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Betty Brinn Children's Museum Announces Acquisition of New Walker's Point Home

Historic Bottling House Being Reimagined for Milwaukee's Children and Families

MILWAUKEE — (November 16, 2026) — The Betty Brinn Children's Museum (BBCM); a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that has welcomed more than 5 million children and families to exhibits, programs and experiences since its founding in 1995; today announced that its new home will be the historic Bottling House at 750 W. Virginia Street, which is part of the Tannery Business Center complex in Walker's Point. It is currently the administrative and corporate office of Aurora Health Care, part of Advocate Health. It is anticipated that BBCM will close on the site in spring 2027.

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society, the building was the bottling facility for the Philip Best Brewing Company, the Pabst predecessor. The bottling plant was built in 1881 and is the only portion of the brewery to survive, characterized by its Cream City brick exterior. The 72,000 square foot building will allow BBCM to significantly expand its footprint and reach new audiences it is unable to serve in the current space. The new location will also give BBCM more opportunities to provide children and families with more meaningful hands-on experiences, programming and events. BBCM selected 750 W. Virginia Street after a search guided by requirements that included approximately 42,000 square feet of interior space, 10,000 square feet of exterior play space and parking for 180 vehicles. An opening date for the new museum has not yet been determined.

"This is an extraordinary opportunity for Milwaukee's children and families," said Tina Quealy, CEO of the Betty Brinn Children's Museum. "For more than 30 years, this community has trusted us to be a place where kids learn through play, and this next chapter lets us honor that trust in a bigger way. A new home in the heart of Walker's Point will allow us to reach more children and welcome more families. This is the beginning of an incredibly exciting chapter for our museum and Milwaukee."

"The Betty Brinn Children's Museum has been an important part of Milwaukee's community for more than 30 years, creating opportunities for children and families to learn and connect," said Milwaukee Mayor Cavalier Johnson. "This new home is an exciting opportunity to build on that legacy and ensure the

museum continues to serve as a cornerstone for our community for decades to come. We look forward to seeing this next chapter take shape, bringing generations of Milwaukee children and families together and helping shape a future we can all be proud of."

"Walker's Point continues to grow and evolve and the Betty Brinn Children's Museum is a great addition to that momentum," said 12th District Alderman and Milwaukee Common Council President José Pérez. "It will bring people together and give families from Milwaukee and beyond another reason to visit our thriving neighborhood."

"Identifying our new Walker's Point home is a defining milestone in our Master Planning process," said Tina Quealy, CEO of the Betty Brinn Children's Museum. "This is about so much more than a new building — it's about what becomes possible when we invest in children. We're imagining a place where children can see themselves as artists, scientists, builders and explorers — a place that sparks curiosity, builds confidence and brings families together."

The announcement builds on BBCM's plans for growth, which it shared externally earlier this year in February, at which time the museum indicated a new location would be finalized within the year. The relocation of BBCM will require a community-driven capital campaign and strategic fundraising that is anticipated to launch in the coming months.

BBCM has operated for more than 30 years on a significantly smaller scale than similar museums in other metropolitan areas, averaging about 170,000 visitors per year at its current downtown Milwaukee lakefront location (929 E. Wisconsin Avenue) at Museum Center Park. The museum has outgrown its current space, which has about 10,500 square feet of exhibition space. BBCM's current lease at Museum Center Park ends April 30, 2029. The museum is planning for a temporary transition period between the end of its current lease and the opening of its new home, while continuing to advance its vision for a transformational children's museum experience in Milwaukee. The museum will share additional details as the Master Plan is finalized.

Today, between 32-35% of BBCM visitors experience the museum through significantly reduced or free admissions and programming. The new museum will continue to offer accessible admissions given Milwaukee's high child poverty rate — 32% of children under the age of 12 in the city live below the federal poverty level, creating a barrier for many families to experience organizations like a children's museum.

The museum's New Museum Task Force; which includes BBCM board and executive leadership along with experts in human-centered design of museum and cultural institutions, including Skyhouse Studio, Future Found and Wisconsin Policy Forum; has been developing a comprehensive Master Plan since 2025 addressing future development and vision, site analysis, programmatic needs, community impact, facility and exhibit design, educational strategy and long-term operational strategy.

Between January and June 2025, BBCM gathered input from more than 700 stakeholders — members, non-member visitors, educators, funders, civic leaders and staff — through surveys, interviews, focus groups and interactive polling. Key findings included that BBCM has outgrown its space, that families and

educators consistently describe BBCM as a unique, irreplaceable space for play-based learning, and that there is strong appetite for a larger, refreshed facility with better amenities, more outdoor space, rotating exhibits and deeper community partnerships, while preserving the intimate, welcoming, hands-on character that makes it special.

About Betty Brinn Children's Museum

The Betty Brinn Children's Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that opened its doors in 1995 thanks to a grassroots effort begun by Therese Binder, Susie Gruenberg and Julie Sattler-Rosene, who were determined to create a place where families in southeastern Wisconsin could learn and play together. Since then, the Museum has welcomed more than 5 million children and families to exhibits, programs and experiences. Through the power of play, the Betty Brinn Children's Museum (BBCM) fosters joy, confidence and curiosity in children and families, inspiring a journey of lifelong learning. BBCM is dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to its immersive, educational exhibits and programs designed to promote the social, emotional and intellectual growth of children from birth through age 10. For more information, visit https://bbcmkids.org.

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