



BJCC approves plans for entertainment district

Beale Street developers will break ground in Birmingham this fall

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The Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex Board of Authority approved conceptual plans this week for a 156,000-square foot entertainment and retail development to be build adjacent to Alabama's largest convention complex.

Performa Real Estate, Inc., which is most well know for developing the Memphis, Tenn., landmark Beale Street, is heading up the privately funded project. The development will include two hotels totaling 280 rooms between them, several restaurants, multiple entertainment venues and retail stores. The plan includes two half blocks, each of which will feature center grass courtyards available for outdoor events.

"The development will include national, regional and local restaurants and entertainment venues with a focus on showcasing Birmingham's personality," Peforma Vice President Cato Walker told Birmingham media following a presentation to the Board of Authority July 18. "One of the things we try to do in all of our developments is to maintain uniqueness. We try to develop a program that is outside of the norm."

Performa is working with HKW Associates, PC in Birmingham on the design of the development. The real estate company is in negotiations with several potential occupants and plans to begin announcing leases in the next 60 days. Walker said he expects groundbreaking to take place sometime in the fourth quarter of 2007.

BJCC Executive Director Jack Fields said the entertainment district will be a much-needed edition to the complex as the BJCC's 2.5 million annual visitors often comment on the need for closer dining and entertainment options. Plus, the hotel space, combined with the existing 757-room Sheraton Birmingham Hotel, will enable the BJCC to recruit larger conventions.

"We have been looking for the right partner for this project for several years, and we have finally found what we were looking for in Performa," Fields said. "We are thrilled to see this project moving forward."

For more information about the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex, go to www.bjcc.org.

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