

Museum of Discovery and Science

Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Role: Architect and Museum Planner for New Museum

Program: 27,000 sf of indoor interactive science exhibit galleries, 3,000 sf temporary gallery, outdoor exhibit decks and balconies, 10,000 sf science court, 300-seat IMAX theater, several science classrooms, lobby, cafe, museum store, office areas, and all required visitor and support areas.

Building Area: 85,000 sf

Status: Opened in 1992

Description: The Museum of Discovery and Science is the centerpiece of Fort Lauderdale's arts and science district which includes the museum, a new performing arts center, a shared parking facility for 900 cars, and a new riverfront park incorporating outdoor science exhibits and performance spaces.

The museum's mission is to promote and enhance science literacy by providing informal and entertaining learning experiences related to ecology, space exploration, and technology. Responding to that mission, the building was designed with a "friendly tech" imagery that encourages visitors to explore at their own pace the museum's exhibits and other science programs. Its crisp white form, deep shaded porches, airy outdoor science court, and lush landscaping establish the museum as a south Florida landmark.

The building incorporates a variety of colorful and sculptural components such as sunshades, bright red handrails, and four 100-ft-long bright yellow curved trusses which span the 10,000 sf science court. Sixty feet above the science court, these trusses support a translucent tensile fabric canopy which functions as a giant parasol for sun and rain protection. At night the glow of the lighted canopy functions as a beacon, allowing the museum to be seen from the Esplanade, from the Riverwalk, from bridges spanning the New River, from downtown highrise buildings, and from airplanes arriving and leaving Fort Lauderdale's busy airport. The museum's colorful outdoor exhibits, which can be seen by passing pedestrians and motorists, are highlighted against the neutral white grid of the building in much the same way that a scientist's sketches and notes might appear on the graph paper of a laboratory notebook.



