



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Greene County ARPA funds help pay for new Fairgrounds arena



SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Ozark Empire Fairgrounds and Event Center (OEFEC) staff, the Greene County Commission, plus state and Springfield community leaders broke ground on a new \$25 million Arena and Youth Ag Education Center on Thursday, Nov. 17, in north Springfield.

The 99,000 square foot facility will include a new event arena, a youth education center, trade show space, and restaurant. The arena can seat 6,600 visitors, tripling the former Fairgrounds' arena capacity, which began demolition in the fall of 2022.



The project was a collaboration between OEFEC, Greene County, state, and local donors. The Commission allocated \$5 million of the county’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Community Impact Program funds for the construction of the new arena.

“This project shows how well our community can collaborate together to make this vision a reality. The new arena will benefit Greene County citizens for generations to come,” said Greene County Commissioner John Russell.

Aiming for a September 2023 completion, once constructed, the new arena will continue to host rodeos, horse shows, junior national livestock expositions, tradeshow, motorsports, sporting events, and concerts.

The Youth Education Center will partner with local schools to offer year-round agriculture education. According to OEFEFEC, agricultural shows are critical for stimulating farm based economic activities in southwest Missouri. This region contributes 12% of total sales from the state's livestock and poultry farms.

Additionally, the facility will provide an enhanced space for crisis response and training, including COVID-19 vaccinations and testing.



OEFEC is projecting an estimated \$123 million in local economic impact over the next 20 years. Construction on the project has also created jobs for local companies.

“This new arena, coupled with other construction and improvements in recent years, will solidify our position as one of the finest entertainment venues in not only the Springfield area, but the entire Midwest, said OEFEC General manager Aaron Owen.

OEFEC says the former arena was in poor condition after being built in 1930 and suffering a major fire in 1959. The facility was too expensive and not large enough to remodel.

OEFEC’s roots trace back to 1937 when a group of community leaders dreamed of developing 76 acres of rolling hills, nestled between Grant Avenue and Norton Road, into fairgrounds.

Through the years the fairgrounds has grown into a year-round entertainment, education, and event venue; hosting more than 600,000 visitors each year.

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Greene County is the State of Missouri’s fourth most populous county, serving approximately 295,000 people. Its mission is to provide all citizens of Greene County, including those in its cities, a safe and thriving community through excellent customer service, unparalleled dedication, and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars. The Greene County Commission is the executive body of Greene County operating under guidelines established in the Revised Statutes of the State of Missouri. Within that authority the Commission enacts ordinances, resolutions and policies, supervises the activities of county departments, fixes salaries, adopts the annual budget, provides for construction and other services, and conducts hearings on planning and zoning matters.

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