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Children’s Museum expands with museumlab™, creating largest cultural campus for kids in the country

PITTSBURGH (September 21, 2018) — One of the most beautiful buildings on the North Side—is soon to become museumlab™, a new project of the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh—one focused on providing interactive experiences and hands-on opportunities for older children, ages 10 and older.

When museumlab™ opens to the public it will feature three core exhibits:

- **MakeLab**: A makerspace with wood and metalworking tools and equipment such as a CNC router, laser cutters and a soldering station
- **TechLab**: A space where youth can explore digital making experiences created in partnership with Carnegie Mellon University students and staff using tools such as 3D printing, coding and virtual reality
- **StudioLab**: An art studio where youth can work with artists-in-residence to create cutting-edge artwork.

Located in the former Carnegie Library-Allegheny – one of Andrew Carnegie’s first free libraries—museumlab™ will transform the building’s existing steel library stacks into a three-story climbing feature. Created by internationally renowned architect and artist Manca Ahlin, the climber will be designed for ‘Generation Z’ youth to explore and reach new heights.

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museumlab™ will re-open the building, which has sat largely vacant for the past decade since lightning knocked the finial off the clock tower and caused significant damage. As renovation unfolds, exciting details are being discovered daily. “In one space we went from having a room with an 8-foot ceiling with no windows to a 30-foot ceiling with 12 windows. The light just came streaming in,” says Jane Werner, Executive Director of the Children’s Museum. “The whole building started to breathe again.”

The Children’s Museum expects to welcome between 30,000 and 50,000 visitors at museumlab™ in its first year. The building caps off the Museum’s vision for transforming its North Side neighborhood.

“When we open museumlab™ we will have created the largest cultural campus for children in the U.S.,” says Werner.

The project is also the Museum’s next step in building on years of national research around design for learning, in collaboration with researchers and educators.

“Our Department of Learning & Research became very involved in studying how kids learn and educators instruct through making. We found, in some instances, we were actually changing the ways teachers taught,” says Werner. “At museumlab™, we’re looking to take what we learn in the informal world of our museum and put it to use in the more formal world of a classroom.”

In 2019, the second floor of museumlab™ will serve as the new home of Manchester Academic Charter School’s Middle School. Since 1998, Manchester Academic Charter School (MACS) has proudly served youth and families as a pioneering public charter school with a strong academic foundation and a variety of experiential learning experiences such as entrepreneurship, robotics, mock trials, horticulture and more.
They look forward to having a greater impact on education beyond their immediate student body as part of museumlab™.

“We were actively seeking a permanent site for our middle school aligned to our vision and educational beliefs,” says MACS CEO, Vas Scoumis. “The opportunity to work with the organizations within and surrounding the museumlab™ is what makes this endeavor so special.”

“We’d been thinking about embedding a school for a long time,” says Werner. “We can do the experiments that the schools can’t—small experiments that everybody can participate in. No one fails a museum!”

Other partner-tenants in museumlab™ include The Saturday Light Brigade, Allies for Children, University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Learning in Out-of-School-Environments (UPCLOSE) and three Carnegie Mellon University programs: Entertainment Technology Center (ETC), IDEATe Network and Master of Arts Management (MAM) program and their experiential learning initiatives. The New Hazlett Theater will remain in its home on the east side of the building.

The Museum is in the last stretch of a fundraising campaign for museumlab™, having raised $16.6 million towards its $18.5 million goal.

“We’ve been encouraged by the generous support we have received to date,” says Werner. “Now we have the chance to get everyone involved to help us cross the finish line and make museumlab™ a reality.”

For further information, visit www.museumlab.org.

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