

An examination of its current status and future potential

This forum explored the various ways the First Coast handles its convention business.

Key Findings:

- Expanding convention business in Jacksonville will have a very positive economic impact on the city. Convention visitors spend, on average, \$319 per day at their destinations.
- There has been a lack of political will to expand convention business in the City.
- In order to significantly expand its convention business, Jacksonville must do at least three things:
 - Develop a convention center with a minimum of 150,000 square feet of exhibit space, 30,000 square feet of ballroom space, and 35,000 square feet of additional meeting space; expanding the Prime Osborn Convention Center or building a new convention center can do this.
 - Develop the necessary amenities within walking distance of the convention center, including an adjacent hotel with at least 500 rooms, restaurants, other entertainment venues, and adequate parking for the Convention Center and its amenities.
 - Increase the marketing and operations budgets for the City's Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB); Jacksonville's CVB's budget is much lower than markets of similar and smaller size. Accomplishing these three things will provide Jacksonville with access to an additional 66% of the convention business market.

Action Plan:

- The committee will encourage an independent third-party to examine the findings of the Strategic Advisory Group's July 2001 Report commissioned by the CVB.
- The committee will create a fact sheet to present to the public and the media that outlines the economic benefits of expanding convention business in Jacksonville and the steps necessary to significantly expand convention business in Jacksonville.
- The committee will partner with the CVB to create a presentation of its findings and present the findings to target audiences, including political, corporate and grassroots leaders. The presentation will be designed to educate the target audiences and increase the political will for expanding convention business in Jacksonville.
- The committee will either create a speakers' bureau or support the CVB's future speakers' bureau to give the presentation to community organizations and business and government leaders in Jacksonville.
- The committee will explore whether racial and ethnic minorities have been excluded from the policy-making, executive, and management positions within the convention business industry. The committee will encourage the community and the local convention business industry to address the inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities.

Community Leaders and Resource Experts:

Larry Bail, Insurance Committee for Arson Control
Al Battle, Downtown Development Authority
Jeff Bloom, World Golf Village
Randy Evans, CSX and Jacksonville's CVB
Glenn Hastings, St. John's County's CVB
John Kiddy, The Jacksonville Landing/Rouse

Bruce Lucker, Senior PGA Tour
Jim Pritchard, Prime Osborn
Kitty Ratcliffe, Jacksonville's CVB
Cheryl Schreiner, Helms Briscoe
Andrea Smith, Sawgrass Marriott
Bob Stone, Restaurant Association