

# FLEXIBILITY

## THE FUTURE OF EVENT SPACE

By Hala Bissada, CFRE



Hotel X Rendering

As an event producer, I'm always excited when a new venue opens. Moving an event to a cool new venue is an easy way to refresh it, more so if the space is flexible so you can think outside the box. According to the International Association of Conference Centre's (IACC) recent report "[Meeting Room of the Future](#)" which surveyed venue operators and suppliers the most important element in venue selection will be flexible meeting space. Similarly, an earlier survey of meeting planners found that 47% thought that flexible meeting space would be more important than in the past with access to

interactive technology being the most important element in venue selection. This applies to other styles of events whether they are product launches or charitable galas.

What is contributing to this trend? With respect to galas, event formats are changing. The traditional sit-down dinner is becoming a thing of the past. People want to engage more socially and are enjoying more interactive experiences. An example of this is the McMichael Canadian Art Collection's [Moonlight Gala](#). It took place on the spectacular grounds which were transformed into a glamorous indoor and

AGO's Massive Party 2017.  
Theme: Machine Age Massive.



outdoor party for an evening of gourmet dining (over 20 food and beverage stations), intermittent curated entertainment and dancing under the stars. They raised over \$700,000 without having to sell tables. Other great events with a relaxed event format and using multiple spaces in the same venue to create a multi-sensory experience include Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery **Power Ball** (2017 theme: Sterovision), SickKids Foundation's **Scrubs in the City** (2017 theme: Marrakech) and AGO's **Massive Party** (2017 theme: Machine Age Massive).

In terms of conferences, the growing need for flexible meeting space is to accommodate the variety of content which is not just plenary sessions, break-out sessions and traditional trade shows. Conference planners are incorporating more interactive elements, showcasing vendors in more innovative ways, shortening formats, making sessions more participatory etc. In fact, some conferences today are more like rock concerts.

So what is flexible event space? For conferences and meetings it means space that accommodates both traditional meeting setups, i.e. theatre-style for things like plenaries or classroom/lecture style for sessions, as well as more dynamic formats where the configuration can change on the fly. Furniture is moveable and stackable and not your typical classroom or round tables or regular chairs. Think creative lounge seating, communal tables, bean bag chairs, high-tops, and creative partitions to create interesting spaces.

For fundraising galas, flexibility comes in the form of having multiple spaces to house various elements of the event, whether it is auctions or a variety of activations including food and beverage, art, sponsor, or custom activations to connect people to the cause. It could also be offering different types of entertainment in each space. It means as a planner your world is your oyster in terms of how to configure and use each space.

Technology does play a role in flexible space. This could mean moveable screens, wireless projectors, interactive whiteboards, video conference capabilities, portable charging stations, gaming equipment, audience response systems and special lighting.

The key to flexible spaces include offering larger open spaces, moveable furniture, and variety of room options in terms of look and feel and technology advancements.

McMichael Canadian Art  
Collection's Moonlight Gala.



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Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery  
Power Ball 2017. Theme: Sterovision.



“*This 30-story lakefront urban resort brings together the most cutting edge mix entertainment options ever assembled in a Canadian urban setting*”

A new venue that is a showcase for flexible venue space is the new **Hotel X** by Library Hotel Collection opening this fall in Toronto. I was invited to take a hard hat tour of the space, and I was wowed and excited by what I saw.

My tour guide explained that the strategic thinking behind the hotel was to create a resort environment for guests and I think they have succeeded. This 30-story lakefront urban resort brings together the most cutting-edge mix of hospitality, sports and entertainment options ever assembled in a Canadian urban setting. It is divided into

three buildings: The Hotel Tower, TEN X TORONTO and the historic Stanley Barracks.

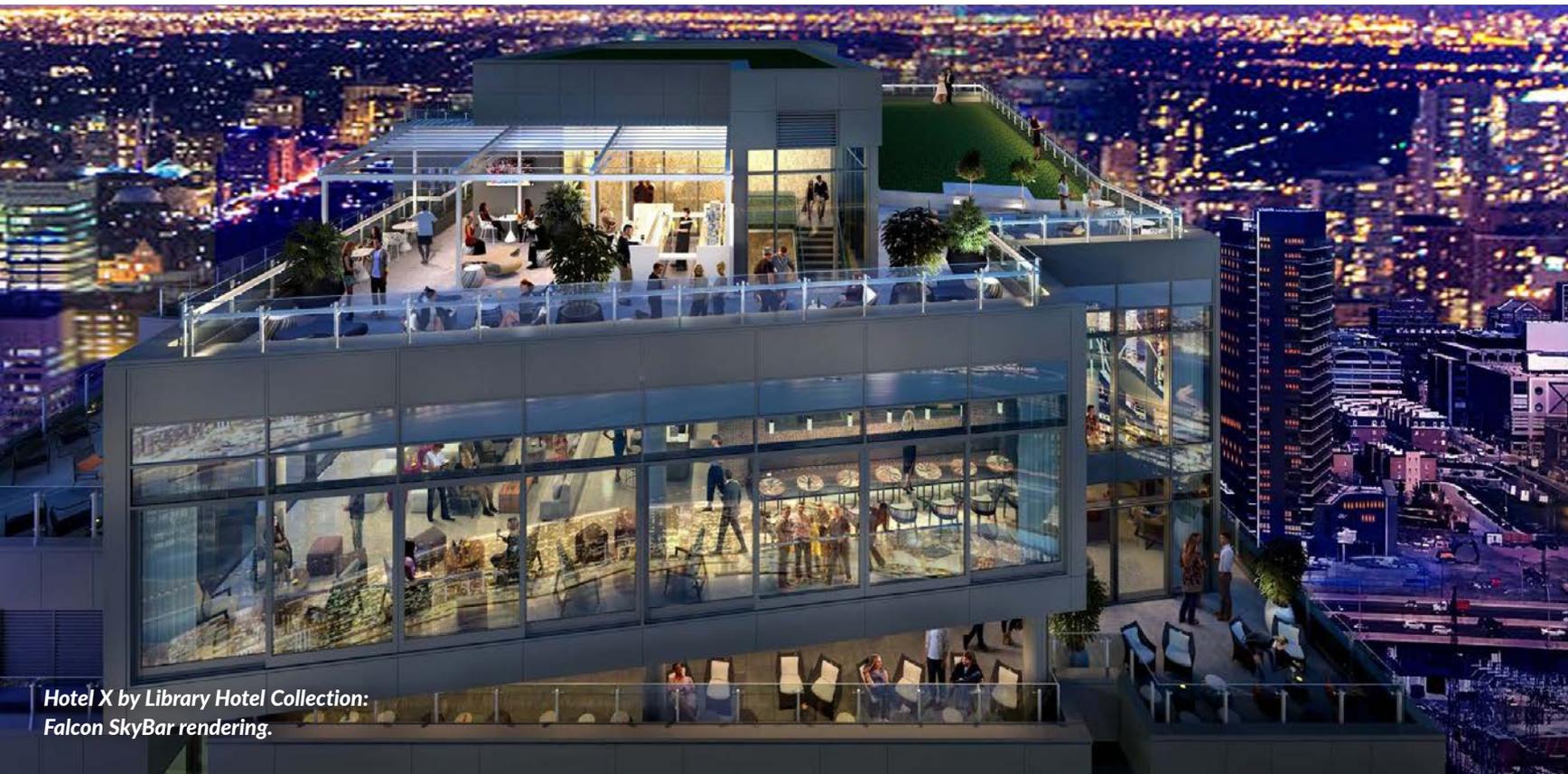
The multifunctional venue has over 60,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor event space to choose from and is an event planner's dream. The space includes:

**Stanley Barracks:** The Parades Gardens and Stanley Gardens on either side of the historic Stanley Barracks both offer beautifully landscaped park space for 4,500 attendees, ideal for large, private outdoor events.

**The Conference Centre** (2nd Floor) has 6,271 square feet of meeting space and 2,859 square feet of pre-function space, with access to a garden-view balcony and the cinema.

**Falcon SkyBar** is 10,000 square feet of space and possible to have up to three events simultaneously on the rooftop:

- The Nest: Ideal for a small VIP gathering with dramatic, high ceilings and unparalleled views (27th Floor).
- The Perch: Adjacent to The View, The Perch is an ideal location for private events and receptions, pre-dinner gatherings and fashion shows.
- The View: 1,600 square feet of indoor and outdoor space located on the 28th floor, with a spectacular view of the Toronto Skyline and Lake Ontario.



Hotel X by Library Hotel Collection:  
Falcon SkyBar rendering.



**Hotel X by Library Hotel Collection:**  
**Falcon SkyBar lounge rendering.**



**Hotel X by Library**  
**Collection: Victory**  
**Ballroom**

**The Ballrooms:** The 3rd floor has two ballrooms, each divisible with Skyfold® drop-down ceiling partitions, share 10,024 square-foot pre-function hall and a garden-view balcony. The Victory Ballroom has spectacular south-facing floor-to-ceiling windows that open to a 995 square-foot balcony overlooking the lake.

**High Park Terrace:** On the 4th floor is a 6,720 sq. ft. outdoor garden terrace located on the roof of the Victory Ballroom, partially fitted with a retractable canvas enclosure, full bar, trellis and panoramic views of the Hotel X Toronto Gardens and Lake Ontario.

**The Cinema:** 1,500 sq. ft. with 243 stadium-style seats.

**Screening Room:** 56 seats.

**TEN X TORONTO:** An inspired athletic facility featuring 90,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space including four decor turf indoor tennis courts, nine glass back squash courts, Fitness Centre with 50 machines, Hot yoga studio, Pilates studio, spinning studio, fitness studio, full-service spa, state-of-the-art golf simulator, Children's Play Centre and Lifestyle Centre.

**Other great features to note include:**

- Dedicated event elevators.
- A VIP reception lounge.
- The Pearl Room (bridal suite), that has a floor-to-ceiling 3-side mirror and Hollywood lighting at the make-up table.
- The Bowtie Room (groom suite) has a pool table and large monitors for watching sports.
- The wedding suites could double as green rooms.

In addition, all the restaurants and event catering will be managed by renowned Toronto catering company [byPeterandPauls.com](http://byPeterandPauls.com), leaders and innovators in the hospitality and entertainment industry for over 35 years.

Creativity has always depended on openness and flexibility... so here's hoping to more flexible venue space in our future.

For more creative event solutions from Hala Bissada, follow her on [twitter](#) and [facebook](#) at @HalaEvents.