



GEORGIA AQUARIUM

at Pemberton Place

## **GEORGIA AQUARIUM'S ECONOMIC IMPACT ON DOWNTOWN ATLANTA**

The Georgia Aquarium has been an unprecedented catalyst for economic growth that is remaking Atlanta's city center. When the Aquarium opened its doors on Nov. 23, 2005, it created a leisure market for Georgians and visitors like Atlanta has never seen before. In his vision for the Georgia Aquarium, benefactor Bernie Marcus wanted 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."

The Georgia Aquarium welcomed more than 3.6 million visitors in its first year of operation. The unprecedented attendance has benefited the city of Atlanta by boosting attendance at nearby attractions and spurring a tourism boom for the entire city. With the addition of the Georgia Aquarium, downtown Atlanta now presents visitors with a ring of attractions, increasing the city's reputation as a leisure destination.

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. Some 75 projects are slated to be completed in Atlanta's central business district by 2010, including 3.5 million square-feet of office space, 878,000 square-feet of retail space and 6,850 new housing units. Since the opening of the Aquarium, new hotels have opened in the surrounding area including Hilton Garden Inn, Twelve Hotel and W Hotel, and Hard Rock Hotel will begin construction soon. 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. The Aquarium itself employs around 220 full-time employees, 200 part-

time staff, and it brings about 1,000 volunteers downtown on a regular basis. Tom Bell of Cousins properties estimates \$3 billion in construction development in the immediate vicinity of the Aquarium since 2005. A study conducted by Georgia State University estimated that the Aquarium will have an impact of between \$1 and \$1.5 billion on the state of Georgia in its first five years of operation.

While Marcus is the first to declare that the Aquarium alone cannot transform downtown, the Georgia Aquarium is playing a major role in changing the perception of the downtown area both locally and nationally. With the Aquarium's local partners at the new World of Coca-Cola, Imagine It! Children's Museum, CNN Center, Philips Arena, Georgia Dome and Centennial Olympic Park, the Aquarium is leading the downtown revitalization. By creating a destination appeal and a world-class venue to complement the hospitality infrastructure, Atlanta will grow as a successful city for conventions and international business. It is the goal of the leaders of Atlanta and the Georgia Aquarium to get conventioners to stay "just one more day."

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### **About the Georgia Aquarium**

The Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, Georgia, is the world's largest with more than eight million gallons of water and the largest collection of aquatic animals. The mission of the 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. The 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](http://www.georgiaaquarium.org).