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PRESS RELEASE

New Learning Complex and Historic ‘Inspiration’ Shuttle Mock-Up Will Take Science Education at the Columbia Memorial Space Center to the Next Level

Renderings of the space center's expansion plans and images of the shuttle mock-up are available [HERE](#).

Downey, CA. – September 24, 2024: The Columbia Memorial Space Center and the City of Downey are excited to unveil details behind a major expansion that will feature ‘Inspiration’ – a historic and full-scale space shuttle mock-up inside a new state-of-the-art learning complex. The space center’s objective is to take the engaging science education programs it already provides to students, teachers, and families to the next level.

The Columbia Memorial Space Center opened in 2009 as the official national memorial for the lost ‘Columbia’ space shuttle crew. The center has also dedicated itself to highlighting the pioneering research and design that began in the City of Downey in the 1920s and contributed to NASA’s Apollo capsules and space shuttle orbiters for seventy years.

As part of this work, in 1972, the ‘Inspiration’ space shuttle mock-up was created by former shuttle contractor Rockwell International as part of their process to build an orbiter for NASA. At 122 ft. long and 35 ft. tall, ‘Inspiration’ was the first shuttle ever built and served as the engineering prototype and payload fitting tool for all the orbiters launched into space.

On October 17th and October 18th – the Columbia Memorial Space Center will begin a two-day effort to move the ‘Inspiration’ space shuttle mock-up from a city facility to a new temporary home. Disassembled and in storage for over ten years, the move will have all seven of the

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shuttle's large-scale compartments placed onto specialized equipment and driven slowly down three city blocks. The move will end inside a dedicated building where historical experts will restore and prepare it for a future, final move into the space center's new complex. The community will be invited to gather along the route and watch the shuttle mock-up move through the City of Downey. Details on that move and how the press can capture every moment will be announced soon.

The future home of the 'Inspiration' space shuttle mock-up will be a 20,000-plus square foot indoor and outdoor complex with hands-on exhibits and learning spaces where science education and events will come to life. As part of this, the shuttle mock-up will be installed to allow the community to experience the inside of its cargo bay and celebrate the engineers who cemented the City of Downey and Southern California in aerospace history. The project team is also working with educators and Latin-American history experts to develop science-focused learning activities and experiences that connect with Spanish-speaking and multilingual learners and families.

Envisioned by LPA Design Studios, construction on the 'Inspiration' science learning complex should begin next summer. To complete the expansion, the Columbia Memorial Space Center's 'Project Inspiration' campaign aims to raise \$50 million in funds to cover construction, specialized exhibits, and the space center's innovative science education plans.

Over the next month, the space center team will announce details behind a series of unique events that will take place in the City of Downey to celebrate the expansion and the fifteen years it has dedicated to inspiring the future scientists of Southern California.

The Columbia Memorial Space Center strives to ignite communities of critical and creative thinkers. Through education programs, exhibits, and special events, our goal is to invite youth from every community in Southern California to experience science and to remind them that they can achieve anything they set their minds to.

Follow the Columbia Memorial Space Center on Instagram at [@columbiaspace](#) and on [Facebook](#). You can also learn more at www.columbiaspacescience.org.

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About the Columbia Memorial Space Center

The Columbia Memorial Space Center is a space museum and hands-on STEM learning center located just south of downtown LA in Downey, CA, on the former site where all of NASA's Apollo spacecraft and Space Shuttles were designed and built. The mission of the Space Center is to ignite a community of critical and creative thinkers. The Center includes LA's only public robotics lab and Southern California's only Challenger Learning Center, a one-of-a-kind space mission simulator. Through engaging programs, world-class exhibits, and unique events, the Space Center strives to be the most accessible STEM opportunity in Southern California.

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