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Home found for children's museum

PHOENIX SITE TO OPEN IN 2005

IN 2005

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Free Arts of Arizona, an organization that provides arts programs to abused and neglected children, will also have space in the building. "The museum will contribute enormously to early childhood education," said David Bodney, a Phoenix attorney who brokered the transaction. "It's an unprecedented investment in Arizona's kids and the future of this state."

Kim van der Veen, executive director of the museum, credited Bodney for getting the transaction done. The sellers, the B. David Russell Trust, initially wanted between \$6 million and \$7 million for the four-acre Monroe site. The asking price increased to nearly \$9 million after the trust conducted an in-house appraisal.

"(Bodney) did a remarkable job," van der Veen said. "Many times we were worried that the site wasn't going to happen."

The Monroe site was the early favorite of museum officials because of its downtown location and access to public transit. But price was a sticking point because the building, erected in 1914 and not used as a school since 1972, needs about \$5 million in renovations. Had the purchase price exceeded \$5.5 million, Bodney joined the negotiators on a pro bono basis in March, at the best of the museum and the city of Phoenix. He said the successful outcome was a matter of common sense prevailing.

"It was a challenge to understand the motivations of all the parties," he said. "But from the outside looking in, the reasons to use this building seemed pretty clear."

Efforts to establish a permanent children's museum in Phoenix have been ongoing since 1998, when Van der Veen and her family visited a similar facility in San Diego. "Most cities our size have several children's museums: Chicago, Kansas City, the Bay Area," she said.

By 1999, van der Veen and other advocates had acquired no place to take kids under (age)

After nearly a year of negotiations, a permanent home has been found for a children's museum in Phoenix.

On Sept. 25, the Maricopa County Probate Court approved the sale of the former Monroe School to the Phoenix Family Museum for \$5 million. Funds for the sale came from a \$10.5 million bond issue passed by Phoenix voters in 2001.

The Monroe building is located at 213 N. 7th St., just south of Van Buren Street. When renovations are completed in 2005, the museum will occupy about 50,000 square feet of the 70,000-square-foot structure.

Museum

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young minds to possible careers in art, architecture and engineering.

Many mobile exhibits will become part of the permanent museum, along with other features identified in focus-group meetings. The idea is to create an environment that appeals to both children and their parents.

"We kept hearing that there's

no place to take kids under (age)

Phoenix Family Museum.

Kim van der Veen and David Bodney are pleased that the former site of Monroe School will become the permanent home of the Phoenix Family Museum.

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