

**Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art
Expansion Designed by Safdie Architects**

Project Features

Working with Nature

Situated within a 120-acre forested park, the seamless integration of art and nature is at the core of Crystal Bridges' design. The expansion will add to the landscaped program directly adjacent to the new pavilions. The landscape design will also incorporate interactive elements, including a signature water feature and picnic areas.

A new circular event plaza will provide dedicated additional space for outdoor community programming and the existing 'Walking Landing' outdoor area will also be shaded with a large canopy to increase year-round opportunities. Art and installations are integrated across the grounds for unique encounters including a Usonian house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, a Skyspace by James Turrell, and sculptures by Louise Bourgeois, Melvin Edwards, Yayoi Kusama, Roxy Paine, and Dale Chihuly.

The museum is located on a FEMA-controlled flood plain and uses an intricate system of water mitigation to safely resist water levels that have been considered with changes in the climate in mind. The highly controlled water system celebrates the natural beauty of the ravine and related ponds while adhering to the highest safety measures. Roofs also gather storm water and return it to the natural watershed.

Natural Light

Two new galleries incorporate a bespoke system of skylights that allow adjustable natural daylight illumination, while ensuring the preservation of the art. The orientation of each gallery's skylights is determined by their placement on the site, with vertical skylights used in the new temporary exhibition gallery, and horizontal skylights in the new collection gallery. In both cases, a daylight monitor and diffusing panels mitigate the natural light to create even light throughout the space in all weather conditions, offsetting direct rays and eliminating shadows. The full spectrum of light is achieved by balancing the northern facing exposure with southern light when necessary.

In addition to the expansion on the north side of the building, renovations are in progress to add to the existing temporary exhibition gallery and accommodate larger exhibitions. The expanded gallery will debut with the museum's anniversary exhibition, [*Crystal Bridges at 10*](#), opening July 10, 2021 with ten distinct immersive experiences inviting visitors to see more than 70 works of art from the permanent collection.

The new amenity-filled connecting bridge privileges natural light with transparent glass walls and skylights.

Regional Specificity & Sustainability

Safdie Architects' thoughtful consideration of regionality and the integration of architecture and nature is the defining characteristic of the museum's design. As with the original museum building, the primary materials of the expansion—concrete, timber, and fieldstone—are sourced from Northwest Arkansas to echo the natural beauty of the site and celebrate the region's craft traditions. Local materials are also more sustainable by leveraging the available resources, minimizing shipping and related energy costs. To further minimize impact on the natural landscape, select new buildings have over 40% of their exterior wall buried into the cliffside, which also reduces energy consumption for heating and cooling.

Many of the original local subcontractors that built the museum in 2011 are slated to work on the expansion, further assuring quality and consistency of construction between the new and old buildings.

Community Site Access

Accessible by vehicle, bicycle, or foot, Crystal Bridges currently has three active entrances at different levels to address the sloping topography of the site. To accommodate increased visitation, the main Museum Lobby is being expanded by enclosing the existing courtyard with a spectacular skylight for year-round use in all weather conditions. The expansion will also add informal connectors, including balconies and courtyards, for seamless flow between interior and exterior spaces, opening sightlines and enhancing the porous relationship between the museum and its natural surroundings. The increased landscape program will also further integrate with the network of surrounding bike and walking trails linking from the museum to downtown Bentonville, Arkansas.

Press Contacts

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