Strategic Plan 2020–2024
Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History
Introduction

This strategic plan charts a direction for the Museum and Sea Center for the next five years—one that builds on the enormous success of the Centennial Project—the transformation of the campus, the revitalization of exhibits, and the strengthening of educational programs, collections, and research.

This strategic plan calls out the most important priorities we will pursue in the next five years: those that will have the greatest positive impact in sustaining our mission and reaching our vision. It is not a written statement of everything we do or will do; instead it is a succinct way of articulating how we will do our work together.

For the Museum and Sea Center to be successful, this plan must be shared with and supported by every staff member and volunteer.

— President & CEO Luke J. Swetland
Organizational & Branding Statements
2019 Update
Mission
The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History inspires a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world.

Vision
The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History seeks to connect people to nature for the betterment of both.

Tagline
Powered by science. Inspired by nature.
Visitor Experience Manifesto
We're not your typical structured museum with cold halls and strict rules. We like to go outside and get our hands dirty, pick things up and take a closer look, laugh, skip, or maybe even jump for joy. Learning is messy and we all learn by doing, not sitting. That's why we offer a different approach to discovering the natural world: one where you're free to wander, ask questions, and explore. When you come here you'll see we're a museum unlike any other. In a nutshell, we're naturally different.

Accessibility Statement
The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History is committed to making our campuses increasingly accessible to everyone. We’re dedicated to providing a welcoming and relevant experience for all parts of the global and local community.
Brand Values
Curiosity, Knowledge, Conservation, and Community

Brand Positioning Statement
We are the only institution in the region that curates a world-class collection of specimens that informs scientific research, sustains engaging historic and interactive exhibits, and supports education programs that serve the entire community. Because of our expertise, we are uniquely qualified to interpret our region’s natural history and changes to it.
Brand Value Proposition

The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History’s Mission Creek Campus invites guests to learn about nature, culture, and the universe; inspiring action to create a better future for our planet and all life on it.

The Sea Center invites guests to interact with live marine animals, use scientific tools, and explore the waters beneath Stearns Wharf to learn about marine life in the Santa Barbara Channel and our impacts on it.
Strategic Plan Framework
2020–2024
We Do Three Things Exceptionally Well: We Curate, Engage, and Educate

We **CURATE:** we collect, document, and pursue research regarding the Central Coast’s natural history.

Our collections—in excess of 3.5 million specimens, artifacts, and documents—are a record of, and window into, our region’s changing biodiversity and cultural heritage over time.

Our collections and research have a regional focus, but are global in scope and scientific impact.

The rigorous science that underpins our collections and curatorial activities informs everything we do.
We Do Three Things Exceptionally Well: We Curate, Engage, and Educate

We **ENGAGE**: we are a place for recreation and learning. We are smart and fun.

The exhibits and programs we deliver, and the philanthropy and earned income we generate in support of them, provide people of all ages the opportunity to engage with the natural sciences and the natural world in unique and personal ways.

The experience we provide is *naturally different* because we connect individuals with nature and science in accessible and engaging ways that inspire curiosity, wonder, and joy.
We Do Three Things Exceptionally Well: We Curate, Engage, and Educate

We **EDUCATE**: as an encyclopedic natural history museum, we provide diverse opportunities to learn about the science of the natural world.

We utilize experiential learning that can be scaled to each person’s level of knowledge and interest so that learning is enjoyable.

The science-based information we provide empowers people to make choices to protect the environment for future generations.
Why We Matter

The most important thing we do is introduce guests to nature and science. Our reach, our impact, and the authenticity and approachability of our institution are unmatched on the Central Coast.

Our job is to ignite and support a lifelong journey of engagement with, education about, and care for the natural world.
Why We Matter (cont.)

Each year we have conversations with over 200,000 guests. We help them engage with nature and science at a deeper level than many have previously experienced. What we do is extraordinarily powerful in its ability to effect change on both an individual and societal level.

If our guests better understand that we are all part of the natural world—that we impact it, and that it impacts us—then we have succeeded.
Why We Matter Now

We are operating in a time when science itself is being questioned. Simultaneously, biodiversity and the basic functioning of the ecosystems we rely upon are threatened, impacting our ability to thrive as a species.

Against this backdrop, we remain a trusted place where positive experiences with nature and science promote essential connection, understanding, and action.
Three Commitments

With this plan, SBMNH is committing to three essential priorities for the next five years.

1. Continually strive to provide every guest with a compelling experience with nature and science
2. Become the best possible science interpreters we can be
3. Make SBMNH an ever more operationally resilient and financially sustainable organization as a cultural attraction and scientific center
Commitment #1

Continually strive to provide every guest with a compelling experience with nature and science by:

- Sustained focus on each aspect of our interactions with every guest, both on- and off-site, to **establish trust and connection** with the SBMNH and its mission.

- Nourishing authentic **excitement and curiosity about nature and science** for each and every guest.

- Providing age- and interest-appropriate opportunities for every guest to **increase** their **knowledge of the natural world, how nature changes over time**, and the **complex human relationship within it**.
Commitment #1 – Initial Action Items

SBMNH will incorporate the human/nature interaction narrative in each exhibition update or redo:

✓ For the recently completed galleries, SBMNH will develop on-site programs and interpretation that addresses environmental challenges in our region and the role of humans in causing, and most especially solving, issues at the nature/human interface.

✓ The new Space Sciences gallery will incorporate an Earth from Space feature.

✓ One of the 2020 Maximus Gallery exhibits will highlight extinct or endangered species.
Commitment #1 – Initial Action Items (cont.)

SBMNH will incorporate the human/nature interaction narrative in each exhibition update or redo:

- The Sea Center second floor exhibits will be updated and incorporate content about our impacts on the SB Channel and marine life.
- Decide scope and timing of Phase 2 to include a compelling exhibit story, e.g., Dynamic Santa Barbara (from the Pleistocene to the Anthropocene) that showcases the human/nature narrative and provides Phase 2 campaign’s case for support.
- In all areas of our educational and guest programs, incorporate age-appropriate learning about the human/nature relationship.
Commitment #2

Become the best possible science interpreters we can be by:

• Equipping staff and volunteers with the skills and resources necessary to comfortably and effectively engage with guests—to make nature and science knowledge accessible—and to explain complex, and sometimes controversial subjects.

• Working with strategic partners to convene rigorous community conversations on the state of our region’s biodiversity and the human relationship with it.

• Making SBMNH the recognized and trusted go-to expert source that can meaningfully explain our region’s natural history and changes to it.
Commitment #2 – Initial Action Items

SBMNH will develop position statements, training materials, and interpretive language and techniques on key regionally relevant biodiversity and natural history topics that can be scaled to different audiences as needed (e.g., what is biodiversity and why does it matter, sea level rise, pollution, evolution, climate change impacts, species extinction over time).

SBMNH will routinely work with community partners to present timely research on the natural history of the Central Coast (e.g., 2020 Channel Islands Symposium).

SBMNH will convene strategic partners for high impact public programs (e.g., annual town halls) that focus on specific threats to biodiversity in our region.
Commitment #3

Make SBMNH an ever more operationally resilient and financially sustainable organization as a cultural attraction and scientific center.
Commitment #3 – Initial Action Items

Develop the scope and timing of the next 5-7 years of **capital projects:**
- CRC roof/HVAC project
- Sea Center infrastructure repairs and exhibit renovation
- Space Sciences gallery installation
- Scope and timing of Phase 2 implementation
- Repair/Maintenance Master Plan for other infrastructure
- Implement these projects in the most green manner possible

Determine the future use of the **Western Residence.**
Commitment #3 – Initial Action Items

Continue to work towards annual balanced budget by:

- Maximizing revenue from all earned income sources, e.g., Artwalk and other existing events, new special events, analyze/reduce free and discounted uses of the Museum.
- Training staff and volunteers to more effectively support development efforts—particularly planned giving.
- Develop the Board and the broader donor community to provide new and ongoing funding and advocacy

Strengthen our ability to remain operationally nimble and resilient in the face of the dynamic weather-related, cultural, and social challenges we will face.
An urgent moment; a bright future

In Summary:

This strategic plan 2020-2024 recognizes the important role of the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History as an unbiased, scientific-based institution that can engage and educate our visitors and our local community about the growing challenges facing the natural world.

This plan, through its commitments and action items, will ensure that we continuously improve as an organization in the coming five years.

We will remain a trusted place that can promote essential connection, understanding, and action when it comes to the all-important human/nature relationship.