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Witte Hall, a place to be immersed in the arts and culture, opens at the Newport Beach Central Library



July 9, 2026. (Photo by Jeff Antenore, Orange County Register/SCNG)



By **ERIKA I. RITCHIE** | eritchie@scng.com | Orange County Register

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The completed Witte Hall, a stunning \$23.5 million facility with a new community courtyard, debuts in [Newport Beach](#) this weekend.

The project is the city's largest public-private partnership and took more than a decade to get off the ground, but Jerold Kappel, CEO of the Library Foundation of Newport Beach, said ahead of Thursday's ribbon-cutting ceremony that the final product "surpasses our expectations."

Located on the grounds next to the Newport Beach Central Library on Avocado Avenue, Witte Hall is a collaboration between the city and the library foundation, with each entity raising \$11.7 million for its construction.

The vision for the project has always been to "transform the quality and character of programs presented by the library, the foundation, city, and community organizations," Kappel said.

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It was approved by the City Council in January 2024, after some back-and-forth, as part of a [new use agreement that gives the foundation access 50 days a year and allows the city](#) the remainder of the scheduling. (The foundation will pay up to \$700 per event.)

The [project got a huge boost in 2022, when Bill Witte and his wife Keiko Sakamoto contributed \\$4 million](#) toward its construction and, with that, secured naming rights for the facility. For years, the local couple has supported the library foundation and its popular Witte Lecture series, which was inspired by Witte's father, Martin, and has drawn notable authors, journalists and scientists to Newport Beach.

The new Witte Hall is tiered with seating for nearly 300 and boasts an 11-by-19-foot video screen and a new audio system. The Stahr Courtyard was also added.

The 10,000-square-foot facility is expected to elevate the literary, cultural, and art experience in Newport Beach, Kappel said, adding that it is already scheduled to be used by the foundation for its speaker series and by the library for many already existing programs, including the annual Nutcracker performance for kids and the upcoming spring 2027 Newbery Film Festival, an annual video contest where K-12 students make short 90 second movies interpreting Newbery Award-winning books.

"The acoustics are just stunning," Kappel said. "The hall itself, once you step inside and really see the scope of it, is really a beautiful facility and will be something where many organizations will want to use."

On Friday, the foundation is hosting a private event for the facility's major donors and community leaders, but on Saturday, the public is welcome to an open house from 2 to 4 p.m. featuring tours of the new facility and other fun, library-oriented events, including two magic shows for kids, some hands-on art activities, and a butterfly garden experience.

Later on Saturday is a "Meet the Author" presentation featuring Shaun Tomson, a former world champion surfer.



Kappel said the hall will be open to organizations in the community and the public for planning events, including musical programs, conferences, films, and lectures, as well as to business leaders who may want to host corporate events there. Along with the new large screen, another feature he said they might enjoy is three cameras mounted in the hall, where anything presented on the stage can be recorded, including the audience, making it possible to live-stream events.

The hall's use will be managed by the city's Recreation and Senior Services Department.

The hall, designed by Robert R. Coffee Architect and Associates, adds to the expanding Civic Center area and stands out with its dramatic curved roof.

On Thursday, Mayor Lauren Kleiman noted the years of collaboration and planning that went into the project, saying the hall provides a "modern civic gathering space" that will serve the community for generations.

"This new facility expands opportunities for lectures, performances, educational programming and community events," she said. "With seating for nearly 300 guests, state-of-the-art audio and visual systems, and an architectural design inspired by seashells found on our coastline, Witte Hall is both functional and uniquely Newport Beach."