

CONSTRUCTION

Hurst center may be a player in Super Bowl

Officials expect more than 70,000 people a year to come to the conference center.

By **JESSAMY BROWN**

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HURST — The \$17 million Hurst Conference Center is taking shape and is set to open in September, in time to potentially get a piece of next year's Super Bowl festivities.

Hurst officials say they expect more than 70,000 people per year to attend the conference center. And with thousands of travelers in North Texas for Super Bowl XLV on Feb. 6, officials hope to host events related to the big game in Arlington.

"I think there are about 600 spinoff-type events," said Charlton W. Northington, the center's executive director. "There are a lot of hotels and venues that will be hosting these, and we certainly want to be a part of that."

Construction on the 51,000-square-foot center began in June. The roof is in place, and crews are putting in drywall and doing electrical work. Crews should begin pouring concrete for piers in the parking areas soon, said Northington, who began work in January.

The center is expected to be used for corporate and club meetings during the week and banquets, weddings, and small conventions and trade shows on weekends, according to a study by David Parker, a Houston-based real estate consultant.



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Construction on the 51,000-square-foot Hurst Conference Center began in June.

A dozen events have been booked, starting Sept. 18 with a Hurst-Eules-Bedford Chamber of Commerce gala. The center will have six meeting rooms, underground parking and a ballroom that will cost \$3,250 to rent on Saturdays. Three hotels are within walking distance.

Officials say those amenities, plus the center's proximity to other cities, Dallas/Fort Worth Airport and North East Mall, should help draw 78,200 people a year. "It is going to be beneficial to our city but also to this area," Hurst spokeswoman Ashleigh Whiteman said. "It will have a trickle effect of people coming in to shop and eat."

A closer look

Location: 1601 Campus Drive, Hurst

Grand ballroom: 14,400 square feet

Parking: 400 spaces in a three-story structure and underground

Patio area: 2,500 square feet, with water features and a fireplace

Rates: \$150 to \$200 for a meeting room, \$2,500 to \$3,250 for grand ballroom

Information: www.ci.hurst.tx.us

The project is being funded by a sales tax for economic development, hotel-motel tax collections and city reserves.

An Iowa-based management company, VenuWorks, is contracting with the city to manage and operate the center. It chose Lubbock native Northington, who was general manager of the RenoSparks Convention Center in Nevada, to run the Hurst site.

Officials expect to hold job fairs in early July for part-time employees such as food and beverage workers. Full-time staffers are using office space provided by the nearby Holiday Inn Express & Suites and expect to move into the center, Northington said.

Online: www.transforminghurst.com, www.venuworks.com

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