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Topics in this article: Cobo Center

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## \$200M Cobo growth spurt under way

By Constance Crump



Exhibit space in **Cobo Center** will expand by 20,000 square feet by the **North American International Auto Show** in January, but the biggest physical changes are just getting started.

Exhibit halls now boast energy-efficient lighting. New parking and upgraded loading docks will be completed by year's end.

And construction starts soon on a larger Cobo overhaul. Cobo Arena will be replaced by a 40,000-square-foot ballroom with a glass wall, open-air terrace and panoramic riverfront views. A three-story atrium will link to a new entrance, also facing the river.

The city side will display a digital sign, glass exterior walls and access to a new food court. Meeting rooms will be reconfigured.

How much for the face lift? The budget for this phase tops \$200 million.

It might be paying off: Bookings are on the upswing, after years of underperforming the industry in days of use and number of shows booked. Two new public shows include the Detroit FanFare Comic Book Convention, held last week, and a 2012 Japanese anime convention.

"We're seeing a renewed interest from the corporate sector," said Thom Connors, Cobo general manager. "GM is doing a Chevy event at the end of the month, and we are one of two stops on a **BASF** tour. BASF picked Detroit because of the good things happening and the convenience of our location between Chicago and Toronto."



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