

Bringing the National Square Dance Convention® Back to Oregon

Feasibility Report
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What's the purpose of this committee?

- Try to answer the question “could Oregon host another NSDC?”
- Gather information
- Explore potential locations
- Identify risk factors
- NOT trying to answer the question of “should we?”
 - Considerable disagreement amongst committee members

What IS the National Square Dance Convention?

- Largest gathering of square dancers in the world
- Truly international event
- First held in 1952 in Anaheim
- 2024 was the 73rd NSDC, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (2,564 delegates)
 - 2025: 74th NSDC in Shreveport, LA
 - 2026: 75th NSDC in Waco, TX
 - 2027: 76th NSDC in Loveland, CO
- Owned and managed by National Executive Committee (NEC)
 - Consists of past convention General Chairmen
 - Extremely tight control over the design and operation of an NSDC
 - Currently 23 members

Has Oregon done this before?

Portland has hosted the NSDC twice before:

- 1994: 43rd NSDC
 - 22,000 attendees
 - Split between still new Oregon Convention Center and Memorial Coliseum
 - Still the second largest convention ever held in Portland
 - Chaired by Don & Shirley White and Lee & Barbi Ashwill
- 2005: 54th NSDC
 - 8,100 attendees
 - Oregon Convention Center
 - Chaired by Lee & Barbi Ashwill and Gary & Betty Willoughby

What makes a convention different from a festival?

- Extensive education program of clinics and seminars
- Two events: Pre-Convention and Convention
- Four full days (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday), 10 AM to 11 PM
- These are the dedicated, serious dancers
 - Thousands of folks from all over the world
 - They expect all levels of dancing
 - They expect nice hotels
 - They don't know the area and expect tours
- Hundreds of callers and cuers
- Large set of vendors

Major Areas of Investigation:

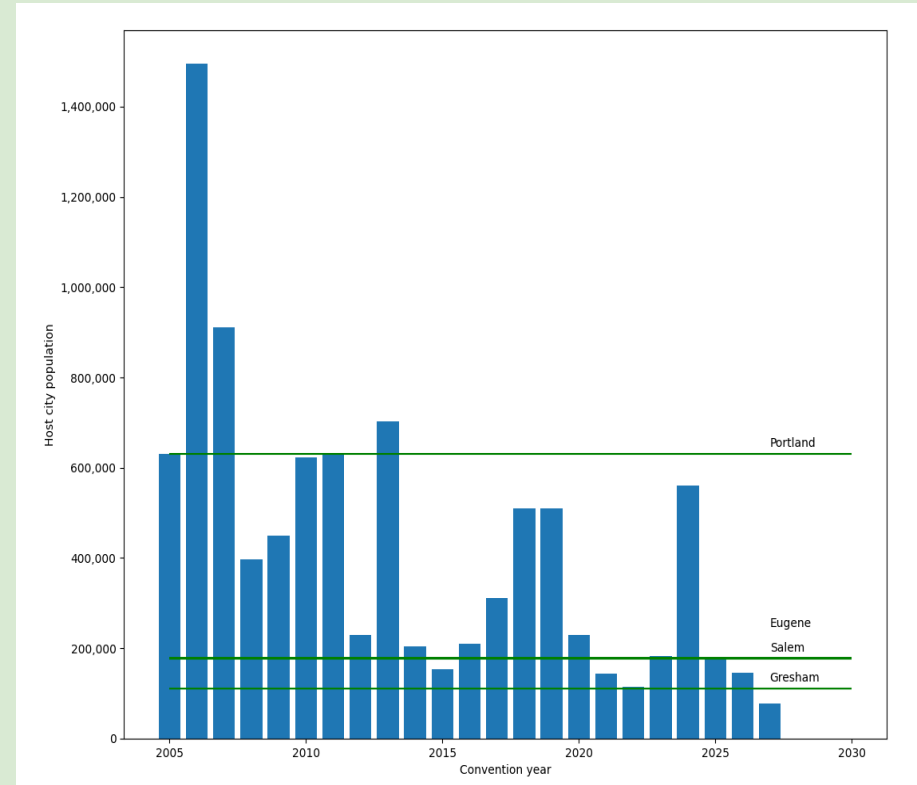
- Cost
- Location
- Organization
 - General Chairman
 - Convention Board
 - Volunteer Base
- Hosting
- Miscellaneous

Cost

- For income, assume 3,000 dancers at \$80 each, total \$240,000
- Expense areas:
 - Venue rental
 - Chair and stages
 - Signs
 - Services
 - Advertising
 - Publishing
 - Insurance
 - Travel
 - Transportation
 - Sound equipment
 - Flooring
- Final report from 2024 showed expenses topped \$200,000

Location

- Base population of last 20 host cities, along with 4 largest cities in Oregon
- Only Portland, Eugene, and Salem have enough population to support a convention



Location Requirements

- NEC requires the following of a host location:
 - 175,000 square feet of dancing space
 - Nine dance floors (or more)
 - Vendor area to accommodate 30 to 40 vendors
 - Meeting rooms (8 to 10)
 - Arena or theater to accommodate 1,500 people
 - 2,000 parking spots
 - Roughly 1,000 nearby hotel rooms
 - (About one room per 4 attendees)
 - Available RV facilities

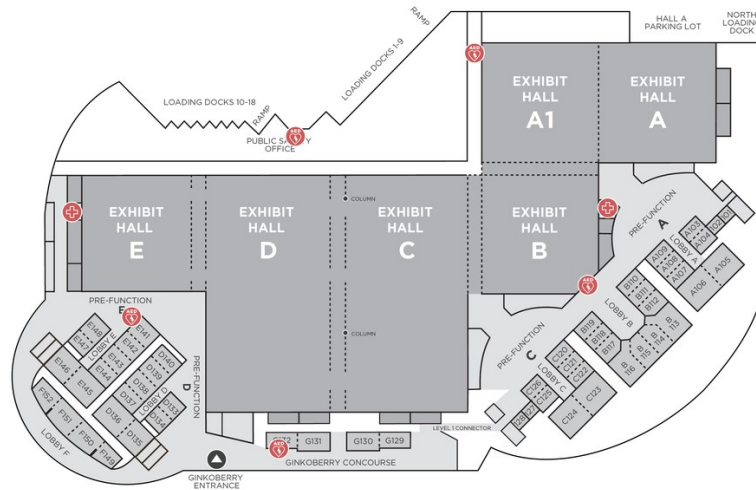
Location Requirements – Dance Halls

- Required by the NEC:
 - Mainstream without Rounds
 - Plus with Rounds
 - Advanced (A1/A2)
 - Challenge (C1/C2/C3)
 - Basic Rounds
 - Intermediate and Advanced Rounds
 - Youth
 - Contra and Line Dancing
 - Variety (DBD, hot hash, high intensity)
- Solo, clogging, and handicapable are desirable

Location Requirements – Possibles

- We've come up with 5 possible locations:
 - Oregon Convention Center, Portland
 - Exposition Center, Portland
 - Lane County Fairgrounds, Eugene
 - Oregon State Fairgrounds, Salem
 - Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center, Redmond

Location Overview – Oregon Convention Center, Portland



Location Overview – Oregon Convention Center, Portland

- Positives
 - We know it works, we've done it here twice before
 - 255,000 square feet of exhibit space
 - 52 meeting rooms
 - 2 grand ballrooms
 - Best hotel and restaurant availability of any option
 - Easy transportation access
- Negatives
 - Prohibitively expensive, up to \$66,000 per day
 - Chews up entire budget
 - POVA (Portland Oregon Visitor's Association) may be able to help

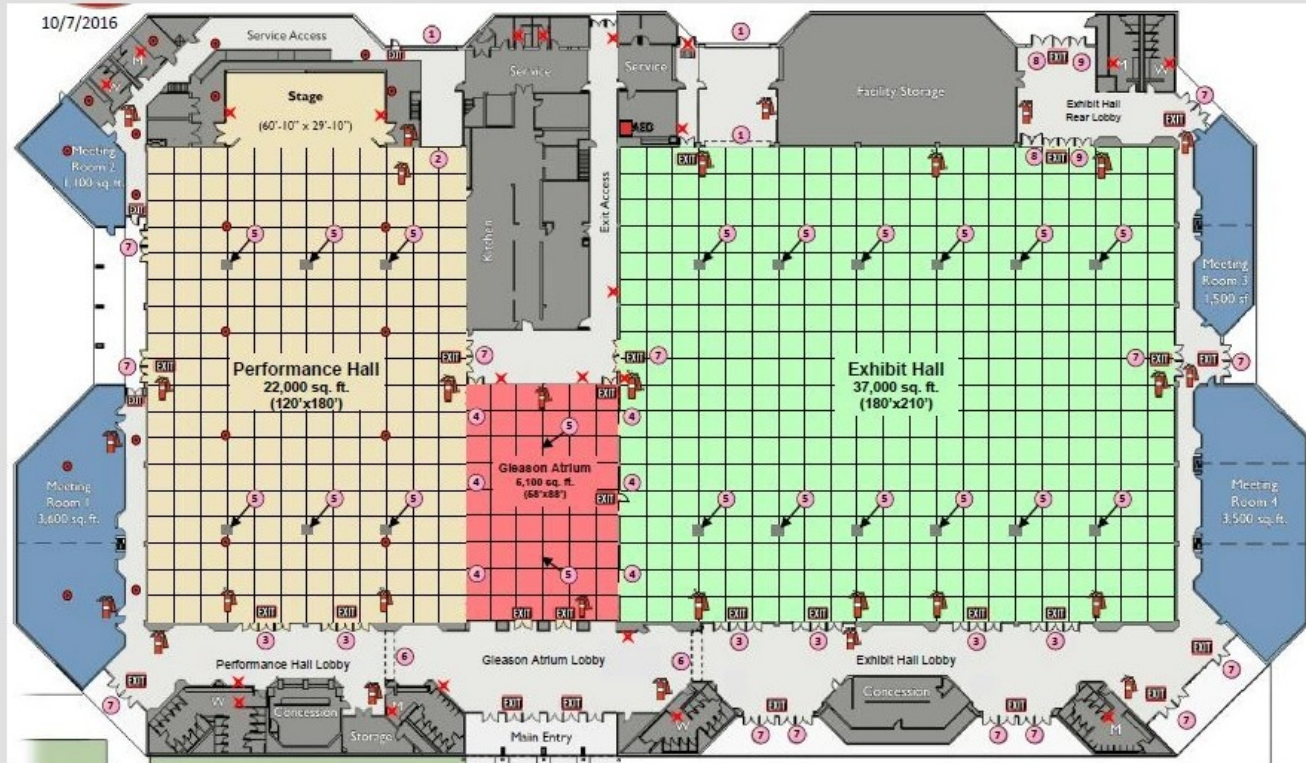
Location Overview – Exposition Center, Portland



Location Overview – Exposition Center, Portland

- Positives
 - Lots of space, 330,000 square feet in 4 large halls and 2 small ones
 - 2,500 parking spots
- Negatives
 - Halls are not easily subdividable
 - \$25,000 per day, plus \$20,000 for parking, about $\frac{2}{3}$ of our budget
 - Again, POVA could probably negotiate for us
 - Far removed from city core, making a hotel and transportation problem
 - Nice hotels in Vancouver's redone waterfront
 - By 2030, Interstate Bridge replacement will be underway
 - Expo Center is old and unsightly
 - Huge remodel into personal sports center has been proposed

Location Overview – Lane County Fairgrounds, Eugene



Location Overview – Lane County Fairgrounds, Eugene

- Positives

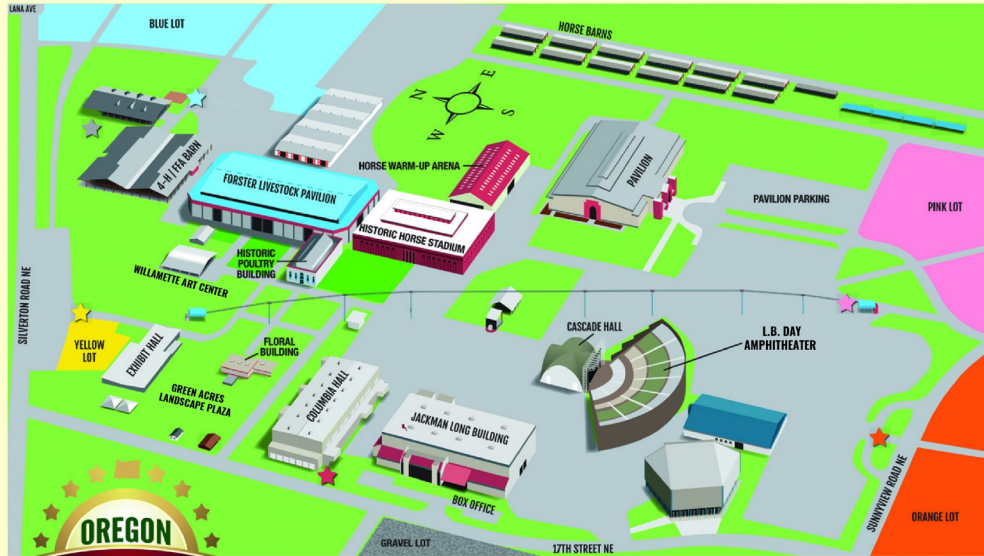
- Well-known to dancers – hosted Mid-Winter Festival from 1957 through 2004
- Had 4,000 dancers there in the early 1990s
- 170,000 square feet in 9 buildings
- 2,500 parking spots
- Total cost for entire grounds about \$18,000 per day

- Negatives

- Large halls would need to be multipurpose
- Fairground sits in a hotel/restaurant desert
 - Nearest hotel 15 blocks, most a mile or more
 - That means we would need bus service
 - Probably need to arrange for buffet service in the building

Location Overview – State Fairgrounds, Salem

Exposition Center Map



2330 17th Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97301
www.oregonstateexpo.org



Location Overview – State Fairgrounds, Salem

- Positives
 - Centrally located
 - Total about 130,000 square feet
 - Columbia Building can be divided into 7 parts with floor to ceiling curtains
 - LB Day Amphitheatre could be used for arena purposes
- Negatives
 - Dance halls separated by curtains are not ideal, acoustically
 - Also in a hotel/restaurant desert
- Salem Convention Center as potential overflow
 - Located downtown, 3 miles away
 - Additional 30,000 square feet
 - Could run shuttle buses

Location Overview – Deschutes County Fair & Expo



Welcome to Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center



Location Overview – Deschutes County Fair & Expo

- Positives
 - 200,000 square feet indoors
 - 5 buildings with about 15 meeting rooms
 - Arena available with 4,000 to 7,000 seats
 - 7,500 motel rooms within 15 minutes
 - Lots of nearby recreation
 - On-site RV sites
- Negatives
 - Long way from PDX and Willamette Valley
 - Redmond Airport only hosts a few airlines

Location Overview – Other Suggestions

- Vancouver Waterfront
 - Completely redesigned and remodeled
 - Hilton has 11 meeting rooms, but only 30,000 square feet
 - May be useful for overflow, but not primary
- Ilani Casino in Ridgefield
 - NEC requires that host location refrain from serving alcohol during the convention
 - Insufficient floor space
 - Casinos don't work...
- Pendleton Convention Center
 - Has hosted the USAWest Convention in the past
 - Not nearly enough floor space or dance halls

Organization – Convention Board

- General Chairman
- Assistant General Chairman
- Secretary
- Computer Coordinator
- Ceremonies Chairman
- General Counsel
- Seven major committee chairs:
 - Business
 - Education
 - Program
 - Publicity
 - Registration and Housing
 - Services
 - Social and Special Events

Organization – General Chairman

- Critical position
- Acts as the face of the convention locally and nationally
- Nearly a full-time job
- Must be a married couple
- Cannot be caller or cuer
- Must be cheerful, personable, charismatic, hard-working, organized, detail-oriented, and well-known within the state
- Runs all board meetings
- Has final signature authority on all purchases and contracts

Organization – General Chairman – Burdens

- Required to travel to pre-conventions and conventions over their 4 years
- Lifetime commitment
 - Becomes a new member of the National Executive Committee
 - Travels to all future conventions
 - Must act as an advisor in their region of the country
- Appoints an Assistant General Chairman to take over in case of emergency, and this HAS happened

Organization – Convention Board

- Each major committee has a dozen or more subcommittees
 - Directors and volunteers
- Committee Chairmen spend a lot of time, like a part-time job
- Five-year commitment — one year bid prep, four years to convention
- Will attend several pre-conventions and conventions
- Must provide reports at every board meeting
- Must give presentation at their pre-convention
- In Zoom era, these can come from other states

Convention Board – Business Chairman

- Monitors all cash, checks and cards
- Handles all bills
- Handles all banking
- Uses QuickBooks or something equivalent
- Handles all contracts
- Deals with vendors

Convention Board – Education

- Creates and oversees the education program
- Major item that distinguishes conventions from festivals
- Three types of sessions:
 - Seminar – lectures and speeches
 - Panel – series of experts at front table debating issues or answering questions
 - Clinic – audience participation teaching and/or demonstration
- Typically multiple sessions from 10 AM to 5 PM
- Needs to avoid conflicts with calling assignments

Convention Board – Program Chairman

- Solicits, signs, validates and schedules all of the “talent”
 - Callers
 - Cuers
 - Prompters
- Major halls get one tip per caller and/or cuer
- There is software to help avoid conflicts

Convention Board – Publicity Chairman

- Handles all publicity through (and before) the four years
- Flyers
- Press releases
- Articles for National Squares
- Newspapers
- Radio stations
- Television stations
- Social media

Convention Board – Registration & Housing Chairman

- Creates pre-registration and registration forms
- Decides which hotels are “featured” hotels
- Gets committed pricing on hotels
- Distributes registration forms widely
- Receives all registrations and money
- Mails out receipts
- Created badges
- Handles check-in at the convention

Convention Board – Services Chairman

- Handles everything associated with the facility
 - Room assignments
 - Stages
 - Pipe & drape
 - Booths
 - Chairs
 - Tables
 - Water
 - Food service
 - Catered meals
 - Parking
 - Bus service
 - Complaints

Convention Board – Social & Special Events Chairman

- Handles creation, registration and execution of tours
 - Typically 10 or 20
 - From three hour city tours to multi-day bus adventures
 - People are flying in from all over the world and don't know the area
 - Work closely with convention & visitors bureau
- Handles opening and closing ceremonies
- Handles the Parade of States (“Grand March”)
- Handles the media breakfast
- Handles the big Saturday Fashion Show
- Handles the bid session for future conventions
- In 1994 and 2005, we had post-convention Alaska cruises
 - Very popular

Organization – Volunteers

- NSDC requires support of a few hundred volunteers
- Some on subcommittees in the 4 years leading up
- Many serving at the convention
- Some may come from out of state
- Does Oregon have a large enough volunteer base to make this commitment?

Hosting a Convention – The Process

- Who can bid?
 - “Any organized association or federation of square and round dance clubs may bid to host an National Square Dance Convention”
- Start with announcing “intent to bid”
- Prepare a “bid package”
 - Bid book
 - Bid contract
 - Pledges of support
- Present the bid via a dog & pony show at a convention
- If the bid is accepted, then the fun begins

Miscellaneous – Seed Money

- Many expenses roll in long before registrations, even before bid
- Need “seed money” from host – OFSRDC
- After 2005, we set aside \$25,000
 - Still sitting in a CD
- Would need to make that commitment again

Miscellaneous – Dancer Impact

- Hosting a convention is a big job, tiring for many
- Volunteers do get burned out
- Federation population went down after 1994 and 2005
- Can we afford that again?

Miscellaneous – Tax Impact

- NEC suggests that NSDCs become 501(c)(3) charities
- This does allow donations and volunteer expensed to be deducted
- Biggest benefit of 1994 and 2005 was distribution of several hundred thousand dollars to clubs, councils, and Federation
 - Saved many member clubs from bankruptcy
- However, 501(c)(3) assets can only be distributed to other 501(c)(3)s
 - Bid committee would need to consult a tax attorney
- With the reduced size, the profit might not be large enough to worry about

Conclusions

- Could the OFSRDC host another convention in Oregon?
 - Yes, technically, it is possible

- Should the OFSRDC host another convention in Oregon?
 - Left for future committees to decide

Bibliography

- 73rd Final Report
- NEC bid package
- Past committee chairs
- NEC website – <https://nsdcnec.com>