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The revised blueprint for the Frank Lloyd Wright Filling Station on the 200-block of Michigan Avenue near Seneca Street.

Plans for Wright-designed gas station get a boost

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NEWS STAFF REPORTER

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Plans to build a re-creation of a gas station designed by Frank Lloyd Wright took a leap forward today when a city panel OK'd construction of a huge atrium that will enclose the structure.

Planning Board members used words like "fabulous" and "great" to describe the second and largest phase of an expansion of the Buffalo Transportation/Pierce-Arrow Museum. The board approved plans by businessman James T. Sandoro to build a 47-foot-high glass-and-steel atrium on the 200-block of Michigan Avenue near Seneca Street. The Atrium will enclose the replica of Wright's filling station.

The world-famous architect originally designed the gas station for the corner of Michigan Avenue and Cherry Street.

Visitors will be able to scrutinize the station from different vantage points, said Patrick J. Mahoney of Lauer-Manguso Architects. He presented revised blueprints today, explaining that the atrium's high ceiling will accommodate the impressive "totem poles" that are primary features in Wright's unique design.

Listen to Mahoney discuss the project



This phase of the museum expansion is expected to cost about \$4 million. Sandoro said he has already secured \$6.3 million in state funds and hopes to raise additional money from

private contributions and other sources as future phases of the museum expansion move forward. He said he has more than 250,000 pieces of transportation-related memorabilia, including Pierce-Arrow cars, motorcycles and other vehicles.

The expanding museum has been in the works for about a decade, Sandoro told city planners.

"Finally, it's coming together, and we're thrilled with it," he said.

The Planning Board unanimously approved a design and site plan for this phase of the project. If things go as planned, Sandoro said he hopes to break ground by July and complete the project by fall 2011, when the National Trust for Historic Preservation holds its annual convention in Buffalo for the first time.

A future phase of the expansion will include additional museum space and a mini-theater that will showcase Buffalo's transportation history.

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