



90th Annual Meeting Outlines Atlanta's Future

ATLANTA (March 21, 2003) – On March 5, The Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau (ACVB) assembled more than 1,300 hospitality industry representatives as well as business and political leaders at the ACVB 90th Annual Meeting. The program, titled “Ultimate Atlanta,” reflected on 2002 and looked to Atlanta’s future with remarks from Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, Governor Sonny Perdue, ACVB President Spurgeon Richardson and ACVB Chairman of the Board William Pate.

The event focused on developments that will enhance Atlanta’s reputation as a top meeting and tourism destination in the coming years. Featured projects under construction or in the development phase including Atlantic Station, the Georgia Aquarium and Centergy and Georgia Tech’s Technology Square, were brought to life through a video presentation.

Centergy and Georgia Tech’s Technology Square will create a first-class, technologically driven conference center, the first of its kind in the Southeast. Dr. Wayne Clough, president of the Georgia Institute of Technology, stated that, “the concentration of facilities will establish the technological heartbeat of Atlanta in a physical way and will provide services to the technological community that have never been present in Atlanta before.” The facility will be supported by and built off the strength of the Georgia Institute of Technology, which is acknowledged as one of the great technological universities in the world.

Atlantic Station, Atlanta’s 140-acre environmental redevelopment and reclamation of the former Atlantic Steel Mill in Midtown Atlanta, will include residential loft and town homes, one million square feet of retail entertainment, six million square feet of office space and 1,000 hotel rooms. The grand opening of this \$2 billion undertaking is scheduled for March 2004.

The new Woodruff Arts Center campus will create a 360,000 square foot cultural village in Midtown complete with five new buildings, piazzas, indoor and outdoor dining, retail space, glassed areas for viewing art and exhibitions including the High Museum of Art frame shop and classrooms at the Atlanta College of Art. The new campus will be completed in 2005.

General Manager of Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport, Ben DeCosta, spoke on expansion plans and construction of the fifth runway. The addition of a new international terminal, scheduled for completion in 2015, will position Hartsfield Airport and Atlanta as the gateway to the world. The fifth runway will be completed in 2005.

Mayor Shirley Franklin provided remarks that supported the ACVB’s vision for Atlanta. “As I look to the future, I see an international city that is a shining example to all the great cities of the world. I see a happily-used welcome mat, laid out with an inviting spirit that infuses the entire city. The Ultimate Atlanta isn’t a dream; it’s a work in progress. Its taking shape as we speak.”

Governor Sonny Perdue also spoke of support for the tourism industry in Atlanta and throughout the state, focusing on statewide cooperation to develop an atmosphere of hospitality from industry employees throughout Atlanta to residents of towns and cities throughout Georgia.

Chairman of the Board William Pate provided an update on the current state of the industry and Atlanta's place amongst its competitors. Atlanta closed 2002 ranked number four in the country in daily room occupancy, averaging 50,000 rooms per night. Hospitality remains a major economic engine for the city, bringing more than 17 million visitors in 2002 with an economic impact of \$8.93 billion. The industry supported 3,854 businesses and provided more than 101,000 jobs.

Pate also reported that in order to respond to increased competition and a challenging climate, three additional sales people were added in 2002, giving the ACVB the largest sales staff in the industry. New corporate partners such as BellSouth, Cingular Wireless, Dixie Foodservice, division of Georgia Pacific, Georgia Power Company, U.S. Foodservice and United Parcel Service have contributed sponsorship dollars that will support ACVB efforts in the coming years. The creation of legislative and public affairs committees will ensure a strong voice in policy decisions that affect the industry.

"This was the best attended and most forward thinking Annual Meeting we've hosted," said Spurgeon Richardson, ACVB president. "2002 presented a challenging year for the hospitality industry but we're making the necessary changes to prepare for the future and we're looking forward to all that Atlanta will offer in the coming years. The Annual Meeting illustrated that Atlanta is a great city and we're going to continue to make it better and more attractive to visitors and the convention industry."

The meeting also celebrated Atlanta's progressive cultural arts community by incorporating performances throughout the meeting. Attendees were treated to pieces by Maryline Blackburn, Traci Wynn, the Atlanta Falcons Cheerleaders, Several Dancers Core, Tracy Silverman and Elizabeth Davidovich.

Established in 1913, the ACVB is a private, nonprofit organization created exclusively to market metro Atlanta and Georgia as the premier conventions, meetings and leisure destinations in the regional, national and international marketplace and to favorably impact the Atlanta economy through conventions and tourism.

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Photo attached: ACVB President Spurgeon Richardson, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, ACVB Chairman of the Board William Pate

Additional photos available upon request