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Vision With a Mission

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The Perot Museum of Nature & Science is at that stage where passersby can see the building, in all its dimensions, but not quite the **vision** behind it. What are we to make, for example, of the glass structure embedded on the south facade, which points to both the sky and the skyline? Thom Mayne, the architect, said his intention is to make the museum a "part of the public life of Dallas." He means this in a physical and even palpable sense. As visitors move from one part of the museum to another, their view will be of Dallas. The most dramatic manifestation of this is the ascent on the glass-enclosed stairway, which visually draws people back to downtown. "You always go back to the city," Mayne observed during a recent tour of the site. Having the city core as a permanent visitor to the museum is a testament to the dramatic visual changes in the Dallas skyline. There is, after all, something of significance to see and to welcome. When you consider that signature additions include major venues for art and culture - like the Perot Museum, all monuments to local philanthropy - then Mayne's **vision** makes even more sense. Dallas is perhaps unique in that it has built all these new gleaming centers of culture over such a short period of time. People will disagree on the merits of the architecture - it is an art, after all - but what does deserve universal approbation is the energy they are bringing to the center of the city. The plazas that will be an integral part of the Perot Museum are now being built. They are designed to attract pedestrians and not just patrons. The museum restaurant, its store and its main public indoor space will be open to all - that's the other way the city comes into the space. Whether any of this works as designed will have to wait until the opening early next year, but a little excitement in advance is appropriate, if not to be encouraged. The city is about to get a \$185 million gift, **vision** included.

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