

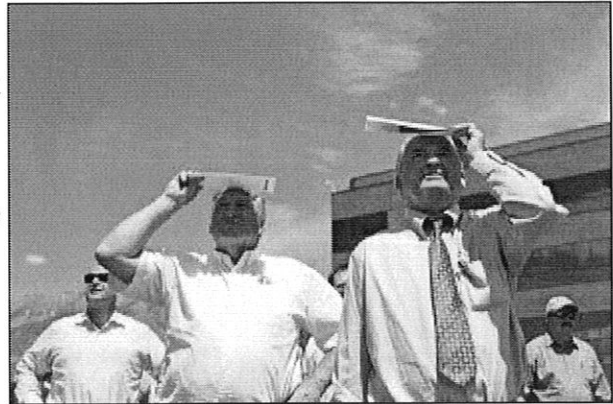
Daily Herald

Convention Center topped off, on track for spring 2012 opening

Genelle Pugmire - Daily Herald | Posted: Tuesday, July 12, 2011 12:30 am

PROVO -- The new Utah County Convention Center reached an important phase during a "Topping Off" ceremony Monday afternoon. It signifies that the last beams of steel have been put into place. As part of the fun, a white beam filled with signatures of local elected officials, business leaders and private citizens was lowered into place never to be seen again, unless the building comes down.

"This is a tremendous addition to our downtown," said Provo Mayor John Curtis. "It's nice to see the glass windows in and see the building take shape."



Curtis was one of many officials who took personal ownership in what is happening with the convention center on the southwest corner of 100 West and 100 North in Provo. The center is slated to open in spring 2012.

Utah County Commissioner Gary Anderson said many people feel the building was theirs. "The great thing about the convention center is that everyone thinks it's theirs. It's really Utah Valley's."

Anderson also said the center is anticipated to pump millions of dollars into the local economy. According to Joel Racker, president and CEO of the Utah Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau, there is already \$700,000 worth of business booked and on the planner right now with much more in negotiations. The first event is booked for April 18, 2012.

Don Nay, assistant director of Public Works for the county, said that most people don't understand how important the building is.

"This is the most significant building the county has ever built," Nay said. "It is the most technically complex building in Utah County. It is also on schedule and under budget."

The convention center will have approximately 52,000 square feet of meeting space. The first floor exhibit hall is 19,630 square feet. The visitors center also will be on the first floor. The second floor features a full-service kitchen, as well as a 16,894 square foot ballroom, the largest in the county. Divisible meeting space is featured on the third floor and there will be an open garden patio. The plans also allow for expansion.

The convention center will be a LEED Silver certified building, which means everything, including construction, operation and maintenance, will be environmentally friendly.

Bryce Jones, president of MHTN Architects, which is working on the convention center, said numerous specialty engineers have helped in the construction of the building including structural, electrical and technical engineers and specialists in sound and acoustics, vibration, interior designers and food services.

"Everyone kept a vision of what this should be," Jones said. "It is environmentally important and will be state-of-the-art for exhibits."

Troy Thompson from Okland Construction, which is working on the building, said, "One of our most celebrated achievements is the topping off. We're going to make the end date."

The Utah County Commission gave its approval to have Global Spectrum help manage the new county convention center. Global will provide the venue with food and beverage services, maintenance services and help with marketing to potential clients.

Brigham Young University graduate Danny Wheeler has been tapped as Global's representative on location at the under-construction convention center. Wheeler says that Provo will become a great location for conventions.

"I've been driving by the site and I'm amazed at the progress," Wheeler said. "This will serve as a focal point to bring visitors into downtown Provo."

Wheeler invited residents to become home-town ambassadors for the travel and tourism office. The convention center will be Global's only venue in Utah. The company helps manage convention centers all over the U.S., including the University of Phoenix Stadium Exhibit Hall in Arizona and the Miami Beach Convention Center.