

The Virginia Hotel Re-development

The Lynchburg Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau (LRCVB) views the proposed redevelopment of the historic Virginian Hotel as a boon to the tourism and conference appeal of Lynchburg. The Virginian Hotel and Conference Center project offers the City of Lynchburg an exceptional opportunity to bolster the city's tourism program by providing additional guest rooms and most importantly, much needed meeting and conference space located within one facility.

Currently, Lynchburg turns-away potential meetings and conferences too large for existing hotel meeting space. The appeal of The Virginian Hotel project is it will offer much needed meeting/conference space accommodating more people than the hotel will be able to provide with their guest rooms. This means many guests coming to a large conference at The Virginian will need to stay at other area properties, benefiting multiple hotels within the City.

The redevelopment of The Virginian Hotel will act as a catalyst for new private sector re-development along Church Street, nearby sections of Main Street and along the area's cross streets, all of which have great potential for renovation of existing buildings and provide new in-fill of area vacant lots.

Finally, the Virginian Hotel, and any area projects that result from this endeavor, will create new jobs, increase local real estate values and generate new local tax revenues. This project will also transform a neglected historic building back to new glory, and will help to generate vibrancy back to this area of downtown.

The Lynchburg hotel and Conference Center inventory needs as seen by the LRCVB are as follows:

- Currently, Lynchburg is positioned to handle conferences that require lodging/function space under one roof with a maximum group room commitment of approximately 175 rooms per night (variable depending on the group/time of booking) and a maximum banquet seating of 500 (table rounds of 10/with staging). For conferences that require flexible meeting space to accommodate general sessions, meal functions and concurrent meetings, this number would probably look more like 200-250. The majority of these conferences are membership associations headquartered in Virginia that require they hold an annual conference easily accessible to their membership for which Lynchburg's geographic location is ideal for such conferences. State associations typically rotate around the state to accommodate their members and drive attendance. The Holiday Inn Downtown which has approximately 10,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, is currently the largest hotel in the city with such meeting space.
- Lynchburg does offer some non-traditional meeting space venues such as colleges and universities as well as the James River Conference Center but there are limitations to these outlets. Colleges and universities can accommodate much larger groups and offer many amenities such as onsite food & beverage, high-speed internet access in conference rooms, large pre-function exhibitor space and sporting venues. However, these options are only appealing to groups who do not require lodging under the same roof. There is also an issue of restricted times of year due to when colleges and universities are able to make space available i.e. spring and Christmas breaks. The City's largest University, Liberty University does not allow alcoholic beverages on campus prohibiting a vast majority of conferences who desire this service.

- Hotels traditionally do not commit all their guest rooms for any conference since they reserve a block for their regular/corporate customers. If Lynchburg has a conference using space for 500 attendees, we now know our largest hotel can host 175 rooms per night on average. Any additional lodging would overflow into neighboring properties. The Virginia Hotel project will have meeting space that can hold considerably more guests than can be accommodated in the guest rooms. As a result, multiple lodging facilities within Lynchburg can expect overflow housing as a result guests attending a conference at The Virginian.
- It has been the experience of the LRCVB that a meeting/conference planner will not consider a property if they are not able to accommodate a majority of their attendees for lodging either in the host property or at least in facilities close by. The LRCVB believes the Virginia Hotel project will make Lynchburg much more attractive to these planners as a location for conferences of many state associations as it fulfills the desired needs referenced above.

New jobs will be created by The Virginia Hotel project including staff related to the day to day operations of a full-service property: Hotel Administrative, sales, front desk, housekeeping, maintenance, public food & beverage, catering and banquet staff. Food service vendors for the catering and public restaurant, florists/landscapers, taxi and transportation services. Potential for increased retail and restaurants along Church Street and area cross-streets.

The Virginian project will bring Lynchburg to a new level of competitiveness with other Virginia communities such as Roanoke, Charlottesville and Staunton in attracting larger conferences and more accommodation space for visitors.

The Virginian Hotel project would offer the LRCVB greater opportunity to lure conferences, weddings and motorcoach tours to the city and give Lynchburg two very distinct Luxury/Boutique hotels offering meeting/function space and full service food & beverage. Since establishing of the LRCVB as a city department, our staff has fielded inquiries about the Craddock-Terry Hotel as a meeting location because of its uniqueness. These inquiries are coming from meeting planners looking for distinctive locations with unique stories and have previously met at locations such as Boars Head Inn, Kingsmill, Wintergreen, The Homestead and Keswick.

The Virginian Hotel will positively impact our marketing efforts by showcasing it as a “destination” getaway for leisure travelers as well as meetings and conferences.