

AVP 1-12-12 The MOAH the merrier: New museum twice as big as old

By: Craig Carrier

LANCASTER - Describing the facility as "an amazing and unbelievable space," city officials said Wednesday the Lancaster Museum of Art and History will open early this summer in the city's downtown area.

The museum, which officials are calling MOAH for short, is at the corner of Lancaster Boulevard and Elm Avenue in a former bank building that has been remodeled and consists of three floors and 20,000 square feet of space.

"We're really hoping to create the cultural arts destination for the Antelope Valley," said Ronda Perez, Lancaster's parks, recreation and arts department director.

The new facility is more than twice as big as the museum's former 8,000-square-foot, one-story building on Sierra Highway across from the Metrolink station.

The new museum has a rooftop terrace with a multipurpose room that can be used to play host to special events or be rented out.

The museum also will have room for educational uses, allowing students and adults to get hands-on experience with projects and workshops on painting and sculpting. The multipurpose room can also be used for lectures and presentations.

Deputy City Manager Jason Caudle said a new curator was recently hired out of the Pomona area and will be at the facility for its public opening later this year.

The abundant space also will better protect the museum's collection. In the old facility, workshops took place in the galleries, which presented a possible danger of accidental damage to artwork. Not only will the new building have dedicated space for workshops, but upgraded storage will help protect the museum's pieces.

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The main gallery will be on the ground floor, and the mezzanine level above will include some smaller galleries and a hall that overlooks the main floor.

In addition to its workshops and projects, the museum also has art from local artists as part of its permanent collection.

Past exhibits included dinosaur fossils and Egyptian mummies as well as the works of Pablo Picasso, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Rembrandt van Rijn and Marc Chagall.

According to its website, the museum contains exhibitions that are especially relevant to the Antelope Valley, with shows on aircraft and space travel as well as displays on the industries and natural resources that were crucial to the area's development. The museum's collection consists of historical newspapers, documents, photographs and glass plate negatives.

The Lancaster Museum/Art Gallery opened in 1986. The Lancaster City Council unanimously voted to change its name to Lancaster Museum of Art and History in June 2011 after a request made on behalf of the museum foundation board by its president, Dan Venturoli.

Staff Writer Alisha Semchuck contributed to this story.

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