

How the Long Beach Convention Center Repurposed an Iconic Venue



The ceiling treatment created a more intimate mood in the ballroom by bringing the ceiling height down.

Photo: Courtesy of the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau

LONG BEACH, CALIF. The [Long Beach Convention Center](#) unveiled its new arena with a full-day conference and event showcase on November 20. Event organizers in attendance were amazed at the possibilities of the Long Beach Convention Center's new [Pacific Ballroom](#), which includes 45,000 square feet of event and entertainment space. Most guests at the gathering, dubbed Sky Transformation, did not realize that they were in the same arena that hosted historical performances from the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

The space is novel in the way in which it can be transformed within minutes to hide all seats, converting the space into a sleek ballroom. Complete with state-of-the-art audiovisual capabilities, high-tech lighting, and design elements, the innovative space changes with just a click of an iPad. The \$7,000,000 repurposing initiative was possible due to an elaborate steel tension grid, which supports LED and stage lighting, sound systems, and decorative elements. These in-house services add a huge value to planners.

The event, hosted by [Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau](#), [SMG](#), the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, and BizBash, showcased the new ballroom by bringing together sight, sound, and

space and taking guests on a journey. From the arena entrance to the unveiling of the ballroom, entertainment was used as a guide.

After welcome speeches by Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau chairman Bill Rouse and president Steve Goodling, SMG C.E.O. Wes Westley, and BizBash C.E.O. David Adler, hip-hop violinist [Paul Dateh](#) led 1,000 guests inside to experience the new ballroom. Once inside, the first reveal was a dynamic video-mapped graphical performance in an elevated DJ booth by [Side Project DJ and Drummer](#). As the excitement built and the music pulsated, a performance by the [Laserman Experience](#) led to a dramatic kabuki curtain reveal of an illuminated stage. On stage, [William Close and the Earth Harp Collective](#) performed with the world's largest stringed instrument, which was connected to the steel grid—literally connecting to the room to the instrument. After the pyrotechnic finale, [DJ Roonie G](#) hosted the after-party where video mapping projected great acts from the venue's history.

According to Shaun Beard, the senior vice president of [Savor](#), the food division within SMG facilities: "The evening's food design was extensive in its employment of sustainable practices in local food sourcing, uses of disposable biodegradable service ware, and composting separation containers throughout the floor. We served over 17,000 portions of short plate and hors d'oeuvres. The philosophy of the evening was to be purposeful in all our decisions involving the catering to attendees as we do in all facilities."

Planners loved the experience, and, according to David Adler, C.E.O. and founder of co-hosting organization BizBash: "There was a demand to book the space immediately. A number of planners gave me their cards and said, 'Find me a date now. The new ballroom had the perfect balance of a dramatic look and feel with the value proposition that will allow me to make a great margin for my event.'"

Here's a look at the opening of the new ballroom.

- See more at: <http://www.bizbash.com/how-the-long-beach-convention-center-repurposed-an-iconic-venue/new-york/story/27541#sthash.FRKM4UWx.dpuf>