

National Aviary News

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NATIONAL AVIARY

Overview National Aviary Expansion and Renovation

The Project

The National Aviary's \$18.5 million expansion and renovation project comprises extensive renovations and upgrades to the old facility and the integration of an expansive new addition, with the result being a seamless environment that is aesthetically beautiful, functional for both people and animals, and green.

The project, designed by SPRINGBOARD Design and constructed by Mascaro Construction, includes construction of the Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone Theater, an indoor, 125-seat space for presenting free-flight bird shows, films and educational programming; the addition of a rooftop Sky Deck for bird of prey lure-flying demonstrations and releases; a café; classrooms; new facades; new exhibits; and a new grand entrance and lobby space.

The Helen M. Schmidt FliteZone Theater is **the world's first and only indoor theater constructed exclusively for the presentation of live, free-flight bird shows**. In the theater's intimate space, guests will experience the Aviary's birds in an entirely new way -- flying freely above and in the midst the audience, enhanced by a rich sensory environment of video, sound, lighting and narration.

In addition to the new theater, extensive renovations and improvements to the existing facility were made, including new HVAC; new hallway flooring; new restrooms, Wi-fi and sound systems; and updates to exhibitry.

In creating the architectural vision for the expansion, SPRINGBOARD Design, Mascaro Construction and National Aviary leadership were faced with the challenge of creating a new addition that would seamlessly integrate with the Aviary's 50+ year-old hodgepodge of existing structures. The new façade and entry facing Arch Street were designed to lend an airy and unified presence that melds the old with the new.

The Aviary's new Arch Street entrance and façade reference the anatomy of a bird, with the bird's wing span taking the form of the existing building, and the body and tail feathers taking the form of the addition. The entry is graced with a wing like canopy that flies out from the building to welcome visitors, while a series of perforated metal scrims backlit with a constantly changing flow of LED lights illuminates the National Aviary in the evening hours.

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Bird Friendly Construction

Millions of birds die each year from collisions with glass windows, lobbies and entry spaces because a bird sees a span of glass as small as 12 inches as an open void. From the outset the National Aviary was committed to creating a building that was not only safe for its birds, but also for wild populations that live in or migrate through the Pittsburgh area.

The Aviary's new glass-fronted entry pavilion employs extensive use of fritted glazing on the glass panels. A tiny dot pattern in the glass makes it appear solid to flying birds, eliminating the risk of birds striking the building from the outside. The dot pattern filters but does not obstruct the flow of light, demonstrating that it is possible to create light-filled spaces that are also bird friendly.

This design feature makes the National Aviary expansion the first explicitly bird friendly building in the region.

Several cities, including Toronto and Chicago, are beginning to set bird-friendly design standards, and the National Aviary project will serve as a model for future efforts.

Enhanced Visitor Experience

The large new entry pavilion provides easy access for visitors and groups, and is equipped with lockers and cubbies for stashing belongings. A welcome desk at the entry point provides concierge service, ensuring that each visitor makes the most of their time at the Aviary.

Visitors and staff can for the first time enjoy the convenience of on-site food service with the opening of ***Bistro to Go at the National Aviary***. Locally owned, *Bistro to Go* has two popular establishments on the North Side, and is known for its fresh and varied menu. Visitors can select from a variety of homemade lunch and light fare options, as well as coffee and beverages. Free Wi-Fi will also be available in the café.

Green Design

The Aviary's expansion and renovation has been developed with the goal of achieving a **Silver LEED** (Leadership in Energy Efficiency and Design) **Certification** for green building standards.

Green design elements include: light colored roofing material that reflect rather than absorb heat; installation of highly efficient mechanical HVAC systems; extensive use of recycled and recyclable materials; lighting controls and use of motion detection to reduce energy usage in the theater, classroom, and other locations; use of low and/or no VOC paints, water-based adhesives, and carpets that do not outgas; and the designation of parking spaces reserved for energy-efficient vehicles. Construction of a green roof above the theater will reduce rainwater runoff while enhancing the space that will be used for bird of prey lure-flying demonstrations beginning spring 2011.

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