

Long Beach zooms to the finish line with \$200 million in upgrades

April 09, 2012 | By Rosemary McClure | Special to the Los Angeles Times



Long Beach is putting out a new welcome mat for visitors just in time for the 2012 Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach.

More than \$200 million has been pumped into upgrading and updating the city's tourist facilities and city fathers hope visitors will take note when races get underway Friday.

The changes are taking place at the Long Beach Airport, with \$140 million in renovations and changes; the Long Beach Convention Center, with \$20 million in improvements; and at three hotels: Hyatt-Regency Long Beach (\$30 million), the Westin Long Beach (\$15 million) and the Long Beach Marriott (\$10 million).

The airport's modernization project includes a new parking structure, ramp and gate improvements and a concourse with a central garden. The project, set to be completed in early 2013, won't eliminate the airport's iconic, vintage terminal: visitors will pass through it into a new modern concourse.

At the convention center, renovations include enhanced lobbies, meeting rooms and hallway areas. New furniture, carpeting, plants and artwork have been added to create networking areas and mini meeting spots.

The Hyatt-Regency's updates include renovated guest rooms, suites and corridors, including a renovation of all bathrooms. Both the Westin and Marriott are renovating public areas of the hotels; in addition, the Marriott has renovated all its guest rooms, and the Westin has renovated half of its rooms; the others should be completed by the end of the year.

Los Angeles Times

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