



Everything New Orleans

World War II Museum in New Orleans shows off new building Thursday

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By John Pope, The Times-Picayune

At the National World War II Museum, where continuous construction is a way of life, dignitaries today will top off one massive building and break ground for the next component of the complex in the 500 block of Andrew Higgins Drive. The back-to-back events are scheduled to start at 10 a.m., when an evergreen tree will be hoisted 96 feet into the air and set in place on the highest spot of the building to be known as the U.S. Freedom Pavilion: The Boeing Center.



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Architectural rendering

The U.S. Freedom Pavilion at the National World War II Museum will be topped Thursday morning. The Boeing Center in the pavilion will include the Laborde Services Gallery.

This \$35 million structure, whose dominant feature will be a massive sheet of glass that will let people see some of the heavy equipment that helped the Allies win World War II, is expected to open during the winter, said Gordon "Nick" Mueller, the museum's president and chief executive officer.

This building is rising at the back of the tract across Higgins Drive from the museum's main building.

After the topping off, participants will make a 90-degree turn and face the Camp Street down-ramp for a ceremony in which museum

officials and honored guests will turn shovels full of dirt to mark the symbolic start of the construction of the next building, whose official name will be Campaigns of Courage: European and Pacific Theaters. The \$33 million pavilion is expected to open in November 2013, Mueller said.

Although both events are scheduled to take place outdoors, rain might force them into the lobby of the Louisiana Pavilion, the museum's main building, he said.

The Freedom Pavilion is designed to display what Mueller called "macro artifacts" from the museum's holdings, such as airplanes, tanks and Jeeps.

Although the museum's inventory is hardly small, this area won't be too crowded. "We're not the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, where you have every variety of plane and macro artifact," he said. "We don't need those to make a point."

Besides, there has to be room in the 26,540-square-foot building for interactive exhibits that will convey America's strength, said Mueller, who for that reason refers to the building as "the tower of power."

One of the more popular stops is expected to be a simulated submarine ride in which 27 visitors at a time will feel the floor vibrate and the whoosh of a torpedo being fired.

To get an idea of what the air war was like, a section called "The Flyboys" will let people peer into planes from catwalks and take virtual cockpit tours.

A display will tell the stories of the 464 men who received the Medal of Honor during World War II, and there will be an oral-history section.

One of the more intriguing sections, Mueller said, will present real situations from the war and ask visitors to decide what they would do from strategic, ethical and moral standpoints.

"It's a very engaging way of making people think what it's like to be in wartime," he said.

The Freedom Pavilion will not have a narrative line, but Campaigns of Courage will, with one floor devoted to the conflict in Europe and Africa and another detailing the war in Asia and the Pacific Theater. Visitors will see how strategies evolved, he said, and get an inkling of the conditions soldiers faced, which ranged from arid African deserts to mosquito-infested Asian jungles to bitterly cold Alpine winters.

Plans call for material on the war in the Pacific to be moved from the original museum building to the Campaigns of Courage Pavilion.

Besides providing overviews of the campaigns, this building will have a personal touch: Each visitor will receive a bar-coded version of a GI's dog tag bearing a service member's name. Throughout the exhibit, updates will be available at kiosks.



The National World War II Museum
New Orleans, LA
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Architectural rendering

In the Campaigns of Courage Pavilion, the last building in the World War II Museum complex to be built, one area will highlight the Battle of the Bulge.

There's no need to fear any of these service members died in the war, Mueller said, because the updates will contain information from oral-history interviews conducted for the museum, long after they were safely back home.

In addition to following soldiers, sailors and Marines with dog tags, Mueller said, visitors will be able to use these electronic devices to indicate artifacts that interest them. Pictures of the artifacts will be emailed to visitors' homes.

Even though the new construction might seem to take up most of the room on the block, the museum's master plan calls for two more buildings:

The Liberation Pavilion, a \$25 million structure that will tell the stories of people who were freed from concentration camps and prisoner-of-war camps and spotlight some of the benefits that came from the war, such as the Marshall Plan and the GI Bill.

A still-unnamed \$25 million hall that will house, among other things, traveling exhibits, curatorial offices and an interactive research center.

On the museum's website, visitors are told to allow two to three hours for a museum visit. With the new additions, Mueller said, that could extend to two to three days.

"I think people will want to hang around," he said.



John Pope can be reached at jpoppe@timespicyune.com or 504.826.3317.

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