

WASHINGTON COUNTY EVENT CENTER

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What is happening?**

Washington County is preparing to build a new Event Center at the Fair Complex, as envisioned by the Fairgrounds Revitalization Task Force in 2008. While continuing to support and enhance the annual Washington County Fair, the Event Center will provide year-round opportunities to host conferences, exhibitions, trade shows and other similar community events.
- **Why is it necessary?**

The current Main Exhibit Hall is no longer adequately serving the needs of the community and has recently been deemed unsafe for occupancy. Building a new Event Center is in keeping with the Fairgrounds Revitalization Task Force recommendation to establish a venue that allows for a wider utilization of the site and ensures future viability for existing uses including the annual County Fair and related functions.
- **How big will the building be?**

The design calls for 91.2K square feet of space which includes approximately 40,000 square feet of exhibition space and a 14,000 sf, state-of-the-art conference center, complete with a catering kitchen, concessions and offices.
- **What type of amenities will be available?**

In addition to the exhibition space, conference center and kitchen, the spacious interior will be complemented by a large entry plaza adjacent to the lobby, and an outdoor exhibit area on the west that opens into the interior grounds of the Fair Complex. The new venue will offer various room configurations sized to accommodate consumer shows, conferences and trade shows, corporate meetings and seminars, banquets and receptions, fundraisers, festivals, spectator events and a variety of community uses. During the annual County Fair the Event Center will provide ample indoor exhibit space, restrooms and concessions.
- **Where will it be located on the Fair Complex property?**

The Washington County Event Center will be located near the northwest corner of NE 34th Avenue and NE Veterans Drive. Construction will not require the removal of any existing buildings.
- **When does construction start?**

Design development, site preparation and construction permitting for the Event Center will continue through the 2017-18 fiscal year with ground breaking tentatively planned for the end of 2018.
- **When will it be completed?**

Currently, the estimated completion date of the Event Center will be in the fall of 2020.
- **What is the cost of the project?**

The total budget for the Event Center is estimated to be \$46 million.

- **How is it being paid for?**

Gain Share and Transient Lodging Tax revenue will pay for most of the project along with significant contributions from the Washington County Visitors Association and the City of Hillsboro. This financial plan does not rely on an increase in property taxes to complete the project.

- **Why did this not go to voters for approval?**

Voter approval is only required prior to collecting new property taxes. In this case, funding for the Event Center will be from sources which do not require additional property tax support. The Washington County Board of Commissioners provides leadership on how existing County funds will be prioritized to pay for projects and initiatives that they believe will be of benefit to County residents.

- **How does this fit into the County's Master Plan for the Fair Complex?**

A new event center has always been at the heart of the Master Plan and was included in the recommendations of the Fairgrounds Revitalization Task Force. The Master Plan calls for a venue which will provide an exhibition hall and other accessory spaces designed to serve the needs of a wide variety of year-round community events.

- **How was the Master Plan created and is it currently being followed?**

In an effort to ensure long-term stability of the County Fair, as well as the ability of the Fair Complex to meet the needs of the wider community well into the future, the Board of County Commissioners initiated a strategic planning process in 2007. This effort led to the creation of a "Fairgrounds Master Plan" by a 15-member Fairgrounds Revitalization Task Force, representing a broad range of interests. Their work also included a [comprehensive report](#) which detailed their findings and recommendations to the Board. Ten years later, Washington County is now on the threshold of reaching one of the major milestones of the Master Plan.

Although best understood as conceptual, the Master Plan is the foundational document for revitalization and enhancement of the Fair Complex. Its flexibility has allowed for review and refinement over the years, reflecting changes related to new opportunities, potential funding sources and cost increases. The Event Center is a key component of a campus of venues envisioned by the Master Plan which will serve year-round needs of the community.

- **What will happen to the current Main Exhibit Hall?**

Although the original plan was to continue to operate the Main Exhibit Hall until the Event Center opened and then have it demolished, new information regarding the safety of the 66-year-old building has come to light. The County recently engaged Scott Edwards Architecture to conduct a structural assessment of all Fair Complex buildings. The Main Exhibit Hall, and a handful of other buildings including the Milking Parlor, Sheep Barn and restrooms near the livestock area, were all found to have structural deficiencies that represent a "severe life safety hazard to the public." After consultation with the County's Risk Management Division and County Counsel, the County Administrative Office directed Fair Complex staff to close the Main Exhibit Hall and other buildings deemed unsafe. The Board of Commissioners has directed immediate removal of the Main Exhibit Hall. Other affected buildings will remain closed until staff presents further information to the Board regarding the cost and feasibility of repairs.

- **Does this construction project impact any other buildings at the Fair Complex?**
The construction project could impact the current location of the Fair Complex Maintenance Building and Compound. Planning is underway to consider various options for relocating the maintenance shop, materials and equipment. There are no plans to move the Maintenance Compound to any of the animal barns.
- **What happens to the events planned for other parts of the Fair Complex while construction of the new building is underway?**
The County does not anticipate that the use of other areas of the Fair Complex will be impacted during construction. Staff will work closely with the project team to minimize any disruption or inconvenience.
- **How much will it cost to use the new building to hold an event?**
A rental fee structure has not yet been established for the Event Center but will be addressed once the final design is complete and will be based upon market research of comparable facilities.
- **How will the new Event Center affect the Washington County Fair?**
The Event Center will support and enhance the programming for the annual Washington County Fair.
- **Will there still be a place for animals to be exhibited at the Fair after this building is completed?**
Yes, there are no plans to phase out or eliminate animal exhibits at the Fair. The County and the Fair Board intend to continue to support the agriculture-related activities enjoyed by the community at the Fair.
- **What will happen to the Fair during the construction period for the new building?**
The annual County Fair will continue throughout the Event Center construction phase and beyond. Fair Complex staff and the Fair Board will work closely with exhibitors and vendors to find creative ways to minimize disruptions and ensure a seamless transition to the new space configurations.
- **What will happen to the arena?**
The location of the Event Center will impact the arena, requiring it to be removed. Although in recent years the arena has only been used for the annual County Fair and the annual 4-H Horse Fair, the County will continue to ensure arena space is available for these events in the future. Staff is currently working with 4-H Horse representatives on options.
- **What will happen to the 4-H Horse Fair?**
The 4-H Horse Fair will continue to be held at the Fair Complex. With the removal of the arena, staff is working with 4-H Horse representatives on options for a temporary riding arena for the Horse Fair. The location has not yet been determined.

- **Will there be a Veterans Memorial Plaza built as proposed in 2012 and included in the 2013 proposal by the Fairgrounds Advisory Council (FAC)?**

The concept plan for a Veterans Memorial Plaza associated with the Event Center has been updated over the last few years. Some of the design features envisioned in the original plan have been incorporated into the existing Veterans Gateway, adjacent to the roundabout intersection at NE 34th and NE Veterans Drive. For example, in the fall of 2017, the County collaborated with volunteers with the Veterans Memorial Fund of Washington County to install six new flagpoles and flags representing each branch of the U.S. military. New landscaping was also recently added to the area. Additionally, a design feature which incorporates a timeline commemorating the history of the armed services into the existing brick work is planned for the future.

- **Is an RV park still being considered as part of the Master Plan concept?**

Washington County has been interested for some time in creating an RV park at the Washington County Fair Complex which would complement and enhance the Master Plan. After receiving initial approval of the RV park concept plan from the City of Hillsboro in 2016, further planning revealed that the project would require more resources than are currently available. The project is now on hold indefinitely.

- **What is the status of the plan to construct a new National Guard Armory on land adjacent to the Fair Complex?**

In 2010, Washington County entered in to an agreement with the Oregon Military Department (OMD) to exchange a vacant parcel of County-owned land (east of NE 34th Avenue and south of Veterans Drive) for the land and building on the existing site of the National Guard Armory and \$1.5 million. The agreement included an opportunity for the OMD to lease back the Armory for a limited period of time while they worked to secure federal funding to build a new National Guard Readiness Center on their parcel. The federal funding for the Readiness Center has not yet been approved.