



MUSEUM AND DESERT GARDENS AT
BARTON WARNOCK CENTER

Project Proposal



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Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

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*"No words can tell you, and no painter hold it. [The Big Bend] is
only to be visited and looked at with awe. It will make you breathe
deeply whenever you think of it, for you have inhaled eternity."*

Author Ludwig Bemelmans, "Texas Legend"



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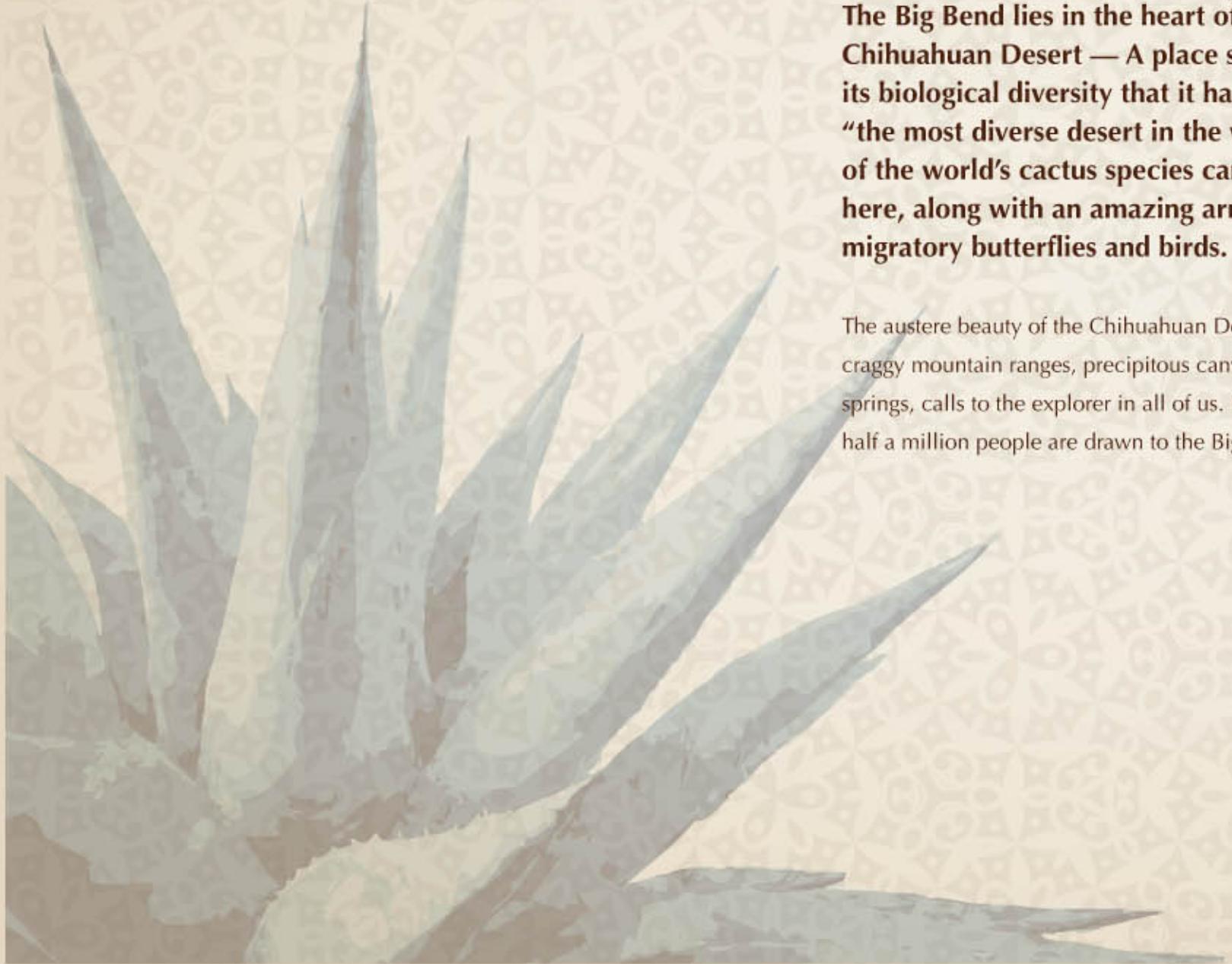
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Project Overview



The Big Bend lies in the heart of the Chihuahuan Desert — A place so incredible in its biological diversity that it has been called “the most diverse desert in the world.” A third of the world’s cactus species can be found here, along with an amazing array of migratory butterflies and birds.

The austere beauty of the Chihuahuan Desert, with its craggy mountain ranges, precipitous canyons and hidden springs, calls to the explorer in all of us. Is it any wonder that half a million people are drawn to the Big Bend each year?

A DESERT AT RISK

But sadly, the Chihuahuan Desert is at great risk from environmental degradation. Along with places like the Amazon rainforest, it has been classified as a critical priority for conservation by the World Wildlife Fund. Lack of knowledge regarding the desert's ecological importance is one of the principal factors leading to the mismanagement of this amazing landscape. The best hope for the Chihuahuan Desert is education.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department manages 300,000 acres of Chihuahuan Desert as Big Bend Ranch State Park. TPWD is committed to the project of conserving the world's most diverse desert through stewardship and education.



PROJECT ABSTRACT: A DESERT DESTINATION

In support of our mission to manage and conserve the natural resources of Texas, TPWD proposes to transform the Barton Warnock Environmental Education Center into an innovative museum attraction that will educate, entertain and inspire people towards stewardship of the Chihuahuan Desert.

The new Museum and Desert Gardens at Barton Warnock Center will combine practices from educational museums, science centers, theme parks and interpretive gardens to tell the stories of an incredible desert ecosystem and its inhabitants. This project will enable the 500,000+ annual visitors to the Big Bend to learn, have fun and continue the project of protecting the world's most biologically diverse desert.





Project Overview

PROJECT LOCATIONS

This project will not only create exciting new exhibits at Barton Warnock Center but it will also create a family of smaller exhibits providing consistent safety and conservation messages for installation at all Texas Parks and Wildlife properties that serve as orientation points for visitors to Big Bend Ranch State Park.

This project will install thematic retail spaces in two locations that will utilize exhibit techniques to promote educational and conservation focused products.



PROJECT SCOPE BY LOCATION

Barton Warnock Center

Museum-quality interior exhibits, themed retail space, extensive orientation and safety exhibits, outdoor late-arrival orientation kiosk.

Sauceda Ranch Park Headquarters

Themed retail space, extensive orientation and safety exhibits, small interpretive gallery.

Park Entrance

Outdoor late arrival orientation kiosk

Fort Leaton

Outdoor late arrival orientation kiosk.



Project Overview

AUDIENCES & GOALS

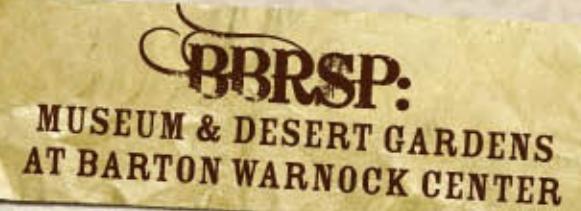
Over 500,000 people a year travel to the Big Bend area. Tourism research indicates that most visitors to the Big Bend area are more educated and more affluent than average and that they are motivated to learn about and enjoy this special place.

Because it takes a long time to travel to the Big Bend, when these tourists arrive in the area they tend to stay three to four nights. While some visitors to the area come with a full agenda, most come with a spirit of exploration – looking each day for something to do.

TPWD seeks to capitalize on this opportunity and connect with these audiences in order to further education about the ecological importance of the Chihuahuan Desert.

Because, Barton Warnock Center is located on the eastern edge of Big Bend Ranch State Park, near the tourist towns of Terlingua and Lajitas and the entrance to the Big Bend National Park, the new Museum and Desert Gardens at Barton Warnock Center will be uniquely positioned to serve as a day-trip destination for the 500,000 plus visitors who come to this area each year.





PROJECT BACKGROUND

The landscapes of the Big Bend are extraordinary, but not all visitors to the area are able to experience its more remote treasures. In fact the majority of the tourist who travel to the Big Bend stay on the main paved roads.

The mission at Barton Warnock Center is twofold:

- 1) Prepare hikers, kayakers, campers and other potential park users to safely enjoy Big Bend Ranch State Park and other public areas. And, prepare these park users to more fully understand their experiences and conserve precious natural and cultural resources while in the park.
- 2) Provide those visitors who are not able to visit the interior of the desert a day-trip destination that will inspire them to become advocates for desert conservation.

In order to achieve this mission the project team identified the following project goals:

- Improve the visibility and street presentation of Barton Warnock Center to invite increased visitation.
- Create a unique thematic shopping experience where products potential park users need are presented in tandem with associated orientation and conservation messages.
- Create vivid, multi-sensory exhibits that use technology and artistry to make a lasting impression on audiences.

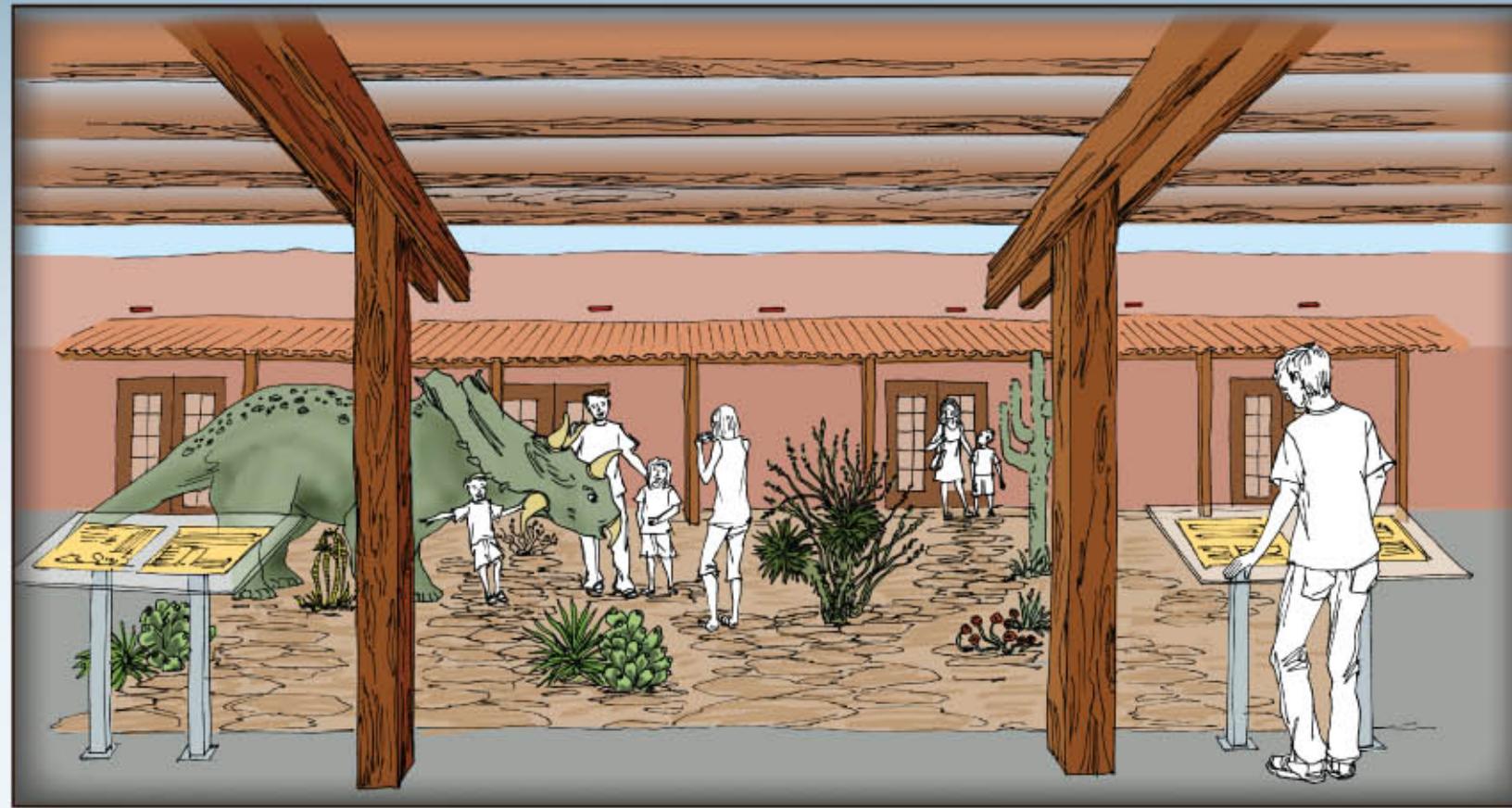


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A WELCOMING RETREAT

In order to create an outstanding visitor destination - it is crucial that Barton Warnock Center has a warm and inviting presence. Currently potential visitors are faced with an institutional, windowless façade. Architectural enhancements will create a welcoming entry area, with a shade structure that shelters a water-feature and gathering area. Large tempered glass panels open up the building, giving guests a view of the retail and exhibition areas and a tantalizing glimpse of the interpretive courtyard within. An ocotillo-themed iron gate will provide both security when closed and an artistic flair when rolled to the side.





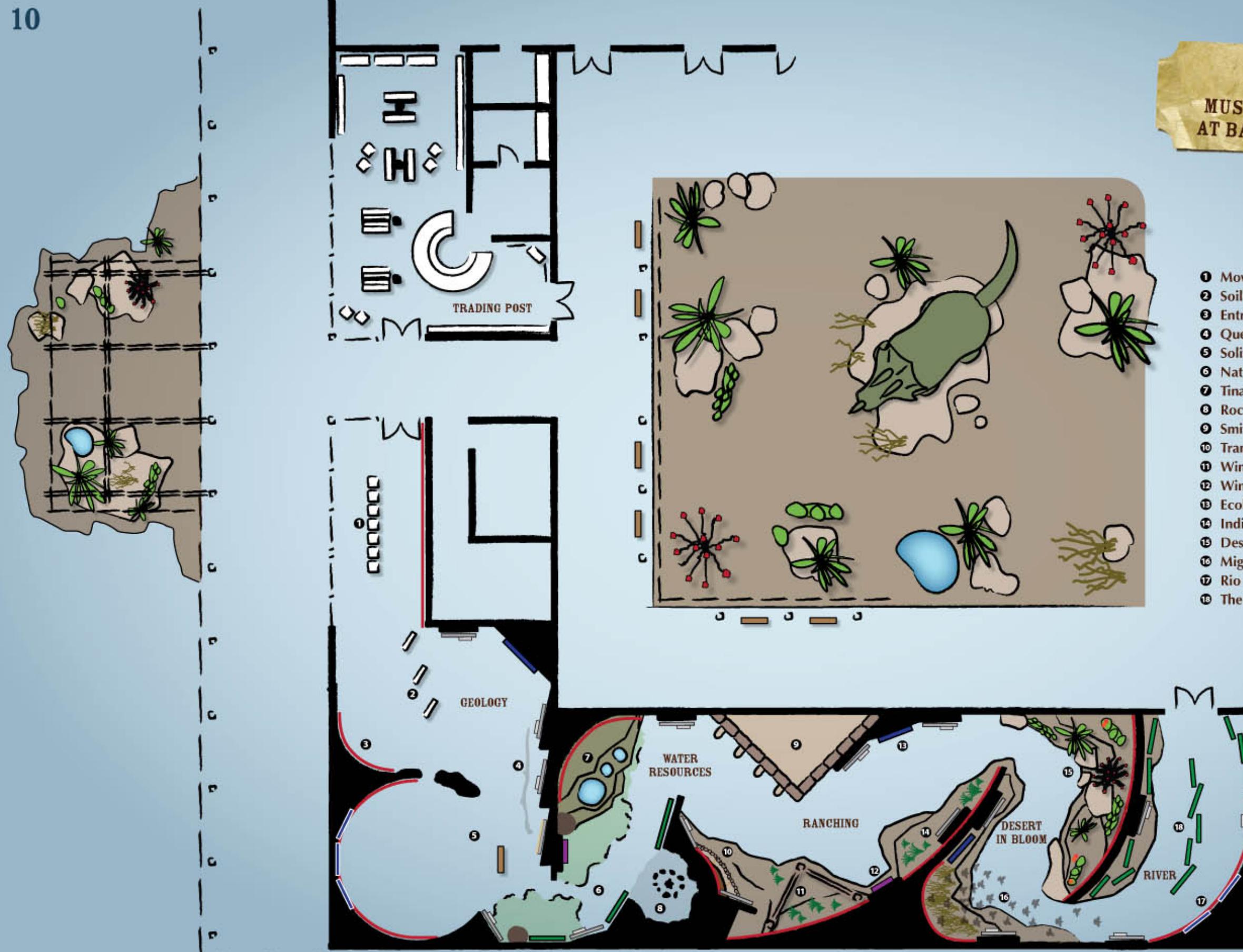
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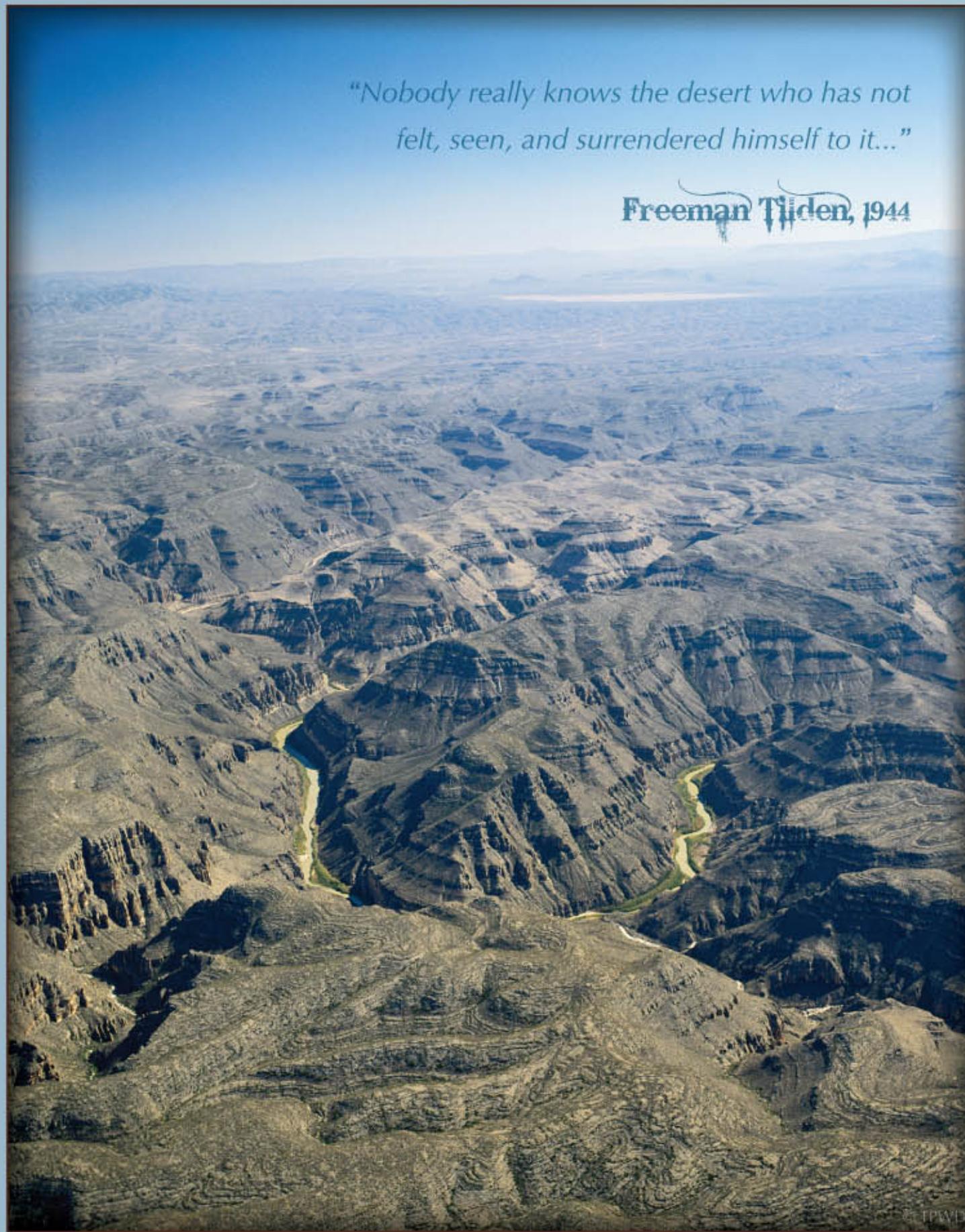
MUSEUM & DESERT GARDENS
AT BARTON WARNOCK CENTER

LIVING LARGE

The story begins... Warnock Center's interpretive courtyard will serve to entice casual visitors to stay and enjoy the museum exhibits. The story of life in Big Bend starts here — complete with a life sized statue of a Agujaceratops.







*"Nobody really knows the desert who has not
felt, seen, and surrendered himself to it..."*

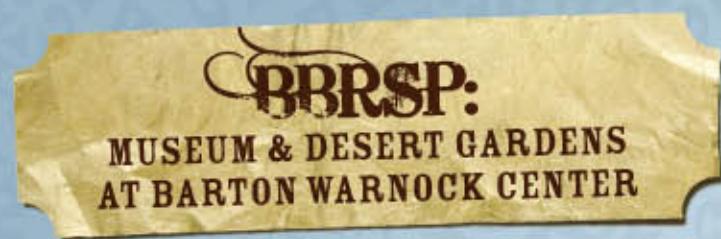
Freeman Tilden, 1944

❖ A JOURNEY THROUGH ❖ BIG BEND RANCH STATE PARK

Every person should have the opportunity to experience the expansive grandeur of the Chihuahuan Desert. Visitors to the Big Bend are drawn by an almost inexpressible desire to have an intimate connection to its timeless beauty and peaceful solitude. Sadly, the desert's most remote treasures are not easily accessible and can be damaged by uninformed use.

In order to showcase the hidden treasures of the Big Bend and enlighten future visitors, this exhibit will create a virtual journey through the landscapes of Big Bend Ranch State Park. The exhibit will employ aerial videography, computer animation, interactive touch-screen displays, authentic artifacts and recreated environments to capture the excitement, drama and discovery of a backcountry expedition.

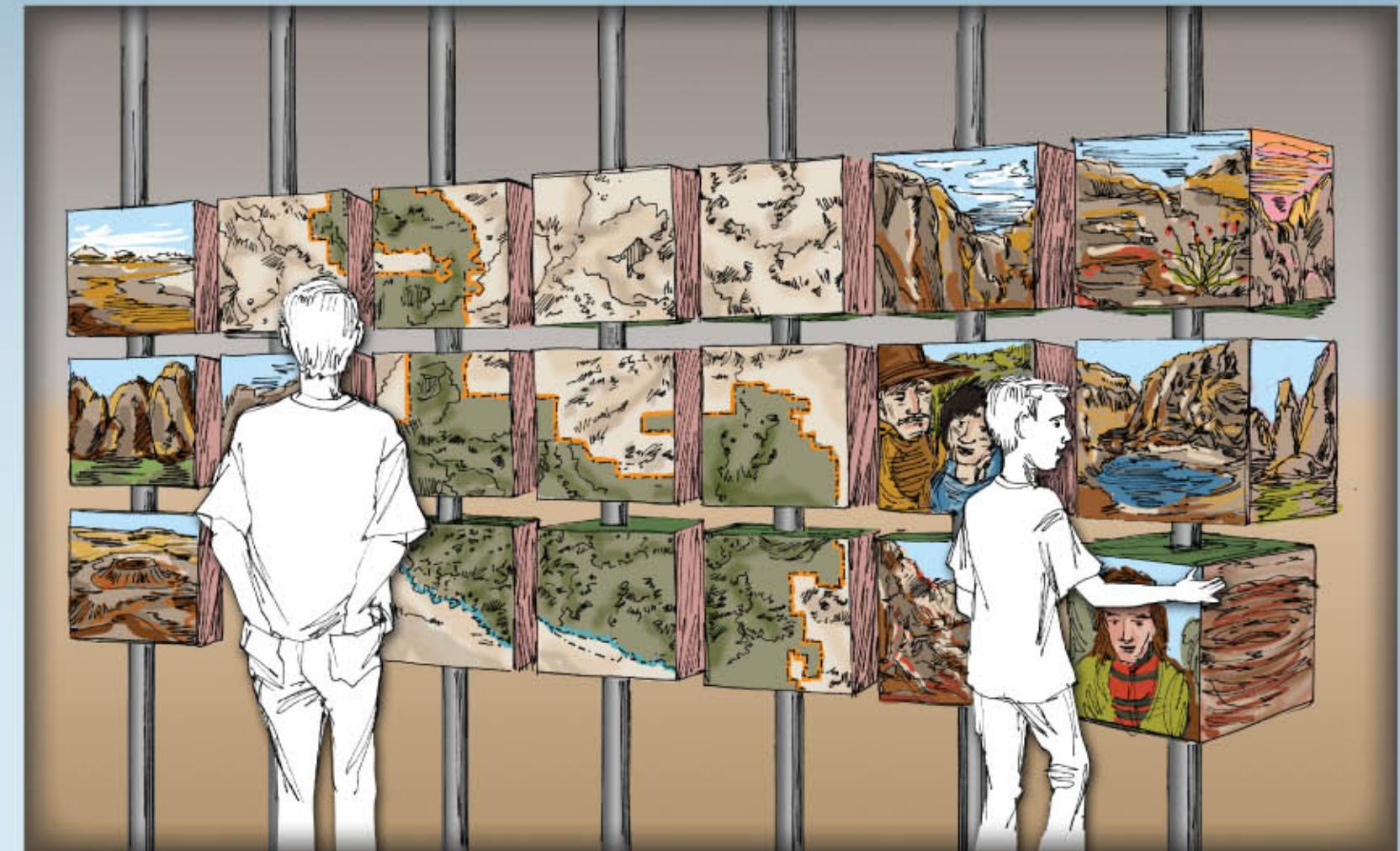
Along the way exhibit audiences will come to understand the natural ecology of the desert and how every form of life here – plants, animals and people – are united in their dependence on limited water resources. Audiences will have the opportunity to explore the inner workings of this ecosystem and observe the impact of mankind's activities. In the end, this exhibit's goal is to inspire visitors to take part in conserving this special place for future generations.



MORE THAN A MAP!

Every exhibit needs a reflective area – a place to set the tone and start the journey.

Here, visitors can explore the topography of the Big Bend in a new way. This sculpted relief map is stretched across cubes that visitors can turn to reveal an ever-changing collage of images and artifacts that evoke the themes of the exhibits.





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TIME TRAVELERS

Visitors to the Big Bend have the opportunity to see into the distant past – if they know what to look for.

In this area of the exhibit, visitors can learn to identify soil and geologic samples that tell tales of ancient volcanoes.

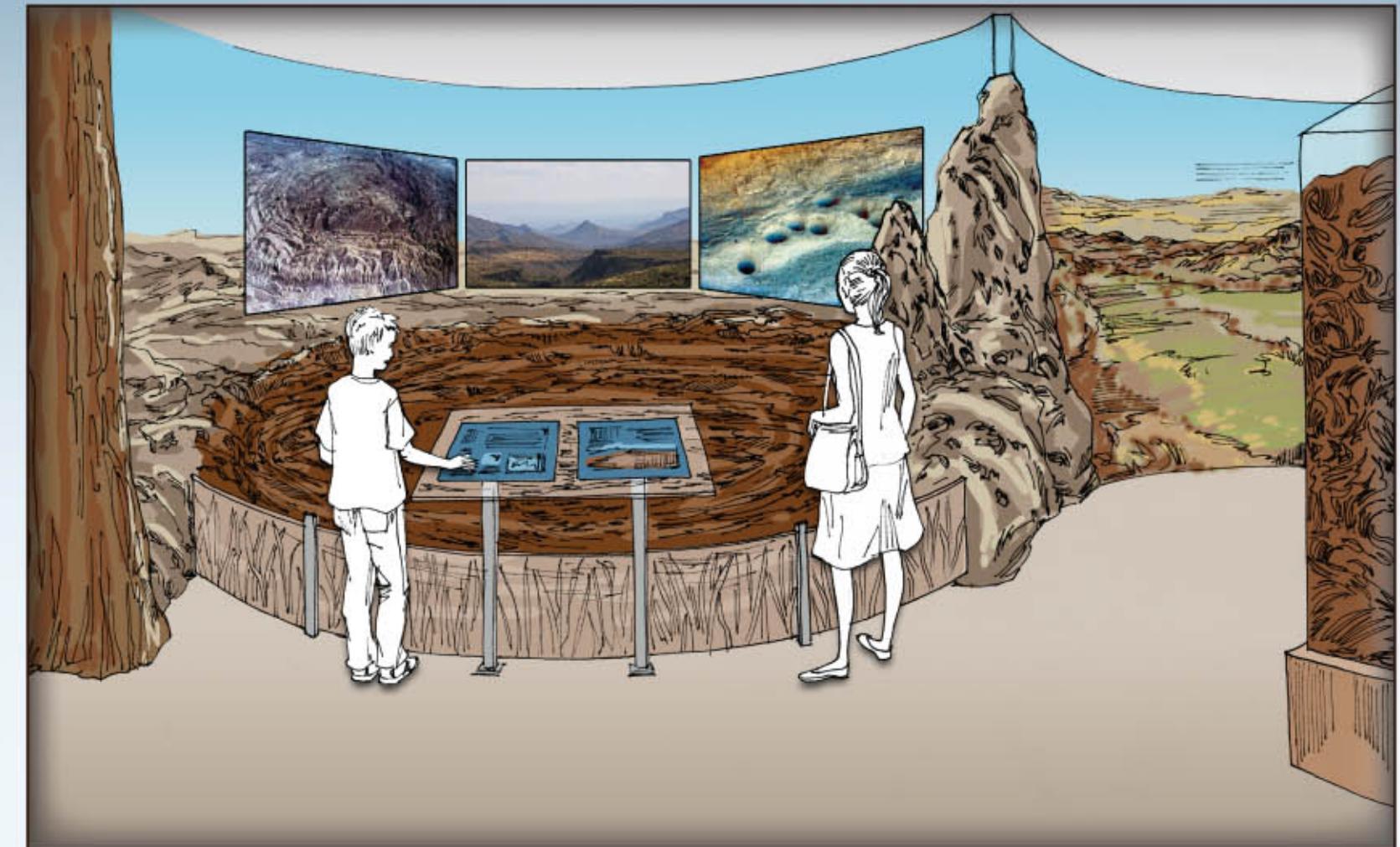
A huge fossilized wing stands in silent testimony to the immense scientific discoveries made in the Big Bend.

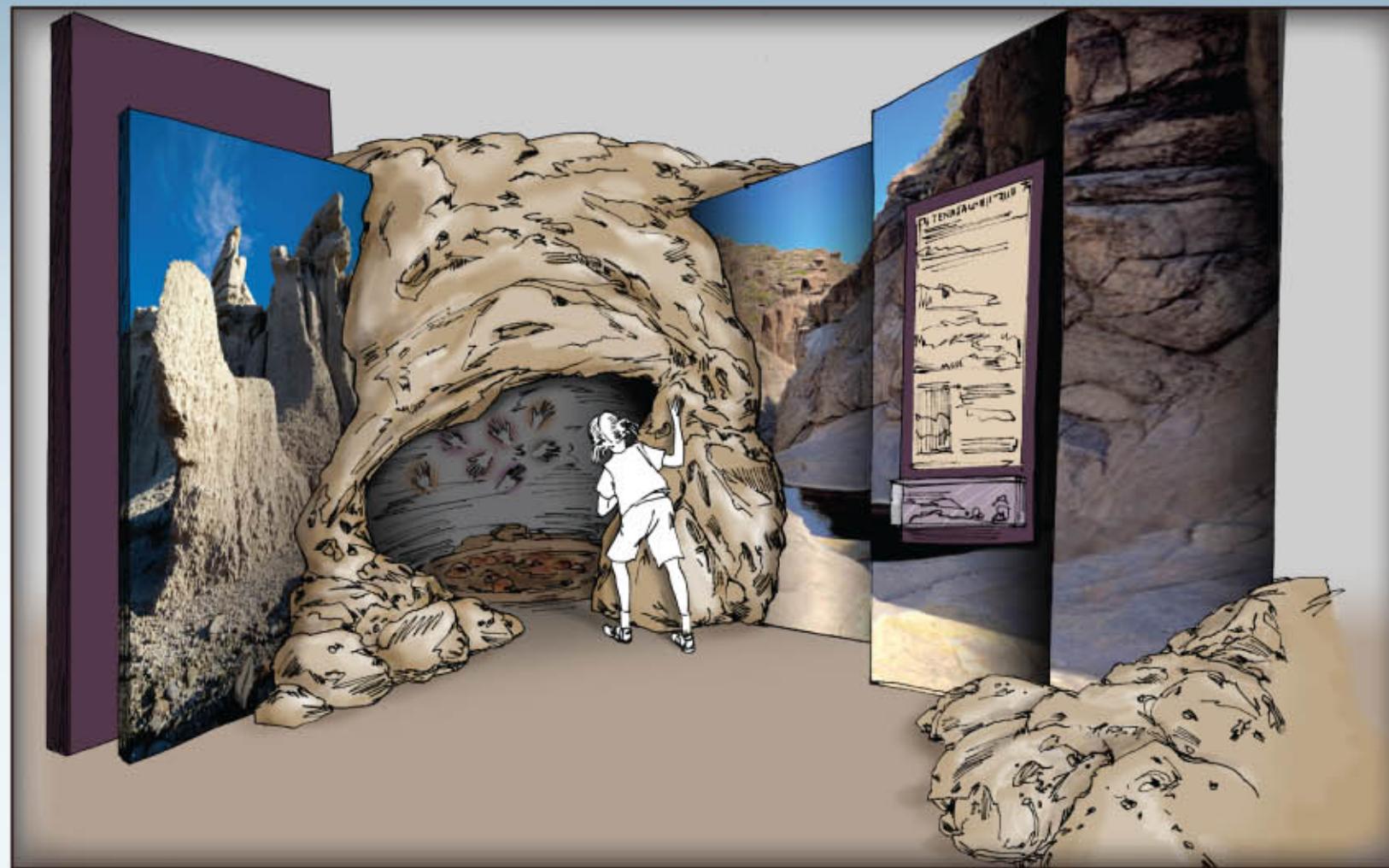


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THE VIEW FROM UP HERE

The best way to view the Big Bend's most striking geologic features is from the air. In this area of the exhibit visitors have a forced aerial perspective of the "Solitario" an ancient volcanic feature that is 10 miles across. Above, three consecutive media screens play amazing images of an exclusive helicopter tour of Big Bend Ranch.





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A SENSE OF DISCOVERY

Hiking in Big Bend is full of surprises.

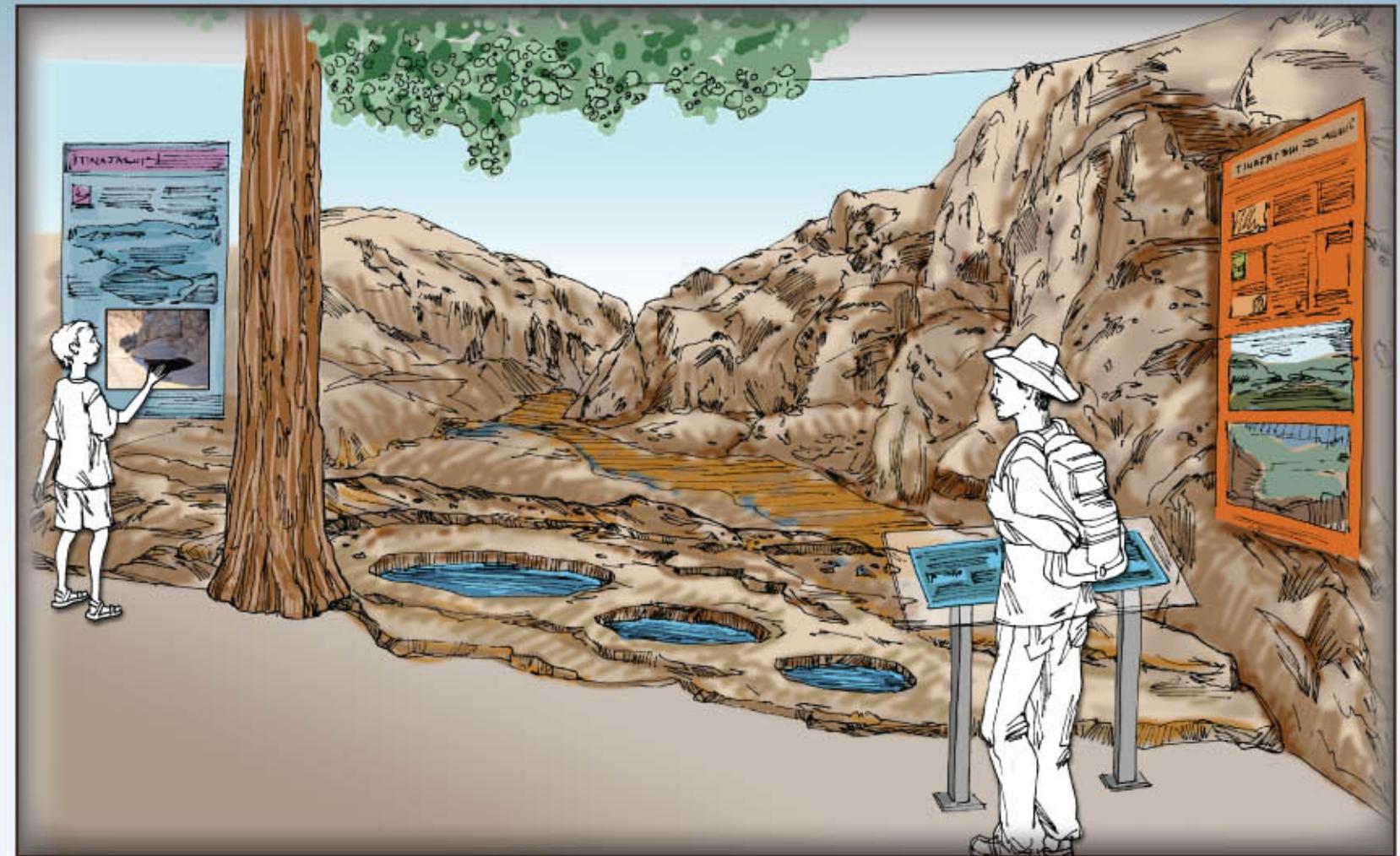
Visitors to the exhibit can feel that sense of discovery as they round the corner, look up and discover ancient rock art. Because this is a replica of a famous, but inaccessible, rock shelter in Big Bend Ranch, younger museum visitors are welcome to crawl inside and imagine life in Big Bend for the first Americans.



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A PRECIOUS RESOURCE

Native peoples and early settlers knew the locations of each spring and tinajas (bowl shaped formations that collect water) in the land that is now Big Bend Ranch. Now, exhibit visitors can use the interactive touch display to explore selected water sources in the park and learn about the vital role they play in the desert ecosystem.





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RANCHING HERITAGE

Hikers in the Big Bend often come across the ruins of early ranches, these crumbling adobe houses, water tanks and windmills are reminders of the ingenuity that helped these families survive in the Chihuahuan Desert. Visitors to the exhibit can view an interactive animation that helps explain how ranchers moved water over large distances for their livestock and how ultimately these technologies affected the desert ecosystem.

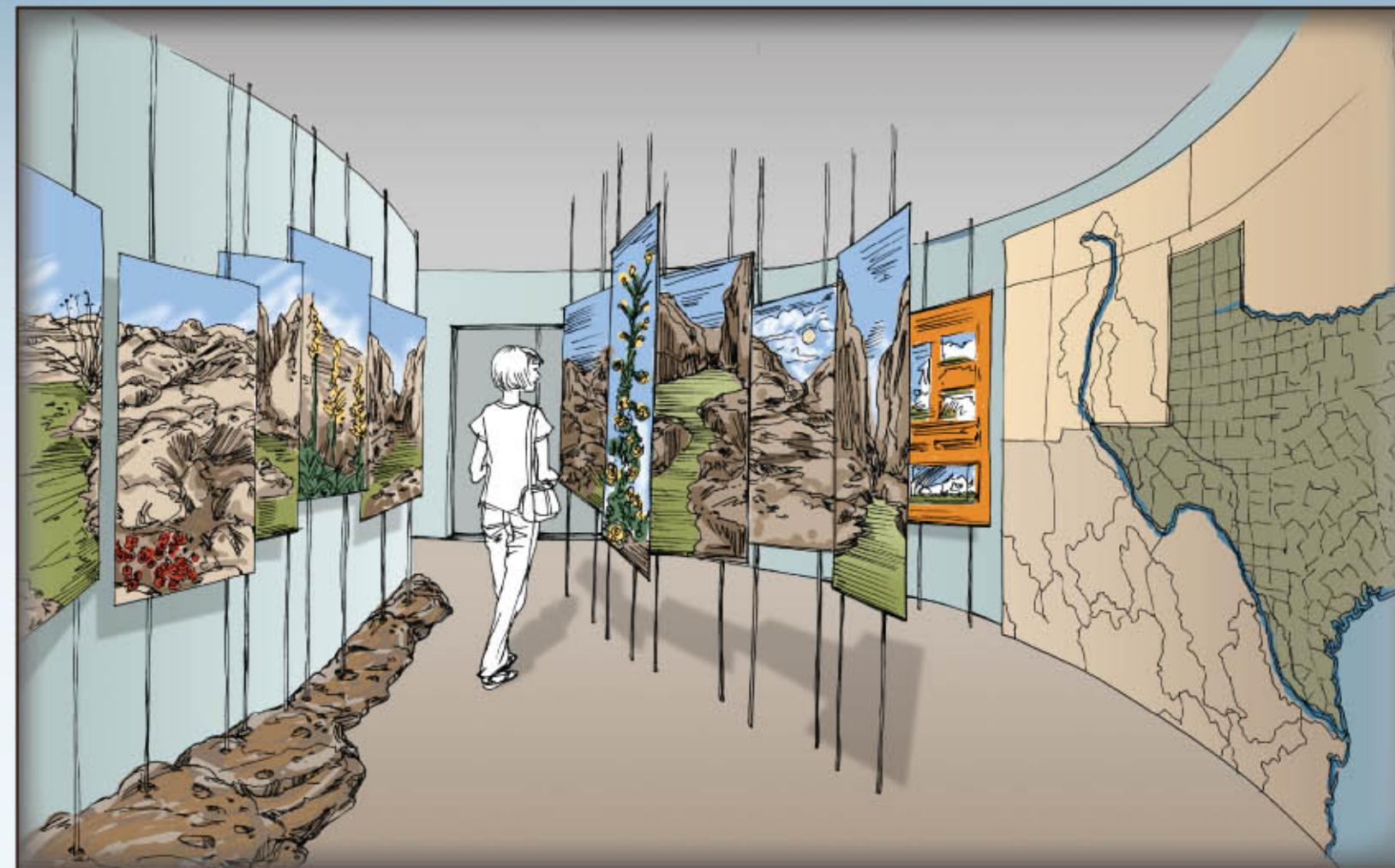




DESERT THUNDERSTORM

A sudden downpour can have a dramatic effect on the Chihuahuan Desert. As visitors turn this corner they will feel a blast of cool, damp air and hear the rumble of distant thunderstorms. Then, they can see a stunning array of blooming desert plants and learn about the amazing adaptations of these plant species. As they follow the sound of flowing water around the next bend, visitors can look up to see examples of the hundreds of migratory birds who visit the Big Bend each year.





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A THREATENED RIVER

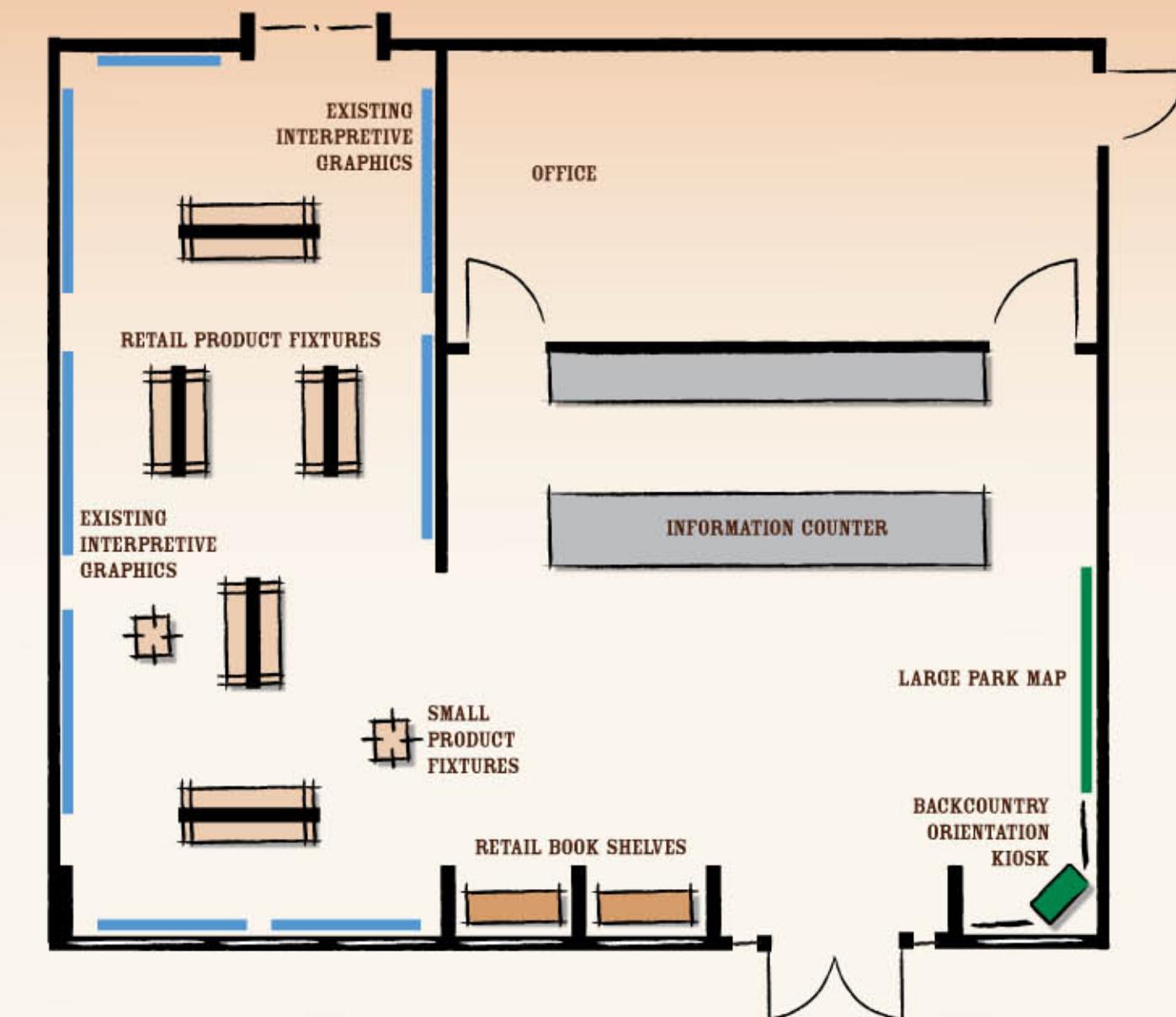
The Rio Grande connects us. The people of two nations and countless wildlife species depend on it for survival. Yet, it is among the most threatened rivers in the world. This contemplative end to the exhibit journey provides visitors a river of images showcasing the many lives that depend on the Rio Grande. A large wall mural and touch-screen displays allow visitors to delve as deeply into the issues surround the conservation of the Rio Grande as they like.



Orientation and Themed Retail

A NEW KIND OF PARK STORE

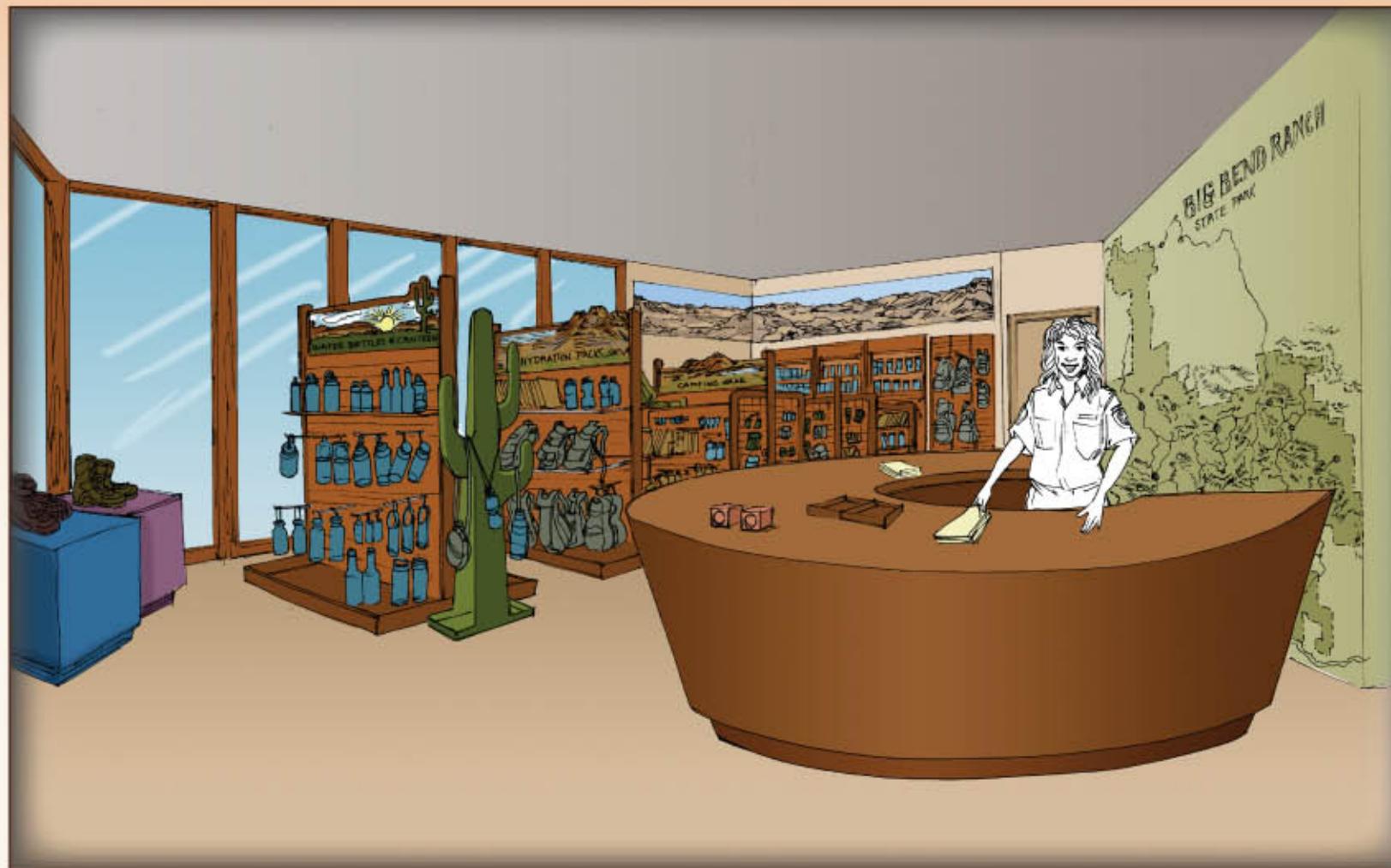
In recent years, many retail organizations have turned to thematic displays to promote products by educating potential customers. Many customers to this retail space will be on their way to outdoor adventures in the Big Bend area and will be in need of both orientation and specialty products. This retail space will be designed to evoke a desert trading post, providing thematic staging for key merchandise. Additionally, orientation maps and safety information will both help visitors navigate Big Bend State Park and remind them of the importance of stocking up on water, sunscreen and other gear.



SAUCEDA RANCH STORE

Visitors to Saucedo Ranch within Big Bend Ranch State Park

can obtain permits, get the supplies they need and learn why they need them. Additionally, integrated maps and thematic displays will provide visitors with an overview of Big Bend Ranch.



Orientation and Themed Retail

WARNOCK CENTER STORE

Visitors to the Barton Warnock Center Store can obtain permits and use a computer kiosk to learn about the recreational opportunities in Big Bend Ranch. Thematic retail displays will link necessary supplies to correlating safety messages.

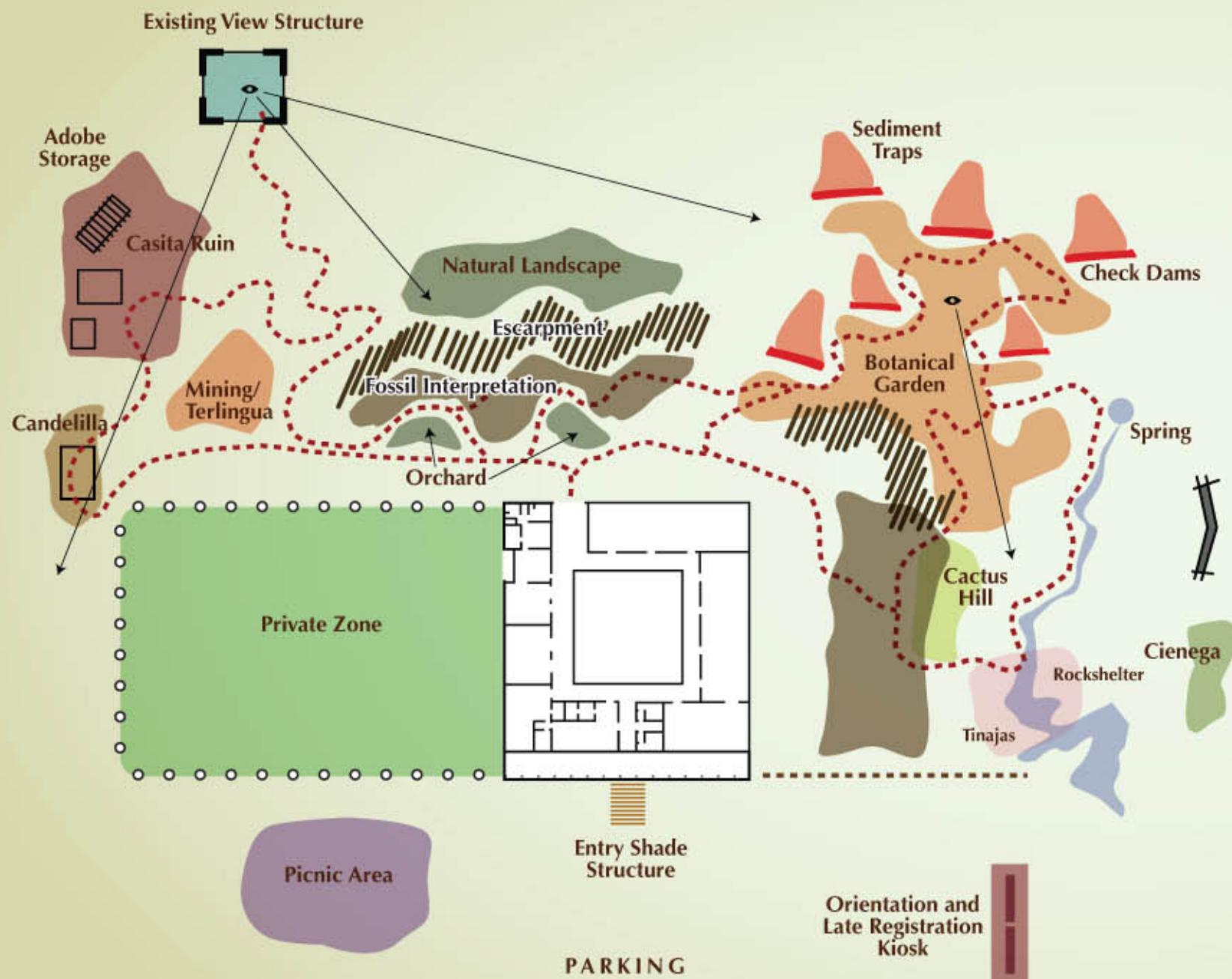


Phase 2 EXPANDED GARDENS AT BARTON WARNOCK CENTER

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

The existing gardens at Barton Warnock Center showcase the amazing diversity of desert plant life that can be found in the Chihuahuan Desert. When the interior exhibit phases are complete, this project proposes to build upon the success of Barton Warnock's original gardens to create a one-of-a-kind attraction.





Phase 2 EXPANDED GARDENS AT BARTON WARNOCK CENTER

HANDS-ON HISTORY

This innovative garden will combine garden plantings with realistic historical environments.

In the thematic garden, visitors will have the opportunity to participate in activities and programs or just stroll through the gardens and enjoy their beauty. Visitors can excavate a fossilized pterosaur in the 1930's, make tortillas in an active mining camp in the 1890's or walk 6,000 years back in time to a rockshelter and create their own pictographs. These gardens will help families make a real connection to the many ways people have lived with and learned from this special place.





**Help Make This
Vision a Reality**

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you are interested in learning how you can help make the Museum & Desert Gardens at Warnock Center a reality please contact the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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