

Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Role: Architect and Museum Planner for New Marine Science Center - Phase I & II

Program: Interactive science and aquarium exhibits, 300-seat IMAX 3-D theater, temporary exhibit gallery, dining facilities, gift shop, classrooms, offices, an outdoor harbor seal habitat at the new building entry, outdoor nature walkway through the marshlands.

Building Area: Phase I: 42,000 sf, Phase II: 97,000 sf

Status: Phase I: 1986, Phase II: 1996

Description: Our work first began for this exciting project in the early 1980's when we were commissioned to provide a Comprehensive Master Plan for a new museum in the City of Virginia Beach. Working with the museum's director, Mac Rawls, we developed and prepared a Master Plan for a unique museum that was a combination of a science museum and aquarium. This hybrid facility integrated well into the Virginia Beach community by focusing its educational roles on the marine environment of the Virginia coast, and attracting many area residents and the thousands of tourists who visit Virginia Beach each year. This initial Master Plan led to our design and the construction of the first phase of the facility: a 42,000 sf building containing 24,000 sf of exhibits.

The resounding success of the Virginia Marine Science Museum led to a continuation of our work for this client. In 1989 we prepared a second Master Plan for a major expansion of both indoor and outdoor facilities and subsequently designed a 97,000 sf expansion, which opened ten years after the opening of the initial facility.

Located on a 45-acre site, the exhibits and programs are housed in what is now a complex of buildings and continue to focus on the institution's original themes. The new facilities contain a broad spectrum of living exhibits including major new aquariums, walk-through habitats, outdoor interpretive trails, partially-contained living exhibits, and controlled public access exhibits incorporate a diverse repertoire of high-tech, interactive techniques and hands-on demonstration areas.



