New convention center will be leased for free— to conventions

Many cities already leasing centers to lure conventions to their communities.

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Business Editor

LAFAYETTE — The convention center addition to the Cajundome will be rented at no charge to conventions.

Greg Davis, the Cajundome’s director, told USL MBA Association members that at a luncheon Thursday.

Davis, the 13-year Cajundome leader, serving eight years as assistant director and the past five as director, himself is a graduate of USL’s College of Business Administration, in accounting.

Cities across the country are leasing their convention centers to conventions at no charge, to lure visitors who spend money in the community while attending.

“So, to be competitive, we’ll have to do the same thing,” Davis said.

The 40,000-square-foot addition will be under way this summer through the spring of 2000.

Another expansion will be needed after only its first year, Davis predicts.

“It’s not big enough,” he said.

Many conventions want to book in Lafayette because of the city’s attractions, food, fun and a lower crime rate than many larger venues have, he said.

The blueprints allow for adding another 80,000 square feet, so jumping to 120,000 square feet is feasible, he added.

To demonstrate size, The Real Superstore building on Johnston Street is about 100,000 square feet. So, the expansion will be less than half its size.

The facility will run an operating deficit of about $200,000 to $300,000 a year, Davis added.

The Cajundome, which will become available year-round to more profitable events, such as concerts and sports matches, will net about $500,000 a year, so it will help cover the deficit, Davis said.

Too many flat shows and not enough arena events is what helped keep the Cajundome in the red its first 10 years. With the addition of ice hockey, then professional soccer and now new interest by concert and other show promoters, it is netting more than $500,000 a year now.

Greg Davis speaks to USL MBA Association members Thursday.