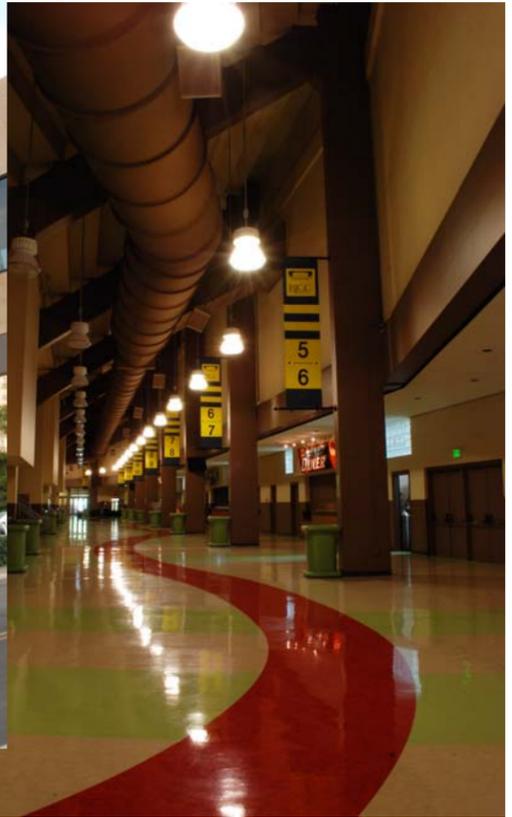


Designform

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Exceeding Expectations and Uniting Facilities

Over ten years ago, the **Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex (BJCC)** wanted to provide their patrons with more accessibility within the complex. Many meeting and convention spaces in the complex could not be directly accessed from the Sheraton Hotel, which limited the use of those facilities. **Designform** presented the BJCC a concept design of a new skywalk system that could alleviate the accessibility issue. While the concept design for the skywalk system was well received, the funding for the project was unavailable, placing the project on hold.

As years progressed, the BJCC was able to secure funding for expansion and improvement projects through bonds and additional tax revenue, leading to the revitalization of the skywalks project. The BJCC accepted Requests for Proposals (RFP) from local architecture firms, including Designform, for the project, which now also included a skywalk to the Arena, as well as North and South Meeting Room Lobby and restroom renovations. After an extensive RFP review process, Designform was ultimately chosen to provide architectural services for the entire project.

The design of the exterior of the Skywalks mimics the existing BJCC structure. Designform remained true to the design of the BJCC, allowing the Skywalks to appear not as additions to an existing structure, but as seamlessly integrated, timeless accessibility structures. Pre-cast concrete panels, aluminum storefront, and window glazing for the skywalk was selected to closely match the existing BJCC, providing the appearance of unification and continuity throughout the complex.

The interior of the Skywalks, however, evokes a sense of excitement while maintaining formality. The carpet within the skywalks is based on a neutral color

palette, yet brims with personality. The lighting fixtures in the skywalk around the Exhibition Hall provide substantial lighting and touches of color without dominating the space. New tile, toilet partitions and automatic fixtures help to modernize restroom facilities while reducing energy consumption.

"We are extremely pleased with the end product," said Jack Fields, Executive Director at the BJCC. "I

"We've taken 1,000 feet of corridor and skywalk, and it has been designed in a manner that makes it seem much shorter. You never feel you're just in a long continuous tunnel..."

- **Jack Fields**
Executive Director, BJCC

think visually it has accomplished (what the project was meant to achieve). We've taken 1,000 feet of corridor and skywalk, and it has been designed in a manner that makes it seem much shorter. You never feel you're just in a long continuous tunnel, so everyone that has looked at it (has) positive comments on the interesting and unique design."

Accessibility was the major issue to resolve, especially for the North and South Meeting Rooms. The South Meeting Rooms could only be accessed from the outside, while the North Meeting Rooms' availability was contingent upon the availability of other spaces.

"Our North Meeting Rooms can be reached internally if we have one of our Exhibition Halls not being used," said Fields, "but if the Exhibition Hall is being used by

another customer, you could not reach the North Meeting Rooms internally from the Hotel and the parking deck. (With the addition of the skywalks) all of our meeting space, all of our exhibition space, and the Arena can now be accessed internally from our Hotel and the 1,400 car parking deck."

While the project may seem simple on the surface, connecting points A and B are more complex than drawing a line. Designform remained in close contact with the City of Birmingham and the BJCC regarding a partial vacation of right-of-way and airspace over Richard Arrington, Jr. Boulevard, which allowed for the construction of the Skywalk connecting the BJCC to the Sheraton Hotel to proceed. Designform also worked closely with Birmingham-based general contractor **Brasfield & Gorrie** and **MBA Structural Engineers** to ensure the installation of the Skywalk's footings underneath Richard Arrington, Jr. Boulevard would not cause any damage to city infrastructure or surrounding property. **CRS Engineering** provided mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire protection services, ensuring all systems maintain levels of comfort throughout the Skywalks and common areas.

"I was surprised frankly at the degree of the complexity of what eventually had to be designed to make it happen," stated Fields. "It was much more involved than I had initially perceived."

Complexity tends to breed additional challenges. Designform accepts challenges that arise during projects, responds promptly and always puts the client's interests at the forefront.

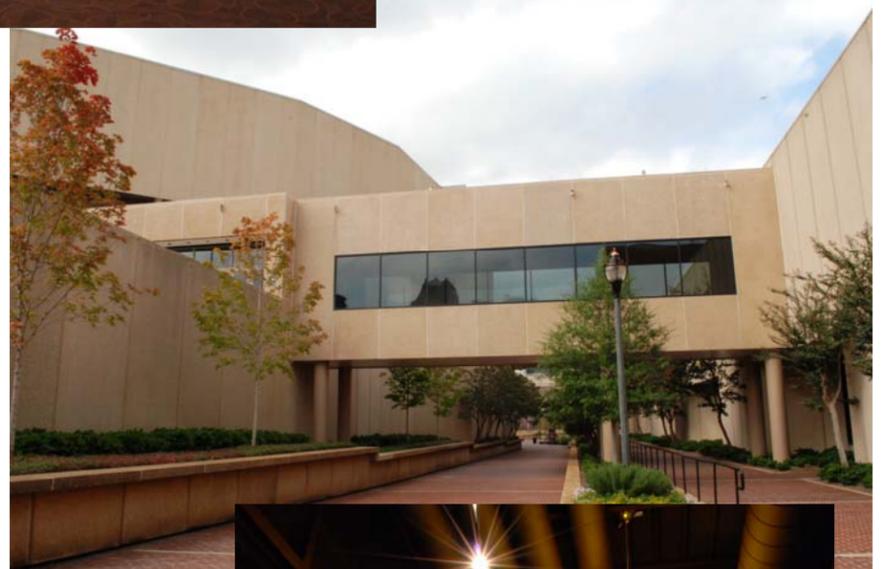
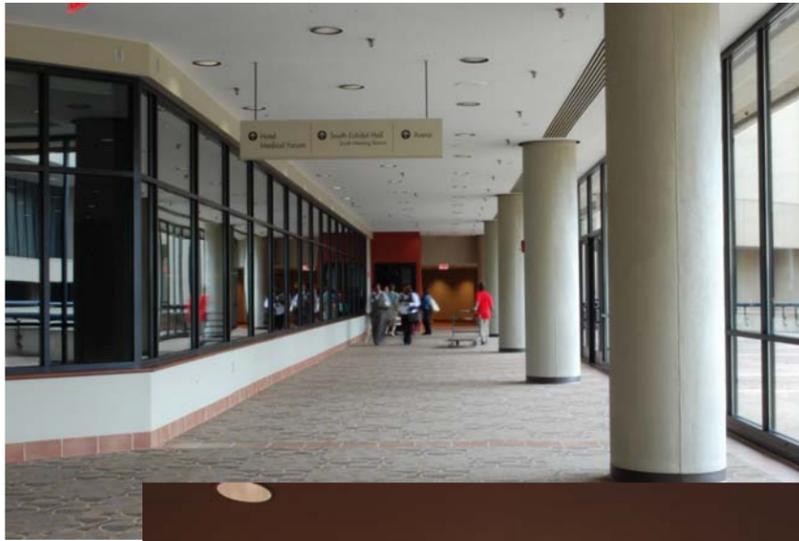
See **BJCC**, Page 2

BJCC, from Page 1

"I think the responsiveness (of Designform) was good," mentioned Fields. "When there were times, as in any project, of challenges, they were on the spot and addressed the issue in the best interest of their client."

Yet, designing the new Skywalk system was not the only project the BJCC had in mind. Renovating the Arena Concourse was also of importance due to the arrival of major events in 2009, such as The Davis Cup, Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus. Designform updated the Arena Concourse by changing the flooring, paint, restrooms, and lighting. The flooring, installed by Birmingham's **Acton Flooring** and waterjet cut by **Waterjet Works!**, is an environmentally preferred vinyl composite tile arranged in a symmetrical wave pattern, which encourages traffic flow throughout the space. The paint colors were chosen to compliment the floor selection, while also adding visual interest. The restrooms received updated flooring, paint and fixtures to save on energy consumption, and the lighting throughout the Concourse improved the brightness in the space.

The Skywalk and Arena Concourse improvements have helped the BJCC remain competitive with newer convention facilities in the Southeast. "I have heard some of our staff and some people comment as they walk through, like 'This is so interesting', 'This is so different'," said Fields. "It gave it a much more pleasant aesthetic appearance, (and) has allowed us to enhance our ability to remain competitive. The ease of accessibility at any convention complex is so, so important because what we sell is the package of our space, and that package includes how well you can move within the space of the convention center. I have no complaints."



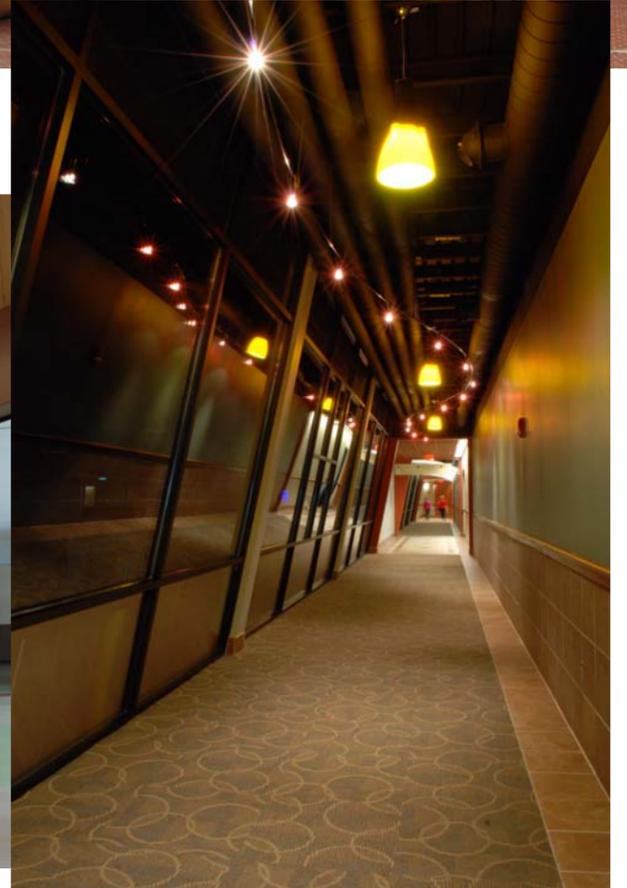
Designform BJCC Project Team

Principal-In-Charge
Craig P. Rogers, AIA

Project Manager (Design)
Justin C. Rogers

Project Manager (Contract Administration)
Tyler G. Price

Interior Design (Arena Concourse)
Heather M. Wiggins



Architecture Did You Know?

A bridge built in Lima, Peru around 1610 was made of mortar that was mixed not with water but with the whites of 10,000 eggs. The bridge, appropriately called the Bridge of Eggs, is still standing today.

Source: miragestudio7.com



Congratulations, Tyler Price!

Designform would like to congratulate **Tyler Price** on completing his qualifying exams, and is now a registered architect in the State of Alabama. Price has been with Designform since May 2008, and managed the BJCC Skywalk & Interior Renovations, the Bainbridge, Mims, Rogers & Smith Interior Renovations and the BlueCross / BlueShield Customer Call Center projects. Currently, Price is managing the UAB 12th Street Parking Deck Expansion project as well as serving on multiple project design teams.

Designform

2 North 20th Street
Suite 850
Birmingham, AL 35203

PHONE:
(205) 324-0018

FAX:
(205) 322-9981

E-MAIL:
info@designforminc.com

PRESIDENT:
Craig P. Rogers, AIA

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.designforminc.com