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Soaring in Seattle

The Emerald City and surrounds are expanding meeting options in all directions

Given its arresting combination of scenic splendor and innovative spirit, it's little wonder that Greater Seattle is one of the most sought-after and dynamic emerging major meetings destinations going. Not content to rest on its reputation, however, the metro region continues to add new venues, attractions and resources that are keeping its appeal fresh for newcomers and long-time visitors alike.

Seattle

With a bevy of hotels slated to open this year and a new convention facility about to break ground, Seattle is gearing up to

welcome more meetings than it has in the past, according to Kelly Saling, vice president of convention sales for Visit Seattle.

Construction is expected to start by summer on a major expansion of the downtown Washington State Convention Center. Plans are for a free-standing building a block and a half away from the current facility that will include 255,000 square feet of exhibition space on two levels, as well as 120,000 square feet of meeting rooms and a 60,000-square-foot grand ballroom. Its opening is projected for 2021.

"While the new facility will allow us to book larger groups that will use both buildings, that's not really its major intent," Saling said. "What it will do is allow us to bring in additional groups to the city. Right now

we have to turn away or pass up bidding on some business just because we don't have the availability."

Also creating more room for groups will be the new Hyatt Regency Seattle, the largest hotel in the city. It is set to open in November across from the new convention center site with 1,260 rooms and will boast over 100,000 square feet of meeting and event space, including two 20,000-square-foot ballrooms.

"The Hyatt will anchor the new convention facility, much in the same way the Sheraton Seattle does for the existing center," Saling said. "In effect, we'll be able to offer two separate campus settings for groups."

Located directly across the street from the convention center, the Sheraton Seattle recently completed a \$53 million renovation of all 1,236 guest rooms, adding new architectural details such as walnut wood finishes and custom-made barn doors with inlaid mirrors. The hotel offers over 75,000 square feet of meeting and event space.

While Seattle currently gets about 70 percent of its convention business from associations, especially medical, the expansion will boost the city's ability to accommodate more short-term corporate



WASHINGTON STATE CONVENTION CENTER, SEATTLE



Also adding energy to the city is Lincoln Square South, a hub for dining and the new Lincoln South Tower, a high-rise office building topped by Ascend Prime Steak and Sushi on the 31st floor. The restaurant, which offers 360-degree views of metro Seattle, offers private dining areas and space for events.

While space is at a premium in Bellevue during the week, the city offers affordable rates and good availability for weekend meetings, including association groups in the range of 600 to 1,200 people, according to Kantor.

Seattle Southside


Adjacent to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, the district known as Seattle Southside encompasses the communities of Tukwila, SeaTac and Des Moines, offering about 8,000 hotel rooms. Its major off-site venue is the Museum of Flight, which recently unveiled a major new exhibit called Apollo devoted to the Space Race of the 1960s.

Hotel options will expand this spring when Hotel Interurban opens in the Seattle Southside market. Standing 19 stories high, the hotel will become the tallest

building in the city. It will offer 185 guest rooms and more than 15,000 square feet of meeting and event spaces, including the 5,000-square-foot Rainier Room on the 19th floor, with its views of Mt. Rainier.

Snohomish County

North of Seattle, groups will find a range of venues that include the Lynnwood Convention Center and Edward D. Hansen Conference Center in Everett. Its major meetings property is the Tulalip Resort Casino, which offers 30,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Tulalip Tribes recently broke ground on a \$98 million casino property with a 150-room hotel in Tulalip that will replace the existing Quil Ceda Creek Casino when it opens in spring 2019. 

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