



MeetingNews south

www.MeetingNews.com

November 10, 2008

Southern Convention Centers Embrace Green

Both new & existing buildings across the region institute environmental practices



The Charlotte Convention Center has become more eco-friendly.

By Matt Alderton

Green building is big business. Not only in cities like San Francisco and New York, but also in the southeastern United States. Where green has long been just the color of fried tomatoes and mint juleps, several convention centers have debuted environmentally friendly facilities and programs this year.

Among the centers—one new, one under construction, and two existing—setting examples for cities nationwide with their green efforts are the Raleigh Convention Center (RCC); the Jackson Convention Complex (JCC) in Jackson, MS; the Classic Center, Athens, GA; and the Charlotte

Convention Center.

Largest among them is the new 510,000-sf center in Raleigh, NC, which opened in September. By the end of this year, the building will have hosted at least 17 conventions—many of which, such as the American Association for Sustainability in Higher Education—chose to meet in Raleigh because of the city's green convention center.

Green initiatives, it seems, are good for business.

"To be competitive in our marketplace, and get some of the meetings that we want to go after, we had to have a green facility in place," said Loren Gold, executive vice president of the Greater

continued on page S13

Attendees, You're Cleared for Takeoff to Improved Airports

Terminal and concourse renovations promise better travel experience

By Matt Alderton

Although customer satisfaction with airlines is at its lowest point since 2001, customer satisfaction with airports is poised for a healthy jolt after terminal renovations and expansions at several hubs in the South.

Under way at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL), Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) and Nashville International Airport (BNA), and recently done at Lexington, KY's Blue Grass Airport (LEX) and Biloxi, MS' Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport (GPT), the projects promise a better experience for travelers in, or passing through, the southeastern United States.

In Atlanta, where work is continuing on a \$6.2 billion, 10-year capital improvement program at

the bustling Hartsfield-Jackson, airport, spokesman Al Snedeker calls the facility's improvements

"game-changing" for Atlanta's meeting planner customers.

continued on page S15



Improvements under way at Atlanta's busy Hartsfield Airport promise to ease congestion.

SOUTH REGIONAL



South Regional, November 2008

Editorial

Rayna Katz, Editor

Phone: (646) 654-4421; rayna.katz@nielsen.com

William Ng, Managing Editor

Phone: (646) 654-4451; william.ng@nielsen.com

Richard Prestia, Art Director

Phone: (646) 654-4424; richard.prestia@nielsen.com

Matt Alderton, Writer; matt@logolepsy.com

Terri Hardin, Editorial Advisor

Phone: (646) 654-7360; terri.hardin@nielsen.com

Corporate/Sales

Nella Veldran, Vice President Travel Group
Phone: (646) 654-7325

Southeast/Mid-Atlantic/Ohio

Larry Mischik, Ad Director/Account Manager
3054 Four Oaks Drive, Atlanta, GA 30306
Phone: (770) 604-9641

NY/NJ/New England/Bermuda/Caribbean

Diane DiMaggio, International Advertising Director
770 Broadway, NY, NY 10003; Phone: (646) 654-7332

Florida/Cruise

Arthur Hyman, Associate Publisher/Account Manager
1267 Via Fiume, Boynton Beach, FL 33436
Phone: (561) 736-5374

Midwest/Texas/Louisiana

Patrice Carman, Account Manager
200 West Jackson Blvd., 27th floor, Chicago, IL 60606
Phone: (312) 583-5522

CA/HI/Colorado/Arizona/Nevada/NM

Sharon Freemark, Account Manager
2950 31st Street, Suite 100, Santa Monica, CA 90405-3037; Phone: (626) 578-0700; Fax: (626) 578-0720

Asia/Pacific/Southwest/Colorado

Edie Garfinkle, International Advertising Director
2510 G Las Posas Road, #505, Camarillo, CA 93010
Phone: (805) 383-1326; Fax: (646) 654-4456

Perspectives

The New South

When one hears “the South,” even today, colorful images of plantation homes, tea parties, and good ol’ southern cooking come to mind. It’s a pretty, if not stereotype-based, picture. But a more modern story is unfolding in the region.



**Rayna Katz,
Editor**

As writer Matt Alderton makes clear throughout the pages of our South Regional section, change is a ‘comin’. Actually, that story line makes a lot of sense as we venture into new territory: This is the premier of our Regional sections, the first issue-within-an-issue that we will present over the

coming year.

On the cover, Alderton reported that convention centers are more eco-conscious and airports are greatly enhancing the passenger experience.

Also, area convention centers are eyeing—or engaged in—expansion in Baton Rouge (p. S4) and Biloxi (p. S8), as is a conference center in Myrtle Beach (p. S12). And, other venues are

coming: the NASCAR Hall of Fame (p. S10) and an arena with meeting space (p. S12).

On the hotel front, Gaylord is taking a wait-and-see approach to expansion, dependent on the economy, but officials are optimistic (p. S4); Atlanta has tied New York City in its quantity of W’s with a fourth such property (p. S6); a convention hotel is coming to Macon, GA (p. S7); the Hilton Jackson is seeking a Four-Diamond rating (p. S8); a full-service hotel is coming to Natchez, MS (p. S9); and a new Greensboro, NC, hotel is the nation’s first LEED Platinum-certified property.

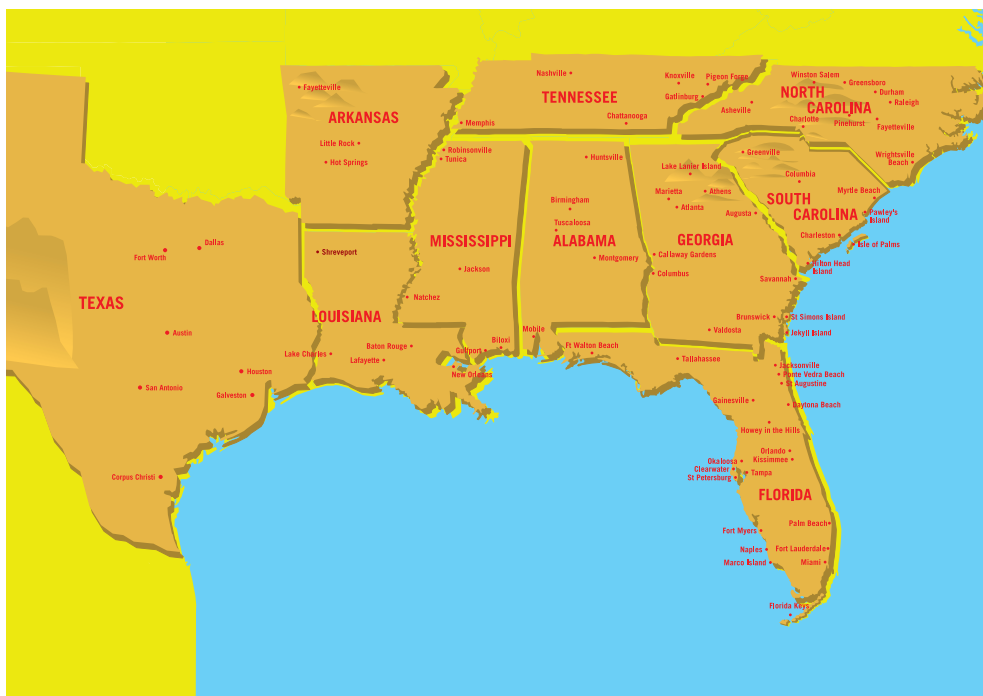
In the midst of this growth, changes to the region are being seen beyond buildings. New Orleans is offering value-added services (p. S4), while Raleigh, NC, has put an extensive hospital-ity training program into effect (p. S10).

Sure, meeting attendees can still find plantation tours and Southern food during their downtime. But now, the South is packed with more reasons to bring groups there in the first place.

rayna.katz@nielsen.com

IN THIS ISSUE

Green Centers	S1
Airport Upgrades	S1
Louisiana	S4
Tennessee	S4
Georgia	S6
Mississippi	S8
North Carolina	S10
South Carolina	S12
Kentucky	S12



LOUISIANA

New Orleans Promises Meeting Planners Value-Laden 'Extraordinary Experiences'



Big meetings get big breaks at Morial.

Responding to the country's economic downturn, the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau has joined with the New Orleans Morial Convention Center to launch Extraordinary Experiences, a turnkey event-planning program offering cost savings and value-added resources to meeting planners.

Available through 2011 in select months, the Extraordinary Experiences program is for groups using the 1.1-million-sf Morial Convention Center and at least 1,000 hotel rooms on peak night. In addition to complimentary meeting space—including free general session, food and beverage, exhibit, and breakout rooms—it includes a host of amenities, such as free wireless Internet access, a free refreshment break, and a complimentary site inspection for two, including airfare.

Extraordinary Experiences also offers meeting planners free marketing resources and assistance. Senior CVB staff, for instance, will help customize for groups a library of event-specific marketing collateral. They'll also attend groups' events in other cities to promote the upcoming New Orleans gathering, and identify local volunteer opportunities for attendees.

Said New Orleans CVB president and CEO J. Stephen Perry, "We understand the economic and ROI pressures that association and corporate meeting professionals are facing, so we want New Orleans to be the highest value proposition of any U.S. destination."

Extraordinary Experiences is part of the New Orleans Commitment, launched in 2007 with the intention of making New Orleans "the most meeting planner-friendly city in America."

Baton Rouge River Center Eyes Expansion

Two years after opening on the Mississippi River, the Baton Rouge River Center is preparing for a 30,000-sf expansion of its 70,000-sf exhibition hall. The exhibition hall, which serves as the city's convention center, will eventually have 100,000 sf and up to 22 breakout rooms. Construction on the expansion is to start next year and conclude in 2011.

Though most of the destination's meeting business comes from small groups, the cen-

ter's expansion will allow the city to go after functions with bigger space requirements, said Renee Areng, executive vice president of Visit Baton Rouge, the city's CVB.

"The majority of our city deals with meetings of 300 people or less," she said. "The convention center itself allows us to go after a new market. With the additional square footage, we'd be looking not necessarily at bigger organizations, but at organizations that

need more breakout space—probably meetings with 2,000 to 3,000 attendees," she said.

Currently, the center features a 26,150-sf ballroom, a 1,900-seat theater, and an arena that can host up to 12,000 people.

Expansion plans also call for the construction of a new 400-room hotel adjacent to the convention center, as well as three new hotels within walking distance. Currently, Baton Rouge has just 600 rooms downtown; if all four new properties are built, it would have at least 1,000 more. ■

TENNESSEE



Gaylord Postpones, Not Cancels, Opryland Expansion

Although work is progressing slower than originally planned, a \$400 million expansion of the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville is moving forward in the midst of uncertain economic conditions, Gaylord Entertainment president and CEO Colin Reed said on a recent earnings call.

Construction was supposed to begin this year, but the expansion is still in the planning

stages. Building will begin if financial markets stabilize, he said.

"We continue to work on our expansion plans, but we're being very careful in overly committing serious capital until we see evidence that things are moving back towards a more normalized business environment," he said.

The expansion would add more than 400,000 sf of meeting and convention space

to Opryland, along with a 400-room, all-suite hotel. Originally scheduled for completion in 2011, the expanded Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center would offer meeting planners a total of 3,281 hotel rooms and over 1 million sf of convention space.

Meanwhile, the city of Nashville is moving forward on plans for a new downtown convention center. A site has already been selected for the 1.2-million-sf Music City Center; construction is to begin in spring 2009. ■

GEORGIA

With Four Ws, Atlanta Rivals New York City

Formerly home to just one W Hotel—the W Atlanta-Perimeter—Atlanta is now teeming with four, giving it more W Hotels than any other city in the world except New York City.

Atlanta's second W, called the W Atlanta-Midtown, opened in June with 466 rooms and 30,000 sf of event space, including a 10,000-sf ballroom, a 3,700-sf penthouse space, and 10 high-tech meeting rooms that range from 400 to 3,000 sf.

The third one, the W Atlanta-Buckhead, opens this month with 291 rooms and 7,000 sf of meeting space, as well as a 3,300-sf spa.

According to Marylouise Fitzgibbon, general manager of the W Atlanta-Buckhead, there's plenty of business to support all four W properties. "Atlanta is really a growing city," she said. "It's very neighborhood-specific. There are four very distinct neighborhoods in Atlanta: Downtown, Midtown, Buckhead, Perimeter—all of them are so unique, and, interestingly enough, they happen to be the four places we have Ws.

"When people have business in one area of town, they tend to stay in that neighborhood."

ACVB: Rediscover Vibrant Atlanta

Exec. VP Vaughan explains city's continual evolution



A native of Lexington, KY, Mark Vaughan first moved to Atlanta in 1998 to become director of marketing for the Atlanta Marriott Marquis. He lived there until 2004, when he accepted a position as director of marketing for the Marco Island Marriott Resort, Golf Club, and Spa in Marco Island, FL. Homesick, he lasted less than two years before moving back to Atlanta in 2005, when he joined the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) as its chief sales and marketing officer, and executive vice president.

During his three-year tenure, Atlanta has undergone a massive transformation into a cosmopolitan meetings destination.

MeetingNews recently spoke with Vaughan to find out what's been driving that transformation. The picture he painted is sure to appeal to meeting planners both north and south of the Mason Dixon line.



Q Why has Atlanta become a major meetings destination?

A Atlanta has always been an attractive meetings destination. But what jump-started us was the addition of the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC) back in 2003, which gave us another 450,000 sf of convention space.

It had been a real missing link for the city.

Q Beside the GWCC, what other meetings venues does the city offer?

A What makes Atlanta unique is that we have numerous facilities. Certainly our anchor building is the GWCC, but you can take a loop around the city and find excellent facilities all over. Starting at the airport, by the Georgia International Convention Center—which has over 400,000 sf of meeting and exhibit space there—and moving up to the north end of town there's Cobb Galleria, and there are tons of viable options that can fit all shapes and sizes. Some of our major hotels have pretty significant meeting space, too.

Q What do you wish that meeting planners knew about Atlanta?

A We had tremendous exposure from the Centennial Olympic Games, but people were waiting for our next chapter. Now, there's all kinds of redevelopment taking place around Centennial Olympic Park.

Literally, you can walk out of the GWCC and walk into a beautiful park setting that's surrounded by the world's largest aquarium, the World of Coca-Cola, and the children's museum. All these attractions have popped up in the last three years, which has really elevated the appeal of our city.

Q Meetings are expensive. How can meeting in Atlanta save cash-strapped planners money?

A It's all about accessibility, and the time out of the office for meeting attendees.

We are very accessible, because 80 percent of the country's population lives within a two-hour flight of

Atlanta. That cuts down on people's time out of the office.

Q Effective Jan. 1, 2009, the ACVB will have a new CEO in William Pate, who was previously vice president of advertising and public relations for BellSouth. How will he help Atlanta evolve as a destination?

A I've known William for probably 10 years, on a personal and a professional level, and I'm extremely excited about him being on board.

He brings a wealth of marketing knowledge to our destination, and he's got a great deal of experience in our industry. He will be a tremendous asset for the bureau.

Q What's Atlanta doing to keep the city's travel market strong, in spite of the present economic and industry downturn?

A It is honestly just about telling our story better. We need to make sure people know that Atlanta has changed drastically over the last three years. So we're saying to potential customers, "If you haven't been to Atlanta lately, you need to take a look at it."



GEORGIA

Macon Readies to Debut First Convention Hotel

Construction is under way in on what will be Macon, GA's first convention hotel. Connected to the 120,000-sf Macon Centreplex—

Georgia's largest convention venue outside Atlanta—the Macon Marriott City Center Hotel will open in September 2009 with 220 rooms

and 5,000 sf of meeting space, including a 1,400-sf exhibit hall adjoining the convention center's existing 30,000-sf exhibit hall, for easy passage between facilities.

“The Macon Marriott City Center will be the only hotel adjacent to the convention center,” said Pat Horan, director of sales and marketing for the new property. “This provides a ‘one-stop shop’ for many meeting planners in the Middle Georgia region, or for those coming here.”

According to Horan, because of its central location in Middle Georgia, the Macon Marriott City Center will allow local and regional planners to increase meetings attendance from both northern and southern Georgia.

“Middle Georgia will brand itself as the meetings mecca of Georgia with a rich cultural background and the epitome of Southern hospitality,” she said.

Upon completion, the Macon Marriott City Center Hotel is expected to contribute over \$33 million annually to the city.

The city, which has added \$7.3 million in funds to the hotel's construction, will use some of that money to fund planned renovations to the Macon Centreplex, which itself boasts plenty of meeting spaces like a 9,000-seat arena, a 9,100-sf ballroom, and 19 breakout rooms. ■



No longer lacking a convention hotel, Macon is group-friendly.



Bold and contemporary, relevant and artful, the Georgia International Convention Center is the medium to accentuate your message. Trade show, executive meeting or gala affair, the GICC is Atlanta's most inviting venue — the perfect platform for your most successful event ever.

Call today to schedule a site visit.

400,000 TOTAL SQUARE FEET
150,000 SQ. FT. EXHIBIT HALL
40,000 SQ. FT. BALLROOM
32 MEETING ROOMS & 3 EXECUTIVE BOARD ROOMS
90,000 SQ. FT. OF PRE-FUNCTION SPACE
17 COVERED LOADING DOCKS
2,000 SURFACE PARKING SPACES
8,500 HOTEL ROOMS IN VICINITY



2000 CONVENTION CENTER CONCOURSE
COLLEGE PARK, GEORGIA 30337
770.997.3566 P | 770.994.8559 F | WWW.GICC.COM

Just Being Here Is an Event.

MISSISSIPPI



Mother Nature's Trio of Hurricanes Doesn't Deter Mississippi Coast Coliseum's Ambitious Expansion

In the wake of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which tore through the southern United States this summer, construction crews once again have resumed work on a massive expansion of the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center in Biloxi. The \$68 million addition was significantly delayed in 2005 due to Hurricane Katrina, and while this year's hurricanes did not cause any major damage along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, they did cause minor construction delays.

"We should have been open by now," said Paula April, director of marketing at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center,

who pointed out that the convention center expansion was originally scheduled for completion in 2007.

The existing convention center, which is open for business during construction, offers 180,000 sf of meeting space. When the expansion is complete next October, the building will offer 413,000 sf of meeting space, thanks in large part to the construction of a new, 130,000-sf exhibit hall that will be serviced by a 40-foot-wide loading door, large enough to accommodate small airplanes and helicopters.

"That's new for us, because we definitely want to go after an air market," said April, who

added that the expanded venue will accommodate small national meetings of up to 6,000 attendees and large regional meetings of up to 5,000 attendees.

The convention center expansion is part of a larger, three-phase plan to improve the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center property, at a total cost of \$107 million.

The second phase, already complete, included renovations to the existing center, which now features a new sound system, new lighting, and an entirely new interior. The third and final phase includes upgrades to the coliseum portion of the property.

Renovated Hilton Jackson Is Courting An Upscale Luxury Rating

The Hilton Jackson in downtown Jackson, MS, is nearing completion on a \$6 million renovation that it hopes will move it into AAA's Four-Diamond strata sometime next year. Upgrades to public spaces already have been completed, encompassing the hotel's lobby, restaurant, swimming pool, and meeting spaces, while renovations to the hotel's 276 guest rooms will be completed by year end.

"Our mission has always been to be the premier luxury hotel in Jackson," said general manager Larry D. Hollingsworth. "And the \$6 million renovation is all about maintaining and elevating that position into a Four-Diamond meetings destination."

The Hilton Jackson features over 30,000 sf of meeting and event space, including two ballrooms and five private boardrooms that received significant upgrades as part of the property-wide improvements.

Each boardroom was outfitted with a secure laptop safe, a private bathroom, a refrigerator, granite countertops, high-tech audiovisual equipment—including a 54-inch flat-screen television and a ceiling-mounted projector, as well as an accompanying projection screen.

The ballrooms, meanwhile—including the penthouse ballroom on the hotel's 14th floor, which offers views of the Jackson cityscape—received new carpeting, along



This chef's table is tech-ready for events.

with updated furnishings.

In addition to its meeting spaces, the Hilton Jackson spent \$50,000 to renovate the Oak

Room, the private dining room at Huntington's Grille, the hotel's fine-dining restaurant. The renovated room, which features the restaurant's chef's table, was outfitted with communications and presentation equipment in order to accommodate groups of up to 18 people for board meetings and private meals.

Those meals—along with all food that's served at the hotel, from both its restaurant and catering menus—now feature locally grown ingredients, according to Hollingsworth, who said the hotel is pursuing "farm-to-table" options with the help of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

To further cement its reputation as an upscale meetings venue, the Hilton has completely rehabbed its pool and health club, and plans to build a spa within the next couple of years.

According to Hollingsworth, the Hilton Jackson's new meeting-space improvements and luxury upgrades will help the property remain competitive in Jackson's growing downtown marketplace. That's good news for the hotel, which does a lot of group business.

"There's a lot of hotel building going on in the city," he said. "Groups and meetings account for 50 percent of our total revenue, so we need to make sure that we continue to garner that business."



MISSISSIPPI

Full-Service Hotel Precedes New Casino in Natchez

A new hotel, the Grand Soleil Hotel, has opened in Natchez, MS, with 124 rooms and 3,200 sf of meeting space. Overlooking the Mississippi River atop its tallest bluff south of St. Louis, the hotel will service a sister casino that's scheduled to open on the river bank in February 2009.

"The Grand Soleil will be the only full-service hotel in the city of Natchez," said Baxter Lee, director of marketing for the Grand Soleil Casino Resort.

"We add to the city a property that takes advantage of our bluffs and views, and promises to be the local hangout for all types of community events."

The Grand Soleil—French for "Great Sun"—officially opened on Oct. 15, slightly behind schedule due to Hurricane Gustav, which left construction crews without electricity for a week in September.

It stands on the spot of a former Ramada Inn that was demolished in 2007 to make room for the new property, which features an on-site fine-dining restaurant, a swimming pool, a fitness center and a business center.

"The locals are excited to have such a unique place to visit in their town," Lee said.

But more than just a local hangout, the hotel is also meant to be a destination for corporate events, he added.

Its meeting space can accommodate as many as 400 people and is divisible into three separate, smaller meeting rooms.

All three rooms feature audiovisual equipment, are enabled with wireless Internet access, and served by on-site event staff.

A separate foyer, meanwhile, is designed for use as a reception and registration area.

When the hotel opens, meeting attendees and hotel guests will have access to the Grand Soleil Casino Resort—which will have 850 slot machines, 19 table games, and a live poker room with six tables—by way of a 24-hour shuttle service.

Construction of the hotel began ahead of that for the casino. High worldwide demand for steel this past spring delayed this and many projects, Lee said.

But now, the hotel and soon-to-be casino may just put Natchez more on the meetings destination map, he said.

The casino, which will be housed inside a three story-high, 375 feet-long riverboat, will

be Natchez's second gaming venue.

A third casino, to be built by the Lane Group, an Atlanta-based developer, is currently being developed.

"Natchez is often described as the best-

kept secret in the South," Lee said.

"We are hoping that this hotel will add to its attractiveness and give potential visitors—whether they're leisure travelers or meeting attendees—an incentive to visit." ■

We've Got all the Pieces.



THE KNOXVILLE CONVENTION CENTER

Puzzled about your next meeting location? The **Knoxville Tourism & Sports Corporation**, the **Knoxville Convention Center** and a host of complimentary services are the perfect "fit" for your meeting needs.

Contact Us Today About Your Next Event!

sales@Knoxville.org • 800-727-8045 • www.Knoxville.org



NORTH CAROLINA



Standardizing Southern Hospitality

Raleigh unites to teach, learn customer service

The Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (GRCVB), in Raleigh, NC, is schooling front-line hospitality workers on the art of Southern charm, aided by a new partnership with Wake Tech Community College, the North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association, and area businesses.

According to GRCVB executive vice president Loren Gold, the goal of the Wake County Community Hospitality Partnership is to train local hospitality employees across all sectors to deliver a consistent customer service experience that will help Raleigh grow its meetings and tourism industries through positive word

of mouth.

"The hope is that visitors see a consistent product through all channels," Gold said. "We want people to understand that when they come to Raleigh, they're going to get genuine Southern hospitality."

In order to get hospitality workers in restaurants, hotels, and other businesses to deliver consistent service, the GRCVB has been sponsoring a three-hour training course each month since June, when the Community Hospitality Partnership debuted. So far, it's trained more than 200 individuals, not counting hundreds more that have received private training

through courses commissioned by employers for their entire staffs.

The buck doesn't stop with customer service training, however. The Community Hospitality Partnership is also planning two additional initiatives, both of which are designed to help Wake County—which is in the midst of a \$3 billion redevelopment—adapt to its rapid growth.

The first initiative is a destination education effort that will use non-traditional materials like DVDs and microsites to keep hospitality workers up to date on tourism developments in Raleigh.

The second initiative will be an outreach program at state colleges and universities in order to recruit new talent for Raleigh's growing hospitality segment.

NASCAR Hall of Fame Revs Up to Open in 2010 with Groups in Mind

Set to open in early 2010, the NASCAR Hall of Fame, in Charlotte, will feature a 40,000-sf

ballroom for groups wishing to meet there. The 130,000-sf museum—situated beneath

a 390,000-sf, 19-story office building—will be adjacent to the 280,000-sf Charlotte Convention Center.

The two buildings will be connected via skywalk, giving meeting planners a function space complex with unusual venues that can be used in various configurations.

"What this does is it gives us a new ballroom that in essence is part of the convention center," said Mike Butts, executive director of Visit Charlotte, the city's convention and visitors bureau.

In addition to the ballroom, which will accommodate up to 2,000 people, groups will be able to rent out the Hall of Fame for meetings, receptions, and special events.

According to Butts, the benefit to planners is a unique meeting venue with a built-in theme, possibly giving them the ability to realize savings on decoration. Events will be held alongside interactive exhibits featuring historic cars, racing simulators, and other super-charged stimuli.

"One thing the Hall of Fame provides that's unique is a theme for your convention or event," said Butts, "whether it's around speed or winning or goals. It expands [Charlotte's] availability for meetings, and we've had some groups book it."

Among the first events booked at the Hall of Fame's ballroom are the National Rifle Association's annual meeting, in May 2010, and the Shriners of North America, gathering there in July 2012.



Racing Fans' Mecca: NASCAR Hall of Fame will have a 40,000-sf ballroom.

NORTH CAROLINA



Proximity Becomes First LEED Platinum Hotel in the Country

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) has awarded the Proximity Hotel in Greensboro, NC, LEED Platinum certification, its highest environmental rating. The 147-room property, which opened in 2007, is the nation's first hotel to achieve that status.

"When we started the design process four years ago, I would have never believed that we could use 41-percent less energy and 31-percent less water without one iota of compromise and with little additional costs," said Dennis Quaintance, CEO and chief design officer of Quaintance-Weaver Restaurants & Hotels, which owns the property.

In order to earn Platinum certification, Proximity had to accumulate 55 LEED points by using an extensive checklist of USGBC requirements. The list included everything from building materials and the treatment of construction waste to choices about insulation, lighting, plumbing, and even parking.

As a result, the hotel features more than 70 alternative-energy and health elements, including 100 roof-mounted solar panels, which generate energy that's used to heat the hotel's water supply; North America's first regenerative-drive elevators, which capture and recycle energy that's created by the elevators' motors; and oversized windows that provide natural light to over 97 percent of the facility's occupied space.

Additionally, the seven-story hotel—which features 7,000 sf of event space—was built with over 40 percent locally sourced materials, 90 percent locally sourced furniture, and over 20 percent recycled content.

"This facility is one that both the community



Though small, the Proximity has had a big green effect.

and its guests can be proud of," said USGBC founding chair, president, and CEO Rick Fedrizzi. "Proximity is a high-performance, energy-efficient, healthy environment, and an inspiration for others." ■

limited budgets,
unlimited options.

We understand that meeting professionals are facing tight budgets and challenging times.

That's why we've created a special Value Program, which consists of discounts, reimbursements and special offers you can choose from to help make your stay here financially efficient. Let our highly trained meeting-planning specialists create the perfect event for you while helping you make the most of every dollar you spend. They'll show you how to do a lot more for a lot less in the place where Florida begins.

WE OFFER:

- More than 100 daily flights
- Over 30 daily non-stop flights
- Over 275,000 square feet of meeting and event space
- Over 16,000 hotel rooms
- Unique venues and event spaces for groups from 10 to 10,000
- Easy access by highways, water-taxi, skyway rail, buses and trolleys

Visit Jacksonville
Where Florida Begins.
visitjacksonville.com

Call today to learn more about our new Value Program | 800-733-2668

SOUTH CAROLINA

Sands Resorts Makes Conference Center Upgrades

Sands Resorts in Myrtle Beach, SC, has completed the first part of a two-phase renovation to its 20,000-sf conference center.

Completed in September, Phase I included the installation of webcam equipment—allowing out of towners to take part in meetings, new LCD monitors, and a new audio system.

Phase II will debut in spring 2009 with a new business center, executive boardroom,

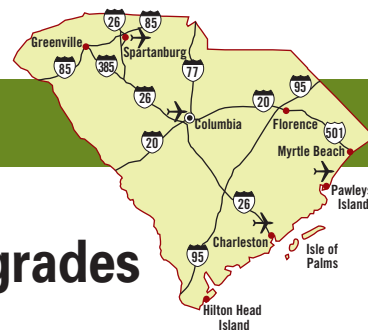
and hospitality suites for 10 to 30 people.

“We’re excited about the upgrades and improvements being made,” said Florence Collins, vice president of marketing, Sands Resorts. “We strive to provide the most up-to-date equipment and services for meetings, and these changes will enhance the more than 20,000 sf of function space.”

Both phases of the conference center work

are part of larger renovations already completed at the adjoining Sand Dunes Resort Hotel and Ocean Dunes Resort & Villas, which, combined, offer over 800 rooms.

Those renovations encompassed the resorts’ lobbies and restaurants and included the addition of wireless Internet access throughout the properties. ■



KENTUCKY

Louisville Goes for a Slam Dunk with Downtown Basketball Arena

Future Louisville Cardinals home will welcome groups as much as fans

Ground has been broken on Louisville Arena, a new basketball venue in Louisville, KY, that will double as a downtown meeting facility.

When it opens near the 300,000-sf Kentucky International Convention Center in November

2010, the 717,000-sf arena will be home to the University of Louisville men’s and women’s basketball teams, as well as 32,000 sf of meeting space across four meeting rooms.

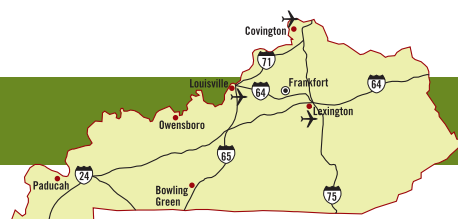
Designed to be party suites during games,

those rooms will be equipped with flat-panel televisions and wireless Internet access. Three of them—including the largest, the 12,000-sf ULA room—will boast views of the Ohio River, which the \$350 million arena faces.

According to Harold Workman, president and CEO of the Kentucky State Fair Board, groups will be able to rent the entire 22,000-seat arena for large meetings and convention gatherings; the arena floor alone will be able to accommodate more than 1,500 attendees.

“We’re planning to host groups who want to be downtown but didn’t previously have the large space for their main gatherings,” Workman said. “Now what they’ll be able to do is hold some of their breakouts at the convention center and hold their main meeting—with their whole group in one place—at the arena.”

Louisville’s 1,291-room Galt House Hotel & Suites, which offers over 124,000 sf of flexible event space, will connect to the Louisville Arena via an elevated skywalk, the same kind that already connects the hotel and other downtown accommodations to the Kentucky International Convention Center. ■



Louisville Arena will allow buyouts when games are not played.



SOUTH REGIONAL

continued from page S1

Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The RCC's most visible green feature, its massive floor-to-ceiling windows, has created energy efficiency, according to Gold. They let in an abundance of natural light, reducing the convention center's need for electricity, he said.

But there are dozens of less obvious eco-conscious details, too. For example, the building's restrooms are equipped with occupancy sensors, which turn off the lights when the rooms are empty. Its planters, meanwhile, are filled with low-maintenance greenery that requires minimal moisture, thereby conserving water.

Even the building's footprint is environmentally sound; construction crews salvaged and recycled 198 tons of construction debris.

The RCC is undergoing certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) as a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) building, Gold said.

Also pursuing LEED certification is the 330,000-sf Jackson Convention Complex. Adjacent to the existing Mississippi TelCom Center, the JCC is opening in January and



The Jackson Convention Complex, in Jackson, MS, will be a sustainable facility.

features a 60,000-sf exhibit hall, a 25,000-sf ballroom, a 382-seat theater, as well as 10 meeting rooms.

Jackson is an unlikely place for a sustainable convention center—the city isn't currently home to a single LEED-certified building, according to the USGBC's LEED Projects Directory—but center officials wanted to go the extra mile, said JCC spokeswoman Angelique Minnifield. "This isn't something that was required," she said. "It's something that we wanted to do."

Like the RCC, the Jackson Convention Complex features a window-heavy design that maximizes natural light. It was built largely with materials from within a 500-mile radius of Jackson—so as to minimize pollution and fuel consumption from transporting supplies—and has many green attributes, including a reflective roof that conserves energy, bike racks and a shower for employees who bike to work, and priority parking spaces for workers who carpool or drive hybrid vehicles.

continued on page S14

THE MIDDLE IS THE BEST PART.

- Easy access from 3 major Interstates
- Great nightlife, golf courses & museums
- International airport
- Over 16,000 area hotel rooms
- More than 500 restaurants
- 80 miles of walking trails
- One of the Southeast's largest convention centers



GREENSBORO IS IN THE CENTER OF IT ALL.

WWW.VISITGREENSBORONC.COM
1.800.344.2282

GREENSBORO
NORTH CAROLINA
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

SOUTH REGIONAL

continued from page S13

But new convention centers aren't the only meetings venues embracing environmental trends. Existing southern facilities are embracing sustainability, retrofitting green features when it's

physically and financially feasible and implementing green programs when it isn't.

When the Classic Center in Athens, GA, for instance, installed new carpeting this year in its 27,000-sf Grand Hall North con-

vention and trade show area, it selected a vendor known for its low carbon footprint. The 80,000-sf building installed recycling bins in both its back office and public areas, and plans to put more bins on its exterior grounds next year.

"We are considering three more green areas for next year, including food composting, improved storm water management, and experiential green roofs," said Philip Verrastro, assistant executive director at the Classic Center.

"Also, we hope to expand our exhibit space within the next three to five years from its current 30,000 sf to closer to 50,000 or 60,000 sf. If we are able to expand, which is contingent on the passage of a public referendum in 2010, we fully plan to obtain LEED certification for the addition." [The Classic will only pursue LEED certification for the expansion, as the certification for existing buildings is more difficult and expensive to get than the certification for new construction.]

Like the Classic Center, the 280,000-sf Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, NC, has committed itself to making slow but certain green improvements—despite the fact that it is almost 15 years old.

A full-scale green renovation would be cost-prohibitive, so instead the convention center has embraced dozens of everyday eco-initiatives.

Its in-house catering staff, for example, recycles all cooking oil, buys food locally, and uses biodegradable cups, post consumer recycled paper napkins, and recyclable paper boxes for box lunches. Its custodians, meanwhile, use 50 percent environmentally safe cleaners, while its office staff regularly recycles toner cartridges and batteries.

"These procedures all add up and make a big impact at the end of the day," said Molly Hedrick, senior director of communications for the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority. "We know that 67 percent of meeting planners keep green initiatives in mind when choosing a destination. With the industry being a major waste contributor, a big trend has turned towards taking a close look at these large facilities' initiatives." ■

visit
MYRTLE BEACH
 SOUTH CAROLINA




ISLANDVISTA.COM

- Oceanfront Suites with First-Class Interior Appointments
- VIP Accommodations for Board Meetings & Hospitality
- 2300 sq ft of Flexible Meeting and Banquet Space
- Professional Group Sales & Full Service Catering
- Wireless Direct High Speed Internet Throughout Resort

(866) 457-7045
groupsales@islandvista.com

LANDMARK RESORT

800.229.7295 **LANDMARK RESORT** www.landmarkresort.com

The Perfect Setting for your Meeting or Event

**LUNCHEONS
BOARD MEETINGS
AWARDS BANQUETS**

866-362-1567
www.ripseysaquarium.com



VISITMYRTLEBEACH.COM • (800) 488-8998

continued from page S1

The upgrades include linking ATL—via the city's new Automated People Mover (APM)—to the nearby Georgia International Convention Center (GICC), and two new hotels, as early as November 2009.

"The connection between the airport and the GICC is going to be a one-of-a-kind connection," he said. "It will eliminate ground transportation costs for meeting planners; they can have their attendees come right into the airport and take the APM to the convention center, which will be two minutes away."

Also debuting at Hartsfield-Jackson next November will be a new, 67.5-acre Consolidated Rental Car (CONRAC) facility; it too will be accessible via APM. "It's going to be much more convenient," Snedeker said.

The largest of the renovations at Hartsfield-Jackson is the construction of a new, \$1.68 billion international terminal, which will have

12 new gates when it opens in 2011. The terminal will adjoin to the existing E concourse, resulting in a 40-gate international complex. Providing that complex, Snedeker said, will improve Atlanta's standing as both a domestic hub and an international gateway into the Southeast, as well as the rest of the country.

A new terminal has opened in Raleigh, NC, where Phase I of a two-phase, \$570 million airport redevelopment project was finished last month. The new domestic travel facility, Terminal 2, is home to four airlines, 40 check-in kiosks, seven security lanes, 25 shops and restaurants, three baggage carousels, and 19 boarding gates—which will ease congestion inside the busy airport.

When Phase II of the project opens in 2011, it will be three times the size of RDU's existing Terminal C. That phase will add three more security checkpoints, two more baggage claim carousels, 17 more shops and restaurants, and 13 more boarding gates.

Another airport planning upgrades is Nashville's BNU. The airport won't be adding

gates or capacity, but it is in the midst of an extensive terminal facelift that represents the airport's first interior renovation since opening in 1987. Scheduled for completion next year, the renovation will give BNU a consolidated, 12-lane security checkpoint, as well as new flight information displays and upgraded interiors. A first wave of improvements included several dozen new restaurants and shops that already have opened at BNU within the last two years.

Also opened within the last two years were airport renovations in Lexington, KY, and Biloxi, MS. In Lexington, Blue Grass Airport completed in 2007 a \$16.9 million concourse addition with six new gates.

And in Biloxi, Gulfport-Biloxi International Airport earlier this year completed a five-year, \$51 million terminal expansion that added two new gates, an expanded lobby and ticketing area, and larger baggage claim and security areas.

The final piece of the expansion, a \$15 million parking garage with 800 spots, opens adjacent to the airport this month. ■

AD INDEX

Advertiser

Page

Beau RivageS5
www.beaurivage.com

Georgia International
Convention CenterS7
www.gicc.com

Greensboro Area CVBS13
www.greensboronc.org

Jacksonville & the Beaches CVB ..S11
www.visitjacksonville.com

Knoxville Convention CenterS9
www.knoxville.org

Memphis CVBS3
www.memphistravel.com

Myrtle Beach Convention Center ..S16
www.myrtlebeachconventioncenter.com

Visit Myrtle BeachS14
www.visitmyrtlebeach.com

William and Ida Friday Center for
Continuing Education, TheS15
www.fridaycenter.unc.edu/

The Index to Advertisers is published for the convenience of our readers. Every effort is made to list advertisers' names, web addresses and page numbers correctly. The publisher is not liable for errors or omissions.



Imagine what we can do next!

Conference planner Joan Black presented the Friday Center with the ultimate technical challenge: to make her conference accessible to a hearing impaired, deaf, or deaf and blind audience. With the highest level of technical expertise and a legendary commitment to customer service, the Friday Center's audiovisual staff was ready to take it on. Each day in every session, through closed captioning, close-up speaker projection, and other methods, Joan achieved her ambitious goals. "Our Focus on Hearing conference is currently being held up as the gold standard for all conferences in providing accessibility," she says.

Whether a conference is high- or low-tech, the Friday Center has long been considered the premiere continuing education facility in the Triangle area of North Carolina. Located in the charming town of Chapel Hill, the Center offers 25,000 square feet of well-appointed meeting rooms, built-in audiovisual support systems, easy access and

parking, and nearby hotels and restaurants.

Let us help you create a gold-standard conference of your own. Call 866-441-3683 or visit fridaycenter.unc.edu for more information.



UNC

THE WILLIAM AND IDA FRIDAY
CENTER FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION

Credit Programs for Part-time Students | **Conference Center** | Professional Development and Enrichment Programs

