

River Center Management RFP

Answers to Questions Received

Site Visit & Follow-Up Meetings

1. What is the latest on the possibility of passenger rail service in Baton Rouge? **Baton Rouge-New Orleans planned but unfunded. The New Orleans to Mobile line has exceeded expectations in its first year, encouraging consideration of an extension of the Mardi Gras service to Baton Rouge.**
2. What is your current airport lift? Direct flights? **824,000 passengers in 2025. Nonstop service to ATL, DFW, IAH, CLT, and DCA (Delta, American, & United). This month BTR received a \$1M federal grant aimed at getting nonstop service to Chicago.**
3. What is your downtown hotel inventory? **1,129 hotel keys within 0.5 miles of the River Center, not including the reduction in Hilton's 291 hotel keys from the conversion to a Sports Illustrated hotel / condo concept.**
4. What is your parish-wide hotel inventory? **77 properties totaling 8,510 rooms currently open in Baton Rouge.**
5. What is the capacity of the arena? **8,900 permanent seats, 1,500 removable floor seats. While the arena would be in place during the interim management period, the long-term renovation plan for the River Center includes redevelopment of the arena into a flexible entertainment venue / flex hall with an estimated 30K SF of floor space, similar to the Fillmore in New Orleans or the Pinnacle in Nashville.**
6. What is the age of the arena? **Completed in 1977.**
7. How many kitchen spaces does the facility have? **One 6,000 SF kitchen**
8. How is the outdoor space used? **The paved space at ground level near the offices is not currently utilized. The green space to the north of the facilities, Repentance Park, however, is sometimes activated for public festivals and events. It is most often used as a gateway entrance to the riverfront.**
9. Who currently manages the parking garages? **LAZ Parking**
10. What are the location possibilities for the future headquarters hotel? **Options include directly north of the River Center, across River Road on the levee, above the current ballroom and early thoughts were above the current parking garages. A developer would make this call alongside the city.**
11. Do we feel that there are enough breakout rooms? **A handful of additional larger breakout rooms incorporated into the hotel development could absolutely be an asset to accommodate groups. A junior ballroom could also be an asset.**
12. How is the Pelican Room utilized? **Pelican Room is not currently utilized much at all. It has potential to be activated for convention hospitality, but foodservice limitations are a current challenge. It could be a hospitality area, vendor reception, onsite grab-and-go breakfast/lunch, etc.**
13. Where do attendees get lunch during the day? **Currently, attendees have to leave the facility to get lunch. While this can be an asset to downtown businesses, it is also a challenge for events with time restrictions.**
14. How often does the train pass the River Center? **2-3 times per day.**
15. How often do boats dock at the City Dock? **Cruise ships are expected to dock at City Dock 100 times in 2026. American Cruise Lines is in a 20-year public-private agreement with the city-parish. Viking also docks further down the river at the Queen Casino.**
16. How much meeting space does Bally's have? **With the casino recently moving into the atrium at Bally's, there is no longer any designated meeting space at the casino or hotel.**
17. What is the capacity per space? **See Appendix A that was an attachment to the RFP.**

18. What spaces in the parking garage are currently contracted and when used? See attached Parking Space and Parking Utilization files for additional information from LAZ.
19. Why do you lose business? Cost to value ratio is the number one reason. Customer satisfaction of repeat business, especially as it relates to food & beverage and quality staffing. Lack of professional sales support to ensure timely responses and sales effort.
20. Does the facility host University events? Some university associated events include: annual galas, career fairs, research/academic group meetings.
21. As it relates to the hotel development, where does that stand? The City of Baton Rouge is currently evaluating its approach to working with a third-party development partner for the development and operation of a headquarters hotel and renovated and expanded convention center related facilities and anticipates more specific plans being put in place in the coming year.
22. With future planned renovations, what is your target market, and what does success look like to you over the long-term? Our goal is to become a southeast regional destination and hub. Airport accessibility increasing along with proximity to New Orleans. Can also be a national destination if facility was up to par with competitors with the necessary walkable hotel package. We also have the ability to be an even stronger sports destination because of the reputation of LSU and there are additional opportunities with associations due to location and cost. The draw of the HBCU seems to have growing potential.
23. From a competitive landscape, what destinations are you competing with? Tampa, Columbia SC, Greenville, Birmingham, Mobile and often put against larger group hotels that are as big as the River Center like New Orleans Hyatt. We find greater success when groups are able to visit and experience downtown Baton Rouge.
24. RFP asks for a three-year proforma vs expected less than two-year contract term? Why the ask for the three-year proforma? Interim management is expected for a period of two years. A three-year proforma was asked in case of delays with the developer solicitation, selection, or negotiation for the broader River Center renovation and headquarters hotel project.
25. What are the current challenges with parking and why looking to make the management change? There are opportunities to better sell the facility with the same management team responsible for the entire River Center guest experience with improvements to customer service and addressing parking as part of the overall convention and event sales process. We need to strike a balance between customer service, expectations and revenue maximization and believe that consolidated management provides the most effective way to achieve those sometimes conflicting goals. This is about improving the customer's first and last impression of the facility. Note too that spaces within the garage are designated for city employees on a daily basis.
26. What is your appetite for capital investment? How can we improve the overall experience through enhancements? Because of the planned River Center renovation project, we would approach capital investment cautiously, considering the likelihood that investment would have benefit beyond most assumed redevelopment plans, understanding the necessity of investment, and the timeframe within which benefits would be derived. That said, we are open to those ideas.
27. Question on locally sourced food and beverage. How do you think through that? Because Louisiana / Baton Rouge is known for its cuisine / flavors, this needs to show up in some way in our menus or offerings. It is important that things are locally sourced, as there are great food and beverage resources locally. This helps to better sell the facility giving attendees the opportunity to experience local culture and something that is unique to Baton Rouge / the region. We also need to be open to outside vendors, it is an interest / requirement for certain clients.

28. What is the status of the sports commission? **Currently VBR has a sports department (1.5 people) but consideration is being given to increasing that capacity and changing the organizational structure around the sports market. VBR is looking to further invest in sports, but is already currently bidding on sporting events as part of its efforts. The River Center is roughly 50/50 sports / convention business now and we will be hosting SportsETA 4S in 2028.**
29. Will in-person rather than virtual presentations, be allowed? **Yes, in-person interviews on October 14th-16th are acceptable. Please email laura@visitbatonrouge.com with your team's availability for an in-person presentation on those days.**

Written Questions

Financial Information

1. Please provide year-end financial statements for the past three fiscal years. **See attached RCRC Financial Reports 2024 & 2025 (both contain prior year).**
2. Please provide audit reports for the past five fiscal years. **See attached RCRC Audits (19-24)**
3. Please provide the approved budget for the upcoming fiscal year. **See attached RCRC Financials Month Ending June 30. 2026 that contains the 2026 budget. 2027 budget not available until November.**
4. Please provide the most recent 2026 financial statements, including the current year-end forecast. **See attached RCRC Financials Month Ending June 30. 2026 that contains the 2026 forecast.**
5. Can our requested financial documents be provided directly to the governmental entity for confidential review rather than including them in the public proposal. Would the City accept a similar approach for this procurement? **Yes, this is acceptable.**

Sales

6. Please provide a summary of any rental waivers or discounts associated with currently scheduled future events. **Attached**
7. Please provide a complete event schedule for all confirmed and tentative events from the present through the anticipated building closure. **See attached Events Calendars. (Green – confirmed and contract is out, Orange – confirmed and contract is being drafted, Yellow – event is held, Blue – placeholder for skating**
8. Please provide sample event settlements for concerts, family shows, consumer shows, and major conventions. **Attached**
9. Please provide the current rental rate and fee schedule for each venue. **Attached**
10. Please provide the current booking and scheduling policy for each venue. **Attached**
11. Please provide copies of any current agreements with event promoters or show producers. **Attached**
12. Please provide a sample user/license agreement. **Attached**
13. Does the facility offer nonprofit rental rates or other nonprofit discounts? If so, please provide the applicable rate structure and eligibility requirements. **The River Center has a rental waiver program for qualifying conventions and events, including events sponsored by nonprofits if they meet the program's criteria. To qualify, an event must be expected to generate significant convention or tourist activity and a positive economic impact, with projected tax collections from attendee spending sufficient to offset the waived rent. The Mayor-President or designee must approve the waiver in advance. A committee may consider exceptions based on other factors, including positive exposure**

for Baton Rouge. Approved waivers cover the facility rental fee and specified lighting, HVAC, registration space, and show office space. Other event costs remain payable.

14. Please identify the sales and event management software currently used by the facility. Simpleview, Momentum

Events

15. Please provide the current Client Facility Guide or equivalent event-planning guide. See Appendix A provided as an attachment the RFP. Additional event planning information can be found here: <https://conventioncenter.raisingcanesrivercenter.com/planners/event-planning-services/>
16. Please provide a copy of the current ticketing agreement, including the agreement term and any renewal or termination provisions. Attached

Food & Beverage

17. Please provide a current inventory of kitchen, concession, and catering equipment. Not available
18. Please provide a summary of current concession offerings and copies of current catering menus. See attached 2025 Catering Menu

Staffing

19. Please provide a list of all full-time positions, including job title and current salary or salary range. Staff positions and total salaries included in Appendix D as an attachment to the RFP
20. Please provide current job descriptions for all full-time positions. Attached
21. Please provide a breakdown of annual part-time labor costs, including applicable hourly rates. Average hourly rates included in Appendix D as an attachment to the RFP. See financials for additional information.
22. Please provide a summary of current employee benefits and, if available, a copy of the employee handbook or applicable benefits materials. Please include information regarding health, dental, vision, group life insurance, retirement/401(k), paid time off, and vacation benefits. Attached

Third Party & Labor Agreements

23. Please provide copies of all current collective bargaining agreements and other agreements with labor unions applicable to the facilities. There are no current collective bargaining agreements or other labor union agreements applicable to the facility.
24. Please provide copies of current third-party service agreements, including, as applicable, ticketing, audio/visual, housekeeping, merchandising, first aid/EMT, parking, security, and other outsourced facility services. Attached
25. Please provide copies of hockey / ice tenant agreements Attached

Sponsorship & Advertising

26. Please provide a summary of sponsorship revenue and agreements for the past three years and for 2019. Please include, for each agreement, the sponsor, annual cash and trade value, agreement term, and expiration date. Attached
27. Please provide copies of all current facility sponsorship agreements. See attached for Raising Cane's agreement

28. Do any current sponsorship agreements include category or other exclusivity rights? If so, please identify the applicable partners and exclusive categories. **Yes. Raising Cane's – naming rights, Deep South Production – sound production, Coca-Cola – pouring rights**
29. How many staff members are currently dedicated to sponsorship and/or premium seating sales? Please provide each position's title and annual compensation structure, including applicable incentive compensation. **One employee: Alysia Guin, Director of Marketing & Partnerships.**
30. Does any third-party entity sell advertising or sponsorship inventory on behalf of the facility? If so, please describe the relationship and provide the applicable agreement, including its term. **No third-party entity currently sells advertising or sponsorship inventory on behalf of the Raising Cane's River Center.**
31. Please provide a current inventory and rate card for all sponsorship and advertising assets available for sale, including any planned future inventory or infrastructure, such as digital signage. **Attached**
32. Please provide a current inventory of premium seating products, if applicable, including suites, loge boxes, club seats, and other premium products, as well as the number of seats associated with each. **N/A – no premium seating**
33. Please describe the amenities and benefits included with each premium seating product, including tickets, parking, food and beverage, access, and other benefits, as applicable. **N/A – no premium seating**
34. Please provide a summary of all premium seating agreements executed or in effect during the past three years, including annual value, agreement term, and expiration date. **N/A – no premium seating**
35. Please provide copies of current sponsorship and premium seating sales collateral. **Attached**

Other Information

36. Please provide a copy of the current facility management agreement, including all amendments. **See attached Mgmt Agreements**
37. Please provide the current and planned capital improvement budgets. If a capital reserve fund exists, please provide the current balance, required funding levels, funding/replenishment mechanism, and permitted uses. **There are no budgets for capital improvement. The decision was made to hold off on all projects that were not required to keep operations going due to the future planned River Center renovation.**
38. Please provide details regarding capital improvement projects currently underway, as well as confirmed or scheduled future capital projects. **There are no capital improvement projects currently in progress or scheduled.**
39. Please summarize the facility's current relationship with the CVB, including the respective roles and responsibilities of each organization and how the CVB supports sales, marketing, convention recruitment, and other efforts to generate business for the facilities. **It is intended for VBR to market, attract, sell, and schedule events outside of 18 months, and cooperate with the operator on scheduling events within 18 months.**
40. Is there a dedicated annual marketing budget for the facilities? If so, please provide the current budget and a general breakdown of its uses. **Under the current management agreement, Legends manages and pays marketing costs as facility operating expenses. Facility operating revenue covers those costs first; then City-Parish provides funding if that revenue is insufficient, subject to the approved budget and appropriations.**
41. Please identify any services currently provided or funded by the City that are not reflected in the facilities' operating budget. For each service, please provide the estimated annual cost, if available.

The City-Parish separately funds River Center capital improvements through Fund 5751. Approximately \$500,000 is appropriated annually for these improvements and utilized on an as needed basis. Any remaining funds at year end are carried over to the next year to be used for future improvements. See attached Fund 5751 budget for more detail. Please keep in mind \$250,000 is committed to a State Capital Outlay Project for River Center renovations. Additionally, the State Capital Outlay requires an escrow account to be set up and funds deposited annually to cover long term maintenance of the project. Currently, the total that will need to be deposited into the escrow account from the River Center Capital Improvement funds is \$1,000,000. Once the \$1,250,000 is removed from the current balance as shown on the attached Project Budget Report, the Capital Improvements currently has a balance of approximately \$2.9M.

42. For required RFP items such as menus and personnel information, may we add these in an appendix? **Yes**

43. Please provide the following information for the parking structures, including:

- a. Historical financial information **See attached Parking Revenue**
- b. Parking rates **\$2/hr up to 4 hours (\$8), \$10 daily, \$16 overnight, event parking varies**
Event Parking – East / West Garage - \$10, B1/B2 Garage - \$20
- c. Discount policies **No discount policy. Currently, changes / discounts in rates must be approved by the City (Public Works)**
- d. Utilization rates **See Parking Utilization attachment**
- e. Total number of spaces **See Parking Spaces attachment**