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By Aleta Walther

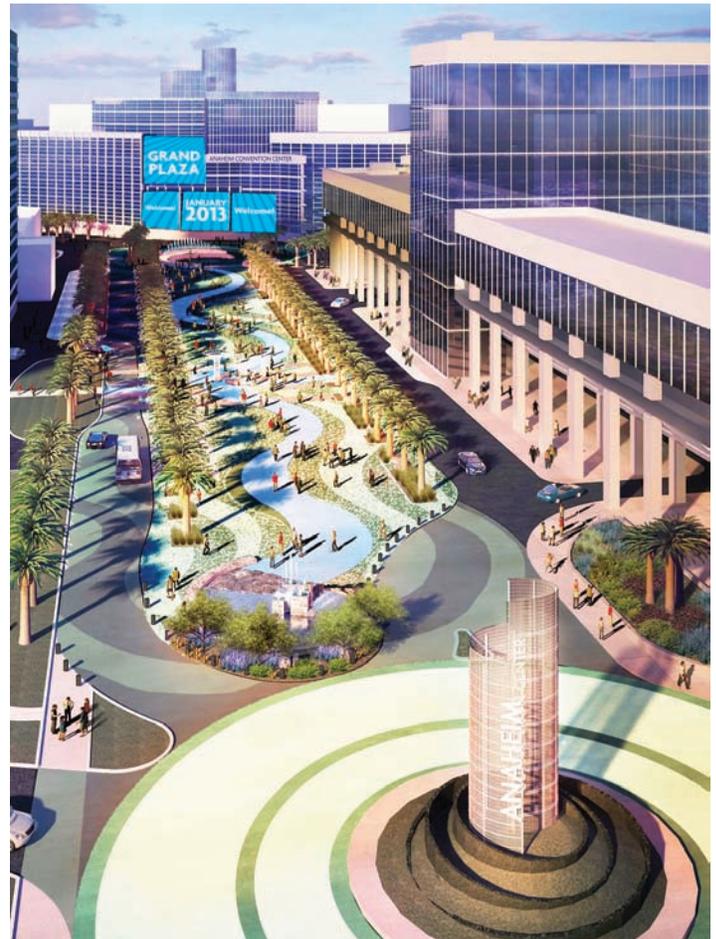
The Anaheim Convention Center is in the midst of a \$20 million, 100,000-square foot expansion of its outdoor and special event space. Christened the Grand Plaza, the new, multi-use, open-air venue is located right outside the convention center's front entrance on Convention Way. When completed, the plaza will provide a seamless pedestrian esplanade that flows from the convention center and between the Hilton Anaheim and the Anaheim Marriott hotels.

"Anaheim Convention Center's new outdoor space, the Grand Plaza, will create a picturesque environment for meeting attendees to gather, and provide meeting planners with an array of attractive options for special events," said Tom Morton, executive director of sports and entertainment at the convention center. "The Grand Plaza is designed to create a new sense of arrival for guests visiting our resort area, as well as provide us with the flexibility to use this attractive outdoor space in a number of ways to accommodate the needs of our

clients and local citizens."

The pedestrian-oriented plaza will include 153 palm trees (65 of which are repurposed from the existing landscape), 60 citrus trees reminiscent of Anaheim and Orange County's citrus industry, a river of lights that will run through the middle of the plaza, water features, a 48-foot lighted entry monument and more than 80,000 square feet of colored concrete and pavers.

"The Grand Plaza provides a new avenue for our clients to use their imagination and create something spectacular for their attendees," said Charles Ahlers, president of the Anaheim Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau. "Orange County's excellent year-round sunny weather is the perfect backdrop for this space. Here, groups can dine al fresco, listen to concerts, or attend receptions and exhibitions. The Grand Plaza will enhance our open, campus-like space surrounding the Anaheim Convention Center and the walkability to the adjacent hotels. It will provide attendees with a spectacular outdoor meeting and gathering environment



The Grand Plaza is slated to open January 2013.

like no other."

Since opening in 1967, The Anaheim Convention Center has gone through three major expansions and several cosmetic renovations. The convention center is home to about 70 events annually, including the National Association of Music Manufacturers' tradeshow and conference, which at-

tracted a record breaking 95,709 for its 2012 edition in January.

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