



Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations

Helping Civic Organizations Remain Educated for 65 years

Post Office Box 9252

Virginia Beach, VA 23450-9252

www.vbccco.org

Virginia Beach Council of Civic Organizations Conversations with the City

Topic: Atlantic Park Project

Definition of the Atlantic Park Project:

The Atlantic Park project is a \$335 million public-private partnership development at Virginia Beach's Oceanfront. Spearheaded by Venture Realty Group and backed by Grammy Award-winning artist Pharrell Williams, this transformative project will redevelop the site of the former Virginia Beach Civic Center, known as "The Dome." Atlantic Park will feature a unique combination of entertainment, retail, residential spaces, and the world's first indoor/outdoor surf park([13News Now](#))([City of Virginia Beach](#)).

Why is the Atlantic Park Project Important to Citizens and Residents?

The Atlantic Park project is designed to be a year-round destination, offering a mix of local attractions and drawing visitors to Virginia Beach. It will contribute to the city's economy by providing a vibrant space for both residents and tourists. This development also addresses the demand for mixed-use spaces and affordable housing, with over 300 multifamily housing units planned. The project will also boost the local job market and further enhance the tourism appeal of the Oceanfront([13News Now](#)) ([Virginia Business](#)).

For the community, Atlantic Park is an opportunity to reinvigorate the Oceanfront area, leveraging its cultural heritage while introducing new entertainment venues, such as the "Wavegarden" surf park, and a 5,000-seat music venue. These attractions, combined with retail and dining spaces, will foster economic growth and improve the city's livability([Virginia Business](#)).

Challenges/Concerns Related to the Atlantic Park Project:

- **Cost and Financial Burden on Taxpayers:** The city's financial commitment to the project has increased substantially since its inception. Initially, the city committed around \$95 million in public funding, but this has ballooned to over \$300 million(Atlantic Park Bacons Re...). The city has leased public land and parking spaces for as little as \$1/year for 100 years, transferring long-term risks to taxpayers(Atlantic Park Bacons Re...). Furthermore, the issuance of **municipal bonds** to finance the surf park involves high-interest rates, some reaching as much as 12%,
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increasing the likelihood of future defaults if the project underperforms(Atlantic Park Bacons Re...).

- **Bond Financing Risks:** The project is heavily reliant on municipal bonds to fund key components, particularly the surf park and entertainment venue([Chris Taylor](#))(Atlantic Park Bacons Re...). Should revenue from these attractions fall short of expectations, taxpayers could be responsible for repaying the bonds with interest. Similar public-private partnerships across the country have faced defaults due to underperformance, raising concerns about long-term financial risks for Virginia Beach(Atlantic Park Bacons Re...).
- **Revenue Dependence and Economic Viability:** The success of Atlantic Park depends on a steady flow of tourism and local visitors year-round. If visitor numbers do not meet projections, the financial viability of the project could be jeopardized, leaving taxpayers on the hook for covering any financial shortfalls([Chris Taylor](#))(Atlantic Park Bacons Re...).
- **Impact on the Local Environment:** The large-scale development has raised concerns about its impact on traffic, parking, and environmental resources in the Oceanfront area. Addressing stormwater management and integrating sustainable features into the design will be key to minimizing these impacts([Virginia Business](#)).

What are Potential Benefits or Opportunities with the Atlantic Park Project?

1. **Cultural and Economic Hub:** Atlantic Park will revitalize the Oceanfront by creating a cultural and economic hub, providing year-round attractions for both locals and visitors. The Wavegarden Cove surf park, capable of generating 1,000 waves per hour, will be the first of its kind and will establish Virginia Beach as a unique surfing destination([City of Virginia Beach](#)) ([Virginia Business](#)).
 2. **Mixed-Use Development:** With over 100,000 square feet of retail space, restaurants, shops, and 309 residential units, Atlantic Park will promote a walkable, mixed-use community. It aims to foster a vibrant local economy and provide residential housing close to these amenities([City of Virginia Beach](#)).
 3. **Entertainment Venue:** The Dome, an indoor/outdoor entertainment venue with a 5,000-seat capacity, is expected to attract a range of performances and events. This venue harks back to the site's history as a music venue while providing modern amenities([Virginia Business](#)).
 4. **Public-Private Partnership:** The collaboration between the City of Virginia Beach and private investors represents a forward-thinking model of urban development that balances private investment with public benefits([City of Virginia Beach](#)).
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What Would You Like to Know from City Representatives?

- How will the city manage potential traffic and environmental impacts associated with the Atlantic Park project?
- What provisions are being made to ensure that the residential units remain affordable for local workers and residents?
- What long-term plans are in place to sustain the economic benefits of the project beyond its initial development?
- How will the city address concerns about the increasing financial burden on taxpayers, especially with the high-interest municipal bonds and extended leases?

Source: <https://www.baconsrebellion.com/author/sherlockj/>

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