

NEWS RELEASE

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November 9, 2023



Virginia Aquarium’s Newly Renovated South Building to Open January 14

Head south for the winter: visit the Aquarium in early 2024 for new aquatic and educational experiences

Virginia Beach, VA – Migrate to the South Building this winter! The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center will welcome guests into the newly renovated and expanded South Building in January 2024, opening to the public on January 14. Holding nearly 20,000 gallons of water and more than a dozen species, the South Building’s renovated spaces will have immersive experiences with interactive exhibits, kids’ play areas, touch pools, an observable veterinary care center, interactive water quality lab, outdoor play areas, and so much more.

After a complete \$28.9 million renovation and expansion, the South Building features new animals including Pacific sea nettle jellyfish, decorator crab, mantis shrimp, and cuttlefish, along with old favorites like the North American River Otters. Brand-new exhibits spotlight the superheroes of the marine world and the jellyfish lifecycle with a moon jelly touch pool. As a City of Virginia Beach asset, the project first appeared in the City’s capital improvements project in 2013. Over the next few years, the City’s partner, the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation, raised \$14 million from generous community members in support of the project.

Kids and adults can unleash their imaginations while playing the role of a veterinarian or field biologist in the Windows into Animal Care gallery – which also invites guests to observe real-life animal examinations on occasion and water quality testing through nearby windows. During the warmer months, guests can step outdoors to a playground with hands-on activities teaching the role of watersheds in the environment and the impacts humans have on our waterways.

“We are thrilled to welcome guests into our reimagined South Building. This space will expand our offerings and education programming, enhancing the overall guest experience,” said president and CEO, Cynthia Whitbred-Spanoulis. “The building is designed to be a hands-on, interactive experience that engages all the senses, sparks curiosity for all ages, and inspires conservation of the marine environment.”

In addition to the new exhibits, the building will have an education hall for schools to utilize for field trips, and an outdoor amphitheater with elevated seating to accommodate a 200-person capacity for events, programs, and entertainment.

City officials and donors will be invited to a ribbon cutting ceremony on January 11, 2024. PRA Group, Inc. is the title sponsor of the Virginia Aquarium's new South Building grand opening and private dedication event.

Virginia Aquarium members will be invited to Member Opening Day for an exclusive first look of the South Building on January 13, 2024. Advanced time-ticket reservations are required for the opening event. Walk-up entry is not guaranteed.

The Aquarium's South Building, previously known as the Marsh Pavilion, first opened in 1995 and was closed in 2018 for planned renovations to revamp and expand the entire facility. The construction process included a complete demolition of the inside, followed by the construction of a new wing, new and upgraded electrical components, replaced roof, fireproofing and the installation of all new exhibits.

The South Building is accessible by walking the Nature Trail from the Virginia Aquarium's North Building at 717 General Booth Blvd. or by using the south parking lot, which the South Building shares with The Adventure Park, at 801 General Booth Blvd.

Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

The [Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center's](#) mission is to connect people to the marine environment, inspiring a more sustainable future. The Aquarium aspires to be a driver in conservation, education, tourism, and sustainability, leading the charge to save wildlife and their ecosystems. Owned by the City of Virginia Beach, the Aquarium operates as a city department in partnership with the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation. The Aquarium is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, supports the work of the Virginia Aquarium. The Foundation procures and maintains the Aquarium's exhibits, including the animals and habitats. It is also responsible for annual and capital fundraising, administration and funding for the Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Program, conservation and scientific research efforts, and the Aquarium's mission-related education programs. You can be a part of our mission by making a [tax-deductible donation](#) to support our programming.

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