



Georgia Aquarium's Economic Impact on Downtown Atlanta

Georgia Aquarium has proven to be an unprecedented catalyst for economic growth, and has played an ongoing key role in remaking portions of Atlanta's historic city center. When the Aquarium opened its doors on Nov. 23, 2005, it created a downtown leisure destination for residents and visitors like Atlanta has never seen before. In his vision for Georgia Aquarium, benefactor Bernie Marcus sought to promote economic impact for the city and state, bring growth and new jobs and help create a destination to inspire visitors to stay - and stay longer.

"I wanted to do something that had a major impact on downtown, something that would draw people to the area, not only folks from out of town, but those living in communities around Atlanta, people who may never have been to downtown or only to a football or basketball game," explains Marcus. "When you bring people in, they're going to spend money, and spending money is going to create jobs in this state and create an environment where this state can prosper better than it ever did before."

Georgia Aquarium welcomed more than 3.6 million visitors in its first year of operation, and since has welcomed more than 13 million in its first five years. These extraordinary attendance numbers make Georgia Aquarium the highest-attended ticketed attraction in the city, and have benefited Atlanta by boosting attendance at neighboring attractions and spurring a tourism boom for the city. Since the addition of Georgia Aquarium, downtown Atlanta now presents visitors with a large and diverse collection of attractions, creating synergy which draws residents and visitors downtown and increasing the city's reputation as a leisure destination. With the opening of the Aquarium's \$110 million dolphin exhibit and theater in 2011, that synergy is expected to only increase over time.

In five short years, downtown Atlanta has also seen an explosion of new growth, from high-rise condominium towers and new shops to restaurants and gleaming new office towers. Since the opening of the Aquarium, several new hotels have opened within just a few blocks, including Hilton Garden Inn, Twelve Hotel, The Ellis Hotel, and the W Hotel. Visitors to downtown have many fine dining choices, with nationally recognized, new restaurants such as Ruth's Chris Steak House, Legal Sea Foods, Glenn's Kitchen, Peasant Bistro, Max's Pizza, STATS, Der Biergarten, Max's Coal Oven Pizzeria, Pittypat's Porch, Rise Sushi Lounge and Thrive. The Aquarium spurred an ongoing revitalization of an entire neighborhood immediately adjacent to the Aquarium, the Luckie Marietta District (LMD), which now offers a charming and walkable streetscape featuring restaurants, bars, shops, loft apartments and condominiums. This new activity has in turn given employers the confidence to invest in downtown. Ernst & Young, the American Cancer Society and others have recently moved thousands of employees downtown.

There are approximately 2,700 people involved in the overall operations of Georgia Aquarium. The Aquarium employs approximately 2,400 people, including 306 full-time staff, 237 part-time staff and 2,000 volunteers. There are approximately 1,000 employees who are employed by third-party vendors.

While Marcus acknowledges that the Aquarium alone cannot transform downtown, Georgia Aquarium is playing a major role in changing the perception of the downtown area both locally and nationally. With the Aquarium's attraction partners the World of Coca-Cola, Imagine It! Children's Museum, CNN Center, Philips Arena, Georgia Dome and Centennial Olympic Park, the Aquarium is leading the ongoing revitalization of Downtown Atlanta. By creating a world-class venue with destination appeal which perfectly complements the hospitality infrastructure, Atlanta will continue to grow as a successful city for leisure travel visitors, conventions and international business.

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About Georgia Aquarium

Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, Georgia, is the world's largest with more than 10 million gallons of water and the largest collection of aquatic animals. The mission of Georgia Aquarium is to be an entertaining, educational and scientific institution featuring exhibits and programs of the highest standards; offering engaging and exciting guest experiences promoting the conservation of aquatic biodiversity throughout the world. Georgia Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. For additional information, visit www.georgiaaquarium.org.