



# Looking UP

**Mid-Sized Convention Centers  
Welcome Diverse Group Business,  
Budding Growth**

BY SANDI CAIN, news editor

Oceanside, CA – Mid-sized convention centers, which have prime exhibit space ranging from 125,000 sf to 349,999 sf, pack a big punch. The category includes convention centers with anywhere from 125,000 sf to 349,999 sf of prime exhibit space. Numbering 85, they represent 27% of the 314 total convention centers in North America with 50,000 sf or more of prime exhibit space, according to the most recent TSE Annual Report on Mid-Sized Convention Centers. They also add up to 17,141,013 sf, which is 24% of the overall prime exhibit space at all North American venues with at least 50,000 sf.

The U.S. dominates this category with 71 of the 85 centers. Canada has nine and Mexico has five. The largest mid-sized center in the U.S. is the Portland Expo Center in Portland, OR, which offers 333,000 sf of prime exhibit space. 2015 is expected to be a good year for the center. Event bookings are ahead of last year, with industries like timber and golf trending upward, according to Matthew Rotchford, director of the Portland Expo Center.

At the other end of the category, the

smallest of the mid-sized convention centers in North America is the Von Braun Center in Huntsville, AL, which has 125,700 sf of prime exhibit space. The Von Braun Center most recently hosted the Boat Show Huntsville, a regional show that used more than 100,000 sf of exhibit space, and in March will host the Association of the United States Army.

In all, 36 U.S. states and Puerto Rico have mid-sized facilities. More than one-third of the mid-sized venues in the U.S. (37%) are concentrated in just four states: California has nine; Florida and Texas each have six; and North Carolina has five. Twelve states have two mid-sized centers. Only California and Oregon have multiple centers among the largest 10 in this category.

### Gains and Losses

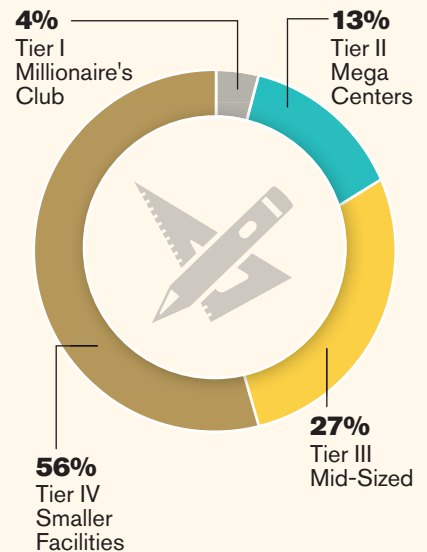
California lost one mid-sized center when The Concourse Exhibition Center in San Francisco closed in late 2014. But Oklahoma will add another state to the roster

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## Convention Centers by Size Classification

Of the 314 North American convention centers with a minimum of 50,000 square feet of prime exhibit space:

Tier I	1,000,000+ sf
Tier II	350,000 - 999,999 sf
Tier III	125,000 - 349,999 sf
Tier IV	50,000 - 124,999 sf



## Business Looking Up

Across the U.S., officials at mid-sized convention centers said overall booking patterns are encouraging if not up significantly, though some sectors are stronger than others. "We see the medical meetings and sports markets as emerging but the traditional SMERF market has shown signs of slowing down in overall attendance," said Eric Blanc, director of sales, marketing and convention services at the Tampa Convention Center.

Medical and technology shows also are strong at the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center in Florida and have helped the region recover from the economic downturn. The corporate market and pharmaceutical business also are bright spots for the Fort Worth Convention Center, according to Kirk Slaughter, director.

In Montreal, healthcare shows, along with aerospace, transportation, tech and

finance, are the strongest sectors, according to Raymond Larivee, chief executive officer of Palais des congrès de Montréal. The Palais primarily hosts international conventions and trade shows, he said.

Other growing sectors in Fort Lauderdale are Comic-Con-related shows and multi-level marketing groups. The city also will host the American Builders & Contractors Association's Workforce Development Conference and a robotics competition this year. "Pop culture events are trending up," Slaughter said. The New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center at Raritan Center also has seen more bookings from that sector. This year, the venue will host iHobby Expo and NJ Comic Con, and Intergroom pet expo.

Booking lead times remain somewhat short across the board, with the corporate market oft-cited as the primary culprits. "We still get a lot of requests for (events) in the year for that year, but we don't always

have room for them," said Denise Niebrugge, VP of convention sales and marketing for CenturyLink Center Omaha. That center will host the Triumph of Ag Expo in March, filling 102,000 sf of exhibit space.

Omaha isn't alone. "The majority of what we're working on is four years and closer," said Steve Bagwell, VP of venues for the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority and director of the Charlotte Convention Center. "A large majority of our bookings for citywides is happening two years out or sooner," he said.

A few mid-sized convention centers said while overall business may be slow to increase, demand for exhibit space is on the rise. "Events under contract for 2015 will be using more space than in previous years and (have) extended the number of days they're using the venue," said Eddie Tadlock, assistant general manager at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, MI, which has 162,000 sf of prime space.

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in 2019 when the new Oklahoma City Convention Center is expected to open with 200,000 sf of prime exhibit space.

Other centers with expansion plans that would add them into this sector are the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly, VA, which is expanding from 100,000 sf of prime exhibit space to 130,000 sf this Fall, and RBC Convention Centre Winnipeg, which is expanding from 78,000 sf of prime exhibit space to 135,500 sf of prime space and 128,500 sf of meeting space by March 2016.

## Our Neighbors to the North & South

Canada's nine mid-sized centers collectively offer 2,081,369 sf, or 12% of all North American mid-sized space. The country's largest mid-sized venue is the Palais des congrès de Montréal, with 332,369 sf of prime exhibit space. In March, that center will host the Allied Beauty Assn. Show that will use 130,000 sf of exhibit space.

Mexico's five mid-sized centers account for 6% of the total mid-sized

venues in North America. Mexico City's Expo Bancomer Santa Fe is the largest in Mexico and also the largest mid-sized venue in North America with 348,750 sf of prime exhibit space.

## State of the Middle

The average (mean) square footage of prime exhibit space for all mid-size convention centers in North America is 201,659 sf. The center that is closest to that average is the Dallas Market Center, which has 202,000 sf of exhibit space. The average square footage at mid-sized convention centers in the U.S. alone is 194,416 sf, which is closely represented by the CenturyLink Center Omaha, with 194,000 sf of prime exhibit space.

The median or midpoint of prime exhibit space at mid-size centers in North America is 191,000 sf. Both the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville, KY and the San Mateo County Event Center in California offer that amount of space.

The most frequent amount of exhibit space (mode) for mid-sized venues in North America is 150,000 sf. Five convention centers have exactly that amount: Greensboro, NC's Coliseum Complex; Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, IA; Raleigh Convention Center in Raleigh, NC; Virginia Beach Convention Center in Virginia Beach, VA; and EY Centre in Ottawa.

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## Current Hot Topics

### MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES

Controversy over minimal wage laws has raged in major markets like Chicago and Los Angeles, but most mid-sized venues haven't yet faced the prospect of local legislation creating dramatic increases.

At the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center, managed by SMG, General Manager Mark Gatley told TSE, "If a change to the federal law is mandated, like all of our sister venues at SMG, we would follow suit, provided that state and local laws did not preclude such a change. We would follow the law that governs." Gatley added, "Here in greater Fort Lauderdale, we have always attempted to stay ahead of the curve with competitive wage rates and we intend to stay the course, long term."

As for the impact on hall rental rates, Adam Heffron, director of event services at the Exposition Center at Wisconsin State Fair Park, said, "We would take a serious look at whether or not we would need to adjust rental rates if the federal minimum

wage rate increases to a significantly higher proposed new hourly minimum. However, since we charge labor back to clients, we would consider raising the rates for labor before doing so to rental rates."

### SECURITY

Convention venues are understandably reluctant to be too specific about their security measures, but face an ongoing battle to balance the need for security with the need to be welcoming to their users. Most review these measures regularly and some changes are in the works.

- The Portland Expo Center has added a camera and entry security system review for this fiscal year.
- The Tampa Convention Center has begun to work more closely with local officials to make sure its plans are consistent with city procedures.
- Expo Center Wisconsin has its own police force on site and conducts training to deal with things like active shooters, which wasn't part of the regimen ten years ago," Heffron said.

- Greater Fort Lauderdale was already an integral part of the Port Everglades security plan post 9/11 which Gatley said actually helped to attract organizations such as the Association of the U.S. Army and the Organization of American States, but was often times a deterrent for others. "As a result, the county has a construction plan currently underway that will remove key checkpoints that at times, have negatively impacted ingress/egress at the facility," he noted. That work will be completed by mid-2015. Gatley added, "We are currently re-evaluating our internal security planning to marry the concept of insuring ease of access for our guests while protecting all from harm, thus rendering the very best guest/patron experience in our destination."



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## Tier III Exhibition Facilities: United States

\*Tied in amount of space

Exhibition Facility	Prime Exhibit Space (sf)	Location	Web Site
1. Portland Expo Center	333,000	Portland, OR	www.expoctr.org
2. CenturyLink Field Event Center	330,000	Seattle, WA	www.centurylinkfield.com
3. David L. Lawrence Convention Center	313,000	Pittsburgh, PA	www.pittsburghcc.com
4. Baltimore Convention Center	300,000	Baltimore, MD	www.bccenter.org
5. Moscone West	296,092	San Francisco, CA	www.moscone.com
6.* Charlotte Convention Center	280,000	Charlotte, NC	www.charlotteconventionctr.com
7.* TD Convention Center	280,000	Greenville, SC	www.tdconventioncenter.com
8. Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center	270,000	Long Beach, CA	www.longbeachcc.com
9. Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center	264,000	Nashville, TN	www.gaylordopryland.com
10. Oregon Convention Center	255,000	Portland, OR	www.oregoncc.org
11. Fort Worth Convention Center	253,226	Fort Worth, TX	www.fortworthconventioncenter.com
12. Cow Palace	248,000	San Francisco, CA	www.cowpalace.com
13. Austin Convention Center <i>See our ad on page 37</i>	247,052	Austin, TX	www.austinconventioncenter.com
14. South Towne Exposition Center	243,000	Sandy, UT	www.southtowneexpo.com
15. Greater Philadelphia Expo Center at Oaks	240,000	Oaks, PA	www.phillyexpoctr.com
16. Washington State Convention Center	236,700	Seattle, WA	www.wsc.com
17. Fairplex/Sheraton Fairplex Hotel & Conference Center	235,000	Pomona, CA	www.fairplex.com
18. Cleveland Convention Center/ Global Center for Health Innovation	225,000	Cleveland, OH	www.clevelandconventions.com; www.theglobalcenter.com
19. The Park Expo & Conference Center	224,000	Charlotte, NC	www.ppm-nc.com
20. Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Complex	220,000	Birmingham, AL	www.bjcc.org
21. Suburban Collection Showplace	215,000	Novi, MI	www.suburbancollectionshowplace.com
22. Piers 92/94 New York	208,000	New York, NY	www.piers9294.com
23. Hawaii Convention Center	204,000	Honolulu, HI	www.hawaiiconvention.com
24. CAL EXPO/California Exposition & State Fair	203,000	Sacramento, CA	www.calexpo.com
25. Dallas Market Center	202,000	Dallas, TX	www.dallasmarketcenter.com
26.* Tampa Convention Center	200,000	Tampa, FL	www.tampaconventioncenter.com
27.* Exposition Center at Wisconsin State Fair Park	200,000	West Allis, WI	www.wistatefair.com
28. Greater Fort Lauderdale/ Broward County Convention Center	199,526	Fort Lauderdale, FL	www.ftlauderdalecc.com
29. Denver Mart	197,000	Denver, CO	www.denvermart.com
30. Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center	195,500	Wichita, KS	www.century2.org
31. Duke Energy Convention Center	195,320	Cincinnati, OH	www.duke-energycenter.com
32. CenturyLink Center Omaha	194,000	Omaha, NE	www.centurylinkcenteromaha.com
33.* Kentucky International Convention Center	191,000	Louisville, KY	www.kyconvention.org

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# CONVENTION CENTERS

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## Tier III Exhibition Facilities: United States

\*Tied in amount of space

Exhibition Facility	Prime Exhibit Space (sf)	Location	Web Site
34.* San Mateo County Event Center	191,000	San Mateo, CA	www.sanmateoexpo.org
35. Wisconsin Center	188,695	Milwaukee, WI	www.wisconsincenter.org
36.* Florida State Fairgrounds	180,000	Tampa, FL	www.floridastatefair.com
37.* Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center	180,000	National Harbor, MD	www.gaylordnational.com
38.* Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center	180,000	Grapevine, TX	www.gaylordhotels.com
39. Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center	178,500	Kissimmee, FL	www.gaylordhotels.com
40. Greater Richmond Convention Center	178,159	Richmond, VA	www.richmondcenter.com
41. John B. Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center	176,000	Boston, MA	www.signatureboston.com
42. Navy Pier	170,100	Chicago, IL	www.navypier.com
43. Albuquerque Convention Center	166,546	Albuquerque, NM	www.albuquerquecc.com
44. Orlando World Center Marriott	165,000	Orlando, FL	www.marriottworldcenter.com
45. Mercedes-Benz Superdome	162,434	New Orleans, LA	www.mbsuperdome.com
46. DeVos Place	162,000	Grand Rapids, MI	www.devosplace.org
47.* Alamodome	160,000	San Antonio, TX	www.alamodome.com
48.* Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum & Sports Arena	160,000	Los Angeles, CA	www.lacoliseumlive.com
49.* Memphis Cook Convention Center	160,000	Memphis, TN	www.memphisconvention.com
50.* University of Phoenix Stadium	160,000	Glendale, AZ	www.universityofphoenixstadium.com
51. New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center at Raritan Center	155,277	Edison, NJ	www.njexpoctr.com
52. Puerto Rico Convention Center Pedro Rosselló	152,700	San Juan, PR	www.prconvention.com
53.* Allen County War Memorial Coliseum	152,000	Fort Wayne, IN	www.memorialcoliseum.com
54.* MGM Grand Hotel & Casino	152,000	Las Vegas, NV	www.mgmgrand.com
55. Georgia International Convention Center	151,000	College Park, GA	www.gicc.com
56.* Greensboro Coliseum Complex	150,000	Greensboro, NC	www.greensborocoliseum.com
57.* Iowa Events Center (Hy-Vee Hall, Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center, Wells Fargo Arena)	150,000	Des Moines, IA	www.iowaeventscenter.com
58.* Raleigh Convention Center	150,000	Raleigh, NC	www.raleighconvention.com
59.* Virginia Beach Convention Center	150,000	Virginia Beach, VA	www.vbconventioncenter.com
60. Saint Paul RiverCentre	145,182	St. Paul, MN	www.rivercentre.org
61. Cobb Galleria Centre	144,000	Atlanta, GA	www.cobb Galleria.com
62. San Jose Convention Center <i>See our ad on page 39</i>	143,000	San Jose, CA	www.sanjose.org
63. Connecticut Convention Center	140,000	Hartford, CT	www.ctconventions.com
64. MetraPark	136,200	Billings, MT	www.metrapark.com
65.* Hyatt Regency Orlando	134,000	Orlando, FL	www.orlando.regency.hyatt.com
66.* Sacramento Convention Center	134,000	Sacramento, CA	www.sacramentoconventioncenter.com

## Tier III Exhibition Facilities: United States

\*Tied in amount of space

Exhibition Facility	Prime Exhibit Space (sf)	Location	Web Site
67. Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center	133,000	Biloxi, MS	www.mscoastcoliseum.com
68. Grand Sierra Resort & Casino	131,000	Reno, NV	www.grandsierraresort.com
69. Cabarrus Arena & Events Center	130,000	Concord, NC	www.cabarrusarena.com
70. Hilton Anatole	128,595	Dallas, TX	www.hiltonanatole.com
71. Von Braun Center	125,700	Huntsville, AL	www.vonbrauncenter.com

## Tier III Exhibition Facilities: Canada

Exhibition Facility	Prime Exhibit Space (sf)	Location	Web Site
1. Palais des congrès de Montréal (Convention & Exhibition Centre)	332,369	Montréal, QC	www.congresmtl.com
2. Vancouver Convention Centre	311,500	Vancouver, BC	www.vancouverconventioncentre.com
3. Place Bonaventure	298,000	Montréal, QC	www.placebonaventure.com
4. B.C. Place Stadium	247,000	Vancouver, BC	www.bcplace.com
5. Evraz Place	223,000	Regina, SK	www.evrazplace.com
6. Prairieland Park	200,000	Saskatoon, SK	www.saskatoonex.com
7. Le Centre de foires de Québec	185,000	Québec City, QC	www.expocite.com
8. EY Centre	150,000	Ottawa, ON	eycentre.ca
9. Québec City Convention Centre	134,500	Québec City, QC	www.convention.qc.ca

## Tier III Exhibition Facilities: Mexico

Exhibition Facility	Prime Exhibit Space (sf)	Location	Web Site
1. Expo Bancomer Santa Fe	348,750	Mexico City, DF	www.expobancomer.com
2. Cintermex	282,876	Monterrey, NL	www.cintermex.com
3. Acapulco International Center	244,169	Acapulco, Gro	www.centrointernacionalacapulco.com
4. Expo Mundo Imperial	242,187	Acapulco, Gro	www.expoimperial.com
5. World Trade Center Mexico City International Exhibition & Convention Center	138,158	Mexico City, DF	www.exposwtc.com



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