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For immediate release

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Children's Museum of Rochester project moves forward;

Next step is to decide on a location

A group of Rochester parents, businesspeople, and community leaders are actively searching for an existing building in which to house the first-ever Children's Museum in Rochester after a recent fundraising study showed strong donor support for a children's museum here.

Children's Museum of Rochester (CMR) board members are considering a variety of existing buildings in all parts of town, with the understanding that any existing building will need to be remodeled to make it appropriate and safe for the boisterous, hands-on fun of a children's museum.

"It is exciting to finally be looking for a place to call 'home' for the Children's Museum of Rochester," said Scott Liebl, president of the Children's Museum project. "We have been working for two years to reach this point, and things are going to happen quickly now. Our goal is to locate a building within the next two months."

In spring of 2008, the Children's Museum of Rochester completed a study that showed 40,000 visitors would use such a facility annually, and the museum would draw from a 50-mile radius around Rochester.

This week's decision by the CMR board of directors to rent or buy an existing building was made after a national fundraising consulting firm, The Steier Group, completed a fundraising feasibility study for CMR which gauged community and donor support for the project.

The fundraising feasibility study—which included mail and online surveys and personal interviews with potential CMR stakeholders—was conducted over the course of the past five weeks. The comprehensive study showed strong support for the establishment of a Children's Museum of Rochester. Results showed:

**** Rochester parents are wildly enthusiastic and passionate about a possible children's museum in town. More than 650 people responded to a mail or online survey about the museum. More than 80 percent of respondents said they were in favor of a museum, and more than half of the respondents indicated they would make a monetary gift to get a**

Children's Museum of Rochester up and running.

** Top individual and business donors in the region also responded favorably to plans for a Children's Museum here. Steier Group consultants conducted 61 personal interviews with potential top donors; 73 percent of those interviewees indicated they would make a monetary gift to the CMR.

"We are thrilled by these results and have decided to proceed with a capital campaign that will begin in two or three months," Liebl said. The active portion of the capital campaign would last six to nine months. Liebl hopes that the doors could be opened for a CMR by 2010.

CMR vice president Melissa Brinkman adds: "A Children's Museum of Rochester is going to provide a big benefit for the whole community. Not only will the museum be a fun and educational place for local families, but it will be a nice escape for families from other communities who are visiting Rochester," said Brinkman. "We expect a children's museum will be a big plus for local businesses and a good recruiting tool for local employers, also."

Children's museums are not typical museums. "One of our mottos is 'Play to Learn. Learn to Play,'" Brinkman said, noting that children's museums are lively places with interactive activities and exhibits designed specifically to develop kids' gross and fine motor skills through play and exploration. For example, some potential exhibits could include: a health-related exhibit in which kids could actually walk through a giant model of a human body, and a construction exhibit in which kids could use basic engineering to build. Currently, the nearest Children's Museums to Rochester are the Minnesota Children's Museum in St. Paul and the Children's Museum of La Crosse. Children's museums are the fastest growing segment of the museum industry, according to the Association of Children's Museums.