



Season 1

Episode 5: Rethinking the Convention and Exhibition Center Blueprint

TRANSCRIPT

Sherri Privitera:

Welcome to drawing people together. The new podcast from Populous, where we'll bring you insights, expertise, and ideas from the people at the forefront of global venue and event design. I'm Sherri Privitera senior principal at Populous, and I'm excited to be joining you for season one, Across six episodes. I'll be introducing you to my colleagues from around the globe who will lead deep dive discussions into the big issues and innovations that are shaping the design of large scale venue and events, from stadium arenas to airport to give engine centers to the super bowl and the Olympic games.

Michael Lockwood:

Welcome back to drawing people together. My name is Michael Lockwood, and I will be your host for this episode today. We're gonna be focusing on the fascinating world of convention and exhibition center design. And I am joined by three experts in the field from Populous global, first from our EMEA region, Shireen Hamdan. Would you like to say hello, Shireen? Hello everyone. And from the Americas, Bridget lowe, please say hello.

Bridget Lowe:

Hello.

Michael Lockwood:

And last, but certainly not least from APAC. Richard Breslin. Richard, please say hello.

Richard Breslin:

Good morning, everyone.

Michael Lockwood:

Good morning from APAC. Okay. Let's jump right in Richard. I'm gonna ask you a question in all of your esteemed years of experience with Populous. How do convention and exhibition centers differ from the other building types that we have

designed? And you designed a lot of them, you designed a lot of different types of buildings. So this specifically, what are some things they're different?

Richard Breslin:

Yeah. Look, I think Michael, one of the main differences, I mean, when you think about the building typology and the scale of the buildings that we do, obviously there's a similar vein, they're all sort of social infrastructure projects, but when you look at the convention exhibition center market and the typology, they're more ingrained within the day to day, they're more part of the urban fabric. Whereas for instance, stadia and arenas, they tend to be an object. And I know we are working globally very hard, and always working with our clients and, and the cities that we work with in to have a look at those integrations, but by virtue of those and given the, the sort of instant number of people coming and going from those buildings, the layout and the way that they work within a city is quite different. So certainly when we looked at something like ICC Sydney in darling Harbor, in Australia, the role of that building and what the government wanted, and what we very much were, were sort of pushing for was really a massive push to try and make a part of the urban fabric to be a fantastic neighbor.

Richard Breslin:

It was as much an urban project as it was trying to create the pure function of that building. So it really was really looking at those two different aspects, the function, you know, getting the business, driving business, getting local interstate overseas people coming to the building, but it was very much about how the building sat within the CBD of Sydney and how it worked as a civic building, as much as everything, how it was a good asset for the city. As I said, how it was a fantastic neighbor for the city as well for the 27 million people every year who engaged and used that precinct, it had to work for them as well as for that core function for what it was being built for.

Michael Lockwood:

It's a staggering number. When you think about how active these buildings need to be in their cities every day of the year, Shireen, what do you think, how is your approach to the convention center building type different or unique to our other building types?

Shireen Hamdan:

I mean, if you look at say, stadium and arenas, for example, they're quite spectator focused and spectator driven buildings, whereas convention centers are more unique in a sense that, you know, in a very simplistic way, they're places where instantaneous communities come together to promote or share a common interest. So they have to be very versatile and very flexible in their nature. And, you know, I think historically they were designed kind of like a black box in a way so that they're quite introvert in their focus, but kind of the evolution of them, I think, is more extrovert these days, they're more integrated into the local communities they're in, which is what Richard mentioned just now. But the big point of difference to me is that versatility I think, they have to be nimble in their kind of existence to promote the different communities and this instantaneous setup.

Michael Lockwood:

It is a unique approach when you also quite simply add that when you don't have a field of play, um, is one thing that I have to remind our staff, you know, because there's so much around bringing people together around a singular focus of a field of play or, or multiple, you know, when you think about our sports projects and conventions centers, you don't have that. So I think the, the urban fabric and the city becomes the field of play and then the building itself is really how folks interact with that, that experience. So, Bridget, I'm gonna switch over to you. So Bridget has the unique perspective of working across and working with multiple architects within Populous. She has worked with our clients very, very closely. She has been to many conferences and she has actually been an exhibitor at a conference. So I think she brings a really unique perspective to these facility types. So Bridget, I'd love for you to think of this issue from the inside out. What are our clients looking to us to do? What are our clients expecting us to do and what are our clients want out of these projects?

Bridget Lowe:

That is a big question and a great question, but I think along the lines of urban planning and city making that we've just touched on every convention center, renovation, expansion, or new build that populous might be looking at is actually an opportunity for a city to reexamine its brand and its position in the market as a destination, and it's a competitive market. And so one of the things that I think we consistently hear from our clients is how do they, you know, really build a venue that helps the city have sort of a new face, a new welcome. It's like, it's the billboard for that city in terms of the amount of people that they're able to bring in and introduce to their city's brand. So I think thinking about the demos, which is America's is the destination marketing organizations and how the client is closely connected to those organizations and then how we're uniquely connected in the industry. So that we actually really understand what the client needs to sell their building and to make their building attractive to the meeting planners, the DMO. So it's not just our clients, but our clients, clients that they're to decide where to bring their convention. Our goal would be to have a beautiful, functional, inspiring building and space within which to do what they need to do at a conference or a convention.

Michael Lockwood:

Yeah. Some of the decision points are fascinating. You know, how a destination can align its brand with the facility and all the things the facility does for a destination. So for example, you know, sustainability obviously is a huge driver currently with how buildings are perceived in the marketplace and how, uh, clients choose to either go to those or use those facilities or not. So, Richard, I'm gonna jump back to you for a minute. Can you talk about some specific features from ICC Sydney that focused on sustainability specifically and how those were able to be used as marketing messaging and attractions to bring more events to Sydney overall?

Richard Breslin:

Yeah, sure. I mean, I guess when you take a step back and have a look at the importance that the sustainable venue is taking within this, I recall when we first started ICC Sydney, gosh, Michael cause obviously worked on the job very closely as

well back in 2012, the notion of the sustainable venue at that time, it was really don't be cynical, but its really was part of the, the bonus venue has these green creds. But as we see started moving through ICC Sydney, it became a given you just, we just knew very, very quickly within our own team. It was a given, but then certainly within the broader global market was succinct, which you had to do. So there are a number of things that we looked at doing there and probably one of the most effective is just having look at the functional on operational planning of the venue.

Richard Breslin:

And these buildings are huge. The footprint that they take up, the area that they take up is just incredible. They're just massive buildings. So having a look at how over the course of the building's life, you can work with the operator, work with their team, to have a look at how you can make their daily lives as efficient as possible and keep their footprint as tight as possible is obviously through the various building services and building systems as well. So again, working with the other consultants with the rest of the team, it looks certainly something that we try to do. So for those who don't know, ICC Sydney sat over or sits over the top of the old convention exhibition center. So we worked very, very hard to try and reuse as much of that building as we possibly could. Under the exhibition floors, there's a, a massive existing concrete slab that we looked to try and incorporate as far as possible, which was incredibly challenging because the, the grid and, and the orientation were quite different between what was there previously and, and what we ended up with.

Richard Breslin:

So we sort looked at trying to do that. And as I sort mentioned before we, as a team, I know, again, Michael, you worked very hard on this with us. We're very, very proud of was that from the previous building that was there to the current building, that's there. Now we have about 50% more building footprint. However, from a urban point of view, from a green point of view, from a park band point of view, we're actually able to give considerably more green open space than what was there previously. So for us, that notion of quality of life, that notion of a good quality public open spaces for the people of Sydney was a major driver for us. And we were all very, very proud of being able to being able to have that within the building itself.

Michael Lockwood:

I think ICC Sydney is a great example and we could probably have a podcast dedicated exclusively to that. But Shireen, you have worked probably across the most exotic spectrum of our project types from Norway to the middle east to all places in between. So how, what's your response? Talk about sustainability, talk about trends, talk about how you can bring forward these client requests into the design process from, you know, very complicated urban structures integrated in, in Europe to blank slates in the middle east.

Shireen Hamdan:

I think to Richard's point sustainability has been a key driver for success for these venues. So a lot of our clients come to us wanting to create sustainable venues. And when you think about sustainability in terms of a convention center, it's not just about

the Bricks and mortar, it's also about how well you integrated within the public realm, how useful it is as a building as 24 7 venue. So sustainability kind of has multiple layers to it. When you think about kind of the venue typology and scale as well. If you look at the convention we were looking at in Norway, it was quite a small bespoke venue that focused on a very flexible event space. And part of that was because it was part of a, kind of a new community that was being developed around one of the outer districts of Oslo. So for them sustainability meant that they wanted to retain quite a lot of the existing structure, but also create something that is quite responsive to the new needs of their local community, which was much younger than your typical, your average convention center, goer or delegate, so to speak.

Shireen Hamdan:

So for them, the convention center ended up becoming more of an event space and as such, it was kind of treated as a new typology of cross between an arena, your typical kind of plenary convention spaces as well. So, you know, there was more technology integrated into the convention center itself and into the plenary. And there was way more flexibility than you would typically expect for these buildings as a result of kind of that inherent requirement to create something that would respond to the needs of say the 20 year olds or 30 year olds that would come to this community location. So as a result, the convention center market was more focused on events, music and your typical planary and exhibition spaces as well. So it was kind of a new typology that was developed for that on the other end of the spectrum.

Shireen Hamdan:

We also do quite a lot of work in the middle east and, uh, Saudi Arabia in general. And, you know, they see the convention centers as the measureless in a way the grand opening or the welcome center to the kingdom itself. So, you know, they want to showcase their ideas of what the future can be. So they are very much technology integrated. We've looked at AR VR. We've looked at the spaces in between, you know, your typical concourse spaces becoming active 24, 7 districts and destinations and their own rights so that you create that footfall. You create the, that new experience. You create that Instagrammable moment, especially in kind of a post COVID era where, you know, business travel is quite limited. So to draw people into kind of these new convention center markets, you have to create kind of these new memorable experiences.

Michael Lockwood:

That's great. I wanna tie two things together here. I think the aspect that these buildings need to be incredibly flexible and adaptable and then very versatile is very critical and key to how different they are from the other building types that we design. They need to be anything to anybody on any given day. So I wanna link that up to Bridget's comment initially about the buildings of becoming a billboard. So I think what you mentioned about the buildings being, you know, an emblem of a destination to be seen as being able to do anything and everything within a community Bridget, I want to ask you in terms of versatility and adaptability, along the lines of what was talking about, how have you seen our solutions satisfy that? What have you seen that we've done in the last few years and some of our projects

that satisfy our clients' desire for more flexibility, more adaptability, and, and to be more market ready, looking forward and going into the future.

Bridget Lowe:

So I think one of the things I wanna talk about that I, I see the client asking for in the facilities needing to do is I'm thinking about our actual design process, more so than delivered projects and how we approach the actual project way before anything is drawn. And that is just a intensely collaborative process. I'm thinking about new Orleans and the visioning workshops we held there and bringing in multiple voices that aren't necessarily specific to the convention center industry, but are more along the lines of futurists, or like for example, for the new Orleans visioning workshop, we included the author of the experience economy. We included Bruce ma it's really having those kinds of conversations that allow us to think through not just what the next five years are gonna look like and what we need for, you know, five years out from now, but what we need 10 years out, 30 years, 50 years, that's where I see a lot of the really relevant sustainability conversations happening, but also the social sustainability conversations coming out of that approach, where, you know, if you're going to be entering this community and building a accessible locally empowering, healthy venue, that's engaging the public realm and is animated by an expansive range of programming that connects with people locally.

Bridget Lowe:

You need to be having those conversations locally and you need to be having them early. And so that's something I see as doing as a firm, as part of our approach to typology that's it obviously is part of our approach across the firm for all scale scopes, sizes of projects, venue typologies. But I think because of the civic nature of the convention center, there's an added layer of necessity to having those conversations early, what do we actually expect this building to do for the community and who will this building impact in a way that transforms something for the better, not just better for one audience or one user type or a client, but better for the local community that is engaging with this on a day to day basis. And I think that that's built into our design process and is actually the most critical thing that differentiates our process right now.

Michael Lockwood:

No, that's perfect. I want to come back to something Richard mentioned earlier, cuz I think he's got something profound to say on this topic, but this idea of having critical conversations early before we draw anything and sometimes, you know, as experts, our clients expect us we'll come just, you know, come up with a solution, come up with an idea. Tell me, tell me what I need to know. And I go back to Richard what you said about Sydney. And I would say, you know, one of the most important things we did early was we having a conversation about what the actual issues are. And so you mentioned, and I want you, I want you to come back to that point. We were expanding a facility by 50%, but in the same urban footprint. And so the conversations weren't really okay, can we do that? It's how should we do this?

Michael Lockwood:

What are the, what are the factors? What are the social factors? What are the urban factors? What are the things that we need to look out for? What's gonna resonate with the community. So I'd like you to talk a little bit about those conversations that we had early in the process that really unlocked the solution. What were the questions we were asking internally and what were the, the conversations with a client as well? Cause I remember them and as they started to resonate and, and started to pick up, Steve was really when we knew we were on something. But I'd love to hear your, your thoughts on that.

Richard Breslin:

Yeah. And it's really building off what Bridget was just saying about what that process is and actually taking a moment to actually consider and think about what it is that we're doing here. Was it that we're actually doing a foreign, you know, if you start off on a project such as this, and if you just look at it in fairly black and white, simple terms, we're building a convention exhibition center, you look at the different markets. Yes. We're trying to get people to come into this facility. They tend to be introverted. You know, the, the event organizers want to bring people in, we wanna host an event and, and so on and so forth. What we really did, Michael, in those early days on darling Harbor was we asked a question, well, who is the audience? Who, who are we actually building this thing for?

Richard Breslin:

What are we actually doing here? And as we sort of said before, and as everyone has said so far, it's, you're not just trying to bring people into a black box and, and then that's it they're done. We really try to take it to that next level about, okay, identifying who are the users and the users aren't necessarily the people who are paying the users. As we've mentioned before, are the people who are engaging with the outside, the building, with the public realm, with the public open space, the person who's crossing the precinct every day, twice a day, going to work and going home every day. It's it's, it's all those different layers. It's looking at the, the primary, the secondary and the tertiary user groups, and really trying to respect them and trying to understand them. As soon as you start putting up barriers and you start to disassociate the building with any of those user groups, putting up fences, you're putting up barriers.

Richard Breslin:

You're basically blocking people, creating this massive, massive lump basically in your city. Because as we all know, these buildings are big. So what we always said, Michael, is that this building needs to be a good neighbor. It needs to be friendly, needs to be welcoming again. Yes. It needs to work incredibly well. Yes, we need to, we wanna bring the people in from overseas. We wanna bring the people in from interstate, but I l've touched on it before there a whole bunch of surveys done around this precinct over many, many years. And now we're getting up to 20, 27 million people a year touching this precinct every, every single year. And that's just a phenomenal number when you think Australia has, it's probably got a few more now, but about 23, 20 4

million people living in it, you had more than the population of Australia engaging with our precinct.

Richard Breslin:

And I can guarantee you, most of those people were not coming there to watch a convention center. They are there using this space right on the edge of the CBD in Sydney as a public rep space as a civic space, it's the most space by people coming into Sydney, all the families. When they come to Sydney, go to darling Harbor, it's got the park, it's got the water, it's got Sydney lifestyle. You're not in the city grid of the C, B D. So it was really about trying to understand who the audience is and what it's that we're actually trying to do here and credit to our consortium. They, 100% got it and credit to the new south Wales. They were the ones who were very keen on that as well. It was an interesting project. It was a, it was a public private partnership.

Richard Breslin:

So a PPP, and normally they're judged on the dollar signs and so forth. But no, everyone was really, really behind trying to respect and understand and recognize who is the user group and what, what are we actually doing this for? So we found that to be quite a refreshing process and look, every city's different, every client's different, but you know, just coming off what you're saying previously about the notion of flexibility, we're always being asked to look at how do we make these buildings as flexible as possible? The capital cost, the capital exponential on these buildings is considerable. The footprint is considerable. We've gotta sweat this asset as much as we possibly can gotta make it work as much as we possibly can. And what we're seeing very much is you've got those sort of lateral notions of a flexible venue where you've got a space and yes, we can host an exhibition there, but we can also host a concert in there and so forth.

Richard Breslin:

So you're looking at this sort of lateral, not of what a flexible venue is, but we've seen more and more. So now this notion of vertical flexibility, where it's looking at the quality of the space and the type of the space. So one week they might wanna host a car show the week after that they might wanna host a high end banquet or high end function, so forth. So we're now really seeing this new notion of flexibility, not just around what the physical X by Y by Z space can do, but around the quality of that experience, the quality of the space we're seeing, we are definitely seeing more and more of that happen now.

Michael Lockwood:

So you touched on a really good point here, and I want ask a question to Shireen. I'm sure you guys have read my article on meetings today about liminal space. It was a huge hit blockbuster here in the us may not have made a it way to you guys yet.

Richard Breslin:

I think it's on the list, mate. It's on the list. It was phenomenal, Michael

Michael Lockwood:

but it was a, uh, a conversation that I had with meetings today at magazine, look it up. It's it's out there, but focusing on the, in between space. So Richard, you just said two things that were, I think very interesting. And I want Seren to address these while we need to design a venue, a black box auditorium, you know, ballroom some functional aspect of the COEX the conventional center that needs to do what it needs to do. Most often mass amounts of people are not going to experience anything inside of that space. They're gonna experience the adjacent district, even the social spaces, the lobbies, the pre-function spaces, all of the, in between. So Shireen in your expertise, in your experience, how do you design the in between? How do you design that perfect auditorium, but then also right outside those doors, a space for 27 million people a year, what's that in between look like what are those experiences that can cross over from very bespoke, very specific solution oriented ideas for an auditorium, but then right outside the door is a space for families and picnics and, and people come into a community and wanting to experience everything about that destination.

Michael Lockwood:

What does that in between look like for you?

Shireen Hamdan:

That's a very interesting question. I think in relation to this question and I guess working with that is looking at kind of the staying power. Had you designed a staying power around a convention center, you know, with a typical venue, you have 20, 30,000 spectators come in for, to watch a 90 minute football game, for example. And then they leave with a convention center. It's more distilled. You've got people coming in throughout the day, every day, experiencing different things as they go into the building. So I guess part of the whole design process is designing flexible interior spaces, but also kind of that threshold space between the building and the public realm itself. As you know, Michael part of our design services include designing event overlay and overlay spaces as well. So part of our design philosophy is creating spaces that can expand and retro track based on the location the building is in, but also so kind of the district and precinct and adjacencies you have.

Shireen Hamdan:

So to Richard's point, darling Harbor is a phenomenal location where you can create this outside kind of event space or outside threshold that creates that footfall and drives people through and into your convention center, looking at kind of, uh, convention centers we're looking at in Saudi, they're overlooking a park. So creating kind of that natural threshold between your building and kind of this beautiful landscape you have on the outside enhances wellbeing for one, but also increases the user groups that would potential really come to the venue itself. So part of the solutions that we've been looking at is how do you get more people to engage with these buildings? If you think about convention centers or who used to attend them 15 or 20 years ago, you'd think of a businessman or a woman or delegation from another country. But if you think about what business is now, you've got more, you know, popup businesses, you've got more WeWork spaces. And it's how I guess part of what we look at is how you bring those communities into these facilities and, and

what experiences you create for them. So I think we all look at the food and beverage offer the retail, offer the activation of that public realm through technology, through, um, food, through art, um, through creating event spaces and places and, you know, exterior amphitheater and enhancing the landscape or around these buildings to make it more engaging.

Michael Lockwood:

No, that's great. I think we're definitely seeing a lot of that in our projects globally, right? This focus on the future and how to integrate events with more meaning, Bridget, what do you think about that?

Bridget Lowe:

I think this conversation is great. This is making me think about Sacramento specifically, which opened last year, the safe credit union convention. So center in Sacramento, California. And when we talk about designing for those liminal spaces or those transition spaces, we focus a little bit on the human behavior side of things, which is just the anxiety. That's often inherent to attending a large event with people you may or may not know, and the pressure to network or meet new people or cultivate a business conversation. So when we talk about it, we often think about how you lessen that anxiety that attends these large conferences and events. One of the things that really struck me about the Sacramento convention center in the design when we went to tour it right before for it opened was when you walk in the front doors and it does have several, you know, strategically placed entrances so that everything kind of feels like a front door, but there's one entry point that you go in and you can actually see straight up into the ballroom there's this unmitigated line of sight where there's immediately a sense of density of people, because you're able to see not only the pre-function space, but you can see up into the active pre-function outside the ballroom, and there's this immediate sense of people and fullness and activity.

Bridget Lowe:

And that does a couple things like one, it creates a sense for that business person or that delegate or that attendee. It creates a sense of a successful event, which is very important for the convention center to keep rebooking. When those meeting planners assess how a convention went, they take all of those delegate feedback into consideration. Did you feel like you met the right people? Did you talk to a lot of people? So I'm thinking about that with Sacramento, but also BMO center in Calgary, which is opening in 2024, the design of the exchange. It was, I would say sort of the flagship project that speaks to this sense of connecting people strategically, once they're in the building, while also lessening the anxiety of the threshold moments and the exchanges, that space where the building was actually designed to face, facilitate these serendipitous connections, so that you're not gonna go to a conference and walk down the wrong hallway and not see all the people you were meant to see. And then in addition to that, you have the creation of when we're talking about food and beverage offerings and things like that, a just beautiful classy bar and a giant fireplace for people to gather around and have that, you know, incredible memorable experience that not only helps our clients continue to draw people to their destination over another, but I think creates that, that sense of success of an event and lessons,

some of those anxiety touch points that happen for most humans on, on a very human basic level.

Michael Lockwood:

Yeah, no, I think that's great. It makes me think about the future of these events, how, you know, populous, we really specialize, as Shireen mentioned this expansion and contraction of a venue given an event, right? So I think that there's no longer this thing that you go to and go inside of. It's, it's much more of the, the, a holistic human experience and how that human experience is integrated into a given destination and how that experience benefits both the convention goers and the community members and everybody in between. So I think that's that expansion and contraction and understanding that expansion and, and how we can design those experiences to be a benefit to everybody, not just the convention, goer, not just the, the neighbor, but really everybody coming together, whether it's inside or outside. The building I think is, is really where the future of this facility type is going. And speaking of the future, I'm gonna put all three of you on the spot. I'm gonna start with Richard look into your crystal ball. And when you think about the future of convention center design, so what are some things we should look for in the next 10, 20, 50 years of, of this venue type? Where do you think we're starting to gain some traction and what are some things you think we could still accomplish or have yet to accomplish with a, a conventional center design solution?

Richard Breslin:

I think, you know, for me, something which I'm excited about, and we've definitely seen it happening, I think we'll get, it'll gather place more and more as, as, as time goes on, is this notion of sense of place that's absolutely critical. And we're seeing clients really start to buy into that. Cause that then creates a critical mass of people wanting to come there and experience something that goes beyond what's happening on the exhibition floor or within the plenary all itself, the technological advancements, I think that will obviously continue to rise. And it's obviously quite an exciting thing, but I think sets of place and creating that sort of quality of space. I look at what Calgary is doing LA, what we are doing in console right now on the Jamil project. You know, talking to clients last week, a client, a hopeful client in Beijing last week as sheen and bridge both said there is that reason that rationale for coming here, it's about trying to create the sort of secondary reasons for coming to these venues, trying to create a cultural center that's reflective of that place you build in show. This thing is gonna be 200,000 square meters. So bit of a 2 million square feet of flat floor exhibition space and a client's panicking. They're like, well, yeah. OK, fine. But what else? And it's that? So what else, which is exciting.

Michael Lockwood:

That's great. Shireen. What do you think the future holds for us

Shireen Hamdan:

A sense of place is absolutely. I think key to the six success of convention centers, creating an environment that is quite unique and engaging and memorable would be key to their survival. You know, they have to offer more than what you could get

sitting behind your desk, doing research. They have to offer more than what you would get from, you know, being at home or engaging digitally with something. So, so creating that sense of community, that sense of place enhancing that shared common interest is quite key to, I guess, the success of, of these venues flexibility as well. You, the more flexible we could make them, the more engaging they can be, the more they can communicate with their precinct and the city they're in the more successful they'll be.

Michael Lockwood:

I think that's right. I think adaptability and being ready for the future, uh, is something we always think about. And so, Bridget, I'm gonna end with you. I think you have the unique situation of having worked with me closely, and I'm sorry for that. but you you've seen and, and heard me talk about the future of our industry and the facilities that we have designed and are designing now and new Orleans and, and LA and, and in Boston and, and orange county across all of north America. So what do you think, what are some things that we've driven toward? What's resonating with our clients, we say, Hey, the future looks like this and people say, I agree, what are some of those things we're seeing right now?

Bridget Lowe:

Yeah. I think every convention center and civic project we approach, we have an opportunity to be rethinking inclusivity who is participating in shaping this important civic component of a city. I think radical inclusivity, radical accessibility, accessibility, beyond in what the Americas is. ADA. I think that thinking about sustainability beyond even just environmental sustainability, which we know is critical and is a huge focus for our firm, but also social sustainability. I think that we will be seeing the future of convention centers and exhibition centers. You know, we talk a lot about human-centered design in our field and our industry, and I think we'll be seeing a discussion that's more focused around life centered design. So taking it out of just the realm of what's best for humans and our needs here on this shared planet and be thinking realistically about all forms of life and life centered design.

Bridget Lowe:

That's a little bit maybe out there, but I don't think it's so out there that those conversations aren't resonating and thinking about creating economic ecosystems that are sustainable. So again, thinking about sustainability, environmental, social, and economic, all three, being able to deliver on the vision that I think we have in house, we have internal to our design teams working on this venue type. And I think we're just constantly looking for ways to make those aspirational things accessible for our clients and helping kind of pace out what to prioritize and when and how to achieve it. I also think we are going to be taking care of the whole employee more for those, the staff that actually work within these convention centers. Those are large staff that our clients are also managing and taking care of and our buildings in the future, I think will best serve that audience as well in ways that we are just now getting excited about.

Michael Lockwood:

No, I think that's great. And I think, you know, if I could summarize, I'm gonna try to summarize, cause that was a pretty broad, exactly how we should think about the future. The future is broad yet specific at times for our projects. But I do think about out, you know, from a sustainability point of view, environmental, social economic, that's what these buildings are meant to do. These buildings are meant to be economic engines for their communities. They need to and want to be used every day of the week. That's how we gauge their success, which I think is unique. The more events, the better, I think they want to be used by every human on the planet. So open to everybody and accessible to everybody. So a building that is open every day of the year and accomplishes all of those things is quite the unique design challenge.

Michael Lockwood:

I think we've, we've all seen that. And then you layer into that, the commentary from, and Bridget, as far as spirit of place, you know, designing these specifically for the place they're in, whether that be an urban environment or not, but every destination has its unique characteristics that you want to celebrate within the experience in the architecture of the building. So I think, you know, wrap all that up into one thing, it's, it's a pretty unique building type, a pretty unique charge, a wide open future. It's been such a joy for me to be able to attempt who design these facilities and we've been successful, but continue to attempt as we go into the future and asking these big, bold questions I think is going to consistently create better experiences and a better environment for everybody that attends these buildings. So I appreciate the perspective guys. That was really great. That was fantastic. I appreciate the candid responses and I, I'm really glad that you guys gave such thoughtful answers, but that is all the time that we have today. I do want to thank Richard, Shireen, and Bridget for being our guests for the podcast. It was great to see you guys as always. I love these conversations and thank you so much for, for taking part podcast.