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CONSTRUCTION BEGINS AS EXPLORE BRISTOL BREAKS GOUND ON NEW VISITOR CENTER

BRISTOL, Tenn. (Wednesday, April 3, 2024) - Explore Bristol, the official Destination Marketing Organization for Bristol, Tennessee and Bristol, Virginia, broke ground today on its new downtown visitor center, which will be located along Volunteer Parkway, just south of the Tennessee-Virginia state line.

Pete Rosenboro, Bristol native and Assistant Commissioner of Welcome Centers for the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, joined Becky Nave, Director of Destination Development for Virginia Tourism Corporation, city officials, Explore Bristol staff, and members of its board of directors for the groundbreaking.

Tennessee Department of Tourist Development Commissioner Mark Ezell feels the new interactive visitor center, which will feature digital screens and display areas to highlight major attractions in Bristol and the region, will be a tremendous benefit to the Bristol area.

"Visitors from around the world flock to our state for its breathtaking scenery, iconic music, rich cultural heritage, and historical landmarks like Bristol's own Birthplace of Country Music Museum," said Ezell. "The addition of Bristol's visitor center will be an important asset to drive tourism in Northeast Tennessee.

"Congratulations to the team for their commitment to ensuring every visitor leaves with unforgettable memories of Northeast Tennessee."

Nave, who is also mayor of Bristol, Virginia, says the new visitor's center is a testament to the city's commitment to tourism.

"The groundbreaking of Explore Bristol's Visitor Center ushers in a new era of connectivity and exploration for our city," she said. "This center will not only serve as a hub for tourists but also as a testament to our community's commitment to fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Bristol's unique heritage and charm."

Bristol, Tennessee, Mayor Vince Turner feels the center is the perfect addition to the downtown area. "With this new center, we are thrilled to have an official front door to welcome visitors from around the globe and showcase the seemingly endless list of things to do, see, and experience during their time in our community. Located in the heart of our city, it is perfectly situated to serve as the jumping-off point to explore not only Bristol but also everything else our region has to offer."

The Explore Bristol Visitor Center will be located near the Parkway's intersection with Anderson Street at the trailhead of the Wes Davis Greenway. In addition to serving as Explore Bristol's primary office location, the 2,046-square-foot facility will feature ample display space for information on local and regional tourism assets from area businesses. Flexible indoor and outdoor spaces will also accommodate small meetings and music events.

Like the Pullman car and caboose that currently sit on the site, both of which will remain and be incorporated into the center's offerings, the interior and exterior architectural features of the facility have been designed to acknowledge Bristol's extensive railroad heritage. Adding a parking lot and updated lighting will also enhance the area for users of the roughly half-mile greenway currently emanating from the site.

While Bristol area attractions will naturally be highlighted, the visitor's center is expected to position Bristol as a starting point for visitors to explore the greater region.

"Bristol is known primarily for racing, outdoor adventures, and music, and there are so many other remarkable attractions here and throughout Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia for visitors to enjoy," said Explore Bristol Executive Director Matt Bolas. "We're also renowned as one of the friendliest, most hospitable regions in the country, and that also keeps bringing tourists back to the area time and time again.

"We're very excited to finally have a place where the full Bristol experience is proudly displayed as soon as folks walk through the doors. It's going to be a tremendous benefit for Bristol. Bristol's tourism economy is booming, with record-number lodging tax collections and new major attractions opening this year, like the permanent Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Bristol and Tennessee Hills Distillery. This Visitor Center will assist in preparing Bristol to welcome these new visitors to our community."

The visitor center is expected to be open by the early winter of this year.

For more information, please contact Explore Bristol at info@explorebristol.com or call 423-212-3637.

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Formed in 2021, Explore Bristol is an independent 501(C)(6) nonprofit serving as the official destination marketing organization of Bristol, Tennessee, and the surrounding region. Explore Bristol seeks to promote and increase tourism in Bristol and the surrounding region through innovative strategies and collaboration. Stay connected online at explorebristol.com and on Facebook and Instagram @explorebristolnow