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Tulsa Children's Museum hires local firm to design new home at Gathering Place

KKT would design the museum's new home at the Gathering Place.

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Construction of the Gathering Place is pictured in June 2015. TOM GILBERT/Tulsa World file

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The Tulsa Children's Museum Discovery Lab has hired a local architecture firm to design its new site, which is currently on the list of economic development projects for the upcoming Vision tax package.

The museum has hired KKT Architects to develop concepts and design its permanent, 45,000-square-foot building that will be located at 31st Street and Riverside Drive as the southern anchor of A Gathering Place for Tulsa, a large park that is under construction.

"KKT brings museum and educational space planning experience and just the right creative capabilities to help us build a state-of-the-art children's museum/discovery center that represents Tulsa and sets Tulsa apart at the same time," museum Executive Director Ray Vandiver wrote in a press statement.

The new museum site will have three times the exhibit space as the current building at Owen Park.

Anne Galbraith, the museum's director of organizational development, said the additional space would also allow for more classrooms, which would be devoted to hands-on STEM and health and wellness learning.

More students would also be able to come on field trips through the museum, Galbraith said.

"This will allow us to be more of a resource for schools," she said.

Galbraith said a steering committee chose KKT Architects for the project after a three-month search. The same firm renovated the museum's current building.



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Galbraith said the goal is to unveil the conceptual work and renderings at the museum's gala in May.

The museum's portion of the Vision 2025 renewal package stands at \$10 million. The George Kaiser Family Foundation has pledged to donate land valued at more than \$10 million to leverage the Vision funding.

Jeff Stava, executive director and trustee of A Gathering Place for Tulsa, wrote in a statement: "The permanent site for the Tulsa Children's Museum Discovery Lab will be transformative for Tulsa's educational landscape. A Gathering Place will be a destination for discovery, imagination and learning for all Tulsa children. So including the museum that focuses on providing STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and math) skills for our children is a perfect addition to our community park."

The museum opened in 2013 and had more than 310,000 visitors in its first two years of operation.

Galbraith said the number of visitors exceeded expectations by 100,000.

In addition to the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, the Anne and Henry Zarrow Foundation and ONEOK Inc. have made donations to the planned permanent site.

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