San Francisco's Exploratorium Breaks Ground on New Waterfront Home

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 21 /PRNewswire/ -- The Exploratorium, San Francisco's internationally acclaimed museum of science, art and human perception, the acknowledged prototype for hands-on museums internationally, broke ground at its future home on Piers 15 and 17, on San Francisco's historic waterfront. This is the largest project on the waterfront since the Giants' AT&T park. The Exploratorium, a private, not-for-profit organization, also has an ambitious $300 million fundraising campaign, with $209 million already raised from private sources.

( Photo: http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20101021/SF86085)

Refurbishing and seismically upgrading a historic pier that spans the length of 820 ft.-- the equivalent of a New York City block -- over the water will be a major engineering feat. The Exploratorium will remain open to the public at its present site in the Palace of Fine Arts until just shy of opening in 2013.

Developed in two phases - starting with Pier 15 - this future nine-acre campus will unite the Exploratorium's educational activities under one roof, as well as offer significant room for future expansion into Pier 17. Completion will enable the Exploratorium to occupy a home that is large enough to accommodate its ambitious educational mission without sacrificing the signature work-in-progress laboratory atmosphere of the interior of this internationally recognized museum.

The project places the Exploratorium at the gateway to the City and at the nexus of public transit, radically improving educational access to all. With room outdoors and in, Pier 15 doubles the exhibition space, doubles the number of classrooms and triples the Exploratorium's capacity for professional teacher development. Today, two out of three teachers from all over the world are turned away from the Exploratorium's nationally recognized Teacher Institute -- considered one of the premier professional training opportunities for K-12 science and math teachers in the Bay Area and beyond. The new Exploratorium will almost triple the number of teachers who come to learn.

Designed by San Francisco-based EHDD Architecture, a leader in sustainable design, the new Exploratorium will be green inside and out. Taking advantage of the piers' location on the Bay, the project will offset as much energy as possible with a 1.4 megawatt photovoltaic array on the roof, an innovative bay water heating and cooling system, and other components that contribute to the Exploratorium's goal of being a LEED Gold, net zero energy facility, perhaps the largest, net-zero energy museum of its size in the world.

"It is the generosity of Exploratorium donors that makes this capital campaign possible," said George Cogan, Chairman of the Board of the Exploratorium. "They believe strongly that the need for international competitiveness in science and technology begins with enthusiasm for science."