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Convention South

The national planners' resource for southern destinations

THE *Relationship* ISSUE

**CREATING MEETINGS
WITH LASTING IMPACT**

**ELEVATING ENGAGEMENT
& EXPERIENCES**



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**RELATIONSHIP TRENDS REVEALED:
2026 CVB & Planner Relationship Survey**



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putting it in perspective

Connections Count

ConventionSouth's March edition marks the return of our annual "relationship issue." Always a highlight for our team and our readers, this issue explores the powerful partnership between meeting planners and convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs)—and how those connections help drive exceptional events. Alongside our in-depth feature showcasing perspectives from both sides of the industry, we share findings from our annual relationship survey. Together, these stories underscore the vital role of strong, collaborative relationships in successful event planning.

Our relationship coverage begins with "Creating Meaningful Moments," which explores creative ways planners are engaging attendees and elevating the event experience. Attendee engagement and experience is more than just entertaining attendees. Real engagement and exceptional experiences involve carefully crafted, personal touchpoints tailored to each audience and event—designed for connection, conversation, and continued impact. As Heather Pilcher, CEO and executive producer of Blue Spark Event Design, explains, "People remember how something made them feel. My most memorable events succeed because they blend the joy of in-person connection with thoughtfully designed creative experiences like custom photo moments, engaging activities, and live performances that invite people to fully participate." Discover more creative strategies from Pilcher and other planners in this special feature, beginning on page 6.

We also examine the critical connection between planners and CVBs in creating successful events with lasting impact. More than ever, the event partnership is built on collaboration, open communication, and a shared commitment to producing exceptional events defined by memorable moments. According to Casandra Matej, president and CEO of Visit Orlando (Fla.), relationships with planners are continually evolving. "Planners today have a lot more on their plates—they're expected to deliver bigger, better events with less time and more pressure. That's really changed how we work together," she says. "It's about working together from the very beginning, sharing ideas, and having open communication regarding their goals and challenges. When both sides communicate honestly and listen to each other, it leads to creative solutions and better outcomes for everyone." Planners and CVBs share more insights about the relationship dynamic in "Connection Counts," on page 11.

Our annual CVB-Planner Relationship Survey Report offers a deeper dive into relationship trends. Based on your survey responses, CVBs and planners enjoy a strong partnership. As one respondent noted, "Planners and CVBs share the same goal: to deliver a successful, seamless event that supports attendees and the local community." Learn more about how CVBs and planners are tackling market challenges together and other survey findings in "Partners in Progress," on page 17.

Our 2026 Event Planners' Guide to Washington, D.C., includes great opportunities for groups to take advantage of the many exciting activities and special attractions planned in celebration of America's 250th birthday. Check out the special festivities, hotel developments, and venue updates highlighted on page 46.

In keeping with our relationship theme, we invite you to connect with us on our social media channels, visit our website at ConventionSouth.com, or send us an email. We love to hear about the exciting new developments in your events, destinations, and venues.



Making Meetings Matter More,

Michelle

Michelle Martin
Editor-in-Chief



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11 Connection Counts

CVBs & planners deliver meetings with lasting impact



Courtesy Visit Orlando

THE *Relationship* ISSUE

6 Creating Memorable Moments
Planner tips to elevate attendee engagement

17 Partners in Progress
Results from our 2026 CVB & Planner Relationship Survey

46 Event Planners' Guide
WASHINGTON, D.C.

IN EVERY ISSUE | TALKING POINTS 5 | CLOSING REMARKS 58

On the cover: Our relationship issue explores how CVBs and planners work together. Courtesy Visit Orlando

Effective Attendee Engagement Balances Connection, Personalization & Flow

A conversation with event planner Pablo Zacarias



Event planner Pablo Zacarias has produced a variety of events with thoughtful, well-executed experiences that blend creativity with strong operational execution. His background as program manager at Bespoke Events allowed him to refine his talents and skills in delivering elevated, brand-aligned events. Recognized as a 2025 *ConventionSouth* Meeting Planner to Watch, Zacarias recently launched Zacarias Event Consulting LLC. Here, Zacarias shares

his approach to creating meaningful, intentional events rooted in authenticity and focused on attendee engagement and exceptional experiences.

How do you approach designing events that create memorable experiences for attendees?

I approach event design by starting with purpose and clarifying the goal, audience, and desired emotional takeaway. From there, I design each touchpoint intentionally, including flow, sensory elements, programming, and opportunities for attendees to interact, creating a cohesive and engaging experience. For example, I produced a purpose-driven event using experiential storytelling, intentional space transitions, and interactive moments to guide attendees through the experience. Rather than passive participation, guests were actively engaged throughout, resulting in strong energy, meaningful connection, and lasting impact tied directly to the event's message.

How have you used innovative technology or interactive/experiential elements to enhance attendee engagement?

I strive to use technology and experiential elements in ways that feel intentional rather than distracting. This includes interactive installations, real-time audience participation through live polling or prompts, and curated digital content related to storytelling before, during, and after an event. I focus on creating moments designed to invite connection and reflection, not just consumption.

To ensure accessibility and inclusivity, it's important to design with flexibility and choice in mind, offering multiple ways for attendees to engage and delivering clear instructions and thoughtful pacing. I also collaborate with vendors in considering attendees' mobility, sensory needs, and communication access so all attendees can participate comfortably and meaningfully.

How do you measure attendee engagement during an event, and what metrics or feedback do you rely on to improve future experiences?

I measure attendee engagement through a combination of real-time observation and post-event feedback. During events, I pay close attention to energy levels, participation in interactive moments, flow between spaces,

and how long attendees remain engaged in programming. Afterward, I rely on surveys, attendee feedback, client debriefs, and qualitative insights to assess what resonated most. In one instance, attendee feedback highlighted a desire for more intentional connection and less passive programming. In response, I adjusted my planning approach to prioritize interactive formats, clearer transitions, and built-in moments for reflection and dialogue exchange, which has resulted in events with stronger engagement and more meaningful attendee experiences.

What strategies do you use to ensure the event experience resonates with different types of audiences or attendees with varying interests?

I ensure event experiences resonate with diverse audiences by designing around attendees' preferences (based on surveys) and shared goals while allowing flexibility in how attendees engage. I use layered programming, varied formats, and intentional pacing so participants can connect in ways that feel natural to them. To add personalization without overwhelming or excluding anyone, I focus on offering optional experiences, clear pathways, and inclusive design elements at different comfort levels, learning styles, and interests. This approach allows attendees to feel "seen" and engaged while maintaining a cohesive, welcoming experience for all.

Can you describe a time when you faced challenges engaging attendees at an event? How did you overcome them and still create a positive experience?

I once worked on an event where attendee energy was lower than expected due to schedule fatigue and competing priorities. Recognizing this in real time, I adjusted the flow by shortening segments, introducing more interactive elements, and creating space for informal connection. These shifts helped re-engage attendees and improve the overall atmosphere. The experience reinforced the importance of adaptability and reading the room. It shaped how I approach events, now prioritizing flexibility in programming, building in moments for rest and connection, and designing experiences that can evolve and respond to attendees' needs while still aligning with the event's goals.

What trends or factors do you think will have the biggest impact on attendee engagement and experiential elements?

Looking ahead, I see technology, personalization, and purpose-driven experiences as the biggest drivers of attendee engagement. Attendees increasingly expect interactive, immersive elements that feel meaningful rather than gimmicky—whether through hybrid event technology, experiential storytelling, or opportunities for connection and reflection. Sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity are also becoming central event elements, reflecting shared values and resonating deeply with attendees. The key will be balancing innovation with accessibility, ensuring all attendees can participate fully while delivering memorable, emotionally engaging experiences that leave a lasting impact beyond the event itself. 🌱



Michael Dumas/Courtesy, Manufacture Alabama

Creating Meaningful Moments

How event planners are elevating attendee experience and engagement

By Lisa Plummer Savas

At a time when attention is currency and genuine connection feels increasingly rare, meeting and event organizers face a critical challenge: How do you create experiences that resonate long after attendees leave the venue? Attendee experience and engagement isn't just about keeping people entertained; it's about designing meaningful touchpoints that foster connection, spark conversation, and deliver value beyond the event itself.

Attendee experience covers every touchpoint, from the first marketing email through post-event follow-up. Engagement is how actively people participate and connect with your content, each other, and your brand. Together, they form the foundation of

successful events that attendees remember, talk about, and return to year after year.

Today's attendees aren't showing up to sit and listen; they want immersive experiences, authentic connections, and moments worth sharing. For event organizers, this means rethinking traditional formats and embracing creative strategies that can be implemented across different scales, budgets, and delivery formats.

Attendee experience and engagement are essential components of meetings and events because they determine whether an event is simply attended or genuinely remembered, according to Melissa Auer, vice president of exhibition operations for MHI, which produces ProMat and MODEX, two of the largest

material handling and supply-chain trade shows in North America.

"The way people feel before, during, and after an event directly influences how they perceive the brand, the value they associate with it, and whether they choose to return or recommend it to others," Auer says. "Pre-event engagement builds anticipation, onsite experiences drive connection and satisfaction, and post-event touchpoints extend the event's impact beyond the show floor. Together, these moments create a seamless journey that fuels word-of-mouth, differentiates the event, and builds long-term trust and loyalty."

Auer and three other event professionals recently shared their insights on what's working now in attendee experience and engagement.



ProMat 2025 exhibitor StrongHold featured the world's largest steel cabinet, which was recognized by Guinness Book of World Records and drew lots of attention with commemorative T-shirts and photo ops.



Photos by StrongHold/Courtesy MHI

Their strategies reveal a common thread: The most successful approaches balance visual appeal with genuine value, create opportunities for organic connection, and treat the event as part of a longer engagement journey rather than a single experience over one or several days.

Low-pressure connection in high-energy settings

Not every attendee arrives at an event ready to network aggressively, which is why smart organizers are finding creative ways to facilitate connection without the pressure.

Amanda Salazar, vice president of communications and membership for Manufacture Alabama, discovered this when her organization introduced small-group trivia at one of its recent events.

“By placing attendees into small teams, we created a low-pressure way for them to connect, collaborate, and naturally network without the intimidation that often comes with open-ended social time,” Salazar says. “The competitive element kept the energy high, but the real value was in how it encouraged meaningful interaction among people who may not have engaged otherwise.”

This approach requires no special technology or elaborate production, just thoughtful team formation and well-crafted questions, Salazar says, noting the fun activity naturally breaks down barriers between strangers.

Auer used a similar quiz-based approach at a recent small meeting, incorporating questions about content covered in previous sessions and awarding prizes to the winners the following morning.

“Everyone arrived on time, so I think it helped to motivate them to get there,” Auer says, adding that the strategy reinforced learning while encouraging punctuality.

Playfulness as a professional engagement tool

Corporate event planners often assume professional attendees want serious, buttoned-up experiences, but, according to Heather Pilcher, CEO and executive producer of Blue Spark Event Design, the reality is different.

“We sometimes underestimate how playful attendees want to be at a conference,” Pilcher says. “Give adults permission to be whimsical for even a moment, and they lean all the way in. This past year, we saw huge success with inflatable prop stations, a carnival-inspired theme complete with stilt walkers, and a jazz-themed corporate suite that felt like stepping into a speakeasy.”

According to Pilcher, the key is understanding emotional resonance. “People remember how something made them feel,” she says. “When you introduce an unexpected moment of joy or a touch of childhood nostalgia, attendees relax and engage more authentically.”

Trish Leonard takes a similar approach in her work as owner and president of TLC Marketing and Creative Services. For the Bonita Springs Short Film Festival and Red Gala, in Bonita Springs, Fla., Leonard created a multi-generational experience that balanced sophistication with accessibility.

“Adults enjoyed the champagne and red-carpet treatment, while young filmmakers had their own dedicated photo area with director chairs, a DJ, and passed refreshments,” Leonard says. “We transitioned the gala into an after-party nightclub atmosphere, complete with music, food, drinks, and dancing.”

The event drew a packed theater of more than 225 attendees, spanning ages 10 to 80—each feeling celebrated in their own way, Leonard says.

Scaling experiences across budget levels

Creating memorable experiences that work across different budgets remains a constant challenge in event planning. The most successful organizers build activations that scale naturally without losing their core impact.

Salazar’s approach at Manufacture Alabama centers on recognition and competition rather than expensive production.

“Manufacturing Madness and the Manufacturer of the Year awards give our members meaningful opportunities to stand out at minimal cost,” Salazar explains.

Photos courtesy Blue Spark Event Design



Modular displays like these celebrating LimeLife by Alcone's 10th anniversary can be scaled for smaller events to engage attendees.



“Manufacturing Madness works especially well because it’s a virtual, statewide competition that generates excitement, friendly rivalry, and wide visibility for companies of all sizes.”

For events at Wonder Gardens, a small historic zoo and botanical gardens in Bonita Springs, Leonard and her team offer intimate behind-the-scenes tours led by animal care and horticulture staff, highlighting historical artifacts and stories from local families.

“These activations require minimal cost but deliver profound emotional impact and VIP-level access,” Leonard says, noting the TLC team elevated this intimate tour concept into a large-scale 90th anniversary celebration for Wonder Gardens, held Jan. 31 – Feb. 1. The same core approach was expanded to include immersive history installations, enhanced lighting, and interactive exhibits, with sponsorship tiers that allowed partners of all sizes to participate, she adds.

For Pilcher’s client, LimeLife by Alcone, which recently celebrated its 10th business anniversary, the approach centered on a modular design philosophy. A larger-than-life “10” installation became an Instagram-worthy photo moment, while a two-sided interactive selfie station invited guests to celebrate the company’s history and future in a fun, engaging manner.

“This approach has adapted easily for different budget levels by scaling the build complexity and interactive elements,” Pilcher explains. “Whether we went big with custom structures or kept it streamlined with modular pieces, the experience has always delivered connection and impact.”

VIP treatment creates lasting impressions

VIP treatment isn’t just about exclusive perks and gifts. When done well, premium experiences can provide benefits throughout the event. According to Auer, MHI’s Premier Club program exemplifies thoughtful VIP experience design. The organization sends swag boxes to VIP attendees before the show, including practical items like water bottles, snacks, and hand sanitizer with the show logo. At the event, Premier Club members enjoy a VIP registration line and a sales-free lounge with complimentary coat and bag check, comfortable seating, charging stations, and meeting rooms. Staff members help VIP attendees navigate the show floor and app, and reserved seating at keynote sessions ensures prime viewing.

The program also includes a valuable post-event component. “After the show, we send our Premium Club members the list of exhibitors that scanned their badge—reverse lead retrieval—to help them remember all the companies they were interested in at the show,” Auer says, adding that this post-event touchpoint transforms the VIP experience from a one-day perk into a lasting business tool.

Instagram-worthy meets mission-driven

Every modern event organizer is tasked with creating shareable moments while still delivering substantive value. Salazar’s approach starts with purpose.

“I always start by asking, ‘Does this element reinforce our mission, and will it spark a real conversation?’ If the answer is ‘yes,’ that’s when we layer in visual appeal,” she explains.

At Manufacture Alabama’s most recent Catalyst, a women-in-industry event held in April 2025 in Huntsville, the team designed

meaningful, mission-aligned backdrops celebrating women in industry, leadership, and workforce pathways.

“They were beautiful and highly shareable, but they also served as conversation starters,” Salazar says. “Women used them as anchors to discuss their own career journeys, mentorship, and the challenges they face. The photo moment brought people in; the substance kept them there.”

Leonard starts with the same question: “What’s the meaning?” At the Short Film Festival, the “Young Filmmaker” area featured highly photogenic elements, including director chairs, custom signage, and curated lighting.

“The real value was emotional,” Leonard emphasizes. “Young filmmakers felt recognized, celebrated, and ‘seen.’ It gave them confidence and a sense of belonging in a traditionally adult-dominated industry. The photos looked fantastic—but the experience made the children feel like stars.”

Pilcher saw this dynamic at work during a direct sales organization conference, where a bold, colorful chair in a New York scene served dual purposes. In addition to providing strong solo photo opportunities, it also created a natural gathering point for teams. “These shared moments felt especially meaningful in a direct sales organization, where community and connection guide much of the culture,” Pilcher says.

The power of recognition and celebration

Intentionally recognizing and celebrating attendees is one of the most powerful yet overlooked engagement tools. “One of our most memorable and unexpectedly impactful activations is the intentional way we honor individuals at our events,” Salazar says. Rather than simply announcing names, her organization shares short stories, quotes, or accomplishments.

“It transforms the room,” she says. “Attendees become emotionally invested, the energy shifts, and people feel connected to one another in a way that’s hard to achieve through standard presentations. The recognition becomes an experience: People cheer, take photos, and continue talking about that moment long after the event ends. It’s a reminder that celebrating people—not just programming—can be one of the most powerful engagement tools we have.”

Leonard saw this at the Short Film Festival, where the team elevated the red-carpet arrival



Blackjack, trivia, and other games provide fun entertainment and encourage attendee engagement at events.

into a multisensory creative zone. Instead of simply walking the red carpet, guests moved through a curated experience with a filmmaker selfie studio, an interactive DJ, and live interview stations mimicking Hollywood press lines. “It elevated the experience from ‘take a photo and move on’ to ‘feel like a filmmaker for the night,’” Leonard explains.

Pilcher observed powerful emotional responses when designing leadership photo opportunities for a conference client. These leaders played active roles in guests’ business growth and training cycles, so meeting them in person was both special and energizing for attendees, she says.

“The results were unforgettable,” Pilcher says. “Guests responded with joy and excitement. Many teared up or jumped into hugs as they connected with the leaders who inspired them.”

Memorable activations

Auer describes a memorable example from the 2024 edition of Expo!Expo!, IAEE’s annual meeting and exhibition, where event services provider GES created a game-show activation around the event’s “gamechangers” theme. Attendees were invited to participate at appointed times, and the activation featured lively hosts and games like Plinko, Spin the Wheel, and Family Feud.

“It helped folks to show up for their appointments—you don’t want to let your

teammates down—and it was very entertaining, so several people walking the show would stop to watch,” Auer says.

Auer recalls another impactful activation, at ProMat 2025, when an exhibitor invited the *Guinness Book of World Records* to document the world’s largest steel cabinet. The exhibitor gave out T-shirts and invited attendees to have their picture taken with it, Auer says. “It was an exact replica of the normal size the exhibitor sells. It brought a lot of publicity and was eye-catching, to say the least. There was a lot of hype before and after the event around their accomplishment.”

Extending the experience beyond the event

The attendee experience doesn’t begin when doors open or end when they close. Pre- and post-event phases offer critical opportunities to deepen engagement and extend value.

Salazar’s pre-event strategy includes storytelling, speaker introductions, social media teasers, and tailored save-the-dates.

“Previewing Catalyst speakers or showcasing the HRSE (HR, Safety and Environmental Conference) agenda early helps attendees feel connected and excited,” Salazar says, noting the team shares photo galleries, sponsor appreciation posts, speaker quotes, and top takeaways after the event. “People want to feel like the event mattered. Extending the life of the event content reinforces the sense of community.”

The most meaningful engagement comes from personalization, Salazar adds. This could include member spotlights or sending attendees a highlight reel that includes them. “Those touches turn a one-day event into an experience with real longevity.”

Leonard builds engagement through storytelling campaigns, which highlight behind-the-scenes preparation and historical milestones, and spotlight participants. She also uses engagement prompts, asking attendees to vote on themes, décor elements, or which film they’re most excited to see. Post-event tactics include personalized thank-you messages and conversational surveys.

“The tactics that create the most meaningful engagement are the ones that make attendees feel like they’re part of the story, not just spectators,” Leonard says.

Pilcher recommends starting the engagement journey early, with simple tactics like social media hashtags or branded frames. “On the post-event side, nothing beats strong recap content,” Pilcher says. “A well-produced highlight reel and a thoughtful follow-up email packed with additional resources give attendees a final touchpoint, reinforcing the message and extending the life of the experience.”

Adapting strategies across formats

As events continue to span in-person, virtual, and hybrid formats, organizers must understand which strategies translate across environments and which work best in specific settings.

Storytelling, pre-event content, attendee spotlights, post-event highlight reels, interactive Q&A, and sponsor features all translate effectively across all event formats.

“These strategies work because they’re rooted in connection, not logistics,” Salazar says.

Certain experiences remain uniquely powerful in specific formats. In-person events are well-suited for sensory engagement, hands-on demos, facility tours, and networking. “When you can shape the environment through sound, scent, visual design, or tactile moments, you immerse attendees in a way that virtual platforms simply can’t replicate,” Pilcher says.

Virtual and hybrid event formats offer distinct strengths: on-demand content libraries, short-form educational videos, and breakout discussions that bring together people from multiple locations. Leonard identifies livestreamed content with backstage camera

Design Moments to Last with Disney Meetings & Events

When success is measured by impact and inspiration, having the right event partner makes all the difference. Disney Meetings & Events unlocks a world of transformational experiences across Disney’s many resorts and theme parks. Disney Meetings & Events creates experiences that last well beyond the meeting. Everything is intentionally designed to connect emotion, environment, and outcomes.

“With Disney Meetings & Events, every moment is an opportunity to create real meetings magic,” says Vanessa Evans, senior public relations manager of Walt Disney World Resort in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. “Our team of Disney Event Architects partners with meeting professionals and executives to bring visions to life, from concept to completion.”

Disney Event Architects work side by side with meeting planners from concept through execution inside the Disney Creative Studio, a reimagined innovation hub where creative designers, technical experts, and production teams collaborate in real time. This integrated approach means that storytelling, space design, entertainment, food, and technology all reinforce the same message and create a seamless flow for attendees.

With access to thousands of props, custom décor, multiple resorts with meeting space, plus the Disney Springs shopping, dining, and entertainment district, the Disney Creative Studio can transform a room or even build an entirely new world to reinforce your meeting



Disney Event Architects partner closely with meeting planners from initial concept to final execution within the Disney Creative Studio.

or event theme. Entertainment elements like live bands, DJs, dancers, and aerialists elevate energy and emotion, while thoughtful branding details, such as illuminated tables and branded chocolates, ensure cohesion throughout the experience.

That philosophy also extends to the venues themselves. At Disney’s Coronado Springs Resort, for example, the setting becomes part of the experience. The Gran Destino Tower’s soaring lobby encourages organic networking, while flexible meeting spaces, boardrooms, and outdoor venues support both large conventions and intimate discussions. Dining experiences like Toledo or Three Bridges Bar & Grill create memorable shared moments that spark conversation long after the event ends. The result is an experience that resonates well beyond the final session. —Helen Jacob

angles and digital engagement rooms as particularly effective in virtual settings.

The key is avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, according to Pilcher. “We tend to approach engagement with the belief that every format deserves its own tailored strategy,” she says. “The experience should always reflect the client’s goals, and those goals often come to life differently depending on the environment.”

The human element

All of these attendee engagement and experiential strategies share a common theme: The most effective attendee experiences prioritize human connection over production spectacle. Whether it’s low-pressure trivia to help introverts network, playful activations, or recognition moments celebrating individual achievements, the focus stays on creating authentic connections between people. The

tactical details may vary by event type, budget, and format, but the underlying principle remains constant. Great attendee experiences happen when you design with empathy, creativity, and a genuine commitment to making every person feel valued, connected, and inspired.

“My most memorable events succeed because they blend the joy of in-person connection with thoughtfully designed creative experiences like custom photo moments, engaging activities, and live performances that invite people to fully participate,” says Pilcher. “Just as important is the behind-the-scenes execution that, when done right, goes unnoticed. Seamless audiovisual, well-run breakout sessions, great catering, and transportation that keeps everything moving smoothly all contribute to an experience people continue to talk about long after the event ends.” 🌸



Courtesy Washington.org

Connection Counts

Strong relationships help planners and CVBs deliver meetings with lasting impact

By Paige Townley

In an industry shaped by constant change, one thing remains consistent: Successful meetings and events are built on strong connections. As expectations rise and destinations compete more fiercely than ever for group business, the relationship between planners and the destinations they choose has taken on new importance. “I absolutely value my relationships with CVBs; they are my

lifeline,” says Christa Hovis, chief event consultant at The Event Diva.

Beyond contracts and logistics, today’s meetings landscape is defined by collaboration, trust, and a shared commitment to delivering valuable experiences and creating memories that remain long after the closing session. “Planners today have a lot more on their plates—they’re expected to deliver bigger, better events with less time and more

pressure,” says Casandra Matej, president and CEO of Visit Orlando. “That’s really changed how we work together. Now, planners lean on destination marketing organizations (DMO) not just for logistics but also for local expertise, creative ideas, and support in making their events stand out. Their need for help navigating the market and finding the right partners is a big reason our relationship keeps evolving.”

Brian Lee/Courtesy Visit Athens



Visit Athens acts as an extension of the planner's team, coordinating site visits, connecting the dots between venues and hotels, and staying involved through contracts and logistics—resulting in a smoother planning process and a more organized meeting for attendees.

Courtesy The Classic Center



The relationship between Visit Athens and the Georgia Association of School Business Officials deepens year after year. After managing housing independently in their first year, the group partnered with Visit Athens in the event's second year to use Passkey, creating a more consistent line of communication and a clearer picture of pickup pacing alongside registration.

Redefining the CVB role

As CVBs adapt to planners' shifting expectations, the relationship between CVBs and planners naturally evolves as well. According to Heather Pilcher, CEO and executive producer of Blue Spark Event Design, CVBs now have a better understanding of what event planners actually do. "The relationship feels much less transactional than it used to," she says. "Whereas requests once centered on singular needs—'I need one entertainer,' or 'I need a meeting room,'—today's planners are designing full-scale experiences, and CVBs have adapted alongside them. While every CVB is different, there's a clear trend toward being more consultative. Many CVB teams now approach events with a 'Let's solve this together' mindset, which makes them feel more like collaborators than information desks. Honestly, it's been a breath of fresh air."

The collaborative approach, Pilcher believes, has been fueled in part by a new generation of CVB professionals with diverse backgrounds in events, hospitality, and production. Many CVB staff have experience in event planning themselves or have worked closely alongside event planners, allowing them to anticipate needs and prepare for different scenarios rather than simply react to issues as they arise. "CVBs are becoming stronger strategic

partners,” Pilcher says. “They understand the language we speak and the nuances behind our questions; years ago, they might not have. Their meeting education is deeper and more aligned with what planners actually need.”

CVBs act as event consultants in small and significant ways. Elyse Worthey-Harris, director of sales and destination services for Visit Athens (Ga.), recalls how a large, recurring statewide conference reshaped how they support groups. The event, primarily attended by students and teachers, relied on the CVB’s Passkey housing platform; still, attendees trying to secure large blocks found the booking experience frustrating. “Technically, our services are just to provide the portal for booking through Passkey and provide those rooms at a discount,” Worthey-Harris says, “but we wanted to improve the booking experience for them.” The CVB reexamined the entire housing process, breaking it down step by step to identify where users struggled with it most. According to Worthey-Harris, the CVB revamped the booking process to offer a more personalized approach for large groups. As she explains, a destination services manager now contacts teachers who need large room blocks in advance to complete the pre-booking before housing opens to the general public. The CVB also adjusted customer support hours to coincide with teachers’ schedules, which extended beyond normal business hours. “It took more than what we normally do as a CVB, but it resulted in a smoother, more successful experience—not only for that group but also for future group bookings,” Worthey-Harris says, noting that a planner’s perception of a CVB or destination can be shaped positively or negatively even before the event based on how well the CVB understands the client’s needs and how the CVB responds to issues.

From services to solutions

Event planners also have a broadening role. Today’s meeting planners are often managing tighter timelines, leaner teams, and rising expectations from both stakeholders and attendees. As a result, planners now expect more from CVBs—partners who not only provide logistics assistance but also help shape the overall experience, turning ambitious ideas into seamless, high-impact events. “A CVB



Planners often rely on CVBs to help identify the best venues and local vendors for their unique needs, including this technology-focused event featuring LED-costumed performers, roaming robots, drones, and AI experiences.

can do things in their city that I can’t,” says Yvette Campbell, meeting broker for Meetings Made Easy, who shares about a particular CVB experience when searching for a large facility for a political event. “My CVB was strategic in helping me find a college that would be able to host that many people and then connect my client with the college to make the event happen,” Campbell adds.

Planners’ changing needs of CVBs involve more than sourcing meeting space. Today’s CVBs are increasingly called on to provide creative problem-solving when

challenges arise—often tapping into CVBs’ own relationships with local partners. Local partnerships played a critical role in a large faith-based group in Galveston, Texas. Bryan Kunz, director of sales and services for Visit Galveston, recalls the planner struggling to secure an appropriate F&B vendor to meet their event needs. “By leveraging community partnerships, the CVB connected the planner with an off-season food program developed by the local school district,” he says. “The planner was thrilled with the solution, and the meeting ultimately benefited our community



A CVB's extended community partnerships play an important role when planners need to create unique event experiences in the host destination, such as recreating the fountain scene from the *Friends* sitcom.



Through her relationship with the local CVB, event planner Christa Hovis connected with partner vendors and suppliers to create a custom gift box for a recent event.

well beyond the hotel and meeting space impact. Not only did their food fulfillment provide off-season work for the Galveston ISD food service staff, generating some additional revenue for the school district, but this group also did several service projects in the community.”

Risk management is another area where planners increasingly lean on CVBs for

guidance, particularly in destinations facing unique external pressures. “These days, in some destinations more than others, a lot of the focus is now on risk management,” says Melissa Riley, senior vice president, convention sales and services, for Destination DC. In Washington, D.C., the occasional government shutdown can present unique and unforeseen challenges to events booked

well in advance. In such situations, Riley says Destination DC works proactively with planners to mitigate everything from attrition concerns to last-minute program disruptions—an approach that proved critical when a financial and insurance conference was scheduled to meet during a shutdown. Just one week out, the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History—a federal building—was no longer viable for the group’s opening reception. The team at Destination DC quickly pivoted to identify another venue that met availability, budget, and needs, ultimately relocating the event to the International Spy Museum, an independent, nonprofit organization. “We had to provide peace of mind and help them communicate to delegates that everything would be okay—that the city is still open, even if the government isn’t,” Riley says.

Even 10 years later, one experience still stands out vividly for Trevor Mulholland, chief event officer at Beyond Fourth, continuing to shape how he views CVB support. The client wanted to recreate the *Friends* intro for their conference kickoff video—fountain, couch, and all. “It felt impossible without having established relationships throughout the city,” Mulholland says, “but the local CVB stepped in, making calls and leveraging connections. They made everything come together.”

For Hovis, having a strong CVB relationship made a last-minute project possible, just 30 days before the scheduled event. “Using my successful relationship with the CVB where the client’s recent national conference was held, I was able to identify and connect with key vendors and suppliers that were partners of the CVB to fast-track a design and project plan,” she explains. With their support, she coordinated with more than eight artisans and vendors to create a custom-curated gift box, complete with unique branded elements and luxe packaging. “It was incredible to have that support in place when the timeline was so tight,” she adds.

Foundations of collaboration

Building the type of relationship that allows CVBs and planners to move quickly, solve unexpected challenges, and deliver seamless experiences doesn’t happen overnight. It requires effort, time, and an honest desire to understand and support one another—all of which start with open and collaborative communication, according to Matej. “It’s about

Open communication between planners and CVBs strengthens relationships, fosters a collaborative spirit, and sparks creativity, all of which lead to better events for both parties.



Courtesy Visit Orlando

working together from the very beginning, sharing ideas, and having open communication regarding their goals and challenges,” she says. “When both sides communicate honestly and listen to each other, it leads to creative solutions and better outcomes for everyone. Our team has cultivated amazing relationships with our clients by continually listening to them so we can remain current on trends and skills, as their needs are always evolving.”

Kunz echoes the importance of open and honest communication. “As in most relationships, open and honest communication is key to success,” he says. “Success comes with listening to clients, anticipating their needs, and being honest with each other about requests, timelines, and deliverables.”

CVBs stress honest feedback throughout the planning process and after the event. “We encourage planners to give us honest feedback about their experience in the planning phase, during the actual event, and after the event,” says Worthey-Harris. “We truly take it to heart, using that feedback to guide our next move, how we promote ourselves, and how we run all of our services. Having an open, honest relationship with planners is incredibly helpful.”

Keep the connection alive

Strong partnerships don’t end when the final session wraps or the last attendee departs. The



This private buyout of the HubCity Spartanburgs baseball stadium, which featured a personal address from the mayor and a fireworks finale, illustrates the strong relationship between the Spartanburg CVB and event planners.

Courtesy Christa Hoels/The Event Dive

relationship between CVBs and planners should continue to grow in the weeks and months afterward through ongoing conversations, helping to identify strengths to build on and gaps to address for the next event. “Staying

connected after the event and laying the groundwork for future opportunities factor into successful longer partnerships,” Kunz stresses.

Worthey-Harris believes keeping the momentum going is the responsibility of the

Photos courtesy: Visit Galveston



Relationships with CVBs and planners are cultivated by connection at boutique conferences and FAM tours, ongoing communication, and personal touches.



CVB. “A CVB needs to follow up and nurture the relationship, making sure the planner knows that just because the event is over, we aren’t gone,” she says. “We want the planner to know that we still consider the CVB as a part of *their* team. We want them to come back and have an equally good experience—or even better—next time.”

Maintaining the connection doesn’t require grand gestures or constant check-ins. In many cases, simple touchpoints make a big impact. “It doesn’t have to be every day or week or month,” Hovis says. “It could be reconnecting at a conference—showing the genuine interest to catch up if you’re attending the same event.”

While large industry events have their place, many planners value the intimacy and

accessibility of smaller conferences, where real conversations can happen. “I’m all about individual relationships,” says Campbell. “I like it when CVBs attend the smaller conferences so they can have one-on-one meetings with planners like me or invite a small group to a breakfast so we can chat individually with them.”

Such intentionality includes FAM tours or personal invitations for planners to see and experience destinations themselves. “I love when CVBs invite planners to their cities,” says Campbell, noting it’s especially nice when the tour invitations aren’t tied to a specific event prospect but instead focus on spending a day or two with the event planner, letting the planner experience all the

destination offers. Campbell adds, “Every familiarization trip I’ve done, I’ve booked in that city afterward.”

Another way CVBs can maintain relationships with planners is by keeping planners in the loop about timely updates—whether it’s a new hotel opening, a virtual site tour, or a notable change in the destination. “I know it can’t happen all the time, but keeping planners in the loop of what’s happening in your city is really valuable,” Hovis says. “Don’t just rely on a generic newsletter that goes out. Reach out with a quick email or call to share something important that’s happening. Planners appreciate that, and you never know how that may spark something.”

Technology has made it easier than ever for planners and CVBs to connect and communicate. “Social media and LinkedIn have made it easier to connect,” Campbell says. “Watch their posts and comment on them. It makes both parties feel good.”

Maintaining connections consistently, beyond the immediate push to bring a meeting to town, creates authenticity and trust. “It’s about continual touchpoints—not just working with a person when you have business, but also working with a person when you *don’t* have business,” Campbell says. “The more touchpoints I have with a CVB, the more we get to know each other. I am more likely to encourage clients to book in cities where I have a good relationship with the CVB, because I know the CVB will take care of the event planner and the event attendees.” 🌸

Partners in Progress

How CVBs and planners are navigating market trends together

By Matt Swenson

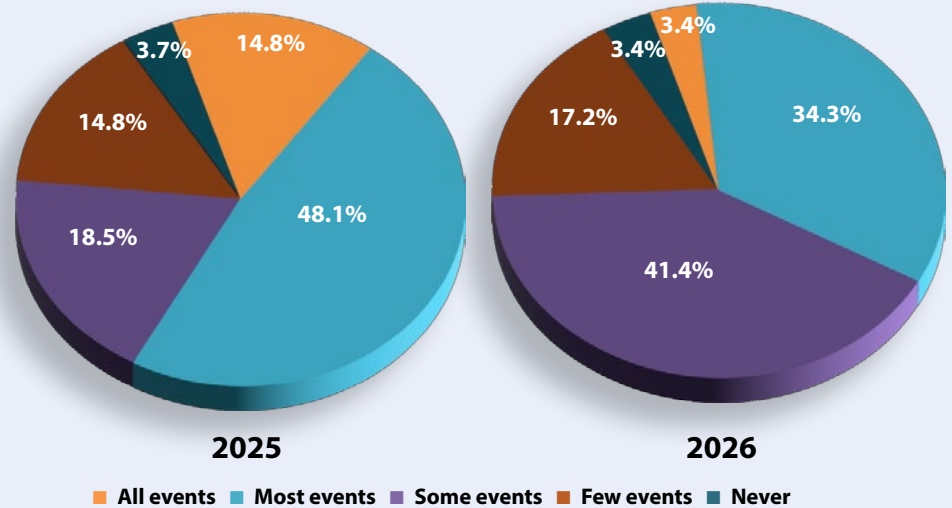
As event planners conceive of events designed to build connections and increase membership and revenue, and as convention and visitors bureaus (CVB) compete for events to fill convention centers, hotel rooms, area restaurants, and local retail stores, relationships have never been more important. Our annual CVB & Planner Relationship Survey reveals significant findings for each segment.

For planners facing high costs and even higher attendee expectations, site selection is increasingly important. Many event organizers are turning toward trusted destinations and staff who have delivered for them in the past. Amid turnover, maintaining existing working relationships can be an advantage for planners and the associations and companies they represent. For their part, CVBs thrive playing the middleman, making important connections and providing information to help shape immersive agendas.

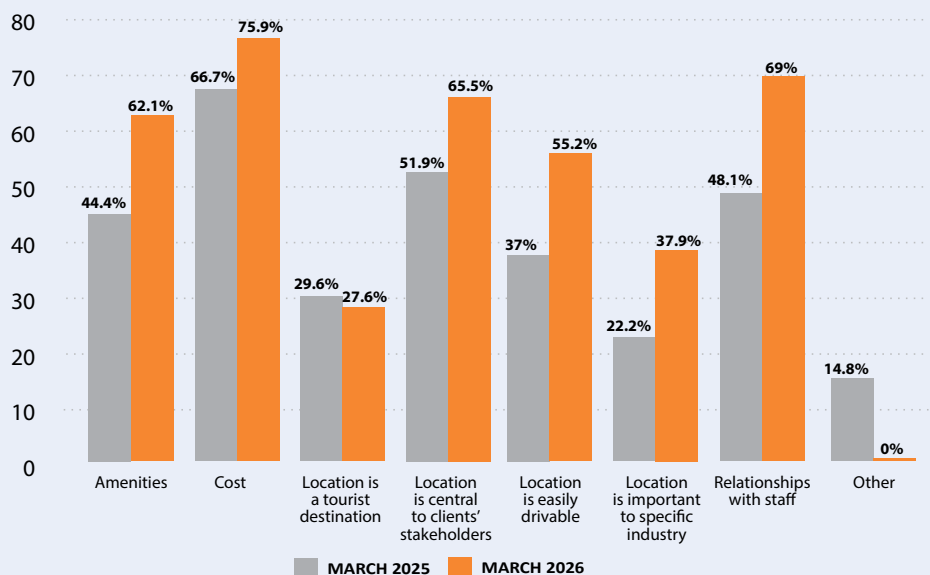
As planners look beyond the hotel ballroom and tradeshow floor, their partnership with CVBs can be a win for both: matching attendees' desire for unique experiences while also showcasing the destination. In addition, a positive experience can lead to repeat convention or conference bookings and to leisure bookings by attendees seeking to enjoy personal travel with family or friends.

ConventionSouth's 2026 CVB & Planner Relationship Survey asked our audience of more than 18,000 planners and supplier professionals to share their insights and experiences on current issues affecting them individually and those common across the industry. A third-party company administered the survey online in December 2025. Responses were collected anonymously to protect participants' privacy and to encourage complete candor in their answers.

Do planners typically use the services of a CVB when planning live events?



What are the main reasons you would go back to a destination and/or specific property?



After a thorough analysis of all responses, the *ConventionSouth* team compiled and calculated the survey results into the summary findings shared in our 2026 report. The results are illustrated with reader-friendly graphs, charts, and direct comments from survey respondents. Among the notable findings of this year’s survey are these positive takeaways: 67.6% of planners indicated they have plans to hold two or more events this year; 45.4% of CVBs reported the same or greater financial results in 2025 than in 2024; and 88.4% of CVB staff were the same size or larger in 2025 than in 2024.

Most encouraging for our focus on relationships, both sides overwhelmingly indicated the CVB-planner relationship has not been negatively affected by common industry issues. As one respondent noted, “Planners and CVBs share the same goal: to deliver a successful, seamless event that supports attendees and the local community.”

Event trends

Despite financial concerns, declining international travel, and other challenges, gathering at events remains a priority for

professionals and other groups. Two-thirds of planners are organizing and executing at least two events in the South. According to the survey, planners are planning an average of 4.9 events in the South in the next 12 months. Of note, 22.3% of planners project to host 11 or more events in the South this year.

The most common types of events being planned are conferences (63.6%), association events (60.6%), corporate meetings (48.5%), and networking/social events (39.4%), followed by trade shows (18.2%) and government meetings (12.1%).

Attendance remains strong, according to the report findings. More than half of planners (51.5%) organized events with more than 100 attendees, and the average attendance at events was 317.

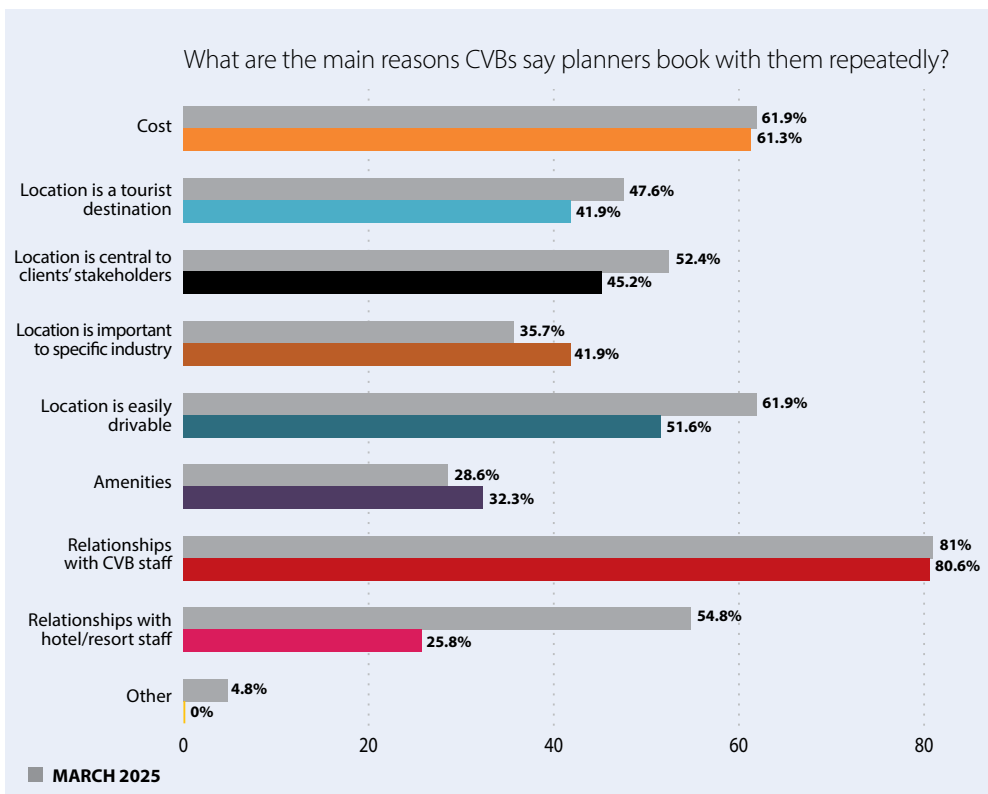
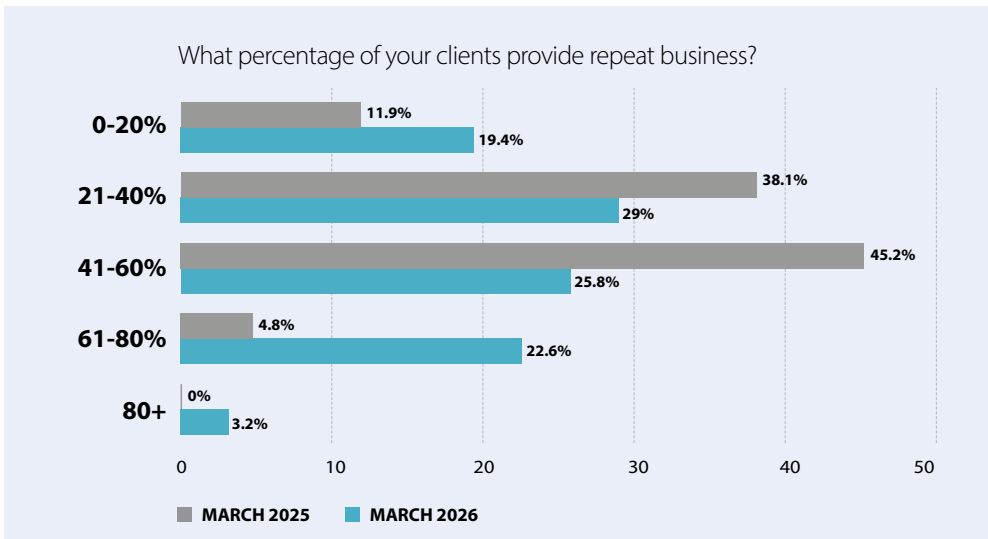
The encouraging news falls in line with Freeman’s *End-of-Year-Trends Recap*, which noted that face-to-face remains the most trusted marketing channel, with in-person event participation holding “remarkably consistent” in 2025. That plays out with 51% of attendees planning to attend two to three events in the next 12 months, according to Freeman.

Factors tipping the scales

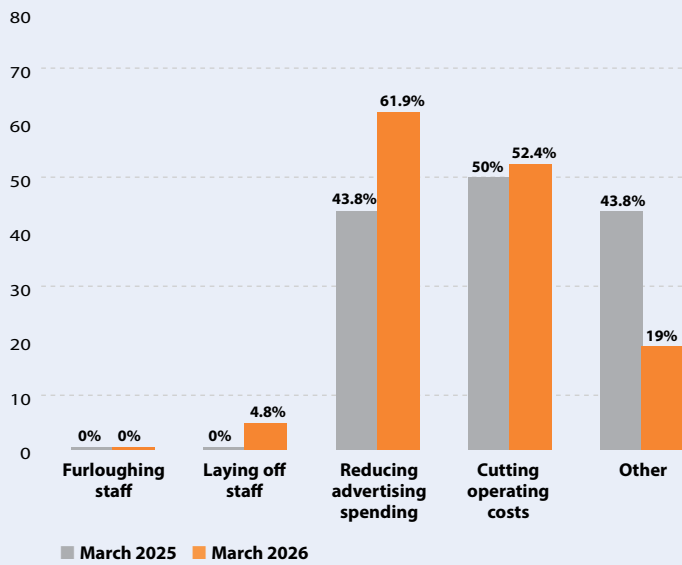
The destination is more than a backdrop for events. Planners are making strategic decisions that align with their business goals. At the root of many site selections are budget considerations, confidence in a CVB’s capabilities, and convenience.

Planners regularly rely upon known quantities. Cost, at 75.9%, is the driving reason planners return to a destination or hotel. Proximity is another important factor in choosing a destination, with 65.5% of planners considering locations central to key stakeholders; 55.2% considering destinations with easy drivability for attendees; and almost 38% considering locations important to specific industries—a 15% increase from the 2025 survey.

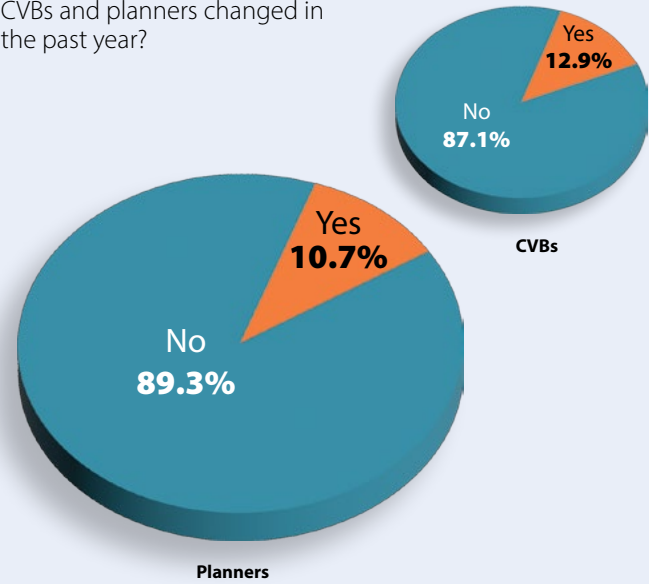
Amenities, at 62.1%, is a chief driver in site selection, as planners seek to create more experiential and memorable events. A city that is a tourist destination sways 27.6% of planners, who can use the appeal to create pre- and post-event tours or try to secure favorable hotel rates for attendees extending their stay as a mini-vacation for themselves and/or their families. Along those lines, 13.8% favor family-friendly destinations.



Of those CVBs that implemented cost-cutting measures, these are the areas in which CVBs reported making cuts:



Has the relationship between CVBs and planners changed in the past year?



Planners’ perspectives

Planners consistently rely on CVBs as a resource for scouting events. In fact, 96.6% reported using CVB services for the live events they produced in 2025.

As one planner noted, “The most effective CVBs position themselves not just as marketers but also as strategic partners—providing operational expertise, data transparency, advocacy, and hands-on support throughout the event lifecycle.”

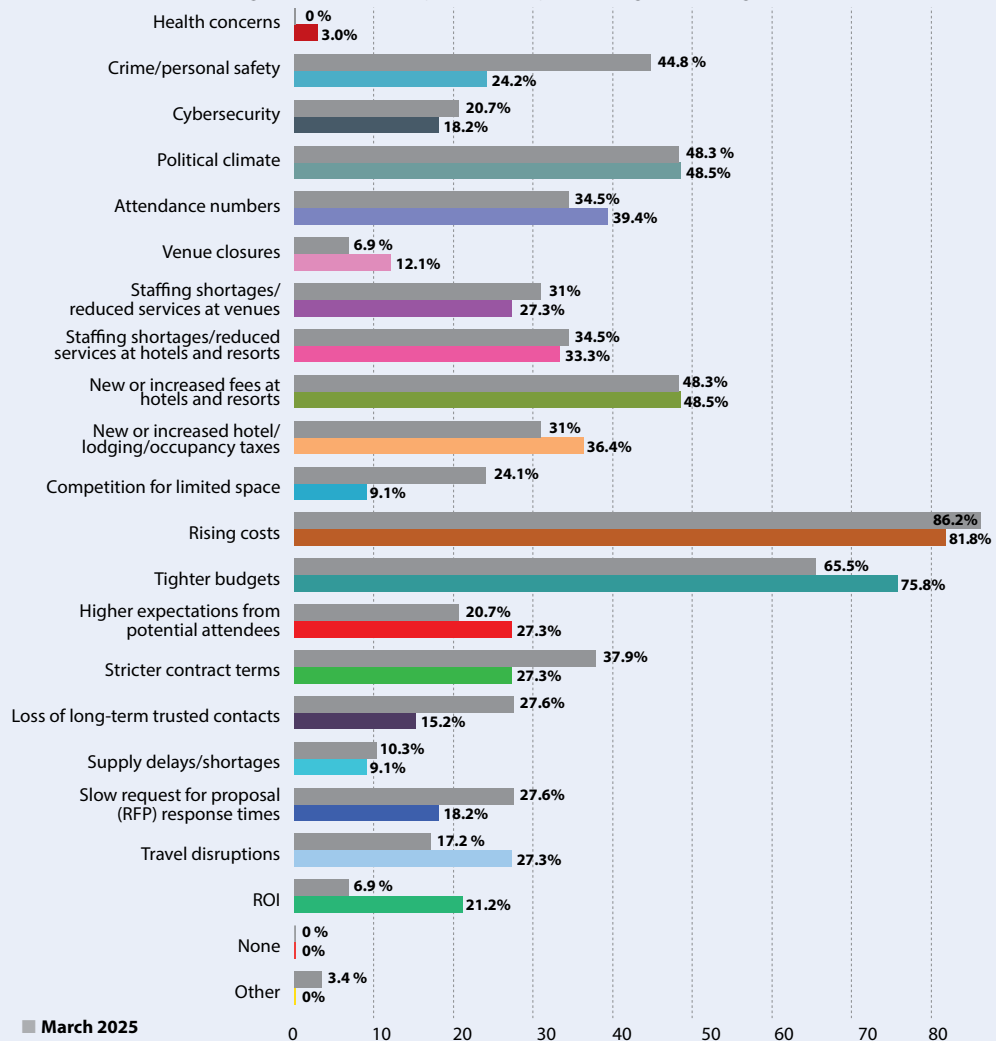
The most commonly used CVB services by planners are RFPs (58.6%), in-person site visits/FAM trips (58.6%), vendor recommendations (55.2%), promotional materials (51.7%), and planning assistance (34.5%).

Planners noted a CVB’s expertise with venues as a valuable resource for creating new experiences for attendees, even for events returning to a destination.

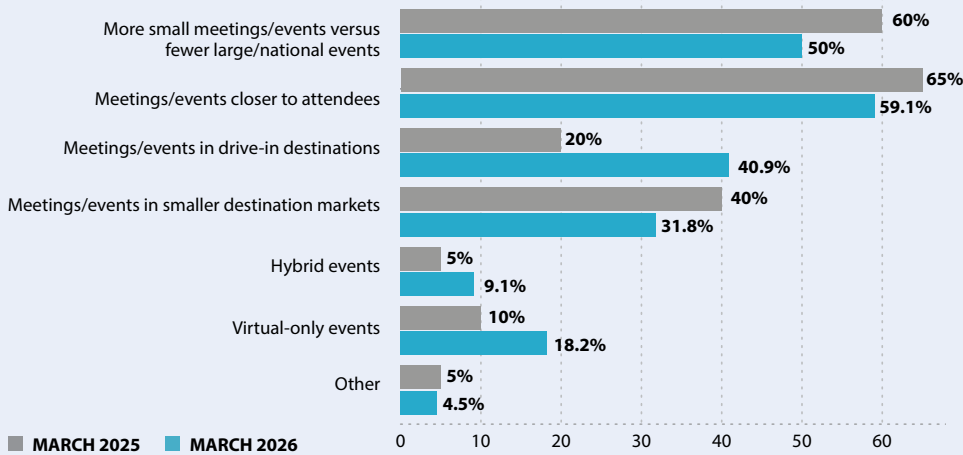
“Help us develop relationships with the hotels,” one planner suggested. “Show us the unique spaces in town or ways to creatively hold meetings, so they’re not the same old thing.”

Additionally, CVB assistance with promotional materials, including microsites, logos, and social media assets, saves planners time and resources, allowing them to focus on other aspects of the upcoming event. “Our budgets are limited, so anything they can provide via marketing materials and attendance boosters that are ready to be used is fantastic,” said a planner. “More plug-and-play helps us all.”

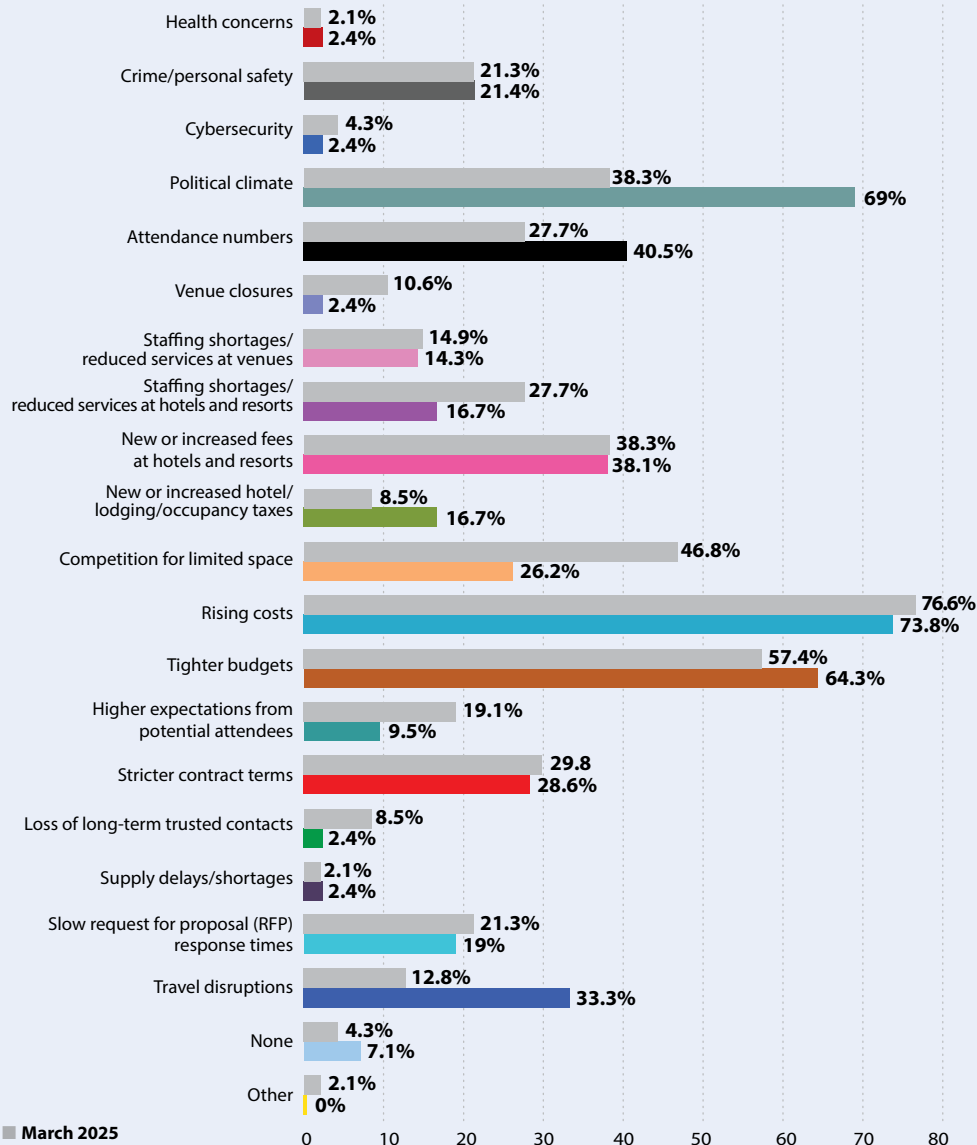
What challenges/concerns are planners experiencing or hearing from clients?



How have rising costs (airline, gas, hotel, F&B, etc.) and/or space scarcity caused you to rethink your meetings/events plans?



What challenges/concerns are CVBs experiencing or hearing from planners?



Adds another planner: “CVBs should have a one-pager for meeting planners about local transportation options for the airport and around town. This is always lacking.”

Relationship trends

Despite the market challenges of 2025, CVBs and planners remain optimistic about their relationship, with 89.3% of planners and 87.1% of CVBs reporting their relationship had not changed in the past year.

As with any type of relationship, both sides agree regular communication helps overcome potential obstacles.

“When planners communicate openly and invite us into the ‘why’ behind their event, CVBs can deliver not just service, but real solutions,” said a respondent from the destination side. “That’s when events become truly memorable and destinations become long-term partners.”

One of the survey’s most encouraging reflections about the industry is only 4.8% of CVBs reported laying off staff due to budget cuts.

That said, venue staffing remains a concern. Three-quarters of planners cited the issue among F&B workers, with 62.5% pointing to reductions in clean-up and set-up staff. One-third of planners said their clients have noted hotel shortages in the past year, and 27.3% commented on reduced staff and services at venues. Both percentages are slightly lower than in the 2025 survey. Additionally, nearly 70% of CVB representatives pointed to a drop among customer service staff, which 50% of planners have also noticed.

To help offset challenges, CVB staff encourage planners to provide as much information as they can regarding attendance, room nights, and must-haves early in the site-selection process.

“Vague details only delay the bid process due to additional research required,” noted a CVB member who responded to the survey.

Respondents from the CVB side are also seeking more time to respond to RFPs. While there is still a time crunch, survey results point to easing the burden. According to responding planners, the peak time to receive proposals is tied at 39.3% between three to six days and one to two weeks. In 2025, more than 75% sought responses in less than a week, with 61.5% specifying between three to six days.

“The most effective CVBs position themselves not just as marketers, but as strategic partners — providing operational expertise, data transparency, advocacy, and hands-on support throughout the event lifecycle. Continuous feedback from planners and investment in people, processes, and technology are essential to closing service gaps and strengthening destination competitiveness.”

Common challenges

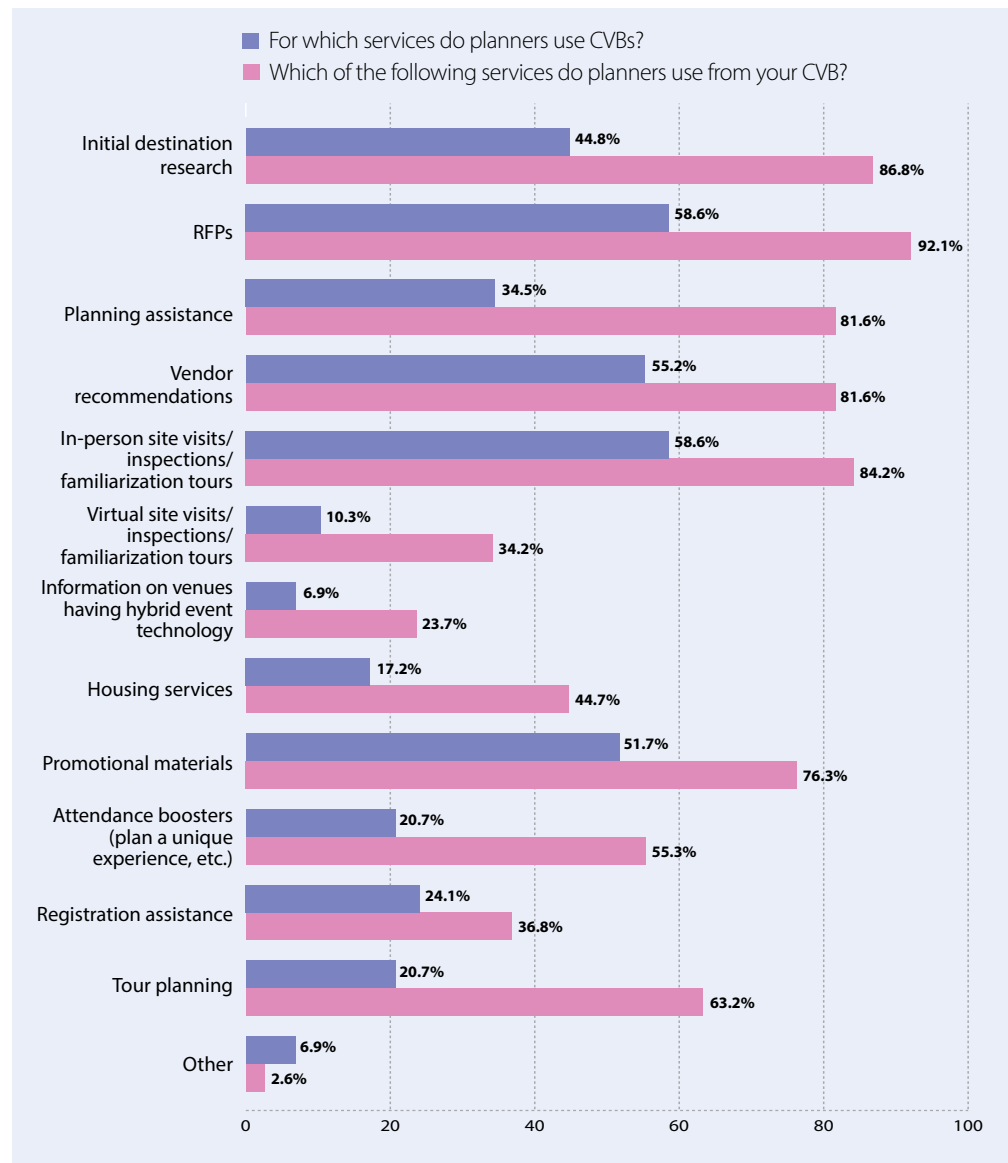
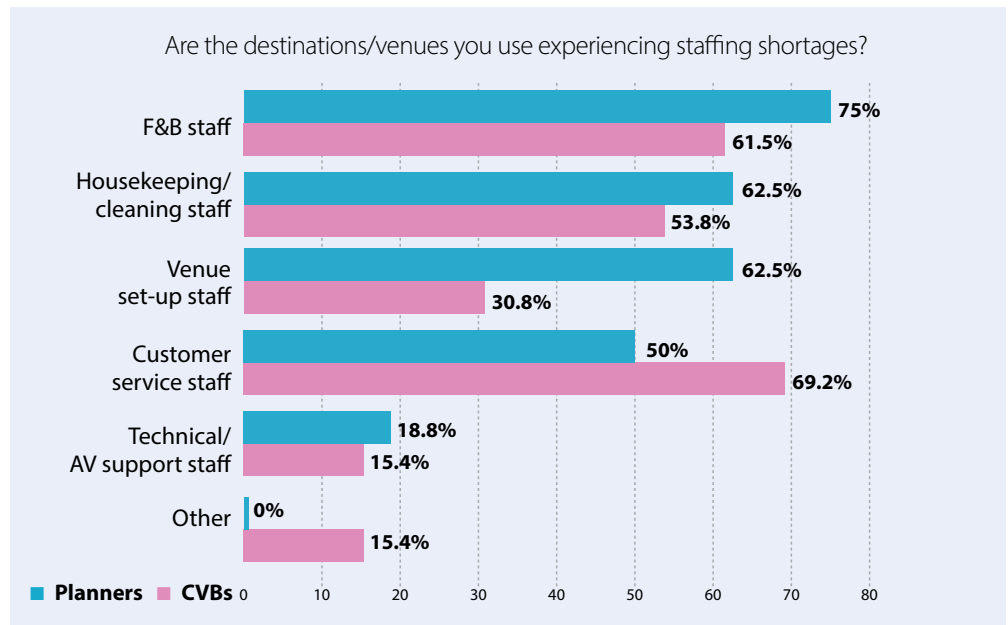
Planning a meeting is never easy. Challenges present themselves in different ways, and planners and destinations are responding with creative solutions.

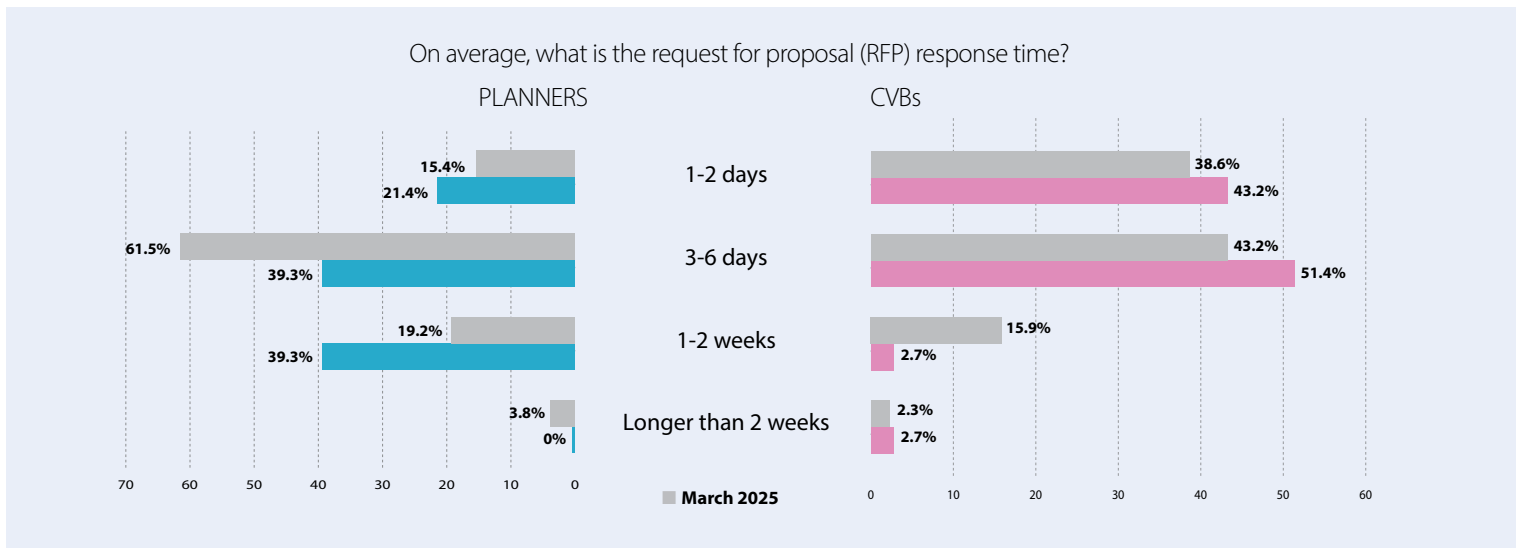
Financial considerations are top of mind in 2026, with planners noting rising costs (81.8%, slightly down from 2025) and tighter budgets (75.8%, a 10% increase from 2025) among the biggest issues this year.

“We are all working with tighter budgets, so it would be great if they would continue to consider this factor,” said one planner who completed the survey. “Attendees want different experiences, so the ability to offer planners various options for entertainment and lodging is appreciated.”

New or increased fees at hotels and resorts remain a concern for 48.5% of planners, roughly the same level as last year. New hotel and occupancy taxes are a concern for 36.4% of planners, up approximately 5% from last year.

Almost half of CVBs (48.8%) have implemented cost-saving measures, including





7 Steps to Successful CVB-Planner Partnerships

Based on comments shared anonymously as part of our annual CVB & Planner Relationship Survey, CVB respondents offer these tips for planners when working with destinations:

1. Share complete information early.

Provide key details up front, including preferred dates, estimated attendance, room requirements, budget parameters, program format, and any special requirements. This allows the CVB to tailor recommendations, check availability, and secure strong proposals from local partners.

2. Communicate priorities clearly.

Share with the CVB exactly which issues are most important, such as walkability, unique venues, service level, price sensitivity, attendee experience, sustainability, etc. This helps CVBs match support and solutions to your vision.

3. Be responsive to follow-up questions.

Quick replies from planners help CVBs proceed

efficiently with hotels, venues, and community partners. Timely communication often leads to better rates and smoother planning.

4. Utilize the CVB as your local resource.

Take advantage of site visits and venue suggestions, transportation support, and community connections.

5. Provide realistic timelines. Sharing your own internal decision timelines and deadlines allows the CVB to coordinate availability, negotiate options, and ensure local partners reserve space and lock rates appropriately.

6. Keep lines of communication open.

CVBs can customize their support and guide partners toward the best fit or adjust as needed if circumstances change.

7. Share post-event insights.

Honest feedback helps CVBs to improve their service for future events.

reduced marketing spending (61.9%), reduced operational costs (52.4%), and reduced services (19%). The efforts appear to have paid off in the bottom line, as 45.4% reported better financial results in 2025 than in 2024; another 40.9% reported steady economic outcomes.

Another positive outcome despite tighter budgets: 72.6% of CVBs reported their staff size has not changed in the past 12 months. In fact, 32% of CVBs expect to expand their staff this year, which aligns with 37.1% of CVBs reporting having experienced staffing shortfalls at venues and destinations. The most

commonly reported staffing shortages were in customer service (69.2%), F&B (61.5%), housekeeping/cleaning (53.8%), and venue set-up (30.8%).

Both CVBs (69%) and planners (48.5%) reported the political climate as a concern, as it has impacted research funds and travel allowances. Attendance is another shared concern of both market segments, as indicated by 40.5% of CVBs and 39.4% of planners. Both sides could experience a boom from the 2026 FIFA World Cup events in Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Miami, and Kansas City, Mo.

Additional challenges noted by CVBs include rising costs (81%), tighter budgets (64.3%), competition for available space (40.5%), and increased demand for leisure travel (21.4%). However, according to 83.3% of CVBs, these challenges have not negatively impacted their relationships with planners.

2026 projections

Rising costs and service challenges will impact where planners hold their meetings this year.

To combat these issues, 59.1% of planners indicated they are moving events closer to attendees. More than double the number of planners—40.9% in 2026, as compared to 20% in 2025—are eyeing events in drive-in destinations. Additionally, 50% of planners are relying on more small events rather than fewer large/national conferences and conventions.

Planners continue to explore different event options, with 18.4% noting they plan to host virtual-only events in 2026—a 10% increase from last year. Another 15.5% of planners are incorporating hybrid elements into their in-person events.

More than ever, planners are counting on CVBs to help shoulder the load, as pressure mounts to reach goals with less time to execute events.

“What planners want CVBs to understand most is that today’s environment is defined by compressed timelines, limited resources, higher expectations, and increased accountability,” as one planner shared. “CVBs that respond with flexibility, transparency, data, and operational support become trusted strategic partners rather than promotional intermediaries.” 🌟

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Forrest Clontz/Courtesy Experience Columbia SC



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Experience Columbia SC

Danna Lilly
Vice President

Danna Lilly is an accomplished tourism professional with more than 30 years’ experience in the industry and serves as the vice president of the region’s CVB, Experience Columbia SC.



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Statesville encourages you to “think outside the convention center” by taking advantage of the area’s vibrant surroundings. Imagine attendees stepping into a world of shopping, dining, and outdoor activities, all within walking distance.

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Located downtown, the event center places attendees in a charming, walkable area filled with local boutiques, cafés, and restaurants. Downtown blends historic charm with modern amenities, offering a unique experience large convention centers cannot match.

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Testimonials: “I wanted to follow up and send a sincere ‘thank you’ for all your help making the Golden Leaf Kickoff event a success! Your responsiveness throughout the process gave me great confidence. We received great feedback and are very happy with our experience in Statesville.”— Ellen Chilton, NC Chamber

“Thank you for your help with our All-Dealer Conference. The whole staff was incredibly kind. We look forward to partnering with you and the civic center in the future.” — Troy, Pineview Team

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Statesville Convention & Visitors Bureau

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Meetings Made to Shine in El Paso, Texas

Courtesy Visit El Paso



a backdrop of sunshine and desert landscapes, the Sun City offers distinctive venues that feel authentic and refreshingly unexpected. From modern convention spaces to unique offsite settings, El Paso provides the flexibility planners need to design sessions that engage and energize attendees.

Beyond the meeting room, El Paso elevates every agenda with exceptional cuisine, attentive service, and a culture rooted in hospitality. Competitive costs allow planners to stretch their budgets further—enhancing programming, experiences, and overall impact without compromise. Attendees enjoy a destination that blends outdoor adventure, rich history, and a rich culinary scene, creating memorable moments before and after each session.

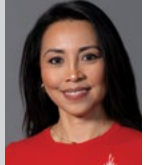
Easy access, seamless logistics, and a collaborative local community make planning in El Paso straightforward and stress-free.

Here, meetings are more than events ; they're experiences, thoughtfully made to inspire ideas, spark collaboration, and leave a lasting impression long after the final session ends. 🌵

Visit El Paso

Valerie Garcia
Director of Sales

At Visit El Paso, I'm proud to champion our city, connecting planners to a destination where vibrant culture, warm hospitality, and seamless execution help bring standout meetings and events to life.



915-637-6032

vgarcia@destinationelpaso.com

VisitElPaso.com/Meeting-Planners

Meeting planners looking for a destination that delivers both inspiration and value will find El Paso made for meaningful connections and standout events. Set against

El Paso
MADE
FOR *Gatherings!*

Host your next meeting in El Paso, the Boot Capital of Texas—With a modern convention center, downtown hotels, vibrant dining, culture, and entertainment options, El Paso is made for memorable meetings.



Visit EL PASO
visitelpaso.com

a City of Makers!

SEE YOU IN *El Paso*
SMALL MARKET MEETINGS CONFERENCE 2026



El Paso Convention Center

Connect with our Director of Sales:

Valerie A. Garcia | 915.637.6032

vgarcia@destinationelpaso.com

Corporate Retreats Feel Effortless at Kent Island Resort

Courtesy Kent Island Resort



At Kent Island Resort, corporate gatherings move beyond boardrooms and ballrooms into an environment designed for clarity, connection, and elevated hospitality.

Set along the water yet removed from everyday distractions, Kent Island Resort offers a refined retreat setting where teams can meet with purpose and gather with ease. Our historic manor house, modern meeting spaces, and expansive outdoor grounds provide flexibility for leadership

retreats, strategy sessions, client entertainment, and company celebrations—without the rigid feel of traditional conference venues.

Meeting planners appreciate the simplicity of hosting everything in one place. From thoughtfully designed meeting rooms and curated culinary experiences to overnight accommodations and teambuilding opportunities, every detail is handled with care. Guests can transition seamlessly from productive sessions to relaxed networking over chef-driven meals or fireside conversations.

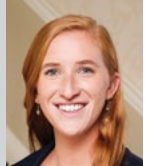
What truly sets Kent Island Resort apart is the atmosphere. The pace slows, creativity flows, and teams reconnect in a setting that feels intentional rather than transactional. Whether planning a midweek offsite, executive retreat, or corporate celebration, Kent Island delivers a balance of professionalism and warmth that leaves a lasting impression.

Conveniently located within easy driving distance of major mid-Atlantic markets, Kent Island Resort offers the rare combination of accessibility and escape—making it an ideal destination for companies seeking meaningful, memorable gatherings. 🍷

Kent Island Resort

Carlie DuLac
Business Development Manager

Carlie DuLac partners with meeting planners to create seamless corporate retreats and events, bringing a personalized approach, attention to detail, and a passion for crafting memorable group experiences.



410-604-8227
cdulac@kentislandresort.com
KentIslandResort.com



Meet With Intention. Gather With Ease.

At Kent Island Resort, corporate retreats move beyond boardrooms into a setting designed for focus, connection, and ease. Set along the water, our all-in-one destination offers inspired meeting spaces, chef-driven dining, overnight accommodations, and outdoor settings that invite meaningful conversation.

From executive offsites to corporate celebrations, Kent Island Resort delivers a refined balance of professionalism and warmth teams remember—and return to.



www.kentislandresort.com | 410.643.5757
500 Kent Manor Dr. Stevensville, MD 26666

Peachtree City, Ga.: Meetings Made Easy

Just 25 minutes south of the world's busiest airport, Peachtree City, Ga., gives meeting planners the one-two punch: big-city access without big-city headaches. A quick drive down I-85 (or I-75, if you're arriving from the east) lands your group in a retreat-like setting, where more than 100 miles of multi-use paths weave beneath a dense canopy of trees, and every turn feels a step farther from the downtown hustle. It's this blend of serenity and practicality that has earned Peachtree City repeated nods as one of Georgia's safest, most livable communities, and why it's tailor-made for small-market meetings that still demand big-league amenities.

Meeting spaces that scale to you

Full-service conference hotels (2): Together, the Hilton Peachtree City Hotel & Conference Center and the neighboring Crowne Plaza deliver more than 90,000 square feet of flexible meeting and exhibit space. Expect pillar-free ballrooms with ceiling heights up to 18 feet, divisible breakouts, sunny pre-function corridors, full audiovisual production, and seasoned teams who view last-minute dietary tweaks as sport, not stress.

Premier select-service hotels (7): These properties cover every price point. Think nationally known flags with loyalty perks, complimentary breakfast, walkable dining, plus independent hotels where your VIPs can enjoy their stay in a relaxing atmosphere.

CAF Airbase Georgia: If you're searching for a keynote setting that sparks social shares, look no further than our resident World War II aviation museum. The 12,000-square-foot hangar easily seats 500 for dinner under the wings of a Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless or the Fairchild PT-19A that once trained the Tuskegee Airmen. Add a sunset ride in an open-cockpit trainer, and your closing reception becomes unforgettable.

Taste & toast after the agenda

Post-session networking has never felt so effortless. Within a five-mile radius, you will find 100+ eateries, many with patios that stretch the outdoor season well into late fall. Sip craft IPAs at Line Creek Brewing Co., reserve a private meeting room, enjoy cornhole, and bring in a catered dinner..



Courtesy Visit Peachtree City

Only-in-Peachtree City experiences

A successful program is more than sessions; it's the moments attendees remember long after the PowerPoint fades. Visit Peachtree City curates activities that showcase our laid-back, outdoors atmosphere while bonding teams and boosting sponsorship value:

Golf-cart scavenger hunts: Navigate 100+ miles of multi-use paths, solving clues that lead to lakeside selfies, nature areas, and the city's iconic piano-key spillway bridge.

Recess at Royal Lane Social: Duck-pin bowling, vintage arcade cabinets, and craft cocktails guarantee everyone—from interns to board chairs—finds their competitive groove.

Local film-site tours & Trilith Studios: Ride in style and see filming spots from *The Walking Dead*, *Stranger Things*, *Sweet Home Alabama*, *Fred Green Tomatoes*, and the Marvel Universe.

Seamless support, compliments of Visit Peachtree City

Planning solo? Wearing three hats? We've got you. Visit Peachtree City is a one-stop extension of your staff, offering complimentary services that save both time and budget:

- Site searches and comparative proposals
- RFP distribution and bid collection
- Room-block negotiation
- Offsite venue sourcing and transportation logistics, including golf-cart fleets and airport transfers
- Dining maps and mobile-friendly path guides

Because we book one meeting at a time, our partners remember every name on your VIP list. It's hospitality at a human scale, delivered with the polish of a top-tier convention district.

Hotel rates remain friendly, yet your keynote speaker can still land at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport (ATL) and be on stage—with a latte in hand—within the hour.

Ready to elevate your next meeting?

Swap the hustle of downtown for skyline-free horizons and lakeside sunsets. Whether you're planning a 50-person strategic retreat or a 400-delegate trade symposium, Peachtree City offers the flexibility, flavor, and fun that keep attendance high and surveys glowing.

Let's get started. We'll handle the logistics; you'll take the credit. After all, meetings here feel effortless—yet anything but ordinary. 🍷

Visit Peachtree City


**Sarah Tarnowski, STS
Sales Manager**

With more than 13 years in the tourism industry and collectively 30 years in sales, Sarah prides herself on building relationships and ensuring the best possible experience for clients.



678-364-6949
sales@visitpeachtreecity.com
VisitPeachtreeCity.com



 Crowne Plaza

Explore at Your Pace
Just 25 minutes from Hartsfield-Jackson
Atlanta International Airport.



Start planning today 



OUR FACILITIES

- Nine hotels
- Two hotels with conference centers
- Over 1,000 rooms
- 90,000+ square feet of meeting space
- Unique meeting venues
- Close proximity to Atlanta's airport

WHY PEACHTREE CITY?

- Easy access to major interstates
- Complimentary services and value-added extras for meeting planners
- 100+ miles of multi-use paths
- Over 100 restaurants
- One of the safest cities in Georgia



www.visitpeachtreecity.com

Your Louisiana Adventure Awaits: Visit Kenner!

From the bottom to the top, Kenner, La., is 5 miles long. But in between those 5 miles? Well, let's just say there's a lot of Louisiana in the middle of that.

Kenner is sandwiched between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, a southeast Louisiana landscape bursting with culture, history, and food!

If you've ever flown into southeast Louisiana, odds are you probably landed in Kenner at the sparkling Louis Armstrong International Airport. With more than 40 vendors, including boutiques, restaurants, and bars beloved in New Orleans, the options are a welcoming sign, confirming you're bound to experience a taste of Louisiana before you ever pick up your luggage and head out our airport doors.

You can get wherever it is you're going if you start and end your Louisiana adventure here. Kenner is only 14 miles from New Orleans and its alluring historic French Quarter and 69 miles from Baton Rouge.

Hungry? With a rich local and international restaurant scene, there's an array of eateries sure to delight any palette or Louisiana craving. Start your mornings with beignets at Café Du Monde or nestle in at a local diner, because here the journey always lovingly begins and ends with ridiculously wonderful food. We take pride in everything we do here. Our goal is to make you fall in love with Louisiana and truly experience this charming place, like the locals do. Eat (and drink) your way through fresh seafood, po-boys, baked masterpieces, traditional Cajun dishes, authentic international fare, perfectly shaved snowballs, and endless culinary creations from all parts of the world without leaving Kenner.

With festivals to fishing piers, acres of immaculate putting greens, and even a Space Station, there's plenty to do throughout the year in Kenner. Visit during Mardi Gras season to experience the purple, green, and glittery gold magic while watching the Krewe of Isis roll through or take in truly local "hometown" parades like the Driftwood Neighborhood Parade, the oldest in Louisiana, during Mardi Gras season. Take a turn at some sand volleyball at Coconut Beach, the largest sand sports complex in the United States—boasting 100,000 square feet of outdoor man-made beach, a full restaurant, and bar—where you



can feel the amazing breeze roll through from Lake Pontchartrain and hang with the local krewe. Ready to roll the dice, play some slots, or make a bet? Kenner has you covered. Visit the exquisite new land-based Treasure Chest Casino to explore endless chances to win, along with unique restaurants and bars. There's truly something for everyone.

The Pontchartrain Center, a 4,600-seat multipurpose arena, always has something going on, from Touch-a-Truck, offering up-close glimpses of helicopters, heavy-duty equipment, ambulances, etc., to bead shows, book shows, dinosaur encounters, and more. Kenner is also home to the brand-new 35,000-square-foot Game On Social Hub, boasting a spectacular laser tag arena, ax throwing, a full restaurant, bar, VIP interactive bowling, an arcade, and much more.

Venture closer to the Mississippi River side of things and see a show at Rivertown Theater, explore the Planetarium, MegaDome Cinema and Space Science Complex, shop in enchanting local boutiques like Tin Roof Boutique, take a stroll around the Historic Rivertown District, or eat fresh pasta from Gendusa's. Don't miss an up-close view of LaSalle's Landing; located at the southernmost end of Williams Boulevard, at the foot of the levee, this was the site of the first boxing match. Keep an eye out for tugboats and water vessels cruising down the mighty Mississippi. Kenner also has a dog park, the only skate

park in Jefferson Parish, and Louisiana's first inclusive park, known as Misquez Park.

History and art abound in Kenner. With artscapes down the major thoroughfares of Vintage Drive and Williams Boulevard, you'll be able to drive by or walk around massive art that's been made and installed by local artists.

Annual events like the Food Truck Festival, Hispanic Heritage Festival, Crawfish Cook-Offs, Music and Movies in the Park, Saturdays in the Sand, and more, locals and visitors alike celebrate the spirit of Louisiana. Even in December, parades roll through with Mr. and Mrs. Claus arriving to launch Rivertown into the holiday season, snow and all.

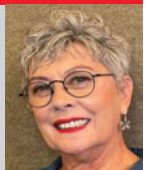
From the River to the Lake, adventure awaits you and your whole krewe in Kenner. We can't wait to be part of your Louisiana adventure.

Simply: Visit Kenner! 🍷

Visit Kenner Convention and Visitors Bureau

Carolyn Barrett, CGMP, CHSP
Executive Director

Experience the difference at Visit Kenner. Carolyn will handle all the details, from start to finish!



504-468-4094
carolyn@visitkenner.us
VisitKenner.us

When You Want Convention Ease, Think Kenner!

EASY ACCESS • EASY PLANNING • EASY ON YOUR BUDGET

Visit
KENNER
FROM THE RIVER TO THE LAKE

Pontchartrain Center — Over 46,000 square feet of continuous space, drive in capabilities, six breakout rooms and 9,700 square feet of pre-function space.



Call us at **504-468-4094** or go to **VisitKenner.us** for more information.

LOUISIANA
Feed Your Soul.

ExploreLouisiana.com

Tupelo, Miss.: Positively the Place for Meetings



Courtesy Tupelo CVB

Hotel Tupelo

Tupelo, Miss., is positively the place for your next conference or corporate meeting. Where functionality meets Southern charm, Tupelo delivers a seamless experience for planners and attendees alike. With a robust network of venues, trusted local partners, and distinctive attractions, this vibrant city is redefining what it means to host a successful and unforgettable event.

The Tupelo Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) serves as a one-stop resource for planners. The CVB's sales manager offers personalized assistance, complimentary site visits, and expert local insight to help match each event's unique goals with the perfect space. Whether you're organizing an intimate leadership retreat, a regional training session, or a full-scale convention, Tupelo offers more than 22,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, supported by more than 2,200 hotel rooms and more than 200 restaurants. The result is a destination that's easy to plan, navigate, and enjoy.

Accessibility is another major advantage. Conveniently located at the crossroads of Interstate 22, U.S. Highway 45, and the scenic Natchez Trace Parkway, Tupelo is just 90 minutes from Memphis International Airport (MEM). For added convenience, Tupelo Regional Airport (TUP) offers daily regional flights to and from Nashville and Dallas, making travel smooth and efficient for attendees arriving from across the country.

Tupelo is more than just a place to meet; it's a place to connect. The city's culture, music,

and history create natural opportunities for shared experiences that strengthen relationships and elevate events. Host a memorable welcome reception at the Elvis Presley Birthplace and Museum, where the "King of Rock 'N' Roll" was born, and give attendees a story they'll be talking about long after the closing session. For a more casual offsite gathering, Queen's Reward Meadery, Mississippi's first and only meadery, offers a relaxed, creative atmosphere perfect for networking and conversation.

Looking ahead, Tupelo continues to invest in unique offerings for groups. The Chickasaw Heritage Center, scheduled to open in early 2027, will add a truly distinctive venue option. Accessible from the Natchez Trace Parkway, the interpretive center will tell the Chickasaw story from a uniquely Chickasaw perspective, providing an unmatched, enriching cultural experience.

Dining is a key part of the Tupelo experience. The city's culinary scene is fueled by creativity and tradition, offering everything from upscale Southern cuisine to international flavors. With more than 200 options, your attendees can eat their way through the city and still have more to explore, ensuring every palate is satisfied.

Fill downtime by shopping three distinct shopping districts, exploring centuries of history along the Natchez Trace Parkway, or participating in the All Shook Up: Elvis' Tupelo Experience, a fun and interactive passport program that guides guests to 21 Elvis-related sites throughout the city.

Completing the tour earns visitors a free #MyTupelo pennant, a unique memento to remember the journey.

Lodging options are equally diverse, from boutique hotels to trusted national brands. Hotel Tupelo, located in the heart of Downtown Tupelo, offers 79 stylish rooms and suites infused with local flavor, perfect for business travelers who appreciate thoughtful design and walkable downtown charm.

Tupelo isn't just a place to meet; it's a place to be inspired. With its combination of Southern hospitality, innovative meeting spaces, and truly one-of-a-kind experiences, Tupelo invites you to imagine what's possible when your next conference goes beyond the agenda. The city's genuine dedication to service ensures every event is a success.

Start planning today at tupelo.net and discover why Tupelo is positively the place for meetings that matter. 🍷

Tupelo CVB

Jan Pannell Sales Manager

Jan loves the hospitality industry and has been inviting guests to Tupelo for more than a decade. She works closely with meeting planners to find the right fit for groups of all sizes.



662-841-6521
jpannell@tupelo.net
Tupelo.net/Meetings

Cadence Bank Arena and Conference Center

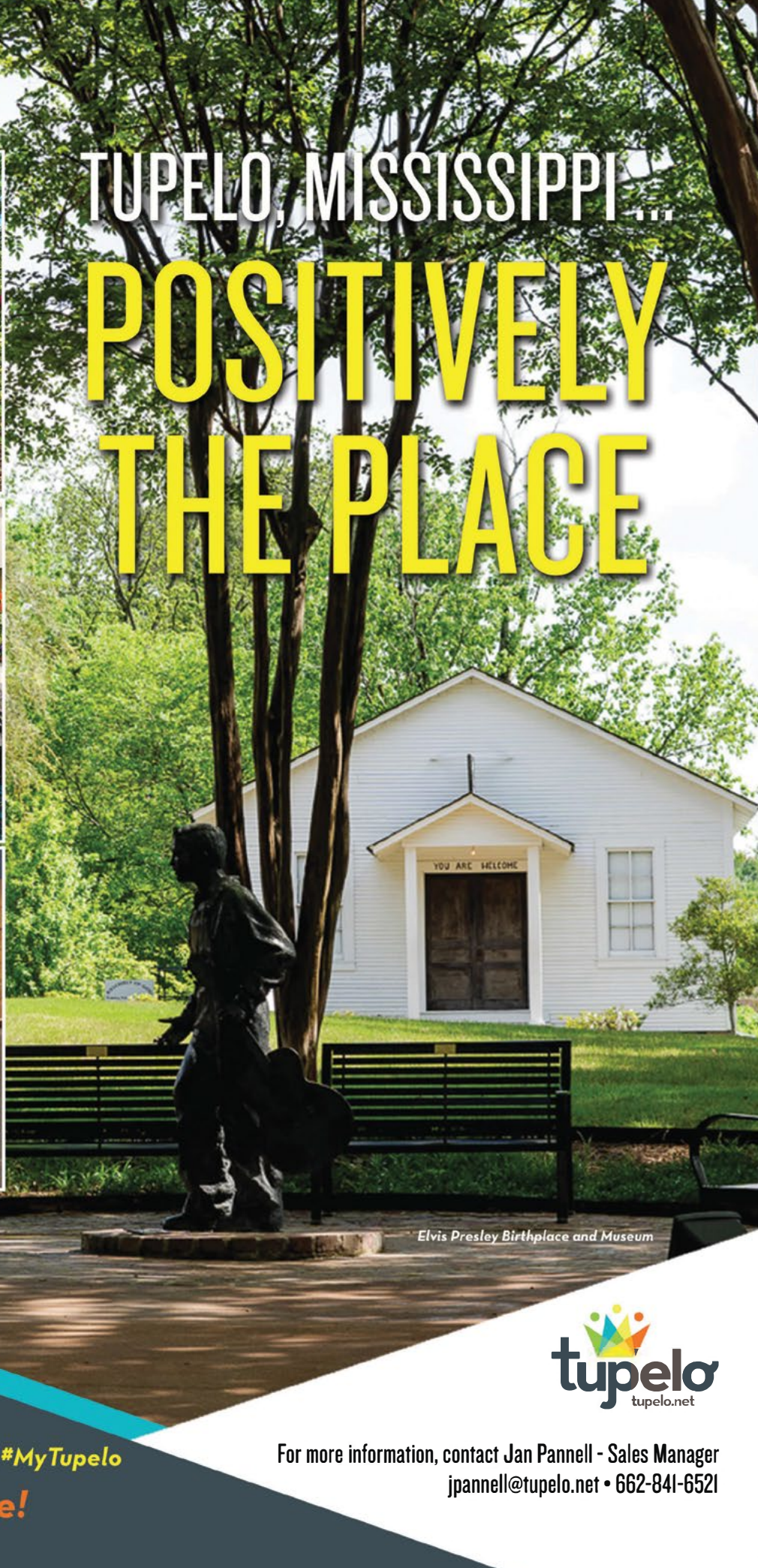
Mark Hudson Sales Manager

Mark Hudson has more than 35 years of experience and 5 years of dedication to the Cadence Bank Arena and Conference Center. When he's not selling the space, you will find him on his back porch with a glass of wine and his beloved dog, Walker.



662-841-6573
mark@cb-arena.com
CB-Arena.com

TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI ... POSITIVELY THE PLACE



Elvis Presley Birthplace and Museum

From 22,000 square feet of meeting space to one-of-a-kind off-site venues, **TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI**, is positively the place to turn your next meeting into a legendary success! **#MyTupelo**

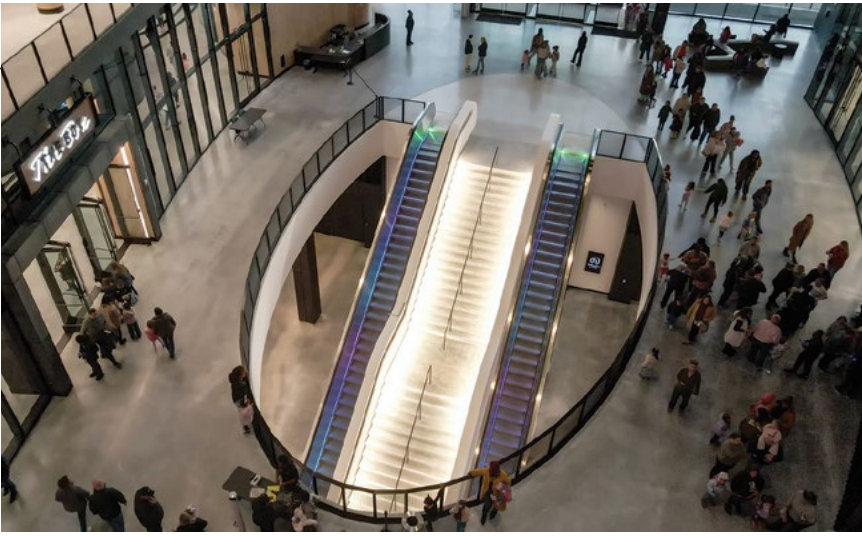
Imagine what you can do here!



For more information, contact Jan Pannell - Sales Manager
jpannell@tupelo.net • 662-841-6521

Trilith LIVE: Your All-in-One Destination for World-Class Events

Courtesy, Trilith LIVE



Located in the Town at Trilith, south Metro Atlanta's premiere creative community, Trilith LIVE is a fully customizable, next-generation, multipurpose venue. It's equipped to host everything from corporate events, conventions and tradeshows to concerts and live audience productions.

Spanning more than 530,000 square feet, Trilith LIVE features a state-of-the-art theater with seating for up to 3,000 guests. The facility also includes two 25,000-square-foot sound stages, two 5,000-square-foot insert stages, and more than 150,000 square feet of support space.

Additional amenities range from greenrooms and broadcast-ready infrastructure to flexible

meeting rooms configured for banquets, classrooms, or breakout sessions. The venue is also home to a luxury cinema, a 730-space parking deck, and a 51,000-square-foot outdoor plaza, perfect for conference functions and activations. With onsite catering, a Marriott Guesthouse Hotel, and retail and dining close by, Trilith LIVE seamlessly delivers a full-service, immersive experience.

This premium event space was designed to offer both scale and flexibility, providing meeting planners with the tools to create standout experiences in one easy-to-access location. Created for leaders and innovators, Trilith LIVE was built to inspire. 🍷

Trilith LIVE

Matt McClain, CVP Executive Director & General Manager

Matt McClain brings two decades of experience in event and venue management to Trilith LIVE. A Georgia native, he lives in Fayetteville with his family.



470-479-7784
mmccclain@trilithlive.com
TrilithLive.com

BUILT FOR BOLD

Located in South Metro Atlanta, Trilith LIVE offers a **fully tailorable venue** with theater capacity for **up to 3,000 guests**, 150,000 sq. ft. of support space, and **flexible meeting rooms** — perfect for **off-sites, conventions, and more**. With on-site catering, parking, and a full-service Marriott Guesthouse Hotel, it's **everything your event needs**, all in one place.

THINKING.



Theater venue capacity up to 3,000



Tailorable convention spaces



Located in South Metro Atlanta



TRILITH LIVE
BUILT TO INSPIRE

Meet in Florida's St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches

Courtesy St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches



With 42 miles of scenic Atlantic coastline, an array of extraordinary hotels and resorts, legendary golf, and a vibrant cultural scene, you won't have to work hard to motivate your team for a meeting or group getaway in St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches.

Florida's Historic Coast offers a seamless blend of Old World charm and modern sophistication, where centuries-old landmarks meet cutting-edge venues, and every gathering draws inspiration from the setting itself. Whether you're hosting a small executive retreat, a high-powered corporate meeting, or a memorable incentive trip, local experts will make planning effortless, ensuring every detail is an exercise in excellence, surprising and delighting your attendees at every turn.

Located just south of Jacksonville and easily accessible from major airports, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches offer convenience without compromise. Groups can choose from an impressive collection of venues, including

oceanfront resorts, elegant golf clubs, historic inns, and cultural landmarks that lend a sense of authenticity and history to every event. Imagine hosting a reception in a centuries-old courtyard, a dinner overlooking the Atlantic, or a teambuilding outing on a championship golf course designed by legends of the game.

Beyond the boardroom, your attendees will find endless ways to recharge and connect. Explore the charming brick streets of the nation's oldest city, sample fresh coastal cuisine at world-class restaurants, or unwind on miles of pristine shoreline. Art galleries, live music, museums, and local festivals add a rich cultural layer, keeping the experience fresh and inspiring.

With a temperate climate year-round and a reputation for warm Southern hospitality, St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches make every group feel welcome and every event unforgettable.

When it comes to creating a meeting that motivates, inspires, and endures in memory, it's hard to imagine a better destination. We've been

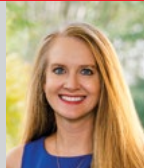
welcoming guests for more than 450 years, and we welcome the opportunity to make your next event one for the history books.

For more information or to start planning your next group event, visit MyFloridaMeetings.com. 🍷

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches

Jennifer Jenkins
Director of Conference Sales

With 25+ years of business and tourism experience, Jennifer Jenkins promotes Florida's Historic Coast (FHC) as a premier convention and meetings destination to associations and corporations nationwide. She develops and executes comprehensive sales strategies, working closely with Directors of Sales from local meeting properties to position the destination to group, incentive, and conference planners.



904-209-4432
 jjenkins@floridashistoriccoast.com
 MyFloridaMeetings.com

Where accomplished people get more done.



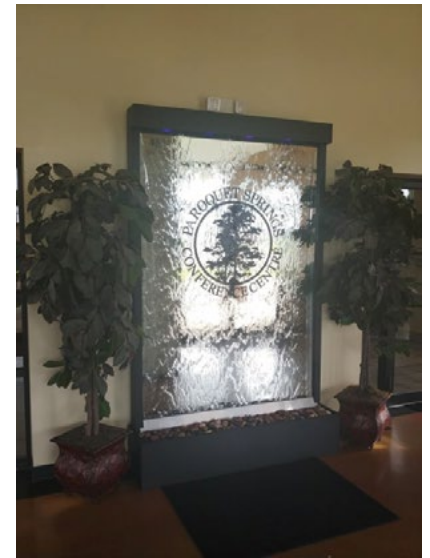
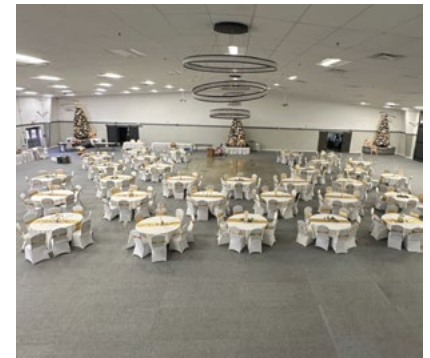
**ST. AUGUSTINE
PONTE VEDRA**
& THE BEACHES



Whether you're planning a retreat for your top performers, or a reward for all their hard work, it's hard to imagine a more inspiring destination than Florida's Historic Coast. With 42 miles of scenic Atlantic coastline, world-renowned golf, amazing cuisine, and an extraordinary array of meeting venues, your group will come back refreshed, recharged and ready to take on the world again.

MYFLORIDAMEETINGS.COM

Paroquet Springs Conference Centre



Named for the historic Paroquet Lick, a salt lick dating back to the 1770s, and its natural springs, Paroquet Springs, Ky., was once a renowned resort that rivaled Indiana's French Lick. According to local history, parakeets were drawn to the area and migrated to the springs. Valued for their medicinal properties, the springs supported a thriving resort that operated from the 1830s until 1877.

Today, Paroquet Springs Conference Centre is a premier event facility offering 40,000 square feet of flexible meeting spaces with breakout areas, state-of-the-art technology, a noted chef, and ample free parking. Its convenient location—just 15 miles south of downtown Louisville and Louisville Muhammad Ali International Airport (SDF), on I-65—makes it an ideal venue for regional and state association meetings, business and social events, and expos. Venues include the 12,000-square-foot Salt River Room, with a banquet capacity of 800 guests; McDowell

ballroom, with a banquet capacity of 300 guests; the Crist, Bernheim, Adam Shepherd, and Beam rooms—all named after local attractions and people who have played a vital role in Bullitt County's history—and an outdoor garden, perfect for hosting tea and wine parties for groups of up to 250 guests.

While in Bullitt County, attendees can enjoy outdoor beauty at the 16,000-acre Bernheim Forest and Arboretum; more than 40 miles of walking trails in nearby Shepherdsville, Hillview, and Mt. Washington; and outdoor parks with picnic areas, walking paths, and an accessible, all-inclusive playground. A new aquatic park with an Olympic-sized pool and pickleball facility is scheduled to open in June.

Unwind after meetings at locally owned favorites like Winery's, Salt River Brewery, 4 Roses, and Beam. Dining options include everything from steak to fish, to ribs and Mexican fare at many area restaurants. Indulge in dessert at Sweet Shoppe on Buckman Street, across from the Bullitt County Courthouse.

No visit to Paroquet Springs is complete without a stop at Bullitt County History Museum, offering a peek at the original stone jailhouse and providing visitors with a glimpse of Bullitt County's rich history and genuine Southern hospitality. 🌸

Paroquet Springs Conference Centre

Vicki A. Downing Executive Director

Vicki A. Downing has been with Paroquet Springs Conference Centre for 26 years, starting on the kitchen service staff and moving into other roles, including event coordinator and sales manager. She takes pride in providing quality service to clients, attendees, and industry partners at every level.



502-955-7009
vicki@paroquetsprings.org
ParoquetSprings.org

Paroquet Springs Conference Centre

With 40,000 square feet of banquet, meeting and exhibit space, the Paroquet Springs Conference Centre is perfect for group meals, small conferences and trade shows.



- Flexible facilities within the Centre accommodate groups up to 1500
- Break-out rooms provide the atmosphere for small meetings
- 12,000 square feet of exhibition space for larger events and trade shows with multiple break out rooms
- Complete audio-visual capabilities throughout the Centre
- Banquet Room comfortably seats 800
- Free onsite parking
- Free Professional Setup and Service Staff
- Event Coordinator
- Executive Chef

Great Location

- Centralized location for Tourist and Family activities
- Over 850 comfortable guest rooms within minutes
- Only minutes to Louisville International Airport
- Convenient, affordable restaurants
- Easy access off Interstate 65
- Turn left on JB Hall, then left onto Paroquet Springs Drive

Nearby Activities

- Visit tranquil Bernheim Arboretum & Research Forest
- Hunt antiques at many local shops & flea markets
- Tour Jim Beam's American Outpost & Distillery
- 4 Roses Distillery
- Kart Kountry fills the need for speed and challenge
- Bullitt County History Museum
- Golf Courses and Driving Ranges
- May 2026: Aquatic center with indoor / outdoor pool and pickle ball courts.



TEAM
KENTUCKY®



Vicki@paroquetsprings.org
or jessica@paroquetsprings.org

Web page: www.paroquetsprings.org
Phone: 502-955-7009

Meetings (and Beaching) Made Easy in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Myrrtle Beach, S.C., may be best known for its 60 miles of beaches, but it's also a destination where meetings come together with the ease of a sea breeze. The setting is relaxed, but the meeting experience still feels polished. For planners, that balance creates meetings that stay light and focused during the day and are packed with fun after the final session.

Touch-down just off the beach

Everything about Myrtle Beach is relaxed, so naturally, getting here is refreshingly straightforward. The Myrtle Beach International Airport (MYR) offers nonstop flights from dozens of major U.S. cities and is just minutes from the area's top hotels, the downtown convention center, and the beach.

From touch-down to check-in, the experience is simple, and that convenience extends throughout the destination. Plus, short drive times keep attendees connected to the meeting venue, hotels, and attractions across 14 coastal communities, without the need for complicated transportation plans.

Meeting venues that fit every need

Myrtle Beach's venues support meetings of every size. Altogether, there is more than 500,000 square feet of meeting space throughout the destination. On its own, the Myrtle Beach Convention Center anchors the destination, with more than 100,000 square feet of exhibit space, a grand ballroom, and several breakout rooms. Plus, the adjoining Sheraton Myrtle Beach hotel makes for an easy morning commute, further simplifying logistics.

The Embassy Suites Myrtle Beach Resort pairs 70,000 square feet of meeting space with 745 guest rooms; its onsite Black Drum Brewing restaurant offers multiple spaces for meetings and networking events and features Carolina brews and barbecue. Across the destination, even more hotels offer flexible meeting spaces, excellent support staff, and easy access to attractions.

When the meetings end, the fun begins

When meetings break, Myrtle Beach delivers easy options for connection and downtime. Waterfront dining at Greg Norman Australian



Embassy Suites Myrtle Beach Resort

Photos courtesy Visit Myrtle Beach



PopStroke Myrtle Beach

Grille sets the tone for relaxed yet elevated group dinners, while the new mini-golf concept PopStroke adds friendly competition and tasty bar bites to the agenda.

For groups looking for an unforgettable evening experience, Polynesian Fire Productions' Luau combines dinner with live music, cultural performances, and fire dancing. The Carolina Opry, one of the many renowned theaters in Myrtle Beach, has been entertaining visitors for more than 40 years with variety shows, tribute performances, and more.

A destination people want to travel to

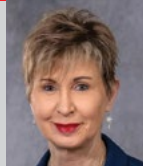
People love attending meetings in Myrtle Beach for one simple reason: it's fun. Here, the work gets done, the pace is easygoing, and attendees leave with more than just notes from a marquee session. As simple as it is to plan a meeting here, the Visit Myrtle

Beach team makes it even easier. Check out VisitMyrtleBeach.com/Meetings to connect with them and start planning. 🍷

Visit Myrtle Beach

Cyndi Mohr Senior Sales Manager

Cyndi brings 30+ years of hospitality and group sales experience — including roles with Hilton and Sheraton — to attract meetings and conventions to the destination. She's a South Carolina native and industry award winner.



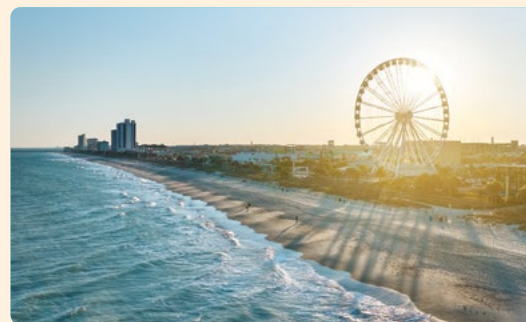
843-916-7267
cynthia.mohr@visitmyrtlebeach.com
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HOSTING A MEETING?



BRING IT TO *The Beach.*

If you're looking for a meeting destination, a place where 19 million people travel every year is a good place to start. Myrtle Beach has 60 miles of beaches, 80+ golf courses and hundreds of attractions. Oh, and they have top-tier venues and accommodations that can host any size meeting as well. Our planning team will set you up for a meeting people won't stop talking about.



The area features 14 coastal communities and 60 miles of sunny, sandy beaches.



Keep your attendees busy with 2,000+ restaurants, countless attractions and live music nightly.

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Myrtle Beach
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Scan to start planning or to contact our meeting specialists.

[MyrtleBeachMeetings.com](https://www.MyrtleBeachMeetings.com)

Meetings that Fuel Memories in Bowling Green, Ky.

If there's one thing we know in Bowling Green, Ky.—the home of Corvette—it's that most people can tell you a story about their favorite car. Whether it's the first one they drove out of their hometown, a family gem that only came out of the garage on sunny days, a classic model rebuilt over months of sweat and tears, or the dream car that finally became theirs, these stories shine a headlight on what matters.

It's never really about the cars, but rather the memories they fuel. As the host city to dozens of annual national car shows, we hear these stories all the time. At our flagship attractions, the National Corvette Museum and historic Beech Bend Raceway, thousands of enthusiasts gather to celebrate speed, nostalgia, and community in a location that somehow sparks the soul.

When you choose to meet in Bowling Green, you are not only taking care of business but offering attendees a chance to catch their breath and tap into this collective experience. Convention centers are everywhere, but the memories a host city conjures and helps create are what fuel motivation after the closing session.

From the moment you cross into Kentucky from the south or approach Mammoth Cave National Park from the north, the rolling hills and wide, open spaces welcome you like a warm embrace. Leaving the hustle behind as the freedom of the road takes control, planners often find meetings in Bowling Green begin with a sense of calm. From there, it's up to you what speed you choose to get from zero to sixty.

Go full throttle with Corvette driving experiences or high-speed karting competitions at the NCM Motorsports Park. Then settle in for a reception or dinner buffet at the iconic National Corvette Museum, where attendees are sure to swap those favorite car stories as they wander among more than 70 Corvettes on display in entertaining and educational exhibits.

Shift into the slow lane in charming downtown Bowling Green with shopping and dining excursions before touring the Historic RailPark & Train Museum and Riverview at Hobson Grove. Another favorite outing for groups is Be Happy Yoga & Salt Cave, where halotherapy may help alleviate symptoms of asthma, allergies, anxiety, and many other ailments.



Build up speed at the city's finest showpiece, Lost River Cave, offering a tranquil underground boat tour. Meander down a paved pathway to the largest cave opening in the region and then watch as daylight disappears. With hiking trails, a small meeting room, an outdoor pavilion (coming this fall), and tons of nature, this beloved attraction takes care of groups as well as they take care of the land with which they are entrusted. Consider a reception in the mouth of the cave, which will undoubtedly leave an imprint on attendees.

If families are in the mix, let the kids bond over rides and slides at Beech Bend Amusement Park & Splash Lagoon. Home to the Kentucky Rumbler wooden roller coaster and Michael Jackson's Sea Dragon ride, the idyllic and nostalgic setting offers thrill-seekers a calmer alternative to major theme parks. It's a perfect escape for families and groups alike, with the Dallas Jones Pavilion accommodating up to 600 people for group meals and events.

When it is time to get down to business, the Sloan Convention Center and connected 218-room hotel (soon to be Crowne Plaza) offer full-service meeting capabilities. With 70,000 square feet of space, the largest ballroom offers nearly 20,000 square feet for banquets and general sessions. Additional meeting rooms and pre-function space comfortably hold up

to 500 attendees. Other options include Embassy Suites, Knicely Conference Center, and unique spaces.

Bowling Green may be the fastest-growing city in Kentucky, but we still take our time with the details so you can rev up the fun for attendees. Best of all, Bowling Green won't break the bank. You get a lot of value here, with top-notch amenities at much more affordable prices than you'll find in larger metros.

When planning your next company retreat, conference, or bite-sized gathering, consider Bowling Green. It's got the space, the vibe, and the Southern hospitality to make your meeting both engaging and memorable. 🍷

Bowling Green Area CVB

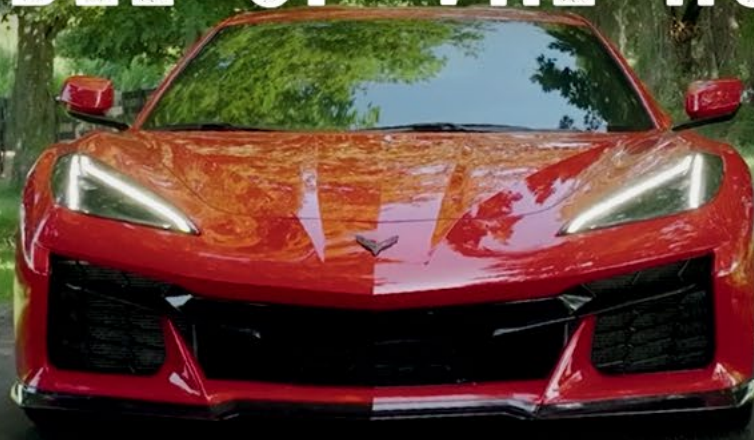
Marissa Butler Hospitality Services Director

With more than 30 years of tourism experience, Marissa is a dedicated professional who feels right at home taking care of planners' needs. Her favorite car is her current Prius V.



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VisitBGKY.com

ANYTHING BUT MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD



MAKE MEMORABLE MOMENTS BEYOND THE MEETING ROOMS

When you meet in Bowling Green, the Home of Corvette, we'll help you curate a supercharged experience that's sure to rev up relationships! After the day's sessions at one of several convention and conference centers, offer attendees exhilarating team-building activities. Whether it's feeling the adrenaline racing Corvettes at the NCM Motorsports Park, exploring Lost River Cave hidden beneath the city's streets, or networking over live music and craft cocktails, there's a memorable conference waiting to be made only in Bowling Green.



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Meetings Made Memorable in Baton Rouge, La.

Photos courtesy Visit Baton Rouge



Louisiana's Old State Capitol

Layered in rich history and unexpected experiences around every corner, Baton Rouge invites you to host your next meeting in Louisiana's capital city. With a diverse mix of hotels and flexible meeting venues, award-winning museums, bold restaurants, and a thriving arts and culture scene, meetings here come with built-in opportunities to connect, explore, and recharge beyond the conference hall. Conveniently served by Baton Rouge Metropolitan Airport, multiple airlines offer direct flights into Baton Rouge, connecting our city to several major hubs for easy access.

Baton Rouge offers a collection of hotels and venues designed to bring your vision to life. Whether you're planning a conference, a gala, or an intimate gathering, the city has spaces to match every need. From downtown spaces overlooking the mighty Mississippi River to historic properties and modern facilities, everything feels connected and seamless. With easy access to nearby dining and attractions, downtown's walkability helps meetings stay focused and on schedule while still leaving room to experience the city on foot.

At the center of Baton Rouge's meetings scene is the Raising Cane's River Center, the city's convention and events complex

located along the banks of the Mississippi River. With more than 200,000 square feet of flexible meeting space, the complex offers endless opportunities for planners to enhance their agenda with moments that feel elevated without feeling pretentious. From second lines and live bands to stilt walkers and photo ops with baby gators, these experiences add energy and are sure to please any crowd.

Once the day's sessions wrap, Baton Rouge gives meetings room to breathe. Attendees can step out to explore a food scene rooted in Cajun and Creole traditions, tour museums like the Old State Capitol or the USS Kidd Veterans Museum, or unwind with live music that spills into the streets. A visit to MICHELIN-recognized Elsie's Plate & Pie is a must, serving up sweet and savory pies alongside longtime local favorites in a welcoming neighborhood setting. Step inside one of the city's museums and be transported through Louisiana's past, or experience the sounds of live blues that define Baton Rouge as a hub for authentic swamp blues.

Behind every successful meeting in Baton Rouge is a team dedicated to helping planners bring it all together. Visit Baton Rouge serves as a boots-on-the-ground partner throughout the planning process, offering support with

site visits, hotel sourcing, venue and activity suggestions, and connections to trusted local vendors. From the early planning stages through onsite execution, planners benefit from a team that knows the city inside and out.

Baton Rouge is more than just a capital city. It's a standout destination that surprises planners and attendees alike, blending productivity with personality in a way that feels authentic and memorable. Long after the final keynote speech, the experience lingers. Start planning your next meeting and submit your RFP at VisitBatonRouge.com. 🍷

Visit Baton Rouge

Geraldine Bordelon, CMP
Senior Vice President of
Destination Sales

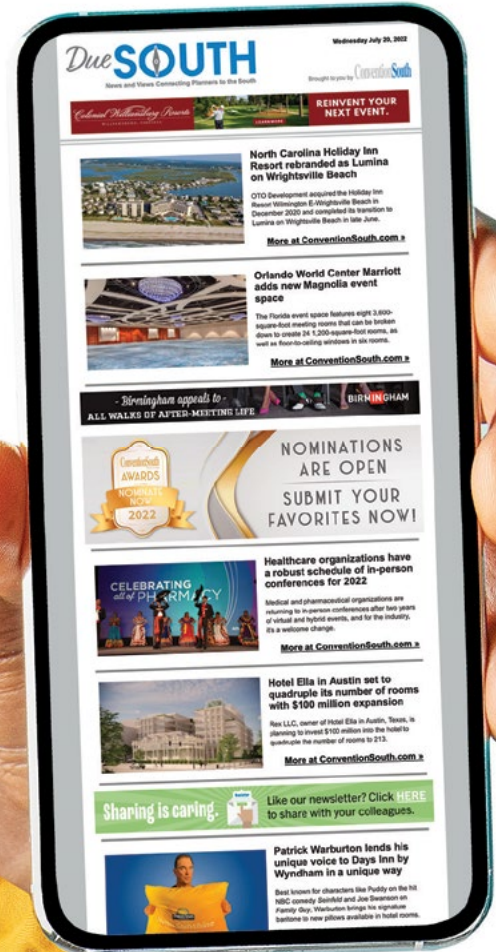
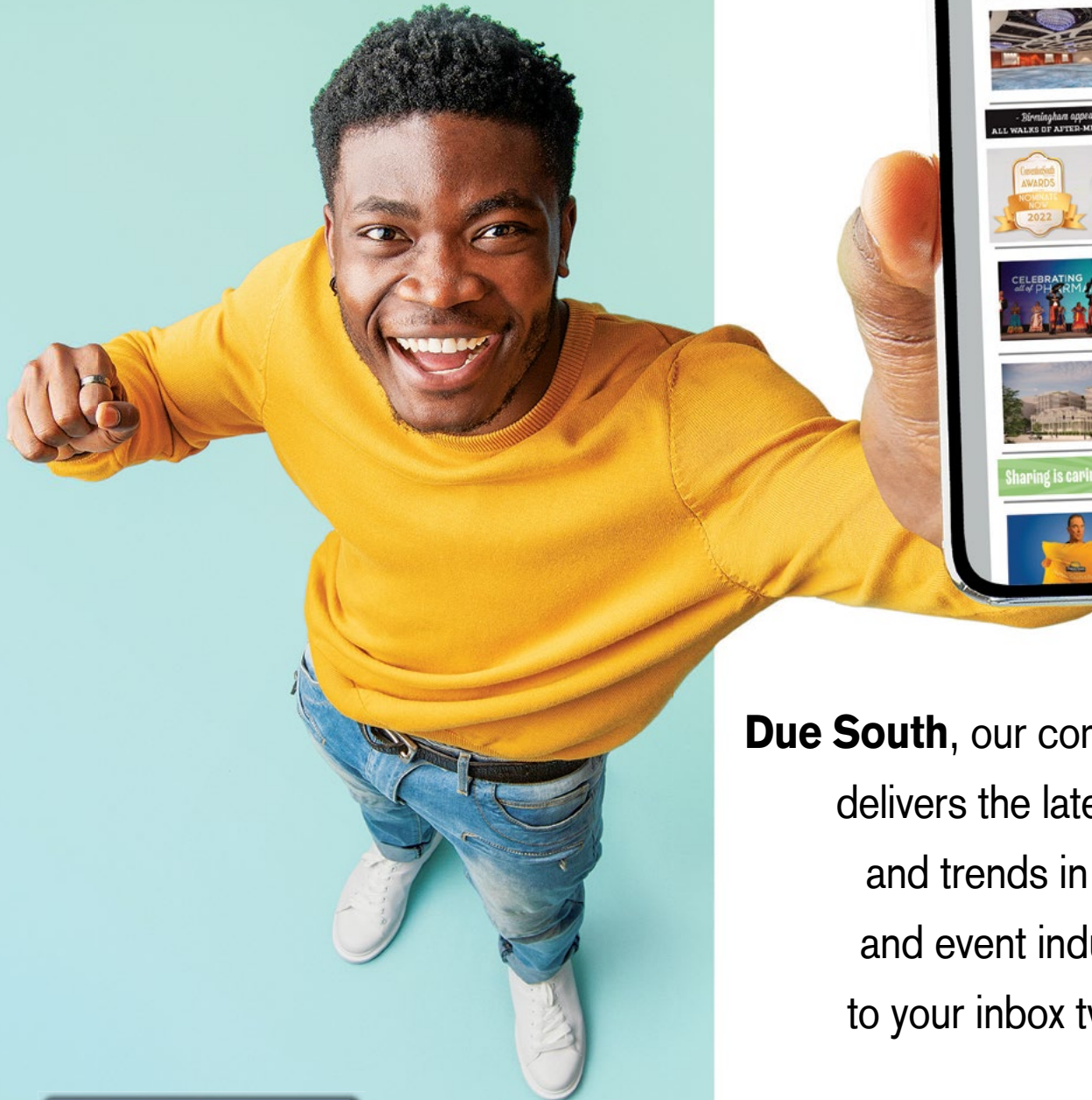
Geraldine serves as the senior vice president of destination sales for Visit Baton Rouge, overseeing all meetings, conventions, sports, and global sales for the organization.



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There is only one D.C. With internationally famous monuments and attractions, some of the most-visited museums in the world, distinctive venues, and unparalleled access to think tanks, financial institutions, organizations and associations, and dozens of embassies, Washington, D.C., provides planners with unique options not found elsewhere. This pedestrian-friendly city, with easy access to three international airports, emphasizes sustainability and welcomes meetings and events of all sizes, from large-scale conventions to intimate gatherings.

EVENT PLANNERS' GUIDE TO

DC

Washington, D.C.

BY NICOLE DUFOUR AND D. FRAN MORLEY



In honor of the nation's 250th birthday, 250 new trees have been planted for the 2026 National Cherry Blossom Festival.

Washington, D.C., offers an endless array of top-tier venues, hotels, and more than 100 free activities at iconic landmarks. Beyond its acclaimed dining scene, the nation's capital provides unmatched access to intellectual leaders and world-class facilities.

"Washington, D.C., is a place where people come together to share ideas, learn, and feel inspired," says Elliott L. Ferguson II, president and CEO of Destination DC. This year, the city takes center stage for America's 250th birthday, offering groups a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience national history and festivities in the heart of the capital.

Washington, D.C., is divided into four quadrants that surround the U.S. Capitol. Planners considering D.C. have their pick of diverse neighborhoods, from historic Georgetown to the dynamic Navy Yard. The region is served by

three major airports: Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), Dulles International Airport (IAD), and Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI). D.C. is also a primary Amtrak hub via Union Station. D.C. also has an efficient Metro transit system, approximately 7,000 Capital Bikeshare rentals, and pedestrian-friendly streets.

D.C.'s Walter E. Washington Convention Center, an LEED Platinum-certified facility, features 700,000 square feet of exhibition space and 77 meeting rooms. The convention center is within walking distance of nearly half of the city's guest rooms. Beyond the convention center, through Destination DC's Connected Campus initiative, planners can utilize a network of nontraditional spaces across five distinct campuses:

- **Capitol Riverfront Campus:** Anchored by Nationals Park and Audi Field, this area

includes seven hotels and 23,000 square feet of event space.

- **Downtown DC Campus:** Centered around the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, the area boasts more than 2,300 guest rooms and 132,000 square feet of meeting space.
- **Wharf Campus:** A waterfront hub anchored by The Anthem and Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater, the area features more than 800 guest rooms and 24,000 square feet of meeting space.
- **National Mall Campus:** Centered at the International Spy Museum, this campus offers 1,700 guest rooms and 70,000 square feet of meeting space near historic landmarks.
- **Connecticut Avenue Campus:** Anchored by the Omni Shoreham and Washington Hilton, the campus has 1,900 guest rooms and 200,000 square feet of event space across 70 rooms.

Destination DC’s Connected Capital strategy focuses on sector-specific platforms linking events with the city’s intellectual capital in policy, technology, healthcare, and finance. “By aligning conferences with D.C.’s subject matter experts, the city elevates every event with insights no other destination can match,” Ferguson says.

The city’s startup scene is thriving in cybersecurity and AI, supported by innovators like Cloudflare and EchoStar. Station DC, an innovation hub in Union Market, recently opened to bring together startups and policy leaders. “Planners are choosing a community of innovators,” says Melissa A. Riley, senior vice president of convention sales and services for Destination DC. “That human connection fuels deeper learning and more meaningful outcomes.”

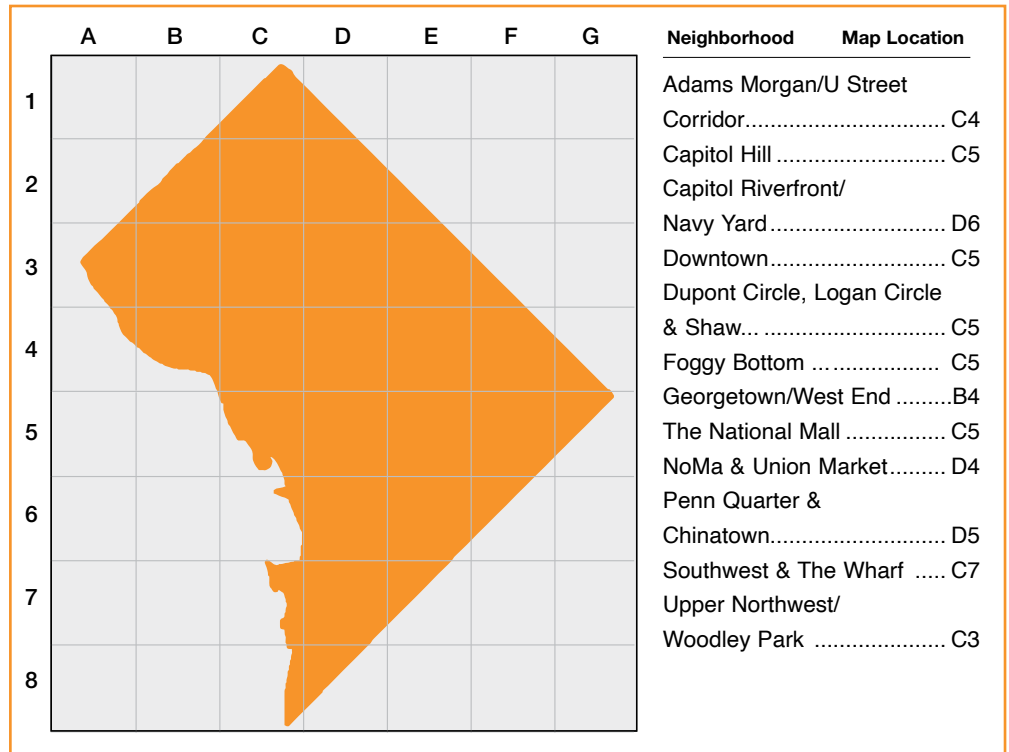
In 2017, Washington, D.C., became the world’s first LEED-Platinum city. Planners can utilize the Sustainability District—the city’s network of more than 75 hotels, venues, and restaurants committed to recycling, composting, and energy conservation—to minimize the hospitality industry’s environmental footprint.

Adams Morgan/ U Street Corridor

Adams Morgan, located in D.C.’s northwest quadrant, is known for its eclectic mix of restaurants, bars, and shops, as well as its rich cultural scene and history. In the 21st century, Adams Morgan has been a focus of urban redevelopment, becoming one of D.C.’s most gentrifying neighborhoods.

The boutique LINE DC hotel, housed inside a former 110-year-old church, features event space across 10 venues, including rooftop space that accommodates up to 225 people and the No Goodbyes restaurant, with a capacity of 450 guests. A hotel buyout can host events of up to 850 people. High Road Hotel, nestled within a historic brownstone, offers stylish private and shared lodging options for small groups.

At DC Arts Center, an art gallery and performance space that supports emerging artists in the city, visitors might catch anything from improv comedy to poetry readings and art exhibitions. D.C.’s longest-running vintage store, Mercedes Bien Vintage, showcases funky, party pieces, while Urban Dwell, another local business, offers D.C.-themed gifts and accessories.



Adams Morgan’s burgeoning restaurant scene has scored MICHELIN stars and other accolades. Reveler’s Hour features an ever-changing Italian menu of à la carte and three-course meals, along with handmade pastas and an extensive fine wine collection. Perry’s, helmed by head chef Masako Morishita, who received the 2024 James Beard Award for Best Emerging Chef, offers a chic dining experience and Japanese-inspired selections. The restaurant

is available for private events. Roofers Union, another neighborhood favorite, serves burgers, gourmet brats, and other American fare. The three-level restaurant features a “cocktail lab,” a dining area, and rooftop space. Madam’s Organ serves hearty comfort food, such as ribs, fried okra, and meatloaf, and has five bars, a billiards area, a heated rooftop deck, and live music each night. For laughs, Catfish Stand-Up Comedy at Shenanigan’s Irish Pub in Adams Morgan

Dating back to the early 1800s, Willard InterContinental Washington DC recently completed renovations of its 335 guest rooms and revitalized more than 22,000 square feet of event space.



For a unique event experience surrounded by icons of flight, groups can enjoy use of the entire National Air and Space Museum for private dinners or receptions.

Capitol Hill

Capitol Hill offers meeting planners a prestigious backdrop defined by historic grandeur. The area’s proximity to the Capitol and Library of Congress provides high-impact venues and unique networking opportunities. With luxury hotels, diverse dining, and easy transit access, it seamlessly blends political influence with sophisticated event logistics.

In late 2025, the 840-room Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill completed an extensive transformation, updating guest rooms, conference facilities, public spaces, and dining experiences. Two blocks from the U.S. Capitol building, the hotel features more than 38,000 square feet of event space across 32 venues. The hotel’s largest space, the Regency Ballroom—the largest on Capitol Hill—can host 1,500 for receptions or 1,200 theater style. The 267-room Hilton Washington DC Capitol Hill has 19,369 square feet of event space across 21 meeting rooms; its largest space can accommodate 700 for cocktails and seat 500 theater style or 360 banquet style. YOTEL Washington DC features 377 rooms and

offers free shows featuring some of D.C.’s top underground comics.

U Street Corridor, a dynamic and historic D.C. neighborhood, renowned as the heart of “Black Broadway” during the Jim Crow era, offers a mix of rich history, diverse culture, and a lively atmosphere for events. Groups can leverage iconic and historic venues, such as the beautifully refurbished Lincoln Theatre. The

100-year-old performance venue is available for private events and can accommodate up to 1,000 people. U Street is also a culinary hotspot, from the world-famous Ben’s Chili Bowl to authentic Ethiopian cuisine like Habesha Market & Carry Out. Several other U Street restaurants, including Sudhouse DC and Bust Boys and Poets, offer private rooms suitable for networking dinners or team lunches.

more than 18,000 square feet of event space, including a ballroom for receptions of up to 500 guests. The hotel's Art & Soul restaurant offers an updated menu of seasonal dishes from the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with private dining for 75 or a full buyout for 300. The Royal Sonesta Washington, DC Capitol Hill offers 10 flexible event spaces, including a 3,100-square-foot ballroom that can host up to 250 people.

Several small and mid-sized hotels provide dedicated spaces for intimate events or breakout sessions. The 218-room Courtyard by Marriott Washington, DC/U.S. Capitol offers 2,755 square feet across five rooms, accommodating up to 115 guests. The boutique Kimpton George Hotel, a Destination DC Sustainability District member, has 139 guest rooms and more than 2,000 square feet of meeting space; its largest space accommodates 150 for receptions. Promoted as family- and pet-friendly, the hotel also offers a seasonal guest bike loan program. The 153-room Capitol Hill Hotel, one of the closest hotels to the National Mall and the Library of Congress, offers three event spaces. Each space can accommodate up to 50 people and is available for office use.

The LEED Gold-classified 20 F St. NW Conference Center & Capitol View Roof—owned and managed by the American College of Surgeons—features a glass-enclosed boardroom, interior space for up to 250, and a tented rooftop terrace for receptions of up to 300. The new 507 event space features a 7,000-square-foot downstairs event hall and an upstairs lounge with in-house equipment, rentals, and creative services.

For a unique event setting, the Library of Congress's dramatic, two-story Great Hall of the Thomas Jefferson Building can host up to 450 seated guests or 1,200 for receptions. The restored historic Hill Center at the Old Naval Hospital, also a green and sustainable building, features elegant indoor and garden space for up to 200 people. The landmark headquarters of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) features several unique event spaces, including its "showstopper," a three-story portico that accommodates up to 200 people. The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum is one of D.C.'s newest museums, combining a historic synagogue with a modern addition; it features seven venues, accommodating 150 seated guests or 250

standing. Capitol View at 400 offers stunning views of the U.S. Capitol and features the Hill's only all-weather rooftop venue, thanks to a retractable canopy. The terrace accommodates up to 250 seated guests or 400 standing, and the venue includes 11 state-of-the-art conference rooms.

Capitol Riverfront/Navy Yard

D.C.'s dynamic Capitol Riverfront blends historic naval roots with modern urban energy. Nationals Park, an anchor of the Capitol Riverfront Connected Campus, features the 1,200-capacity FIS Champions Club with field and river views, and a conference center with

What's New in Washington, D.C.

D.C.'s hospitality landscape expanded significantly in 2025 with the arrival of ROOST White House, Sixty DC, and Canal House of Georgetown. The momentum continues through 2026, with anticipated openings including the Hoya Hotel, citizenM Georgetown, and Tempo by Hilton.

D.C. also saw numerous additions to its thriving culinary scene, including Bar Japonais (French-Japanese), Casa Teresa (Spanish), and the MICHELIN-ranked Albi.

In fall 2025, the Milken Institute, a nonprofit think tank, opened the Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream in downtown D.C., across from the White House. The center features a series of gallery spaces and immersive exhibits exploring ingenuity, perseverance, and possibility in a nation of immigrants.

Late last year, the National Archives Museum unveiled a new permanent exhibit, The American Story. The 10,000-square-foot exhibit spans nine galleries and offers an immersive, interactive look at the people, ideas, and events that have shaped the U.S. over the last 250 years. This exhibit and the adjacent Discovery Center for children are part of an extensive \$40 million renovation.

In the U Street Corridor, the African American Civil War Memorial Museum, which pays tribute to the 209,145 US Colored Troops (USCT) who helped end slavery, installed a dramatic new outdoor sculpture of Abraham Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation.

This month, a historic carousel on the National Mall reopens after a two-year restoration. The artifact came from a Baltimore community, where a young African American child riding the carousel in 1963 became the face of desegregation.

The Tidal Basin is scheduled to complete improvements this spring, including wider walkways and the planting of 250 cherry blossom trees. Also this spring, the Jefferson

Memorial will complete renovations to a 2,500-square-foot exhibit area, along with the addition of a new 450-square-foot space. Project features include expanded and reimagined exhibit space and new exhibits about Jefferson.

This summer, the National Geographic Museum of Exploration (MOE) will open as a new component of the National Geographic Society's campus. Part of a massive renovation and addition project on the campus, the MOE was designed to provide an immersive, high-tech experience. The MOE will include nine state-of-the-art spaces available for private events, including a theater with a capacity of 398 and a rooftop terrace seating 200 people. Following an extensive renovation, the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum will reopen most of its galleries and public spaces in time for the museum's 50th anniversary in July. Also in July, 15,000 square feet of new exhibit space will open beneath the Lincoln Memorial. New exhibits and multimedia presentations in the memorial's cavernous undercroft will showcase its construction history and how the site has become the nation's foremost backdrop for civil rights demonstrations.

After a three-year revitalization, the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden is expected to reopen this fall. The 1.4-acre art park will feature outdoor sculptures, time-based artwork, and large commissions, and will provide a unique setting for performances, public education, and private events.

A newly expanded 14-gate Concourse E at Dulles International Airport (IAD) is expected to open in September. In downtown D.C., the \$800 million redesign of Capital One Arena is underway and scheduled for delivery in 2027. The project has numerous components, including the planned United Globe Club (capacity 800) and Lounge (capacity 150).



five flexible breakout spaces, along with the outdoor warning track and dugout, which can host up to 1,500 for receptions. Co-anchoring the Capitol Riverfront campus is the LEED Gold-certified Audi Field, which includes large club spaces for up to 686 guests, rooftop decks, and the field pitch.

The 225-room Thompson Washington DC has more than 7,000 square feet of event space across eight venues, including a wine room and a rooftop bar for up to 200 guests. AC Hotel Washington DC Capitol Hill Navy Yard, also with 225 rooms, has four event spaces and can host more than 300 people for receptions. Cambria Hotel Washington D.C. Navy Yard Riverfront has 152 guest rooms and features more than 2,500 square feet of flexible meeting space for up to 360 guests. Courtyard by Marriott Capitol Hill/Navy Yard offers five event rooms and accommodates 175 for receptions in its largest venue. The 168-room Hampton Inn & Suites Washington DC-Navy Yard features a popular rooftop bar overlooking Nationals Park, and Homewood Suites by Hilton Washington DC Capitol-Navy Yard has 195 guest rooms and a rooftop terrace to host receptions for up to 150 people. Wyndham rebranded the former Placemakr Navy Yard as the new Reside Navy Yard, an extended-stay property with fully furnished apartments.

HQO events, located in an LEED Platinum-certified building, features more than 30,000 square feet of event space, including a rooftop that accommodates 300 people and offers

stunning 360-degree views of the Anacostia River, a first-floor lobby and an adjacent patio accommodating 300, a spacious second-floor boardroom seating 160, and a 4,100-square-foot atrium that accommodates 300 for receptions. D.C.'s first working winery, District Winery, boasts floor-to-ceiling windows, an outdoor terrace, and sweeping river views. The venue is ideal for all types of events, from intimate dinners for 20 to large-scale events of up to 800 people, and offers a range of teambuilding activities, including wine blending sessions and custom wine labels. For more fun, the Bullpen, just outside of Nationals Park, offers versatile event spaces, including game-day dugouts for 50 to 100 guests and a 200-person-capacity roof deck; complete buyouts of the venue accommodate up to 4,000 people.

Salt Line seafood restaurant offers stunning river views and has indoor and outdoor event space for up to 200 people. Full venue buyouts and a traveling raw bar experience are also available. Osteria Morini offers authentic northern Italian cuisine, with private event options or buyouts for up to 200. MICHELIN-starred Albi, ranked Washington's best restaurant in 2025, serves eastern Mediterranean fare and includes flexible spaces ranging from intimate dining rooms to full-venue buyouts.

Groups can bond while learning circus tricks at the Trapeze School NY/Washington. Waterfront outfitter Ballpark Boathouse provides kayak and stand-up paddleboard rentals, along with views of the river wildlife.

Downtown

Downtown D.C. bustles with popular restaurants, high-end shopping, nightlife, world-famous museums, and several iconic hotels, some within a couple of blocks of the White House.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2026, the historic The St. Regis Washington, DC has 182 recently renovated guest rooms, a 2,510-square-foot presidential suite, and 11,388 square feet of elegant function space, including the Astor Ballroom, which accommodates 250 reception guests. Fresh off a multimillion-dollar upgrade, the 459-room Washington Marriott at Metro Center has direct access to the Metro system and features 13,462 square feet of function space across 14 event rooms, with a 650-person reception capacity in the Grand Ballroom. Also newly renovated, the 559-room Capital Hilton has 31,235 square feet of event space across 21 meeting rooms; when combined, the Presidential, Congressional, and Senate ballrooms can seat 1,350 theater style. Formerly the Madison, Le Méridien Washington, D.C., The Madison is now part of the Marriott portfolio; it has 356 guest rooms and offers 27,207 total square feet of event space with a capacity of 500 people. Set to open by mid-2026, Tempo by Hilton Washington DC Downtown will have 278 guest rooms and 3,528 square feet of event space, including five meeting rooms and a rooftop venue with a capacity of 200 guests for receptions. JW Marriott Washington, DC, a Destination DC Sustainability District member, has 777 guest rooms and 40,776 square feet of function space across 25 event rooms, with a capacity of 1,200 theater style or 800 banquet style. In summer 2025, the Willard InterContinental Washington DC, which dates back to the early 1800s, debuted a complete renovation of its 335 guest rooms, which include signature suites named for historic figures who were frequent guests, including Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglas, and Martin Luther King Jr. The hotel also revitalized more than 22,000 square feet of event space, including a ballroom seating 450 banquet style. Another historic property just steps from the White House, Hotel Washington has 326 guest rooms and more than 12,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor function space, including a ballroom with a capacity of 700 people. On Pennsylvania

Avenue, between the White House and the U.S. Capitol, Waldorf Astoria Washington DC—once the city’s iconic post office—has 263 guest rooms and more than 34,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including the 13,200-square-foot Presidential Ballroom, which can accommodate 1,300 people for receptions, and the elegant Lincoln Library, which seats 150 theater style. Additional event hotels include The Westin Washington, D.C. City Center, with 410 guest rooms and 16,961 square feet of function space; Courtyard by Marriott Washington Downtown/Convention Center, with more than 13,121 square feet of function space across 13 event rooms; the boutique Eaton DC, part of the Destination DC Sustainability District, with 209 guest rooms and 12,000 square feet of event space; Embassy Suites by Hilton Washington DC Convention Center, also a Destination DC Sustainability District member, with 388 guest rooms and 6,720 square feet of function space; and Hamilton Hotel, a 326-room property on the National Register of Historic Places, with more than 18,000 square feet of newly renovated venues.

The Spire is a newly opened offsite rooftop venue, which features seven meeting spaces with a capacity of 300 guests and offers views of the U.S. Capitol. The Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, owned by the U.S. General Services Administration, is the first and only federal building dedicated to both government and private use, according to RRBITC.com. It is an official World Trade Center, networking with similar centers in more than 100 countries, and has more than 65,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space, including a 595-seat amphitheater, to accommodate a capacity of 5,000 guests. The building also features an extensive food court and a variety of art and historical exhibits, and hosts numerous annual events, including the Capital Book Fest and an outdoor live-music series.

Foggy Bottom

Stretching from the Potomac River to Georgetown, Foggy Bottom is named for the naturally occurring fog that forms along the banks of the river. The neighborhood includes the southern reaches of D.C.’s 1,754-acre Rock Creek Park, the U.S. Dept. of State, and John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts (The Kennedy Center). The

D.C. Celebrates America’s 250th Birthday

There is no better destination than D.C. to celebrate America’s 250th birthday and recognize the city’s place among the world’s international cultures and stories. Most monuments, memorials, and museums on and around the National Mall, as well as other significant historic landmarks and attractions throughout the city, are planning special events and exhibits, with details to be forthcoming. The National Park Service’s annual 4th of July celebration, with a grand parade, concert, and fireworks, is just part of what visitors can expect in 2026. Here are a few other highlights for D.C.’s celebration of America’s 250th birthday.

On the National Mall, the famous, historic Smithsonian Castle will pause renovations and open temporarily from Memorial Day to Labor Day with special exhibitions. The National Museum of American History will debut a new exhibit titled “American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith,” with 250 significant objects from history, including the portable desk used by Thomas Jefferson and the table where Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote on women’s suffrage. This year’s National Cherry Blossom Festival will celebrate the planting of 250 new trees. Renovated and expanded galleries will open at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum; the National Museum of the American Indian will exhibit “Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the U.S. and American Indian Nations”; the National Archives will showcase the Emancipation Proclamation; and the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival will expand into a multi-week celebration in June & July, exploring how

Kennedy Center includes five theaters seating up to 2,465 people, numerous indoor galleries and halls to host up to 1,000 reception guests, and outdoor plazas that can be tented to host up to 3,000 guests.

Foggy Bottom’s largest event hotel is The Watergate Hotel, which has 336 guest rooms and more than 27,000 square feet of event space, including a ballroom seating 510 guests banquet style, a rooftop venue, terrace, library, and additional meeting rooms. Foggy Bottom offers several smaller, boutique hotels, including ARC Hotel DC, with 136 spacious guest rooms; the 140-room Hotel Lombardy, with a 50-person meeting capacity; and The



The nation’s capital is planning special attractions and festivities in celebration of America’s 250th birthday.

festivals are a tool of civic engagement and cultural exchange.

Expected to launch citywide in July 2026, the 51 Steps to Freedom Trail will use cutting-edge augmented reality and “point your phone” technology to present a fresh look at the city’s hidden history that helped shape the nation, from pivotal events to legendary individuals. According to 51StepstoFreedom.org, the trail highlights D.C.’s history as a place where people come together to exercise their First Amendment rights, “from the Women’s Suffrage Procession in 1913, to the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, to the Anti-Vietnam War protests of the ‘60s and ‘70s, to protests continuing today.”

New events, exhibits, festivals, and live entertainment are being added to the calendar, which can be viewed at DC250.us/Events.

Hive, DC’s first micro hotel, with 83 guest rooms and a rooftop lounge.

Dupont Circle, Logan Circle & Shaw

The cosmopolitan neighborhoods of Dupont Circle, Logan Circle, and Shaw are home to renowned boutiques, indie bookstores, trendy restaurants and bars, parks, performance venues, and beautiful Victorian mansions.

Hotels with significant event space include Washington Hilton, a Destination DC Sustainability District member, with 1,107 guest rooms and suites and more than 118,000 square feet of meeting and event space,

With three major airports, Amtrak service at Union Station, and the Metro transit system, Washington, D.C., offers convenient access and navigation for visiting groups.



including a 30,000-square-foot ballroom; The Dupont Circle, The Doyle Collection, Washington DC, with 327 guest rooms, penthouse-level suites, and more than 10,000 square feet of event space in six venues; The Darcy Hotel, with 226 guest rooms and 10,000 square feet of event space; and The Mayflower Hotel, Autograph Collection, with 581 guest rooms and nearly 43,000 square feet of ballrooms and meeting rooms to host up to 1,000 guests; and Royal Sonesta Washington DC Dupont Circle, with 335 guest rooms and more than 11,000 square feet of flexible function space.

For smaller gatherings, the newly rebranded Eurostars St Gregory Dupont Circle Georgetown has 156 guest rooms and four event rooms with a capacity of 200 for receptions, all set in elegant mid-century styling. Kimpton Banneker Hotel has 144 guest rooms and 3,800 square feet of event space, including Lady Bird, an open-air, year-round rooftop bar and terrace. Churchill Hotel near Embassy Row, a member of Historic Hotels of America, has space to accommodate up to 125 people for receptions. In Shaw, near the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, the newly rebranded Hyatt House Washington DC/ Downtown/Convention Center (formerly the Cambria Hotel Washington, DC Convention Center) has 184 guest rooms, meeting space for 70 guests, and a rooftop terrace.

Offsite event venues include Howard Theatre, a dual-purpose concert and event space with a capacity of 700 for receptions and 600 theater style; the President Woodrow Wilson House, with garden space to accommodate 200 for receptions and indoor spaces for up to 40 people; Friends Meeting of Washington, a historic Quaker meeting house and Destination DC Sustainability District member, with indoor and garden event space for up to 300 guests; Studio Theatre, with two fixed-seat theaters, a black box theater, an atrium, and other spaces; and Swingers Dupont Circle, a multipurpose venue featuring indoor “crazy golf,” cocktail bars, carnival games, upscale street food vendors, and private event rooms with a capacity of 450 people. In Dupont Circle, the quirky O Museum in The Mansion is an immersive, tactile experience with more than 100 rooms and more than 80 secret doors; it can accommodate 160 people for banquets or 300 for receptions.

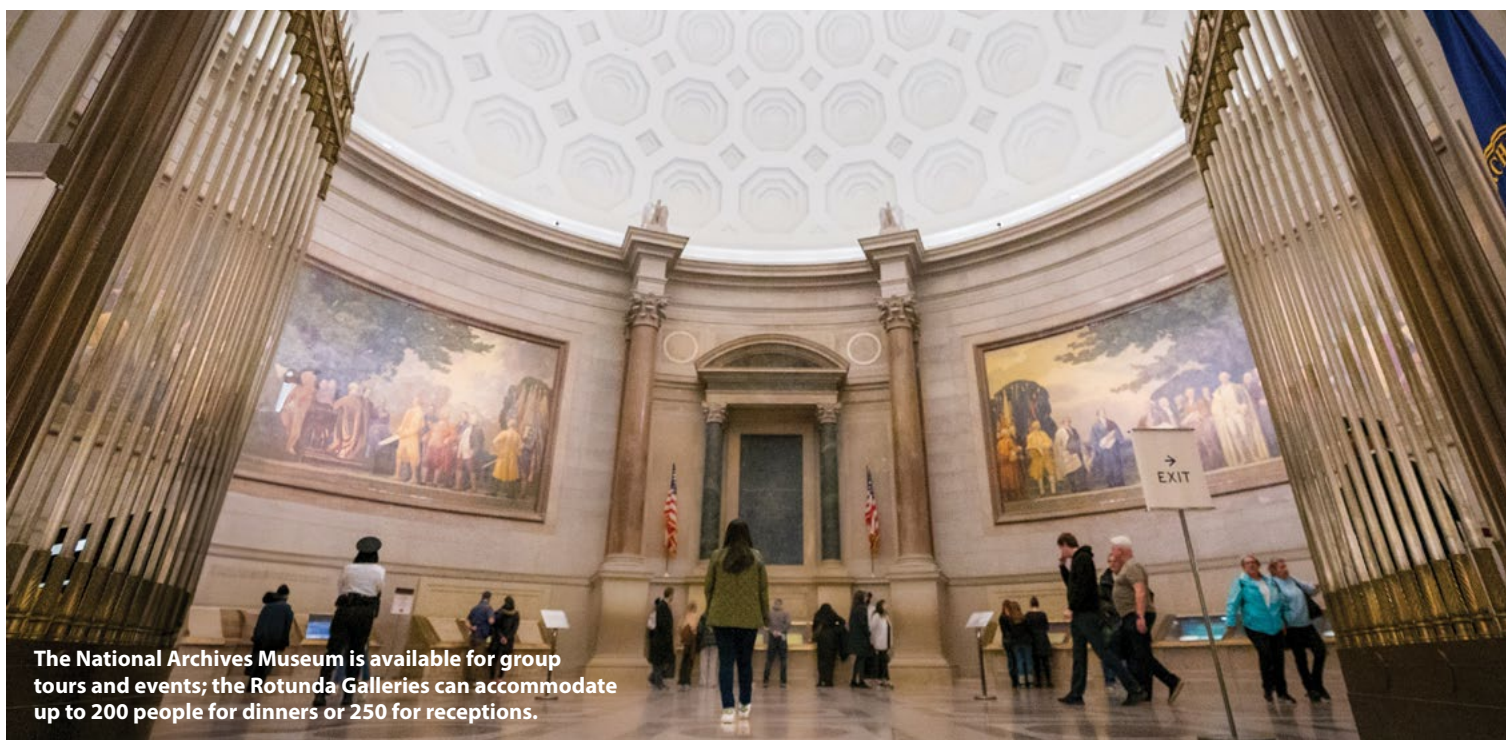
Georgetown/West End

Combining 18th-century charm with urban luxury, Georgetown and the West End offer elite multi-starred-hotels, sophisticated event spaces, and exceptional walkability. The Forbes Four-Star Rosewood Washington D.C. features elegant event spaces, including Wolfgang Puck’s CUT D.C. dining room, which hosts 80 for dinner, and CUT ABOVE rooftop,

which accommodates 125. The Graham Georgetown offers a speakeasy and rooftop bar for 150, while the 107-room Canal House of Georgetown, a Tribute Portfolio Hotel, which opened last year, provides intimate spaces for 50.

The Georgetown Inn hosts mid-sized events for up to 84. Ritz-Carlton Georgetown, housed in a restored factory, features 8,782 square feet of event space, including a tiered garden with a capacity of 150 people for receptions. West End’s Fairmont Washington D.C. Georgetown offers more than 29,000 square feet of event space, including a ballroom with a capacity of 700 for receptions. Ritz-Carlton, Washington, D.C. features 10 venues, the largest of which accommodates 1,100 people. The AAA Five Diamond, Forbes Five-Star Four Seasons Hotel Washington, DC features 22,900 square feet of indoor/outdoor space, including the Corcoran Ballroom, which accommodates up to 420 guests. Washington Marriott Georgetown boasts 15,078 square feet of space across nine rooms; Park Hyatt Washington DC features 12,000 square feet with a capacity of 500 people; and The Westin Georgetown offers nearly 14,000 square feet of banquet space for up to 220 guests. For smaller meetings, Hyatt Place Washington DC/Georgetown/West End offers 2,200 square feet of space.

Hotel developments in the area include the waterfront citizenM Washington Capitol, which is scheduled to reopen this spring under



The National Archives Museum is available for group tours and events; the Rotunda Galleries can accommodate up to 200 people for dinners or 250 for receptions.

the Marriott brand following a renovation and expansion. The 230-room hotel features 2,234 square feet of event space. Georgetown University's hotel in the Leavey Center is scheduled to reopen this summer as the Hoya Hotel; it will feature 146 guest rooms and 13,000 square feet of meeting space. Chef José Andrés will debut The Bazaar House in mid-2027; the luxury hotel will offer 67 guest rooms and several curated dining concepts and event spaces.

Georgetown and West End offer many unique venue options, ranging from historic mansions and art galleries to industrial-chic spaces and waterfront properties. The charming 18th-century City Tavern has two ballrooms and other areas to host up to 600 guests, while the sleek, modern Fathom Gallery Georgetown accommodates gatherings of up to 150 people. Pinstripes, situated on the waterfront, blends dining with bowling and bocce for engaging corporate events. Clyde's of Georgetown serves classic American cuisine and is available for private events.

The National Mall

Set between the U.S. Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial, the 309-acre National Mall is the country's most-visited national park. It hosts numerous events throughout the year, including the annual Cherry Blossom Festival and D.C.'s 4th of July festivities. Expected

Venues with a Front-Row Seat to History

In addition to historic hotels and world-class museums, several venues with their own unique histories offer event space.

The **National Press Club**, the world's leading professional organization for journalists since 1908, includes a full-service conference center with several meeting rooms, pre-function space, and a ballroom seating 400 theater style.

The **National Archives'** event space includes a 290-seat theater with lobby reception space, the Rotunda Galleries, which can accommodate 200 people for banquets or 250 for receptions, and four additional conference rooms.

to open this year are improvements at the Tidal Basin, new exhibits at the Jefferson Memorial, a newly restored historic carousel with ties to the Civil Rights Movement, a new 15,000-square-foot innovative museum under the Lincoln Memorial, and a revitalized Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden.

The National Mall is lined with monuments and statues honoring former presidents, founding fathers, military branches, armed conflicts, women veterans of the Vietnam War, and notable Americans like Martin Luther King Jr. and Alice Paul and Alva Belmont, leaders of

Capitol Turnaround, an old car barn that was once the last stop on the Red Line, has been transformed into a venue with a 982-seat theater, a main hall accommodating 450 people for receptions, and additional gathering spaces.

The **DC History Center**, inside the 1903 Carnegie Library, offers a gallery, a main hall, and library function space, all available to groups (capacity of 200 people) that align with the center's values.

Built in 1890 as the headquarters for the National Union Fire Insurance Co., the **National Union Building** has 27,000 square feet of flexible space in 11 venues, including a cellar speakeasy; it can accommodate up to 380 guests.

the Women's Suffrage movement. A Soldier's Journey, a sculpture wall at the WWI Memorial, is the longest free-standing bronze sculpture in the Western Hemisphere, at approximately 58 feet long. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum tells the story of the Holocaust through artifacts, films, photos, and oral histories, and offers faculty seminars and workshops. Many of the Smithsonian Institution museums are located along the Mall—all offer free admission (some require tickets for timed entries), and most have indoor and/or outdoor event space for groups of all sizes.



The 373-room Salamander Washington DC includes more than 36,000 square feet of event space and a newly renovated Salamander Spa, with 14 redesigned treatment rooms.

The National Museum of Natural History can host 2,000 reception guests utilizing the four-story rotunda and additional galleries. Space at the National Museum of American History includes a 264-seat theater, a rooftop terrace with a capacity of 350 guests, exhibit halls with a capacity of 500 for receptions, and smaller rooms for daytime meetings and luncheons. The National Air and Space Museum, which is projected to complete its eight-year, multimillion-dollar renovation projects by this summer, can accommodate 2,500 guests reception style, 350 banquet style, or 485 theater style. In addition, the museum's Udvar-Hazy Center at Washington Dulles International Airport can host 5,000 for receptions or 1,000 for banquets. Event space at the National Museum of African American History and Culture includes Heritage Hall, with a capacity of 2,500 for receptions, a 350-seat theater, and additional gallery, atrium, and terrace spaces. The National Museum of the American Indian has indoor and outdoor event space to host intimate dinners or large events with 3,500 guests, utilizing the entire building. Following a \$40 million renovation, the National Archives Museum features new exhibits and four conference rooms seating 20-65 people, a 290-seat theater, and the Rotunda Galleries, which can accommodate 250 for receptions and 200 for banquets. The International Spy Museum offers behind-the-scenes tours, speakers, teambuilding experiences, and 18,000 square feet of

function space, including a ballroom seating 350 for dinners, a rooftop terrace with a capacity of 200 for receptions, and the museum lobby for receptions.

Hotels near The National Mall include Hilton DC National Mall The Wharf, with 367 guest rooms and 21,189 square feet of event space, including a ballroom seating 650 theater style, and Hyatt Place Washington DC/National Mall, with 214 guest rooms and five meeting rooms totaling 2,100 square feet, plus additional pre-function space.

The American Pharmacists Association headquarters, which is the only privately owned real estate on the National Mall, features the 3,600-square-foot Potomac View Terrace, with space to seat 250 people for dinners, as well as several smaller conference and gallery spaces.

NoMa & Union Market

Named for its location north of Massachusetts Avenue, just north of the Capitol, NoMa is defined by warehouses and historic storefronts that now house creative and contemporary businesses, trendy restaurants, specialty stores, and gourmet markets. NoMa is home to Gallaudet University, National Public Radio, and Union Station, D.C.'s iconic transportation hub and the country's second-busiest Amtrak rail station. Union Station features several venues available for private events, including a main hall with 23-carat gold-leaf ceilings and a reception capacity of 4,475 guests.

Approximately a mile from the station, Union Market dates to the 1870s and is today filled with shops and services, plus dining and entertainment options. Upstairs from the shops at Union Market, Dock5 is a 12,000-square-foot indoor/outdoor space with a capacity of 700 for receptions. Hi-Lawn, a seasonal, open-air rooftop green space, can accommodate 1,000 guests. Adjacent to the market, La Cosecha celebrates Latin American culture with authentic flavors, art, and heritage, with seasonal menus curated in partnership with D.C.'s Latin American embassies. Venues include a 75-person-capacity gallery, a 30-person-capacity culinary studio, and a media studio.

MOB Hotel is expected to open in mid-2027 in the heart of the Union Market. It will be the Paris-based chain's first North American hotel, featuring 144 guest rooms, a spacious rooftop venue, and additional smaller meeting spaces. At Gallaudet University, a private university for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, Kellogg Conference Hotel has 122 guest rooms and 17,000 square feet of event space, including a 275-seat auditorium. Washington Marriott Capitol Hill has 20,000 square feet of event space, including a ballroom seating 210 for banquets and a rooftop terrace. The Morrow Washington DC, Curio Collection by Hilton has 203 guest rooms and more than 11,400 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space, including a ballroom that opens onto a terrace and has a capacity of 250 for receptions. Other

hotels with event space include the 204-room Hilton Garden Inn, Washington DC/U.S. Capitol, with 3,090 square feet of function space, and 200-room Hyatt Place Washington DC/US Capitol, with 1,600 square feet of function space.

Penn Quarter & Chinatown

Located just north of Pennsylvania Avenue, the adjacent neighborhoods of Penn Quarter and Chinatown are home to historic and new attractions, major hotels and boutique inns, and significant memorials.

Chinatown is easily identified by the 60-foot-high Friendship Arch, one of the largest ceremonial arches of its kind outside of China.

Installed in 1985 and restored in 2002, the arch features traditional colorful tiles and 284 painted and sculptured dragons. Chinatown was once home to thousands of Chinese immigrants, but now is one of the city's most varied neighborhoods, with culturally diverse restaurants and shops.

Penn Quarter is home to the Walter E. Washington Convention Center and the 20,000-seat Capital One Arena, a multipurpose sports and entertainment venue (home to the NBA's Washington Wizards and NHL's Washington Capitals). Set to complete a six-phase, \$800 million redesign in 2028, the arena currently can host 2,500 for receptions and seat 1,000 for banquets.

The LEED Platinum-certified, 2.3 million-square-foot Walter E. Washington Convention Center features 703,000 square feet of exhibition space on two levels, 198,000 square feet of meeting space across 77 rooms, and a 52,000-square-foot ballroom seating 4,600 guests theater style. The convention center is Metro-accessible, with a dedicated stop, and is walkable to neighborhood restaurants, downtown museums, nightlife, and the National Mall.

Connecting to the convention center via an underground concourse is the 1,175-room Marriott Marquis Washington, DC. The hotel has 100,474 square feet of function space across 80 event rooms, including a

Seeking Wellness in D.C.

More than just a center of politics, Washington, D.C., offers visitors ways and means to find balance and recharge mind, body, and soul through culture, art, spirituality, community, memorable dining, and green spaces.

Soothe the body

Attendees seeking serenity may not need to venture beyond their hotel. Waldorf Astoria Washington DC, Willard Intercontinental Washington, and The Ritz-Carlton Georgetown Washington DC all offer spa experiences that go beyond the expected. The spa at Four Seasons Washington DC provides a forest-bathing immersion massage experience and a meditation ritual. At Salamander Washington DC, guests may choose a holistic spa journey with treatments featuring wild-harvested plants and botanicals. The Morrow has special weekly complimentary wellness programs, such as yoga, spiritual Pilates, and evening tea and meditation. The Hay-Adams features programs designed to engage the mind, including an author series and intimate music salons.

Eat and drink mindfully

According to Destination DC, innovative D.C. restaurants are transforming dining and drinking into mindful, full-body sensory experiences. El Cielo, a MICHELIN-star modernist Colombian restaurant, invites guests to begin their journey with its signature "chocotherapy," bathing their hands in warm coffee- and sugar-infused chocolate as a meditative prelude to a tasting meal. At Minibar, chef José Andrés' avant-garde

concept, a "sensory journey" begins with a signature cocktail flight designed to engage all five senses, followed by a tasting menu shared in a communal experience. Residents Cafe & Bar integrates a curated playlist with lush greenery and flowers to heighten the experience of taste, sound, and sight.

Mindful drinking—no- or low-alcohol cocktails—is on the rise at many D.C. bars and restaurants, including Binge Bar, D.C.'s first alcohol-free bar, as well as Metrobar, Old Ebbitt Grill, Moon Rabbit, and The Red Hen.

Exercise body and mind

Run, hike, bike, ride, and boat at Rock Creek Park, a nearly 1,800-acre national park oasis in the heart of D.C. Established in 1890, the park has 32 miles of hiking trails and paths, picnic areas, bridle paths (with horseback riding lessons and guided trail rides), tennis courts, and fishing areas.

Boating in DC partners with the National Park Service to provide kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, rowboats, and other watercraft for exploring Rock Creek, canals, and the Potomac River. A paddle on the Potomac is a unique way to view the city's iconic monuments.

Forest bathing, a Japanese therapy practice designed to engage multiple senses in a natural environment, can be done under the full moon at the U.S. National Arboretum with a guided class.

At Meridian Hill Park, participants may join a weekly drum circle.

Many city parks have a regular schedule of yoga and tai chi classes.

Reflect on the arts

From the National Gallery of Art—home to the only da Vinci painting in the country—to The Phillips Collection's more than 6,000 pieces of modern and contemporary art to dozens of small galleries and creative spaces tucked away in neighborhoods throughout the city, D.C. is an art-lover's dream. Visitors can make reservations for tours (suggested a month in advance) to discover artworks and historic artifacts at federal buildings like the State Department, the U.S. Capitol, and the Treasury Department.

Seek spirituality

Perhaps the best-known Christian church in D.C., the Washington National Cathedral welcomes persons of all faiths and is frequently the site of interfaith and ecumenical services. The National Cathedral offers group tours by reservation, as well as programs on spirituality, special exhibits, behind-the-scenes tours, lectures, organ demonstrations, and musical events.

According to Destination DC, other major religious sites in the city include Franciscan Monastery and Memorial Church of the Holy Land, with free tours, a monthly music series, and 42 acres of gardens; the nondenominational United House of Prayer for All People, offering daily sunrise, noon, and evening services; the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the largest Catholic Church in America; the Islamic Center of DC, situated on Embassy Row; the Museum of the Bible, with more than 40,000 objects related to Bible history; and the Capital Jewish Museum, located inside the oldest surviving synagogue in D.C.



Visitors can take advantage of approximately 7,000 Capital Bikeshare rentals throughout the region.

30,600-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 3,500 guests. It is one of the country's largest hotels to earn Silver LEED certification. Both the convention center and hotel are members of the Destination DC Sustainability District.

Two blocks from the convention center is CityCenterDC, a 10-acre mixed-use shopping, dining, and entertainment destination with condominiums, apartments, office buildings, and a public park. Several popular restaurants at CityCenter offer private dining spaces, including Del Frisco's Double Eagle Steak House, Estuary, and Centrolina. The Museum of Illusions at CityCenter offers a unique space for parties, corporate events, and teambuilding, featuring more than 50 exhibits and special programs.

Part of CityCenterDC, Conrad Washington DC has 360 guest rooms and nearly 32,000 square feet of function space, including a grand ballroom, a rooftop terrace, and other outdoor venues. Other area hotels include Grand Hyatt Washington and The Westin DC Downtown, both Destination DC Sustainability District members. Grand Hyatt Washington features 902 recently renovated guest rooms and suites, offers lobby access to the Metro, and is expected to open a new restaurant concept

and complete renovation of more than 43,000 square feet of meeting space early this year. Currently, the hotel's Independence Ballroom can accommodate 2,050 for receptions or 1,210 for banquets. The Westin DC Downtown offers 807 guest rooms and 77,872 square feet of function space, including 25 breakout rooms and a 19,000-square-foot ballroom with a capacity of 950. Additional hotels with event space include the 181-room Riggs Washington DC, with 4,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor rooftop event space; 184-room Kimpton Hotel Monaco Washington DC, with more than 5,500 square feet of function space and additional courtyard and private dining space; and 445-room Arlo Hotel, which incorporates and preserves the city's oldest apartment building, dating from 1882, with 4,287 square feet of function space, a courtyard, and rooftop indoor/outdoor lounge space.

Unique theater venues in the neighborhoods include historic Ford's Theatre, which offers group tours and experiences in a working theater restored to reflect its appearance the night President Lincoln was assassinated; Shakespeare Theatre Company, which has two theaters, seating 437 and 761 guests, and additional space to host receptions of up to 500

guests; and the 1,950-seat Warner Theatre, a restored 1920s-era building with space to host 800 for receptions and 500 for banquets. Each theater has a full lineup of productions.

Additional offsite event spaces in Penn Quarter and Chinatown include the National Union Building, with 27,000 square feet of event space over seven floors, and Puttery DC, an indoor mini-golf venue with three themed courses, two bars, and pre-set or customizable space for teambuilding or social events of up to 600 guests. The National Law Enforcement Museum offers exhibits, programs, and special events, and features a 100-seat theater, a main gallery with a capacity of 450 guests, a boardroom, and smaller meeting rooms. The recently renovated and expanded Visitor's Center at the U.S. Navy Memorial has exhibits and interactive displays illustrating the story of the men and women of the Sea Services. Venues at the memorial include The Arleigh & Roberta Burke Theater (222 seating capacity) and a commemorative plaza, along with The Gallery Deck and the Delbert D. Black National Chief's Mess, which are available separately or can be combined to accommodate up to 120 people for dinners or 300 for receptions.

Southwest & The Wharf

D.C.'s Southwest waterfront blends rich history with modern redevelopment. Located along the Potomac River, the area is anchored by The Wharf, a mile-long mixed-use development featuring upscale dining, major music venues, public piers, luxury hotels, and the historic Municipal Fish Market. The Anthem, an acoustically advanced 6,000-seat concert hall located at The Wharf, is flexible for large conferences and galas; it can accommodate 1,200 for seated dinners or 3,000 for cocktails. Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater has more than 14,000 square feet of space for all types of events. Pearl Street Warehouse features a built-in stage and onsite catering for 300. Other outdoor options include District Pier (800 capacity) and Transit Pier (700 capacity), the latter of which houses The Wharf Ice Rink, D.C.'s only over-water rink, which is available November through February for private events of up to 120. Culture House DC, an art gallery in a repurposed 1886 church, offers 15,000 square feet of flexible indoor and outdoor space for events of up to 600 people.

The 373-room Salamander Washington DC offers more than 36,000 square feet of event space; its Grand Ballroom accommodates up to 1,170 guests. Leed Gold-certified InterContinental Washington D.C. – The Wharf has 278 luxury guest rooms and more than 17,000 square feet of event space; its largest venue, the Waterside Ballroom, accommodates up to 700 guests seated theater style or 630 reception style. The Pendry Washington DC has 131 guest rooms and more than 7,500 square feet of event space. Two LEED Gold-certified properties, Canopy by Hilton Washington DC The Wharf and Hyatt House Washington DC/The Wharf, together offer 412 guest rooms and more than 3,300 square feet of event space.

From fine-dining establishments with waterfront views to casual, walk-up kiosks and international cuisine, Southwest & The Wharf has an eclectic range of dining options. Sea Table D.C. offers intimate dining—under the direction of MICHELIN-star awarded chef Troy Knapp—for up to six people aboard a 47-foot sailing yacht. The acclaimed Afro-Caribbean restaurant Dōgon, led by celebrity chef Kwame Onwuachi, is available for private dinners or buyouts.

Groups can also explore the water by renting kayaks or paddleboards from Wharf Boathouse



The 163-acre Smithsonian National Zoological Park in Woodley Park offers free admission and features more than 2,200 animals and more than a dozen unique event spaces; in addition, the entire zoo is available for buyouts of up to 10,000 people.

or electric powerboats from Float DC. For a taste of local history, groups might explore the Municipal Fish Market, the nation's longest continually operating open-air fish market.

Upper Northwest/ Woodley Park

D.C.'s prestigious Upper Northwest community blends suburban charm and city amenities. Part of the Connecticut Avenue Campus, the area features historic neighborhoods like Woodley Park, upscale shopping, and iconic landmarks like the National Cathedral and the Smithsonian National Zoo.

The 834-room Omni Shoreham Hotel is a campus anchor with a 90-year history of hosting presidents, world leaders, and even The Beatles. Set on 11 acres, it boasts 100,000 square feet of event space across 23 rooms. Its 15,718-square-foot ballroom accommodates 1,500 people for banquets and 3,500 for receptions, while an exhibit hall fits 165 booths. Guests can enjoy a heated resort pool and proximity to Rock Creek National Park for jogging and horseback riding. For smaller gatherings, the 154-room Glover Park Hotel offers three event space options and,

in its largest configuration, can host 180 for receptions. Additional guest accommodations in the area include the budget-friendly Days Inn by Wyndham Washington DC/Connecticut Avenue, which offers 155 guest rooms and was renovated in 2024.

The Washington National Cathedral offers stunning spaces for intimate meetings or grand galas with up to 1,600 guests. The onsite Virginia Mae Center provides 30,000 square feet of event space and overnight accommodations for 23. Adjacent venues at the National Cathedral School include Grace Chapel (300 capacity), historic Hearst Hall, and the picturesque Oak Courtyard for cocktails. In McLean Gardens, the McLean Gardens Ballroom accommodates 350 for receptions or 160 for seated events. Lebanese Taverna in Woodley Park, Guapo's in Tenleytown, and Barcelona Wine Bar in Cathedral Heights offer private dining and diverse menus. The Smithsonian National Zoological Park in Woodley Park offers free admission and more than a dozen unique event spaces. Its largest area, Great Cats Circle, can accommodate up to 2,000 guests; in addition, the entire zoo is available for buyouts of up to 10,000 people. 🐼

Closing Remarks

New Luxury Hotel Opens on Charleston's Waterfront

By Helen Jacob



Charleston, S.C., debuts a new centerpiece for gatherings with the opening of The Cooper, the city's first luxury waterfront hotel situated along the city's historic harbor. The Cooper marks the first major step in the city's reimagining of its storied waterfront.

Located on the Cooper River, just steps from Joe Riley Waterfront Park, the six-story hotel offers sweeping views of the harbor and the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. Accommodations at The Cooper are designed to feel residential, with 191 guest rooms, including 20 suites, inspired by Charleston's finest coastal homes. Rooms feature neutral color palettes, shiplap detailing, wide-plank light oak floors, and woven textures. Many rooms include Juliette balconies or private balconies with unobstructed views of the water and the city. Guest rooms feature walk-in showers, while suites offer soaking tubs.

Additional amenities include boutique retail shops, a 7,000-square-foot wellness spa, a saltwater infinity pool overlooking the harbor, and a private marina offering direct access to Charleston Harbor.

Dining is a major component of the hotel's appeal, with four distinct venues overlooking the water. The Crossing, a refined second-floor restaurant open to the public, draws inspiration from Mediterranean influences while incorporating local ingredients and Southern hospitality. CurrentBurger offers a modern take on a classic soda shop, serving smashburgers, fries, and milkshakes from a walk-up window. Cooper Coffee & Wine—overlooking the hotel's marina—transitions from an elevated coffee and breakfast spot by day to an intimate wine bar by night. Bar Marti, a guests-only poolside venue on the fourth floor, serves coastal fare and cocktails in an open-air setting.

While the hotel's design, dining, and marina are notable draws, its scale and flexibility for meetings and gatherings set it apart in the local market. The Cooper offers 20,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space, designed to accommodate everything from corporate conferences and board retreats to weddings, galas, and large-scale community celebrations.

An outdoor centerpiece, the 9,000-square-foot waterfront Grand Lawn can accommodate up to 900 guests. The Grand Lawn is part of a landscaped plaza and promenade that connects directly to Joe Riley Waterfront Park, providing a seamless flow between the hotel and the surrounding public waterfront.

Indoors, the Asten Ballroom spans 5,655 square feet and seats up to 300 guests. The space features upholstered wall panels, classical architectural details, wood accents, and statement lighting. It can be divided into four smaller rooms and is complemented by 2,250 square feet of pre-function space and a 1,500-square-foot terrace overlooking Charleston Harbor. Additional options include the Salon, a flexible meeting space with floor-to-ceiling windows and a private balcony, and Palmer Boardroom, an intimate 10-seat room featuring a custom nautical-chart table and providing river views.

"As the only luxury waterfront hotel in the heart of the Charleston peninsula, The Cooper sets the stage for thoughtfully designed events," says Lukus Grace, managing director. "With 20,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space, including a waterfront lawn overlooking Cooper River, gatherings are seamless, memorable, and effortlessly elegant." 🍷

EXPECT

HOMEGROWN HOSPITALITY

From conferences to corporate retreats, set your sights on planning your next meeting in the heart of South Carolina. Here, the unexpected becomes the expected. You might be surprised to find yourself smack dab in a buzzing urban scene at South Carolina's only downtown convention center or walking along our rivers that flow through the city after the meeting wraps. But to us? This is just where we've set the bar. Discover a brand new attendee experience for yourself and learn more at ExperienceColumbiaSC.com/Meetings-Conventions

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