

PROJECT DATA

**DETROIT ZOO
FORD CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND
CONSERVATION EDUCATION**
ROYAL OAK, MI

Client

Detroit Zoological Institute
8450 W. Ten Mile Rd.
Royal, Oak, MI 48068
Marty Mitton
248.398.0903

Architect

Smith Group
500 Griswold St.
Suite 200
Detroit, MI 48226
John Sobetski
313.983.3600

Size

41,800 sf

Cost

\$7,900,000

Date Completed

December, 2004



The new Ford Education Center at the Detroit Zoo is an interactive experience with larger-than-life animal sculptures and models of animal homes, such as birds' nests and underground burrows. The center allows participants to explore by observing, touching and climbing the exhibits.

JM Olson Corporation was selected as the General Contractor working with the architect and owner to develop the 41,800 s.f facility to serve as the epicenter for the zoo's educational initiatives.

The center's education wing contains six interpretive studios developed for hands-on discovery through virtual dissections, wet laboratory experiments, group studies, ceramics and painting. The presentation wing contains a 240-seat theater and an art gallery for traveling exhibits. Also included is a 3-D virtual simulator that provides visitors with the opportunity to experience life as a dinosaur in the Jurassic era, a mountain gorilla foraging for food or similar encounters.

The building design allows for natural ventilation and light. Understanding the logistical uses of the building while staying within budget was one of the biggest challenges. Another challenge included the shipment of materials and equipment across railroad traffic on the zoo grounds in use by visitors. Progress and safety meetings and a proactive schedule help provide workable solutions.

