

Shreveport Convention Center Shreveport, Louisiana

Shreveport, Louisiana, after the Oil Industry collapse of the 1980s, was at a crossroad. The city suffered from a depressed economy with the loss of 10,000 jobs leaving multiple acres of abandoned properties. In order to stimulate the economy, Shreveport was searching for the means to restore the Central Business District, thereby creating new jobs and bringing life to the inner city. Through the construction of a Convention Center, city leaders felt that the rejuvenation of particular tourist industries, such as River Boats Tours, River Front Activities, and a Festival Site, would lead to a marked increase in economic growth. However, the targeted land for this economic development had been contaminated by a history of industrial use. It was deemed a Region 6 Brownfield.



The primary source of the contamination at this site was from the past operations of the Shreveport Gas, Electric Light, and Power Company. Large natural gas storage basins had to be excavated and removed and three oil/gas wells had to be plugged and abandoned. The contamination covered a surface area of approximately three acres with small areas of remediation that included arsenic impacted soil and removal of underground storage tanks and associated impacted soil. The remediation activities included the excavation and disposal of 38,005 cubic yards of impacted soil, primarily with petroleum products, closure of one underground concrete fuel oil tank that contained approximately 45,260 gallons of fuel oil and water, the closure of two underground storage tanks, the plugging and abandonment of three oil/gas wells, and the excavation of two 100,000 cubic foot brick natural gas storage basins.

(During remediation, the contractor implemented a soil-reuse plan that included transplanting soil cut from the south portion of the site in order to grade the excavated areas; thereby compacting and remediating the soil. In addition, the contractor lined each one of the trucks hauling contaminated soil to the landfill with polyethylene liners, which were dumped at an area landfill.) Once the site of the new Shreveport Convention Center was clean, construction of the Convention Center could begin. The various developments of the Shreveport Convention Center included: Riverboat Casinos (and hotels on the riverboats), Riverview Park, a visitor's center, an entertainment district, and various apartment and condominium complexes.

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Other important statistics concerning the new Convention Center are: a 20-acre site, \$100 million total price tag, 350,000 sq ft facility, 100,000 sq ft exhibition hall, a 18,000 sq ft ballroom, 10 meeting rooms each measuring 1,500 sq ft and accommodating up to 5,000 guests, a full-service kitchen, and a 813-vehicle (capacity) parking garage. The adjacent hotel will be managed by the Hilton Hotel Group boasting 300 full-service rooms and will open in January of 2007. Facts about the Convention Center Hilton: located in the heart of the downtown business district, convention delegates are within walking distance of Las Vegas-style casinos, restaurants and nightlife in the Red River Entertainment District, family-friendly museums and attractions, such as Sci-Port Discovery Center and Riverview Park with its Disney style choreographed water fountains as well as the Corp. of Engineers J Bennett Johnston Visitor Center. The vast majority of these projects have been completed on old abandoned properties in the past six years. The overall project is an excellent model for communities in that it demonstrates how a community can work together to take old contaminated properties and transform this land into environmentally safe, productive enterprise. The Shreveport Convention Center project demonstrates various methods of financing other than conventional.



Did You Know: Greenspace, in the form of park additions in the core of downtown and along the water's edge, was a desired quality-of-life improvement. A jogging trail is planned along Cross Bayou in order to preserve its natural. The pedestrian walkways and greenspace, including crosswalks, signage, and lighting, are key elements in Shreveport's Downtown/Riverfront Redevelopment strategy and will link together the Convention Center and with retailers, restaurants, office space, parks and plazas. The pedestrian walkways and greenspace, along with the relocation of Greyhound Bus Terminal out of downtown, are designed to encourage more foot traffic and less vehicular traffic with an increase in pedestrian safety. In addition, a central downtown park, called "City Park" will be nestled within downtown's employment center and will become a public gathering point within the heart of the city.

The funding of this project through numerous sources of funds demonstrates the city's ability to sell its economic ideas and leverage its dollars. These funds were raised not only to construct a convention center, but also to develop a convention center district with a hotel and the infrastructure to foster private development beyond the heritage village the city is initiating. The city's partnership with the Downtown Development Authority and its Downtown Stakeholders ensures the success and sustainability of this project, the downtown area and both waterways (Cross Bayou and Red River). In addition, an excellent model for future large-scale public participation in a voluntary cleanup program emerges, which can be used by other projects in Louisiana and other states. A high-level of cooperation between the city, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the integrated use of a state Voluntary Compliance Program (VCP) and federal-granted local Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (BCRLF) program has been demonstrated.

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