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Rachelina Bonacci
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Officer

Maryland Stadium Authority
The Warehouse at Camden Yards
333 W. Camden Street, Suite 500
Baltimore, MD 21201
410-333-1560
1-877-MDSTADIUM
Fax: 410-333-1888

www.mdstad.com

Voice: 800-201-7165
TTY: 800-735-2258

Baltimore Convention Center Modernization Effort Continues

Stakeholders look forward to next steps of concept design effort

Baltimore, MD – On February 4, 2020, the Maryland Stadium Authority’s (MSA) Board of Directors approved a request from the Mayor of the City of Baltimore to develop a concept design for the modernization of the Baltimore Convention Center (BCC) that aligns the program with the fiscal benefits of the modernized facility.

In July 2018, MSA released a market and economic study that proposed an ‘ideal’ program for the proposed BCC renovation/expansion. The study considered both a stand-alone convention center as well as a hybrid facility inclusive of a hotel and/or arena. Among other things, the study proposed expanding the existing exhibit space to include 400,000 contiguous square feet as part of the ‘ideal’ program.

In fall 2018, MSA proceeded with conducting due diligence and conceptual design of the proposed program and a design scenario that included a renovation/expansion of the BCC and a hotel. The purpose of the effort was to test fit the ‘ideal’ program and to identify challenges to development/construction. Engineering studies were conducted to determine impacts related to utilities, environmental issues, vehicle and pedestrian traffic patterns, and the conditions of existing building systems such as structural, mechanical, electrical, life safety and security.

MSA’s efforts to date revealed that expanding the existing BCC to include 400,000 contiguous square feet of exhibit space and a hotel requires the use of the space currently occupied by the privately owned Sheraton hotel at the corner of Charles Street and Conway Street as well as the southbound lane of Charles Street. This necessitates acquiring privately owned property, demolishing the physical structures located on the property and significantly modifying/relocating existing publicly and privately owned utilities located in and around Charles Street.

In July 2019 legislation was enacted requiring MSA and the City of Baltimore to enter into an agreement to further the planning and design for the improvements of the BCC with a funding split of one-third City and two-thirds State. The legislation was enacted prior to the completion of the due diligence and conceptual design work.

Based on the findings to date and in acknowledgement of the newly enacted legislation, stakeholders recommended designing the project to a budget that aligns the program with the fiscal benefits of the modernized facility. The cost of the effort is \$400,000 and will be funded by the City and State from the Baltimore City Convention Center Capital Improvement Reserve Fund.

Stakeholders include City of Baltimore, Greater Baltimore Committee, Downtown Partnership of Baltimore, Baltimore Development Corporation, Baltimore Convention Center and Visit Baltimore.

Completion of this effort is expected by year end and will be published on MSA's website, announcements will be made as appropriate. The BCC's modernization is expected to positively impact its position among its competitive set, create new jobs and generate additional new tax revenue for the City and State.

MSA's role in managing the Baltimore City Convention Center Modernization Effort is to provide an unbiased, objective and thorough independent analysis. MSA's studies provide information, not recommendations, to local officials to assist in the decision making process about investment and benefits for their communities and constituents.

The BCC East Building opened in 1979, was renovated and expanded to add the West Building in 1997 with functional space totaling just over 400,000 square feet. The BCC is a top location in the Mid-Atlantic region for organizations wishing to host conventions, meetings, banquets and other activities. The BCC is located within walking distance to Baltimore's Inner Harbor attractions, the Camden Yards Sports Complex and rail service to Baltimore / Washington International Marshall Airport and Penn Station.

QUOTES

Colin Tarbert, President & CEO, Baltimore Development Corporation

“The modernization and expansion of the Baltimore Convention Center is vitally important if Baltimore is to compete with other cities for convention business. The Convention Center is an essential economic engine for the City of Baltimore and the State, bringing millions of dollars to the city and surrounding counties in lodging, entertainment and other spending. Most importantly, this project will create and support jobs for City residents in all sectors of the hospitality and tourism industry.”

Susan Yum, Managing Director, Marketing & External Relations
Baltimore Development Corporation
410-837-9305
syum@BaltimoreDevelopment.com

Peggy Daidakis, Executive Director, Baltimore Convention Center

“Last year the Baltimore Convention Center celebrated its 40th anniversary of the opening of the East Building and the 23rd year of our expansion. With this realization, the modernization of our facility is of the utmost importance as it relates to our customer experience and ultimately to our ability to book business. The look, feel, and technology of our industry have advanced. To ensure that our role as an economic driving force in the region continues, it is imperative that we increase space, while offering a facility with infrastructure that satisfies the technological needs of the contemporary convention attendee. The continuation of the phase two effort will accomplish that.”

Jennifer J. Douglass, CTA, Communications and Marketing Manager
Baltimore Convention Center
jdouglass@bccenter.org
410.649.7021

Donald C. Fry, President & CEO, Greater Baltimore Committee

“The tourism and visitor industry is an important driver of the region’s economy. To remain competitive, the Baltimore Convention Center, the state’s convention center, needs to be larger in scale, modernized with updated amenities, and equipped with the latest technology to meet the evolving demands of the convention and visitor industry. It is imperative that this effort move forward with a sense of urgency to ensure that a project can be designed that takes into account budget concerns, while delivering a transformative project that will continue to be an economic benefit to the state, region, and City of Baltimore.”

Mark Guidera, Vice President, Communications & Marketing
Greater Baltimore Committee
410-727-2820
markg@gbc.org

Al Hutchinson, President & CEO of Visit Baltimore

“Visit Baltimore supports this effort that will help identify a competitive and sustainable future for the Baltimore Convention Center. Our desire is to see the space become more relevant and adaptable to customer needs. Our competitor convention centers are significantly newer, larger and more flexible than Baltimore’s, and customers as well as prospects have noticed. We back the continuation of the phase two effort and are optimistic about the center’s future.”

Jessie Walker, Public Relations Manager

Visit Baltimore

410-659-7032

jwalker@baltimore.org

About:

Maryland Stadium Authority Mission: To plan, finance, build and manage sports and entertainment facilities in Maryland; provide enjoyment, enrichment, education, and business opportunities for citizens; and develop partnerships with local governments, universities, private enterprise and the community.

<https://www.mdstad.com/>

Contact:

Rachelina Bonacci, Public Information Officer, Maryland Stadium Authority

Direct: 410.223.4136, Mobile: 410.977.0381, Email: rbonacci@mdstad.com