



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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October 24, 2024

## New Leader Named for Orange County Regional History Center

**Orange County, Fla** – Arts, education and humanities professional Azela Santana has been confirmed by the Orange County Board of County Commissioners as manager of the Orange County Regional History Center and executive director of the Historical Society of Central Florida. Santana, who has 20 years of experience in Central Florida, was confirmed following a nationwide search. She will assume her new role on December 9, 2024.

“Throughout her nearly two-decade career in the arts and humanities, Azela Santana has personified the attributes of creativity, partnership and innovation that Orange County values,” said Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings. “I am confident that she will continue the Regional History Center’s award-winning traditions while leading the museum into a future of national prominence and distinction.”

In her new role, Santana will oversee operations for Central Florida’s largest and most expansive history museum. Covering more than 14,000 years of regional history, the museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, and it is one of only twelve museums in Florida affiliated with the Smithsonian Institution.

Currently, Santana serves as director for advancement at the University of Central Florida’s College of Arts and Humanities. Overseeing the college’s major gift fundraising as well as donor and alumni engagement, she fosters community relationships and impactful collaborations to drive engagement and philanthropy. In 2022, Santana’s efforts to build relationships and strategic partnerships were recognized with the University’s inaugural UCF Advancement Core Values Excellence and Partnership Award.

Prior to her work at UCF, Santana held multiple positions of leadership within the Orlando Museum of Art. As the associate curator, she championed efforts in the development and execution of numerous high-profile, award-winning exhibitions. These included the *Florida Prize in Contemporary Art from 2014-2016*, *Maya Lin: A History of Water, 2015*; *Taíno: Discovering a Caribbean Culture, 2013-2014*; and the rotating exhibition series *New Work:*

*A Series of Bi-Monthly Exhibitions of Contemporary Art, 2010-2014.* Santana also served as the museum's collections and exhibitions coordinator and education assistant.

Santana earned a Bachelor of Arts in studio art and art history from the University of Florida as well as a Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix. Her professional affiliations include the American Alliance of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Curators, and the Association of Latino Professionals for America.

Located in downtown Orlando, the Regional History Center is widely regarded as a leader in innovative, historical storytelling. The museum's work has recently been recognized by such notable organizations as the American Association for State and Local History, the Southeastern Museums Conference, and the Florida Historical Society.

"Azela Santana's arrival at the Orange County Regional History marks an important moment in the Historical Society's more than eighty-year history," said Kristopher Kest, president of the board of directors for the Historical Society of Central Florida. "Her accomplishments at the University of Central Florida and the Orlando Museum of Art speak to her leadership and dedication to excellence. As we work to tell Central Florida's stories in new and exciting ways, we look forward to continuing this journey with Azela Santana."

Tracing its roots to 1942, the Historical Society of Central Florida is a nonprofit organization that supports the Regional History Center in partnership with the Orange County Board of County Commissioners. Additionally, it sponsors a variety of exhibitions, programs and events for pass members and guests of the Regional History Center.

***About Orange County Government:***

*Orange County Government strives to serve its residents and guests with integrity, honesty, fairness, and professionalism. Located in Central Florida, Orange County includes 13 municipalities and is home to world-famous theme parks, one of the nation's largest convention centers, and a thriving life science research park. Seven elected members make up the Board of County Commissioners, including the Mayor, who is elected countywide. For more information, visit [www.OCFL.net](http://www.OCFL.net) or follow Orange County Government's social media channels.*

***About The Orange County Regional History Center:***

*Housed in a historic courthouse at 65 E. Central Blvd. in downtown Orlando, features four floors of permanent and special exhibitions. The museum is a Smithsonian Institution affiliate and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. It is funded in part by Orange County Government through the Community & Family Services Department under Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings and the Board of County Commissioners. The Historical Society of Central Florida Inc. is supported by United Arts of Central Florida and sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture. For more information, visit [TheHistoryCenter.org](http://TheHistoryCenter.org).*

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