

PRIDE OF PLACE

When Orlando's new soccer stadium opens next March, it will complete an impressive corridor of sports and entertainment venues. Feature writer, Steve Traiman, gets insight from management, the architect, Populous, and owner's representatives.

Orlando, Florida, has long been on the map for its world-class entertainment venues, including Walt Disney World, Universal Studios & Islands of Adventure with The Wizarding World of Harry Potter and Sea World.

Orlando City SC, Major League Soccer's (MLS) expansion Club, who first began in the MLS in 2015, will kick-off its third campaign in the new downtown stadium that will create a world-class soccer experience in the heart of the 'City Beautiful' next March.

Integrated seamlessly along Church Street's emerging Public Assembly Corridor, the design is intended to initiate development and activate the relationship between the city, citizens and spectators – both local residents and visiting tourists.



Main Panasonic 2,040ft² HD videoboard
All images throughout courtesy of Populous

Originally developed as a joint public/private project with the **City of Orlando**, surrounding counties and the team, in late May 2015, Orlando City SC's Board of Directors announced that the stadium would be privately funded by the Club. Founder and President, Phil Rawlins, and CEO, Alex Leitao, announced that they would also be upgrading the new stadium's capacity.

The new plan was unveiled on July 31, increasing capacity from 19,000 to 25,500 by adding seats to the south end. This maximised seats without major design changes that would have set back the project by another year. Total costs also rose from US\$110m to US\$155m, with US\$104m for construction.

As part of the private funding venture for the new stadium, at least US\$15m has come from 30 foreign investors, from countries such as Brazil and China, via the EB-5 investment program. This grants American visas in exchange for a US\$500,000 investment in the project. Candidates are thoroughly vetted and must meet various criteria set by the **U.S. government**.



The new stadium will also be 'home' to the **National Women's Soccer League's** newest expansion club, the **Orlando Pride**, and has already been awarded the **2017 NCAA Women's Soccer Challenge Cup**.

DESIGN LOWDOWN

Bruce Miller, Senior Architect and Senior Principal with **Populous** since 1989, provided project highlights and background for PS&AM. His other sports projects include the new **MLS Minnesota United Soccer Stadium** in St. Paul for 2018, the **AAA Nashville Sounds** new ballpark and the ongoing renovations at **Target Field**, home of **MLB Minnesota Twins**, among others

Miller said: *"Populous had been project architect for Amway Center, home of the NBA Orlando Magic. We interviewed for the soccer project in late 2013, won the contract and started the design in early 2014.*

"The majority owners are Brazilian and their initial thoughts about the project were also ours – to create a great fan experience with a building that would be another pearl in the necklace of the Church Street public assembly corridor. This now includes the Dr. Phillips Center for Performing Arts, Amway Center home of NBA Magic, Camping World Stadium (formerly the Citrus Bowl) [see PS&AM's Q1, 2015, issue], other theatres and night spots.

"The building address on Church Street provides an urban edge to create a true soccer fan experience in an intimate environment that was intense and loud. We liked the idea of a typical English soccer ground that led to a collection of stands, suites and clubs east, west, north and south, with a continuous lower bowl. The pitch is 10ft below ground, so fans can see all the pitch with entry from an urban environment.

"A lush landscaping plan by Landscape Design includes a pavilion in a parklike setting with a festival plaza lined with palm trees for the overall design. The stadium exterior is white structural steel with cantilevered steel canopies that create a 'megaphone' throughout the stadium. The canopies provide shade and shelter from rain with the majority of the bowl covered – creating the feeling of a traditional EPL [English Premier League] stadium.

"The main entry is off the west side corner of Church Street, and there's a VIP entry for suite and club seat holders. The west side Stadium Club has an outdoor terrace and interior/exterior, »

**VENUE IN
FOCUS**
**ORLANDO
CITY SOCCER
STADIUM**

ORLANDO CITY SOCCER STADIUM

Project Team and Fact File

Location	Orlando, Florida, USA
Construction Cost	US\$104m, Total Cost: US\$155m
Opening Date	March 2017
Owner & Operator	Orlando City FC
Lead Architect	Populous
Local Architect	C.T. Hsu + Associates
Construction Manager	Barton Malow; Partners: JCB Construction & Votum Construction
Owner's Representative	ICON Venue Group
Orlando City SC Project Team	Principal, Bruce Miller; Manager, Bruce Behm; Architect, Mitch Rybacki; BIM Manager, Thom Chuparkoff; Designer, Phil Kolbo; Interior Designer, Amy Wunderlich
Technology Partner/ Videoboards	Panasonic
Structural Engineer	Walter P Moore
Structural Steel	Banker Steel & S+R Enterprises
Mechanical & Electrical Engineer	ME Engineers
Plumbing & Fire Protection Engineer	SGM
A/V & Security	WJHW
Civil Engineer:	WBQ
Landscape Architect:	Landscape Designs
F&B Concessionaire	Spectra
Major Tenants	MLS Orlando City SC and National Women's Soccer League Orlando Pride
Events secured	2017 NCAA Women's Soccer Challenge Cup
Amenities	
25,500 seats, two suite levels with 31 luxury suites, 1,800 club seats, 10,500ft ² west side Stadium Club; Supporters' Stands with 3,800 safe standing room; north side Supporters' Terrace with concessions and amenities; Team Store; 60 x 34ft (2,040ft ²) main videoboard; metal deck canopy; and natural grass pitch.	



Natural grass pitch for men's and women's soccer.

« two-sided bar, with access for 1,800 club seat fans. This multi-use space on non-game days is available for meetings and receptions. Team administrative offices are also in the stadium – the true heart and soul of the Orlando City SC.”

FANS FIRST

Miller continued: “The stadium seating sections are all very steeply pitched to keep fans on top of the action with great sightlines. We also created innovative Supporters’ Stands with 3,800 safe standing room capacity, and a north side Supporters’ Terrace with concessions and amenities.

“We have two levels of VIP suites with 20 on the main concourse, including several larger party suites, and 11 more on the back of the west side. From the upper level, fans get a great image of downtown.”

“In relation to project challenges, Miller advised: “While we had no major problems, the 25 percent increase in seating after initial design plans were completed was a situation we had to deal with. A major utility’s underground duct bank ran through the site, which meant the main structure had to go up in two pieces, while the communications cabling was relocated.

“We have a great project team that is keeping the stadium on target. We have worked with contractor Barton Malow on many projects, including the Nashville ballpark. Owner’s representative, ICON Venue Group, also has been very helpful, led by Charlie Thornton, Brent Beardslee

and Nick Homrich. Great teamwork is keeping everything on budget and on target for opening next March for the 2017 MLS season.”

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

Charlie Thornton, ICON Venue Group Executive Vice President, who is serving as Project Executive and Owner’s Representative, told PS&AM, “This has been a unique opportunity for us to create a definitive stadium plan for a franchise that was seeking to join the MLS.

“Ultimately, the plan and incredible support from the local fan base provided their entry to the MLS and they took on the development of a new stadium. There has been an incredible outpouring of support from the City of Orlando. You can’t drive a block without seeing cars proudly displaying the Orlando City crest – it is truly an exceptional city with exceptional fans.

“It did add some pressure knowing how important this is for the Orlando City fans, but the entire project team has risen to the challenge to create something that everyone can be proud of. It has been an exceptionally rewarding and prideful experience.”

LAST LINK IN THE DOWNTOWN CHAIN OF SPORTS VENUES

Providing Orlando City SC’s views and outlook for the new downtown stadium

was General Manager, Scott Neal. With over 20 years of sports and event experience, he started the post last September after having spent the last seven years with venue management firm, SMG.

Neal was most recently at **Baylor University McLane Stadium** (see PS&AM Q2 ‘14 issue), after a GM position at **Rabobank Arena, Theater and Convention Center** in Bakersfield, CA.

Neal told PS&AM: “The stadium is the last link in the downtown chain of sports venues that includes Amway Center and Camping World Stadium. With Interstate 4 and State Route 408 feeding in close to downtown, we have a Sunrail station several blocks away. There’s very adequate parking nearby and bike racks for local fans.

“The stadium offers a very intimate setup – the best of many different sites I’ve worked at. It’s truly downtown, bordering Church and Central Streets, and you walk right off the street into the main 360-degree concourse.

“For the typical soccer fan, the design brings all sightlines close to the field and the canopy really holds the sound in – an experience never before seen for soccer in Orlando.”

SENSE OF COMMUNITY

In regards to the fan experience, fan engagement and the community, Neal advised: “This Parramore area brings a rich heritage that is noted with a display in the stadium. We are building »

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Main Church Street stadium entry gate.

« strong relations with the community as a whole. As a proud example, on June 14 we announced there will be a permanent rainbow memorial in Section 12 in honour of the victims of the June 12 Orlando nightclub shooting.

“Our sense of community extends to our concessionaire, Spectra. They have about 10 permanent concession stands, each with its own theme, including sausage, stadium fare with burgers and hot dogs, and international fare.

“They also operate the west side Stadium Club that is open to suite and other VIP seat holders, and Heineken, as official beer partner, has a named bar on the main south side concourse.

“Panasonic is our Official Technology Partner, providing on-field and fascia LED boards, time clocks, play clocks, and the 60 by 34ft (2,040ft²) main scoreboard on the southeast corner. In addition, Panasonic will provide technology solutions such as the control room and other key components.”

TEAMWORK

When asked about the looming March 2017 completion date and filling the new stadium, Neal said: “After selling out our 18,000 season tickets for this year at Camping World Stadium very quickly, we’ll be starting sales for 2017 in the new stadium very soon. We’ll have the same 18,000 allotment with an online virtual venue for fans to access – and see – actual suites and other areas to reserve. Our goal first and foremost is for soccer, to make sure the pitch is well protected. Then

we’ll be going after concerts, shows and other municipal events.

“We’ve been involved in all meetings with the project team and have a great

relationship with Populous, Barton Malow, ICON and others. Frequent meetings have covered general construction, security, signage and

Typical VIP suite interior.

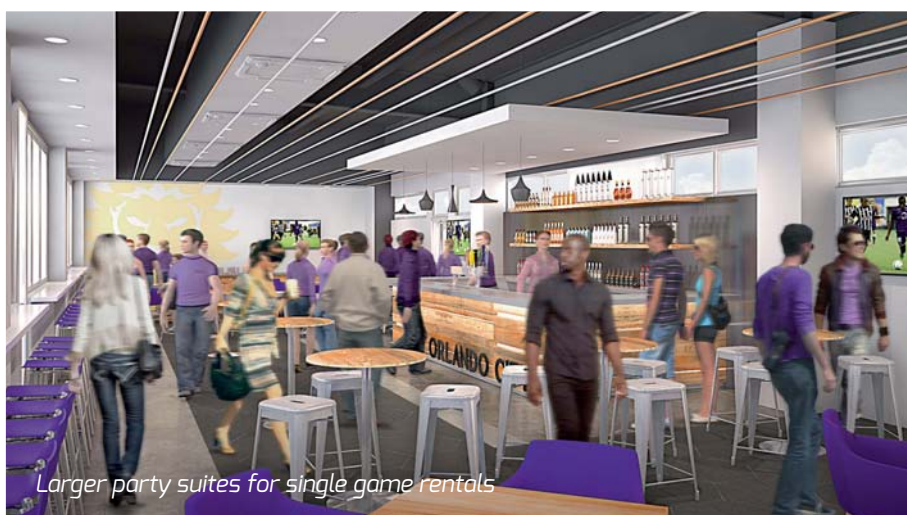


VENUE IN FOCUS

ORLANDO CITY SOCCER STADIUM



Entry lobby for VIP patrons.



Larger party suites for single game rentals

wayfinding, among other topics. Dealing with such world-class companies has made it a very easy-going relationship.

"Other key members of my Orlando City FC team include finance, front office operations, marketing, communications and ticket sales. I report to President, Phil Rawlins, and CEO, Alex Leitao, and their doors are always open.

"We are very proud of our exciting stadium project and the great project team working toward a successful finish line next March." ■

Main image: Separate VIP entry for suite, club and club seat holders.

