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It's finally Scottrade Center's turn for major renovations

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**BREAKING
GROUND**
DON MURET

Scottrade Center, which stands among the NHL's six oldest arenas, is in the early stages of a much-needed facelift in St. Louis.

The arena opened in 1994, the same year as **United Center**. But unlike the Chicago facility, which has undergone more than \$100 million in upgrades since that time, the Blues' building has gone largely untouched since it opened as the Kiel Center 23 years ago.

Things are slowly starting to change, though, starting with the first phase of arena renovations completed for this season, a \$37 million project funded by the Blues. The highlights include the installation of a new **Mitsubishi** center-hung video board and construction of new theater boxes in the west end zone, where the Blues shoot twice and opposite stage end.



The first phase of updates to the St. Louis arena, a \$37 million project funded by the Blues
 Photos by: SCOTT ROVAK (3)

The new premium product, supported by lounge space, replaces eight suites that were eliminated for the retrofit, according to **Chris Zimmerman**, the team's CEO and president of business operations, and a former executive with the Vancouver Canucks, plus brands Nike, Bauer and Easton.

The theater boxes, built mostly in groups of four seats with a total of 128 seats, hit the sweet spot in the local market and sold out, Zimmerman said.

The price is \$80,000 a year over a seven-year term. It covers the cost of tickets plus food and drink, including beer, wine and hard liquor, for all Blues regular-season games and concerts at Scottrade Center. Thirty-six percent of those patrons are new Blues season-ticket accounts, he said.

Kansas City-based **Generator Studio**, which has designed improvements to NHL arenas in Tampa and St. Paul, is the architect working on the Scottrade Center upgrades. In St. Louis, the theater boxes were designed with the flexibility to accommodate two, four and six people and can be adjusted to meet

demand, said **Tom Proebstle**, Generator Studio's founder and director of design.

"Every arena I've been to has some type of loge box, but I think we executed ours a little differently," Zimmerman said during the AXS Sports Facilities & Franchises conference in Atlanta. "You [typically] have four seats and a table in front of you ... almost desk-like. We took out that element, which gave

us this big wide space and we use a small table between the chairs to put your food and drink down. The feel is dramatically different and more spacious. We had fantastic response.”

The new center-hung moves the Blues from the back of the pack in the NHL with the second-smallest video board to the league's top-10 biggest screens. “Our goal wasn't to compete on size, but to get the right board for our building,” Zimmerman said.

In addition, Scottrade Center now has a new LED sports lighting system produced by **Musco**, and a new sound system. The Blues renovated every restroom and three concession stands. Over the next two summers, plans call for redoing all food locations on the lower and upper concourse.

The arena's existing club spaces and seats closest to the ice will be renovated as well with adjustments made in hospitality packages, Zimmerman said.



The new theater boxes in the west end zone.



The section has 128 seats supported by a lounge.

The total cost for the upgrades is about \$150 million, but financing to pay for the remaining improvements is up in the air, he said.

In August, the Blues sued the city, which owns the arena, to force the city to issue bonds to fund the project after it approved the measure in February. Since that time, though, city officials had second thoughts, concerned about the deal affecting the city's credit rating. They have proposed using ticket fees from arena events to pay for the remaining projects, according to local reports.

Separately, three local residents, including an alderwoman, filed suit against the Blues, arguing that the team's lease prohibits the city from using public money to pay for improvements.

“It's been an interesting journey,” Zimmerman said. “We expect to win the various challenges we're up against. We've also been in discussions with the state for additional [financial] support. We'll be back at it again when the Missouri legislature opens in January.”

> **OVERHEARD: Shawmut Design and Construction** is building the retrofit of **Toyota Sports Center** in Los Angeles to accommodate the Kings exclusively after the Lakers moved to their new practice facility across the street. For years, the two teams had shared the same facility. As part of the \$5 million project, the Kings will move their offices to their practice facility from an adjacent building. In Chicago, Shawmut is constructing a 12,000-square-foot restaurant at the Hotel Zachary, the biggest of multiple eateries at the boutique hotel opening in 2018 across the street from **Wrigley Field**. ... Finance consultant **Mitchell Ziets** has teamed with **Janet Marie Smith** and **Larry Lucchino** as the two ballpark developers pursue a new triple-A stadium for the Pawtucket Red Sox. Previously, Ziets filled the same role for Lucchino for **Camden Yards**, **Petco Park** and **JetBlue Park**. He's also working for the Cleveland Cavaliers as they move ahead on a \$140 million renovation of **Quicken Loans Arena**, and the Arizona Coyotes in their attempt to develop a new arena in Greater Phoenix. ... **Carlos Bernal**, president of **Delaware North Sportservice**, reported the concessionaire posted a \$45 per cap for food, drink and merchandise at the new **Little Caesars Arena** for the Detroit Red Wings' Oct. 5 regular-season home opener. “A very strong number,” Bernal said, without making comparisons with the firm's other NHL accounts. ... **Levy's** local management team took Orlando Magic officials on a tour of **Mercedes-Benz Stadium** for a closer look at the Falcons' Fan First pricing model, which includes \$2 hot dogs, popcorn and sodas. (Levy also runs the food at **Amway Center** in Orlando.) In Atlanta, Levy told the Magic that the food portion of the value menu has accounted for 13 percent of overall revenue after the stadium's first 12 events. The balance is beverage sales and local vendors running the “street pricing” model, said **Charlie Freeman**, the Magic's chief operating officer. ... **Dave Touhey**, president of venues for **Monumental Sports & Entertainment**, was spied taking a hard-hat tour of **Philips Arena's** \$193 million renovation. “I'm always interested in what buildings are doing,” Touhey said. “We all try to glean ideas from each other to see what's practical in our own situations.” ... The same is true for **Amy Latimer**, president of **TD Garden** in Boston. Latimer planned to visit the two newest NHL arenas in Detroit and Edmonton to see what the Boston facility could do as part of the mixed-use development tied to her building. The \$950 million project, titled **The Hub on Causeway**, includes a new front entrance next year for the home of the Bruins and Celtics. “I'll be doing R&D — rip-off and duplicate,” she joked.

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