

Tampa Convention Center (TCC)

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www.tampagov.net/dept_Convention_center/

Key Public Service Areas

The Tampa Convention Center provides a venue for regional, national and international events that will attract and retain the maximum amount of visitors for the benefit of the local tourist industry.

Critical Issues and Areas of Concern

- Facility Improvements
- Expansion of the Tampa Convention Center
- Convention Facility Modernization
- Additional Convention Center Parking & Support Facilities
- Blighting Influences
- Business Enhancements to Operations and Staffing
- Convention Center Debt
- Potential Role for the Tampa Bay History Center

Scope of Department Operations

Tampa Convention Center (TCC) maintains 63 employees with an annual budget of \$6.8 million. It is responsible for operation and maintenance of the 677,000 square foot-convention center building, which consists of a 200,000 square foot main exhibit hall, a 36,000 square foot ballroom, a 90,000 square foot lobby and 36 existing meeting rooms providing 43,000 square feet of space. TCC stimulates the local economy by providing a venue for national, regional and international events that will bring the maximum number of out-of-town visitors to the area. Annually, TCC attracts an average of 40 city-wide conventions with an average of 120,000 attendees and generates over \$104 million economic impact on the local economy. Figures do not include local meetings, banquets, charity events or public shows.

Current Initiatives

- Implementing a three-pronged marketing campaign:
 - Hometown Hero
 - Sized Just Right
 - Downtown Connection
- Conducting a Feasibility Study for Expansion of the Convention Center
- Administering the "Shining Star" Employee Recognition Program

Status Report

Facility Improvements. The Tampa Convention Center identified 12 facility improvements that would make the facility more marketable to private and public sector meeting planners. In 2002 the TCC was not appropriated any funding for the projects listed below, therefore, the projects still remain an unfunded need.

Airwall - Exhibit Hall -Replacement of the existing airwall that has extensive wear and tear often making it inoperable. This results in poor productivity and lack of ability to make quick room changes, resulting in potential lost revenue, and is a potential safety hazard.

Facility Carpeting - The carpet has worn out its useful life at this stage. It is 12 years old and new carpeting for the Meeting Room Expansion Project flows into the old carpet on the Ballroom Level.

Replacement of Facility Roof - The facility is twelve years old, and during heavy rain storms extensive leaking occurs in various locations on the roof.

Replacement of 2-125 Ton Chillers - Like the roof, the (2) 125-ton chillers are 12 years old, have been repaired numerous times, and are vital to TCC's ability to attract needed summer business.

Chiller Conversion 2-600 Ton Chillers - Convert the (2) 600-ton chillers to run R-123 refrigerant. These units are 12 years old, have been repaired numerous times, and are vital to TCC's ability to attract needed summer business.

Octagon Planters -- Remove existing oak trees, replace irrigation and electrical systems, and repair planters that are leaking into the back area of the meeting rooms. These improvements are needed to enhance the tropical flavor of the Convention Center to meet the marketing message. Many of the oak trees have died and others are in poor condition since they have outgrown their containers. Due to the condition of these trees, this initiative needs to be dealt with immediately.

Replacement of Outside Lighting -- Rewire underground lighting in facility tree planters that have corroded and add additional outside lighting for enhanced security requirements which will work in conjunction with new cameras.

Exhibit Hall Lighting -- Complete electrical wiring and increase lighting needed for clients needs and proper security coverage inside the Exhibit Hall.

Tampa Convention Center (TCC) Status Report (continued)

Replacement of the Wallboard Fabric -- Replace existing wallboard fabric in the Ballrooms and Meeting Rooms that has extensive wear and damage. Several pieces of wallboard fabric have actually fallen off the walls during events. The wallboard fabric is 12 years old.

Painting of Interior/Exterior of TCC -- It has been over twelve years since the building opened; the original paint still exists in most locations.

New Telephone Switch -- Replace the antiquated facility phone system with a functional system that will provide detailed billing to subcontractors and be responsive to exhibitors' needs. The existing system is no longer appropriate to adequately handle current technology.

Functional Storage Area -- Add functional storage space for facility equipment and supplies. Most of the facility prime storage space has been eliminated to provide new meeting space. Equipment and supplies need to be stored in appropriate locations that will extend their useful lifetimes.

Walkway under Platt Street -- Construct an addition to the riverwalk linking the foot of Ashley Street, which consists of the urban park between the Platt Street and Brorein bridges on Ashley, and the Tampa Convention Center riverwalk located under the Flag Deck.

Expansion of the Tampa Convention Center. The Tampa Convention Center has reached capacity and needs to be expanded to host additional conventions. A study will be performed to determine the feasibility, marketing potential and "return on investment" of a possible expansion of the facility. Approximately \$150-\$200K from the Tourist Development Council (TDC) will be used to finance the study. The study will also look at possible capital improvements and operations management alternatives to make the facility more competitive. A committee will work on an RFP to be submitted by April 2003, with the study results finalized during Fall 2003. This study will also include recommendations on the financing methods to be used (including bonding), possible operational and managerial reorganization as a private entity, an independent authority or retaining its current status. The preliminary plan is to have the study completed in 2003, obtain necessary funding to implement the study's recommendations during 2004, and begin construction in 2005, if warranted.

Convention Facility Modernization. Since the opening of the Tampa Convention Center in 1990, there have been significant technological innovations that are now commonplace in newer facilities. Convention attendees expect such technology support systems to be in place when considering a facility. Efforts should be made to determine how to modernize the Convention Center to make the facility more efficient, effective and attractive to convention planners. Because technology changes so rapidly, a plan should consider a variety of options (wireless communication, mechanized systems to move walls, etc.) and how they may change over time. Additionally, consideration should also be given to capital improvements to make the facility more functional and efficient for conventioners and visitors.

Additional Convention Center Parking & Support Facilities. At times, there are problems with moving people to the Convention Center and providing enough parking space in close proximity (2-3 blocks from facility) to serve the Center. The area is significantly congested when there are activities being held at nearby facilities (St. Pete Times Forum, Marriott Waterside Hotel). This impacts nearby parking facilities, forcing Convention Center customers to park farther from the facility. Additional parking facilities need to be provided and an event circulation management strategy needs to be put in place.

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Status Report (continued)

There are various alternatives under consideration. One of these is the expansion of South Regional Parking Garage, which could mean two (2) additional parking floors. Additional property could be acquired near the Tampa Convention Center. These options will be examined. Additionally, other parking-related issues include: 1) Parking revenues are given to the St. Pete Times Forum on all of their events; 2) Parking attendants lack customer-service training and skills; 3) There is a need for satellite parking, smooth pedestrian and traffic access from and to events, and; 4) Streetcar and Downtown Connector need to offer longer hours of service during events.

Blighting Influences. Parcels near and adjacent to the Tampa Convention Center are beginning to fall into disrepair. Some are becoming eyesores. Some properties are vacant and property owners have no plans for reuse, rather instead, waiting for opportunities to sell the property. In the meantime, these parcels provide a negative "first impression" to those visiting the Tampa Convention Center. A concerted effort to remove these blighting influences would help to support the continued development of the area.

Convention Center Debt. The debt on the Tampa Convention Center is estimated at approximately \$13 million annually. Reducing this debt will be a concern, particularly in light of the numerous improvements and expansion that is needed to generate new business. TCC generates revenues from a 5-cent tax (3 cents go to the Bureau for marketing and operations costs, while the 4th and 5th cents go to facility support, including Capital Improvements). The Tampa Convention Center was recently added as a beneficiary of this program.

Potential Role for the Tampa Bay History Center. A marketing plan and strategy should be completed to determine how the planned Cultural Arts District including the History Center coordinates with the strategies for convention and visitors business development. With Tampa Convention Center receiving an additional 10,000 sq.ft. of retail space on Franklin Street when the History Center is relocated, it will be imperative to devise a publicity and marketing strategy that shows how the Convention Center could position itself to benefit both venues.

Business Enhancements to Operations and Staffing. Tampa Convention Center has gone from a deficit of \$1 million to a positive \$400K (not including debt service) in operations. This comes as a result of its business management philosophy (of running the operation as a business and monitoring monthly progress to determine the year-to-date status of achieving its goals). The Convention Center's association with Tampa Marriott Waterside Hotel and positive business relationships with the hospitality industry, business communities, industry clients, employees and suppliers need to continue and be nurtured to support the future success of Tampa Convention Center.

Tampa Convention Center (TCC) Organization Chart

The Tampa Convention Center is organized into five divisions consisting of the following: Administrative and Fiscal, Sales and Marketing, Guest and Exhibitor Services, Operations, and Convention Services

