

'Hidden gem' no more. Browns give up to \$150 million to turn MOAS into regional attraction.



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Hyatt Brown announces 'wow' upgrade to MOAS

Cici and Hyatt Brown announced plans for a major investment and upgrade at the Museum of Arts and Sciences in Daytona Beach at an event on Sept. 14.

DAYTONA BEACH — If the three women who started the Daytona Beach Museum of Arts & Sciences in a small military barracks building shortly after World War II could see the 126,000-square-foot operation the museum has evolved into, it would exceed any dreams they ever had.

And if they could see the [latest \\$100 million expansion](#) and improvement plans, they would be thoroughly blown away.

A brand new proposal for the museum unveiled at a gala event Saturday night calls for a \$75 million building to be constructed just off of Nova Road, a \$25 million [revamp of the museum's main building](#) on the back end of the property, and a \$75 million surge in the nonprofit's endowment that would catapult it to a total of \$125 million.



About 250 invited guests gathered in a tent just outside the Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art in Daytona Beach Saturday night for the museum's annual fundraiser. They were treated to drinks, dinner and an auction led by Volusia County Sheriff Mike Chitwood and Volusia County Chair candidate Randy Dye. *Nigel Cook/News-Journal*

Within about four years, the Museum of Arts & Sciences is hoped to become a regional destination, and it will have one of the largest museum endowments in Florida.

Longtime museum supporters and philanthropists Cici and Hyatt Brown are in [their own stratosphere of support](#) for the venture. They've already given the museum \$83.7 million for the project, and they've promised to give up to \$67 million more in a three-for-one matching campaign. That adds up to a \$150 million gift.

If museum supporters collectively give \$25 million to the project as hoped, that means a total of \$175 million will be poured into the museum.

The new construction and greatly expanded endowment are hoped to guide the museum into the future, and secure its sustainability. If the endowment reaches \$125 million as hoped, that will allow the museum to draw the standard 4% off of it every year and cover \$5 million of the expected \$9 million in annual operating costs.



The Daytona Beach Museum of Arts & Sciences is in the early stages of planning to construct a new 60,000-square-foot building fronting Nova Road south of ISB. Shown is a conceptual rendering of what the east facade of the building could look like. *Design By Gensler*

"This museum has been an important part of our lives," Cici Brown told the crowd at Saturday night's gala, recalling how she began volunteering at the museum in the early 1970s. "I care greatly about this place."

Hyatt Brown received three standing ovations as he explained what he would contribute and how the project will be financed.

"This is going to happen," he said. "This museum is getting ready to take a giant step forward. This is an opportunity that won't come again."

The huge new two-story building, which is planned to front Nova Road next to the Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art, will also greatly improve the operation's visibility. The current main museum building spans 100,000 square feet, but it's buried in thick woods and only comes into view after visitors wind down a long driveway on the property.

The plan now is to build a 60,000-square-foot building in a clearing just west of Nova Road within the next few years.

"We don't want to be the hidden gem anymore. We want to be the crown jewel," said Tabitha Schmidt, executive director of the Museum of Arts & Sciences.

A glimpse into Daytona museum's future

On Saturday night, about 250 museum supporters donned in colorful party dresses and black tie tuxes gathered in a tent just outside the Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art, which is also run and owned by the Museum of Arts & Sciences.

The local leaders and residents attending the invite-only event at the museum filled with Florida paintings thought they were mainly assembling to take part in the museum's annual fundraiser, and be the first to see a new exhibit featuring 84 original John James Audubon hand-colored paintings of Florida birds. The works of art are owned by the Browns.

The large watercolor illustrations of the birds Audubon saw fluttering around during his expedition through Florida in 1831 and 1832, some of which are now extinct, will be on display Sept. 21 through March 2 at the Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art.



Daytona Beach Museum of Arts & Sciences Executive Director Tabitha Schmidt is going to be very busy the next few years as the main museum building is extensively renovated, and a new building is constructed near the western edge of Nova Road. Schmidt is pictured in the museum's display area that has a large collection of historic Coca-Cola items. *Nigel Cook/News-Journal*

Around 8:30 p.m. Saturday, Hyatt Brown took hold of the microphone and revealed the true surprise of the night. He stunned the crowd dining in a tent under the stars with the news that he's planning to donate \$150 million, and he excited them with the new vision for the sprawling Museum of Arts & Sciences property.

The idea was conceived one day about a year ago when the Browns were talking at home and got into a discussion about the museum and its endowment. They decided they wanted to do something dramatic, and they hired a national firm to sketch out a master plan for the next 25 years.

The lead design consultant for the Museum of Arts & Sciences master plan is Gensler, an architecture, design and planning firm. Founded in 1965, Gensler has built a team of 6,000 professionals who partner with clients in over 100 countries each year.

Gensler came up with the conceptual design, layout and master plan for the museum project. Architects will get involved in later stages of the project.

After the Browns talked through their ideas with Schmidt and board members, the plan was formulated to construct the new 60,000-square-foot building just off Nova Road to give the operation a very large, modern facility that will wow people. The new structure will become the main building, and it will have the welcome desk, gift shop and traveling exhibits.

They also decided it's time to downsize the nearly 100,000-square-foot main building in the rear of the property to 60,000 square feet. Plans haven't been finalized yet, but the current idea is to demolish the north wing, the part of the building that would be to a visitor's right when they come in the main entrance.

The entryway could also undergo changes, and the front courtyard could become usable space.



On Saturday night, Hyatt Brown unveiled the conceptual rendering for the new building that will front Nova Road on the eastern edge of the Museum of Arts & Sciences property. He hopes the building will wow people and entice them to check out the museum's offerings. *Nigel Cook/News-Journal*

Left in place would be the Lohman Planetarium, Root family train cars, west wing, children's museum, classrooms, relocated offices and storage space.

Some of the 33,000 items in the main building, including the historic Coca-Cola memorabilia, will move to the new building. Other items there might be phased out or rotated in and out.

"You're going to see a philosophical change," Schmidt said. "Most museums have less than 5% on view. We have 25-35% on view now. We want to go away from more is better."

Despite the downsized collection, the museum will continue to have displays focused on art, science and history.

The main building will be reshaped and undergo extensive renovations, including a new roof and HVAC upgrades.

The Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art, which opened in 2015, will not undergo any changes.



The Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art opened in February 2015. The couple donated the construction money, endowment money and paintings that made the museum possible. *News-Journal/Nigel Cook*

Before any dirt is moved, the museum needs to hire an architect to come up with final designs for the new building and the redesign of the existing building. Museum officials will also need to work with the city government to secure a rezoning and easements.

The land in the area is protected, so government officials will have to sign off on construction there. Trees will have to come down, and retention ponds will have to be reconfigured.

Construction is hoped to begin in the spring or summer of 2026.

'Museum directors dream of this'

The expansion of the endowment is as important to the Browns as the planned renovations and new construction.

"If you don't have an endowment equal to the investment in the building, you'll go broke," said Hyatt Brown, former CEO and current chairman of the board of his insurance brokerage company, Brown & Brown.

The venture won't be cheap. The Brown museum with the Florida paintings cost about \$400 per square foot to construct 10 years ago. The new building is estimated to cost \$1,200 per square foot.



Museum of Arts & Sciences Executive Director Tabitha Schmidt is thrilled with new plans to pour \$175 million into a project that will include constructing a new building, renovating the main museum building and expanding the museum's endowment to \$125 million. *Nigel Cook/News-Journal*

Members of the museum's board of trustees and nine other supporters have already pledged \$3.8 million, so those contributions combined with the Browns' three-for-one match of \$11.4 million has given the project \$15.2 million so far.

Those at Saturday night's gala are also hoped to be a strong source of financial support. On Thursday, local elected officials will attend a luncheon where the project and giving opportunities will be explained.

There will be many naming and recognition opportunities for donors. Those interested in donating can visit www.moas.org or call (386) 255-0285.



Hyatt and Cici Brown are donating \$150 million to the Daytona Beach Museum of Arts & Sciences for a project that will renovate and reshape the existing main building, which is pictured. The project will also involve construction of a new building. The Browns are pictured in 2019 with former museum Executive Director Andrew Sandall. *The Daytona Beach News-Journal*

Although the Browns' total gift will be \$150 million if the matching campaign goes as hoped, it'll grow into even more than that. The \$83.7 million the couple has already transferred to the museum is earning \$10,000 per day in interest, and it's expected to accrue an additional \$4 million or \$5 million in earnings before it's tapped in two years.

That additional \$4 million or \$5 million can be used for museum staff salaries when construction and renovations are going on and the main museum building needs to shut down for about a year.

The Browns, who are in their 80s, have entered into a written agreement with the museum guaranteeing payment of what they've promised should they not live to see the project to completion in 2027 or 2028.



Cici Brown told the crowd Saturday night how she started volunteering at the Museum of Arts & Sciences more than 50 years ago, and has grown more and more involved as the years have gone by. *Nigel Cook/News-Journal*

The Browns' extensive generosity is allowing Schmidt to think big for the museum and what can happen on its 60 acres.

"Museum directors dream of this," said Schmidt, who's led the Museum of Arts & Sciences for two years. "This is a legacy they're leaving. This is rare and very special."

The Browns' philanthropy also made the art museum named in their honor possible. They donated \$15 million for that large, high-ceiling building, and they contributed another \$10 million for the endowment.

They also donated 1,380 exquisite paintings of places throughout Florida valued at \$49 million.

'Massive' impact expected

Cici Brown started volunteering at the museum in 1971, and she has grown increasingly involved with the nonprofit in the 53 years since. She is a member of the Board of Trustees executive committee, and she has been a major benefactor of the place that has been a passion for her.

"It's sort of my second home," Cici Brown said. "It's absolutely a wonderful part of my life. I wouldn't change a thing."



Cici Brown, pictured wearing the green sweater, has given much of her time and financial resources to the Daytona Beach Museum of Arts & Sciences for 53 years. Also pictured are Hyatt Brown in the white shirt, and museum Executive Director Tabitha Schmidt in the red suit. The group was interviewed by Daytona Beach News-Journal reporter Eileen Zaffiro-Kean on Sept. 5. *Nigel Cook/News-Journal*

Others who've been involved with the museum are in awe of the Browns' generosity with their time and vast financial support. The couple has also donated \$36.5 million to make [Daytona Beach's Riverfront Esplanade](#) possible, and they've donated millions to Stetson University and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

"It's amazing. From Embry-Riddle to downtown, they're hitting all areas of the city," said Jack White, who serves as the assistant treasurer on the museum's board of trustees executive committee.

The Browns' latest museum donation "will rewrite the way the entire museum impacts the community," White said.

"It's going to be massive with its impact, and it will make it one of the top museums in Florida," he said. "We're in an exciting time for Daytona Beach."

Read more: [Daytona Beach's Museum of Arts & Sciences celebrates 50 years in its Nova Road location](#)

"They have a passion for museums and what it's going to do for this community," said museum board member Randy Dye. "The museum is going to become a destination."

Up to now, "the museum has almost been a secret, but it won't be anymore" said Dye, owner of Daytona Dodge Chrysler Jeep RAM and a Volusia County Council chair candidate.

"When you get an opportunity to be around people with a vision, and they make it reality," he said, "that's special."