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Pompano Beach and Pembroke Pines open city centers; Frost Museum debuting in Miami

A performing-arts theater for 11 local dance companies, a two-story art gallery and a martini glass-shaped, 500,000-gallon aquarium tank will be the centerpieces of three new cultural centers, all opening to the public next week in Pompano Beach, Pembroke Pines and Miami.

When the Pompano Beach Cultural Center, the Frank C. Ortis Art Gallery at Pembroke Pines City Center, and the Patricia and Phillip Frost Museum of Science debut, these multimillion-dollar cultural hubs aim to put their stamp on South Florida's arts scene.

"The idea of enhancing our arts community in different counties at the same time is fantastic," says Jill Slaughter, chief curator of the Frank C. Ortis Art Gallery. "It's all about making arts and culture close and affordable to everyone."

Following is what each new cultural center will offer to the public.



The new Pompano Beach Cultural Center on the southeast corner of North Dixie Highway and Atlantic Boulevard. (Carline Jean / Sun Sentinel)

Pompano Beach Cultural Center, 50 SW First Ave.; 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; free admission; 954-839-9578 or CCPompano.org

Opening: Thursday, May 11

What it is: First came Bailey Contemporary Arts, the gallery and studio in old Pompano. Then came the Ali Cultural Arts Center, a performance space converted from a remodeled former boarding house. The city's third and newest effort to increase Pompano Beach's cultural clout will be this two-story, sharply angled building on Dixie Highway and Atlantic Boulevard. At 48,000 square feet, the Cultural Center will house a branch of the Pompano Beach Library, a performing-arts center, classrooms and an art gallery.

The \$18 million center, paid for by the city, Broward County and Pompano Beach's Community Redevelopment Agency, aims to drive more arts-minded visitors to Pompano, says Alyona Ushe, president of the Creatives group, which will handle cultural-events programming at the center. "It's got that 'I am art, hear me roar' feeling," Ushe says. "When you walk into the building, you know you're in a creative atmosphere. It's got a soul."

Features: Starting this month, the cultural center will become the permanent home of 11 local orchestras, theater and dance companies, including Outre Theatre, Florida Classical Ballet, South Florida Chamber Ensemble, Rootz of Music and the all-female South Florida Jubilee Chorus. Other snazzy amenities: a 2,500-square-foot digital media center, which will have a green screen, a recording studio and 3D printers. "The public can film their movies there, or live stream, and local musicians can record their music here," Ushe says.

Upcoming events: On Saturday, May 13, the center's Havana Nights-themed kickoff party will feature Latin bites, a performance of "Don Quixote and Music of Spain" with the South Florida Chamber Ensemble, a performance of the Michael McKeever play "Imagine: A Celebration of the Creative Mind" and the exhibit "Shipwrecked of Reason," showcasing 50 years of Cuban art in the gallery.



The interior of the Frank gallery, which features a mural by South Florida artist Lori Pratico titled, "Just Being Me." (Garrett Julian Productions / Courtesy)

The Frank C. Ortis Art Gallery at Pembroke Pines City Center, 601 SW City Center Way; 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; free admission; 954-392-2129 or TheFrankGallery.org

Opened: Thursday, April 27

What it is: The Great Recession stalled construction of the Pembroke Pines City Center for years, and the city borrowed from its utility fund to pay for infrastructure and upkeep of the multibuilding campus. But after a decade of delays, the center debuted in April with a \$58 million civic center — the city's most expensive building ever — which includes a new commission chambers and a 35,000-square-foot Great Hall. Next door is the city's new cultural cornerstone: the two-story Frank C. Ortis Art Gallery, nicknamed "the Frank."

"When we opened last week, people were just amazed that something of this caliber could be in Pines," says Jill Slaughter, the Frank's chief curator. "This project was so long in planning. People are finally seeing what we'd all been dreaming. [This gallery] envelops you in the spirit of the people of Pines."

Features: At 11,000 square feet, the Frank boasts a reception hall, three art galleries and two project rooms for site-specific installations. The group exhibit “What’s Wonderful,” which opened April 27, showcases 14 local artists attempting to answer the question posed in the show’s title, while a companion show, “What Else Is Wonderful,” features works by special-needs individuals from the Sunrise-based nonprofit Friends and Stars. A separate exhibit, “People of Pines,” takes 16 painted portraits of Pembroke Pines residents and pairs them with recorded audio of the subjects answering questions about their lives and health.

Upcoming events: Along with the new exhibitions, the nearby Great Hall theater will host the Mother’s Day-themed comedy event “Honor Thy Mother With Joy and Laughter” on May 13 and a performance by Kool and the Gang on May 27.



The \$325 million Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science opened in downtown Miami on May 8. Save 10 percent on museum memberships in May during [Miami Museum Month](#). (Doreen Christensen)

Phillip and Patricia Frost Museum of Science, 1101 Biscayne Blvd., in Miami; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Sunday (extended opening weekend hours: 9 a.m.-10 p.m. May 12, 9 a.m.-10 p.m. May 13 and 9 a.m.-6 p.m. May 14); admission \$17-\$28; 305-434-9600 or FrostScience.org

Opening: Monday, May 8

What it is: After money snafus, permitting delays and a last-minute \$49 million funding bailout by Miami-Dade County in 2016, the ambitious, 250,000-square-foot Frost Museum of Science (total cost: \$305 million) will finally open along the Biscayne Bay waterfront. In August 2015, the Frost shut down its old longtime home in Coconut Grove, which opened in 1949, to prepare for the new museum.

Features: Enter the stand-alone aquarium at the Frost Museum and gaze up: That's a 31-foot-wide oculus, a kind of sea-bottom lens letting museumgoers peer at the 500,000-gallon fish tank overhead. The four-story, martini-glass-shaped aquarium is home to 100 marine species, including scalloped hammerhead sharks, lesser devil rays, snappers, angelfish, tarpon and jellyfish, spread out among six South Florida habitats.

"These animals are ambassadors of their species," says Andy DeHart, the museum's vice president of animal husbandry. "They can be a gateway for the next generation who decides to become an ecologist or biologist or horticulturist."

The building also includes a 250-seat, spherical planetarium and high-tech gallery spaces.

Upcoming events: An opening-day ceremony on May 8 will include a ribbon cutting (the first 100 families will receive a free Family Level membership) and tours of exhibits including "Feathers to the Stars," chronicling the history of flight from dinosaurs to manned aircraft; "Seeing: What Are You Looking At?" a probe into the marvels of human and mechanical vision; and "LasersHow: Light, Color and Geometry," a history of the physics of light.