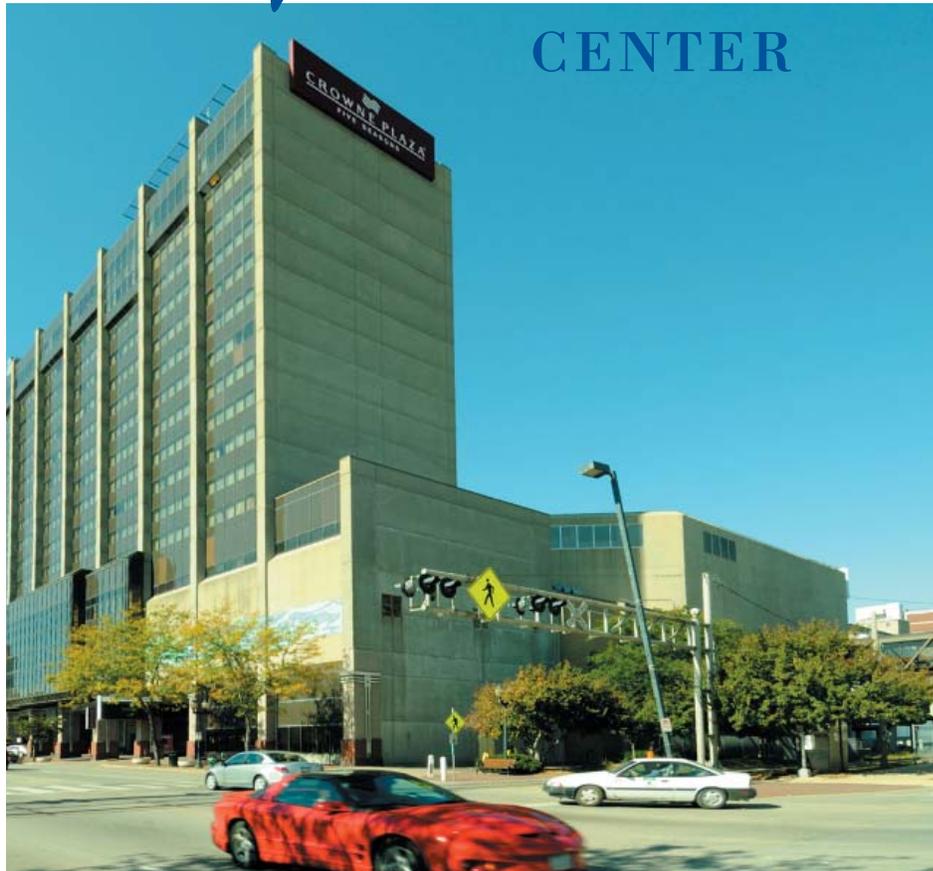




CENTER



## US Cellular Center Facility Planning Study

Prepared for the  
Five Seasons Facilities Commission  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
DRAFT - March 4, 2009

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US Cellular Center Facility Planning Study  
Five Seasons Facilities Commission - City of Cedar Rapids, IA



## Table of Contents

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### 1.0 Executive Summary

Acknowledgements	1.03
Introduction	1.05
Scope of Work/Process	1.07
Facility Conditions and Design Issues	1.09
Market and Economic Analysis	1.xx
Program of Space Needs	1.13
Concept Options	1.15
Design Options	1.17

### 2.0 Appendices

Appendix A - Concept Options Graphics	
Appendix B - Design Options Graphics	





US Cellular Center Facility Planning Study  
Five Seasons Facilities Commission - City of Cedar Rapids, IA



# 1.0 Executive Summary





US Cellular Center Facility Planning Study  
Five Seasons Facilities Commission - City of Cedar Rapids, IA



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*Five Seasons Facilities Commission*

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US Cellular Center Facility Planning Study  
Five Seasons Facilities Commission - City of Cedar Rapids, IA



### Introduction

The US Cellular Center is a nearly 30 year old multipurpose event facility in downtown Cedar Rapids, IA. It has had virtually no major renovations or upgrades in this time frame, and is suffering from lack of viability for several major reasons. The arena, which was in the top of its class at the time it was constructed, has suffered declines in major event bookings, mainly due to lack of seating capacity, building infrastructure capabilities, and patron amenities. The convention and exhibit industry has largely bypassed the US Cellular Center due to the fact that it is not really, nor can it compete as, a true convention facility. Finally, the attached 275 room hotel, which is the only lodging provider in downtown Cedar Rapids is suffering from what can be described as a lack of synergy with successful and vibrant convention and event partners.

As previous reports have noted, the facility has had necessary annual capital improvements which have ensured that the facility is safe and functional for its intended uses. Through forums such as the Fifteen in 5 program and polling in 2007, the public has said that they would like to see the US Cellular Center become a viable entity once again. However the major issues are such that careful consideration be paid to the necessary elements that would make the Center work again.

Currently the arena space is used for (but not limited to) stage events such as concerts and speakers, sporting events including basketball, wrestling, and volleyball, and the occasional trade show or exhibit event. The facility management company, VenuWorks, estimates that the US Cellular Center hosts upwards of approximately 50-60 events annually in the arena. The attached hotel contains a ballroom and kitchen that hosts a fairly steady calendar of banquets, wedding and formal events, and small conventions. While hotel management reports that the current relationship of kitchen/banquet/hotel works, the facility as a convention center is too small to compete for very large events, and due to size and access issues, cannot compete for flat floor trade show-type events. The open arena floor can serve as this type of space, but due to its small size, and large percentage of low headroom it is also not able to offer competitive space for these types of events. As a result of these and many other deficiencies, the US Cellular Center has been seeing business in the form of dozens of trade shows, events, and concerts go to the other facilities within its market range that can handle and effectively bid them.



US Cellular Center Facility Planning Study  
Five Seasons Facilities Commission - City of Cedar Rapids, IA



### Scope of Work/Process

JLG Architects was retained in late 2008 to complete a master plan facility study of the US Cellular Center, with the intended result of providing an assessment of the current facility and recommendations as to methods and ideas for its renovation and/or conversion into a viable entity.

This planning process included:

- Visual and physical on-site observations
- Analysis of previous studies and assessments by third parties
- Market and Economic Impact Analysis
- Preparation of a preliminary program of space needs outlining
- Analysis of existing facilities and preparation of preliminary design options
- Processing of select options with Commission input
- Final master planning recommendations
- Preparation of final study document for use in future planning, funding, and implementation



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Five Seasons Facilities Commission - City of Cedar Rapids, IA



### Facility Conditions and Design Issues

**Background** - Previous studies and investigations, as recently as 2007, have explored various facility options ranging from adding a convention center component and retaining the arena, to wiping the entire site clean and constructing a new arena and convention complex. The underlying factor is that the three main components need to meet the criteria set forth by public demand (previous facility studies, public forums, surveys, Fifteen in 5 program) and program needs (industry standards, event planners, public demand, facility management recommendations).

**Three Components** - The current combined facility serves three main functions – arena, convention, and hotel– with varying levels of success. The arena serves a specific function as the only larger capacity indoor sporting and show event venue in the community, but lacks many key features and amenities to be competitive in attracting the most desirable types and sizes of events to Cedar Rapids. The “convention” facilities are not actually even convention space – just the ballrooms of the hotel, some meeting rooms scattered throughout the hotel, and/or the main floor of the arena. This lack of a convention center could be considered a major detriment to Cedar Rapids, and past studies have shown that a good convention facility would be an asset in the downtown area. The hotel is an inherently viable facility, but suffers from deficiencies that are more easily addressed by upgrades and relatively minor renovation. The hotel also suffers from lack of synergy with a successful partner such as a true convention center.

**Do They “Work”?** In order to be successful and best serve the community, these three components must “work”. They must achieve a level of operational success that allows them to serve their intended purposes at a level that is competitive now and for the future, that allows the community to enjoy a quality of life by having access to local events, and encourages business development and positive secondary economic impact.

**Arena** - If we look at what is being asked of the arena, it really doesn’t work. As stated, it lacks many features that its competitors have and has lost most of its marketability for larger concerts and shows. According to the arena’s management company, Cedar Rapids should be within the prime country act market but continues to be passed over by all but the smaller acts due to being under the industry minimum seating capacity of 10,000 reserved seats. And it is not just country acts - within the 2007 booking season alone, the US Cellular Center lost the ability to bid dozens of major stage and entertainment events primarily due to not enough seating capacity, including

Trans-Siberian Orchestra

Dierks Bentley

Red Hot Chili Peppers

Eric Clapton

Kenny Chesney

Godsmack

Keith Urban

Elton John  
Hannah Montana/Jonas Brothers  
Ozzy Osbourne  
John Mellencamp  
Cirque du Soleil  
Kid Rock  
Alan Jackson  
  
Toby Keith

While published sources claim as high as 9,200 for event capacity, the current arena has fixed seating of 6,200. For average concert events, this is reduced to 5,461 seats front of stage. The arena needs 10-12,000 to be competitive in concert market. Other venues within the general market area that are attracting the events listed above have up to 16,000 seating for concerts. The current arena space contains 9 luxury boxes, but lacks quality premium seating amenities that can generate revenue. The boxes are not much more than converted seating platforms within the main seating bowl, and are not enclosed or able to offer any kind of amenities approaching that of actual suites or private seating or loge boxes. Market studies show that the ability to sell premium seating goes far beyond just direct lease revenue, and can significantly subsidize the operating budget of a facility.

Another area of concern is the lack of square footage on the main arena floor to allow competitive bidding for sporting events. Unfortunately, most records kept by the Cedar Rapids Convention and Visitors Bureau were lost in flooding, but those from 2006 show several major amateur athletic events lost due to the venue requirements that the US Cellular Center lacks. Some of these include, along with some of their major requirements:

AAU Boys' and Girls' Basketball national tournaments - court space, seating, lockers

AAU Gymnastics national championships - court space, lockers

AAU & USA Wrestling national championships - mat space, lockers, staging areas

AAU Volleyball national tournaments - court space and flooring type, lockers

US Trampoline & Tumbling Championships - used the facility but space was so tight other venue locations had to be arranged for the event. Any growth would be difficult in future years.

The arena has many other deficiencies that continue to affect its ability to attract events and allow patrons to best experience the events that they do get. Major HVAC work is needed in the form of a new steam plant and the ability to control zoned heating and cooling. After the 2008 Flood, the provider of steam services for the US Cellular Center is not intending to replace the supply line that serves the arena. In order to continue to use the existing HVAC system, a new source of steam must be provided most likely in the form of a facility



## Executive Summary: Facility Conditions & Design Issues (continued)

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steam plant somewhere on site. Additionally, due to the way that the current system is set up, a single 450 ton chiller must be run if the administrative offices need supply, which is incredibly inefficient.

The existing arena roof structure has a substandard rigging capacity - approximately half that needed by a lot of potential events. The floor power boxes on the main arena floor are original and showing their age. Narrow, dim concourse areas need to be widened and brightened in order to provide a more pleasant experience for visitors. Unfortunately any physical concourse work will likely result in reducing the amount of seating, exacerbating an already serious issue.

Current concession space and facilities do not allow for any kind of menu service and a very limited choice of foods, mostly due to a lack of actual cooking space and proper support (coolers, storage, ventilation, etc.). The modern competitive arena must be able to serve a variety of menu items in order to take advantage of revenue. It is difficult to get competitive bidding for foodservice if available facilities are not an option.

Public toilet areas are better on the concourse level than the floor level, but upgrades are needed, and the capacity on the floor level is far below adequate. During events with floor seating or standing, access to toilet facilities can be compromised depending on the arrangement of entertainer or event pipe and drape. There are only four small team locker rooms which are hopelessly undersized, and these do not work well for team sports, let alone expensive entertainer quarters for shows. As a result, facility users often elect to not use locker facilities at all and instead rely on their parked tour buses as dressing areas.

Finishes and public amenities are extremely outdated. As mentioned previously, these have not been changed since they were new, and some areas are showing their age and wear very clearly. There are really no support spaces such as meeting or breakout rooms for the times the arena floor is used for convention events. There is no real street presence or main entry, and once patrons are at the main doors, the lobby and ticket window area is far too small to act as any type of prefunction space for events.

In order to access the concourse level, patrons must use either the internal stairs, elevators not adjacent to the main lobby, or the escalators that are within the small cramped public lobby and skyway access space. These escalators must serve triple duty - public skyway access, hotel main lobby, and arena concourse level. However, since they are not within the secure or ticketed portion of the arena, the arena must allow for ticket taking at several upper level doors to accommodate these patrons. Finally, the escalators are in need of replacement due to wear, age, and flood damage.

Reviewing this rather extensive list of operational, programmatic, and aesthetic issues makes it quite clear that the arena does not work.

**Convention Center** – There really *is* no convention center within the facility. As stated in previous reports, the square footage of the hotel ballroom and scattered meeting rooms are less than half the size of the nearest major convention competitors. The arena floor, at just under 16,000 sf open space and an additional 14,000 sf of column/low headroom make it uncompetitive for exhibition/flat shows and unsuitable for convention events. Industry standards and the facility management suggest up to 60,000 sf of open exhibit space plus at least 12,000 sf of meeting and breakout space. It is safe to say that this portion of the facility does not work.

**Hotel** - There is currently no other form of lodging in the immediate area, and being directly connected to the arena and ballroom is a huge benefit. At this time the hotel doesn't quite work – it needs a face lift and some real downtown presence, as well as viable facility partners to help fill the rooms. This study discusses the hotel as a member of the facility group only in the sense that “a” hotel entity is needed to help the convention center work. If a final design solution puts the convention center at another location, a hotel or multiple hotels would be needed to eventually make that entity work to its potential. The hotel component is critical for the convention center in nearly every competitive market. The current hotel ownership group is in the midst of a minor remodeling project, but if the entire facility were to remain operational in its current configuration, the hotel would need a fairly extensive cosmetic renovation at the areas directly associated with the arena and public areas in order to help make the complex function as a whole.



### Market and Economic Impact Analysis

Discussion of facility market analysis and economic impact will contain several key areas of interest: geographic area of market influence; economic impact of arena, convention, and hotel; lost business; and feasibility statement.

A 2007 public assembly needs analysis report by Compass Management (now VenuWorks, the US Cellular Center's current management company) looked at many different factors having to do with the market viability of a multi-purpose arena and convention facility in Cedar Rapids. The report studied public opinion, needs, and event attendance and determined that "there is both a population and economic base to support additional function space and programming in Cedar Rapids." While the report also suggested concept design solutions that differ slightly from the ones being presented in this study, the economic and market information it pulls from is recent enough that we feel it is still viable.

#### *Area of Influence*

The general geographic location of Cedar Rapids relative to major highways and interstate systems makes it quite accessible to visitors. As the Linn County seat, Cedar Rapids has the largest population base of any metro area in Eastern Iowa, and acts as the primary market trade area for the entire region, with a population of over 200,000. A secondary market area of the next seven surrounding counties, has a population of nearly half a million (including Linn County). Finally, a population base approaching one million can be reached within a one hour drive. After this one hour drive radius is passed, we start to get into the range of some of the competing venues for arena and convention events such as the UNI-Dome in Cedar Falls, Carver Hawkeye Stadium in Iowa City, the i-wireless Center in Moline, IL, RiverCenter in Davenport, Grande River Center in Dubuque, and the Marriott Coralville Convention Center in Coralville.

#### *Economic Impact*

The investment into arena and convention facilities can almost never be offset by facility income. In a mid-size market such as Cedar Rapids, a multipurpose venue or venues such as the ones being discussed in this study seldom make money, but should instead be considered growth stimulus for the city. The Cedar Rapids Area CVB hotel and consumer direct spending rates suggest that for an average concert crowd of 10,000, the single event economic impact is upwards of \$340,000. We can look at some other examples of stimulus growth related to multi-purpose facilities in mid-sized markets to see how they have affected their communities' economies. Fargo, ND a community of just under 200,000, built the 19,000 seat Fargodome in 1992 and reported economic impact of \$321 million from event attendee spending in its first ten years. The i-wireless Center (formerly the Mark of the Quad Cities) in Moline, IL which was expected to have annual economic impact in the range of \$6-7 million has spurred development around itself in the neighborhood of

\$300 million. Another VenuWorks-managed facility, the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, ND has impacted the local economy by an estimated \$20 million in 2008, resulting in nearly \$780,000 of tax revenues for the City. Unfortunately, the economic impact of the US Cellular Center, viewed on a yearly basis, shows a decline of 40% over the 10 years from 1996 to 2006.

### ***Lost Business***

Since the US Cellular Center has been near the bottom of the market for concert seating capacity and competitive convention center facilities, it helps to look at lost business as a way of gauging its market placement. We have established that there are a few key elements of both the arena and convention center facilities that reduce the viability of each the most. For the concert or performances in the arena it is lack of seating capacity, lack of rigging capacity, lack of support space (dressing and staging areas), insufficient patron amenities (concessions, arena access, and premium seating). For sporting events in the arena, the main issues are lack of adequate square footage for many tournament events (basketball, gymnastics, wrestling, and volleyball), and lack of proper locker and staging facilities. For conventions, the problems include lack of open flat floor space, lack of breakout and meeting areas, and lack of prefunction and other support spaces.

In the 2007 event season, the US Cellular Center missed out on about 50 concert and performance acts, with 48 being due to not enough seating, and 2 due to building costs. Additionally, the insufficient rigging capability was an issue for a significant number of concert and other performances. While some said that they had to not only compromise and cut audio and lighting equipment setups, some acts such as John Mellencamp were nearly lost shows due to this technical deficiency. These performance events all went to other area facilities, such as Wells Fargo Arena (Des Moines), i-wireless Center/Mark of the Quad Cities (Moline, IL), McElroy Auditorium (Waterloo), and the McLeod Center (Cedar Falls).

Athletic events are another staple of the US Cellular Center's typical schedule, with amateur competitions and tournaments comprising the bulk of these events. There is currently no permanent athletic team tenant in the facility. In 2006, at least six major amateur athletic organizations, comprising approximately 28 separate national events were lost or the USCC did not bid on due to various combinations of facility deficiencies. These include lack of multiple competition surfaces, spectator viewing areas, athlete staging, locker spaces, and HVAC/comfort concerns. In turn, these events all generate hundreds of overnight stays and thousands of dollars of direct consumer spending for meals and services. The events can range from a low end of 400 to a high end of 2500 estimated overnights per event. Furthermore, this type of athletic event is usually held in the summer months of June, July, and August – traditionally slower booking months for multi-use facilities.

According to US Cellular management, the convention market for this facility has not really even been a serious consideration in the last few years due to the lack of amenities. When it was originally built, the arena floor was designed to handle convention and exhibit events

on a competitive basis, but since that time the facility requirements for event planners have far exceeded what the US Cellular Center can offer, both in terms of physical space and technical capabilities/amenities. Therefore lost convention business is a little harder to track, because even at the very small flat floor size of the arena, the lack of true convention space and other needed amenities (meeting areas, prefunction space, etc.) has caused convention planners to bypass consideration of the US Cellular Center as they book their venues. Many of the convention events that can and do occur at the facility are those small enough to utilize the hotel's ballroom space. Some of the convention and exhibit events that the US Cellular Center has lost or not been in consideration for include Iowa League of Cities, Iowa Dental Association, Iowa Association of Counties, Iowa Funeral Directors' Association, Cedar Rapids Boat-Sport-Travel Show, Cedar Rapids Home & Builders' Show, and the Cedar Rapids Antique Show & Collector's Fair. Some of the above had previously used the facility, but have now chosen to go elsewhere to venues with the size and modern amenities that the US Cellular Center lacks.

### ***Feasibility Statement***

A review of the various factors above shows that the event needs of the Cedar Rapids area are not being met due to a loss of business. In turn, the lost business means a lack of corresponding consumer spending and its economic impact. The 2007 Compass report states that statistics show that the area market "will continue to provide an audience for arena and convention center events." Given the types of shows and events that the current US Cellular Center is missing, and a declining economic impact sector as a result, we can see that there is feasibility in providing the necessary competitive facilities.

## Program of Space Needs

### **ARENA**

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#### **Arena Floor**

*Planned sport uses:*

*6-8 high school basketball courts with portable seating*

*Layout to fit within space created by retracting all lower bowl seating*

*Volleyball courts*

*Wrestling mats*

*Gymnastics competition*

*Indoor/arena football*

*Ice events (portable ice by others)*

*Backstage event power*

*Arena bowl blackout capabilities*

*Main bowl rigging capacity for large shows*

*Consider ability to scale down main arena bowl to 5-7,000 seats and suites*

#### **Seating-main bowl**

*10,000-12,000 seats*

*Preferred some retractable or moveable end for stage sets*

#### **Suites/Premium Seating**

*Desired 36-48 suites – included in total seating count*

*Club/lounge seating – included in total seating count*

*Press area – elevated and preferably centralized press booth*

*Can contain audio/video control rooms for arena*

#### **Prefunction Facilities**

*Public Lobby*

*Box Office – 6 Ticket Windows ( with direct connection to Admin. offices)*

*Women's Toilet Rooms*

*Men's Toilet Rooms*

*Vertical Circulation*

*Escalators*

*Public Elevator*

*Consideration for private elevator for premium seating*

#### **Support Facilities**

*Meeting/Breakout Space – 2-3 rooms for between 25-200*

*Direct access to lobby and administration*

*Locker Rooms (4-8 teams)*

*Dressing Rooms (6-8 with toilet and shower. Note some dressing room space can be achieved by using locker rooms if necessary.*

*Banquet Area – for event staff, adjacent to loading & dressing areas*



## Executive Summary: Program of Space Needs (continued)

*Staging Area – behind stage, can be part of loading area if immediately adjacent  
Storage (needed for portable floor, baskets, etc.)  
Loading Docks (4-8 trucks)  
“Pen” – on-site secure parking for trucks and busses during events  
Electrical Room  
Engineering Office*

### Food Service/Concession

*Concession Facilities – total of one point of sale (POS) per 300 seats  
Storage – central storage for all concessions  
Catering Space/Kitchen – capabilities for full menu service to suites and for events  
Food/Beverage Office*

### Administration

*Offices (6-8)  
Facility Management  
Event Staff  
General Administrative Staff and seasonal/interns  
Connection and access to ticket windows/box office*

### Other Needs

*House sound system – high quality, designed for this space*

## **CONVENTION CENTER**

136,400 Total S.F.

### Prefunction Facilities

21,000 S.F.

*Public Lobby  
Public Toilet Rooms  
Janitor Space  
Box Office Window  
Business Center*

### Exhibition Hall

60,000 S.F.

*Large column free flat floor space. Recommended width of 120-140’  
Ability to get vehicles/equipment directly in from grade  
Ability to subdivide into several smaller spaces*

### Meeting Rooms

14,000 S.F.

*Meeting Rooms – various combinations with capacities of 25 - 100 for meetings.  
Other capacities would vary depending on use.  
Storage – space for meeting area tables & chairs*

### Support Facilities

20,000 S.F.

*Service Corridor – “back of house” connection for kitchen, meeting rooms, loading,  
flat floor areas. Needs access to service elevator.  
Receiving/Security Office  
Loading Dock – dock space for one truck per 10,000sf exhibition space*



## Executive Summary: Program of Space Needs (continued)

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*Truck Marshalling – large secure or semi-secure “pen” area for event load-in/out*  
*Electrical/Telephone/Audio Room*  
*Storage – Security, Equipment/Materials, Vehicle*  
*Mechanical Room*  
*Refuse/recycling*

### **Food Service** 6,000 S.F.

*Main Kitchen – ability to cook, hold, and plate for 3,000 banquet*  
*Service Kitchen*  
*Concession Stands*  
*Food & Beverage Offices*

### **Administration** 3,000 S.F.

*Reception*  
*Office*  
*Staff Office (2)*  
*Conference Room*  
*Toilet*  
*Janitor Space*  
*Storage/Workroom*  
*Event Manager Office*

### **Grossing Factor (10%)** 12,400 S.F.

*Circulation, etc.*

## **HOTEL**

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*Program requirements limited to minor spaces and necessary renovations to public, lobby, shared, and “front of house” spaces, which include:*

*Ground Level drop-off and Bellhop Stand*  
*Second Floor Lobby*  
*Need Updated/Additional signage on exterior of building*  
*Expand Escalator Access or replace with other facility location*  
*Possibly Collocate Kitchen and Storage with new Convention Center*  
*Collocate Ballroom Space with new Convention Center*

## **GENERAL**

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*Shared Space Renovations/Additions:*  
*24 hr. Public Lobby w/ access to City skyway system*  
*Escalator*  
*Mechanical/Electrical*  
*Drop-off Area*  
*Event Sponsorship Signage Locations*  
*General Announcement Sound System (as required)*



### Concept Options and Possible Solutions

The following Options begin to explore the idea of what might be done with the US Cellular and Crowne Plaza facilities to better meet the needs of Cedar Rapids. All of the options being explored involve the retention of the existing Roosevelt Hotel and parking facility. It is also assumed that these Options would maintain the necessary connections to the downtown skyway system, and that facility parking is accounted for within the adjacent downtown parking areas and ramps. The Options range from finishes only (Option 1 series), keeping everything on the existing site (Option 2 series), moving at least one component off site (Option 3 series), to moving everything off site (Option 4 series).

Some very preliminary costs associated with each are listed, and are not intended to account for any site or real estate acquisition costs, relocation of tenants or demolition of neighboring buildings required for any of the Options (other than demolition to the current US Cellular Center as noted elsewhere), unknown or unusual subgrade and/or utility costs, and any normal construction project “soft costs” such as professional fees, surveys, hazmat remediation, street or municipal work, or furniture, fixtures, and equipment which are normally regarded as owner-provided.

More refined costs are discussed as part of the final design solution.

**Option 1 – Finish Upgrades/Facelift Only.** Complete the necessary material, finish, and other upgrades to give a sorely-needed fresh appearance and simple amenities to the facility. It will be the only face lift work done in the facility’s nearly 30 year existence. This option does not make the convention or arena portions “work”. In fact, adding amenities and upgrades to the arena within the context of the existing envelope may actually hurt the arena – by doing things like widening concourses, upgrading premium seating, increasing concessions and other support spaces will reduce the amount of seating capacity, thereby making the seating problem even worse. Estimated cost, approximately \$20-25 million.

**Option 2A – Add Convention Center to Site.** Keeps everything at existing site. Create a new 2-level convention center by reclaiming 3<sup>rd</sup> Street NE. This begins to “work” for the convention center, but is short of the suggested convention center space by nearly 50%, at around 30,000 sf of flat floor space and about 4,000 sf of meeting space. It also leaves an arena that still does not meet the desired requirements. Includes finish upgrades to arena. This Option has the benefit of creating a unified, common main entry and might benefit from shared spaces such as prefunction, ticketing, meeting, and loading areas. Estimated cost, \$30-40 million.

**Option 2B – Add Convention Center to Site.** Keeps everything at existing site. Essentially the same as Option 2A, but reclaims adjacent site space and brings the total facility in line with the desired space of 60,000 sf of flat floor space and a total of 12,000 sf of meeting space. Renovate the major portion of the current site/city blocks, with the exception of the Roosevelt Hotel and adjacent parking ramp, into a single large 2-level convention center. This “works” for the convention center and hotel, but leaves an arena that still does not meet the desired requirements. Estimated cost, \$40-50 million.

## Executive Summary: Concept Options (continued)

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**Option 2C – Add Convention Center to Site.** Keeps everything at existing site. Retains existing arena, with required face lift and minor renovations. Creates a new multi-level convention center across 1st Avenue NE, and connecting to the existing arena and hotel via 2nd level skyway. This does not “work” due to a too-small site, awkward spatial requirements, and the logistics of facility patrons needing to either cross the busy downtown street or only use the skyway level connection. This connection would require significant disruption in the hotel lobby area. It would also require the convention space and arena to have independent loading and back of house spaces, which would increase cost and require additional square footage. Estimated cost, \$55-60 million.

**Option 3A – Retain Arena & Create Convention Center Off-Site.** Starts to move pieces off site. Retain existing arena, complete the necessary finishes and upgrades. Ballroom and kitchen spaces stay with the hotel. The off-site convention center would not have the intrinsic benefit of the hotel or arena pieces, nor provide the critical synergistic relationship that the hotel needs. It would also require outside costs in the form of site acquisition and infrastructure. Estimated cost, approximately \$65-70 million.

**Option 3B – Convert Arena to Convention Center & Create Arena Off-Site.** Starts to move pieces off site. Remove seating, add intermediate floor in key areas, convert the arena volume into a multi-level convention center. This makes the convention center “work”, but eliminates the arena on site. This arrangement would include a face lift and allow the hotel to work in conjunction as a single-source downtown convention destination. The desired flat floor space of 60,000 may be achieved through careful planning. A new arena is then created at a location off-site. This Option considered several locations, including the near West bank of the downtown area and the existing Westdale Mall site. Plans may include an amphitheater component as a transition or companion piece, however this portion is not included in the programming or costs. Estimated cost, approximately \$120-130 million.

**Option 4 – Entire New Complex Off-Site.** Construct an entirely new convention center and arena at another site that supports the needed facilities, which allows all facilities to “work”. The hotel and amphitheater components could be added portions. There are some great advantages to this option – the ability to choose a site that best fits the facility rather than shoehorning it into an existing site; and the ability to Phase the project, thereby maximizing funding options. However, this Option potentially eliminates the true downtown aspect and leaves behind an empty facility that the City would have to deal with, not to mention a hotel with no partners whatsoever. The same sites as Option 3B were considered. Estimated cost, not including hotel and land/infrastructure, \$150 million.



### Design Options

After reviewing the previous Options and outlining the various pros and cons, JLG was directed to move forward with the Option 3B - Convert Arena to Convention Center and Move Arena Off-Site, using the existing Westdale Mall site as its focus.

#### Design Option 3B - Convention Center

Requires the removal of interior seating spaces and essential gutting of the US Cellular arena shell. The existing precast frame and panels for the exterior shell, plus the roof structure would stay in place but the seating risers and all associated columns would come out. The main floor space is opened up as much as possible to create as close as possible to a 60,000 sf flat floor exhibit space with access to a common prefunction on the 1st Avenue side and a common back of house storage and loading area. The intent of the loading area is to provide a mix of depressed dock and drive through capabilities. The main facility kitchen would be adjacent to the loading area and main hall, with access via service elevator to upper floors. An intermediate floor would be constructed to provide peripheral intermediate spaces such as meeting and support rooms surrounding the large open exhibit hall. This would be at or connected to the existing skyway level to allow access to the City skyway system and hotel. The hotel lobby would be maintained as a second floor component, with a dedicated vertical circulation in roughly the same location as the existing ground floor elevator lobby. However the connection from grade to lobby would be a single/double elevator only, and the patrons would have access to the rest of the hotel stairs and elevators for upper floors. Various groups of small and large meeting rooms are set throughout the three levels, providing nearly 24,000 square feet of meeting and banquet space.

The main prefunction space runs the length of the exhibit hall and has one common vertical circulation point that rises three stories through the skyway level to a third floor 9,000 sf banquet/meeting hall. The entire section fronts 1st Avenue with a large glass wall and acts as atrium and provides a focal point for the terminus of Third Street with a strong visual draw. This facade along 1st Avenue becomes one large glass entry wall, and the terminus of 3rd Street becomes the main entry into the facility. The existing drop-off remains in place for hotel and convention center use.

This Option exceeds the program space in several areas, most notably meeting, prefunction, and storage space, and ends up being approximately 190,000sf as shown in the concept plans. This number includes public skyway areas and has potential for significant areas of efficiency upon further design. There would be the possibility of eliminating the third level and its meeting rooms, or planning that space as future expansion.

#### New Arena - Westdale Mall Site

The existing Westdale Mall site is in need of revitalization. By removing the northern portion of the mall, a new 10-12,000 seat arena can be constructed in this location and

## Executive Summary: Design Options (continued)

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anchor directly to the mall. This is a significant advantage on several levels:

**Revitalization** - by adding a viable and active component to a languishing site, an arena may help bring life back to the Westdale Mall. Arenas attract and support active businesses such as restaurants, bars, hotels, and retail.

**Circulation and Infrastructure** - the necessary components to any large event facility are already in place with the mall. It is easy to get in and out of, and with controlled traffic on event days it can be run quite smoothly. The interior ring roads are all in place - in fact very little would have to be done at all. The site and proposed arena location allow easy access in and out, and place the facility in a highly visible location. An arena of this size has a large mass which in this case will be very well balanced by the rest of the mall. With further development of this concept, it is suggested to explore the idea of sharing certain services and amenities between the arena and mall - restaurants, training areas/personal health facilities, and other peripheral activities.

