chabot space & science center

Chabot

Since 1883

Chabot Space & Science Center

history & timeline

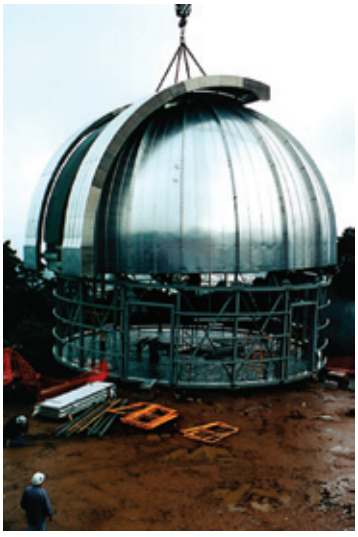
The institution began in 1883 as the Oakland Observatory, through a gift from Anthony Chabot to the City of Oakland. The original Oakland Observatory was located in downtown Oakland and provided public telescope viewing for the community. For decades, it served as the official time-keeping station for the entire Bay Area, measuring time with its transit telescope. The observatory was given to the Board of Education in trust for the City of Oakland and was to be forever free to the public and public schools.

Lafayette Square Park

Mountain Boulevard Construction

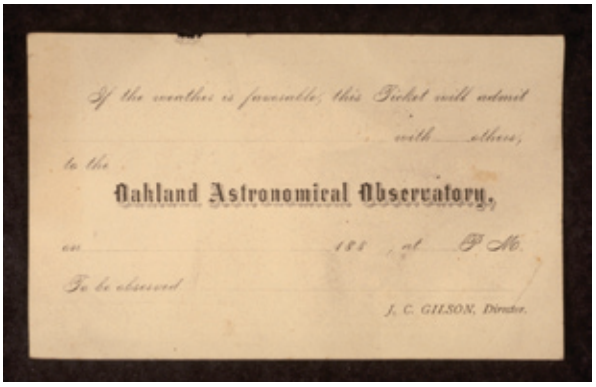
The Observatory moved to Mountain Boulevard in 1915 due to increasing light pollution and urban congestion downtown. In the mid-1960s, the facility was expanded considerably with the addition of a 90-seat planetarium, science labs and classrooms. Throughout this time, Chabot Science Center (as it was renamed) was staffed mainly by Oakland Unified School District personnel and volunteers. In 1977, seismic safety concerns terminated public school students' access to the original Observatory facility. The Observatory remained open to the general public, but school activities were limited to outlying classroom buildings and the planetarium.

Recognizing the need to restore full access to the facility, in 1989 Chabot Observatory & Science Center was formed as a Joint Powers Agency between the City of Oakland, Oakland Unified School District, East Bay Regional Park District and Eastbay Astronomical Society. In 1992 COSC was recognized as a nonprofit organization. The JPA reached an agreement to relocate to Roberts Regional Park high in the Oakland Hills. The project broke ground in October 1996 and construction of the new center began in May 1998.



Dome being lowered during construction, 1998

In January 2000, in anticipation of the grand opening of the new 86,000 square-foot complex, the organization changed its name to Chabot Space & Science Center. On August 19 of that year, Chabot opened its state-of-the-art facility to the public.



Original Chabot Observatory Ticket, c.1883

1882

The new superintendent of the Oakland School District, James C. Gilson, resolves that the district should have a fine telescope such as the one he had seen at the Philadelphia High School.

1883

Anthony Chabot, successful hydraulic engineer and provider of water to the city, agrees to fund an 8-inch telescope. Chabot subsequently funds the new observatory, which opens in downtown Oakland on November 24th.

1885

Chabot further funds a Fauth Transit Telescope with its opportunant chronometers and sidereal clocks.

This telescope establishes the correct time by measuring the passage of stars across its axis. It was used to set the official local time.

1888

Anthony Chabot dies, endowing the observatory, which assumes his name.

1915

A new observatory is built on a low hill, about five miles east of City Hall, and equipped with the existing telescope plus a new 20-inch instrument commissioned in 1914 from Warner & Swasey, with optics by John Brashear.

1924

The East Bay Amateur Astronomical Association, now known as the Eastbay Astronomical Society (EAS), is founded at the new observatory. The Association makes the observatory the focus of a great deal of innovative and enthusiastic scientific activity.

1960

Physics and biology programs are moved to the site, and a new planetarium is built and equipped by four Oakland Rotary clubs. Kingsley Wightman is put in charge of the astronomy/space sciences classes.

1976

After several years of discussions, a site planning committee recommends relocating to a new site — 1,543 feet above sea level — several miles away.

1977

A new law bans the use of the Observatory — which sits on the creep zone of the Hayward Fault — by school classes.

1980

The Board of Education votes to support relocation.

1989

The creation of the Chabot Observatory & Science Center (COSC) as a Joint Powers Agency is approved by the City of Oakland, East Bay Regional Park District, and Oakland Unified School District in conjunction with the Eastbay Astronomical Society. This resolution creates a new steward for the Chabot endowment, to which the founding authorities can turn over assets. In the mean time, maintenance at the present site is delayed, and the physical condition of the buildings becomes even more critical.

1991

Dr. Michael Reynolds becomes the first Executive Director of COSC.

1992

The Chabot Observatory & Science Center Foundation is established as a nonprofit organization.

1993

The architectural firms of Gerson/Overstreet and Fisher-Friedman Associates are retained to prepare the master plan and to design the new facility.

1994

A contract with the United States Air Force provides a construction grant of $17 million.

1996

A groundbreaking ceremony is held in October on the site in Roberts Regional Park in the Oakland hills.

1998

Construction of the new center begins in May. The same month, Chabot becomes a Smithsonian Affiliate.

2000

In January, Chabot Observatory & Science

Center changes its name to Chabot Space & Science Center to better convey the organization's focus on astronomy and the space sciences. On August 19, Chabot Space & Science Center opened to the public.

2003

Alexandra Barnett becomes Chabot's first female Executive Director on January 10. A 36" reflecting telescope ("Nellie") opens to the public on June 21.

2005

Dedication marker placed at original Chabot site and 125th Anniversary Torch Relay took place June 20. The Chabot Space Games, a community celebration commemorating our 125th Anniversary, took place June 21.

More classroom spaces open per Measure G funding. Chabot's Planetarium upgrades to full-dome digital projection, one of just a dozen such projection systems in the world.

2007

Alexander Zwissler is appointed Executive Director & CEO on April 23.

2008

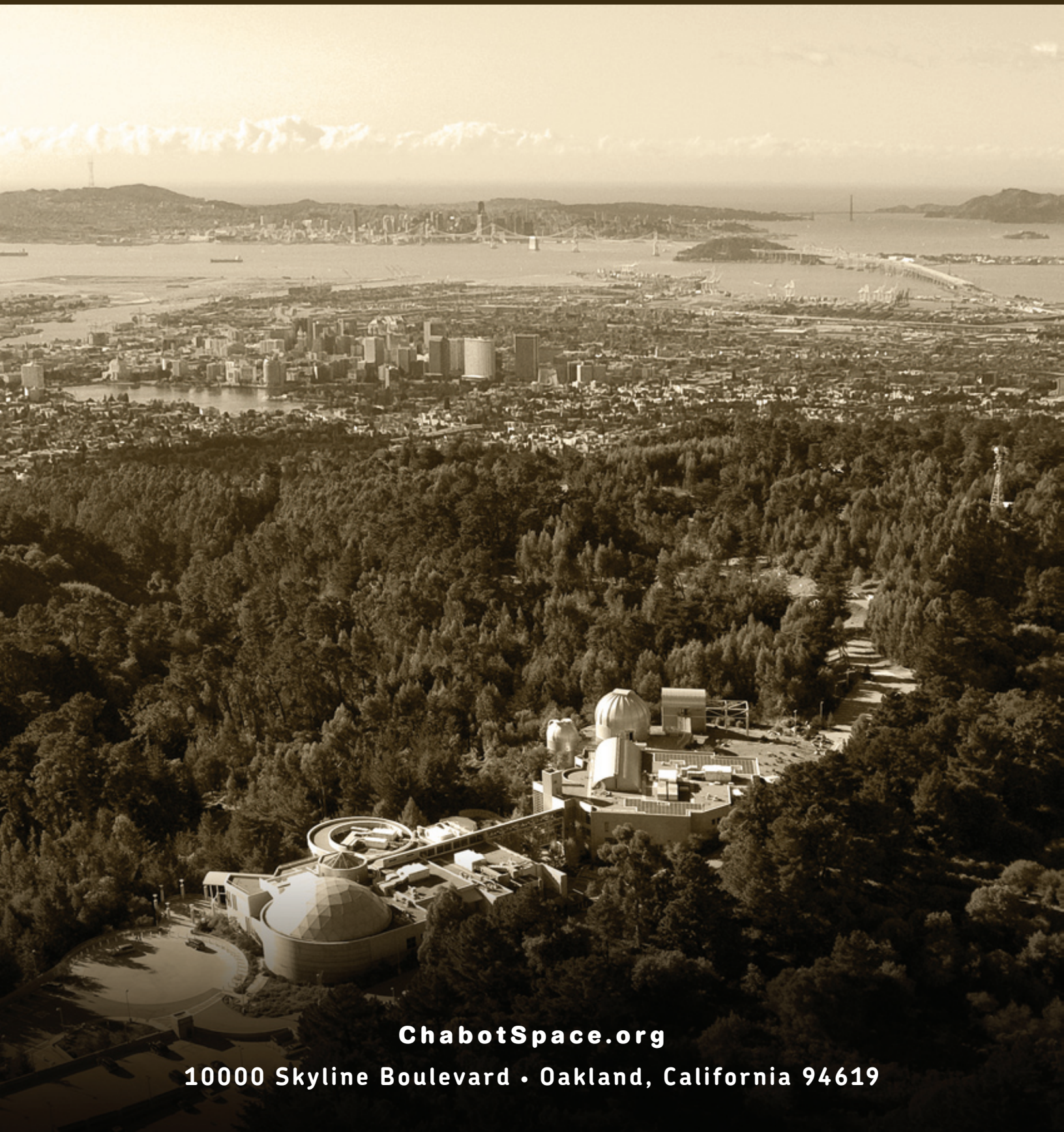
Bill Nye's Climate Lab exhibition opened November 2010, raising climate awareness through interactive displays and solutions-based activities. The exhibit encourages reduction of energy consumption and development of clean energy.

2009

The first digital full-dome show highlighting a Latin American culture, **Tales of the Maya Skies** was produced by Chabot. Produced in English, Spanish and Mayan, the show details the achievements in astronomy and math of the Maya.

2010

Chabot Space & Science Center is a place for students of all ages to learn and be inspired about the Universe and our Planet Earth.



ChabotSpace.org

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