

Venue recruits visitors

Marketing plan promotes flexibility of TEE Center

By Gracie Shepherd
Staff Writer

The Augusta Convention and Visitors Bureau has launched a \$350,000 marketing project that will span the next 11 months, getting the word out locally and across the state that the downtown Augusta Convention Center – the TEE Center – is looking for business.

“My life is very TEE-centric right now,” said Peggy Seigler, the vice president of marketing and sales for the CVB.

Seigler and CVB president and CEO Barry White spoke at Thursday’s meeting of the Downtown Development Association to update the outreach campaign, highlighting the importance of local residents in making the Trade, Exhibit and Event Center a success. The money comes from the \$1 hotel-motel tax and the plan includes

print advertisements, information packets and other outreach methods to attract potential visitors.

Locking down reservations has been difficult, as the original completion date was pushed back from the second quarter of 2012 to late summer. Only four groups have made reservations so far, the earliest of which is in January 2013. Seigler said local residents can play a key role in convincing their groups to meet in Augusta, demonstrating faith in the TEE Center, which could in turn encourage other groups to visit.

“We all have something to bring to Augusta, so help us out,” Seigler said.

The TEE Center’s main attraction is the 38,000 square feet of floor exhibit space where trade shows and other exhibits can take place.

“This is a new and different product for the city,” she said. “We want

people to use it, to enjoy it, and we want things to happen there.”

Over the past few years, more than 600 local residents have brought more than \$237 million to the city by recommending Augusta as a place for their various groups to gather. Augustans play an important role in demonstrating faith in the TEE Center, Seigler said, but the marketing campaign will also be cheerleading all over Georgia to groups looking for a place to meet.


More than nine trade shows are on the CVB’s agenda in upcoming months, and Seigler said they are excited about what Augusta can now offer because of the TEE Center.

The CVB will also use its database of associations to re-recruit organizations who have outgrown Augusta’s existing meeting spaces but have enjoyed the city in the past.

Reach Gracie Shepherd at (706) 823-3217
or gracie.shepherd@augustachronicle.com.

IN OTHER BUSINESS

- The DDA approved a Georgia Cities Loan application for \$250,000 by Matthew Lewis for his work renovating 864 Greene St. The project cost him \$550,000.
- The DDA approved \$7,000 for the Olde Town Neighborhood Association to put up gateway signs at the corners of Fourth and Broad streets, Fourth and Greene streets, East Boundary and Broad streets and East Boundary and Greene streets. The money was reallocated from leftover SPLOST funds in the Emporium Project.

 **LEARN MORE** about the convention center project on its topic page at augustachronicle.com.