

Wednesday, December 3, 2014

Spirit Communications to Become Naming Rights Partner for Multi-Use Venue at Columbia Common

Spirit Communications Park Coming to Downtown Columbia

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The **City of Columbia** and **Columbia Professional Baseball**, announced today that they have reached an agreement with **Spirit Communications** to name the new, state-of-the-art multi-use sports and entertainment venue at **Columbia Common** in downtown Columbia. The venue will be known as "**Spirit Communications Park.**"

Spirit Communications is based in Columbia- with its headquarters on Bull Street, just blocks from the Columbia Common development. Spirit was born and raised in Columbia and is one of the 25 largest privately held firms in the state of South Carolina. Spirit was formed in 1984 by the eleven independent telephone companies and cooperatives across the state.

Spirit offers innovative business solutions to a cross section of businesses, government agencies, schools and healthcare organizations throughout the Carolinas. Spirit provides high tech solutions for voice, data, Internet, managed and hosted IT Cloud services that meet the demands of business today and into the future.

"Spirit Communications is delighted to make this investment in what we are sure will be one of the most important and transformative projects our home town of Columbia has seen," said **Bob Keane, President and Chief Executive Officer, Spirit Communications**. "Spirit and our owner companies have been a part of many big things here in South Carolina--assuring that modern technology is available to grow businesses throughout our state as well as bringing that technology to underserved rural areas and schools. Supporting Columbia Common and our new hometown team is a natural fit."

"Spirit Communications is a successful, home-grown Columbia business that, along with its member companies, has done so much for South Carolina," said **Mayor Steve Benjamin**. "They are helping position Columbia as a true center of global innovation and I can't think of a better partner for our new community venue."

"We're thrilled to partner with a cutting edge company like Spirit Communications," said **Jason Freier, CEO, Hardball Capital**. "Spirit is a great local company with a tremendous backstory. Spirit is a leader in innovation, collaboration, and customer service and has been a great community partner. Our goal is for this park and professional baseball in Columbia to be recognized the same way."

--more--

Sitework for Spirit Communications Park is scheduled to begin in late December and a ceremonial groundbreaking will occur in early January. **Populous**, the world's premier venue architectural firm, has designed the ballpark. The construction of Spirit Communications Park will be managed by **CCEB Partners**, a joint venture between local firms **Contract Construction**, **Construction Dynamics** and **EnviroAg Sciences** and national ballpark experts **Barton Mallow Construction**.

Spirit Communications Park will anchor the Columbia Common development, the new gateway to downtown Columbia. Under the guidance of master developer **Hughes Development**, Columbia Common will transform the 181-acre former state mental hospital site into the premiere live-work-play community in the region.

"This heralds the start of big things for Columbia Common," said **Bob Hughes, President of Hughes Development**. "The show of faith by one of our state's leading companies, Spirit Communications, along with the capabilities they will bring to the project, is just further confirmation that Columbia Common will become a unique and exciting place for the citizens of the Midlands."

Spirit Communications Park will play host to far more than just baseball. The facility, which is being developed via a partnership between the City of Columbia and Hardball Capital, will serve as a public gathering space with multiple uses for both indoor and outdoor events. From concerts to parties to business meetings and charitable functions, Spirit Communications Park will host hundreds of community events every year. The park will hold approximately 8,000 fans for baseball games and 14,000 for concerts.

"This is a unique opportunity for us to have the Spirit Communications name echo throughout the Midlands," added **Bob Keane**. "We're confident professional baseball in Columbia is going to be a home run. But more than that, Spirit Communications Park will be a venue for the entire community to enjoy."

"It's exciting and gratifying to have a great partner like Spirit Communications step up to the plate and support one of our most important projects," said **Mayor Steve Benjamin**. "The momentum in our city is contagious. Uniting one of our strongest local companies with one of the region's top developers and Minor League Baseball's top owner/operators will only strengthen that momentum."

About Spirit Communications

Headquartered in Columbia, South Carolina, Spirit Communications provides voice, data, Internet, and fiber optic solutions, along with a full suite of Cloud services to commercial businesses and government agencies across the Southeast. The company's ownership group includes Chesnee Communications, Comporium, Farmers Telephone Cooperative, Hargray Telephone Company, Home Telephone Company, Horry Telephone cooperative, Palmetto Rural Telephone Cooperative, Piedmont Rural Telephone Cooperative, Sandhill Telephone Cooperative, TruVista Communications and West Carolina Rural Telephone Cooperative. Spirit's mission is to enable customers to transform their operations through fast, stable, and secure offerings that flex with business demand. Ranked among the top 25 privately held firms in South Carolina, Spirit serves thousands of customers in over 150 service locations throughout South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia. For more information, visit www.spiritcom.com.

--more--

About the City of Columbia

Founded by the General Assembly in 1786, Columbia was South Carolina's first planned city and among the first planned cities in the nation. Columbia is the largest city in South Carolina with a population of 129,276 (2010 U.S. Census) and a metro workforce of over 375,000 (SC Department of Employment and Workforce) and serves as state capital while hosting multiple colleges and universities including the state’s flagship Carnegie Research 1 facility the University of South Carolina. Columbia is also home to the nationally renowned Riverbanks Zoo and Garden, the largest children’s museum in the Southeast Edventure and the largest U.S. Army training facility in the world at Fort Jackson.

The City of Columbia works closely with neighborhood organizations to increase the lines of communications between the community and City Hall and, with approximately 2200 employees on staff, is dedicated to providing the highest quality services to all of our citizens.

About Columbia Professional Baseball

Columbia Professional Baseball is returning professional baseball to Columbia for the first time in a decade. It is partnering with the City of Columbia and Hughes Development to construct a multi-use outdoor venue at the center of the Columbia Common development. Columbia Professional Baseball is owned by Hardball Capital, the owner of the Fort Wayne TinCaps of the Midwest League and the Savannah Sand Gnats of the South Atlantic League. For more information visit www.ColumbiaProBall.com or www.SpiritCommunicationsPark.com.

About Hughes Development Corporation

Hughes Development Corporation is a 76-year old, family owned real estate development firm based in Greenville, SC. It has developed projects across the southeast, from Alabama to Virginia, in virtually all types of real estate. Over the last 15 years, Hughes Development has refined its focus to mixed-use, urban developments, where its expertise and experience can be used to transform districts and make a lasting impact. Hughes Development continues its tradition of broad development expertise, long-term ownership of its projects, and a commitment to adding value to local communities.

High-Resolution renderings are available for download at:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/mi7enwe4zxdnv1d/AABEWwavI2zT7Bh5h57czP80a?dl=0>

###