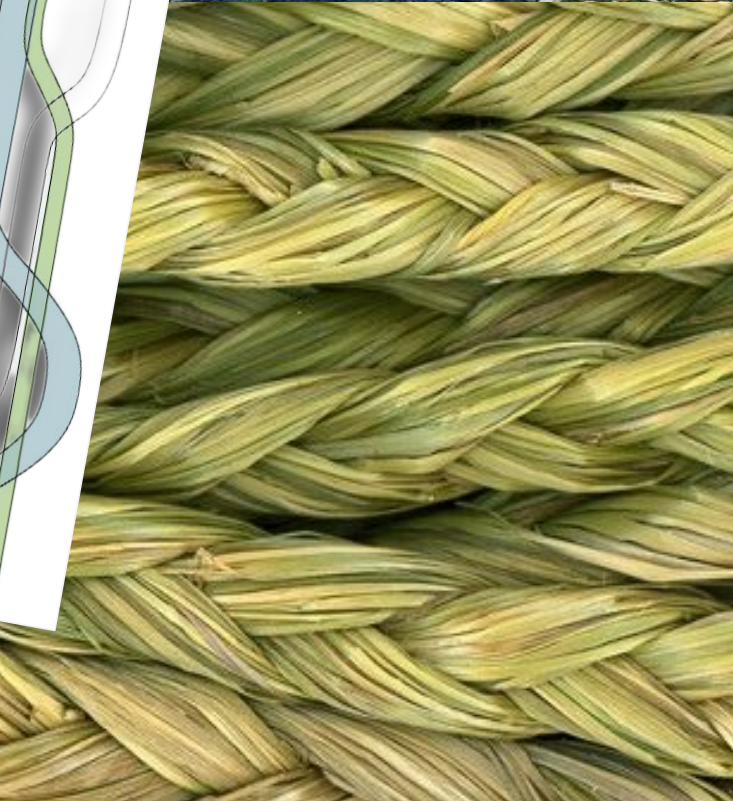
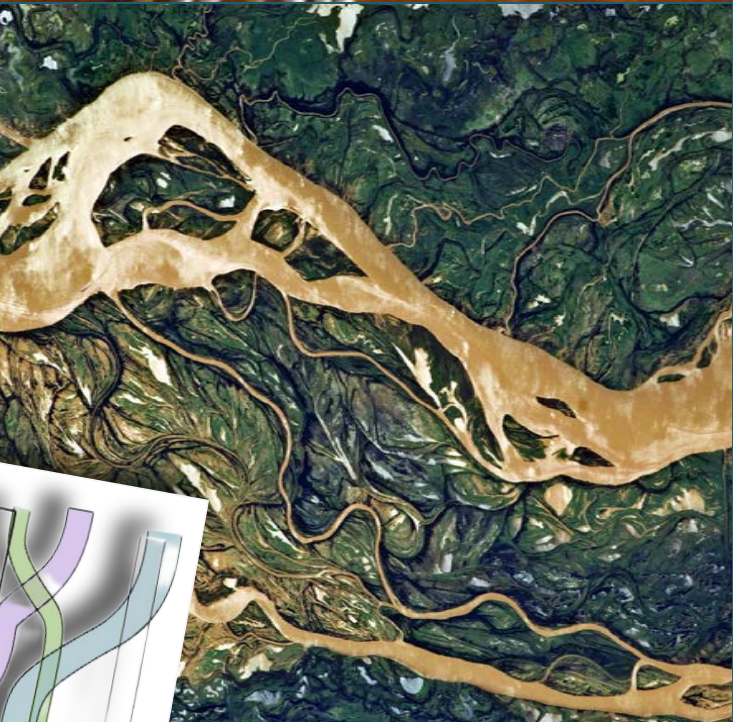
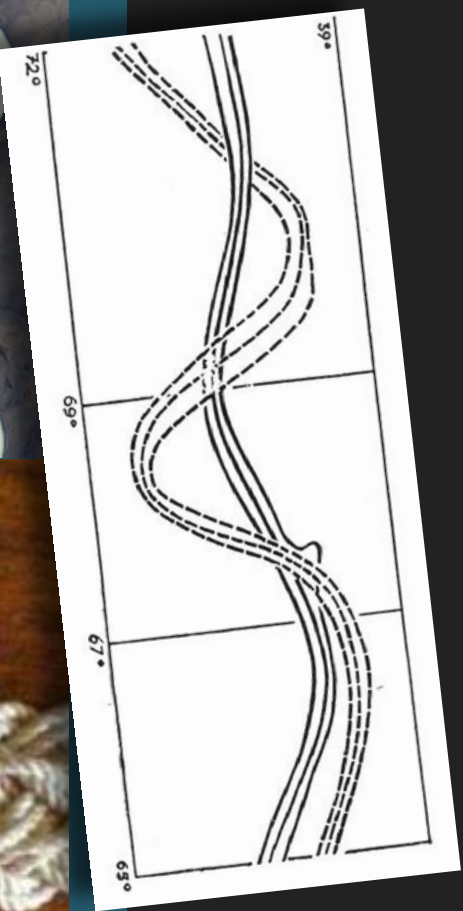
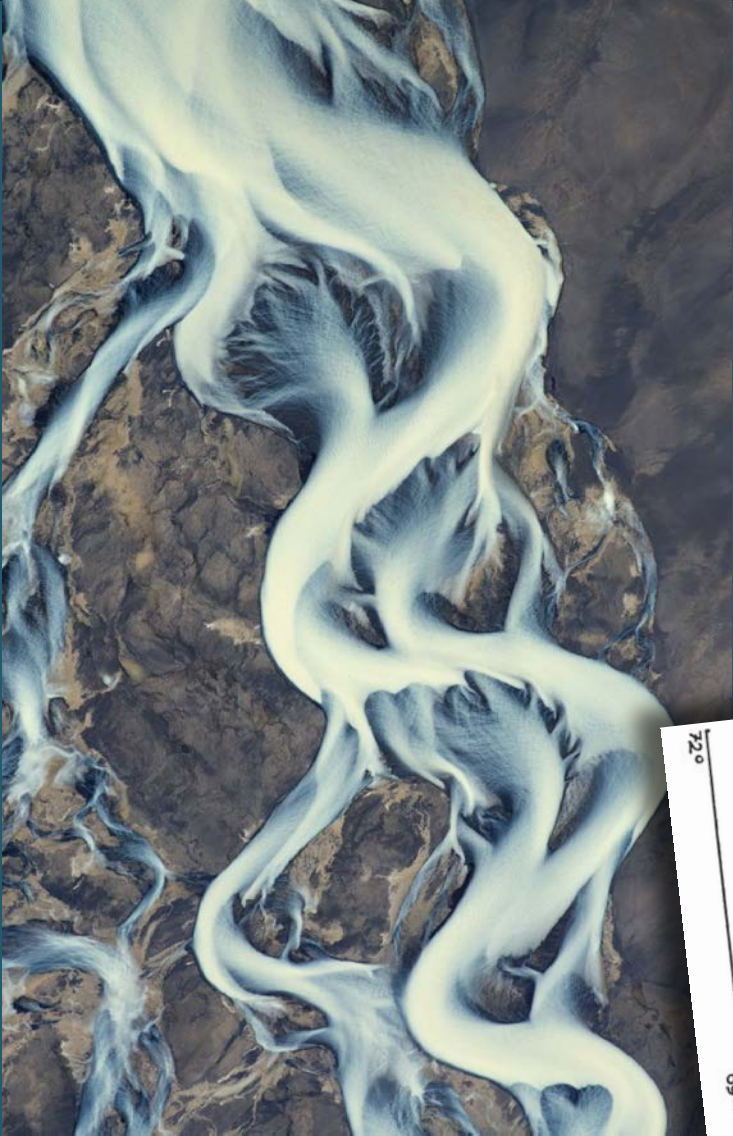


Architecture + Experience Design + Storytelling

Inspired by Arizona

Past, Present and Future





Storytelling

Braided Rivers

Journeys of Discovery

Along Pathways of Interconnected Themes

Braided Rivers: Intersecting Themes

The storytelling of the new AZMNH is built around four cross-cutting themes that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries. Rather than organizing the museum by subject alone, this approach makes each topic more accessible and approachable, while emphasizing the deep connections between them, reflecting the fundamental truth that the earth, life, and human culture are inextricably intertwined.

Main themes

- **Cosmos:** Our place in the universe, and how forces beyond our planet have shaped life on Earth
- **Earth:** How our planet has transformed over billions of years, forging the conditions that made life possible
- **Life:** The evolution, behavior, and remarkable adaptability of living things across the history of Earth
- **People:** The evolution, migration, and diversity of cultures and beliefs that define our human story



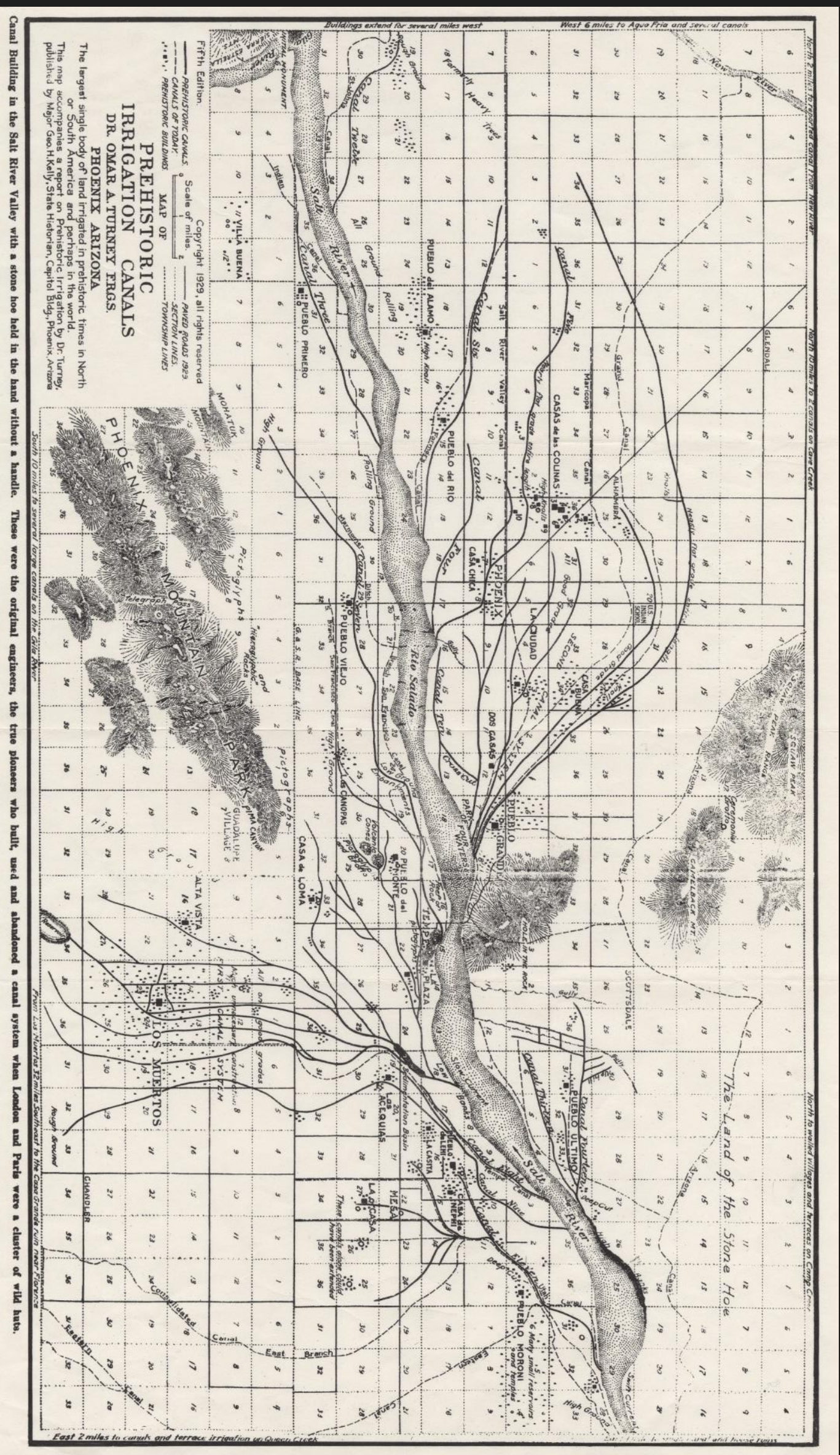
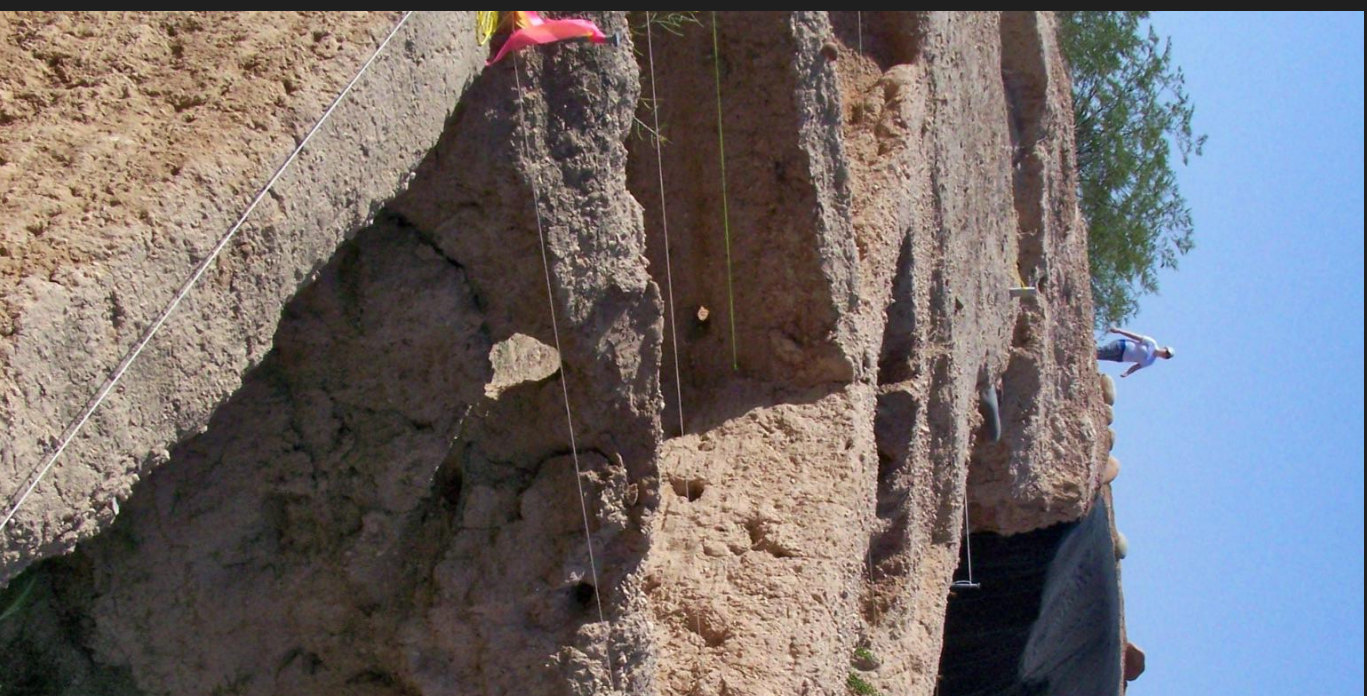
CHITECTURE & EXPERIENCE DESIGN

Architecture inspired by Place

geology and time



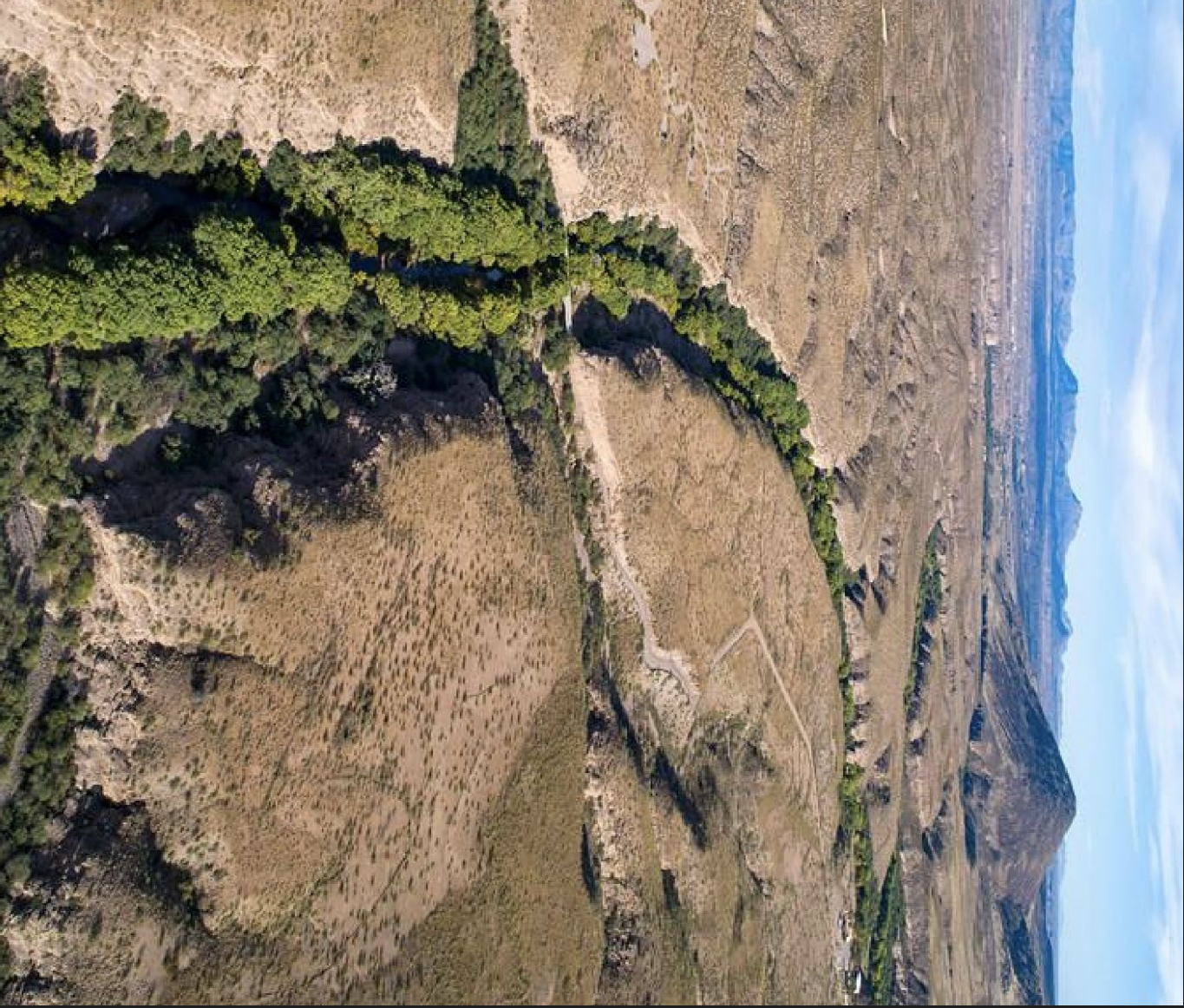
learning from the wisdom of those who lived here before us



Architecture inspired by *Place* stewards of our most precious resource



Architecture inspired by *Place* natural building materials and landscape



Architecture inspired by *Place* Indoor - outdoor spaces and vertical ascension through time



Architecture inspired by *Place* natural respite from the sun - and uniquely mesa





Photo credit: Alan Stark

At AZMNH, your Journey of Discovery starts HERE ...

... at this museum, here in Mesa, within the unique ecosystem of the Salt and Gila River watersheds, a particular desert river valley which is home to a diverse array of life and a long history of human habitation.



Your Journey of Discovery starts NOW ...

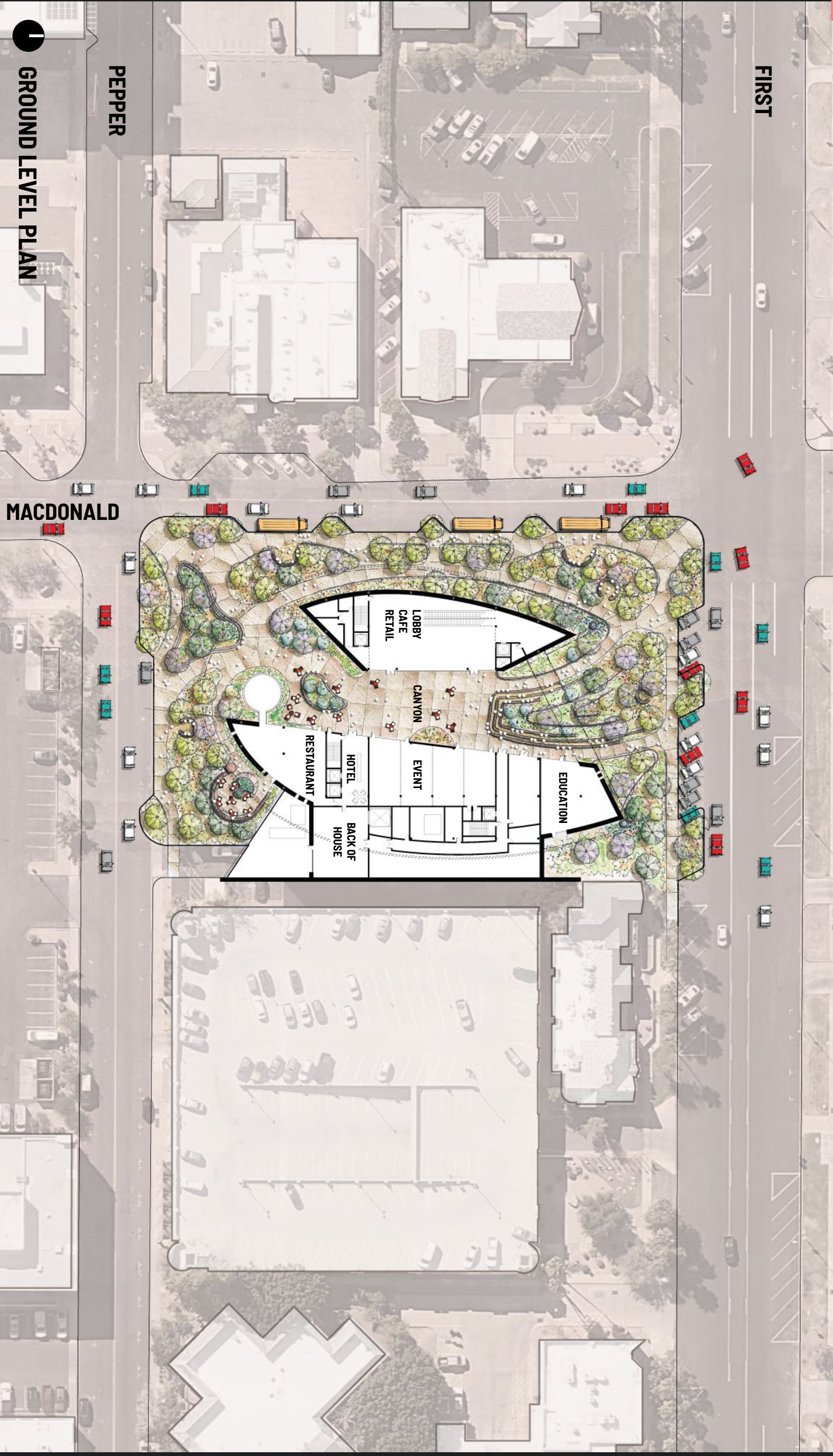
... in this historical moment of rapid change, shaped by the deep geological and ecological history of this place, a long and ongoing history of human culture and interaction with this environment, and by the choices we continue to make every day for our shared future.

FIRST

PEPPER

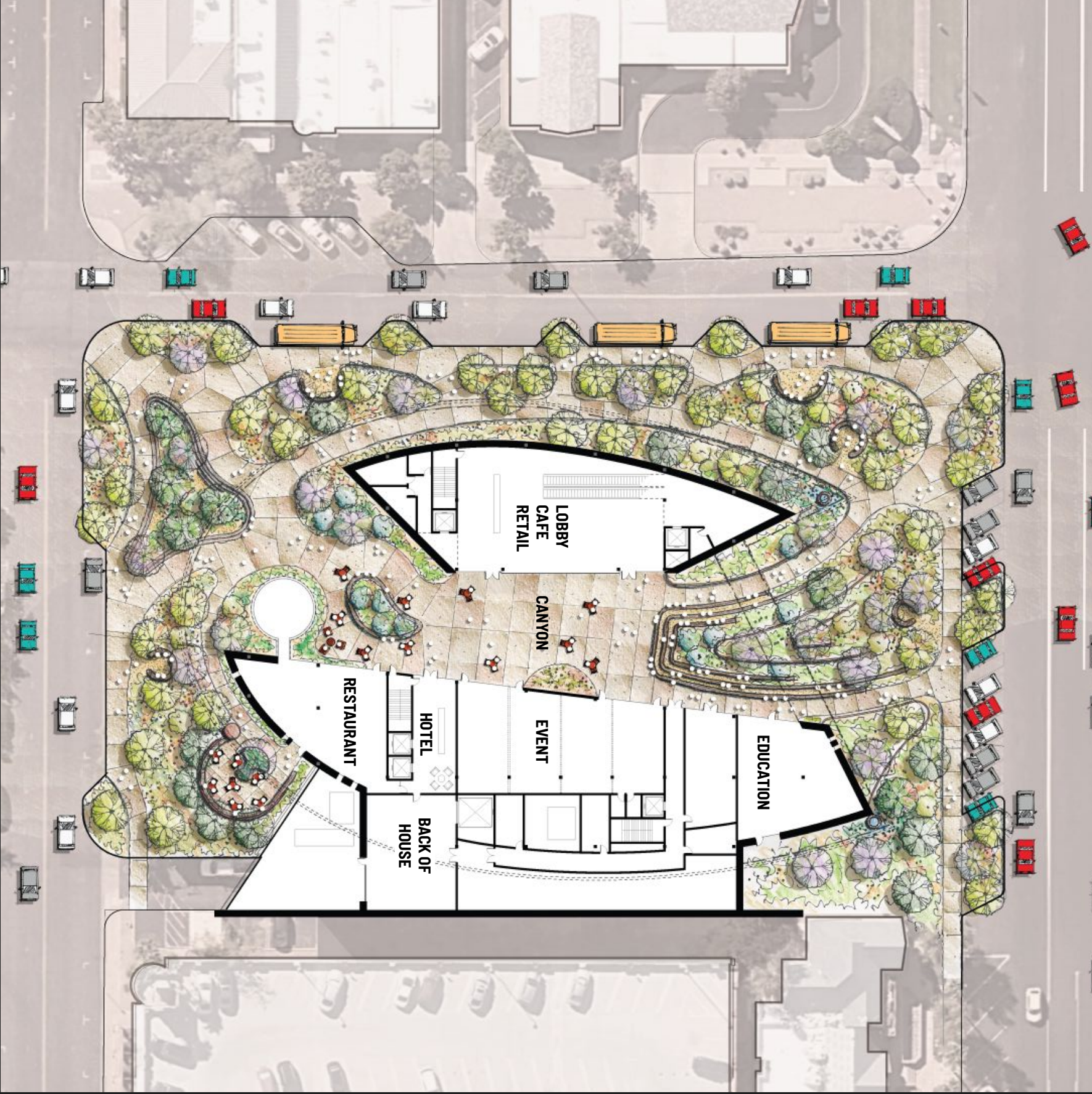
MACDONALD

GROUND LEVEL PLAN



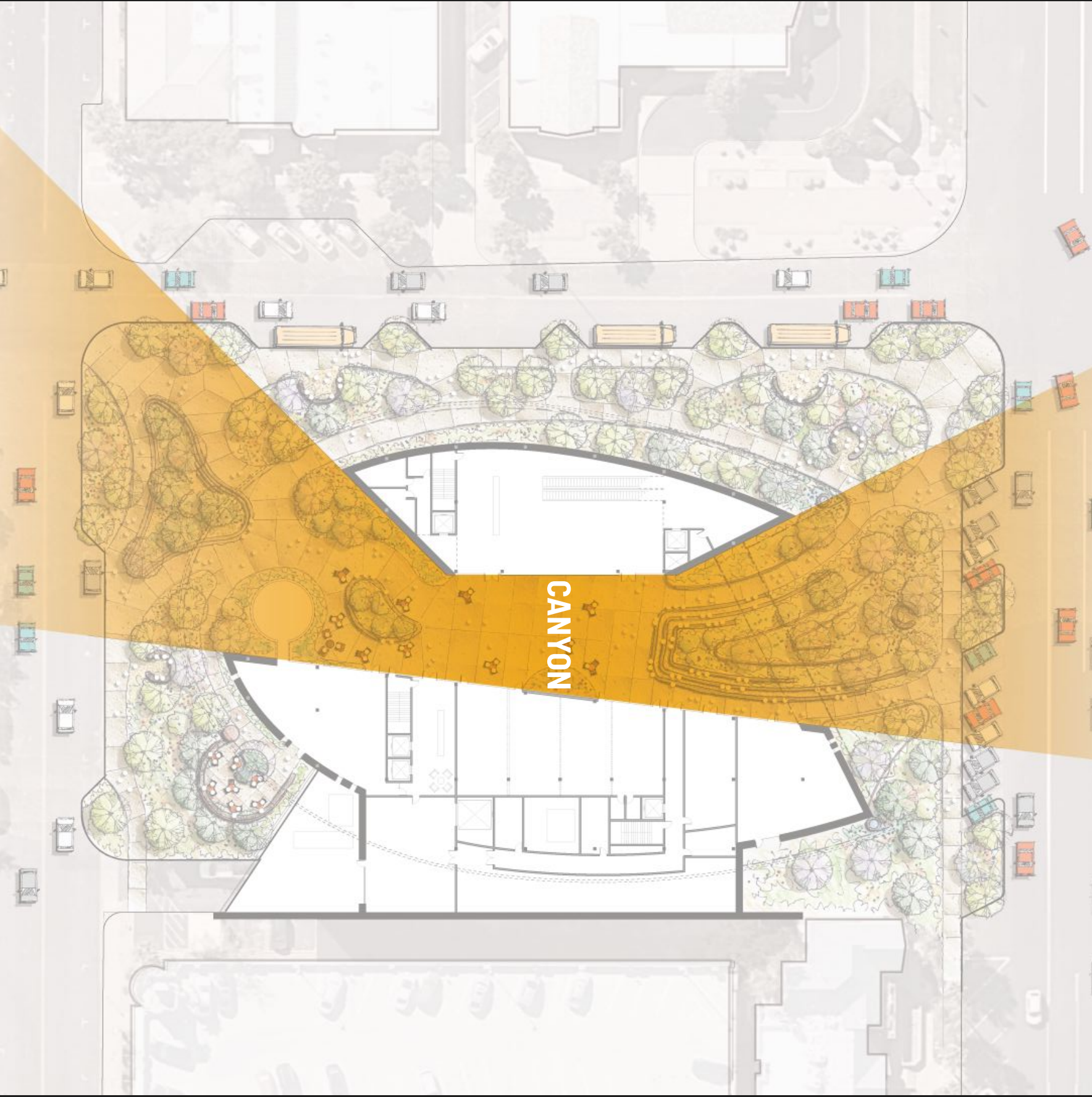
Desert Landscape

- Retention Gardens
- Shaded Gathering Spaces



Desert Landscape

- Retention Gardens
 - Shaded Gathering Spaces
- ## Canyon & Public Realm
- Shaded Outdoor Space
 - Open to the Public



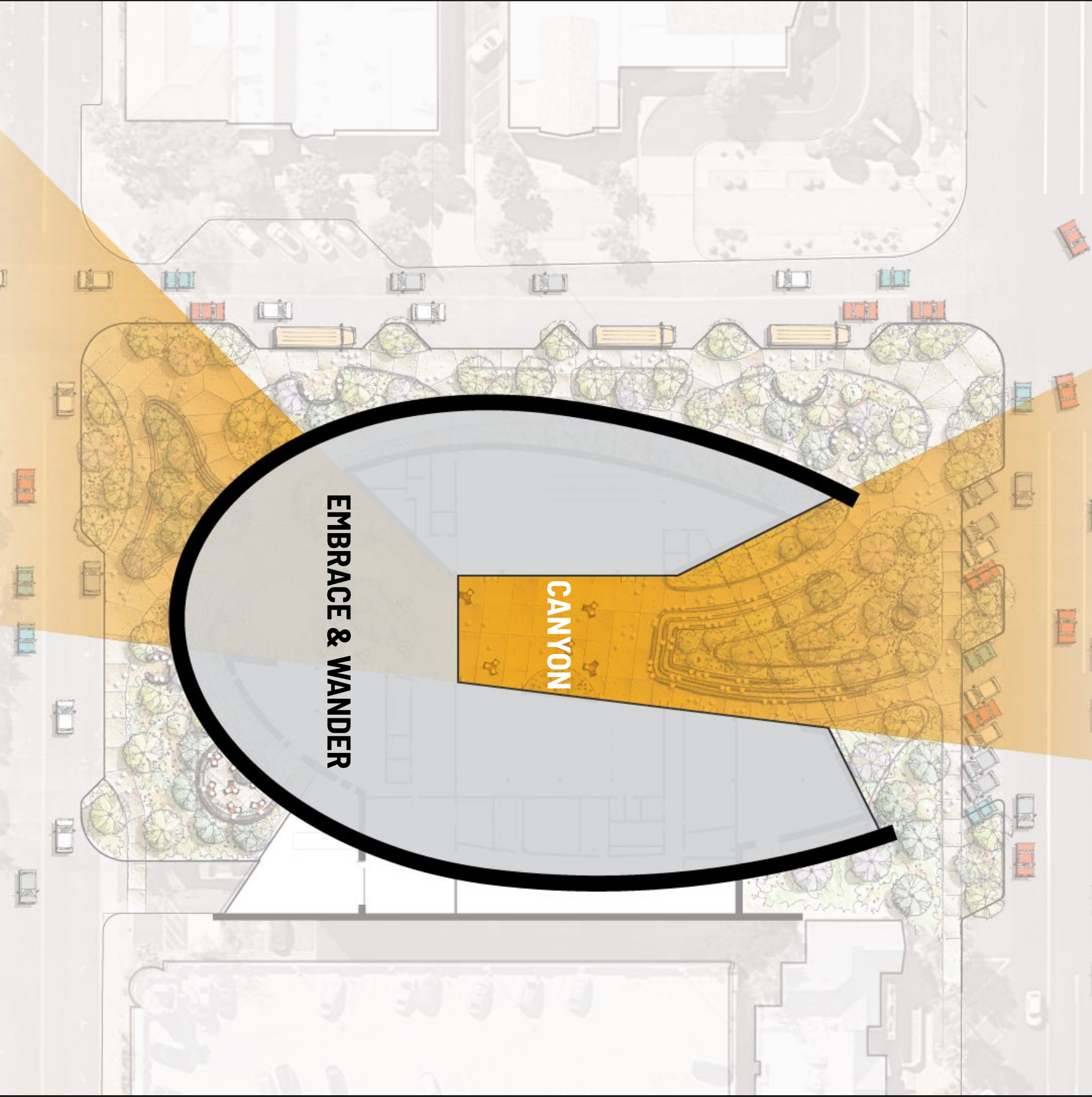
Desert Landscape

- *Retention Gardens*
- *Shaded Gathering Spaces*
- *Shaded Outdoor Space*
- *Open to the Public*

Canyon & Public Realm

- *Optimizing Daylight*
- *Thermal Performance*
- *Journey of Discovery*

Embrace & Wander



Desert Landscape

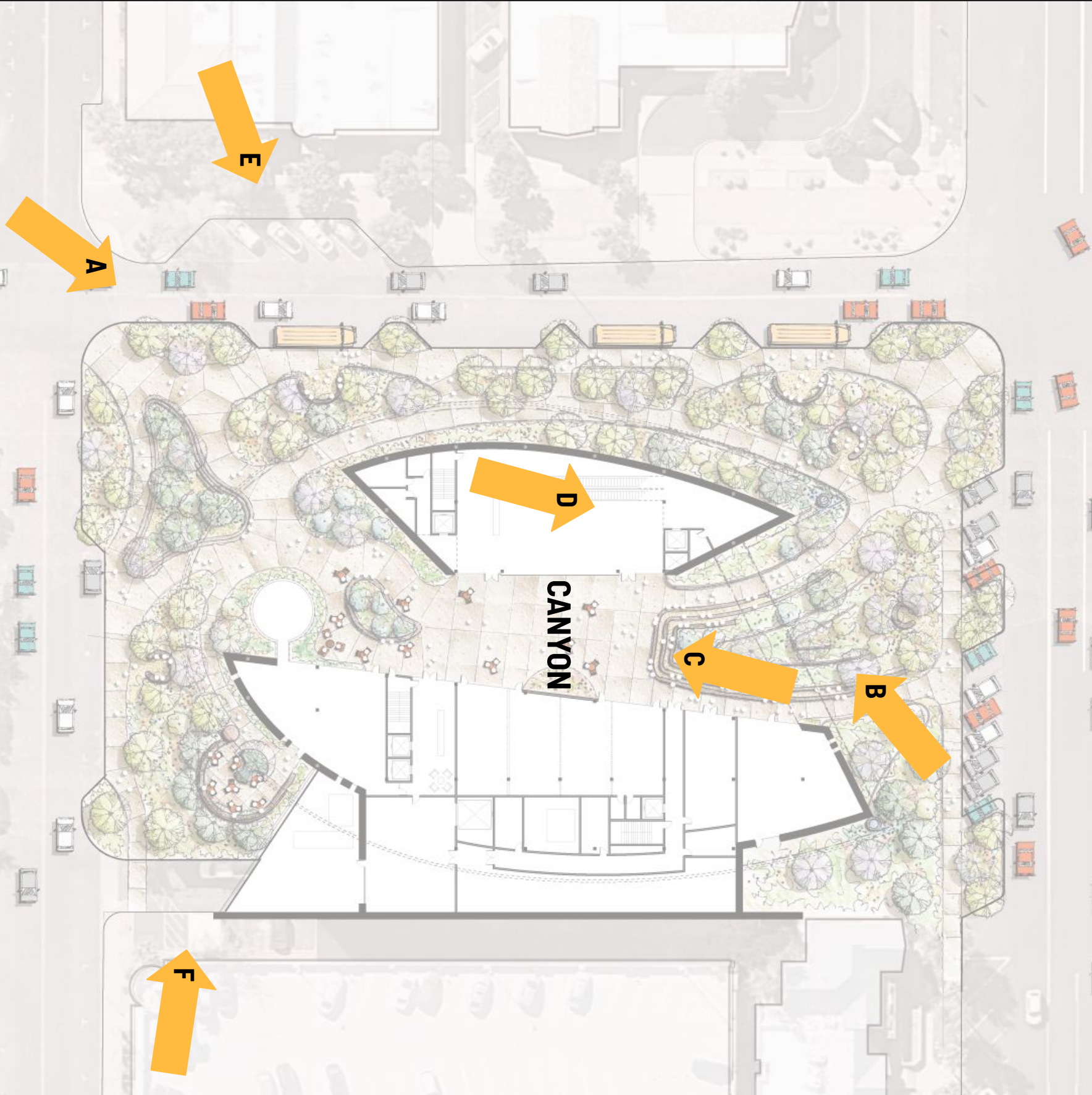
- Retention Gardens
- Shaded Gathering Spaces
- Shaded Outdoor Space
- Open to the Public

Canyon & Public Realm

- Optimizing Daylight
- Thermal Performance
- Journey of Discovery

Embrace & Wander

Views





A: STREET VIEW AT MACDONALD AND PEPPER

B: VIEW FROM FIRST - TOWARD CANYON





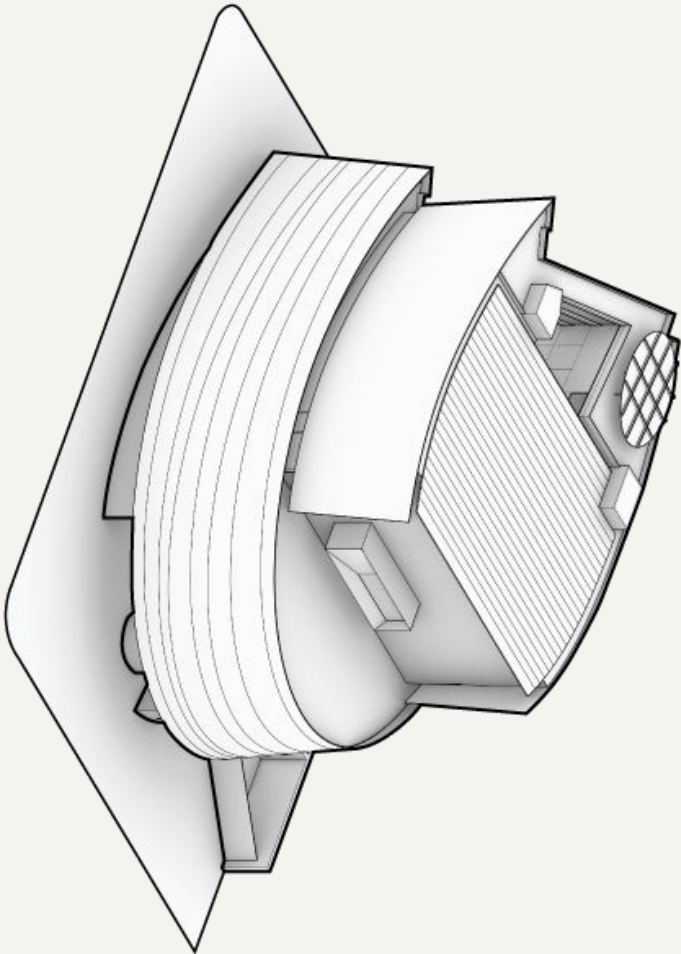
C: CANYON VIEW - LOOKING SOUTH



C: CANYON VIEW - LOOKING SOUTH

D: INTERIOR VIEW - GROUND FLOOR LOBBY

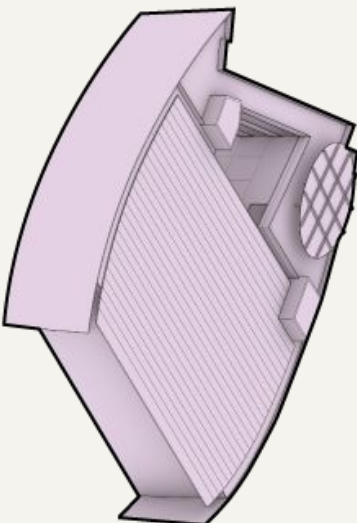




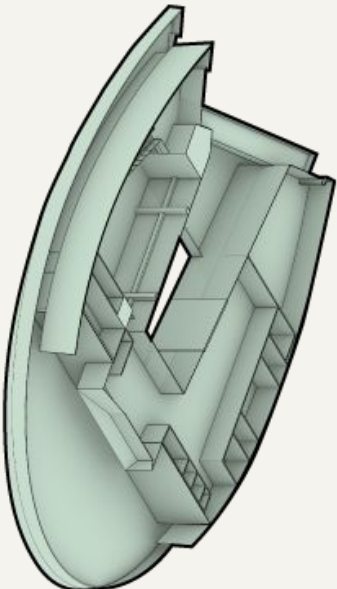
SW BUILDING AXON

CHITECTURE & EXPERIENCE DESIGN

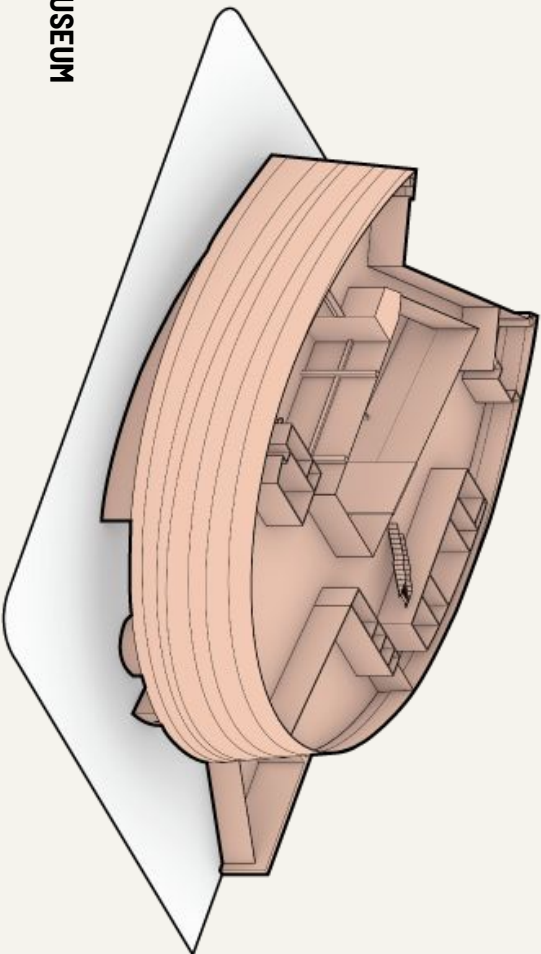
HOTEL



COMMONS



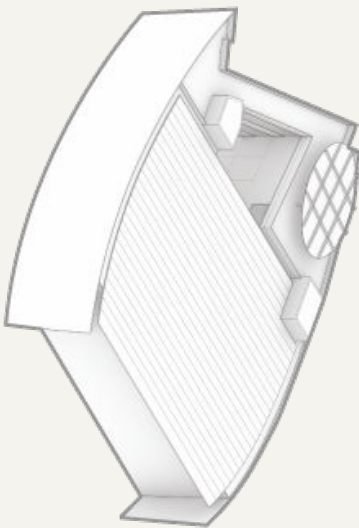
MUSEUM



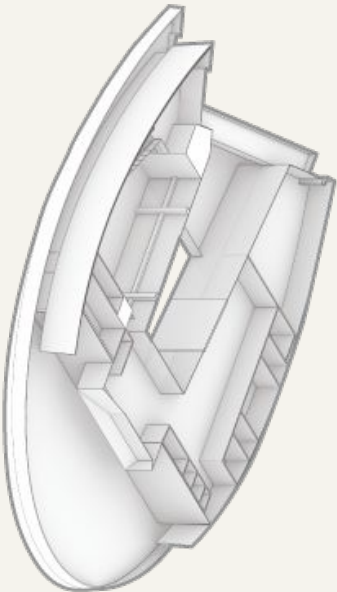
SW BUILDING AXON

CHITECTURE & EXPERIENCE DESIGN

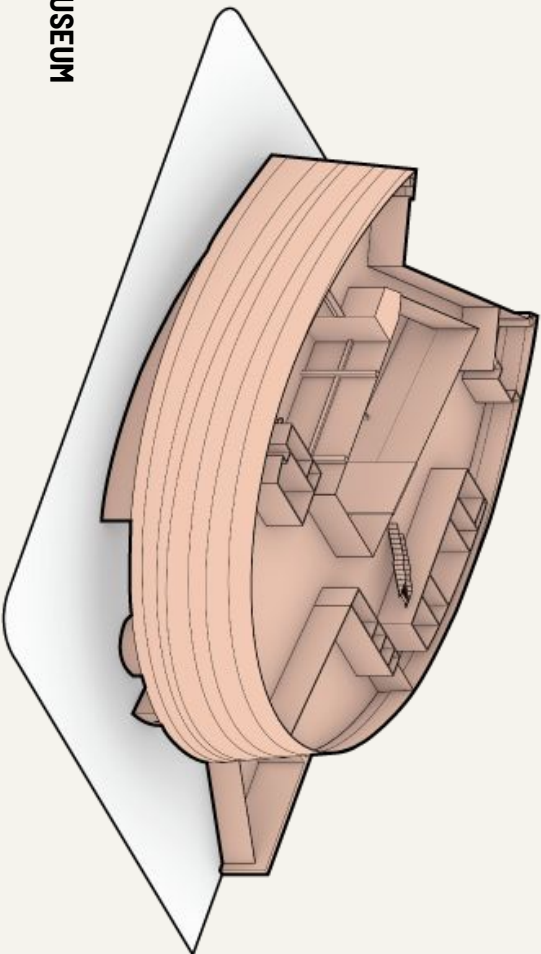
HOTEL



COMMONS

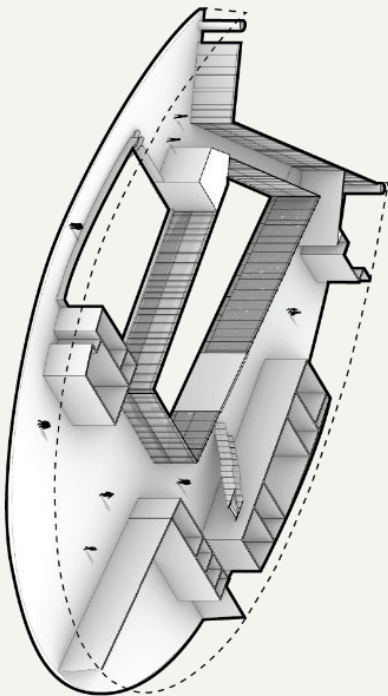


MUSEUM

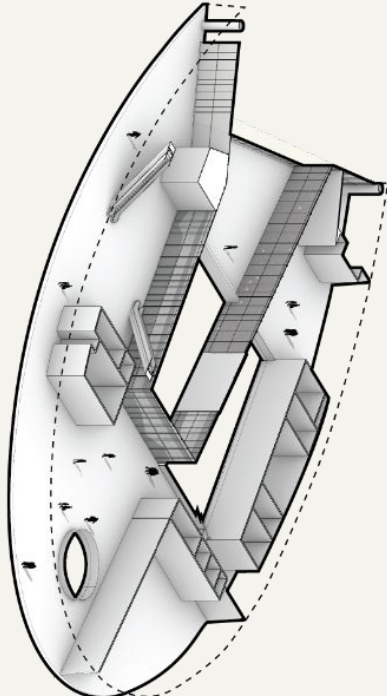


SW BUILDING AXON

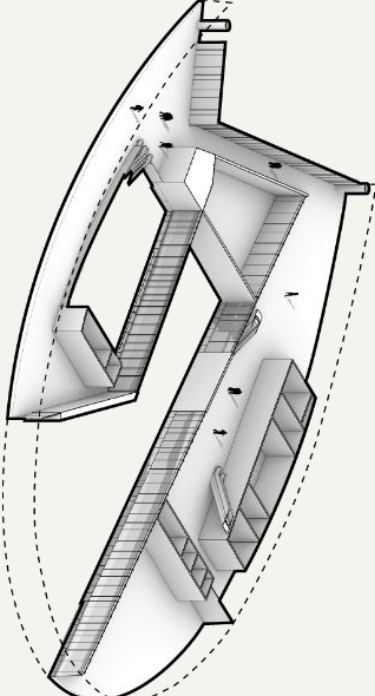
LEVEL 3



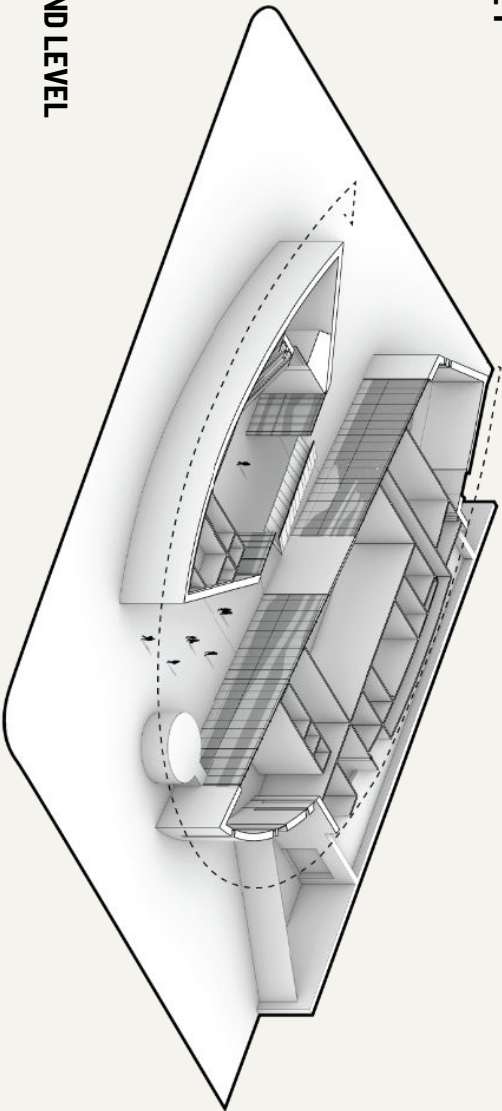
LEVEL 2



LEVEL 1

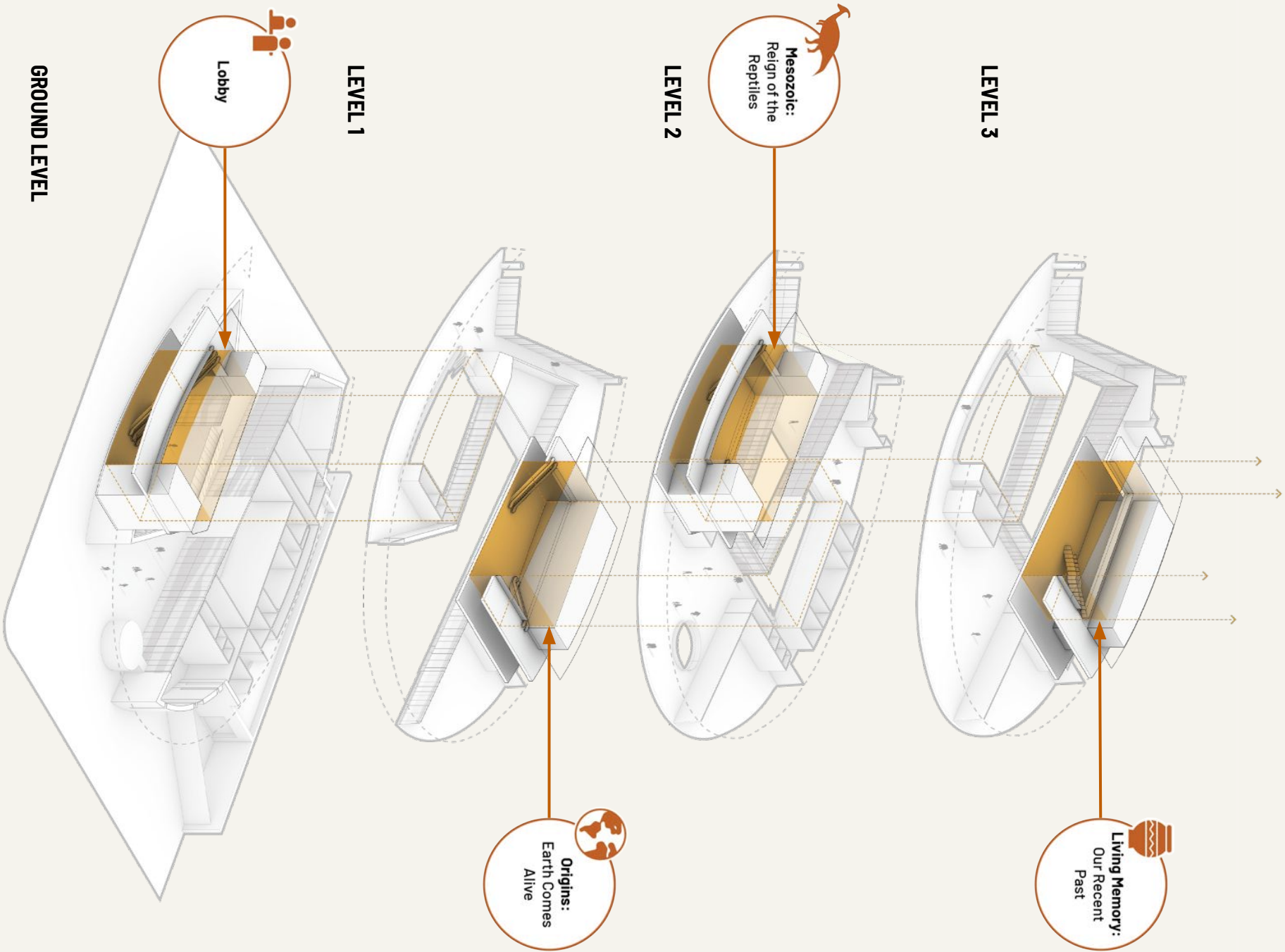
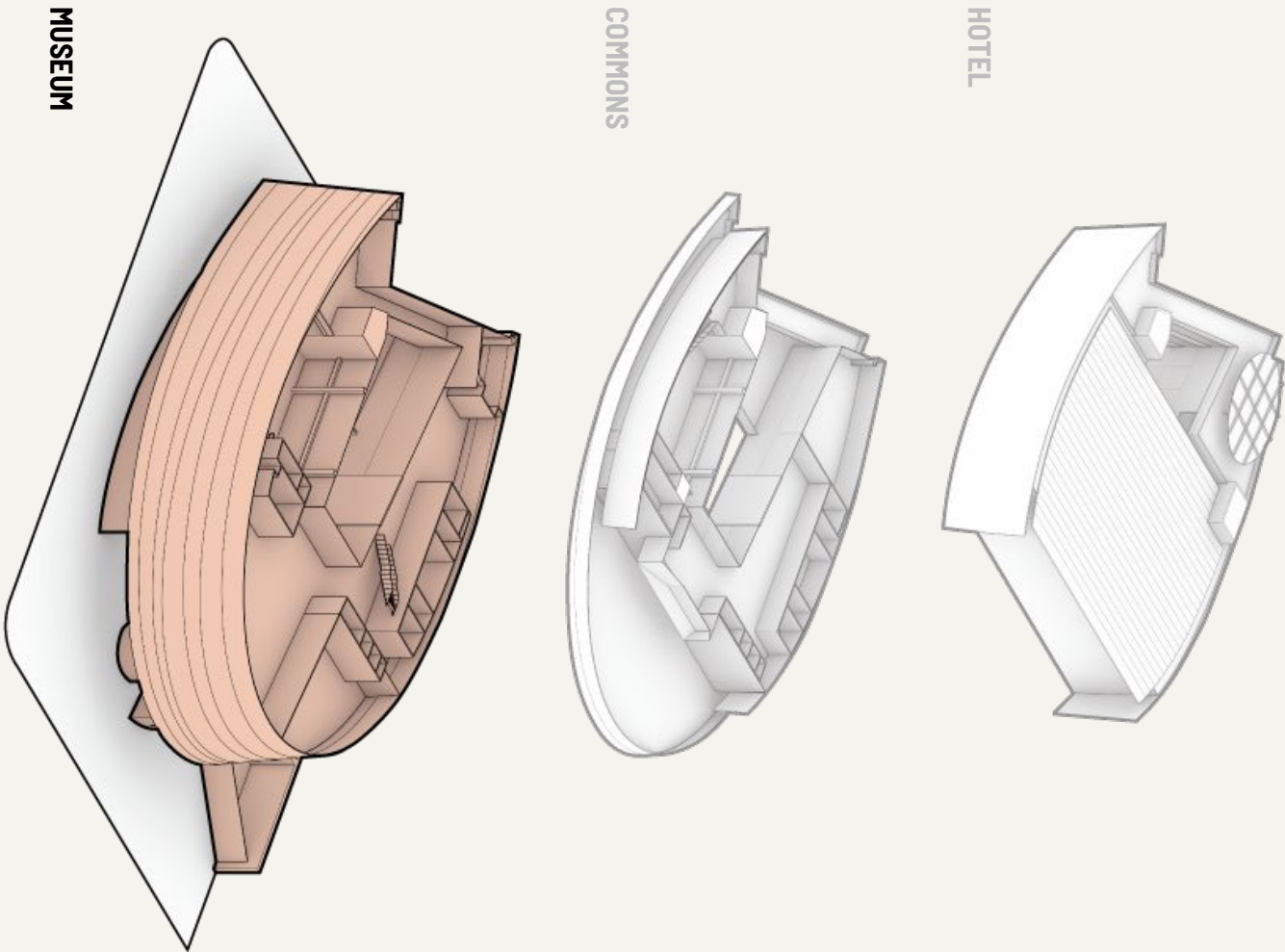


GROUND LEVEL



Museum Levels

CHITECTURE & EXPERIENCE DESIGN



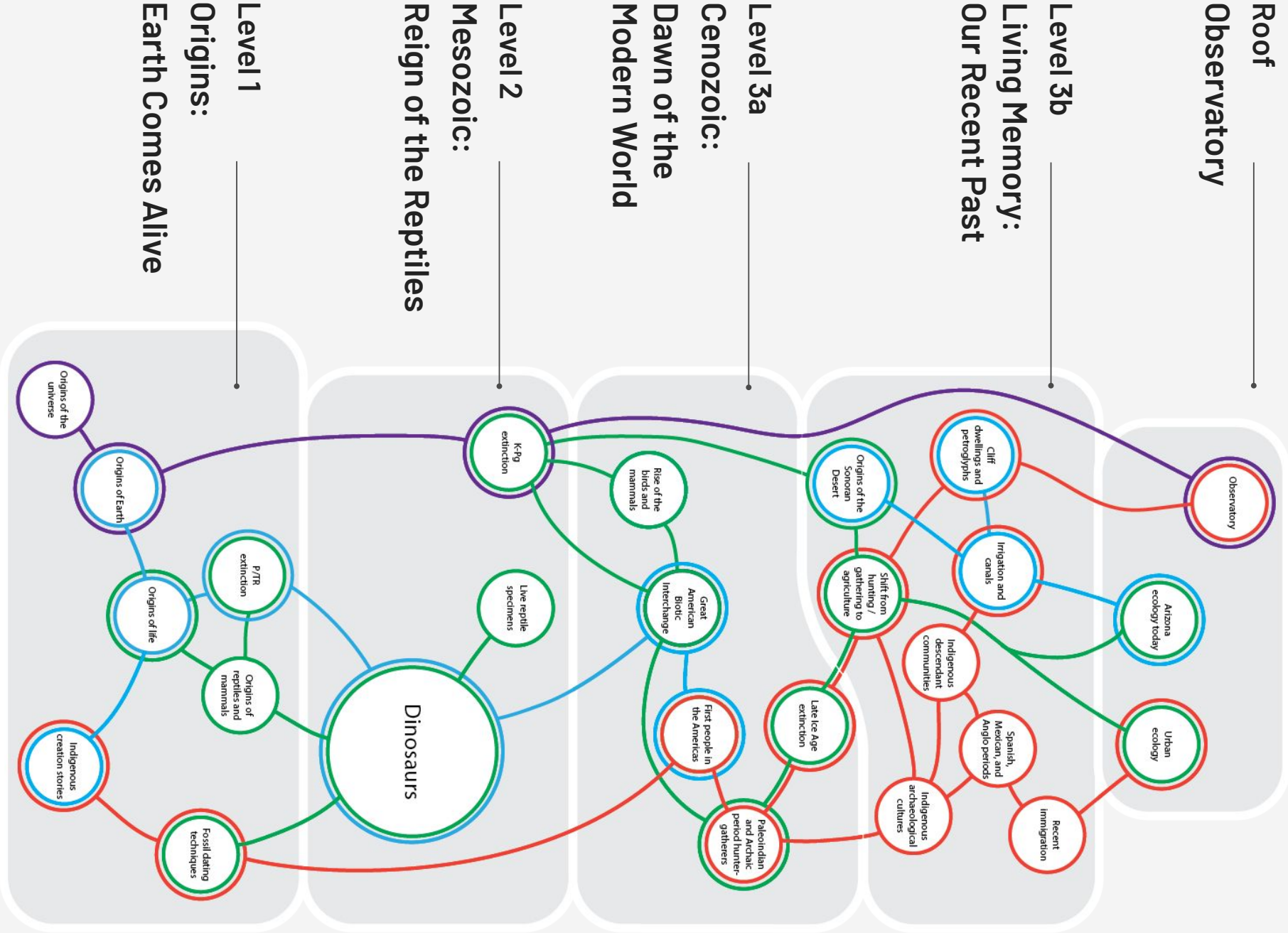
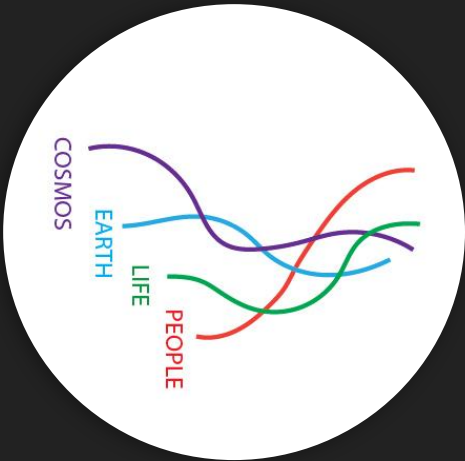
SW BUILDING AXON

DOUBLE HEIGHT SPACES - THE STORY OF 4.5 BILLION YEARS OF TIME

Thematic Floors

Each floor captures the intersections of Geology, Paleontology, and Anthropology according to a cross-section of time and place.

The overall experience of each floor follows the natural flow of intersecting stories, interweaving and illuminating how landscape shapes life, how ecology influences culture, and how all are bound together across time.









E: AERIAL VIEW - LOOKING EAST



F: FIFTH FLOOR TERRACE - LOOKING WEST





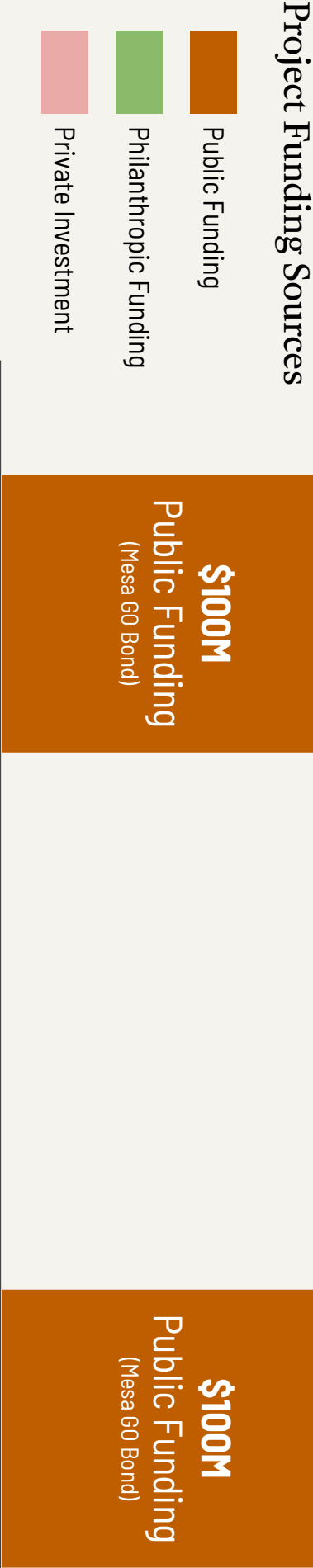
Funding Models

**How will the Arizona
Museum of Natural
History realize its
vision?**

Project Funding Strategy

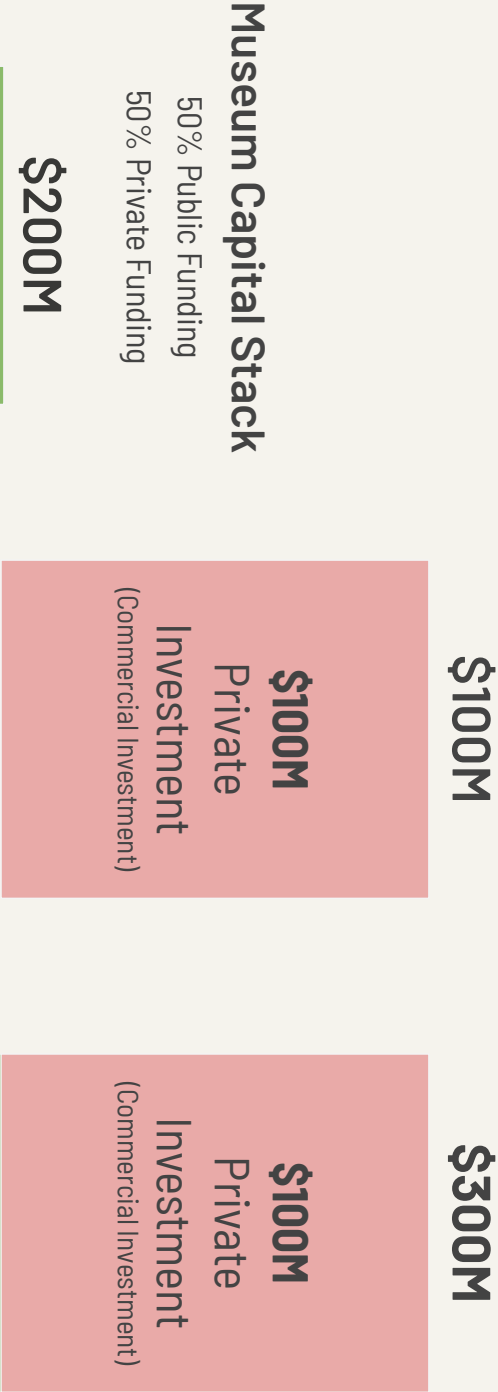
Mesa’s investment unlocks the the philanthropic and private investment needed to maximize the project ROI’s

- Every \$1 Mesa invests is designed to generate \$2 more dollars in total project investment
- PPP structure gives Mesa flexibility to shape the deal that works for them



Project Sources & Uses of Capital

Funding Sources: 33% Public Funding | 33% Philanthropic Funding | 33% Private Investment



Assessing Philanthropic Potential

1

The
Philanthropic
Landscape

2

Charitable
Giving in the
Region and State

3

National and
Global Funding
Possibilities

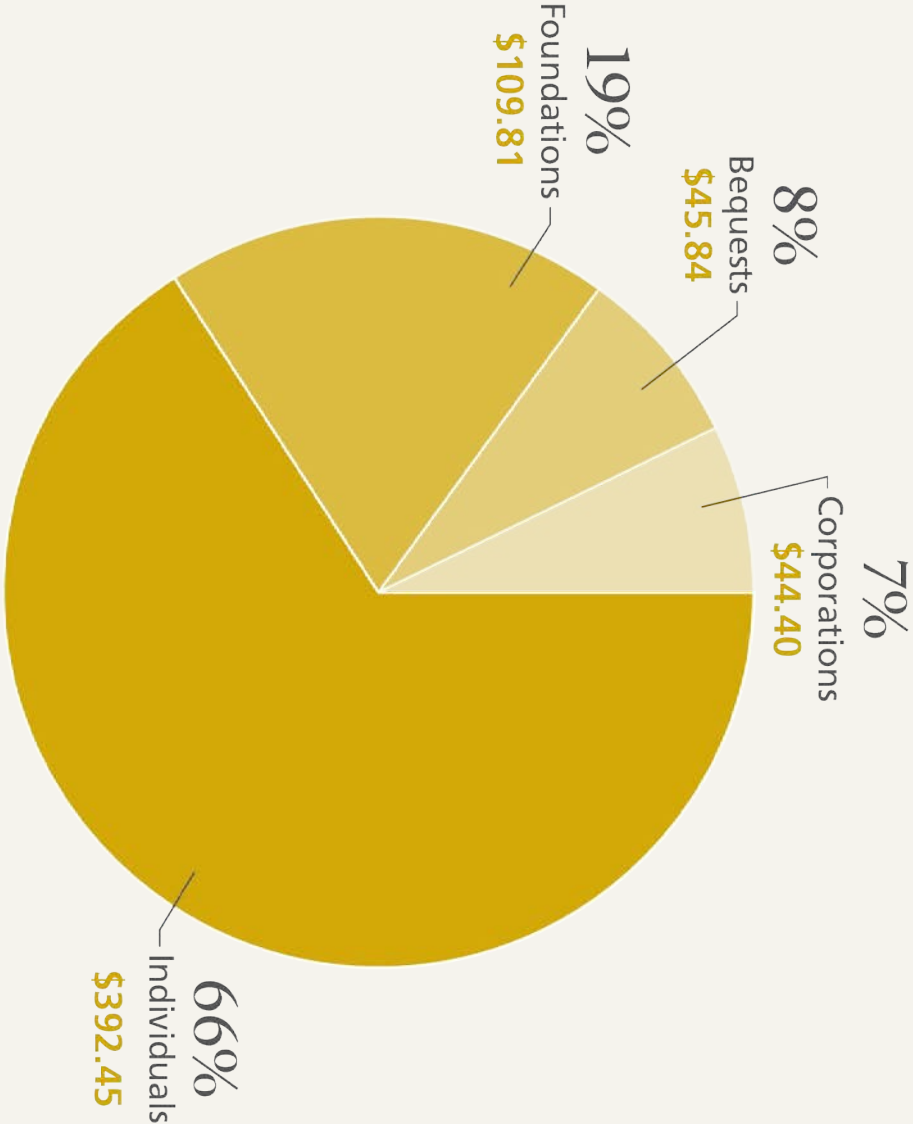
4

Capital and
Operating
Support

The Philanthropic Landscape

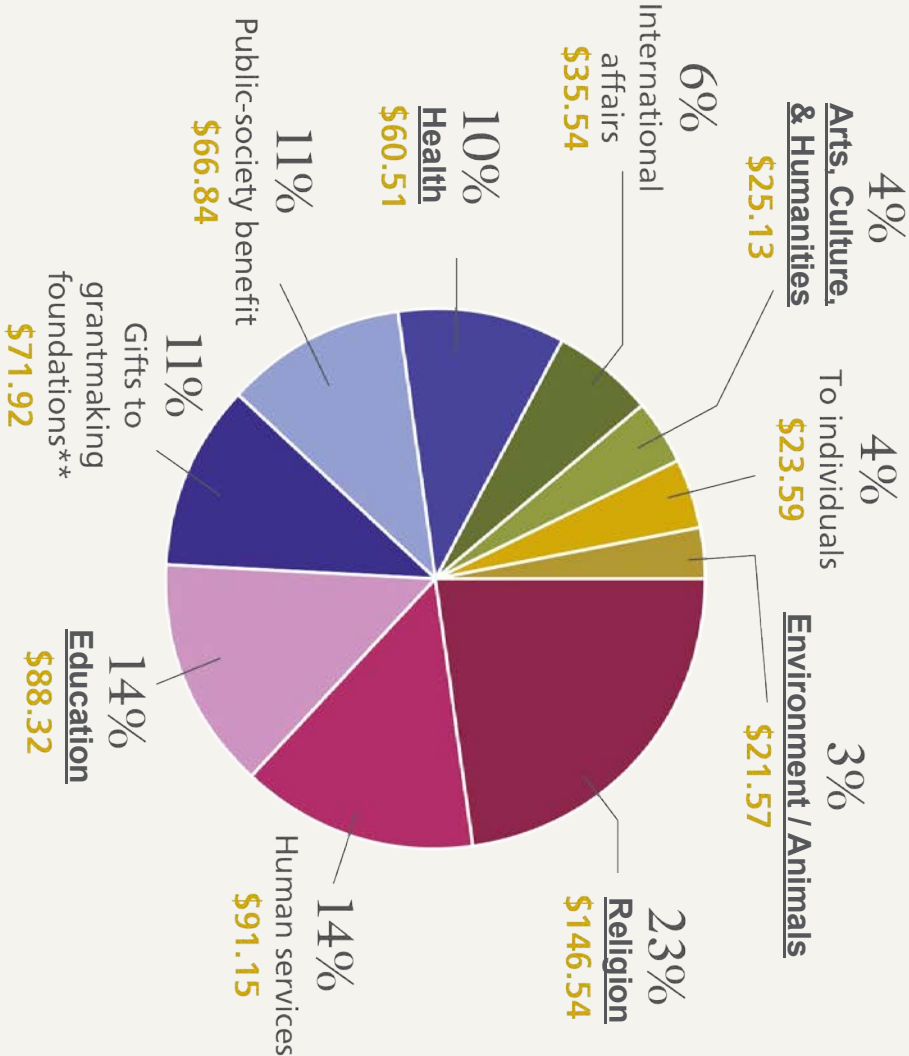
2024 contributions: \$592.50 billion by source of contributions

(in billions for dollars – all figures are rounded)



2024 contributions: \$592.50 billion by type of recipient organization*

(in billions for dollars – all figures are rounded)



* Total includes unallocated giving, defined as the difference between giving by source and recipient categories. Unallocated giving totaled ~\$38.60 billion in 2024.

** Estimates developed by Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy using data provided by Candid.

Source: Giving USA 2025

ENDING MODELS

Charitable Giving in the Arizona and the Metro Area

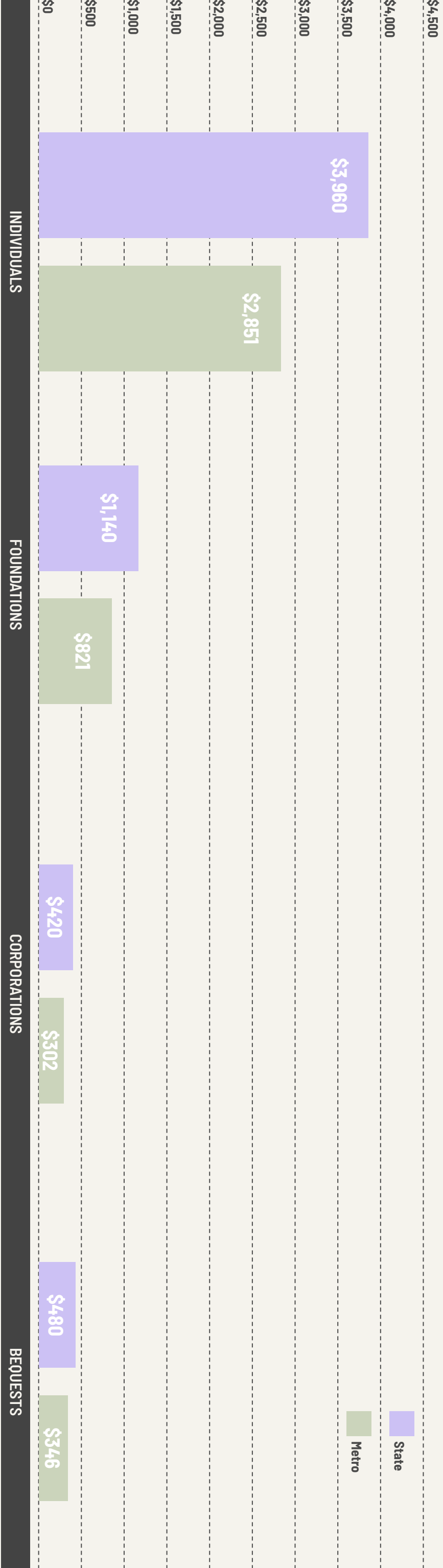
Arizona (Est.)
\$5-\$7 Billion
Annual
Charitable Giving

Metro Area (Est.)
\$3.6-\$6 Billion
~72% of State Total

HNW Households
120,000
Drive Individual
Giving

AZ Foundation Assets
\$7.2 Billion
990 Foundations

Giving by Source: AZ & Metro (\$Millions)



Attracting National (and Global) Funders

US foundation giving to aligned causes
40-45%
STEM, informal learning,
environment, culture

Accessible to museums annually
\$544M-\$1.3 Billion
From foundations and corporations

Capital + transformation projects unlock big gifts.
Most \$5M+ institutional gifts fund:

Major new buildings or galleries
Digitization or collections initiatives
National education programs
Global research partnerships



Denver Museum of Nature & Science



Perot Museum (TX)



Field Museum (Chicago)



Milwaukee Public Museum
(rebranding to Nature & Culture Museum of Wisconsin)



Cleveland Museum of Natural History

How museums raise money



How museums raise money

The path to 100 Million

	# of gifts	Gift Range	Total value of gifts at this amount
Tier I	1	\$20,000,000 or more	\$ 20,000,000
	2	\$10,000,000 to \$19,999,999	\$ 20,000,000
	3	\$5,000,000 to \$9,999,999	\$ 15,000,000
	6		\$ 55,000,000
Tier II	6	\$2,500,000 to \$4,999,999	\$ 15,000,000
	10	\$1,000,000 to \$2,499,999	\$ 10,000,000
	18	\$500,000 to \$999,999	\$ 9,000,000
	34		\$ 34,000,000
Tier III	22	\$250,000 to \$499,999	\$ 5,500,000
	34	\$100,000 to \$249,999	\$ 3,400,000
	42	\$50,000 to \$99,999	\$ 2,100,000
	98		\$ 11,000,000
TOTAL	many @ less than \$50,000 to ensure success		
	138		\$ 100,000,000

Case Study: Natural History Museum of Utah

Utah's Natural History Museum's move to a new purpose-built facility tripled attendance and transformed it from a modest regional institution into a top Mountain West attraction.

Project Facts

- Hybrid partnership structure (University/State/Private)
- Originally located in a space-constrained university building not built for purpose
- 163k sq ft new building, completed 2011
- \$196M total project investment, roughly \$1,205 per Sq Ft (adjusted to 2026)
- Capital sources: 57% public | 43% private
- Annual attendance growth: 80K → 290K | 3.5x sustained increase

Sources: [NHMU.UTAH.EDU](https://nhmu.utah.edu); [US Allegion](https://www.usallegion.com)

Before



After



Case Study: Milwaukee Public Museum

Milwaukee Public Museum is relocating from its historic Westown site to the higher-traffic Haymarket district and rebranding as the **Nature and Culture Museum of Wisconsin**, leveraging a more active downtown location while claiming the funding and prestige of becoming the states flagship natural history museum.

Project Facts

- Hybrid partnership structure (County/State/Private)
- 200k sq ft new building, opens in 2027
- \$255M total project investment, roughly \$1,275 per Sq Ft (adjusted to 2026)
- Capital sources: 35% public | 65% private
- New build located and built with market in mind, adding event spaces, amenities, and experience options fit for its opportunity
- Collection space moved off-site to maximize investment in visitor-focused areas of new building

Sources: MPM.edu



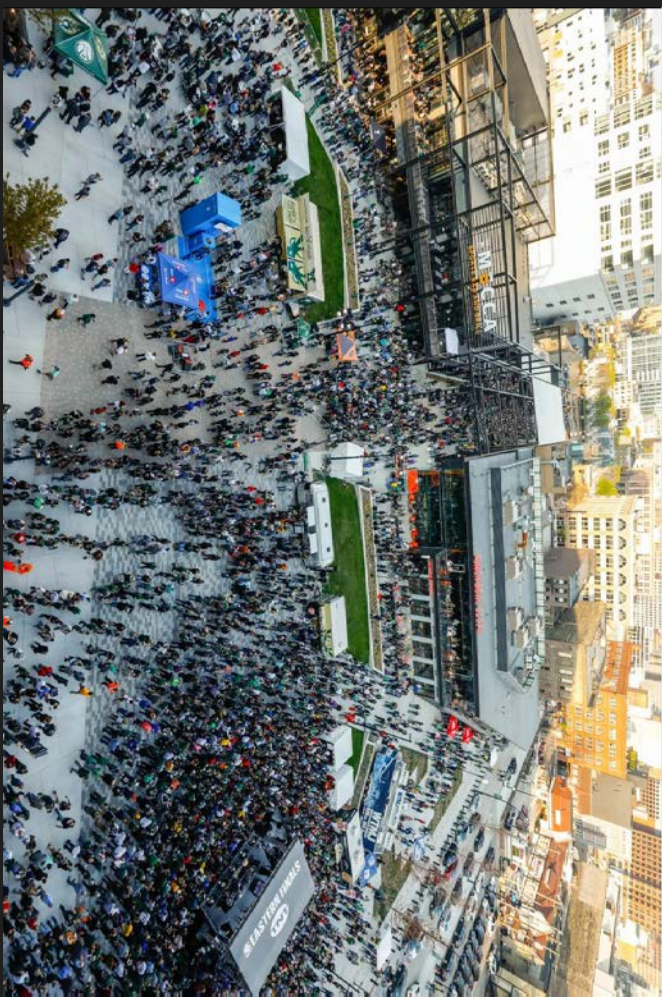
Current Building



Future Building



Future Rooftop Exhibit / Event Space



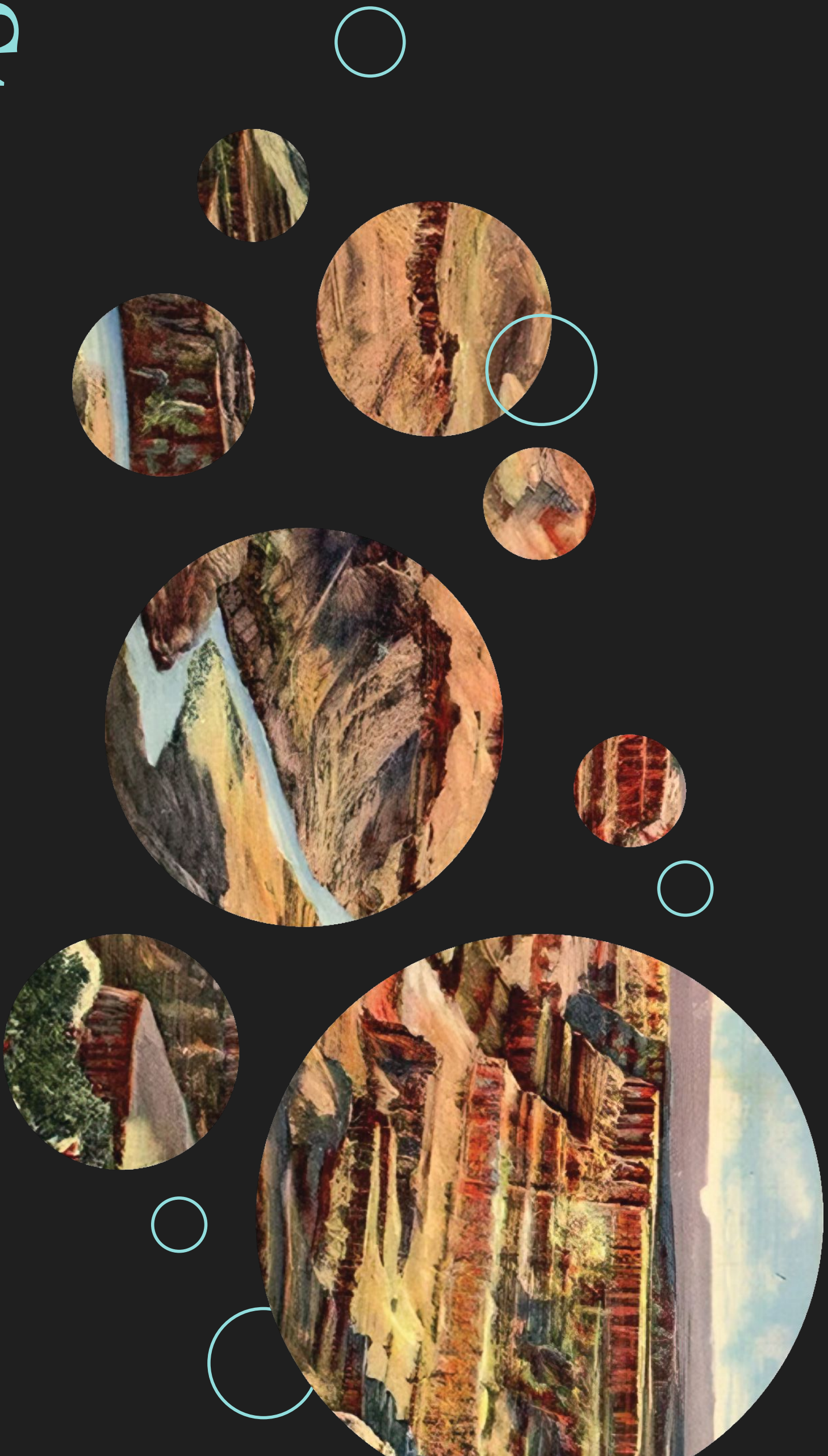
Existing Site Activation

The case for a world-class natural history museum in Mesa is not just about paleontology or economic impact.

It is a question of what kind of city Mesa wants to be — and what kind of opportunity to create for the half-million people who live here and millions more who pass through.

This will be a museum that tells the 4.5 billion-year story of the land under our feet that trains teachers, employs scientists, sparks careers, generates private and public revenue, and gives every child in the East Valley a reason to wonder about the world they inherited. **This institution is worth far more than any economic multiplier alone can capture.**

Next Steps



Continued Progress Across The Next 2 Years

- **Conduct Economic Impact Study (G&A)**
- **Principal Advisory Services (G&A)**
 - Developer partnerships, research partnerships, project governance, identify hospitality/retail partners, public-private partnership coordination, sponsorship recruitment, and related activities in advancing the project
- **Experience and Storytelling Development (G&A)**
 - Content Development + Community Engagement
 - Develop Content and Acquisition Collection Plan
 - Experience Visualizations Representing Content Development efforts
- **Fundraising Capacity Building (Benefactor Group)**
 - Develop fundraising strategy and plan, identify top prospects and conduct donor discovery, strengthen development capacity, draft comprehensive case for support
- **Fundraising Campaign Preparation (Benefactor Group)**
 - Continue to build prospect lists, recruit voluntary leadership, develop fundraising collateral, engage early donors (possible seed-stage gifts)
- **Architecture & Site Design Work (Jones Studio)**
 - Program Validation & Development
 - Conceptual Bridging Design & Documentation
 - Conceptual Engineering Validation & Documentation
 - Conceptual Cost Estimating

Thank you