Expansion & Renovation Update
December 29, 2017

The Transformation of Memphis Cook Convention Center Is Coming Soon – at No Cost to Local Tax Payers
Project Overview

The Memphis Cook Convention Center is being reimagined as the facility undergoes an important expansion and upgrade with modern enhancements. The dramatic renovation of the convention center over the next 24 months will make Memphis competitive in the meetings and conventions market, while complementing our already strong leisure market segment.

The $175 million dollar project is more than an expansion and renovation. It’s a transformation of the building’s interior and exterior, the upgrade will keep Memphis on the map for meetings and conventions. Every square inch of the convention center will be touched by this project, bringing high end finishes and amenities that are not only desired by meeting planners and their delegates, but necessary to compete for bookings and business.

The Memphis Meeting Planners Advisory Board looked at the needs of our local stakeholders and asked for feedback from meeting planners from around the country, their input was critical to the improvements that will be implemented during the transformation of the facility. Research shows industry leaders and planners want to book Memphis as a meetings destination, this project will deliver the state of the art facility that meets expectations and has become an industry standard.

Through an extraordinary effort of long range planning with meeting planners and groups that utilize space in the building annually, the Memphis Cook Convention Center will continue to host events and open for business during the renovation timetable. Completed in time for our city’s bicentennial year in late 2019, this game changing project for the tourism industry will be paid for by out of town visitors through the hotel/motel tax and Tourism Development Zone (TDZ) funds.
Vision for the Future Convention Center

Inspired by our community’s deep music heritage and recent trends in readapting existing assets (examples: Crosstown Concourse, Tennessee Brewery, Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid and more), LRK of Memphis partnered with tvsdesign to develop plans for a facility that meet the needs of Memphis and meeting planners. Their vision will allow for a total of 52 breakout meeting rooms and expand the footprint of the building with outdoor terraces and glass enclosed concourses, prefunction and meetings spaces that embrace the river and skyline views, while adding valuable square footage and amenities. This partnership has allowed us to reimagine the facility into a modern 21st Century building with all the amenities that are expected within convention centers today, resulting in:

- Large-scale event space and amenities that entice people from across the globe to continue to choose Memphis as the venue for their visitors and dollars
- Artistic nods to our community’s cultural roots and world-renowned reputation for soul and rock ‘n roll music
- Natural light seeping through the entire interior of the building, thanks to new floor-to-ceiling windows on every level
- Direct views of the Mississippi River and the Memphis Bridge to the west, Bass Pro Shops Pyramid to the north, and our downtown skyline to the south
- Continued covered access to Sheraton Hotel to the north
- Easy foot and trolley access to restaurants, hotels, shops, entertainment venues and businesses throughout the Pinch District, Downtown Core and South Main Arts District

See pages 7-9 for more information on the variety of additional Improvements that will be addressed during the renovation.
Funding

Our current convention center footprint is the ideal location. Upgrading the currently built environment will save millions of dollars. New construction is cost-prohibitive, as concluded in feasibility studies in both 2010 and 2012.

In the win-win scenario of reinvigorating existing built structures and saving millions of dollars, the Memphis Cook Convention Center is attaining project funding through:

- **Visitors/Tourism**: Visitors to Memphis who stay in hotels and motels will pay an additional 1.8% on their final lodging bill.
- **Tourism Development Zone Funds**: TDZ designation has already been approved for the neighborhood in which the convention center sits.

To make the current structure modern and competitive, the total project will cost $175 million. Conversely, a new convention facility would approach $500 million in costs, an expenditure that would be hard to justify, given the location and footprint of the existing convention center.
Project Milestones

Early and Mid 2017  Design and Pre-Construction Services to Set Vision
                  Looney Ricks Kiss and tvsdesign

February 2018    Competitive Bid Solicitation for Construction Team

March 2018       Construction Team Awarded (30% minority goal)

Late 2019        Transformation Is Complete

The Memphis Cook Convention Center will remain open for events and local gatherings throughout the construction project. High degrees of planning and security will keep guests safe from construction areas and ensure a pleasant experience in Memphis while the transformation is taking place.

For More Information
For media inquiries, contact Kevin Kern, Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau, at kevinkern@memphistravel.com / 901.543.5320 - or Catherine (Kitty) Taylor, RedRover Sales & Marketing Strategy, at catherine@redrovercompany.com / 901.266.2662. High-res renderings available upon request.
Detailed Transformations

Customers of the Memphis Cook Convention Center – meeting planners and delegates – have voiced their needs about what it would take to keep Memphis as a viable convention and meeting destination. The redesign and construction transformation are dedicated to meeting their needs, which will continue to bring outside dollars into our community.

**Problem:** The main exhibit hall, with close to 120,000 square feet of column-free space, is a real advantage as compared to other convention centers without column-free space; however, when there is a need to convert the hall into a banquet-type atmosphere, it is expensive, time consuming and a difficult transition.

- **Solution:** The west end of the main exhibit hall will be reconfigured to have the flexibility to be easily transformed into a beautiful, 40,000-square-foot secondary ballroom. Retractable ceiling lights, upgraded wall finishes, permanent carpet and a newly constructed exterior pre-function concourse overlooking the Mississippi River will be added to create this new space.

**Problem:** With the exhibit hall on the second level, there is only one way in and out and only one loading dock, which causes additional expense and time for meetings, conferences and trade shows on their load-in and load-out.

- **Solution:** Within this expansion there will be a total redesign of the second floor loading docks. The final configuration will give us five permanent docks on the second level that will accommodate five 18-wheelers to load in and load out for shows.

**Problem:** There is a deficiency in the number of breakout meeting rooms. In the current configuration there are about 30 breakout meeting rooms. Many of those meeting rooms are hard-walled with low ceilings and have columns that cause major obstruction during audio-visual presentations.

- **Solution:** The new configuration will add over 20 new meeting rooms, bringing the total to 52 breakout meeting rooms. In addition, all meeting rooms will have
ceiling levels of between 16-20 feet, and most meeting rooms will have air walls that will allow for more flexibility to make rooms larger or smaller.

**Problem:** The original facility opened in 1974 and has a minimalist feel to it. Over the last two decades convention centers have taken on more of a hotel look and feel from an aesthetics and amenities standpoint.

- **Solution:** Every part of the building is being modernized and upgraded with hotel quality finishes, from interior restrooms to carpet and paneling; the building will take on a greatly enhanced “sense of place” to the visitors.

**Problem:** Built in the 1970s, the convention center had very few windows that took advantage of the aesthetics of the surrounding area, namely the Mississippi River.

- **Solution:** A new southern glass concourse will extend around to the west side of the exhibit hall to allow for maximum view of Bass Pro, the State of Arkansas, Mississippi River, and the Memphis skyline. Additional windows will be installed on the eastern side of the building to take advantage of hotel views, the downtown trolley, and views to the east.

**Problem:** Back-of-the-house quarters are in some cases non-existent, resulting in a lot of that activity, and food and beverage carts, etc. encroaching on the front-of-the-house guest space.

- **Solution:** In the newly configured South Hall and other parts of the building, much attention is being devoted to back-of-the-house quarters to minimize the interaction of food and beverage and other staff functions with the public space.

**Problem:** The 2003 addition to the Cannon Center for the Performing Arts gave an exterior visual of a new vs. old building. This immediately caught the eye of meeting planners who wanted to shy away from the going into the older part of the building.

- **Solution:** Under this renovation, a complete exterior façade transformation will take place to modernize the entire convention center complex.
**Problem:** Way finding and signage is deficient in the current building. This is a seven-level multi-faceted facility, which makes it very easy for people to get confused and lost.

- **Solution:** A new way finding and digital signage plan is being incorporated into the building, making navigation much more user-friendly to the consumer.

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**Problem:** Convention facilities of the 21st century typically take on a major public art component. The current convention center is deficient in that area.

- **Solution:** A partnership will be formed with ArtsMemphis, the Urban Art Commission, and private contributions to bring a strong public art component to the building.

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**Problem:** With 48 doors around the massive footprint it is hard to determine where the main entrance is at the current convention center.

- **Solution:** A new grand entrance on the east side of the building across from the Sheraton Hotel will be designed as part of these renovations and upgrades.

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**Problem:** The convention center has close to a 1,000-car underground parking garage. The arrival area from the parking structure into the lower level of the building is nondescript and unwelcoming.

- **Solution:** The arrival doors from the parking garage into the building will be greatly enhanced to provide a real sense of arrival. In addition, when entering the lobby in what is now called the South Hall area, escalators will be repositioned and open up to the natural light of the main lobby to give a welcoming sense of arrival.