



NEWS

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A Year Later, New Owners of The National Conference Center and West Belmont Place Celebrate Turnaround Success

New personnel, new programs, renovations, and increased bookings make property one of the fastest turnaround successes in the history of the conference center industry

LEESBURG, Va., May 29, 2015 –Anyone driving by The National Conference Center or West Belmont Place, knows there’s a lot going on at the property. The National and West Belmont Place represent the largest open market meeting, training and event center in the nation, located within close proximity to Washington Dulles International Airport and just outside of Washington, D.C. Purchased out of bankruptcy just over a year ago, the property has undergone significant changes and improvements which have resulted in a dramatic uplift in business.

Last year, **LaKota Hotels & Resorts** was retained by the new ownership to reorganize and re-energize the operation. LaKota brought in new onsite leadership and worked with them to reorganize the sales and marketing team, develop a capital improvement plan and infuse and reinforce a “whatever it takes” attitude. The result was one of the fastest and most dramatic turnarounds in the history of the conference center industry.

In 2013, prior to new ownership, The National was at a financial low with a downswing that continued into 2014 when the property was purchased and the new management team brought in. The team managed to completely reverse the downward direction during the remaining seven months of 2014, actually increasing revenue 34% over the prior year. In 2015, the team accelerated the trend with 2015 revenues forecasted (conservatively) to increase another 73% over 2014, which is a 140% increase over 2013. Occupancy in 2015 has increased by 130%. Usage from all group market segments is up double to triple digit percentages at The National and West Belmont Place including corporate, association, government, military, religious, fraternal, weddings, social functions and events. So far this year, more than \$5 million in additional group business had to be turned away due to advance group commitments.

The key players of the new executive leadership team include Vice President and General Manager Geoff Lawson, a proven hospitality executive with years of conference center experience, numerous turnarounds and a former president of the International Association of Conference Centers; Chief Marketing Officer Chuck Ocheltree, a conference center sales and marketing icon with a number of turnaround successes in his career; Kahilua Herlihy, chief financial officer with years of experience as an accounting and finance executive in the D.C.

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hotel market; Allan Reynolds, director of food and beverage, with exceptional culinary experience in revamping conference center food and beverage operations; Chris Ferrier, executive chef who brings large 4-star hotel and catering experience and a passion for exciting, locally-sourced and innovative food; and Kellie Mueller, an exceptional leader in conference planning who returned to The National as director of conference services.

This new team set about to shake up the former operation and set it on a new path by investing in top sales talent, repositioning the property in the marketplace, and initiating capital improvement and renovation plans. “The dramatic turnaround at The National is a true testament to the ability and attitude of the onsite team, which is by far the strongest leadership, sales, and service group of folks I have had the pleasure of working with in this industry,” stated Sam Haigh, LaKota president and chief operating officer.

Capital improvements include renovations internally and externally with new dining and gathering areas, lobby improvements, a renovated fitness center and outdoor gathering areas such as patios and fire pits, taking advantage of the property’s large campus setting. With the physical improvements and service changes, dining at The National is an entirely new experience, as is relaxing and enjoying the evening entertainment in The Bar.

“The best way to tell we’re on the right track is the tremendous volume of business we’re seeing as well as the very high marks and exceptionally positive feedback from our clients,” stated Geoff Lawson, The National vice president and general manager. The property will continue with additional renovations as part of the ongoing capital improvement plan, so that clients will experience new enhancements with each return visit.

More about The National Conference Center

Located along the Potomac in Northern Virginia 12 miles from Dulles International Airport and 35 miles from Washington, D.C., The National Conference Center the largest and most comprehensive fully open market conference center in the nation. With 917 guest rooms and over 250,000 square feet of meeting and group function space, including the West Belmont Place catering complex with its 16,500 square foot ballroom, The National has become the nation’s headquarters for productive meetings and West Belmont Place the hub for Loudoun County and surrounding area social functions. West Belmont Place was named 2013 Best Venue by the International Special Events Society. The National Conference Center is also on the GSA schedule. The National is owned by NCC PS Enterprises LLC, a venture between PCCP, LLC and Stoneleigh Capital, LLC. For information call 800-640-2684 or visit www.conferencecenter.com

LaKota Hotels & Resorts, LLC, a dynamic hospitality management company specializing in turning around under-performing hotels, resorts and conference centers, has been retained by ownership of The National and West Belmont Place to reorganize and re-energize the business and to oversee all aspects of the day-to-day operations. For more information, call 203-987-8042 or visit www.lakotahr.com.

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