COLUMBUS GA
Chamber of Commerce

September 9, 2026

The Honorable Mayor and Members of Columbus Council
Columbus Consolidated Government
100 10th Street
Columbus, Georgia 31901

RE: Support for a Parking Garage Connected to the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center

Dear Mayor and Members of Council:

On behalf of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce and the businesses we represent, I write in strong support of the proposed parking garage connected to the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center.

The Trade Center is one of our community's most productive economic assets. In its most recent fiscal year, the facility hosted more than 450 events, welcomed more than 235,000 attendees, and generated approximately $15.9 million in economic impact for Columbus. Those figures represent hotel nights, restaurant patronage, retail sales, and tax revenue that reach far beyond the walls of the facility and into businesses across our community.

In looking to growth on these numbers, parking is consistently the first concern raised by the clients and guests who use the facility, and it is a factor every event planner weighs when comparing Columbus to competing markets. A modernized garage answers that objection directly — improving safety and accessibility for visitors and for the residents who use the Trade Center throughout the year, and strengthening our ability to win regional, statewide, and national events that bring new dollars into Columbus.

We are also encouraged by how this project has been developed. It is informed by a professional traffic study and master planning completed with engineers and architects. And its design is intended to complement the Trade Center and the surrounding Historic District rather than compete with it. That combination — disciplined use of existing public funds, data-driven planning, and respect for the character of downtown — is exactly the standard our members expect of a public investment of this significance.

This need was identified more than two decades ago. On behalf of our membership, I respectfully urge Council to diligently consider the development of a modernized parking garage connected to the Trade Center, and I offer the Chamber as a resource to you and to the community as the project moves forward.

Sincerely,

Jansen Tidmore
President & Chief Executive Officer

118 W. Eleventh Street
P.O. Box 1200 • Columbus, GA 31902
706.372.1566
columbusgachamber.com

September 14, 2026

Dear Hayley:

Uptown Columbus is pleased to express our support for the proposed parking garage directly connected to the Columbus Georgia Convention and Trade Center.

The Trade Center is a significant economic and community asset, bringing thousands of visitors to Columbus each year. Improved, convenient, and accessible parking would enhance the guest experience and strengthen the Trade Center's ability to attract and retain events.

This investment would also have a direct positive impact on Uptown Columbus. Trade Center attendees are important customers for our restaurants, retail businesses, hotels, attractions, and other Uptown businesses. Better parking and connectivity would make it easier for visitors to move throughout Uptown, spend more time in our district, and support local businesses.

We believe this project is an important investment in the continued growth and economic vitality of Columbus and Uptown.

Uptown Columbus appreciates the City's consideration of this long-standing need and supports the project.

Sincerely,

Steve Morse, MPA
President & CEO
Uptown Columbus, Inc.

September 15, 2026

Greetings,

I am reaching out in support of the Columbus Georgia Convention and Trade Center and their initiative to bring a new parking garage connected to their venue.

Although still relatively new in town, the Clingstones organization recognized quickly the impact the Trade Center has on the community and how their events "lift all boats" for their neighbors in Uptown Columbus.

In travelling to many conventions around the country, I can appreciate the importance of safe, accessible parking and how that can be a major consideration in the initial selection of a venue for groups .... and ultimately a large factor in booking a return trip to that city.

Please reach out with questions at any time.

Best regards,

Pete Laven
General Manager
Columbus Clingstones
Pete.laven@clingstones.com

SPORTS COUNCIL
COLUMBUS GEORGIA

P.O. Box 1519
Columbus, GA 31902

(706) 660-1996

www.columbusgasports.com

September 15, 2026
Columbus City Council
3111 Citizens Way
Columbus, GA 31906

RE: Letter of Support – Trade Center Connected Parking Garage

Dear Members of the Columbus City Council,

As a valued client and partner of the Columbus Georgia Convention and Trade Center, I am writing to express my strong support for the development of a new parking garage directly connected to the Trade Center.

I have experienced firsthand the tremendous energy and economic impact the Trade Center brings to our region. The Columbus GA Sports and Events Council hosted nearly 100 events with almost 200,000 participants and attendees last year alone, and we have utilized the Columbus Trade Center for many of those events. However, I have also experienced firsthand its greatest challenge: convenient, safe, and accessible parking.

My attendees and guests have frequently encountered congestion, long walks from distant parking, and confusion finding safe, available spaces — especially during large events. This creates frustration, accessibility concerns, and safety issues, particularly for evening events and for guests with mobility challenges.

Aside from safety and confusion for our guests, the lack of connected parking has hindered our ability to recruit certain events to Columbus. This, along with an additional adjacent full-service hotel, would enhance the city's tourism portfolio and help the city continue its viability as a preferred destination for both conventions and sporting events.

I urge you to approve the development of the connected parking garage. It will directly benefit my organization, my attendees, and the entire Columbus region.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of the Columbus Trade Center.

Sincerely,

Craig S. Howard
Executive Director
Columbus GA Sports and Events Council

PROUD TO BE A PART OF
Columbus, GA
What progress has preserved.

Georgia Thespians

September 1, 2026

Dear Members of the Columbus City Council:

On behalf of Georgia Thespians, I am pleased to express our strong support for the development of a new parking garage directly connected to the Columbus, Georgia Convention & Trade Center.

Georgia Thespians has a long-standing relationship with the Trade Center and the City of Columbus through our annual Georgia Thespian Conference. Each year, our conference brings thousands of students, theatre educators, teaching artists, college representatives, vendors, families, and guests to Columbus. The Trade Center serves as one of the central facilities for our event and is an essential part of our ability to provide a high-quality statewide conference experience.

One of the most consistent logistical challenges we experience is the limited amount of convenient parking located near the Trade Center. During a large event such as ours, available parking in the immediate area can fill quickly. This is particularly challenging when managing large groups of high school students, transporting conference materials and equipment, accommodating guests with mobility needs, or arriving and departing during periods of heavy traffic.

A parking garage directly connected to the Trade Center would significantly improve the experience of our attendees. It would provide greater convenience, enhance safety and accessibility, reduce congestion and confusion, and make it easier for organizations like Georgia Thespians to continue bringing large-scale events to Columbus.

Georgia Thespians strongly supports the proposed parking garage and the continued investment in the Columbus, Georgia Convention & Trade Center. We appreciate the City's consideration of this important project and believe it will benefit conference attendees, Columbus residents, visitors, and the broader community.

Sincerely,

Nicholas Sostillio

Nicholas Sostillio
Chapter Director
Georgia Thespians

International Thespian Society | Educational Theatre Association | Georgia Thespians

Georgia

September 9, 2026

Dear Members of the Columbus City Council,

My name is Paul Hampton, and I am writing to you as the former Chapter Director of the Georgia Thespians, the state's high school theatre honor society, to express my strong support for the construction of a new, modern parking deck at the Columbus Trade Center.

The Georgia Thespians and the City of Columbus have shared a long and productive relationship. For many years, the Columbus Trade Center has served as the home of the Georgia Thespian Conference, ThesCon, one of the largest annual gatherings of high school theatre students, educators, and directors in the nation. Columbus was chosen, and has continued to be chosen year after year, because the Trade Center offers the space, flexibility, and central location that a conference of this size requires. Over the course of this partnership, over 66,000 students, teachers, and parents from every corner of Georgia have come to know Columbus not just as a stop on a map, but as their theatre "home away from home." In three days in February, Georgia Thespians bring a substantial economic impact of over 1 million dollars to Columbus every year.

The Georgia Thespian Conference has grown steadily over the years, and that growth is a direct reflection of the reputation the conference — and Columbus — has built within the Georgia theatre education community. A modern, dedicated parking deck at the Trade Center would remove one of the few remaining obstacles to that continued growth. Conference organizers are constantly evaluating whether Columbus can continue to accommodate an event of this scale, and adequate infrastructure, including parking, is a key part of that evaluation. Investing in a parking deck sends a clear signal that Columbus is committed to remaining a top-tier host city, capable of supporting this conference not just today, but for many years to come.

Anyone who has attended the Georgia Thespian Conference at the Trade Center knows the challenge that inadequate parking creates. With roughly 6,000 attendees converging on the facility over the course of the event, the current surface lots are simply not sufficient. Students, teachers, and chaperones — many of them arriving early in the morning for competitions and workshops — are forced to park far from the venue, walk long distances while carrying costumes, props, and equipment, or circle the area searching for an open space. This creates safety concerns, delays the start of programming, and leaves a poor first impression on visitors who are experiencing Columbus for the first time. A modern parking deck would directly address this problem, allowing attendees to arrive, park, and get into the building efficiently and safely.

The Georgia Thespian Conference is more than just an event that passes through Columbus once a year — it is a partnership built on years of trust, hospitality, and shared success. A new parking deck at the Columbus Trade Center is a practical, forward-looking investment that will directly benefit not only this conference but every other event the Trade Center hosts. I respectfully urge the Council to support this project.

Sincerely,

Paul Hampton

Paul Hampton
Former Chapter Director, Georgia Thespians

BLACK HISTORY MONTH
OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE

Congressman Sanford D. Bishop, Jr., Honorary Chair
Post Office Box 371, Columbus, GA 31902

September 15, 2026

Hayley Tillery
Executive Director
Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center
801 Front Avenue
Columbus, GA 31901

Dear Hayley,

Without reservation, I am pleased to express my support for the proposed parking garage connected to the Columbus, Georgia Convention and Trade Center.

The Trade Center is an important asset to Columbus and regularly brings significant business, visitors, and economic activity to our community. However, limited and inconvenient parking can create challenges for attendees, clients, and event organizers. The proposed parking garage development would increase parking, improve accessibility, safety, and the overall visitor experience.

This project would also strengthen the Trade Center's ability to attract and host events that benefit local businesses and the broader Columbus community. I believe it is a thoughtful, long-term investment in the continued success of the Trade Center and our city.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my support.

Sincerely,

Herman E. Lewis, Jr.
Co-Chair/Treasurer
Annual Black History Observance Committee

September 16, 2026

Dear Members of Columbus City Council:

I am pleased to share my perspective regarding the proposed development of connected parking for the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center.

For more than ten years, I have worked with Hayley Tillery and the Trade Center as a trusted business and community partner. During that time, I have seen firsthand the important role the Trade Center plays in hosting significant community, civic, corporate, and regional events that bring people and economic activity to Columbus.

I have also experienced the parking and accessibility challenges associated with major events at the facility. Improved, directly connected parking would meaningfully enhance accessibility, safety, convenience, and the overall experience for attendees and organizations utilizing the Trade Center. It would also address a practical facility need as Columbus continues to attract and host large-scale events.

The Trade Center is an important community and economic asset, and thoughtful investment in its infrastructure will help position the facility to effectively serve residents, organizations, and visitors for years to come.

Respectfully,

SirMichael D. Jones
Chairman, Alpha Onward & Upward Foundation, Inc.

"Your gift today builds a brighter tomorrow."

Alpha Onward & Upward Foundation, Incorporated
P.O. Box 12343 | Columbus, GA 31917
aoufoundation@gmail.com

Dr. Marvin Broadwater, Sr.
3004 Slippery Rock Ct.
Columbus, GA 31909
September 15, 2026

Convention and Trade Center (Management Team)
Attn: Hayley Tillery
801 Front Avenue
Columbus, GA 31901

As a 24-year military retiree who has had bilateral knee surgery (both knees) and bilateral hip surgery. It is a colossal challenge to attend events at the Convention and Trade Center because of the parking and walking long distances. If there was a parking garage built where the disabled parks were given specific consideration for parking, it would be greatly appreciated. We need a new garage!

Sincerely,

Dr. Marvin Broadwater, Sr.

Dr. Marvin Broadwater, Sr.
mbroadwatersr@yahoo.com
706.315.6454

FIT
FINANCIAL SERVICES

3100 Gentian Blvd Ste., 101-B
Columbus, GA 31907
sanderson1n@yahoo.com
(706) 593-5858

September 15, 2026

Support for the Columbus Convention & Trade Center new parking garage.

To whom it may concern,

I strongly support the building of a new parking garage at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center.

The parking garage is an important asset to the Trade Center, downtown Columbus, and the many organizations that host conferences, meetings, galas, fundraisers, and other events in the area. Convenient and adequate parking directly impacts attendance, accessibility, and the overall experience of visitors.

For organizations/businesses in the Tri-City, which hosts major events at the Trade Center, convent parking is an important consideration when selecting and promoting an event venue. "Accessing the Trade Center through the parking garage can be challenging during inclement weather, particularly when heavy rain or severe weather conditions make navigating the area difficult."

I encourage city and community leaders to recognize the economic and community value of a new parking garage and support efforts to ensure that it remains safe, accessible, well-maintained, and available to Trade Center patrons.
Investing in the parking garage is an investment in the continued success of the Trade Center and the vitality of downtown Columbus.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Sanderson
Nathaniel Sanderson
Owner FIT Financial Services llc.

GEORGIA TACTICAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Hayley Tillery
Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center
801 Front Avenue
Columbus, GA 31901

As a board member of the Georgia Tactical Officer Association (GTOA), I wanted to show my support for development of a new parking garage directly connected to the facility.

We host our annual conference each March at the Columbus Georgia Convention and Trade Center. During this time, our organization has experienced firsthand the value the Trade Center provides as a conference venue, as well as the challenges associated with parking during larger events. Convenient, safe, and accessible parking is an important part of the overall experience for attendees, presenters, vendors, and guests. A connected parking garage would significantly improve accessibility, reduce the difficulties associated with locating available parking, and provide a safer and more efficient experience for those attending events at the Trade Center.

The Trade Center is an important economic and community asset for Columbus, and continued investment in the facility will help ensure it remains competitive in attracting future conferences, conventions, and other major events. Organizations such as ours, would benefit from improvements to parking and would strengthen the Trade Center's ability to meet the needs of both current and future clients.

I believe the proposed parking garage is a practical and necessary investment that will enhance the guest experience, support continued economic activity in the area and position the Convention and Trade Center for long-term growth not just for our organization but the future ones. I respectfully encourage the Columbus City Council to support this important project.

Jomo Bent
Board Member
Georgia Tactical Officers Association
11770 Haynes Bridge Rd Ste 205-405
Alpharetta GA 30009

GEORGIA
STATE ASSOCIATION

To the Columbus City Council:

On behalf of Georgia Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), I am pleased to offer our support for the proposed development of a new parking garage connected to the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center.

Georgia FCCLA welcomes students, advisers, and guests from across the state to Columbus for our State Leadership Conference, and the Convention & Trade Center plays an important role in creating a positive experience for our attendees. When coordinating an event of this size, safe, convenient, and accessible parking is an important consideration for our organization, our schools, and the families we serve.

Improved parking with direct access to the Trade Center would make arrival and departure easier for attendees, reduce parking-related challenges for advisers and guests, and add an extra layer of safety and accessibility, particularly when moving large groups of students throughout the conference.

We value our partnership with the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center and appreciate the continued investment in making Columbus a welcoming and competitive destination for statewide events such as ours. We believe this development would meaningfully improve the attendee experience and be a valuable long-term investment in the facility.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued support of organizations that bring students, educators, families, and visitors to Columbus.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Roberson
Executive Director
Georgia FCCLA

Carolina Shows, Inc.

P.O. Box 853
Matthews, N.C. 28106-0853
704-847-9480 • Fax 704-845-9226
Email - festivals@madeinthesouthshows.com

September 2, 2026

Dear Columbus City Council Members,

Carolina Shows is about to open our 35th season of "Christmas Made in the South" this October in direct partnership with the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center. We have wonderful memories over three decades of working with all the outstanding people who make the facility one of our absolute favorite venues. I'm not sure one can overstate the uniqueness of that property in terms of both its physical attributes and its long-serving and dedicated staff. We are truly thankful for our partnership.

The facility's primary limitation is parking. Each year, the show welcomes more than 150 artisans and 10,000 customers. Although our partnership with the neighboring Marriott provides parking for some participants, substantial overflow still extends onto surrounding streets.

By the time the show opens at 10:00 a.m., more than half of the parking deck is typically occupied. By approximately 11:00 a.m., the deck is often full, forcing customers to navigate heavy traffic, turn around, and search for alternatives. We witness these challenges firsthand while distributing parking maps to drivers in the garage and on nearby streets.

A parking garage may not initially appear to be a compelling use of public funds, but inadequate parking can directly affect business, customer relationships, and a facility's reputation. For many attendees, parking is their first experience with a venue—and that first impression matters.

As you consider this decision, we would be pleased to provide any additional feedback or suggestions. Please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

Best Regards,



Dave Johns

VP, Carolina Shows INC

704-847-9480

dave@madeinthesouthshows.com

1747 WARM SPRINGS ROAD
COLUMBUS, GA 31904

706.221.1900 • 706.571.2546 *fax*
OutdoorEvents.com

September 11, 2026

Members of the Columbus City Council
Columbus Consolidated Government
Columbus, GA 30901

RE: Letter of Support — Proposed Parking Garage Connected to the Columbus Trade Center

Dear Members of the Council:

I am writing on behalf of Outdoor Events to offer our full support for the development of a new parking garage directly connected to the Trade Center. As an organization that has held events at the facility and brought attendees to downtown Columbus, we believe this project addresses a real and long-standing need — and we hope the Council will move it forward.

Outdoor Events has worked with the Trade Center for [over six years, hosting the annual Toast of the Town event that benefits the Columbus Symphony Orchestra. This event which draws approximately 1600 attendees, many of whom traveled from outside Columbus. The facility itself is excellent: the space is flexible, the staff are professional and responsive, and the downtown location is a genuine selling point when we market our events.

Parking, however, is the one part of the experience we cannot control and the one we hear about most. Our attendees regularly report circling downtown looking for a space, arriving late as a result, and walking longer distances than they expected — a particular problem in bad weather, after dark, and for older attendees or those with mobility limitations. Our vendors and exhibitors face the same difficulty during load-in and load-out, when proximity to the building matters most. These complaints reflect on our event rather than on the parking supply, and they take real staff time to manage.

A connected parking garage would resolve most of this directly. Guests would park and walk into the building without crossing streets or navigating unfamiliar blocks, and accessibility would improve meaningfully for the attendees who need it most. It would also affect how we plan future events: parking and ease of access are among the factors we weigh when choosing a venue, and other organizers weigh them the same way. A connected garage would make it substantially easier for us to keep bringing events, attendees, and out-of-town spending to Columbus rather than to competing venues in the region.

We also appreciate that the project has been approached carefully — informed by a professional traffic study and master planning, designed to complement the Trade Center and the surrounding Historic District, and funded through previously designated SPLOST and bond dollars set aside for this purpose. That is a thoughtful use of public funds for a need identified more than twenty years ago.

We respectfully urge the Council to approve this project. I would be glad to speak with any member of the Council or to provide additional detail about our experience at the Trade Center.

Sincerely,

Warner Neal
President
Outdoor Events Inc.
warner@outdoorevents.com
706-221-1900

September 14, 2026

Columbus City Council
Columbus Consolidated Government
Columbus, Georgia

RE: Letter of Support – Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center Parking Garage Development

Dear Members of the Columbus City Council:

I am pleased to offer my strong support for the proposed development of a new parking garage directly connected to the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center.

Through my professional involvement with the Trade Center (since 2024) and our continued partnership in hosting statewide conferences, executive seminars, training programs, and other large-scale events, I have had the opportunity to experience firsthand the tremendous value this facility brings to Columbus and the State of Georgia. The Trade Center has consistently provided an exceptional environment for bringing together educators, public safety professionals, government leaders, businesses, vendors, and community partners from across the state.

As President of the Georgia Alliance for School Resource Officers and Educators (GASROE), I have also seen our events in Columbus continue to grow. With that growth comes an increased responsibility to ensure our attendees have a safe, accessible, and positive experience from the moment they arrive until the conclusion of an event. Parking remains one of the most significant logistical challenges associated with hosting large events at the Trade Center.

From a safety and operational perspective, a connected parking garage would provide significant benefits. It would improve pedestrian safety, increase accessibility, reduce the distance attendees must travel between their vehicles and the facility, help alleviate congestion surrounding major events, and provide a more controlled and convenient arrival and departure experience. These improvements are particularly important when events bring hundreds of attendees into the downtown area at the same time.

The proposed parking garage should not simply be viewed as additional parking. It represents an investment in the continued growth and competitiveness of the Trade Center and the greater Columbus community. As an organization that continues to select Columbus for major statewide events, we recognize the importance of infrastructure that supports future growth.

I also appreciate that this proposal represents thoughtful, long-term planning and utilizes funding designated for this purpose while considering traffic patterns, accessibility, public safety, and preservation of the historic character surrounding the Trade Center.

For these reasons, I respectfully encourage the Columbus City Council to support the development of the connected parking garage. This project is an important investment not only in the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center, but also in the safety of its visitors, the continued economic development of Columbus, and the facility's ability to remain a premier destination for organizations throughout Georgia and beyond.

GASROE values our partnership with the Trade Center and the City of Columbus, and we look forward to continuing to bring public safety professionals, educators, community partners, and industry leaders to Columbus for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued investment in the future of the Columbus community.

Respectfully,

DB Rosa

Danielle B. Rosa
President
Georgia Alliance for School Resource Officers and Educators (GASROE)

Contact us for more information at gasroe.org@gmail.com

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION®

To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of the Alzheimer's Association, Dancing Stars of Columbus Gala, I am pleased to offer our enthusiastic support for the proposed parking garage development at the Columbus Trade Center.

The Columbus Trade Center has long served as a premier venue for community gatherings, nonprofit events, corporate functions, and fundraisers that bring people together for important causes. As the host venue for the annual **Dancing Stars of Columbus Gala**, we have experienced firsthand the tremendous value the Trade Center provides to our organization, event participants, sponsors, volunteers, and guests.

Dancing Stars of Columbus is one of the community's premier fundraising events and has become one of the most successful charitable galas in the region. The event raises critical funds for the Alzheimer's Association, supporting groundbreaking research, care and support programs, education, and resources for individuals and families impacted by Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Each year, the gala welcomes hundreds of attendees, making accessibility, convenience, and guest safety essential components of a successful event experience.

One of the most common challenges our guests encounter is parking availability and accessibility. Many attendees include older adults, caregivers, community leaders, and supporters who would greatly benefit from more convenient and direct access to the facility. A connected parking structure would significantly improve the arrival and departure experience, enhance safety, reduce congestion, and provide a more welcoming environment for all visitors.

We recognize that the Trade Center welcomed more than 235,000 attendees across more than 450 events in the most recent fiscal year and generated a substantial economic impact for Columbus. Investing in improved parking infrastructure is not only beneficial for organizations like ours but also serves the broader community by helping the facility remain competitive in attracting regional, statewide, and national events.

We support this project because it represents a thoughtful, long-term investment in a facility that plays an important role in the economic vitality and cultural life of Columbus. The proposed development addresses a need that has been identified for decades while incorporating careful planning, accessibility enhancements, preservation of historic character, and responsible use of designated public funding.

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION®

The Alzheimer's Association is proud to support efforts that improve the experience of Trade Center guests, strengthen community assets, and position Columbus for continued growth. We appreciate the consideration being given to this important project and encourage support for the development of the new parking garage.

Sincerely,

Joshua Edens

Alzheimer's Association

Relationship Events Manager

FOUNTAIN CITY PRODUCTIONS

September 2026

Columbus City Council
Columbus Consolidated Government
Columbus, Georgia

Re: Support for a Connected Parking Garage at the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center

Dear Members of the Columbus City Council:

On behalf of Fountain City Productions and the Fountain City Tattoo Expo, we are pleased to express our strong support for the development of a new parking garage directly connected to the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center.

As longtime event producers at the Trade Center, we have had the opportunity to welcome artists, vendors, industry professionals, and attendees from across Georgia and throughout the United States to Columbus. The Trade Center is an extraordinary venue and one of the defining assets of our event. Its historic character, location, professional staff, and connection to Uptown Columbus create an experience that would be difficult to replicate elsewhere.

However, parking has consistently remained one of the most significant logistical challenges associated with producing and attending our event.

For a multi-day event such as ours, convenient parking affects nearly every part of the guest experience. Our exhibitors arrive with equipment and supplies. Attendees come and go throughout the weekend. Families, older guests, and individuals with mobility considerations need safe and practical access to the facility. When nearby parking is limited, guests may be required to walk considerable distances, navigate unfamiliar areas, or search for available spaces during already busy periods.

These challenges do not reflect the quality of the Trade Center itself, but they do affect the overall experience of visiting it.

FOUNTAIN CITY PRODUCTIONS

A connected parking garage would be a meaningful investment in accessibility, safety, convenience, and the continued growth of the facility. From an event producer's perspective, it would also strengthen the Trade Center's ability to attract and retain regional and national events in an increasingly competitive convention and event market.

Events do not exist only within the walls of a venue. Our attendees stay in area hotels, dine in local restaurants, shop in Uptown, visit local businesses, and experience Columbus while they are here. Improving access to the Trade Center therefore improves more than a single facility. It supports the broader network of businesses and organizations that benefit when visitors choose Columbus as their destination.

We have continued to choose the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center because we believe in the venue, its team, and the experience Columbus offers our guests. We also believe that providing modern, safe, and convenient parking is an important next step in protecting that investment and positioning the Trade Center for the future.

For these reasons, Fountain City Productions strongly supports the proposed connected parking garage and respectfully encourages the Columbus City Council to move this important project forward.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued investment in the infrastructure that allows events like ours to grow and thrive in Columbus.

Sincerely,

Rachel Randall & Thomas Randall
Fountain City Productions
Producers, Fountain City Tattoo Expo

September 17, 2026

Dear Columbus City Council Members,

On behalf of VisitColumbusGA, I am glad to offer our support as the Columbus City Council considers development of a new parking garage connected to the Columbus Georgia Convention and Trade Center. We see this project as more than a parking garage; it is the necessary first step in a longer strategy to make Columbus a truly competitive convention, sports, and trade show destination, one that we believe should ultimately lead to an attached, dedicated convention hotel.

Tourism is a key economic driver for our community. Last year, our destination welcomed over 3.1 million visitors, who generated total visitor spending of $650.3 million. Direct tourism and hospitality careers grew to almost 6,300 citizens, representing every district in Columbus. Visitors also fueled over $30 million in local sales and lodging tax revenue. Tourism works for Muscogee County. The more we think long term and big picture, the more we can continue to grow visitation, and with it, our tax base.

The Trade Center remains one of Columbus' most important economic engines. In its most recent fiscal year alone, the facility hosted more than 450 events and welcomed over 235,000 attendees, generating an estimated $15.9 million in economic impact for our community.

But I also want to be transparent about why VisitColumbusGA views this as more than a standalone project. Modernized parking is the piece of Trade Center infrastructure the city can act on today; a headquarters hotel is the piece that will determine whether Columbus will compete at the next level for the conventions we are trying to attract. Improving access and safety now and demonstrating the city's continued investment in the Trade Center and uptown meeting district campus, builds the case and the momentum for that next, larger step.

That next step is not hypothetical. Columbus is the only city in our immediate competition set of Georgia destinations without an attached convention hotel. The term "under one roof" and "convention hotel limitations" is a constant reason Columbus loses business. Athens, Macon, Augusta, and the Gas South District all have this in place and continue to develop their meetings and event destinations. Columbus is a city that thinks big and has long-term vision in destination placemaking; however, for nearly two decades the Trade Center has needed to expand. The first step is to move forward with the previously approved SPLOST dollars and long-held bond funding for a parking garage that will improve parking conditions and aesthetically blend with the architecture on display in the surrounding historic district.

To be clear about what a future connected hotel would and would not do: it is not about competing with Columbus' existing hotel community for the travelers we already attract. It is about capturing group and convention business that currently bypasses Columbus entirely in favor of Savannah, Augusta, or Athens; business that would grow total visitor spending, room nights, and local tax revenue across our whole hospitality community rather than redistribute what we already have.

The parking garage is the right next investment for the Trade Center today, and it keeps Columbus moving in the direction our data points to and our visitors need: toward a fully connected convention campus, anchored eventually by a dedicated hotel, that can compete for the business we are currently losing. On behalf of VisitColumbusGA and the clients and visitors who bring their business to Columbus each year, I respectfully request the Council's support for this project. Thank you for your leadership and for keeping the Trade Center's long-term competitiveness in view.

It starts with a visit,

Ashley S. Woitena

Ashley Woitena
President-CEO
VisitColumbusGA