

CONVENTION CENTER
HEAVY
WEIGHTS



Trade Show Executive's Annual Review of the Mega Convention Centers and Millionaire's Club

BY DANICA TORMOHLEN, *editor-at-large*

Oceanside, CA – While there's no new additions to this year's list of convention centers that offer 350,000 sf or more of prime exhibit space in North America, there's plenty of activity underway. As the economy continues to improve, cities are once again investing in construction and redevelopment in and around their convention centers.

In fact, among the U.S. venues that make up the *Millionaire's Club* — those with 1,000,000 sf or more of prime exhibit space — half of them have construction projects underway or in the planning stages. Among the 40 U.S. convention centers that offer at least 350,000 sf of prime exhibit space, 16 of them have projects planned or under construction. Despite all the activity in the U.S., there is no new construction underway or planned for the largest venues in Canada and Mexico.

A number of centers are focused on green initiatives and technology upgrades. As technology demands continue to rise, convention centers are investing millions of dollars in state-of-the-art upgrades to their Internet and Wi-Fi infrastructure. To address sustainability concerns, venues are installing solar panels, adding electric car charging stations and putting in lighting and motion sensors.

Each year, *Trade Show Executive* presents a comprehensive list of the *Millionaire's Club* and *Mega Convention Centers* in North America. In this report, we offer insight and analysis of the latest trends at the largest convention centers.

Millionaires Invest

During the last year, the *Millionaire's Club* has invested in some major infrastructure upgrades, and a handful have announced comprehensive projects that could potentially transform their centers and destinations. *TSE* offers highlights of the some of the biggest news and largest projects.

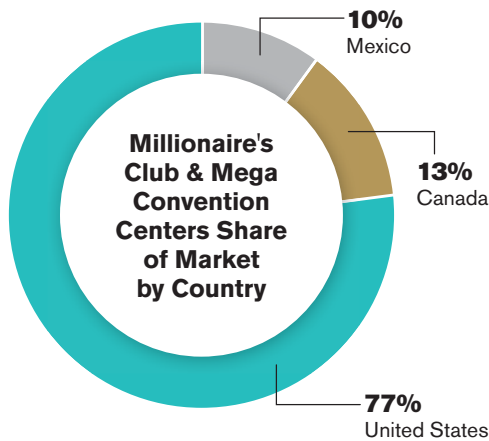
- In January, **McCormick Place** completed a state-of-the-art Internet and Wi-Fi upgrade representing a significant change in its business model for providing Internet services to attendees, exhibitors and show management. "We are proud of the fact that today 45,000 users can connect to the system at once, which is critical in a world where exhibitors and attendees now carry multiple Wi-Fi enabled devices on a regular basis," said David Causton, general manager, McCormick Place and regional vice president of SMG's Convention Center division.

Last year, Chicago announced last year that it would create a McCormick Place Entertainment District that will feature a 10,000-seat events center connected by a pedestrian sky bridge to McCormick Place West, a 1,200-room Marriott Marquis Hotel and additional dining and entertainment venues. In April, the Chicago Plan Commission approved project development and zoning for the entertainment district. The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) has purchased the land for the project and is expected to select the design/build team for the arena and hotel in September. MPEA hopes to break ground on the \$600 million, two-year project in early 2015.

- The **Orange County Convention Center (OCCC)** in Orlando, FL, has begun a five-year, \$187 million renovation project. The first phase of the renovation includes

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CONVENTION CENTERS



Among the 40 U.S. convention centers that offer at least 350,000 sf of prime exhibit space, 16 of them have projects planned or under construction. And half of the *Millionaire's Club* have construction projects underway or planned.

TOP CONVENTION CENTERS IN THE U.S. RANKED BY AMOUNT OF PRIME EXHIBIT SPACE, AUGUST 2014

Rank/Convention Center	Prime Exhibit Space
1. McCormick Place (Chicago, IL)	2,600,000 sf
2. Orange County Convention Center (Orlando, FL)	2,100,000 sf
3. Las Vegas Convention Center (Las Vegas, NV)	1,940,631 sf
4. Georgia World Congress Center (Atlanta, GA)	1,400,000 sf
5. Sands Expo & Convention Center/The Venetian The Palazzo Resort Hotel Casino (Las Vegas, NV)	1,305,052 sf
6.* Kentucky Exposition Center (Louisville, KY)	1,100,000 sf
7.* New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (New Orleans, LA)	1,100,000 sf
8. NRG Park (formerly Reliant Park) (Houston, TX)	1,056,213 sf
9. International Exposition Center (I-X Center) (Cleveland, OH)	1,050,000 sf
10. Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center (Dallas, TX)	1,000,000 sf
Prime Exhibit Space at Top Ten U.S. Venues	14,651,896 sf
Percent of Total SF of Prime Exhibit Space at All U.S. Venues	26%

*Tied in amount of space

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major improvements to the West Building, including Halls E & F and meeting rooms. Hall WF will be converted into a 50,000 sf ballroom and four new boardrooms. A new outdoor mezzanine terrace will be built and new carpeting, doors and décor will be installed. The renovations in the West Building should be completed by August 2015. An \$8 million pedestrian bridge, which will connect the venue to the Hyatt Place Orlando/Convention Center, will be completed in 2016, said Kathie Canning, executive director, OCCC.

- After more than a decade since its last renovation, the **Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC)** announced plans to expand last year. "The vision of the Las Vegas Global Business District continues to take shape with input from resort partners," said Chris Meyer, vice president of global business sales, Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA). In January, the LVCVA received final approval to issue the initial \$50 million in bonds for the transformational project. The funding will allow the LVCVA to finalize recent land purchases and begin the next steps in the conceptual design process.

The LVCC, along with their technology partner Cox Business, has invested in on-going technology upgrades. Last Fall, the center's Internet bandwidth was increased to a 10 Gigabit circuit. "This Internet bandwidth is, at a minimum, over double the bandwidth of the any other convention center in North America and highlights the technology leadership of the Las Vegas Convention Center," said Meyer. Cox Business is in the process of installing more than 2,300 new wireless

CONVENTION CENTERS WITH 350,000 SF OR MORE OF PRIME EXHIBIT SPACE

Metric	U.S./Canada/Mexico	U.S.	Canada	Mexico
Total Number of Millionaire's Club & Mega Venues	52	40	7	5
Total Square Feet of Prime Exhibit Space	38,544,151 sf	31,909,728 sf	4,232,000 sf	2,402,423 sf
Prime Exhibit Space Mean (arithmetic average)	741,234 sf	797,743 sf	604,571 sf	480,485 sf
Prime Exhibit Space Median (midpoint)	550,000 sf	662,250 sf	471,000 sf	430,556 sf
Prime Exhibit Space Mode (most frequent)	1,000,000 (3) & 502,000 sf (3)	502,000 sf (3)	1,000,000 sf (2)	None

Source: Trade Show Executive's directory of the World's Top Convention Centers 2014

Internet access points, with an expected completion date of September 2014. As of August 1, all Internet bandwidth package speeds have been doubled with no price increases, and the complimentary Wi-Fi service coverage has been expanded to include all meeting rooms.

- In May, ground was broken on a new \$1.2 billion multi-purpose stadium in Atlanta. The new stadium, which will seat 71,000, will feature a retractable roof and an open-air concourse. In February, the Georgia World Congress Center Authority (GWCCA) was selected to manage the **Savannah International Trade & Convention Center (SITCC)**.

In this ground-breaking new arrangement, the GWCCA will be responsible for the management and operation of the SITCC and will work collaboratively with the Visit Savannah team in marketing the convention center.

- **The Sands Expo, The Venetian and The Palazzo** in Las Vegas have recently completed a \$35 million congress center renovation that includes a redesign of the pre-function space to improve traffic flow and will add new carpeting, lighting and signage. The convention complex recently achieved Level Two Certification to the ASTM Standard for Environmentally Sustainable Meetings And Events given by the Convention Industry Council's APEX initiative and ASTM International. In addition, AT&T completed the installation of a new 4G LTE-capable Distributed Antenna System (DAS) at the complex in 2013, providing a more powerful level of cellular services to the venue.

- In June, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal gave final approval to the **Ernest N. Morial Exhibition Hall Authority** to begin executing plans for a \$175 million Convention Center District Development Project. The plan includes a new development on a 47-acre tract owned by the authority. Central to the plans is the construction of a new headquarters hotel. Other proposed aspects of the project include a park along Convention Center Boulevard, outdoor entertainment, arts and cultural venues, and new retail and housing options.
- In March, **Reliant Park** in Houston, TX, and its entities were renamed NRG Park, NRG Stadium and NRG Center. NRG,

a *Fortune 250* company, bought Reliant in 2009, and the company has dual headquarters in Houston and New Jersey. In May, the Harris County Sports and Convention Corp., the county agency that runs NRG Park, approved a sustainability plan that calls for installing 700 solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations and

LED lighting throughout the complex.

- In Dallas, a \$27 million construction project near the convention center began in January. The 18-month project will add about 350 underground parking spaces and four above-ground restaurants

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Millionaire's Club

UNITED STATES CONVENTION CENTERS WITH ONE MILLION SF OR MORE OF PRIME EXHIBIT SPACE



Rank/Convention Center	Prime Exhibit Space (SF)	Location	Web Site
1. McCormick Place	2,600,000	Chicago, IL	www.mccormickplace.com
2. Orange County Convention Center	2,100,000	Orlando, FL	www.occc.net
3. Las Vegas Convention Center	1,940,631	Las Vegas, NV	www.vegasmeansbusiness.com
4. Georgia World Congress Center	1,400,000	Atlanta, GA	www.gwcc.com
5. Sands Expo & Convention Center/ The Venetian The Palazzo Resort Hotel Casino	1,305,052	Las Vegas, NV	www.sandsexpo.com
6.* Kentucky Exposition Center	1,100,000	Louisville, KY	www.kyexpo.org
7.* New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center	1,100,000	New Orleans, LA	www.mccno.com
8. NRG Park (formerly Reliant Park)	1,056,213	Houston, TX	www.nrgpark.com
9. International Exposition Center (I-X Center)	1,050,000	Cleveland, OH	www.ixcenter.com
10. Kay Bailey Hutchison Convention Center	1,000,000	Dallas, TX	www.dallasconventioncenter.com

*Tied in amount of space

CANADA

Rank/Convention Center	Prime Exhibit Space (SF)	Location	Web Site
1.* Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place	1,000,000	Toronto, ON	www.directenergycentre.com
2.* The Toronto Congress Centre	1,000,000	Toronto, ON	www.torontocongresscentre.com

*Tied in amount of space



1



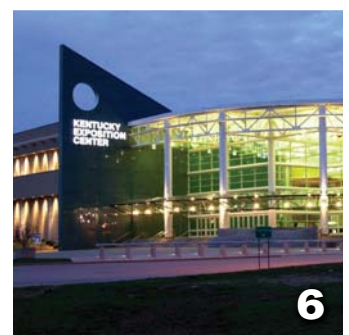
3



4



5



6

Continued from page 49

to the land adjacent to the **Omni Dallas Hotel**. In addition, the area around the DART Convention Center Station will receive a \$4.67 million renovation that will include better lighting and more pedestrian-friendly walkways to and from the buses and trains.

More Growth at Mega Centers

Expansion and renovation plans are also underway at the *Mega Convention Centers*, which offer 350,000 to 999,999 sf of prime exhibit space. The George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, TX, and the Music City Center in Nashville, TN, are in the discussion phase, while the Los Angeles Convention Center, San Diego Convention Center, Boston Convention & Exhibition Center and Moscone Center in San Francisco are working toward legislative approval of their expansion plans. The Miami Beach Convention Center is securing financing for its plans.

The **Anaheim Convention Center** is one step closer to breaking ground on a \$180 million expansion. The project includes an additional 200,000 square feet of flexible, multi-use space at the north end of the center and a climate-controlled pedestrian bridge that connects the expansion to the original facility, as well

as replacement of parking areas, loading docks and the entrance to the campus.

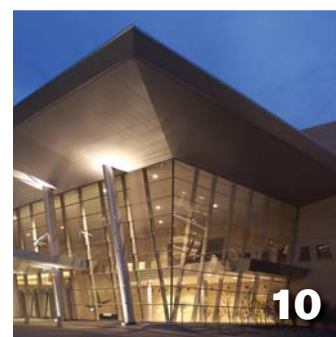
In April, **Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino** announced a \$66 million expansion project. Plans include the addition of more than 350,000 square feet of exhibit space, as well as underground parking and more carpeted ballroom space. Construction is scheduled to begin in late Fall 2014, with new exhibit space available in August 2015 and anticipated completion of all space in January 2016. The new space will feature a 70,000 sf ballroom that is divisible by five. The convention center's bandwidth will also increase to accommodate more attendees and to allow for the most advanced presentations.

The **Cobo Center** in Detroit nears the completion of a \$299 million renovation that began in 2010. The current phase of renovation will include new carpeting and furnishings in the remaining meeting rooms, public concourses and pre-function areas. A new TV studio, with a 4,000 sf sound stage, is now fully operational. In March, a 4,800 sf and a 2,900 sf video wall were installed. Two 36'x20' exterior video walls and a 120'x40' exterior video screen will be installed by early 2015. The center will complete 50,000 sf of flexible space in January 2015.

In San Antonio, TX, the **Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center** is adding 75,000 sf of exhibit space, 32,830 sf of meeting space and a 54,768 sf ballroom. When the \$325 million expansion is completed in 2016, the center will feature 515,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space and 121,932 sf of meeting space.

While the ranks of the *Millionaire's Club* and *Mega Centers* didn't change, there's no doubt that current projects underway and those in the planning stages will mean some significant changes to this list in the years to come.

All of these projects bode well for organizers as trade shows continue to grow. While the ranks of the *Millionaire's Club* and *Mega Centers* didn't change from 2013 to 2014, there's no doubt that current projects underway and those in the planning stages will mean some significant changes to this list in the years to come. **TSE**

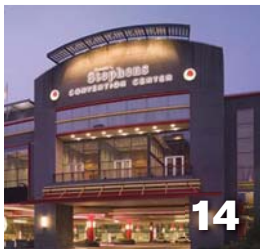


Mega Convention Centers

UNITED STATES CONVENTION CENTERS WITH 350,000 SF TO 999,999 SF OF PRIME EXHIBIT SPACE

Rank/Convention Center	Prime Exhibit Space (SF)	Location	Web Site
11. Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino	934,731	Las Vegas, NV	www.mandalaybay.com
12. George R. Brown Convention Center	862,000	Houston, TX	www.houstonconventionctr.com
13.* Jacob K. Javits Convention Center	840,000	New York, NY	www.javitscenter.com
14.* Donald E. Stephens Convention Center <i>See ad on page 53</i>	840,000	Rosemont, IL	www.rosemont.com
15. Anaheim Convention Center	813,000	Anaheim, CA	www.anaheimconventioncenter.com
16. Indiana Convention Center & Lucas Oil Stadium	749,100	Indianapolis, IN	www.icclos.com
17. Cobo Center	723,000	Detroit, MI	www.cobocenter.com
18. Los Angeles Convention Center	720,000	Los Angeles, CA	www.lacclink.com
19. Walter E. Washington Convention Center	703,000	Washington, DC	www.eventsdc.com
20. Pennsylvania Convention Center	679,000	Philadelphia, PA	www.paconvention.com
21. Phoenix Convention Center <i>See ad on page 49</i>	645,500	Phoenix, AZ	phoenixconventioncenter.com
22. San Diego Convention Center	615,701	San Diego, CA	www.visitsandiego.com
23. Colorado Convention Center	584,000	Denver, CO	www.denverconvention.com

**Tied in amount of space*



14



12



20



21



16



24



22



30



33



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CONVENTION CENTERS

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UNITED STATES CONVENTION CENTERS WITH 350,000 SF TO 999,999 SF OF PRIME EXHIBIT SPACE

Rank/Convention Center	Prime Exhibit Space (SF)	Location	Web Site
24. Boston Convention & Exhibition Center	516,000	Boston, MA	www.advantageboston.com
25. Calvin L. Rampton Salt Palace Convention Center	515,000	Salt Lake City, UT	www.saltpalace.com
26. Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex & Expo Center	506,000	Harrisburg, PA	www.pafarmshowcomplex.com
27.* America's Center	502,000	St. Louis, MO	www.americascenter.org
28.* The Atlanta Convention Center at AmericasMart	502,000	Atlanta, GA	www.atlconventioncenter.com
29.* Miami Beach Convention Center	502,000	Miami Beach, FL	www.miamibeachconvention.com
30. Atlantic City Convention Center <i>See ad on page 53</i>	500,000	Atlantic City, NJ	www.accenter.com
31. Minneapolis Convention Center	475,000	Minneapolis, MN	www.minneapolisconventioncenter.com
32. Moscone Center	442,000	San Francisco, CA	www.moscone.com
33. Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center	440,000	San Antonio, TX	www.sahbgcc.com
34. Greater Columbus Convention Center	410,000	Columbus, OH	www.columbusconventions.com
35. Expo Square	400,000	Tulsa, OK	www.exposquare.com
36. Kansas City Convention & Entertainment Facilities	388,800	Kansas City, MO	www.kccconvention.com
37. Reno-Sparks Convention Center	381,000	Reno, NV	www.meetrenotahoe.com
38. Atlanta Exposition Center	366,000	Atlanta, GA	www.atlantaexpoctr.com
39. Music City Center	353,000	Nashville, TN	www.nashvillemusiccitycenter.com
40. World Market Center Las Vegas	350,000	Las Vegas, NV	www.lasvegasmarket.com

*Tied in amount of space

CANADA

Rank/Convention Center	Prime Exhibit Space (SF)	Location	Web Site
3. Olympic Park	500,000	Montréal, QC	www.parcolympique.qc.ca
4. International Centre Toronto	471,000	Mississauga, ON	www.internationalcentre.com
5. Metro Toronto Convention Centre	460,000	Toronto, ON	www.mtccc.com
6. Northlands	401,000	Edmonton, AB	www.northlands.com
7. Calgary Stampede Park	400,000	Calgary, AB	calgarystampede.com

MEXICO

Rank/Convention Center	Prime Exhibit Space (SF)	Location	Web Site
1. Expo Guadalajara	753,200	Guadalajara, Jal	www.expo-guadalajara.com
2. Poliforum León	447,648	León, Gto	www.poliforumleon.com
3. Expo Puebla	430,556	Puebla, Pue	www.expo-puebla.com
4. Feria Nacional Potosina	405,046	San Luis Potosí, Slp	www.visitasanluispotosi.com
5. Centro Banamex	365,973	México City, DF	www.centrobanamex.com