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# Detroit's Cobo Center Adopts Construction Mascot: COBOTRON

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By Matt Alderton  
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Currently in the midst of a \$299 million renovation, the Cobo Conference & Exhibition Center in downtown Detroit has a new construction mascot that will represent the facility's transformation to visiting meeting planners and attendees, as well as Detroit residents, convention center management company SMG — which oversees the Cobo Center — announced last month.

The mascot, known as COBOTRON, is a multi-tasking robot that changes into a construction vehicle. Seen around the Cobo Center, where it provides construction information to visitors, it was designed by Bethany Radloff, a junior at Detroit's College for Creative Studies who received a \$1,200 scholarship from SMG in exchange for her winning design.

"We felt that Cobo Center customers needed to better understand the ongoing construction in the building," said Thom Connors, SMG regional vice president and general manager of Cobo Center. "Right now, most of our customers are unaffected and unaware that construction is happening."

Renovation of the Cobo Center began in 2009 and is scheduled for completion by 2015. Completed in fall 2009, phase one of the renovations included a set of urgently needed upgrades that focused on electrical improvements and leak reduction. Phase two began in February 2010 and is scheduled for completion this week. It entails the enclosure of the loading dock, further electrical and lighting improvements, the creation of more than 400 new parking spaces, a partial re-roofing of the building and the addition of 25,000 gross square feet of exhibition space.

Scheduled to begin this year, the third and final phase of renovations will turn the existing Cobo Arena into a 40,000-square-foot ballroom with an open-air terrace; create a new "signature space" in the form of a three-story glass atrium that will link the venue's main floor with a new entrance facing the Detroit River; renovate the building's primary façade, turning it into a high-tech "media mesh" that will function as a giant digital signboard; and reconfigure most of the building's meeting and breakout space along the facility's south side, where new meeting rooms will showcase views of the Detroit River.

According to the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority (DRCFA), the goal of the renovations is "restoring Cobo Center's competitiveness in the national meeting and convention landscape, revitalizing Cobo Center with an updated image and improving Cobo Center's financial viability through increased revenue opportunities and decreased costs."

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