

The Former Chisca Hotel, Memphis, Tennessee

The Chisca Hotel has been a fixture in the Memphis skyline for over 100 years. This historic building has served several purposes throughout its life, but notably, it was the broadcast center where Elvis Presley's voice first hit the airwaves. From 1949-56, its mezzanine was the base for WHBQ radio's "Red, Hot, and Blue" program, and from there, DJ Dewey Phillips broadcast Elvis' first record on July 7, 1954. Elvis' first radio interview was also conducted in the hotel by Phillips. Since the late-1990s, the hotel sat empty after the last owner, Church of God in Christ, moved its headquarters. There were several redevelopment projects proposed for the building since then, including tearing it down, but all plans were abandoned or put on hold because of the 2008 market crash. Starting in 2013, the 300,000 square foot property began undergoing remediation and rehabilitation efforts as developers prepared to turn the historic landmark into a mixed-use building with apartments and retail space. In 2016 the Chisca reopened with 161 apartment units, lofts and penthouses and two ground-floor restaurants.

An EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant awarded to Shelby County funded two Phase I Environmental Site Assessments on the property in 2012. This initial \$5,892 investment by EPA resulted in approximately \$2 million short-term investment by the City of Memphis, a long-term investment of \$1 million in Downtown Memphis Commission Funds, and \$19.5-24 million in private capital long-term investment. The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Division of Remediation staff provided technical oversight for the EPA grant awarded to Shelby County.



The inside of the former Chisca Hotel lobby before remediation and renovations.



The former Chisca Hotel after remediation and renovations.