

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HYATT PLACE SCHEDULED TO OPEN IN ATHENS, GEORGIA,  
AS FIRST CONNECTING HOTEL TO THE CLASSIC CENTER  
SPRING 2017**



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ATHENS, Ga. (July 13, 2016) – Athens, Georgia, is set to add 192 hotel rooms connected to The Classic Center, the downtown’s convention and performing arts space, with the opening of a Hyatt Place in spring 2017. The new hotel will be the first connected property to The Classic Center and bring the total number of rooms within one mile radius of this major convention center to over 1,400 rooms. The property is being developed by HP Athens. Southern Hospitality Group has been selected as the management company.

“The Classic Center is thrilled to now have a connected hotel to complement the convention complex,” said Classic Center Executive Director Paul Cramer. “Since 1995, The Classic Center has continued to grow and expand, and we are now able to host groups of up to 6,000, doubling our capacity in 2013. Having the expanded facility and close proximity to 1,400 hotel rooms – combined with our unique downtown location and focus on quality service – makes Athens one of the premier meeting destinations in the state. Having everything under one roof will make life easier for attendees and planners and certainly make us appealing for corporate events.”

The nine-story Hyatt Place will include Presidential and Governor’s Suites, perfect for meeting planners and corporate entities. Three meeting rooms and a boardroom will provide over 6,000 square feet of meeting and pre-function space. A full restaurant, rooftop bar and lobby level bar and lounge offer a range of dining options. Amenities also include a fitness center and business center. A parking deck with 200 spaces adjoins the building.

“We are excited to enter the Athens, Georgia, market,” said Andrew Cajka, partner and president of Southern Hospitality Group. “It is an extraordinary opportunity to open the first hotel connected to this expanding convention center in a growing destination. The fact that our hotel is not only connected to The Classic Center but also in the midst of vibrant downtown Athens gives it an exceptionally broad appeal that is indeed remarkable.”

Paul Martin, a local businessman, former Classic Center Authority board member and now an owner of the new Hyatt stated, “Having been an Authority board member, I recognize the importance of having a connected hotel to the convention center and am thrilled to be a part of

it.” Robert Small, another owner, said, “I chose Athens as a good place to do business and for my wife and me to rear our children. This new hotel has been a missing link in the local tourism infrastructure, and I am glad to be a part of this project that will create meaningful jobs.”

“We are proud to welcome Hyatt Place to Athens,” said Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Director Chuck Jones. “Athens has become a stronger market for business travel, leisure trips and conventions, and we’ve definitely seen the need for more hotel rooms downtown. The CVB has tracked the number of groups who have wanted to come to Athens, but were not able to do so until either an attached hotel was built or there were over 1,000 hotel rooms within walking distance of The Classic Center. We are thrilled that both of these needs will soon be a reality here in Athens.”

The opening of the Hyatt Place will usher in a boon in new hotel rooms in downtown Athens. A Homewood Suites by Hilton, being developed by McNeill Hotel Company out of Germantown, TN, will add approximately 130 rooms one block from The Classic Center as part of The Mark complex set to open in the next couple of years. A SpringHill Suites, being developed by Benson’s Hospitality Group, will add another 200 rooms at the corner of Hull and West Broad Streets just a half mile from The Classic Center. In addition, a 95-room Fairfield Inn is planned for Broad Street adjacent to Howard Johnson and 54 rooms are being added to the Best Western, at which time it will be converted to a Best Western Plus. When completed, Athens will be able to boast a total of 3,012 hotel rooms.

“It is extremely gratifying to see such growth in the local hospitality industry,” said Jones. “With this series of new hotel openings, Athens will benefit from new jobs, increased spending at our local restaurants and retailers and increased local sales and property tax collections to fund enhanced quality of life programs for residents without increasing the tax burden on Athens-Clarke County citizens. Tourism is economic development and tourist expenditures in Athens result in an annual tax savings of \$423 per household.” Jones continued, “The Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau takes our mission to generate economic development seriously and our sales and marketing efforts over the next several years will be focused on filling the increased hotel capacity in our city.”

“I am very proud of the new hotel development in Athens,” said Cramer. “It is wonderful to see how our industry has positively affected our community by luring private sector investment and by increasing our tax base.”

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***About the Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau:***

The Athens Convention & Visitors Bureau is a proactive sales and marketing organization whose primary goal is to increase the economic impact of the hospitality and visitor industry by attracting individual visitors, group tours, and meetings and conventions to Athens. Tourism WORKS for Athens, contributing \$273.40 million in spending, 2,600 jobs and \$17.86 million in local and state tax revenue in 2014.