

Southern Graces LLC announces the closing of operations

Robert Sukenik, President of Southern Graces, offers the following statement regarding the decision to close:

We are very saddened to announce that Southern Graces will no longer continue operations due to the financial burden incurred as a result of unfulfilled obligations for the Sunsphere renovations.

We are very disappointed in having to make this decision, especially when so many clients were planning events with us and so many more were interested in doing so. Having completed more than 350 events in the Sunsphere and having provided so many memories for so many visitors, it is very tough to have the company operations shut down only because some individuals were allowed to take advantage of the City and of Southern Graces.

I have argued to the City's administration and to the City Council to implore them to hold KPH Sunsphere LLC (a partnership between KPH and Cardinal Properties) to their commitment to make the required investment to renovate the Sunsphere. Instead, it appears that the City's leadership is comfortable allowing KPH Sunsphere LLC to have reneged on this commitment and, as a consequence, enjoyed a windfall of over \$250,000.00 as well as to, effectively, put Southern Graces out of business. We will have no choice, now, but to file for bankruptcy.

At Southern Graces, we are very troubled to see leadership in our City that will allow this kind of activity to take place, without objection. It is a very disturbing event for any small business that operates in Knoxville, because it says that you cannot count on the City for support. I have heard this feeling echoed from others who operate businesses in Knoxville and this needs to change.

Nevertheless, we are very proud of our role in authoring the concept that brought the Sunsphere back to life and we have enjoyed serving the good people of Knoxville during the past 3+ years of operations. I am so proud of the Southern Graces employees and of their hard work to persevere under the most difficult of circumstances and we thank our vendors who worked with us in support of our efforts. It is quite an accomplishment that we were even able to survive as long as we did, given the financial burden put upon us. And, of course, we are all very sorry that the greed of the few has ruined the opportunity for the many.

We can only hope that the City will do a better job of managing this kind of effort, in the future. And, I hope to be a part of that leadership, because we need change. Our leadership needs to stand for integrity and accountability – obviously, we didn't see much on either front.

In any case, thank you to all of our valued clients and "regulars" at the Skybox – we will never forget your support for Southern Graces and we hope that the friendships made along the way will endure for a lifetime.