

# Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Kalamazoo, Michigan

**Role:** Design Architect and Museum Planner for New Museum

**Building Area:** 64,000 sf

**Description:** The Kalamazoo Valley Museum focuses on the past, present, and future of the cultural, scientific, technological, and industrial development of Kalamazoo County and southwestern Michigan. Its mission to help people of the region understand themselves within a worldwide cultural context. Operated by the Kalamazoo Valley Community College, this project represents an innovative museum-college collaboration, functioning as both a public museum and an interactive learning center for college students and faculty.

Our initial work on this project was to develop a comprehensive master plan and feasibility assessment for a new museum to be co-located with a new college classroom building in the heart of the city's downtown redevelopment project. Subsequent to this work, we designed the 64,000 sf building, which includes 16,000 sf of exhibit space, a 155-seat Digistar theater/planetarium, a 90 seat interactive theater which also functions as a college auditorium, and a learning resource center for college faculty and students and for teachers and students from other regional schools.

The museum is located in the center of a State-mandated historic district in downtown Kalamazoo, an area that incorporates Federal-style brick commercial buildings, a pedestrian shopping mall, a French, Empire-style building, the main arterial street of Kalamazoo, and canal. In order to create a strong visual presence within this architecturally diverse neighborhood, a tower-like entry pavilion one story higher than the surrounding buildings was incorporated into the design concept. The museum is set back from the main street to establish a small but significant forecourt which provides an appropriate setting for the entry pavilion.

The museum opened to an enthusiastic public in February of 1996 with 16,000 persons visiting the facility on its opening weekend. The total project cost was \$19 million, including building construction and site development, architectural and engineering fees, theater equipment, other furnishings and equipment, exhibit design, fabrication, and installation costs, and land acquisition costs.



