

Queens Science Hall to Get Atomic Reactor

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A working nuclear reactor—the first to be incorporated into any museum for public display—will be the central feature of an addition to the Hall of Science in Flushing Meadow-Corona Park, Queens, that will expand the exhibit space by 400 per cent.

Work on the foundation of a new structure is 95 per cent complete, and it is expected that the enlarged science museum will be ready by late 1974 or early 1975. The cost of construction has been put at \$24.8-million.

The Hall of Science is now closed to the public because work on the foundation has interfered with operations in the existing building at 111th Street and 48th Avenue in Corona. However, a large section of the Space Park, with its rockets rising above the adjacent Grand Central Parkway, has remained open during the construction.

Set Up for Fair

Established in 1964 for the World's Fair, with an \$8-million building provided by the city, the Hall of Science has compiled an impressive attendance record. Its popularity is reflected in the five million visitors to the museum during the two seasons of its existence during the fair and the 3.7 million visitors in the post-fair period from 1966 through June of the year.

"We've had nearly a million visitors a year through 40,000 square feet of space," said Robert C. Reiley, the newly elected executive director of the Hall of Science. "It was wall-to-wall people and we could barely handle them."

Mr. Reiley, a mechanical and electrical engineer who has been at the science museum since its inception, said that "it sometimes seemed as though we were getting nothing but complaints," noting that school groups had to make reservations to visit six months in advance.

When the addition is completed, Mr. Reiley said, the Hall of Science will have facilities for a wide range of imaginative lecture and demonstration programs.

One of the major exhibits to be included in the addition is an atomarium, a vertical, circular theater on five levels that will seat 150 people. At the base of the theater, beneath a 6-inch-thick plexiglas floor, will be a working nuclear reactor at the bottom of a 23-foot deep pool of water.

Visitors in the theater will see and hear a demonstrator explain the operation and use of the reactor. In addition high school and college students will be able to conduct their own research around the base of the reactor and in adjacent laboratories.

A total of \$1.5-million for construction of the reactor and related exhibits was provided by the Atomic Energy Commission on the stipulation that the city build a proper building to house the facilities. Mayor Lindsay agreed in 1966.

Among the other facilities that will be included in the addition are a gamma laboratory, in which the public will be instructed on the uses of irradiation as well as a 350-seat theater with a revolving stage that will permit three shows to be given simultaneously.

To Include TV Studio

Other facilities, many of which will be added to the existing building, include a complete radio and television studio with a potential for worldwide transmission, and a science information center, which, in addition to having conventional library services, will contain computers tied into information sources throughout the country.

The addition will also contain a 60-unit laboratory amphitheater, as well as a great amount of scientific equipment not available in the city's high schools.

"We're not trying to compete with the public school system. Rather, our intention is to provide facilities that the schools don't have," Mr. Reiley explained.

The problem of financing the addition is an intricate one. When construction proposals were included in the city's capital budget for

1967-68, a total of \$12.3-million was allotted. Now, because of delays, and because of escalating construction costs—about 15 per cent a year—an additional \$12-million is needed.

Both the City Planning Commission and the Board of Estimate approved the additional funds in July. The proposal now goes to the City Council, where approval also is expected, possibly at the Council's next meeting, which is subject to call.

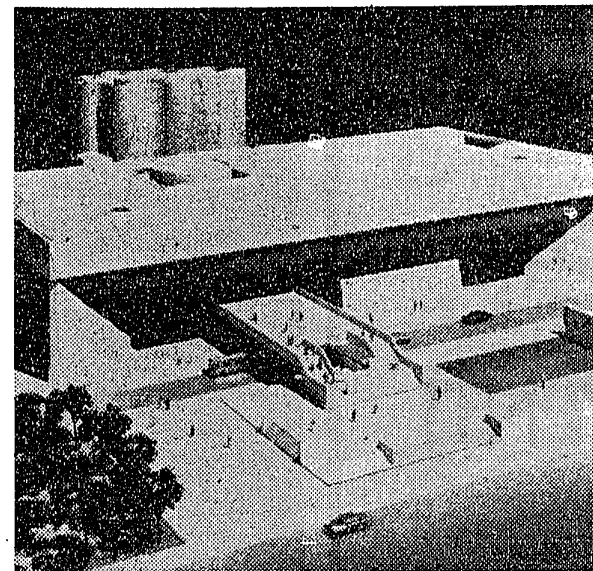
In addition, the Board of Trustees of the Hall of Science has made an agreement with the Mayor to raise an additional \$10-million privately. This additional money is needed for furnishings, staff procurement and training, operation of the museum during its first few years and for exhibits and educational facilities.

About \$2-million already has been raised.

The Hall of Science staff also has taken into consideration long-range fiscal support. "Taxpayers are not going to support the museum—we have to," Mr. Reiley said, noting that a number of ways of raising money are being planned.

Among them, he said, are the operation of restaurants, souvenir shops and book stores, as well as charging industrial exhibitors an annual fee. In addition, he said that the museum would most likely charge parking and admission fees.

While the Hall of Science is closed, 29 of its exhibits are touring the state and are expected to be seen by a total of 3.6 million. Its six educational programs, including a science film forum and teacher astronomy workshops, will continue at other locations under a grant from the New York State Council of the Arts.



Artist's sketch, above, shows the proposed addition to the Hall of Science, right, which was built for the 1964 World's Fair in Flushing Meadow-Corona Park, Queens. Museum addition will house a working nuclear reactor.

