

## KICK-OFF MEETING MINUTES

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VALDOSTA MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM  
Valdosta, Georgia  
IPG Project No. 1160

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25 January 2012  
8:30 am – 4:00 pm

### Contacts/Attendees

#### City Representatives:

Larry Hanson | Mara Register | Pat Collins | Matt Martin – City of Valdosta  
John Gayle – Mayor of Valdosta (partial)

#### Design Team:

Rob Evans | Matt Hart | Malinda Taylor - IPG  
John Starr | Frank Andre – Lord Aeck Sargent (LAS)  
Michelle Walter – AMS Planning and Research  
Steven Friedlander – Auerbach Pollock Friedlander (APF)  
Kevin McOmber | Joe Garland – Clark Patterson Lee (CPL)  
Jay Scott – Greenrock Partnership  
Randy Crews – Crews Engineering  
Trent Thomas | Cody Petijean – Georgia Engineering and Testing (GET)

### Discussion

The meeting opened with introductions of the Design Team and City Representatives. It was noted that this process and kickoff meeting will help us distill information and determine what the project needs to be. IPG and the Design Team expect engagement by the City of Valdosta and will also provide transparency and clarity back to the City of Valdosta. Notes will be taken by the Design Team to be reviewed by the attendees and then distributed.

The Design Team reviewed the process and discussed the 2-day session. It is the intent of the meeting to get ideas down on paper. Initially, last December there were facility visits and today is a “Design Alliance Workshop” where we will create a roadmap for going forward. Following this kick-off meeting, we will return in March so that AMS can present information discovered and what the numbers mean for planning (an assumption of 60,000 square feet is based on what and quantifications are needed to develop space plans). In April, another coordination meeting will be planned. In June, three site plans and design concepts will be developed and presented, and finally in August, a final presentation will be made that has been distilled into one final concept plan.

The Design Team, specifically AMS Planning and Research will develop characteristics of the community and find similar communities that can be compared to Valdosta. The Design Team will present recommendations to the City, but no final Business Operations Plan is complete until design is complete; they work together (design and operations). The City and Steering Committee must weigh uses and costs. The Design Team and subsequently the City and Steering Committee will work together to work the operations with the design. Size and seating capacity discussions and collaboration are critical. The process is about “right-sizing” the building which will be determined and thought out well. City of Valdosta Representatives shared that a Market Analysis has been performed and could be helpful in planning.

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It was discussed by all present the impact of this project to the Five Points Area, the Valdosta and Lowndes County Community and South Georgia. The funding and the construction project and the final product will essentially be a stimulus project for the community. It will be a stimulus project that solves long-standing traffic and site issues and will be a gateway project. It should focus on all the benefits. The existing and adjacent property owners are interested in the progress, which may initiate additional development in the area.

Mathis Auditorium layout and preliminary auditorium criteria was discussed. Christopher Wood was recently hired as the new manager at Mathis Auditorium. The existing building will not be the focus of the new project, but it will be understood as the current facility which can be helpful to determine and develop what is and isn't needed. Those in attendance have the opportunity to see the existing facility following the meeting. The current Catering Kitchen is not adequate and the Multipurpose Room is not divisible into smaller sections – two important issues. Energy Efficiency was also discussed at length. The design, orientation and construction of the project will aim to provide efficient operating costs. An initial review of The Sandler Center in Virginia Beach (a comparable facility in size, not weighing community engagement to the arts) indicated the following differences in the two facilities.

- Mathis is 30,000 SF / Sandler is 100,000 SF (more than doubling space)
- Mathis is 1,200 seats / Sandler is 1,200 seats (800 on bottom + 200 on two balconies)
- Sandler Center was built on a constrained site and has several restroom locations

Our Process will develop a facility to get from a 30,000 SF (Mathis Auditorium) to something similar to the Sandler Center (100,000 SF). Initial sizing numbers were shared by the job team.

Net Square Footage – to – Gross Square Footage is a factor of 1.5 to 1.6 on these types of facilities...or 20,000 Net Square Feet will equal about 30,000 Gross Square Feet.

The seat count is a critical issue that needs to be determined and agreed to by all involved as each additional seat adds cost. We must be sure the seat count is correct because there are “deltas” that reflect seat counts and that can increase cost exponentially. Based on history, how do we justify seat counts? We have to work through and plan for future expansion, if the budget does not support a large building at this time. This building needs to last 50 years and be efficiently expanded. The City population grew by 25% over the past decade. We have to assume population demand will increase, not go down, based on University growth, population trends, etc.

Building Expansion and Phasing will be considered and illustrated, but the Design Team believes that phased seating should not be considered as a cost saving measure. Phased seating is NOT cost effective because base costs (MEP/Support Space) will still be designed and built. Bigger (in terms of seat count) is not necessarily better. Balconies, lost space, and mechanical/equipment space will increase the square footage.

The production and show schedules of the current facility were discussed. These shows are market driven and we must examine the realities carefully. Valdosta does not have a demanding schedule.

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There is a formula which determines if a show will come to a particular city (based on if they can make money). If they can make money, they will come. If they can't they won't.

The initial conceptual master plan prepared by the City was reviewed. An agreement between the adjacent owners of the property outlines what can be done on the site regarding access and parking. The yellow triangle (shown on the NE corner of the site) is a demolition agreement and is required to be demolished/removed from the site by 14 May 2014. The Design Team is not required to follow this plan, but it does illustrate the anticipated needs by the City and potential for the site.

The transportation and traffic problems surrounding the site were discussed. There is a \$5M T-SPLOST scheduled for July 2012...but it is not part of the auditorium budget. These are for the transportation and traffic improvements on GDOT Roads (Ashley and Patterson). Future developments (immediate and long term) were discussed and the Design Team will take these into consideration with this schematic design phase. About 22,000 cars come through this area per day (maybe 25,000 to 30,000 per day). Based on economy, etc., we cannot entertain the idea of taking property, so we must work based on the land we have. We have to look at solutions for each adjacent property owner and present the best solution for the entire area. When more information (traffic counts, etc.) becomes available, the solution will become more evident. Addressing access issues will be good for the surrounding community.

A boundary survey was prepared by Folsom Surveying and was provided to the job team. Guess and Lovell Surveying and Mapping are currently surveying the site and will have deliverables by the next meeting.

Three design concepts were reviewed and discussed. These concepts were put together by the Design Team prior to the selection interview. IPG and LAS distilled and extracted these ideas from the RFP document distributed by the City of Valdosta. These demonstrate how the back of house (support spaces) relates to front (auditorium, stage, pre-function area, etc.). It was noted that water features are creative, traffic calming devices. The Design Team includes experts in traffic and transportation planning and their current work includes water features and other traffic calming devices in their plans. All concepts try to put buildings up toward North Valdosta Road.

Concept A

- The most spread out; generous plaza and ties to Setzer property to the North. Parking is pushed to rear; green area to the front.
- CPL has already looked at options – they have reviewed the existing traffic flow, observed the red lights causing traffic congestion.
- Creative traffic design will enable flow.

Concept B

- Has water features and park like space.
- Plaza to south.
- Auditorium to front.

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Concept C

- The Auditorium and Library have visibility from new gateway.
- Water feature is a big part of this concept.
- Parking to rear (with greater walking distance).

Strengths/weaknesses regarding site concepts were shared. These include parking closer to the building, adequate parking quantity, and transit studies to ensure the design is adequate for years to come.

Data provided from initial planning exercises was shared with all attendees. Neilson tracks populations and trends and provides descriptions of population segments. Neilson came up with descriptors that represent each segment of the population. The top 10 segments presented represent one-half of the population (for Valdosta and Lowndes County). All of the segments representative of Valdosta/Lowndes have similar characteristics. Disposable income should be heavily considered in ticket prices and events that will come here. Reviewed top five segments of 30 mile radius population (190,000 population). AMS will complete an inventory based on 45 mile limit (adding Tifton and Moultrie) to see if it will change the demographics in any significant way.

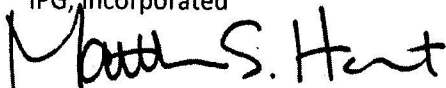
The City issued a survey and there were 81 surveys returned. Specific users of the current facility are small in number, addressing how to creatively use space will increase this number. In reviewing the surveys/interviews, some people said they would actually pay double for the fees for the new facility (which indicates they know they are getting a good deal). Parking is the #1 issue: Drop-off, access, ease in parking, bottlenecks are important issues that will keep people from using the facility. If they come and have a great experience, and then leave and are faced with parking/bottlenecks, etc., it diminishes the experience and leaves them less likely to come in the future.

The meeting adjourned and members of the Design Team visited Mathis Auditorium.

*Note: throughout the day, members of the Design Team interviewed individuals connected to events at Mathis Auditorium as well as others who generate shows or manage other community facilities in Valdosta. These interviews were scheduled to gather data that will be used in determining the arts and operations plan – a critical piece to the Design Team's scope of work for this project.*

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Matthew S. Hart, Associate AIA  
Project Manager

cc: Meeting Attendees (.pdf)  
Project Notebook  
IPG File: 1160/A1

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