

New Convention & Events Center

INTRODUCTION

On April 7, Springfield voters will consider a 3% increase in the hotel motel lodging tax, paid by overnight visitors, to fund the construction, operation, and maintenance of a new Springfield Convention and Events Center

For local businesses, the core question is simple. Will this project increase customer base, stabilize revenue, and improve Springfield's competitive position? The data and market analysis indicate that it will.

More Customers. More Predictable Revenue. More Opportunity.

A Built-In Customer Pipeline

- A Convention and Events Center is not speculative tourism marketing. It is contracted, scheduled business.
- When conventions and meetings are booked, attendance is built in. Exhibitors, vendors, speakers, and attendees are professionally obligated to travel. These are confirmed visitors with defined event dates and structured agendas.
- The facility is projected to host approximately 164 events annually, attract nearly 180,000 attendees, and generate around 80,000 hotel room nights each year.
- That translates into predictable foot traffic and concentrated spending across multiple days.

Higher Spending Visitors

- Convention attendees typically spend more per day than leisure travelers. They dine out more often, schedule client meetings in restaurants, use transportation services, shop between sessions, and frequently extend their stays.
- Over a 30-year period, visitor spending associated with the center is estimated to exceed \$1.3 billion.
- On an annual basis, that represents roughly \$125,000 per day in visitor spending that Springfield is currently missing without a modern facility.
- For business owners, that is not an abstract economic impact. It is incremental transactions and repeat exposure to new customers.

Stronger Weekday and Off-Peak Performance

Many local businesses experience heavy weekend concentration and slower midweek performance. Conventions and business meetings typically occur midweek and outside peak leisure seasons.

This creates:

- More consistent weekday sales
- Improved staffing stability
- Smoother cash flow
- Reduced seasonal swings
- Rather than competing solely for weekend traffic, businesses benefit from structured midweek demand.

Keeping Revenue in Springfield

- Springfield's current Expo Center does not meet modern convention standards, and the city routinely loses conventions and large events to peer cities with newer facilities.
- When events leave, their spending does too.
- A modern Convention and Events Center enables Springfield to compete for business currently going to other markets. That means hotel stays, catering contracts, printing jobs, equipment rentals, transportation services, and retail purchases remain here.

Opportunity Beyond Hospitality

While hotels and restaurants see immediate impact, the ripple effect extends much further. Tourism already supports more than 20,000 local jobs and generates approximately \$1 billion in annual economic impact.

An expanded events calendar creates demand for:

- Marketing and printing firms
- Technology and audiovisual providers
- Security and staffing agencies
- Transportation services
- Event production companies
- Maintenance and facility services
- Construction and trade professionals

For small and mid-sized businesses, this creates opportunities for recurring vendor relationships and diversified revenue streams.

Competitive Positioning and Business Recruitment

- Even with the proposed increase, Springfield's lodging tax rate would remain competitive compared to peer cities.
- A modern facility strengthens Springfield's profile with site selectors, investors, and corporate leaders, which supports long-term business growth across sectors.

Structured Funding and Fiscal Guardrails

- The proposed 3% lodging tax increase would be paid by overnight visitors and would automatically expire after 35 years.
- The City has established a fixed construction budget of \$175 million and has stated that no General Fund dollars would be used for construction, debt service, or ongoing operations.

BOTTOM LINE

For local businesses, this proposal is about expanding the customer base, stabilizing weekday demand, keeping revenue in Springfield, and strengthening the city's competitive position.

A Convention and Events Center is not simply a facility. It is an economic tool designed to create predictable, recurring business activity that supports long term growth.

