

Museum History and Fact Sheet



The Children's Museum of Indianapolis is a nonprofit institution [501(c)(3)] committed to creating powerful learning experiences for children and adults. The 815,700-square-foot facility includes 13 major galleries indoors plus the 7.5-acre outdoor portion of the *Riley Children's Health Sports Legends Experience*[®]. Visitors explore the physical and natural sciences, health and fitness, world cultures, and American popular culture and arts; see how dinosaurs lived in *Dinosphere*[®]; and examine how children have impacted the world in *The Power of Children: Making a Difference*[®].

A regular host of exhibits and activities on contemporary issues, the museum reaches beyond its walls with community improvement initiatives and family learning programs. In addition, museum staff members regularly provide consultation to other museums across the globe.

Mission, updated in 2024: We ignite joy, wonder, and curiosity by creating powerful learning experiences for children and adults.

Attendance: The museum saw record attendance—1,318,930—in 2019. Unfortunately, that momentum was cut short by the onset of the pandemic in 2020. After closing in March 2020, the museum pivoted

to online programming and safely reopened in July that year. Attendance in 2020 totaled 344,719 but increased to 606,232 in 2021 and bounced back in a big way in 2022, with 1,019,133 total visitors. In 2023, we tallied 1,205,198 visitors.

In 2023, the museum welcomed more than 128,000 visitors at reduced or free admission through the Access Pass and Foster Family programs, The Children's Museum Neighborhood Club, and First Thursday Nights.

Funding: The Children's Museum is a nonprofit institution with revenues from investment income; contributions and grants by individuals, foundations, corporations, and local, state, and federal government agencies; earned income; program and workshop income; and memberships and admission income.

Budget: Total museum budget in 2023 was \$40.8 million.

Governance: An independent, nonprofit institution with a 35-member board of trustees.

Collections: The Children's Museum of Indianapolis maintains a collection of more than 130,000 artifacts and specimens, the largest of any youth museum in the world.

Staff and Volunteers: The Children's Museum employs approximately 244 full-time and 81 part-time staff members. In 2023, more than 900 adult and family volunteers, corporate and group volunteers, Children's Museum Guild members, interns, and board members donated more than 65,000 hours to the museum.

Approximately 30 youth volunteers participate in the Museum Apprentice Program, where they are trained to lead interactive demonstrations and activities for visitors.

Formed in 1933, The Children's Museum Guild continues to donate time, money, and service toward the museum's success. Each year, about 100 active members of the Guild contribute more than 36,000 volunteer hours and, in 2023, raised over \$750,000 through the annual Haunted House fundraising project.

History: The Children's Museum of Indianapolis was founded in 1925 through the stewardship and inspiration of Mary Stewart Carey. After visiting the Brooklyn Children's Museum, she was determined to create a museum for the children of Indianapolis. With the help of several civic-minded women and contributions from children in nearby neighborhoods, the first museum collection sprang to life.

The initial homes of the museum included a carriage house at the Propylaeum in Indianapolis' Old Northside and the Garfield Park Shelter House. The museum moved to its current location in 1946. Community activities at the museum increased during the '50s and '60s, bringing greater attendance, more collection contributions, and the need for further expansion.

By 1971, the museum was among the first two dozen museums in the country—and the first in Indianapolis—to be accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

Facility expansions:

1976: Main building. \$9 million, 225,000 square feet.

1988: Welcome Center, SpaceQuest® Planetarium (now called the Schaefer Planetarium and Space Object Theater), additional classroom space, and new galleries for special exhibits. \$16 million, 80,000 square feet.

1996: CineDome™ theater and Allen W. Clowes Festival Park. \$14 million, 32,000 square feet.

2004 additions: *Dinosphere: Now You're in Their World®* and parking garage. \$57 million, 46,000-square-foot expansion and renovation of CineDome and addition of 293,200-square-foot parking garage.

2006 addition: *Fireworks of Glass*. \$4.5 million, 43-foot-tall tower, glass ceiling, and hands-on exhibit area containing 4,800 pieces of glass designed by artist Dale Chihuly.

2009 additions and expansion: *Take Me There®* gallery, current Welcome Center, Skywalk over Illinois Street, installation of the brachiosaurs, the Wonders of the World sculptures, and renovations to infoZone and The Museum Store. \$20.1 million, 39,900 square feet.

2018 expansion: *Riley Children's Health Sports Legends Experience®*, including outdoor sports experiences on 7.5-acre site and Efroymson Pavilion and Plaza. \$38.5 million.



Learning Environments

More detailed exhibit info sheets are available.

Lower Level

All Aboard!

National Geographic Treasures of the Earth

Beyond Spaceship Earth

Ruth Allison Lilly Theater

Fireworks of Glass

Level 1

Riley Children's Health Sports

Legends Experience®

Dinosphere®: Now You're in Their World

Level 2

Special Exhibit 1 (Spurlock Special Exhibition Gallery) and Special Exhibit 2 (Johnson-Weaver Gallery)

For traveling and temporary exhibits

The Galleries for American Arts and Popular Culture

Take Me There®: Peru (opens July 2025)

Stories from Our Community: The Art of Protest

infoZone (a branch of the Indianapolis Public Library)

Level 3

Playscape®

The Power of Children: Making a Difference®

Level 4

Carousel Wishes and Dreams

Corteva Agriscience ScienceWorks and *Corteva Agriscience STEMLab*

Mini Masterpieces

