



**MEDIA CONTACT:**

John Mayner  
Vice President Marketing & Communications  
Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau  
501 370 3224 direct  
[jmayner@littlerock.com](mailto:jmayner@littlerock.com)

**RENOVATIONS SET FOR ARKANSAS'S PREMIER PERFORMING ARTS FACILITY**

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (Dec. 11, 2013)** – Voters in Little Rock on Tuesday approved a plan to use a portion of the city's existing 2 percent restaurant and hotel tax to repay bonds for a renovation of Robinson Center. Robinson has long been a landmark in central Arkansas. Construction of the Joseph T. Robinson Memorial Auditorium began in 1937 and officially opened December 1939. The structure was a WPA (Works Progress Administration) project, and is an excellent example of the Art Deco style architecture of the time. The building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2007. The facility is owned by the City of Little Rock and managed by the Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A few notable events and performers that have taken place at Robinson Auditorium over the years have included Micky Rooney, Bill Cosby, Liza Minelli, Mikhail Baryshnikov, and Itzhak Perlman just to name a few. The first recorded performance of Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" took place on May 16, 1956 on the Robinson stage, and was recorded live on KIRA radio and aired throughout central Arkansas.

The 1939 structure currently suffers from a wide array of deficiencies, including stage loading and unloading, stage size, acoustical insufficiency, dressing room access and inadequate wing space within the performance hall. Also, structural, mechanical and electrical issues, public circulation and outdated conference center spaces exist within the facility.

Knowing the center is in need of major upgrades if the facility is to continue to serve central Arkansas into the future, the Little Rock Advertising and Promotion Commission (LRA&P) empanelled a Robinson Center Concept Team in October 2011. The group was tasked with evaluating all aspects of the existing facility, researching user needs, proposing conceptual solutions and estimating the cost and construction schedule of the proposed additions and renovations.

The concept team was led by Mike Steelman of SCM Architects, PLLC, and included representatives from WD&D Architects, Shuler Shook Theatre Planners, Jaffe-Holden Acoustical Consultants, TME Inc. Mechanical and Electrical Engineers, ECI Inc. Structural Engineers, McClelland Consulting Engineers Inc. Civil Engineers, East Harding Construction, HVS Consulting and Hunt Construction Group.

Additionally, stakeholder and tenant organizations representing the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Celebrity Attractions of Tulsa, Oklahoma and the Double Tree Hotel participated in the planning. The concept team findings were presented publicly on June 5, 2012.

On January 17, 2013 the LRA&P announced the selection of Polk Stanley Wilcox Architects, partnered with Ennead Architects, as the architectural and design team for the future renovations.

On March 28, 2013 CDI Contractors LLC, partnered with Hunt Construction Group, were selected by LRA&P as the general contractors and construction managers.

On September 23, 2013 the final schematic renderings and cost estimates were presented publicly. The schematic plans depict major interior upgrades within the performance hall including additional volume to create a two-balcony setup, increased lobby space, acoustical improvements, theatrical upgrades, loading dock expansion, a larger stage area, and new dressing room facilities. Additionally, an enhanced modern ballroom and small conference center was unveiled. New technology, mechanical systems, and outdoor plaza spaces were included in the presentation.

A special Little Rock election was called for Tuesday, December 10, 2013, asking citizens to dedicate the existing 2% A & P tax for the repayment of bonds to fund the renovations. The final vote tally reflected nearly 75 percent of voters were in support of dedicating these funds for the Robinson Auditorium restoration.

Final design development is expected to be complete in spring, 2014, with construction beginning July 1, 2014 and completion in September, 2016.

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