



LEVERAGING LOCAL INNOVATION IN THE LAS VEGAS MEETINGS INDUSTRY

Presented by

Skift. + *LAS Vegas*

SKIFT SUMMARY



Adobe Summit 2018

The growth of advanced industries in Southern Nevada provides an opportunity for Las Vegas to elevate its value proposition for hosting meetings and conventions in those industries. The increasing volume of innovative companies based in the region – especially in technology and healthcare – represents significant, yet underutilized, assets that meeting planners and decision-makers can integrate into their programming.

Today, destinations worldwide are leveraging their local knowledge capital and innovation economy more intentionally to differentiate themselves. In Las Vegas, hospitality and tourism leaders have a legitimate advantage to position the city as a global incubator of innovation in everything from brain science to artificial intelligence, among many other advanced industry segments.

Doing so benefits the local meetings and events industry in two important ways.

First, it gives meeting planners and decision-makers a host of new opportunities to attract a higher quality and variety of exhibitors, sponsors, speakers, educators, members, and business partners. As well, local tourism and hospitality stakeholders are better able to speak the same industry language with outside prospects, because they can tap into the growing array of local ambassadors fluent in Southern Nevada's high-growth sectors.

Second, the rise of intellectual capital in advanced industries in Las Vegas has a direct influence on the destination brand within the meetings marketplace. That gives Las Vegas a new story to tell conference organizers, showcasing the level of local sector expertise and knowledge sharing taking place during many high-profile events in the city.

Las Vegas is home to world-leading tech conferences such as CES, IBM Think, and Adobe Summit, as well as major medical conferences in every field of healthcare. Las Vegas, therefore, is where the world's brightest minds come together to discuss the very future of digital transformation, mobility and connectivity, wellness and longevity, and other innovations helping people live and work more productively.

"Las Vegas is about seeing the future," said Gary Shapiro, CEO of the Consumer Technology Association, which produces the annual CES conference in Las Vegas every January. That's basically the tagline for Las Vegas in the global meetings and events industry.

Today, public and private stakeholders throughout Southern Nevada are collaborating more strategically to expand the Las Vegas brand as a global intellectual capital in the region's priority sectors. This report shows how local government, academic, community, and industry leaders can strengthen existing linkages between the local visitor economy and local innovation economy to better engage the world's thought leaders – and the people who plan their meetings and events.



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ABOUT SKIFT

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EXECUTIVE LETTER



Las Vegas is a world-recognized leader in the tourism and convention industries. The city continually evolves and reinvents itself to ensure the greatest possible experience for all visitors. That reinvention is now taking shape through the increasing attraction of companies and industries that are innovating Las Vegas and the world.

Las Vegas was developed and has grown through the vision and entrepreneurial spirit of business leaders who were willing to take chances. The innovators of the future have that same drive to succeed, and Las Vegas is taking steps to welcome those visionary leaders. By embracing these new industries with the innovation district and the medical district, Las Vegas stands to be on the forefront of several new industries. And, as always, the destination is once again reinventing itself to maintain its leading reputation as the business and leisure travel capital.

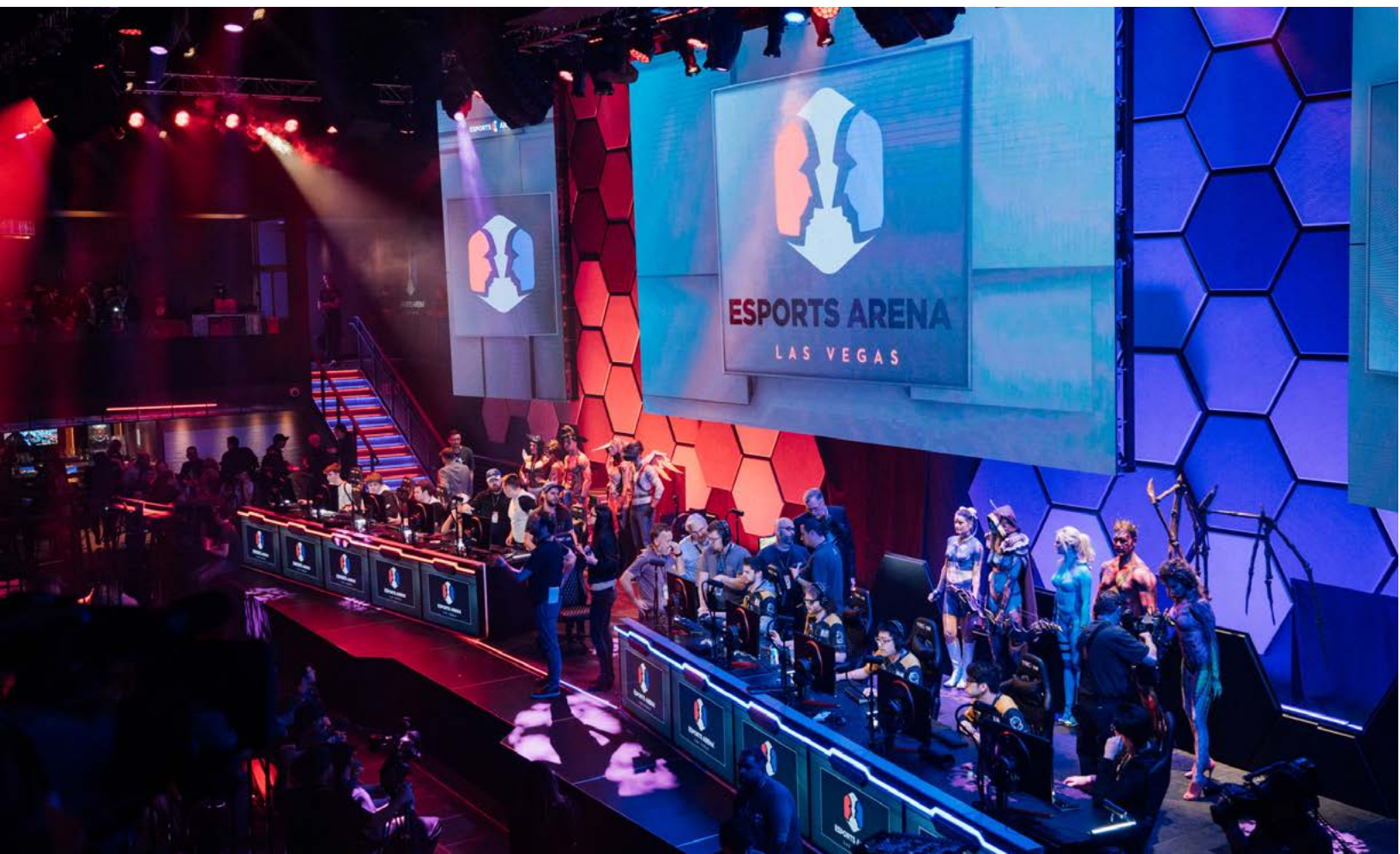
By partnering with the meeting and convention industry, innovators are finding the resources and contacts necessary to realize their visions. With all of the leading companies and industries traveling through Las Vegas for various conferences and trade shows, the ability to collaborate and share ideas is made easier.

Las Vegas' tourism-driven economy, which thrives on customer service, is the perfect atmosphere for collaboration and innovation.

Sincerely,

Rossi Ralenkotter
Chief Executive Officer,
Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

INTRODUCTION: A NEW COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE IN THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY



Esports Arena, Luxor Las Vegas

Las Vegas has a long legacy of innovation. It gave birth to the integrated full-service resort, completely changing how people travel and connect during leisure and business trips worldwide. The city was never gifted many natural resources. Instead, Las Vegas evolved as “The Entertainment Capital of the World” from scratch, because a lot of creative people invented innovative solutions in urban design and architecture, energy and resource management, business and marketing strategy, and hospitality and tourism development.

That also made Las Vegas one of the world's most popular destinations for meetings and conventions. The high volume of air access, hotel rooms, meeting space capacity, convenience, value, and entertainment options gives the city a significant competitive advantage against other North American destinations.

However, the competitive landscape in the meetings industry is evolving.

Even though Las Vegas welcomed record visitor arrivals in recent years, there are a number of factors shifting how meeting decision-makers are sourcing host cities. Local stakeholders should be cognizant of those to ensure continued leadership in the meetings marketplace.

One factor is the rise of development in urban centers that Las Vegas hasn't previously competed against. New York, Chicago, Dallas, Orlando, and a few other major U.S. metropolitan areas no longer make up the city's sole competitive set.

Today, Phoenix, Denver, San Antonio, Nashville, Philadelphia, Calgary, and other midsize North American cities are investing billions of dollars in new hotels, airports, public transportation, and convention centers. As those cities grow their infrastructure and visitor economy, and therefore attract new air routes, they are becoming more attractive to meeting planners and attendees considering alternative destinations.

The second major factor is the focus of this report.

Following the global recession, many large convention bureaus around the world began promoting their local innovation economy and knowledge base to planners. Cities such as Berlin, Manchester, Singapore, and Sydney were facing a surge of new emerging meetings destinations competing for their market share in a down economy.

To adapt and evolve, they started promoting their clusters of industry expertise in IT and technology, medicine and healthcare, energy and renewables, creative and digital media, aerospace and aviation, advanced manufacturing, and other high-priority growth sectors.

For example, when the BBC moved some of its facilities from London to MediaCityUK in Manchester in 2012, that sparked a wave of growth in Manchester's digital and media industries. Visit Manchester, therefore, leveraged that growth in expertise to attract and develop more conventions in the digital tech and media sectors.

This is now a worldwide megatrend. Inspired by the success of those global city initiatives, many other convention bureaus of all sizes are now expanding beyond the role of brokers of hotel beds and meeting spaces to brokers of innovation. They're now marketing the access they can provide for outside organizations to engage local leaders throughout their advanced and creative industries with increasing emphasis.

“Many global convention bureaus are expanding beyond the role of brokers of hotel beds and meeting spaces to brokers of innovation.”

— Skift

There are many examples of this in the U.S. today. Destination D.C. developed meeting planner-facing research promoting the strength of its tech sector to attract tech-related conferences. Visit Seattle is now engaging planners by showing how it provides access to leaders at Microsoft, Boeing, and Amazon. San Diego is leveraging its clusters in clean tech and life sciences to draw conferences in those sectors; Raleigh is promoting its Research Triangle to attract IT conferences; Orlando and Denver are building new medical cities to enhance their healthcare clusters and medical meetings business; and San Antonio is collaborating with local military institutions to engage planners in telemedicine and cybersecurity.

Las Vegas, too, is home to a growing number of companies driving significant advancements in technology and medicine.

The autonomous NAVYA shuttle in Downtown Las Vegas represents one of the two most advanced driverless vehicle ecosystems in the world, bringing together a convergence of technologies in artificial intelligence, smart cities and the Internet of Things. Likewise, Aptiv and Lyft are rolling out autonomous ride-sharing vehicles in Las Vegas this year.

Those are two signature projects anchoring the ongoing development of the Las Vegas Innovation District downtown, designed to test many new urban technologies.

The Innovation Economy

Economist Joseph Schumpeter introduced the concept of an innovation economy in his 1942 book, “Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy.” He asserted that the strategic convergence of institutions, entrepreneurs, and new technologies advance economic growth most effectively.

Today, usage of “innovation economy” is mainstream in the U.S., while other nations prefer “knowledge economy.”

According to The Brookings Institution: “Innovation and entrepreneurship are crucial for long-term economic development. Over the years, America’s well-being has been furthered by science and technology. Both public and private sector investment created jobs, built industries, fueled innovation, and propelled the U.S. to leadership in a number of different fields.”

In the medical sector, Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas is attracting some of the country's leading experts in cognitive medicine. It's also located downtown next to the Las Vegas Medical District, which is home to the new UNLV School of Medicine. The Medical District is being developed to host the city's cluster of leading healthcare providers and academic researchers in close proximity, replicating the success of similar medical-related infrastructure projects in many large cities globally.

As shown later in this report, local leaders in both the Las Vegas Innovation District and the Las Vegas Medical District are eager to work with the local hospitality and tourism industry. They're hungry for opportunities to explore how they can connect with visiting organizations in aligned industries during tech and medical conventions in the city.

As well, local hospitality executives and outside meeting planners emphasize that they also want to engage the innovation economy in Las Vegas more aggressively. Their shared goal is to elevate their value by providing a richer and more productive convention experience for visiting delegates in tech and medicine.

The supply and demand for knowledge sharing in advanced industries are already in place in Las Vegas. It's time to connect the dots more strategically – and promote the rising convergence of local industry expertise to meeting planners and decision-makers around the world – to continue the long legacy of innovation in Southern Nevada.



Aptiv + Lyft driverless ride-sharing vehicle

REIMAGINING LAS VEGAS AS AN INNOVATION INCUBATOR



Crescent Dunes Solar Energy Plant outside Las Vegas

Southern Nevada evolved more than most other destinations in North America during the last decade, especially in terms of diversifying its economy. That growth represents a new story for local stakeholders to share to help elevate the Las Vegas brand in the global meetings and events marketplace.

According to the Office of Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval: "Nevada maintained the highest private sector job growth in the United States through the first half of 2017. [Also] the demand for skilled workers in Nevada's STEM industries (requiring knowledge in science, technology, engineering, and math) is growing 41 percent faster than jobs in non-STEM industries."

Las Vegas also has a higher percentage of job growth in STEM industries compared against other U.S. cities. According to the Praxis Strategy Group, Las Vegas ranked among the top 10 metro regions in 2017 showing year-over-year growth in STEM employment.

Furthermore, LinkedIn's February 2018 Workforce Report reads: "Since February 2017, Las Vegas has risen from #9 to #4 on our list of cities gaining the most workers. This growth in people moving to Las Vegas represents a 44 percent increase compared to a year ago." Skills with the highest demand include software development and electronic engineering, which LinkedIn suggests "reflects the maturation of Las Vegas' economy beyond the entertainment and hospitality industries."

The Nevada Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) and the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance (LVGEA) have prioritized economic diversity since the global recession, when the state was hit harder than most because so much tax revenue relied on tourism dollars and disposable income. Toward that end, the two economic development organizations identified the greatest opportunities for business development and job growth in the following seven key sectors to further commercialize local innovation:

- 1. Gaming, Tourism, and Conventions**
- 2. Health Care and Life Sciences**
- 3. Business and IT Ecosystems**
- 4. Logistics, Manufacturing, and Assembly**
- 5. Clean Technology**
- 6. Defense and Unmanned Aerial Systems**
- 7. Global Finance, Banking, and Business Services**

Those seven sectors represent a true north for the Las Vegas meetings and events industry. They all provide a wellspring of growing talent, expertise, resources, and knowledge that can be leveraged to attract conferences specifically related to those sectors.

"Las Vegas is maturing as a place, and we're becoming more known for developing other industries here in Southern Nevada beyond gaming and hospitality," said Steve Hill, President and COO of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA). "That provides additional connections for our meetings and convention people. It also provides additional credibility, and it provides an additional market for some shows who are potentially looking at Las Vegas to locate."

"Las Vegas is maturing as a place, and we're becoming more known for developing other industries here in Southern Nevada beyond gaming and hospitality."

— Steve Hill, President and COO, LVCVA

The following data, supplied by the LVGEA, illustrates the growth of the technology and medical/healthcare sectors in Southern Nevada from 2010 to 2016:

Software publishing

276.32% growth in establishments/companies
82.42% growth in employees

Internet publishing

73.74% growth in establishments/companies
78.85% growth in employees

Data processing and hosting

62.79% growth in establishments/companies
251.10% growth in employees

Medical and Healthcare

29.16% growth in employees (2010 – 2016)
24.98% growth in employers (2010 – 2016)

Jared Smith, Chief Operating Officer of the LVGEA, attributes the growth of the tech industry in Southern Nevada since the global recession to a variety of factors. Among them, he says, is the burdensome regulation, high taxation, and higher cost of living in neighboring markets. The priority now, he says, is to support workforce development in Southern Nevada to grow and attract talent in technology to staff all of the new companies investing in the region.

“The future of any city’s workforce relies on its ability to train, attract, and retain an information technology workforce,” said Smith. “Southern Nevada is fortunate because it has a hidden and growing tech workforce inside the hospitality industry, as these companies leverage the Internet of Things, invest in game development and design, and hire more data and security professionals.”

In addition to that, Smith stresses that everyone in the region understands the value of close collaboration between local economic development, tourism, and academia to drive continued growth.

“The LVGEA, LVCVA, UNLV and other stakeholders have worked together repeatedly in strategic outreach to companies interested in expanding to the Western U.S.,” explained Smith. “We have great partners already in the region that are helping to continually spur growth in the tech sector. Switch and ViaWest are just two examples of companies that are advancing the state’s role as an innovation hub by increasing the efficiency, speed and sustainability in the region’s tech ecosystem.”



The Las Vegas Convention Center District

THE FUTURE OF THE LAS VEGAS MEETINGS BRAND

The **Las Vegas Convention Center District** is undergoing a massive expansion and renovation that will enhance the levels of connectivity, mobility, and capacity in and around the Las Vegas Convention Center. The \$1.4 billion project includes a new 600,000 square-foot exhibition hall scheduled for completion in January 2021.

The public and private sectors in Southern Nevada are continually investing in the region's tourism and meetings infrastructure to elevate the Las Vegas leisure brand. However, all of the new developments in Southern Nevada's innovation economy are also shaping the city's brand image in the global meetings sector.

The new UNLV School of Medicine; the surge of esports, drone, and autonomous vehicle technologies in the region; and the growth of tech companies locally, such as Switch and Zappos, are all influencing how meeting decision-makers think of Las Vegas.

"The reputational benefit from those types of things is significant in terms of broadening the perception of Las Vegas," said Steve Hill at the LVCVA. "Everybody knows you can come to Las Vegas and have an absolutely great time, but now people are starting to understand that they can have a deeper intellectual experience here, as well. We have all these centers

of excellence now, and I think we're just starting to appreciate how they can supplement our efforts at securing and hosting conventions."

The next step is showing meeting planners the new face of Las Vegas' meetings and events ecosystem celebrating innovation on a global scale. Toward that end, the **LVCVA.com** website is being redeveloped to integrate the rise of the local innovation economy.

According to Cathy Tull, Chief Marketing Officer at the LVCVA, the overarching goal is to show meeting planners and decision-makers how they can engage area leaders in advanced industries to deliver higher business outcomes for their events.

"It's really exciting that Las Vegas is becoming a hub of technology, but because we've evolved so quickly, most people aren't aware of everything that's happening here right now," said Tull. "So we're continually exploring how meeting planners can benefit from all of these new synergies that exist with so many innovative companies expanding in Las Vegas."

From a brand standpoint, the messaging around tech and medical industry expertise is not replacing how the LVCVA typically promotes the destination to planners. The expansion of the Las Vegas Convention Center; all of the new hotel, restaurant, bar, and entertainment developments; and all of the other partner news will always be front and center.

Rather, Tull explains, the story about how planners can tap into the rise of the local innovation economy is a natural extension of how the city has always stayed in front of industry trends to provide the most value to planners.

"We need to always make sure that when people come here for meetings, tradeshows, and conventions, they know they're bringing their meetings to a destination that's on the forward leading edge of this innovation conversation," explained Tull. "Las Vegas has always excelled at connecting the dots. Before, that revolved around hospitality. Now, we're connecting the dots between our innovation economy and hospitality sector, which is our core economy. We just need to make sure we're all telling the same story."

"We're continually exploring how meeting planners can benefit from all of these new synergies that exist with so many innovative companies expanding in Las Vegas."

— Cathy Tull, Chief Marketing Officer, LVCVA

Q+A: ANGELO VARRONE, CEO, EXPONATION

Exponation is an Atlanta-based event management company that has produced trade shows in the technology sector for the past 15 years. It operates Digital Signage Expo and LightShow West in Las Vegas, and other trade shows around the country.



This year, Exponation is launching the inaugural Connected TechExpo in October 2018 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, exploring the future of the Internet of Things (IoT).

Angelo Varrone, CEO of Exponation, discussed how the growing innovation economy in Southern Nevada is benefiting event decision-makers in the tech sector.

Skift: What factors led to the launch of Connected TechExpo this year in Las Vegas?

Angelo Varrone: We're closely tied to the LED lighting market, which is an industry essentially revolutionizing itself and a number of ancillary technologies, such as full building systems and smart homes. There's some amazing stuff happening because of the combination of Wi-Fi and the ability for different devices to be identified on networks. Lights used to be lights, but now lights can be a light and a speaker, or lights and a camera. So, we know the future is clearly all about connected technology.

Skift: Why do you host your events in Las Vegas?

Angelo Varrone: I can't think of a better technology center than Las Vegas. I mean, all the major technology shows stage in Las Vegas, and the hotels are really leading edge there when it comes to technology. On top of that, Las Vegas is a very familiar and favorable destination for attendees where they can get business done.

Skift: With Las Vegas leading the country in emerging industries, such as autonomous vehicles, AI-powered drones, and esports, how does that benefit people who produce meetings, tradeshow and conferences in the city? Especially in terms of attracting more attendees, exhibitors, speakers, sponsors, and business partners?

Angelo Varrone: I didn't know about those things, but I would say that they definitely support more and better attendance, because people are just interested in experiencing

“I can’t think of a better technology center than Las Vegas. All the major technology shows stage in Las Vegas, and the hotels are really leading edge there when it comes to technology.”

— Angelo Varrone, CEO, Exponation

and learning about those things. That is also a great way for Las Vegas to show its leadership in the whole technology sector by providing access to that innovation.

Skift: The Las Vegas Innovation District downtown is designed as an urban lab to test emerging technologies in IoT, like the autonomous shuttle. Is that something that the city should promote more to event decision-makers in advanced industries?

Angelo Varrone: Yes. It’s important from a standpoint of smart cities, where you can explore the connected technology mentality and functionality. So, when you have a city that is leading those industries as you just described, it makes for a better experience. It makes people more eager to be part of that.

Skift: CES this year in Las Vegas launched its inaugural Smart Cities Marketplace track. That’s really talking about the future of connectivity and mobility, which applies to not just what you do, but all technology companies. Are those themes you would like to learn more about from the LVCVA and its partners?

Angelo Varrone: Yes, it’s very important, and Las Vegas has always been a leader in that area, versus other convention centers and cities. I mean, they’re far more proactive in helping organizers connect with the resources they need and the people they need to make their show successful. The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority readily assists us with promoting attendance and finding sources and exhibitors relevant to our industry.

Skift: Overall, then, it benefits event producers in tech like you when Las Vegas promotes the local innovation economy and volume and variety of leaders in the tech sector.

Angelo Varrone: Yes, it gets back to Las Vegas promoting its full capabilities, and you never know what will attract someone to a city. The industry there should communicate every benefit they have about how we can work together in emerging technologies.

CES: RETHINKING LAS VEGAS AS A GLOBAL INNOVATION DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL



Gary Shapiro, CEO, Consumer Technology Association

More than 170,000 people attend the annual CES conference in Las Vegas every January to explore the future of global connectivity and mobility. Once considered the world's premier marketplace for tech gadgetry, CES has evolved into a forum highlighting innovation in every sector. In terms of its impact on the city, CES has elevated the image of Las Vegas as a global innovation distribution channel, similar to what SXSW has done for Austin.

"Las Vegas is a place where people go to learn, to be inspired, and develop relationships — Las Vegas is about seeing the future," said Gary Shapiro, CEO of the Consumer Technology Association, which produces CES. He believes that the event will eventually top 200,000 attendees because every brand today is undergoing a digital transformation, and CES is the global showcase for next generation digital platforms.

“Las Vegas is a place where people go to learn, to be inspired, and develop relationships – Las Vegas is about seeing the future.”

– Gary Shapiro, CEO, Consumer Technology Association

“CES is the largest innovation event in the world, but it’s really at the CXO level where people come from every different industry to see the intersection between their worlds with the future of technology,” Shapiro added. “Technology affects everyone, from agriculture to broadcasting to automotive to content to travel to leisure to everything.”

Hospitality, tourism, meetings, and hotel/travel technology are all central to the future of connectivity, mobility, and digital transformation. Therefore, as a global leader in those areas, Las Vegas has a cluster of expertise directly linked to the future of how communities collaborate to drive industry and society forward.

Karen Chupka, SVP of CES and Corporate Business Strategy for the Consumer Technology Association, says CES is a catalyst for knowledge sharing within the region. The show is a perfect example of how leaders in the Las Vegas innovation economy are building stronger networks that the city can leverage to engage outside companies more effectively.

“We work with the Nevada Trade and Development Authority to put on some programs during CES that benefit both of our interests,” said Chupka. “For instance, we usually host a breakfast in conjunction with them. Together we invite the local business community, as well as our CES attendees, to participate in a session with a high-profile speaker who talks about how technology is influencing business overall globally.”

That illustrates the power of events in advanced industries to influence policy and drive local innovation. For the first time in 2018, CES had three U.S. governors on stage to discuss state-level strategies to develop new technology more effectively. In recent years, there’s been a greater emphasis on the part of CES to engage political leaders in Nevada more.

“Because CES is in their backyard, there are many government officials in Nevada who are able to attend more easily,” said Chupka. “Therefore, they see what’s coming down the road as far as technology is concerned, and they’re able to put more specific agendas together to go and attract those businesses. That talks a bit about how we help educate people about technology and innovation in Las Vegas at both the city and state level.”



EHang passenger drone

CASE STUDY: NEW FRONTIERS IN DRONE TECH AND AI

The Nevada Institute for Autonomous Systems (NIAS) represents the strongest cluster of industry intelligence in unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in North America. That leading drone tech ecosystem is another good example of how Las Vegas is evolving as a global innovation distribution channel in advanced industries.

The NIAS works with many different private companies to develop new drone technologies, such as EHang, which designs and develops autonomous flying passenger vehicles. Recently, Microsoft also collaborated with the NIAS to test new artificial intelligence capabilities for its autonomous drone platforms.

“Innovative AI technology like what Microsoft tested with NIAS is clearly where the most dramatic global UAS industry disruptions will occur,” said Dr. Chris Walach, Director of the Nevada UAS test site. “Developing and testing AI, or machine learning technology, is going to have multiple applications that will significantly benefit the UAS Industry and the American way of life. This is one of the most exciting developments I have seen over the past several years in Nevada and globally.”

LEVERAGING UNLV AS A HUB OF INTELLECTUAL CAPITAL

Bo Bernhard is Executive Director of the International Gaming Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). He is one of the leading innovation ambassadors in Las Vegas, overseeing a team of academic researchers developing advanced technologies used in hotels and casinos around the world.

“The International Gaming Institute is the world’s largest academic institute dedicated to the study of global gaming, hospitality, and tourism, and to that end, we serve as the global intellectual capital of academic study around those types of entities,” said Bernhard. “With conventions like CES, and the global gaming industry event, G2E, which is a massive convention, Las Vegas is the place where the brightest minds of the world come together.”

On its website homepage, the International Gaming Institute is positioned as a world-leading “Global Intellectual Capital.” That provides precedent for local meetings industry stakeholders to promote the same message for the city. Bernhard says it’s not so much a matter of repositioning Las Vegas in any way, because the hospitality expertise has always been here. It’s more a matter of celebrating, leveraging, and trumpeting it more.

“Las Vegas has always been an innovative place in the tourism age, because we’ve invented things that are every bit as transformative in tourism as the automobile was in the transportation age,” Bernhard said. “The integrated resort, which was invented in Las Vegas, now exists and thrives on all six continents. In fact, these are often the most expensive buildings in the world, in addition to being the most lucrative. And so, I think Las Vegas is maybe under-appreciated as an invention hub. It invented the most successful innovation in our tourism age, and tourism is now 10 percent of the global economy. So, that’s no small force.”



New Harrah's College of Hospitality, UNLV

“Las Vegas is the place where the brightest minds of the world come together.”

— Bo Bernhard, Executive Director, International Gaming Institute, UNLV

The International Gaming Institute is built across three innovation labs, or “centers of excellence” in gaming, hospitality, and esports, and it has the patent applications to back up its status as a world leader in travel and hotel industry technology.

According to UNLV: “In universities across the country, the notion of student-owned and generated patents is fairly unique. But UNLV’s Center for Gaming Innovation created an incubator for both undergraduate and graduate student ideas. The collaborative relationship demonstrates the university’s dedication to protecting students’ intellectual property while offering them a unique learning experience. The center is responsible for filing more than 40 patent applications, resulting in eight issued patents and seven commercialized products since its inception in fall 2013.”

Looking ahead, Bernhard sees the Las Vegas hospitality and tourism industry evolving along the same lines as other clusters prominent in U.S. cities, such as the energy industry in Houston. He says Houston was able to weather the global recession better than a lot of American cities because it’s home to North American and global headquarters for almost every energy company in the world.

“Houston has a large and diverse group of really smart people there in the energy sector to try to figure out how to zig when the economy’s zagging, or how to adjust on the fly as things are really headed south,” Bernhard said. “So Houston, really, has a status as a global intellectual capital, as opposed to just a sales location of energy, or just a business location of energy. That differentiation really allowed it to kind of dodge the bullet during the great recession.”

So how does Las Vegas’ innovation economy in hospitality and tourism compare to the innovation ecosystem surrounding the energy cluster in Houston?

“The global giants in gaming-oriented hospitality and tourism all pretty much live in Las Vegas, and, as a result, the ecosystem is here,” explained Bernhard. “There’s an ecosystem of the best law firms in the world, the best engineering firms in the world, pertaining to this specific entertainment tourism product. Decisions are made in Las Vegas that drive a global tourism economy in much the same way that decisions are made in downtown Houston that drive a global energy industry. So, we really do see a similar parallel process happening and one that we hope to encourage further through UNLV.”

Q+A: ZACH MILES, ASSOCIATE VP, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, UNLV

The mission of the UNLV Research Foundation is to connect UNLV research and technology parks with the corporate community to commercialize intellectual and scientific innovation in the region.

Zach Miles, Associate VP for Economic Development at UNLV, is the Executive Director of the UNLV Research Foundation. He spoke with Skift about the future of economic development in Las Vegas, and how the university can work with corporate leaders and meeting decision-makers visiting Las Vegas.



Zach Miles

Skift: How and why has Las Vegas been successful developing the local tech and medical sectors, and what more needs to be done?

Zach Miles: The need was facilitated by the global economic downturn, when it became even more acute that revenue in Southern Nevada is generated by disposable income from individuals. Everyone in the city realized we needed to have a more diverse economy to help stave off these huge economic downturns, and also to provide other opportunities in the community for students and the diverse groups of people living here. To me, the success started from that. The medical and innovation industries were identified by the state as being priority areas, which included resources for developing the UNLV School of Medicine and the technology sector in Southern Nevada. Now we need to focus on not having too short of a memory. We can't lose sight of how important it is to continue investing in local innovation and education in our priority sectors.

Skift: The Las Vegas Innovation District and UNLV Medical District are both massive undertakings. How will they impact the long-term economic growth of Las Vegas?

Zach Miles: They'll have a significant impact in attracting new companies to the state, and facilitating companies to grow within the state, and a lot of those companies will be very high tech. When that occurs and new innovations take hold, we can attract other industries to the area. The economy will diversify and we'll have significant increases in tax dollars, revenue, jobs for students, and other supporting industries coming to the Valley.

Skift: In the Las Vegas Innovation District, you have NAVYA and Keolis developing the tech and operations behind the autonomous shuttle. Audi tested their Vehicle-to-Infrastructure technology there. So the District is really about how companies can come in and collaborate with a wide variety of tech companies and organizations in the city, right?

Zach Miles: Yeah, exactly, including how they partner with the university and local chambers, and everyone else here. Then we all put in whatever resources we possibly can. The Innovation District is certainly one of the places where we have some type of standing relationship with, as do many other organizations throughout Southern Nevada.

Skift: How does the UNLV Medical District impact the level of local healthcare expertise?

Zach Miles: There's now a much broader ability to conduct research, including clinical trials with large pharmaceutical and medical device organizations. We're educating many more students in the community, attracting doctors to relocate here, increasing the number of medical professionals in the community, and improving services and research with other organizations across the country. People around the country are now becoming aware that Southern Nevada has these resources.

Skift: How would you characterize the impact of Las Vegas conventions in advanced industries on the growth of those industries in the region?

Zach Miles: I think it's huge. I don't think, though, certainly from UNLV's perspective, that we are engaging as closely with conventions as much as we can. That's especially true in terms of exposing UNLV and obviously the surrounding community to convention delegates. I think, if you speak with anyone that's outside the state, they're excited about coming to Las Vegas for a convention, but it's often just to hit the Strip. It's not to see what else is available in the greater Southern Nevada area, as far as space or services or relocating or what's going on at UNLV. I think that conversation is ongoing right now between other universities and others in the convention industry.

Skift: So, it's a matter of more intentional networking and strategic collaboration?

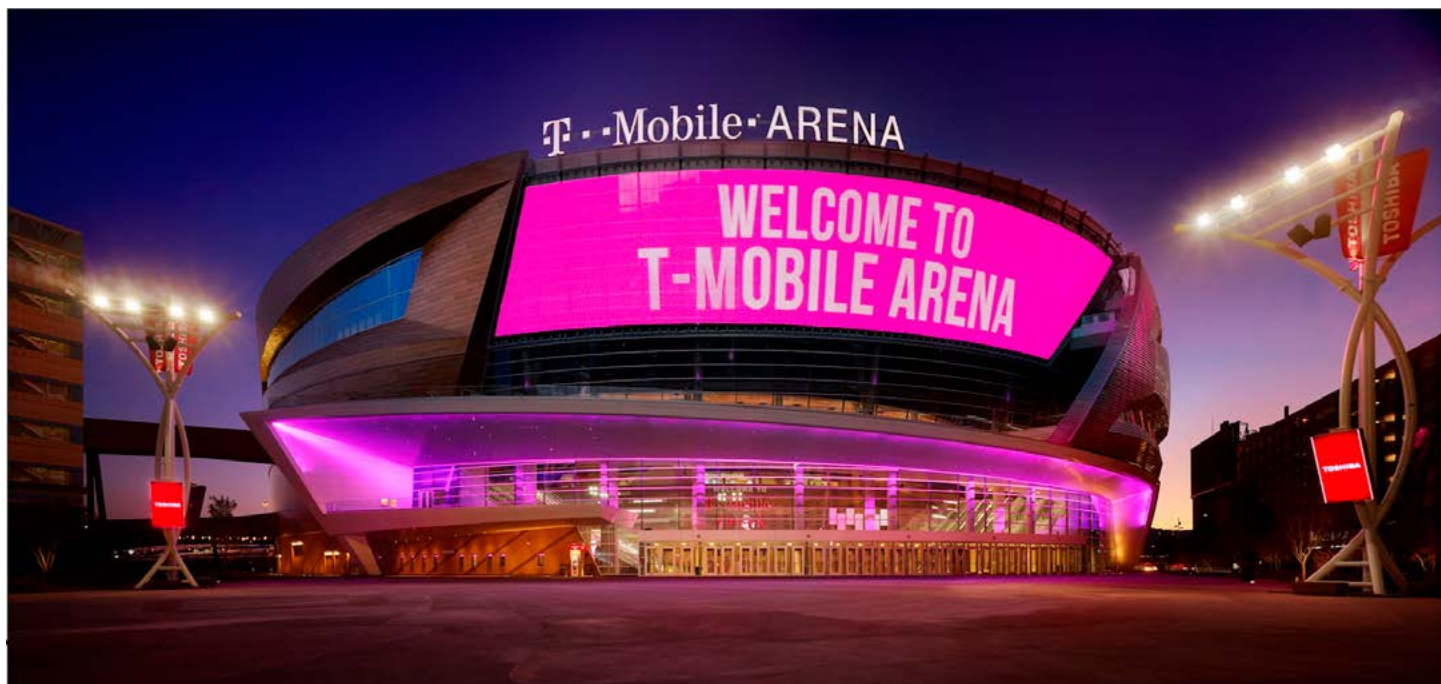
Zach Miles: I think so. We want to be able to identify the top companies that we think we have some type of offering for. And then we really need to have a concerted effort to reach out to them to take them on a tour of Southern Nevada to show what resources are available. We don't always reach out and say, "Come over and spend an hour at UNLV. Let us treat you to lunch, show you around, and have some students come and present on research areas or educational areas that really can benefit your company." I think that really is the conversation that needs to take place more frequently.

LAS VEGAS HOTELS ARE DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL MEETINGS

Hotels in Las Vegas are leading the international hospitality industry in innovation. Here's what that means for meeting organizers and attendees.

- 1> Positioning MGM Resorts as a Platform for Innovation**
- 2> Q+A: Jud Hannigan, CEO, Allied Esports**
- 3> Sands Las Vegas: 'Innovation Is a Brand Pillar'**
- 4> Caesars Entertainment Reinvents the Las Vegas Strip**
- 5> Q+A: Mamie Peers, VP, Digital Marketing, The Cosmopolitan**

POSITIONING MGM RESORTS AS A PLATFORM FOR INNOVATION



MGM Resorts International's T-Mobile Arena

When the new Esports Arena Las Vegas opened in 2018 at Luxor Resort & Casino, operated by MGM Resorts International, it sent a shot across the bow of the gaming, hospitality, and tourism industries. Esports is a massive global business, and more importantly, it's plugged into the heart and minds of the next generation of meeting and event attendees who will be populating the city's hotels for the next few decades.

The launch of the Esports Arena joins a succession of other big developments at MGM Resorts in Las Vegas, including the opening of T-Mobile Arena, The Park Vegas, The Park Theater, and the MGM Park Las Vegas hotel.

Furthermore, in April 2018, MGM Resorts announced a new partnership with Invenergy, North America's largest independent renewable energy company, to develop a new solar photovoltaic array that will generate 100 megawatts of clean energy. The MGM-Invenergy Solar Project will be located 25 miles north of Las Vegas, and MGM Resorts will purchase all of the energy generated by the project to help power its 13 properties on the Las Vegas Strip when it's operational in 2020. Previously, MGM Resorts installed the nation's largest contiguous rooftop solar array in 2016 with the 26,000-panel configuration atop the Mandalay Bay Convention Center.

“We have the capacity to quickly evolve at a scale that would be too cumbersome, too difficult, and frankly, too scary for other companies and communities to attempt.”

— Michael Dominguez, Chief Sales Officer, MGM Resorts

“Protecting the planet is a business imperative for MGM Resorts, and it is our responsibility to find innovative ways where we can use clean energy to power our resorts,” said Jim Murren, Chairman and CEO of MGM Resorts International. “Incorporating renewable energy into MGM’s portfolio will fundamentally reduce MGM’s environmental footprint.”

According to Michael Dominguez, Chief Sales Officer at MGM Resorts International, the spirit of innovation throughout the company to create new guest experiences is what keeps the city competitive on a global stage. The new Esports Arena at an MGM hotel exemplifies that advantage.

“Esports is just like any other sports league, so it’s no different than the NBA or NHL or any other league that has teams, players, and fans, but its online audience is unmatched,” Dominguez said. “Our ability to build what we just built in Luxor is a major statement for the destination of Las Vegas, and for MGM’s commitment to this market.”

He adds that there are few other markets where a hotel group could pull this off, because the city and stakeholders are always reinventing themselves.

“Las Vegas is unique in that we have the capacity to quickly evolve in these verticals at a scale that would be too cumbersome, too difficult, and frankly, too

Stay Well Rooms



MGM Resorts partnered with Delos and Dr. Deepak Chopra (pictured) to develop “Stay Well” guest rooms and meeting spaces. They’re designed to optimize how the human body and brain perform in different commercial environments.

“We worked with Delos to examine the physical aspects of what we’re creating, and how they’re conducive for learning,” said Michael Dominguez, Chief Sales Officer at MGM Resorts.

scary for other companies and communities to attempt,” Dominguez said. “It’s almost a responsibility for us in Las Vegas to be on the front edge of innovation, and we need to continually be making people aware of what’s current and new.”

So, that said, how can Las Vegas hospitality executives work with local leaders in advanced industries in the tech and medical sectors to further enhance the meetings experience?

Dominguez suggests developing further partnerships that embrace new thinking rooted in science and data, much like the Delos collaboration. Could, for example, a hotel group in Las Vegas join forces with organizations like the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, or Allied Esports, or other leading local innovators to develop research on the future of how we meet, network, share knowledge, and develop new business amid a wide range of audiences?

“We worked with Delos to examine the physical aspects of what we’re creating, and how they’re conducive for learning,” Dominguez answered. “How interesting would it be to work with an organization like the Lou Ruvo Center to talk about what we can do to enhance how we put together our programming to make sure we are fully utilizing our mental acuity and agility during meetings? Those are the opportunities for us to learn from each other and bring science into the play of what we do.”

Cross-sector partnerships and research like that are presently girding the future of the meetings and events industry worldwide. Technology today is a must, and Dominguez says hotels in Las Vegas need to look at how the Starbucks, Ubers and Microsofts of the world are managing digital transformation and industry partnerships. Illustrating that strategy, MGM Resorts CXO Lilian Tomovich joined the company from MasterCard.

“That is a huge shift for a culture in Las Vegas that used to be very insular in nature, where everyone had a gambling mentality,” said Dominguez. “But if we really want to drive innovation, we need people with competency in disciplines not necessarily in hospitality.”

Furthermore, he argues, it’s going to eventually be critical to further curate local advanced industry expertise to drive competitive advantage for the Las Vegas meetings market.

“It’s incumbent on us as a community to have a steering committee or innovation council, whose job is coming together to engage these verticals in a very thoughtful and productive way,” Dominguez said. “I love the concept of positioning Las Vegas as a global intellectual capital in our priority sectors. If we’re going to execute it well, we should have an innovation committee within the community that’s passionate about this. Then we can report out to the community that this is where we think we should be going, and this is what we should be doing to get there.”

Q+A: JUD HANNIGAN, CEO, ALLIED ESPORTS



Esports Arena Las Vegas

Allied Esports is the company behind the new Esports Arena Las Vegas at MGM Resorts' Luxor Resort & Casino. In April 2018, the venue hosted a tournament with Twitch superstar Ninja, which set a record for 680,000 concurrent online views. Jud Hannigan, CEO of Allied Esports, provided insight into the rise of esports mania, the surging demand for interactive group events, and the future of virtual gaming in Las Vegas.

Skift: Why all the excitement in esports?

Jud Hannigan: I think entertainment in general has evolved and become very interactive, largely on the back of gaming and technology. That is the power that esports brings. With traditional sports, you go to an arena and watch incredibly talented individuals play a game. With esports, one of the things that's so powerful is the accessibility. Not only can I watch my favorite pro or team compete, but I can also interact with them via chat tools and livestream platforms. I can also potentially play with them online, as well, or in tournaments. At Esports Arena, we don't necessarily throw a lot of events where you're expected to just come in and watch passively. A lot of our events are for you to come in and play in the tournament. You may not make it to the end, but you're going to be engaged in the competition and the overall experience.

Skift: Do esports pros want audiences to engage them?

Jud Hannigan: The level of engagement with the younger audiences and up-and-coming esports pros is incredibly high. The pros treat it as a relationship with their fans, and ultimately, that helps propel their stardom. You have to treat esports like sports, and every game is little bit different. One of the most popular genres of games right now is the Battle Royale format, which has a hundred people that drop into a map at the same time and scavenge for resources. Then it's the last man standing.

Skift: What does this say about MGM Resorts and the City of Las Vegas in general that it has created one of the first dedicated esports arenas of this size in the country?

Jud Hannigan: I think if you look at Las Vegas, it's always reinventing itself. It's always reinventing the offering, and that's what makes it so special. It's the entertainment capital of the world, but it's always changing. It's always cutting-edge. I think MGM Resorts is a leader in that regard in really providing the best entertainment offering out there that continues to draw people to Las Vegas every year. With us sitting down to talk to MGM in the beginning about our product and what we offer, the reception and openness to this was extremely welcoming. You can tell that they saw the power of esports, and they believed in having a permanent destination on the Las Vegas Strip for esports with us.

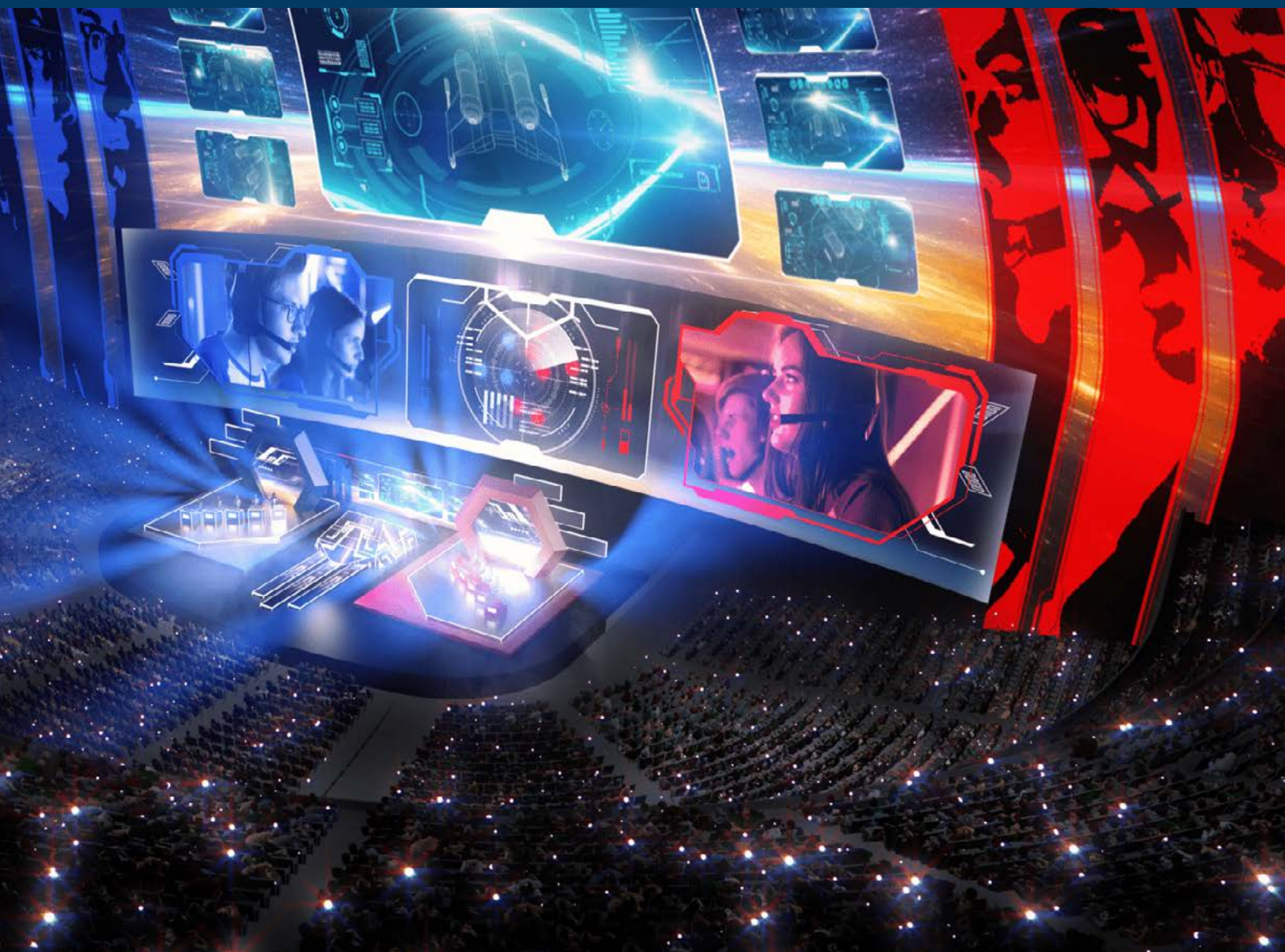
It's also exciting from the standpoint of the consumers who are coming there. They're seeing something new and different, and every time they visit, there's something new and exciting. That's part of the power of Vegas — the willingness and interest in always staying fresh and evolving to remain at the pinnacle of the entertainment and events industry.

Skift: How can the Esports Arena be used for conference groups?

Jud Hannigan: We have an unbelievable production capability built into this facility. You're seeing a lot more conferences actually looking to broadcast what they're doing and talking about. Essentially, we have a 30,000-square-foot production studio that is very flexible and modular, which can be tailored to meet a wide variety of needs for conference groups. A key component to what we do is we create modular spaces that represent a blank canvas for the interactive gaming industry to come in and create their own events and bring their vision to light. That works very well for conventional event organizers as well. The common denominator for everything we do is it's always a social experience.

Skift: Can you help groups create their own dedicated esports tournament?

Jud Hannigan: Of course, we absolutely can. Our space is meant to be used for virtual game tournaments, which we can broadcast as well, if that's of interest.



MSG Sphere Las Vegas

LAS VEGAS SANDS: 'INNOVATION IS A BRAND PILLAR'

The Las Vegas Sands Corporation owns and operates The Venetian Las Vegas, The Palazzo Las Vegas, and the Sands Expo Convention Center inside one integrated campus on the Las Vegas Strip. The hospitality and event complex is the largest hotel property in the U.S., and it was the first of its kind built for the meetings and convention marketplace. Today, Sands Expo hosts major tech conferences such as CES, Adobe Summit, and Amazon's re:Invent.

The Sands Corporation and Madison Square Garden company are co-developing the MSG Sphere Las Vegas, scheduled to open on New Year's Eve 2020 next to the Venetian and Palazzo. The massive globe-shaped event venue will feature the largest and highest-resolution LED screen in the world, spanning 170,000 square feet of display area wrapping around the inside of the building.

“We’re always developing new and interesting environments for community building and creative learning collaboration.”

— Chandra Allison, SVP of Sales, The Venetian and The Palazzo Resort Hotel and Casino

“Innovation is a brand pillar for us,” said Chandra Allison, SVP of Sales at The Venetian and Palazzo Resort Hotel and Casino, during this year’s Global Meetings Industry Day in Las Vegas. “We’re always developing new and interesting environments for community building and creative learning collaboration, including many untraditional meeting spaces like the MSG Sphere.”

The entire integrated resort is basically a city-within-a-city, and many of the hip lounges, restaurants, pool clubs, fashion stores and other creative venues are used for events and other brand activations. Also, Sands Expo has the only dedicated, full-service, and full-time coworking space in any convention center in Las Vegas, or elsewhere, for that matter.

“Las Vegas is just naturally innovative because the city is always reinventing itself,” explained Allison. “We get a lot of millennials at our properties, attending meetings and visiting for leisure and business, so we need to continually be ahead of what’s next.”



MSG Sphere Las Vegas

CAESARS ENTERTAINMENT REINVENTS THE LAS VEGAS STRIP



Caesars Forum Conference Center

Placemaking is the art and science of creating public spaces in urban environments that successfully drive dollars to adjacent businesses and lure people to congregate, engage and network in groups organically. One could argue that the Las Vegas Strip, and before it, Downtown Las Vegas, exemplify the tenets of urban placemaking because both were created ground up from the desert floor. And clearly, both are magnets for connecting people and compelling brand experiences.

Building on that theme, Caesars Entertainment opened The LINQ Promenade across the Las Vegas Strip from its landmark Caesars Palace property in 2014. The open-air boulevard connects a variety of shops, restaurants, and the High Roller ferris wheel at the intersection of more than 8,500 Caesars-operated hotel rooms.

In 2019, Caesars is rolling out a new interactive digital experience called Kind Heaven that will layer a virtual façade of visual storytelling over the entire LINQ corridor that will mimic the street markets of Singapore and Bangkok. Along with the virtual and augmented reality experiences, there will also be a wearable technology component to personalize the individual guest interaction and support a cashless ecosystem, which presently proposes to accept crypto-currency payments.

Perry Farrell, lead singer of Jane's Addiction and founder of the Lollapalooza music festival, is collaborating with a cross-section of Hollywood industry leaders to design the 360-degree communal experience. The overall mission seeks to bridge technology and tourism in ways never before explored in any city.

"The LINQ Promenade and Kind Heaven are highly representative of Caesars' strategy to innovate and meet the needs of an evolving customer," said Shaun Swanger, VP and General Manager of LINQ Promenade & Caesars Attractions. "Entertainment has been a huge driver for both leisure and meetings business in Las Vegas. Now, Kind Heaven is going to be a game changer on the Strip. There is nothing like it in the world, and being able to place it right on the Las Vegas Strip is going to be a huge brand statement for Caesars."

Following the roll-out of Kind Heaven, the new \$375 million Caesars Forum conference center will open in 2020 anchoring The LINQ Promenade, bringing 550,000 square feet of new event space to the east side of the Strip. Almost the entire south wall of the building leading to the outdoor plaza is designed like a large glass garage door that will open, in essence, like a 500-foot air wall.

"It's pushing uniqueness, innovation, and investment to the forefront — it's a big statement," said Michael Massari, Chief Sales Officer at Caesars Entertainment. "It is unprecedented, and I would challenge anybody to come up with a place comparable with The LINQ Promenade where 8,500 rooms, the High Roller, and Kind Heaven are attached to a 100,000 square-foot outdoor plaza and the two largest ballrooms in the world. This indoor-outdoor combination really becomes interesting for attendees, planners, etc., because it optimizes networking, social, and experiential opportunities like nowhere else."



Kind Heaven VR/AR experience

Q+A: MAMIE PEERS, VP, DIGITAL MARKETING, THE COSMOPOLITAN OF LAS VEGAS

The rise of digital assistants (chatbots) is changing how brands and consumers engage. Text and voice-based conversational commerce brings a new layer to the guest experience, exemplified by the Rose chatbot at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. Since its launch one year ago, guests engaging Rose are spending an average of 30 percent more on-property. Mamie Peers, VP of Digital Marketing at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, is the brain behind the bot.

Skift: How is Rose innovative?

Mamie Peers: Rose is innovative because she provides answers to questions via text message within seconds, automatically. She has answers to 80 percent of customer questions instantly. So this is new, because before when you traveled to a hotel, you would have to call maybe an operator or talk to a concierge or do research on the web about what you should do tonight or where you should go. Now within seconds you can have this virtual VIP host and personality help you have a better time in Las Vegas. It's extremely convenient for meeting attendees who are using texts and messaging more to get things done.

Skift: Rose is a global benchmark for digital assistants and conversational commerce. Walk us through the architecture.

Mamie Peers: There are two kinds of ways that Rose interacts with customers. One is in response to questions from guests. Two, she also will proactively message guests who are



already engaged in conversation with her. She might say, “Hey, I don’t know if you’ve made a decision about the spa yet, but how about some nail polish on me when you book your next pedicure?” The number one thing that we try to do is always have a pivot to continue to engage the customer. We might have had Rose send up customer towels, so then she might say, “Well if you’re ready to go out, just say you’re looking for options.” And then we might give a few more ideas [within a menu in the chat UI] of things that they can do to explore. We always end with giving guests ideas, and not: “Okay great, let me know if you need anything else.” We’re always ending on a move back into more that people can do. That’s the strategic part, in terms of how we pivot guests back into our brand and into our hotel with each beginning and end of the chat conversation.

Skift: What does Rose mean for The Cosmopolitan brand overall?

Mamie Peers: For us it means engaging directly and personally with the customer in a way that reflects The Cosmopolitan experience, which is distinct from all of our competitors. Anyone can have artificial intelligence. Anyone can have a bot, but absolutely and only The Cosmopolitan has Rose. That’s important because then it creates a more personal connection with the guest. Rose is a reflection of who we are and the kind of brand that we aim to be. You might not trust or build a relationship with a machine, or take a recommendation from a machine that sounds cold and transactional. You are more likely to take a recommendation from someone who feels like a friend or someone you know. Customers engaging Rose spend an average of more than 30 percent on-property, so it seems people are getting more comfortable with chat.

Skift: What are you learning about customers who chat with Rose?

Mamie Peers: How we interact with customers on Rose has changed based on some of what we’re learning. For example, guests like to have more informational tips than offers, so they like to be told: “Hey, did you know at 3:00 pm Jaleo is serving their predinner menu with all of your favorite foods from Spain?” Or something like that, versus: “Here’s a 2-for-1 cocktail at Jaleo.” Providing something that’s relevant to guests at a specific time of day is more valuable to guests than freebies. That’s what we’re seeing, so we’re trying to pay attention to that overall nuance and behavior. And, now that we’ve connected Rose to our customer profile platform, we actually know more about the guests that are interacting with her, so we can serve them better information without requiring an app download.

Skift: Is this a big deal, where you have more nuanced understanding of individual guests and can deliver more contextually aware messaging within a chat interface?

Mamie Peers: She’s the first of her kind that I’m aware of, really in our industry. I don’t know of any hospitality company that has a personalized bot that knows what status you’re at in the rewards program. So, yeah, we think we’re the first for that.

THE RISE OF THE LAS VEGAS INNOVATION DISTRICT



NAVYA autonomous shuttle

Progressive cities worldwide are developing technology, medical, and academic urban clusters defined as “innovation districts” to help spur commercialization of new product prototypes developed by both local tech startups and global enterprise companies. The Las Vegas Innovation District, which encompasses most of downtown and the Arts District, was specifically developed as a platform to test new smart city technologies. Since its inception in 2017, the District has already provided proof-of-concept for a multitude of projects bringing together the public and private sectors.

For example, Audi tested its Vehicle-to-Infrastructure (V2I) technology in the Innovation District leading up to CES 2017. The V2I system connects the brains of a car with the IoT systems embedded throughout the District to assist how drivers navigate the streets. Audi worked with the City of Las Vegas to configure the automotive and urban tech platforms, and then measured how they worked in real-life scenarios. That provided data for all sorts of metrics to inform how the city can improve mobility for local residents and support commercial opportunities for corporate partners.

Those are the types of collaborations that Las Vegas can provide for outside companies active in advanced industries, suggests Don Jacobson, IT Business Partner for Innovation with the City of Las Vegas.

“We’re re-inventing our streets and mobility among them with smart city technology so that streets are connecting blocks and connecting people, rather than separating them,” he explained. “In other words, we want to connect the city not only digitally, but we want to connect the city physically. And we’re doing that with all the data that we collect with our sensors, and also the data that we collect from the public and our partners.”

From a public-facing perspective, the most auspicious development in the Innovation District to date has been the launch of the autonomous shuttle, built by the Paris-based NAVYA driverless vehicle manufacturer. The all-electric minibus was the first autonomous public transportation to be launched on U.S. roads, thanks to the collaboration between the City of Las Vegas, the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC), and the Keolis transportation management company.



Autonomous shuttle at Las Vegas Container Park

“We host U.S. and international conference groups all the time where delegates can learn about the future of AI-powered connectivity and mobility.”

— Christopher Barker, VP of New Mobility, Communications & Marketing, Keolis

Operating daily since November 2017, the shuttle navigates a section of downtown along a short route starting at Downtown Project’s Las Vegas Container Park. The data and learnings collected from all of the various stakeholders involved in the shuttle is helping position the City of Las Vegas as the capital of autonomous vehicle innovation in North America.

So far, as of May 2018, the shuttle has transported more than 25,000 riders, according to Christopher Barker, VP of New Mobility, Communications & Marketing at Keolis, which he says is “ahead of what we forecasted.” Keolis has been managing driverless vehicle projects for a few years now, but often it’s in controlled environments such as academic, corporate and medical campuses.

“The City of Las Vegas has been very proactive about embracing new technology, and the Innovation District is well designed to do a lot of experiments in transportation, Internet of Things, signaling tech, and those kinds of things,” said Barker. “What we’re doing in the Las Vegas Innovation District and the La Défense business district in Paris involves the most heavily populated mixed-use traffic for autonomous vehicles worldwide.”

Barker adds that Keolis offers customized group tours and lectures for conference delegates.

Aptiv + Lyft



Aptiv and Lyft launched 30 driverless ride-sharing BMWs in Las Vegas in May 2018 to deliver Autonomous Mobility on Demand (AMoD).

“We have been working closely with Las Vegas officials in developing our plan to deploy AMoD in a dense urban setting,” said Glen De Vos, Chief Technology Officer at Aptiv. “We will be working side-by-side to proactively architect future mobility solutions, which benefit public transportation and urban congestion challenges. We will then take those learnings and deploy them in other cities across the globe.”

“We host U.S. and international conference groups all the time where delegates can learn about the future of AI-powered mobility and how cities are emphasizing and developing people-centric neighborhoods,” he said.

In 2018, CES launched the inaugural CES Smart Cities Marketplace to host leading companies worldwide that are developing innovation in urban connectivity, logistics, and mobility. Jacobson participated in that to represent the City of Las Vegas and meet visiting companies interested in partnerships in the Innovation District. One of those was Cisco Systems, which is a global leader in smart cities infrastructure.

“We’re now partnering with Cisco Systems and their Kinetic platform to expand our existing connectivity infrastructure in the Innovation District,” explained Jacobson. “That’s helped establish a dashboard for all the different IoT sensors, regardless of their source and maker. So, now we can connect all of that data to provide comprehensive situational awareness for the entire downtown area in real time.”

Moving forward, Jacobson sees Las Vegas evolving as an international intellectual capital based on all of the many different technologies converging in the Las Vegas Innovation District and elsewhere in Southern Nevada.

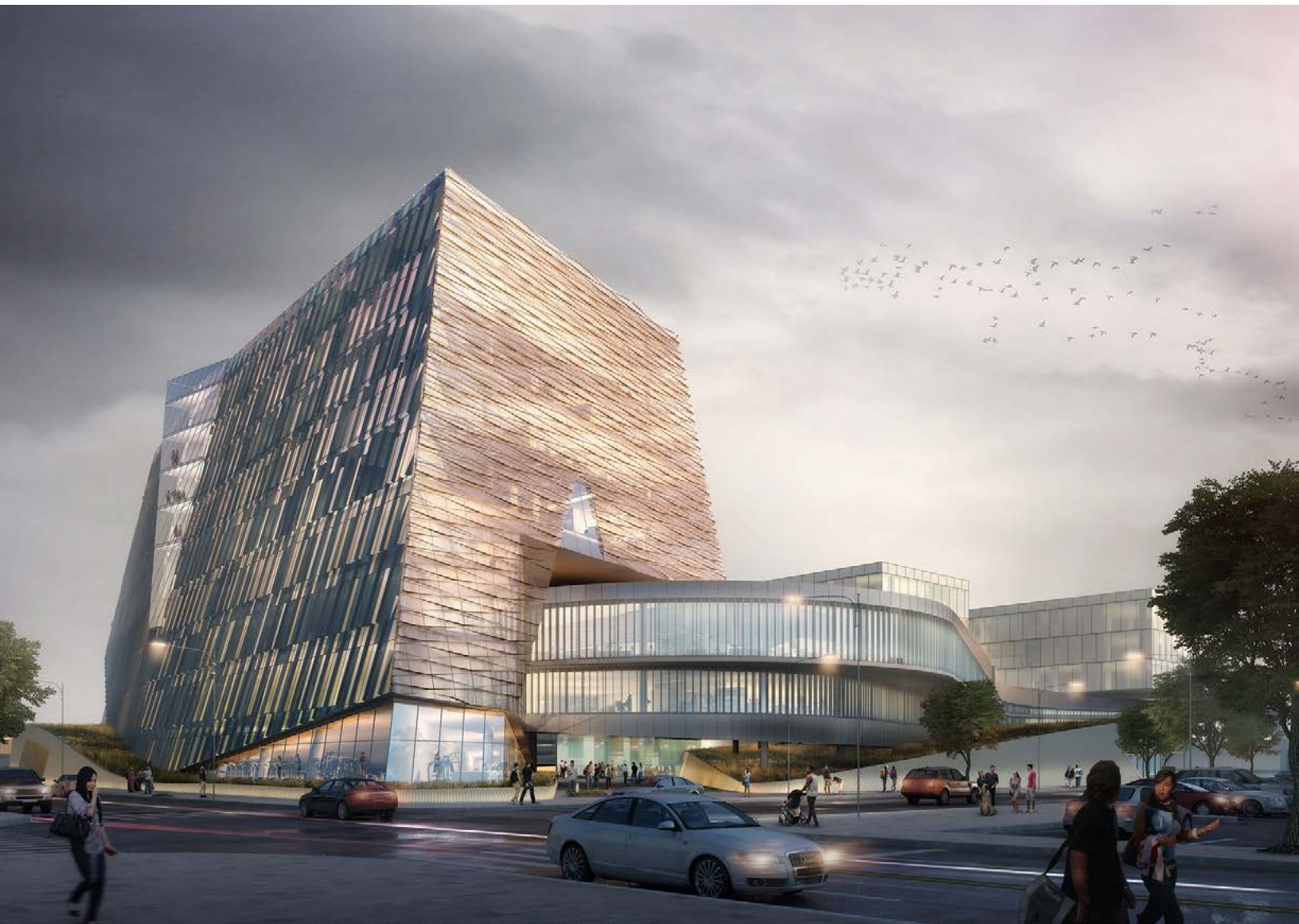
In effect, Las Vegas is evolving as a blockchain of innovation — a distributed platform for knowledge gathering and sharing across a global stage.

“We are a global destination now, so we can’t just think in terms of our valley, or our state, or even the western United States,” he said. “We have to think in terms of the thought leadership that we can provide worldwide. And then, we also have to think about how we can learn best practices from other companies and cities, and how we can apply those here. A lot of those conversations begin at conferences like the CES Smart City Marketplace and many others taking place in Las Vegas.”

“We’re reinventing our streets and mobility among them with smart city technology so that our streets are connecting blocks and connecting people, rather than separating them.”

— Don Jacobson, IT Business Partner for Innovation,
Information Technologies, City of Las Vegas

THE LAS VEGAS MEDICAL DISTRICT AND HEALTHCARE CLUSTER



UNLV School of Medicine in the Las Vegas Medical District

The Las Vegas Medical District was originally established in 1997 directly adjacent to Downtown Las Vegas. It is comprised of seven institutions of higher learning, four hospitals, two imaging centers, and one medical center dedicated to the treatment and research of neurodegenerative diseases. The primary anchors are the new UNLV School of Medicine, two major hospitals including University Medical Center and Valley Hospital Medical Center, and the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health.

Launched in 2017, the UNLV School of Medicine will significantly elevate the level of medical and healthcare expertise in Southern Nevada. The new main building, which is presently under construction, will have state-of-the-art meeting space, lecture halls, and clinical labs available for visiting medical conferences starting in 2022.

“To be a quality city, great medical care and research is absolutely paramount,” said Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman. “That’s what we want the UNLV School of Medicine to bring to Las Vegas.”

Presently leading that drive, the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in downtown Las Vegas is one of the top neurology facilities in North America.

Dr. Zoltan Mari, who moved to Las Vegas in 2017, represents the growing level of medical expertise in the city. He is the Section Head of the Nevada Movement Disorders Program and a Lee Pascal Parkinson’s Disease Scholar at Lou Ruvo Center. He is also a Clinical Professor of Neurology at UNLV. Before arriving in Las Vegas, Dr. Mari served as Director of the Parkinson’s and Movement Disorder Center at Johns Hopkins University, and Director of the National Parkinson Foundation Center of Excellence, also at Johns Hopkins University.

“Part of the reason we’re able to attract high-quality talent is the connection to Cleveland Clinic, which is the number two hospital in the country,” said Erick Vidmar, Administrative Director of the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health. “Our new medical



Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health | ©Matt Carbone

director, who just joined us, Dr. Marwan Sabbagh, is the most respected up-and-coming Alzheimer Disease trialist in the country. So, in the world of neurology, the Lou Ruvo Center is one of the places to be, and we've kind of proven that."

The facility hosts many different types of events for up to 1,500 people. The physicians, researchers, and administrators also offer their expertise at medical and healthcare conferences throughout the city.

Vidmar says he would like to increase the level of engagement that he and his event and education teams have with stakeholders throughout Southern Nevada.

He also wants to collaborate with more outside medical meeting planners, because even though the Lou Ruvo Center has been operating in Las Vegas for more than a decade, he feels that most people attending medical conferences in the city don't always appreciate the quality of local medical knowledge at the highest levels.

"I think there's a lot of opportunity for us and the city to show people that there are many avenues for learning in Las Vegas," Vidmar said. "I come from Cleveland, and before I moved here I didn't know anything about all the expertise in Las Vegas, both in tech and healthcare. When you look at everything that's happening here, we have a lot to share with the world."



Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health | ©Matt Carbone

DOWNTOWN PROJECT: MARRYING TECH, CREATIVE, AND CULTURAL INNOVATION



Downtown Project's Las Vegas Container Park

No city in North America has undergone a downtown resurgence recently like Las Vegas. Originally funded by Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh, the Downtown Project organization invested \$350 million to revitalize the iconic streets where Las Vegas began. Throughout the revival, the Downtown Project, its partners, and the rest of the business community in the urban core have preserved the local vernacular and historical spirit, while supplementing that with a modern energy to create something wholly new and original.

The Las Vegas Container Park, developed by Downtown Project, sits across the street from the El Cortez Hotel & Casino — the oldest continually operating hotel casino in the city. The starting point of the autonomous shuttle route sits between the two.

Downtown Las Vegas is quickly evolving as the creative nexus of Nevada, celebrating the convergence of new and old, and high-tech and low-fi. Local entrepreneurs are expanding hotels and restoring vintage motels. Others are opening fresh markets, veggie restaurants, indie bookstores, and local bars to pump fresh vibrancy into the heart of Las Vegas.

In 2017, Downtown Project launched the Downtown Las Vegas Convention Association to provide meeting planners a holistic overview of convention hotels and event spaces surrounding the Fremont Street Experience.

The new **dtlvca.com** website includes an overview of each property, group venues, and various entertainment experiences in the city's core.

Complementing the broader convention sales and marketing efforts of the LVCVA, the Downtown Las Vegas Convention Association seeks to further spotlight the meeting assets and venues specific to the downtown area. The new platform makes it much easier now to pull together all relevant information for the area in one place.

“The overarching goal is to attract more citywides to Downtown Las Vegas,” said Mark Carlson, VP of Operations at the Downtown Project.

The biggest draws for conventions downtown are price, variety, and the creative vibe. The nearby World Market Center Las Vegas is building a new 350,000-square-foot Expo Center for tradeshow and conventions. At the same time, the downtown area has extensive outdoor lots and a wide spectrum of creative venue spaces. Some of those include the spectacular art deco-influenced Smith Center for the Performing Arts, The Mob Museum, The Neon Museum, and Las Vegas Container Park.



El Cortez Hotel & Casino

“We’ve discussed using our buildings as a kind of laboratory for next generation technologies. It’s just a matter of bringing people together and vetting that out.”

— Mark Carlson, VP of Operations, Downtown Project

“As the millennial generation has more pull about where they want conventions to go, they’re seeking something a little more different and dynamic, with more personality and character,” said Carlson. “We can host a boardroom meeting in the Dome at Container Park, or the 11th Street Record Studios. Those kind of things might require more work and imagination, but that’s what people are looking for these days.”

Since its inception in 2012, Downtown Project has provided seed money to many small businesses and tech companies in the downtown area, ranging from the Vegenation restaurant chain to The Mill startup accelerator. Looking ahead, Carlson sees new opportunities to connect small businesses and the local tech scene.

For example, the retro Fergusons Motel, which is currently undergoing renovation, could be used as a test site for smart home and solar power activations, as well as a venue for events in those sectors.

“We would love to do an innovation lab like that with some of these local companies,” said Carlson. “We’ve discussed using our buildings as a kind of laboratory for next generation technologies. It’s just a matter of bringing people together and vetting that out, but I think you’re going to see a lot of those kinds of partnerships downtown in the future.”

Local Tech



Las Vegas-based student travel company JusCollege was acquired for \$25 million in April 2018. The online site is just one of many local tech companies that have exited for 7- and 8-figure buyouts in recent years.

“Downtown has so many interesting personalities and innovative people,” said Mark Carlson, VP of Operations at Downtown Project. “We’re a small, tight-knit community of entrepreneurs, where people come together to collaborate to drive new business, and get ahead of what the consumer wants. That’s what Las Vegas is all about.”



The Mob Museum

CASE STUDY: TECH-DRIVEN DOWNTOWN EVENT VENUES

The Mob Museum and The Neon Museum in Downtown Las Vegas exemplify the level of innovation driving the future of how people gather and learn in creative group environments. Both venues are using technology in interesting ways to speak to larger themes in travel, business, and society at large.

At The Mob Museum, the new Use of Force Training Experience illustrates how law officers prepare for high-stress situations that require level-headed thinking in real time. Visitors are given a CO2 pistol and police officer duty belt to participate in what the museum describes as “an intensive training session using both digital and live role-playing scenarios that demonstrate the speed and complexity of use-of-force decisions.”

There’s a metaphor there for business, exploring decision-making in fluid situations.

“It’s not just about conveying information because it’s compelling and interesting,” Executive Director Jonathan Ullman told NPR recently. “It’s also about how you apply this information. What’s the takeaway that makes you think differently about the world?”

The Neon Museum is also integrating technology in new ways to showcase local history and culture. The venue is a “neon boneyard” and final resting place for an amazing wealth of neon signage that once graced Downtown Las Vegas and the Las Vegas Strip.

The museum’s Brilliant! experience uses projection mapping to illuminate more than 40 signs, making them appear as if they’ve been turned back on. Meanwhile, iconic Las Vegas music from Elvis, The Rat Pack, and other famous entertainers supplements the event for a truly one-of-a-kind Las Vegas experience.

“I design experiences that help bring the future closer,” said Craig Winslow, who designed Brilliant! The Adobe Creative Resident is at the forefront of visual experience design in projection mapping, which planners can learn about at The Neon Museum.

The venue also hosts an impressive range of community events that visiting meeting planners can tap into. To celebrate Women’s History Month in March 2018, for example, the Neon Museum told the stories of Las Vegas luminaries and pioneers, such as Helen J. Stewart. Known as “The First Lady of Las Vegas,” Stewart sold her family ranch in 1902 to provide the real estate upon which the city was originally founded.

The Mob Museum and Neon Museum are both available for group rental.



The Neon Museum

4 TAKEAWAYS TO INTEGRATE LAS VEGAS INNOVATION INTO MEETINGS

1. Catalog the evolving innovation economy in Las Vegas. The city is leading the country in autonomous vehicle technology, drone development, and esports, which bring together a wide range of ancillary innovations ranging from AI to digital currencies. The Las Vegas Medical District and Innovation District are attracting new talent and partners. UNLV and the private sector represent one of the world's strongest clusters in hospitality and tourism. All of this activity in advanced industries is relevant to meeting planners and decision-makers in those industries, as well as others. As the local innovation economy grows, it's critical for everyone in the city to know who's doing what, and how they can partner with visiting conference groups.

2. Collaborate across sectors. A comprehensive, cross-sector network connecting the Las Vegas visitor economy and innovation economy will help local stakeholders engage a broader scope of outside companies in high-priority sectors. A new Innovation Council, steered by hospitality representatives and the LVCVA, would be valuable for exploring new synergies within such a network, and reporting back to community and industry partners on successes and best practices. Cities can no longer compete for meetings and events in advanced industries based on infrastructure alone. The new competitive advantage is access to industry expertise and knowledge capital, but that requires a significant amount of curation to deliver effectively and consistently to conference organizers.

3. Develop new messaging highlighting Las Vegas' innovation economy. It's imperative to continually show meeting planners and decision-makers how they can collaborate with local leaders driving innovation in advanced and creative industries. The people at the leading edge of STEM fields, as well as other innovators active in urban, cultural, and social change, are the new influencers in the events industry. Providing those types of local influencers a platform reimagines the Las Vegas destination brand in the meetings sector by expanding the conversation to embrace world-leading innovation in the region.

4. Rethink Las Vegas as a global innovation distribution channel. Las Vegas today is more than a large collection of creative and innovative buildings where conference attendees can eat, sleep, meet, and be entertained. As city stakeholders develop more comprehensive networks with the local innovation economy, they're also connecting with those organizations' global networks. As such, Southern Nevada then becomes a blockchain of innovation – a distributed platform for worldwide knowledge sharing. Positioning the local meetings and events industry that way provides a true north for everyone striving to accelerate meetings and events business in Las Vegas.

ABOUT THE LVCVA

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) attracts visitors by promoting Las Vegas as the world's most desirable destination for leisure and business travel. The LVCVA also manages the Las Vegas Convention Center. Las Vegas has nearly 150,000 guest rooms and 11.5 million square feet of meeting and exhibit space. Las Vegas has evolved tremendously in recent years, and continues to capture the world's imagination. Beyond the 24-hour-a-day casino excitement are some of the best restaurants, most unique entertainment, world-class events, professional sports teams, premier shopping and fantastic golf – not to mention the greatest variety of meetings venues and accommodations in the world.



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