



What's New in Tacoma and Pierce County, Washington

Winter 2017

A fountain becomes a winter skating rink at Point Ruston (November/December 2017)

Starting Nov. 10 and running through the New Year, [Indigo Frozen Fountain Ice Skating Rink](#) will make the emerging waterfront destination of Point Ruston the place for families to enjoy a skate together amongst the holiday décor and an elaborate lighting scheme. The rink caps off busy year at Point Ruston, as new shops and restaurants open one after another. Farrelli's Wood Fire Pizza set up shop alongside local micro-creamery Ice Cream Social, and Fish Brewing is opening a massive 360-seat pub in late November.

The Polar Express Train Ride (November/December 2017)

The magic of the [Polar Express](#) returns for a second year in Elbe, Washington. This story of a child's Christmas Eve journey comes alive aboard the Polar Express train ride, where visitors of all ages can enjoy the warmth and fun of the Christmas season as you depart for a trip to the North Pole. Like the movie, the Polar Express ride is a 90-minute roundtrip immersive theatrical experience. Passengers will be entertained by chefs, enjoy hot chocolate and cookies, and listen to a reading of the Polar Express book. Upon arrival at the North Pole, Santa will board the train and give each child the first gift of Christmas – a silver bell.

Connecting Point Defiance to the waterfront (Opening Mid-2018)

As part of [Destination Point Defiance](#), a long-term planning initiative for Point Defiance Park, an elevated walkway will create safe pedestrian access into the park from Ruston Way. It is the long-sought "missing link" trail between the two and a critical piece connecting Tacoma's downtown and beyond to Point Defiance Park. More than a bridge, Wilson Way will be a monument, with spans that cross 50 feet in the air to create a space for people to enjoy spectacular views of Puget Sound. The bridge also will feature a series of slides that combine for a 59-foot elevation drop!

Pacific Seas Aquarium (Opening Summer 2018)

Imagine standing in a tunnel of water with hammerhead sharks swimming overhead and sea turtles gliding in front of you. That's just part of the plan for the new 35,000-square-foot [Pacific Seas Aquarium](#) at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, which is slated to open in summer 2018. Aside from hosting many of the same exhibits from the North Pacific Aquarium, new exhibits will include:

- **Baja Bay**, a 250,000-gallon warm-water exhibit, which will be home to scalloped hammerhead sharks, green sea turtles and spotted eagle rays;
- **Northwest Waters**: A 75,000-gallon exhibit highlighting Pacific Northwest marine life;
- **Coastal Kelp Forest**: A tank featuring giant strands of kelp similar to the kelp forests found off the coast of Southern California; and

- **Tidal Touch Zone:** An engaging space offering hands-on and up-close experiences for people of all ages.

Tacoma Art Museum (TAM) expansion underway to house Benaroya Collection (Opening Fall 2018)

The [recently-bequeathed Benaroya Collection](#) of 225 works includes Northwestern and international studio art glass along with important paintings and sculptures by renowned regional artists. The gift includes a \$14 million contribution for the construction of a new 7,390 square-foot gallery addition in which to present the collection, an endowment fund for its care, and funds for a dedicated curator. The new wing is projected to open in fall 2018. With the gift of the Benaroya Collection, TAM will have one of the most important studio art glass collections in the United States.

Pierce County's first McMenamins breaks ground (Opening Early 2019)

In addition, the long-awaited [McMenamin's hotel project](#) at the 102-year-old Beaux-Arts-style Elk's Lodge property has also recently broken ground, and when it opens in early 2019, will feature 44 guest rooms, live-music venues, multiple bars and space for weddings and events. Several other projects in early stages of development along the Tacoma waterfront are adding capacity to accommodate the needs of record numbers of visitors.

Tacoma Convention Center Marriott Hotel construction begins (Opening Spring 2020)

The much-talked-about Tacoma Convention Center Marriott Hotel broke ground in a ceremony on August 8. The 22-story, 303-guestroom project is expected to open in the spring of 2020 and feature a 10,000-square-foot ballroom and 9,000 square feet of breakout space.

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