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Agricenter International Embarks on a New Chapter

MEMPHIS, TN – Agricenter International is embarking on a Strategic Business Plan and Conceptual Master Plan. The public is invited to attend a drop-in on January 29, 2018 from 4:30-6:30pm at Ducks Unlimited on the Agricenter Campus.

Open House
January 29, 2018
4:30-6:30pm
Ducks Unlimited (1 Waterfowl Way)

This Strategic Business Plan and Conceptual Master Plan will serve as the guide for the next 20 years of growth. The goal is to have it completed by May 2018. The plan is funded by a local Anonymous Foundation, FedEx Corporation, Shelby County Commission, Agricenter International, Helena Chemical, and Asgrow.

Long range goals for Agricenter are to serve as a hub for agricultural networking and innovation, to showcase food and fiber as a pathway to increased educational and career opportunities, and to promote the efficacy and commercialization of new agricultural technologies and practices. Agricenter will be positioned as a leading center of agricultural innovation, education, and outreach that works in the nexus of environmental sustainability, water, soil, urban-rural interface, technology, poverty, and entrepreneurship.

Steven Spalding of **Point A Consulting LLC** from Louisville, KY leads the team which has deep expertise in farming and agriculture, land planning, real estate development and the related economics and finances of large projects and complex organizations. **According to Spalding, “The planning now underway will not only develop a mission for Agricenter that is readily visible to the public and has a positive impact on agriculture, but also extend its reach and impact tremendously in the Mid-South, across the state, even nationally and internationally.”**

Point A will be joined by two internationally recognized partners: **Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects** (NBW) of New York City and Charlottesville, and **HR&A Advisors, Inc.** from New York City.

John Butler, President of Agricenter International, added “We are excited to have Point A and their team on board to help us in this planning process. We are humbled with the support we have received from the community in the past and look forward to a bright future.”

Spalding adds, “We’ve done a lot of research and analysis to date; now we’re looking forward to hearing from the people of Memphis—folks who work at or visit Agricenter. What do they want to see this place become?”

Background:

Point A started this project in 2016 with a preliminary assessment. In addition to Spalding and Dawn Riley, team members include: Mark Scholl, president of his farm holding company and Chairman of the Farm Foundation Board of Directors, with experience both as a start-up entrepreneur and agribusiness executive; and Bill Morlok, who collaborates with Point A on research park engagements across the country, and has pioneered in establishing the concept of *Knowledge Communities* as the standard for next generation research parks.

Thomas Woltz, FASLA leads the designers at NBW in the Conceptual Master Plan for Agricenter. Their past design projects include continuing work with the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation (Monticello); the \$25 billion Hudson Yards project in New York City; Nashville’s Centennial Park; St. Louis’ Citygarden; and West Tennessee’s Lone Oaks Farm. **Woltz stated, “This could be an exciting addition to the current offerings of ShowPlace Arena, Expo Center, nature trails and the Farmer’s Market. A farm experience center could offer support to regional farmers through coursework and be a community destination for the public to learn about the important history of the site and various scales of agricultural production.”**

Candace Damon, Vice Chairman of HR&A has experience working on the business plan for Shelby Farms Park, and brings an understanding of the history and context of the overall district. HR&A also has been part of a team working on the revitalization plan for 11 miles of the Memphis Riverfront and on another project to re-envision Research Triangle Park, to transform it from a 1960’s style research park into a Live, Work & Play community. **Damon stated, “Working on this project is great opportunity to advance that civic vision by engaging all segments of the greater Memphis community in achieving a better understanding and appreciation of our food systems, as well as to more closely knit the future of Memphis' rural and urban communities.”**

Agricenter International, the education, agribusiness, research and agricultural hub of the Mid-South has a \$524 million annual economic impact on the region, hosts over 1.3 million visitors annually, and has educated tens of thousands of students. For more information visit www.agricenter.org or call 901-757-7777.

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