

# PLANET WORD

## Groundbreaking



## PLANET WORD, A REVOLUTIONARY MUSEUM DEDICATED TO THE POWER AND FUN OF LANGUAGE, BREAKS GROUND AT HISTORIC FRANKLIN SCHOOL IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

*Museum scheduled to open in late 2019 will bring language to life through revolutionary technology, interactive exhibits, and voice activation.*

**JUNE 4, 2018** (Washington, D.C.) — Planet Word, a revolutionary museum dedicated to the power and fun of language and how words shape the human experience, broke ground today on its future home: the historic Franklin School building in Washington, D.C. Scheduled to open in late 2019, Planet Word plans to be the world's first voice-activated, interactive museum and a centerpiece of the revitalization of Washington's Franklin Square Park area.

Franklin School developer and Planet Word Founder and CEO Ann Friedman was joined by Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser to mark the official start of renovations to the 50,000-square-foot building that will be home to the museum.

Planet Word will comprise three floors of immersive, interactive exhibits that will engage visitors of all ages in experiencing words and language from a wide range of perspectives — from the science of how language skills develop early in life to how words are used creatively and persuasively in music, poetry, humor, advertising, oratory, and literature.

"There's never been a museum showcasing the fun and power and beauty of words and language, even though we're all word collectors from the day we're born. They are the overlooked and under-appreciated artifacts of our lives. Planet Word will change all that," said Friedman. "We're excited to bring Planet Word to the Franklin Square

neighborhood, and to be a part of the rebirth of this corner of the city. And we're delighted to have been chosen to renovate the Franklin School as a home for Planet Word. This glorious, historic building will now get a new lease on life for another 150 years."

The Franklin School, a five-story, 50,000-square-foot modern Renaissance building designed by Adolf Cluss, opened in 1869 as the cornerstone of a comprehensive system of public education for the city of Washington. A National Historic Landmark, it was chosen to house Planet Word in large part for its historic connection to the museum's mission. It was here that Alexander Graham Bell made the first wireless transmission of the human voice — words — using a Photophone, a precursor to fiberoptic technology, in 1880.

Ms. Friedman also announced a \$1 million contribution to support Planet Word from AT&T, the company that sprang forth from Bell's invention. AT&T is committed to supporting media, culture, and the arts, and since 2008 has committed \$400 million to training and education programs, helping millions of students across the country and around the globe.

"AT&T and Planet Word are a great fit," said Denis Dunn, President, AT&T-District of Columbia. "At AT&T, we use the power of our network to connect people to the world; Planet Word is

*The museum where language comes to life.*

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celebrating the words and language that people use to connect. I believe Alexander Graham Bell would have approved.”

The architecture firm Beyer Blinder Belle was chosen to oversee the preservation and rehabilitation of the Franklin School, due to its specialization in historic buildings, its specific knowledge of the building methods of Adolf Cluss, and the strict preservation standards and sensitivity it will apply to renovating the Franklin School’s interiors and striking architectural details.

The project will include restoring the building’s original frescos, some of its original classrooms, and the two grand staircases with their ornate railings. A fourth floor is being renovated under the original soaring mansard roof, which will house a new event space and connect to a new roof terrace on the historic roof overlooking K Street and Franklin Square.

Local Projects, the renowned interactive exhibit design firm behind the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and the Equal Justice Initiative’s new Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama, is designing Planet Word’s nine immersive learning galleries.

Renderings of three of Planet Word’s experiences were unveiled at the groundbreaking:

→ a 22-foot-high word wall comprising more than 1,000 three-dimensional words that light up and respond to words spoken by visitors to tell stories about how those words entered the English language;

- an enormous 5,000-LED world-globe chandelier that will challenge visitors with word games incorporating languages from dozens of lands and cultures;
- and a gallery where visitors will “paint” with words, experiencing the power of words to evoke rich, imaginative settings by creating a variety of scenes on the walls around them.

“Local Projects creates next-generation experiences that forward our culture through humanity and innovation, and we’re thrilled to partner with Planet Word on this initiative,” said Jake Barton.

“Words are among our most powerful tools of expression, and with Planet Word we will put words into the minds and mouths of our visitors. We’ll have a playful, lively environment where the power of words will resonate in every sensory way imaginable.”

— JAKE BARTON, *Principal and Founder, Local Projects*

High resolution digital files of the renderings are available to media by contacting Brian Moriarty at 212-981-5252 or brian\_moriarty@dkcnews.com

The District of Columbia was instrumental in arranging for Planet Word to make its permanent home in The Franklin School, which has been unoccupied since 2008.

“Given the Franklin School’s historic role as a place of learning and exploration, it is

fitting that Planet Word will continue using the space in such a unique way to promote creativity and knowledge. This one-of-a-kind museum will fit right into the culture and fabric of the District and we are proud to be part of this exciting project,” said Mayor Muriel Bowser.

The groundbreaking event also featured remarks by award-winning young adult author Jason Reynolds, a member of Planet Word’s Advisory Board, as well as performances by singer/songwriter Flo Anito and Jazzlyn Ford, who performed an original song, “Caged Bird,” inspired by Maya Angelou; Mayor Bowser was introduced by 2018 D.C. Youth Poet Laureate Aniyah Smith.

Ann Doerr, a member of Planet Word’s Board of Directors, was an early major donor to the project.

“Words matter. Without a strong vocabulary, ideas cannot be shared, innovation is stifled, and democracy withers. Coming from a STEM-based world in Silicon Valley, I know how important precision is — in science, in communication, in government, in the arts. Precision matters in vocabulary.”

— ANN DOERR, *Noted Philanthropist and Social Change Agent*

“I am grateful to Ann Friedman, someone whose leadership I have admired for decades, for her tireless efforts to bring this vision to life.”



### ABOUT PLANET WORD

Planet Word is a non-profit museum scheduled to open in Washington, D.C., in late 2019 that will be dedicated to the power and fun of language. Founded by philanthropist Ann Friedman, the museum will invite visitors of all ages to experience what words mean to the human experience in a fun, technologically-advanced, immersive environment. It will be housed on three floors in the Franklin School Building at 13th and K streets, a National Historic Landmark with a rich history in public education and the site of the first wireless voice transmission by Alexander Graham Bell in 1880. Planet Word is overseen by a Board of Directors that includes leaders in media, real estate, technology, the arts, museums, and education, led by Chair Ann Friedman. Renovation of The Franklin School will be overseen by Beyer Blinder Belle, and the museum galleries will be designed by Local Projects.

The museum where language comes to life.

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