



# FLORENCE CITY-COUNTY CIVIC CENTER

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**For Immediate Release**

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## Florence Civic Center Wins Second Prime Site Award

**Florence, SC. February 6** – The Florence Civic Center has been awarded the prestigious Prime Site Award for 2003 by Facilities & Event Management magazine. Only 55 venues in the U.S. and Canada received the award as the top entertainment facilities in 2003. This is the second year the Civic Center has received the award. It was also a 2002 recipient. The facility is featured in a full page layout in the current issue of the publication.

The Prime Site Awards are voted on by leaders in the industry directly involved with site selection – promoters, booking agents and event planners. Voting was based on convenience of location, attractiveness of facility, quality of staff, maintenance, food & beverage functions, technological capabilities and ease of setup and breakdown.

In winning the award this year, the SMG managed Civic Center is in the company of such notable facilities as the Thomas & Mack Center, Las Vegas; the RBC Center, Raleigh; the American Airlines Center, Miami and the Conseco Fieldhouse, Indianapolis. The only other South Carolina venue receiving the award is the Bi-Lo Center in Greenville.

Kendall Wall, General Manager of the Civic Center, commented, “It is an honor for us to have received the Prime Site Award and especially gratifying to have been recognized two years in a row. It not only acknowledges the hard work of our staff, but the support of our Civic Center Commission and City and County officials. The promoters and meeting planners who have booked our facility obviously have appreciated the quality and service provided here.”

The Florence Civic Center is the largest convention and entertainment facility in northeastern South Carolina. It opened in 1993 and has played an important role in stimulating the area’s economic, recreational and cultural growth. Strategically located on a spacious complex at the intersection of I-95 and I-20, the facility is adjacent to several national chain hotels and just across from Magnolia Mall. Numerous restaurants are located throughout the immediate vicinity. The Civic Center pumps nearly \$40 million dollars annually into the local area economy.

With the renewal of its management contract with the Civic Center last year, SMG is spending more than \$250,000 to refurbish and improve the building’s amenities. Much of this is happening in the food service area, because as of July 1, 2003 all food service is now handled in-house by Catering by SMG.

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The Arena's in-line concession stands have been completely redesigned and remodeled, including new equipment such as hoodless fryers, to expand menu capabilities. A new pizza concession has also been added. New portable concession stands have been placed in the Arena concourse and VIP Club areas. These include a deli buffet station for hot and cold sandwiches and new beverage stations. The portable stands will also be used, when needed, in the Expo Center. Improvements and upgrades have also been made in the main kitchen. Rene Josey, Chairman of the Civic Center Commission, remarked on the improvements, "Our patrons have really been pleased with the attractive, new concession stands. The colors are bright and appealing and patrons have enjoyed our expanded menus. We finished these projects just in time for the Florence Pride hockey season as well as all the other events we have scheduled. It was perfect timing for the launch of our '03-04 season."

The building renovations also include \$100,000 spent on such capital improvements as new painting and signage on the Arena concourse and a new basketball court, where the new USBL team, the Florence Flyers, will begin their season in April. To enhance the meeting and convention side of business, new carpeting and painting was added in all the meeting rooms. The building also installed high-speed internet service throughout.

The Civic Center recently hosted the Bill Gaither Homecoming Tour, WWE Wrestling, Arena Motor Cross and Monster Truck Showdown, the U.S. Cowboy Rodeo Tour, "Bear in the Big Blue House" and the David Phelps Christmas Show. Upcoming shows include the Royal Hanneford Circus, Disney On Ice - "Mickey & Minnie's Magical Journey," the Canton Spirituals and Lee Williams and the Pee Dee Kids Jamboree. The Center will also host Public Radio's "A Prairie Home Companion with Garrison Keillor" on February 11. This is one of only three shows scheduled for South Carolina and the Center is working in conjunction with The Friends of the Florence County Library on the project which benefits the new \$17.5 million state-of-the-art library opening this year.

The building also has a variety of sporting events going on throughout the season with Florence Pride hockey, the USBL Florence Flyers, Francis Marion University NCAA Division II basketball and the NCAA Division II Basketball Tournament scheduled for November this year.

The Florence Civic Center has developed an expanding market for meetings and conventions and will host such important events as the South Carolina Governor's Rural Summit, March 2004; the South Carolina State Association of Fire Chiefs, October 2004; and the South Carolina Association of School Librarians, March 2005. In 2003, the Center hosted meetings for a number of prestigious groups such as Honda of South Carolina, the Florence Education Foundation, the Asian-American Hotel Association, Sprint, First Citizens Bank, BB&T, Blue Cross/Blue Shield South Carolina, Nucor Steel, Roche Carolina, South Carolina Electric & Gas, Carolinas Hospital System, Dove Data Products, Diamond Hill Plywood, Institution Food House and the University of South Carolina.

The Civic Center is home to the Florence Symphony and the Florence area civic community also utilizes the Center for a variety of functions. The Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce holds its annual banquet, board of director's meetings, ShowBiz tradeshow and Flavors of Florence at the building. The Center also hosts events for Florence Progress Economic Development and numerous City-County luncheons and meetings.

Additionally, the Civic Center has rolled out a new marketing plan and advertising concept - "Meet Florence. She's Beautiful!" in national and regional publications. And, a new four-color brochure, targeted to regional meeting planners, is about to be introduced in a direct mail campaign. The building has also been featured editorially in such publications as the Southeastern Association Executive, Association News, Convention South, Facilities & Event Management, Sports Events South and the Florence Business Journal.

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