



VBC's Propst Arena Receives \$4 Million Backstage Renovation

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[\[Dropbox link to pictures\]](#)

Huntsville, Ala. (December 9, 2021) – The Von Braun Center (VBC) showcased additions made to the Propst Arena backstage with an open house on Wednesday, December 8, 2021 to city leaders, event promoters and media.

The approximately \$4 million expansion began in December 2020 and was recently completed in October 2021, with Matheny Goldmon Architects + Interiors and The Highland Group General Contractor leading the project. This is the first major renovation to the arena backstage since it was originally built in 1975. The original space included one locker room that was often subdivided into two spaces, plus multiple small dressing rooms.

With the completion of this latest addition, the backstage now includes six dressing rooms, two private star lounges, four locker rooms, a catering and media room, office space, commercial-grade laundry room, and more.

In preparation for the additions, sports tenants and live event promoters were interviewed on what needs and wish list items should be included in the project.

“The intent of the project was to not only bring our backstage spaces up to current sports and entertainment standards, but to surpass the expectations that touring teams and stars come to expect,” remarked VBC Executive Director Steve Maples. “We wanted to give them a ‘Wow’ moment when they enter our facility, give them a reason to not stay on their bus, and ultimately leave a lasting impression that they’ll share with industry peers.”

The Von Braun Center has brought thousands of events to Huntsville through the arena, including top-tier artists like Johnny Cash, Elton John, Dolly Parton, Chris Stapleton, Jamey Johnson, Jackson Five, Aerosmith, Jimmy Buffet, The Eagles, Charlie Pride, Van Halen, Alabama, and Reba, to name a few.

But it is not just concerts that take place in the ‘bowl,’ Huntsville’s own Southern Professional Hockey League – multi-time President’s Cup Champions Huntsville Havoc – call the Von Braun Center Propst Arena home and host sold out games every season inside the facility.

Additionally, the VBC Propst Arena hosts the annual SEC collegiate basketball game showcasing the University of Alabama’s men’s basketball team during the Rocket City Classic.

In 2021, the SEC Gymnastics Championships were held inside the VBC Propst Arena with sold out sessions. The championships were broadcast live on ESPN’s SEC Network and beautifully showcased the capabilities of

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the Von Braun Center, the Huntsville Sports Commission and the City of Huntsville as a whole.

The new backstage additions to the arena will make hosting future sporting events and large-scale events easier with more space and accessibility for all teams, coaches and referees.

Knight Eady, a Birmingham-based full-service event, strategy and creative agency focused on sports has been a major partner and component to bringing large sporting events to Huntsville in recent years.

"The Von Braun Center has always been a great host for many of our events," said Knight Eady President Michael Eady. "The new improvements to the arena will put the Von Braun Center in an even stronger position to continue to host premium sporting events for the foreseeable future."

The end result of the year-long project, leaves the VBC Propst Arena backstage with dressing rooms and star lounges that look and feel like a 5-star hotel. Amidst the fresh paint and plush furniture, entertainers and crews will enjoy the hand-picked artwork hanging on the walls.

"More than just giving our guests a fantastic space they can relax and enjoy their time in, we took great care into thoughtfully picking each of the art elements and special little details that welcome each individual to Huntsville," said VBC Director of Marketing and Public Relations Samantha Nielsen. "For instance, our team named each of the new rooms in keeping with the space-theme that's prevalent throughout the Rocket City - rooms like 'Galaxy Lounge' (the main star lounge), 'Mission Control' (the production office), 'Launchpad' (the training room), and the different dressing rooms each identified by a planets name"

As performers, athletes and crews walk down the main corridor running the length of the expansion, they see enlarged photograph panels highlighting past events in the arena. On one end leading to the section of four locker rooms, Harlem Globetrotters, Alabama and Auburn gymnasts, the Rocket City Classic basketball court, and hockey scenes are placed along the route in 3 foot by 5 foot panels.

In the opposite direction towards the star lounges and dressing rooms, vibrant large-scale photographs by well-known talented local photographer, Dennis Keim, capture a creative glimpse into the beauty of music – like his brightly colored closeup shot of eight guitars, or his black and white detailed photograph of a man's hands playing a Les Paul.

Once inside the Galaxy Lounge, one of the most notable moments in VBC history is showcased throughout the room. Elvis photographs found in The Huntsville Times archives illustrate his time at the VBCC in 1975 when he played five consecutive sold-out shows, and then again in 1976 with another two sold-out shows. Photographs include an enlarged performance shot capturing the moment he threw his scarf into the crowd; the outdoor marquee showing ELVIS – SOLD OUT; and excited concert-goers lined up in front of the building waiting to get in for the shows.

Off to the side, in a bank of four dressing rooms, framed photographs with the artist's name and date the picture was taken at the VBC further illustrate the history of past stars who have performed in the building – stars like Reba McEntire, Elton John, Prince, and Dolly Parton.

Step into the private star chambers – Lunar Lounge – and the reason behind the city's nickname becomes clear - custom, enlarged Dennis Keim originals highlighting the U.S. Space and Rocket Center's Saturn V rocket – a piece of American history built in Huntsville, Alabama – make up the wall elements, accompanied by a large oil painting of an astronaut.

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As the performer leaves the spacious and luxurious quarters to take to the stage, the last pieces of art he sees is a large 28 foot by 7 foot photograph broken into three panels featuring the Saturn V rocket at night with traffic light trails leading the way towards the audience.

Adjacent is a hand-painted mural by local artist, Brandon Stoll, of AM PM Paint Co. The vibrant mural gives the viewer the perspective that he or she is standing on the surface of Mars looking at a directional signpost indicating the backstage room names. (Stoll also created two custom ‘Welcome to Huntsville’ murals on the building’s exterior at the entrances the stars, athletes, and crews will use. One mural has the look of a vintage greeting card and includes hand-painted Huntsville landmarks inside the letters.)

Finally, on the third wall in the galley leading to the stage entrance is an enlarged 3 foot by 5 foot photograph panel of The Man in Black himself – Johnny Cash – who was the very first musician to ever play in the VBCC.

For more information about the Von Braun Center and to see upcoming events, visit www.vonbrauncenter.com.

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About Von Braun Center

The Von Braun Center is a multi-purpose facility located in downtown Huntsville, Alabama. The VBC offers multiple venues for presenting cultural, educational, entertainment, sporting and social events. Venue spaces include the Propst Arena, Mark C. Smith Concert Hall, Mars Music Hall, North Hall, South Hall, and East Hall. Additionally, the VBC has an on-site full-service restaurant and rooftop bar – Rhythm on Monroe. With over 170,000 square feet of flexible meeting space the VBC is able to accommodate events of all types and sizes.