

# LOCAL NEWS

## Moscone revamp coming at right time



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### Center tries to stay current as convention business dwindles

By Erin Sherbert  
Examiner Staff Writer

Hotel revenue is down, tourism is lagging and San Francisco is quickly losing its status as a world-class destination to hold conventions.

But tourism officials say a newer, sleeker and more tech-savvy Moscone Center will fix all those problems. Next week, San Francisco will start a major two-year renovation of Moscone Center's North and South halls, a \$55 million project that's sure to draw more conventions to The City, officials said.

The halls, the first of which opened in 1981, will get fresh paint and carpet, new heating systems, upgraded signage and new artwork of San Francisco icons, including the Golden Gate Bridge and Chinatown, said Leonard Hoops, executive vice president and chief customer officer for the San Francisco Convention and Visitors Bureau.

### Moscone Center

The facility that opened in 1981 has hosted fewer conventions this year.

**\$18 million** Annual rent payments

**740,000** Square feet of meeting space

**\$55 million** Cost to renovate

"It's a buyer's market and customers are expecting new, nicer and fresher buildings, and they are getting it in other cities," Hoops said.

Moscone traditionally holds approximately 60 conventions annually, but the number has been hovering around 50 this year, he said. That's had a domino effect on hotels, where revenue generated from Moscone conventions declined from \$992,000 in 2008 to roughly \$780,000 in 2010, according to the Convention and Visitors Bureau.

"Conventions have said that if we don't get the upgrades that are

needed, they will look elsewhere," said Dan Kelleher, chair of the Tourism Improvement District, which is funding a portion of the project. "We are becoming noncompetitive."

The district has long planned for these renovations, kicking in more than \$20 million from its account to help pay for the project. San Francisco is funding the remaining \$35 million.

Eventually, the plan is to expand the 20-acre Moscone Center, creating a tunnel under Third Street to connect the South and North halls.

It's certainly a keen investment at a time when the hotel industry has been hit hard, with boycotts, declining tourism and now a 2 percent hotel tax increase slated for the November ballot, said Tony Winnicker, spokesman for Mayor Gavin Newsom.

"As we work to improve the facilities that attract these multimillion-dollar conventions, it further points to the folly of increasing the hotel tax, which would hurt our ability to attract these large conventions for the future," Winnicker said.

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**New look:** Next week, a two-year renovation project will begin at Moscone Center. The \$55 million face-lift will help draw more conventions, city officials say.

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**CONSERVATION CORPS GREENS COMMUNITY, HELPS YOUNG ADULTS ACHIEVE**

The San Francisco Conservation Corps has been "Green" since its inception, utilizing environmental community service projects to help young people at a time when "Green" was not a buzzword. For the past 27 years, the San Francisco Conservation Corps has turned the lives of low-income young adults ages 18-26 into lives of promise and new beginnings.

SFCC offers young adults the opportunity to earn a high school diploma while gaining marketable job skills. The young men and women who enter the Corps often have little or no experience in the working world. They are eager for the job training, support and education that they know can open doors for them and their families. Many Corpsmembers live in the poorest San Francisco communities and join the Corps to build a better San Francisco, and a new life.

Each Corpsmember takes part in a structured 18-month program and will: Work with a team of 5-10 peers under the guidance of a dedicated supervisor; Green the City's public spaces and parks; Build playgrounds for community centers; Recycle and divert tons of materials from our landfills; Educate communities on how to recycle more efficiently; Earn above SF minimum wage for their work; Attend academic classes to attain a high school diploma; Collaborate with a career counselor to explore work opportunities and create a personal action plan.

In the past 12 months: More Corpsmembers attained High School Diplomas than at any time in its 27 year history. Corpsmembers greened and beautified 27 parks, community centers, recreation centers, senior centers and child development centers throughout the City. Our Zero Waste project recycled over 280 tons of materials otherwise destined for landfills. Twenty nine Corpsmembers secured full time jobs, many of them in green businesses, like solar installation, recycling, energy conservation, and transportation, food service, home health and human services.

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