



The Atlanta CVB's 112th annual meeting was held on April 22 in the Atrium Ballroom at Atlanta Marriott Marquis. The event celebrated the 100th anniversaries of Delta Air Lines and Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Left to right: Ed Bastian, CEO, Delta Air Lines; Erica Qualls-Batney, Chair, Atlanta CVB and Area General Manager, Marriott International – Atlanta and General Manager for Atlanta Marriott Marquis; Kamora Freeland, youngest African American female pilot in the United States and student at Spelman College; Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens; and William Pate, President & CEO, CVB.

ASAE Welcomes Executive Order to Modernize Workforce Programs

By Todd McElwee

ASAE is applauding President Donald Trump's Executive Order to modernize American workforce development programs to better prepare citizens for the high-paying skilled jobs of the future.

Signed by the president on April 23, the order directs the Secretaries of Labor, Education, and Commerce to conduct a comprehensive review of all federal workforce programs to modernize, integrate and re-align them to address urgent talent pipeline needs in emerging industries.

ASAE is offering the resources and expertise of the Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition as a partner in this effort. Led by ASAE and the Professional Certification Coalition (PCC), the Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition has grown to include more than 900 organizations representing more than 50 industries nationwide. The coalition supports modernizing workforce development by advocating for poli-

Please turn to page 4

Please turn to page 4

Wage Agreement Ratified for Long Beach Convention Center Workers

By Jonathan Trager

Unite Here Local 11, a Southern California union representing hospital workers, and ASM Global, which operates the Long Beach Convention Center (LBCC), have resolved a dispute resulting in a new wage agreement.

The new agreement will cover about 100 workers at the LBCC, including dishwashers, cooks, servers, bartenders, and cleaners. It was ratified by the union last week.

The deal includes wage increases totaling \$12 an hour over the three-year agreement, free family health

insurance, a 400% increase in pension contributions, and protections limiting the use of subcontracted workers. It also extends a contract for a soon-to-be developed amphitheater and sets the expiration of the workers' contracts on the eve of the 2028

Please turn to page 4

Please turn to page 4

Environmentally Conscious Populus Seattle Set to Open This Spring

By Jordan Bradley

Populus Hotels will open its newest property, the Populus Seattle, later this spring, the company announced on April 17.

The Populus Seattle is a 120-room adaptive reuse boutique hotel in a structure formerly known as the Westland Building in the heart of Seattle's Pioneer Square.

The hotel was created by Urban Villages, a developer and environmental steward,

and will be managed by Aparium Hotel Group.

The Seattle property will follow the Populus Hotels' brand ethos of sustainability and environmental consciousness, pledging to plant a tree for every night's stay at the hotel through the brand's One Night, One Tree Program, among other initiatives.

"We are incredibly proud to introduce Populus Seattle as the second carbon positive hotel in our port-

Please turn to page 3

Inside



Page 3

Page 2
Drew Maloney Announced as Head of EEI

Page 3
Greater Palm Springs Achieves Certified Autism Destination Designation

Page 5
Baltimore Convention Center Issues 2024 Sustainability Report

Historic Hotels of America, Tech Company Create New Experiences

By Jordan Bradley

Historic Hotels of America (HHA) and Historic Hotels Worldwide have partnered with StraxAR, an augmented reality platform, to collaborate on new experiences for guests of several member hotels, the pair announced on April 22.

The partnership aims to enrich the guest experience, HHA and StraxAR said.

StraxAR, an app developed by Strax Networks Inc. that's available on iOS

and Android devices, creates interactive digital experiences for guests at hospitality, entertainment and sporting venues—including hotels, historic sites and museums—and corporate trainings and live events.

To participate, guests aim their phones at historic artifacts, architectural features, signage or artwork within participating hotels to be connected with multimedia content like videos, narratives, and guided tours.

Please turn to page 5

NEWS

Drew Maloney Announced as Head of EEI

By Todd McElwee

Drew Maloney has been named President & CEO of the Edison Electric Institute (EEI), effective July 1. He joins EEI from the American Investment Council (AIC), where he has served as President & CEO since 2018.

“As AI transforms our industries, manufacturers return to our shores, and daily life becomes more electrified, the strength and resilience of America’s energy grid is more critical than ever,” said Maloney. “EEI’s member companies make up an innovative and dynamic industry, and I am excited to work with them to lay out and execute policies to support critical infrastructure investment, accelerate the deployment of domestic energy sources, and keep energy affordable and reliable for customers. I am confident that, working with the Trump Administration and Congress, we will advance and strengthen American energy independence, national secu-

urity, economic prosperity, and global leadership.”

Prior to leading AIC, Maloney was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Legislative Affairs, where he worked on issues including tax policy and energy infrastructure investment policy. From 2012–2017, he was Vice President of Government and External Affairs, Hess Corporation, directing international, federal, and state government relations while overseeing sustainability initiatives.

Maloney holds a law degree from the Catholic University of America and a bachelor’s degree from Randolph-Macon College. He has also worked on Capitol Hill as a legislative director and chief of staff and at Ogilvy Government Relations. He succeeds interim President & CEO Pat Vincent-Collawn.

“Drew Maloney’s extensive public policy expertise, financial and energy sector work, and trade association

leadership will be a tremendous asset to EEI member companies and the millions of customers we serve,” said EEI Board Chair Maria Pope. “His proven record in Washington, DC, navigating some of the most complex policy landscapes by building effective coalitions, will be invaluable as our industry works to meet increasing electricity demand with a focus on keeping customer bills as low as possible. On behalf of the EEI board, I also want to thank interim President & CEO Pat Vincent-Collawn for her successful stewardship of the organization.”



Drew Maloney

“As AI transforms our industries, manufacturers return to our shores, and daily life becomes more electrified, the strength and resilience of America’s energy grid is more critical than ever,” said Maloney.

North American Associations Form Beyond Borders Tourism Coalition

By Todd McElwee

An alliance of continental travel associations committed to open North American borders has formed the Beyond Borders Tourism Coalition.

Members include the Adventure Travel Trade Association, American Bus Association, Canadian Association of Tour Operators, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, International Inbound Travel Association, National Tour Association, Student & Youth Travel Association and United States Tour Operators Association.

The group said the industry faces a dynamic landscape of challenges and opportunities that require innovative solutions and unified action.

“Current government trade and border crossing policies are creating an environment of instability in the travel sector, which is creating many hurdles,” the coalition said. “These challenges threaten not only the financial health of countless businesses but also the livelihoods of millions of workers who rely on a thriving tourism industry. Indigenous communities, which are increasingly benefiting from a growing demand for authentic cultural experiences, also face heightened risks as economic pressures mount.”

The coalition went on to state nowhere is this pressure greater than between Canada and the United States, with each nation counting the other as its most significant trading and travel partner.

Stats Canada research showed in February there was a 13.1% decline of Canadians flying back from the United States compared to the same month in 2024. In the United States, foreign tourist spending is expected to fall by 11%, representing an \$18 billion loss in 2025. The decline in international tourism, coupled with a potential decrease in domestic travel, could result in a \$64 billion loss for the

The group said the industry faces a dynamic landscape of challenges and opportunities that require innovative solutions and unified action.

U.S. travel sector by the end of 2025. For April, air travelers hold fewer than 300,000 advanced bookings between Canada and the U.S., OAG Aviation found—down more than 75% year-over-year.

Canada is also facing reductions in U.S. visitors for the 2025 year.

American visitors spend an estimated \$13 billion in Canada annually.

“The travel industry’s interconnected nature demands unified voices and actions to tackle shared challenges arising from the current unprecedented situation,” the coalition said. “Speaking with one voice amplifies our influence, ensuring we are not ignored. Tourism has the power to bridge borders, drive economic growth, link people together and champion environmental stewardship. By embracing collaboration and innovation, we must build a resilient future that benefits travelers and global communities. As a coalition of Canadian and U.S. based associations, we stand together and united at a time when our economies and purchasing power are in turmoil.”

ASAE Research Shows Shifting Meeting Attendance Trends

By Todd McElwee

ASAE’s new *Insight Update* report highlights how shifting federal policies are reshaping association meeting attendance, particularly international participation

Half of respondents reported decreased attendance at their meetings, while participation from speakers, exhibitors, and sponsors remained relatively steady. Exhibitor participation was the most stable metric, with 66.9% of associations reporting no change.

“These findings underscore how external forces are compelling associations to reimagine events in ways that prioritize member value, accessibility and flexibility,” said Michelle Mason, FASAE, CAE, President & CEO, ASAE. “While the environment is undeniably challenging, we’re also seeing incredible innovation and resilience across the community.”

Additional key Findings Include:

- Professional Associations Hit Hardest: More than half of professional and combined associations

reported declines, while trade associations saw fewer decreases and a higher percentage of increases (14.5%) than any other group.

- International Participation Impacted: The decline is most evident in attendance from Canada and Europe and Central Asia—regions historically well represented at U.S.-based events.

- Innovation in Response: Associations are adapting by exploring virtual and hybrid formats, shortening events, and renegotiating venue contracts to manage rising costs and uncertainty.

The most recent survey was distributed to 3,118 CEOs of associations and association management companies (AMCs), with 210 responses analyzed. This study is part an ongoing series of ASAE member polls providing associations with timely, nonpartisan insights to inform strategic planning.

The PDF release is free to ASAE members and runs \$9.99 for non-members. Find more information at asaecenter.org.

HOTS

HOTS No Sweat... Several human-oid robots jogged alongside human runners in a half-marathon held in Beijing, China, on April 19. The 20 bipedal racers were supported throughout the 13.1 mile race by teams of navigators, operators, and engineers in what is being called the first Humanoid Robot Half-Marathon, the Associated Press reports. To facilitate the race, organizers had the robots run with their teams in a roped off track as a precaution for the both the robotic and human racers. And while humans followed standard half-marathon rules, the robots were

allotted pit stops for battery changes and other tailored guidelines. The AP reports that the Sky Project Ultra robot from the Tien Kung Team was the first to cross the finish line, with a race time of 2 hours, 40 minutes, and 42 seconds. Awards were given to robotics teams for best endurance, best gait design, and most innovative form. HOTS definitely didn't have robot racers on their 2025 bingo card!

✧ ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧

HOTS Massive Minions... An Australian woman has achieved a new Guinness World Record for her collection of Minions—yes, those mischievous and unintelligible little yellow henchman from the Despicable Me movie franchise. Liesl Benecke of Western Australia has collected a total of 1,035 minions. She told the Guinness World Records that she first began collected Minions 15 years ago. “I remember laughing so much at the cute, little pill-shaped henchmen. They certainly made a huge impression on me,” she said.



Jim Allen (far right), CEO of Seminole Gaming and Chairman of Hard Rock International, was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 28th Annual East Coast Gaming Congress held April 15–16 at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Atlantic City. Allen was honored by the Congress for his more than 40-year career in gaming and hospitality. Here is Allen with Michael Pollock (far left), Sr. Policy Advisor to Spectrum Gaming Group and Co-Founder of the East Coast Gaming Congress (ECGC); New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy (center left); and Lloyd D. Levenson (center right), CEO at Cooper Levenson and Co-Founder of ECGC.

“I’m just a big kid at heart. Since then I have always been on the lookout for Minions everywhere I go.” Benecke added that she continues to collect Minions and doesn’t expect to stop anytime soon. HOTS thinks that is some serious dedication.

Greater Palm Springs Achieves
Certified Autism Destination Designation

By Jonathan Trager

Visit Greater Palm Springs, in partnership with the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES), announced on April 21 that Greater Palm Springs has officially achieved the Certified Autism Destination (CAD) designation. This milestone “underscores the region’s commitment to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for autistic and sensory-sensitive travelers and their families,” accord-

ing to Visit Palm Springs. Greater Palm Springs is the first destination in Southern California—and the fifth worldwide—to achieve the recognition. The CAD designation is awarded to destinations where a representative selection of hotels, attractions, and entertainment venues have completed specialized training and certification to better serve autistic visitors. Numerous Greater Palm Springs organizations have achieved Certified Autism Center status, ensuring staff members are equipped with the knowledge and resources to accommodate guests

with autism and sensory sensitivities. “We are proud to see Greater Palm Springs recognized as a Certified Autism Destination,” said Scott White, President & CEO of Visit Greater Palm Springs. “Creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment is at the heart of our destination’s values. This designation reaffirms our commitment to ensuring that all visitors, regardless of their unique needs, can enjoy the beauty, adventure, and relaxation that Greater Palm Springs offers.” According to a travel survey con-

Please turn to page 5

Populus Seattle

continued from page 1

folio and in the country,” said Jon Buerge, President of Urban Villages. The Populus Seattle—like its sister property in Denver—is carbon positive, “meaning it will sequester more carbon in biomass and soil than it emits through both embodied and operational activities over its full lifecycle, prioritizing the health of the planet,” Populus said. Repurposing the former Westland Building was part of the Populus Seattle’s sustainability strategy, which reduced its embodied carbon footprint by 36%, the hotel brand said.

“With adaptive reuse, we’ve preserved the character of this historic building while prioritizing the health of the planet,” said Buerge. “Populus Seattle represents Populus Hotels’ commitment to responsible hospitality and meaningful guest experiences that reflect the city’s rich culture, arts, and vibrant local ecosystems.” The hotel is part of a larger adaptive reuse development and one of three main historic building connected by alleyways that have been revitalized in recent years. The Populus Seattle will debut Salt Harvest, “a signature, hearth-driven restaurant” that offers dishes highlighting ingredients typical of the Pacific Northwest. The restaurant will

also have a Chef’s Counter, two private dining rooms, and the Solarium. The hotel will also introduce the Pioneer Square’s first rooftop bar, and The Café at Harvest will serve locally produced Monorail Espresso coffee. “Populus Seattle brings to life a vision of hospitality that’s rooted in place and purpose,” said Mario Tricoci, CEO and Founder of Aparium Hotel Group. The Populus Seattle’s restaurants and café will also partner with local farms to source ingredients and reduce food waste using BioGreen360 compost systems. The hotel is also powered using 100% renewable electricity. Reservations are now open at populusseattle.com, with rates starting at \$469 per night.

WEEKLY NEWS
OF ASSOCIATIONS
CVRs AND
HOTELS

USAE

PUBLISHER & EXECUTIVE EDITOR 1982 – 2021
Anne Daly Heller

PUBLISHER-EMERITUS
Ross E. Heller
ross@usaenews.com

PUBLISHER
James Heller
james@usaenews.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER
Todd McElwee
todd@usaenews.com

MANAGING EDITOR
Jonathan Trager
jon@usaenews.com

HOTEL EDITOR
Jordan Bradley
jordan@usaenews.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Diane Nichols
dkn@usaenews.com

GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Danielle Erbe

MARKETING & CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Christy Pumphrey
christy@usaenews.com

To ensure publication, all Letters to the Editor must include a telephone number and mailing address in order to verify authenticity.

Complete copies of *USAE* are available for all paid subscribers online. Log onto <https://usaenews.com> and locate the log-in and password boxes. Specific log-in and password information is provided to subscribers via e-mail.

To receive another copy, please contact our circulation dept. at christy@usaenews.com.

USAE is published weekly except the week of Christmas Day by *USAE, Inc.* Subscription rate is \$175/year; add \$65 in Canada and Mexico. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *USAE*, PO Box 15009, Chevy Chase, MD 20825.

usaenews.com

USAE, Inc.
PO Box 15009, Chevy Chase, MD 20825
703.898.3528 • ©2025 by *USAE, Inc.*

NEWS

IGLTA Announces Partnership with African Travel & Tourism Association

By Todd McElwee

Strengthening connections between African tourism and the global LGBTQ+ travel community, the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) has announced a strategic two-year organizational partnership with the African Travel & Tourism Association (ATTA).

The agreement will provide ATTA with official membership to IGLTA, alongside advertising and marketing opportunities across IGLTA's global network. Reciprocally, IGLTA will receive ATTA membership as well as promotional opportunities through ATTA's official platforms.

John Tanzella, President & CEO of IGLTA, said: "We look forward to collaborating with ATTA to support safe and inclusive tourism and strengthen connections among our members. Since our historic first IGLTA Global Convention in Africa, held in Cape Town in 2016, we have increased our commitment to raising awareness for LGBTQ+ travel across the continent,

and this is another important step on that journey."

IGLTA currently has members in 12 African countries: South Africa, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Mauritius, Uganda, Madagascar, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Seychelles, Botswana, and Rwanda. Known as the "Voice of African Tourism," ATTA serves more than 900 member businesses. The partnership will be implemented with the support from of

Ramothoa and Martina Barth IGLTA Membership Manager - Africa, who also serves as Group Sales Manager for The Liz McGrath Collection.

"We are thrilled to establish this formal collaboration with IGLTA, which marks an important step in making African destinations more visible and accessible to LGBTQ+ travelers worldwide," said Kgomotso Ramothoa, CEO of ATTA. "This partnership reflects our commitment to inclusive tourism that celebrates diversity across our continent—and creates meaningful connections between international visitors and African communities."

Known as the "Voice of African Tourism," ATTA serves more than 900 member businesses.



The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) announced a two-year partnership with the African Travel & Tourism Association (ATTA) earlier this month. Shown here in Cape Town, South Africa (left to right): Chris Mears, ATTA; LoAnn Halden, IGLTA; Chadwick Kieser, IGLTA; Blessing Bello, ATTA; Martina Barth, IGLTA; Amine Gabbouj, IGLTA Foundation; Kgomotso Ramothoa, ATTA; and Brett Massoud, Dadamanga & 2025 IGLTA EQUAL Africa Fellowship recipient.

ASAE Workforce

continued from page 1

cies that empower individuals to gain industry-recognized credentials and pursue alternative career pathways.

A key legislative priority of the Coalition is the bipartisan, bicameral *Freedom to Invest in Tomorrow's Workforce Act*, which would expand qualified expenses under 529 education savings plans to include post-secondary training and credentialing, such as licenses and nongovernmental certifications.

ASAE strongly encourages the agencies to include 529 expansion lan-

guage in their recommended actions.

"This Executive Order recognizes that building a modern workforce requires modern tools," said ASAE President & CEO Michelle Mason, FASAE, CAE. "Associations are the backbone of skills-based training across countless industries, and ASAE, along with the Tomorrow's Workforce Coalition, is ready to collaborate with federal agencies to ensure the success of this initiative. By aligning policy with practical training needs—including expanding access to credentialing through 529 plans—we can build a stronger, more competitive American workforce."

Long Beach

continued from page 1

Olympics, during which the LBCC will host events.

A month ago, the union accused a subcontractor, event-management company 1Fifty1, of underpaying workers and avoiding payroll taxes, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. The union filed a complaint with the state, and ASM Global ended its ties with the business.

"Solidarity was the key to this victory," said Kurt Petersen, Co-President of Unite Here Local 11. "Our members again showed extraordinary courage and unity—they refused to settle until the workers exploited by the tempo-

rory agency 1Fifty1 won justice. Now, those workers have the permanent jobs and will be covered by this extraordinary contract."

ASM Global has also offered employment to more than 25 former 1Fifty1 workers, who'll see their wages increase by 80% during the term of the contract.

"We are proud to share that UNITE HERE and ASM Global have reached a new agreement reinforcing our shared commitment to good jobs, fair wages, and outstanding service at the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center," Stacey Escudero, a spokesperson for ASM Global, told the *Times*.

Accor Announces Acquisition of 17 Hotels

By Jordan Bradley

Luxury and lifestyle hotel brand Accor announced on April 17 that it will bring on 17 hotels in the Americas to its portfolio of properties for \$79 million.

Through an exclusive agreement with Royal Holiday Group, Accor will add 6,400 guest rooms and suites to its offerings in the premium midscale and economy brands in Mexico, Argentina, Puerto Rico and the United States.

The collection of hotels is asset light, with six all-inclusive resorts to be managed by Ennismore, and 11 by Accor PM&E Americas.

"This is an incredible opportunity for Accor to expand its premium mid-scale and economy brands in new destinations throughout the region," said Thomas Dubaere, CEO of the Americas at Accor. "This addition represents a significant milestone for us and we are committed to supporting and enriching the local

communities where our resorts are located, fostering strong relationships and contributing to their sustainable development. Together with our new partners, we look forward to creating unforgettable experiences for our guests and driving positive impact in these vibrant destinations."

As part of the acquisition, Accor said it plans to spend \$130 million renovating the properties during the next 30 months.

Following these renovations, three hotels in Cancun, Cozumel and Puerto Vallarta will reopen under the Rixos Hotels brand, "marking a significant milestone in the brand's global growth with its first entry into the Americas," Accor said.

Three properties will remain under their existing brand names, and the remaining eleven hotels will be rebranded after renovations complete under either the Swissôtel, Mercure, Mercure Living or ibis umbrellas.

NEWS

Baltimore Convention Center Issues 2024 Sustainability Report

By Jonathan Trager

The Baltimore Convention Center (BCC) announced on April 22 the release of its 2024 Sustainability Report, which details the organization's progress in environmental responsibility, social impact, and sustainability initiatives.

The report highlights key achievements over the past calendar year and "reaffirms the facility's commitment to sustainability," according to the convention center.

"Our 2024 sustainability outcomes are a testament to our unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship and innovation," said Mac Campbell, CVP, Executive Director of the BCC. "By surpassing our diversion

goals and integrating advanced energy monitoring solutions like SkySpark, we are now able to provide impact and data to our customers in ways few destinations can."

Highlights in the report include the following:

- In 2024, the BCC achieved a 51.31% waste diversion rate, surpassing its original goal of 35%. The facility's events generated 590.81 tons of waste, with 303.15 tons successfully diverted from landfills.
- The Diversion by Donation program placed 95.27 tons of furniture, materials, and supplies into the hands of Baltimore region nonprofits and reuse programs.
- Furthering its environmental impact, the BCC prevented 52,413

plastic water bottles from entering landfills in 2024, adding to a cumulative total of 319,928 bottles saved since 2021.

• The Center also continues to support regional businesses by sourcing 60% of its culinary ingredients regionally, benefiting over 18 small businesses.

• The Alvéole Bee Program has expanded to house over 40,000 honeybees across two dedicated beehives, playing a critical role in urban pollination efforts.

"We're incredibly grateful for our clients who go the extra mile to plan their events with sustainability in mind," said Campbell. "Their thoughtful choices and shared commitment to the environment make a lasting im-

pact—not just within these walls, but across our community and industry."

The building also achieved silver-level certification under the Events Industry Council Sustainable Event Standards, demonstrating excellence in energy efficiency, waste reduction, and sustainable purchasing practices.

"Our team's dedication to sustainability has been truly inspiring," said Baltimore Convention Center Director of Operations Tyler DeBella. "We are committed to pushing these initiatives even further and have set our sights on achieving a higher certification level in 2025."

To read the 2024 Sustainability Report, visit bccenter.org.

Historic Hotels

continued from page 1

The content "enhances the emotional and intellectual connection guests have with the rich history at historic hotels," the pair said.

"Historic Hotels of America and Historic Hotels Worldwide are dedicated to preserving the authenticity of the finest iconic and legendary historic hotels, where hoteliers strive to create meaningful experiences for their

guests," said Lawrence P. Horwitz, Executive Vice President of Historic

Hotels of America and Historic Hotels of America.

Alan Mariotti, Chief Strategy Officer at Strax Networks, said the collaboration offers another way for guests to experience hotels.

"With StraxAR, hotels can transform every artifact, painting, even architectural detail into a living story—and do it at scale," Mariotti said. "Guests instantly unlock immersive experiences, fueling loyalty, social sharing, new revenue, and unforgettable moments that keep them coming back for more."

"Guests instantly unlock immersive experiences, fueling loyalty, social sharing, new revenue, and unforgettable moments that keep them coming back for more."

Horwitz added: "By partnering with StraxAR, we are providing a new technology that will provide travelers with a fantastic tool to bring history to life in an innovative, easy to use way that blends traditional historic experiences with modern technology."

One of the hotels already implementing augmented reality on their historic property is The George Washington Hotel in Washington, Pennsylvania. The property was built in 1922 by architect William Lee Stoddart in the Beaux-Arts style, according to its entry in HHA's registry, which the property joined officially in 2023.

The property boasts placements in Historic Hotels of America's top 25 lists for 2024 Most Haunted Hotels, 2024 list of hotels Where U.S. Presidents Made History, and the 2023 Most Magnificent Art Collections.

For this hotel, the collaboration with StraxAR is an opportunity to enhance events, specifically weddings, in its seven event venues.

"At The George Washington Hotel, we're redefining weddings with StraxAR, bringing invitations, thank-you notes and albums to life in ways never imagined," said Robert Plutto, General Manager of The George Washington Hotel. "This technology creates an immersive, unforgettable experience,

allowing couples and guests to relive their special moments again and again."

Another member of the Historic Hotels of America, The Omni Homestead Resort & Spa in Hot Springs, Virginia, utilized StraxAR during the 2024 holiday season to enhance guest experiences through a new way of advertising.

The hotel placed an ad in an edition of *Virginia Living* with a QR code that, when scanned through the StraxAR app, initiated a short commercial highlighting exciting holiday events and offerings at the hotel before redirecting viewers to the Omni Homestead booking page.

The collaboration is a new opportunity for marketing and storytelling, according to Strax Networks CEO, Eric Singleton.

"Partnering with Historic Hotels is an incredible moment for us," said Singleton. "We believe in the power of storytelling to create unforgettable experiences, and StraxAR was built to do just that—instantly connecting people to the history and soul of these remarkable places. As we continue to evolve our platform, including future AI-driven enhancements, we're beyond excited to bring an even deeper dimension of discovery, engagement, and inspiration to guests around the world."

NYC's The Mark Hotel Reportedly Receives \$1B Bid

By Jordan Bradley

Alexico Group, owner of New York City's Upper East Side hotel The Mark, has reportedly received a \$1 billion takeover bid for the hotel through an adviser, according to confidential sources.

Individuals with knowledge of the situation contacted Bloomberg to report the bid, the outlet reported on April 14.

The Mark, known as the unofficial red carpet of the Met Gala, is comprised of 106 guest rooms and 47 suites. Of those suites, The Mark boasts the largest penthouse suite in North America, The Central Park, which sleeps 10 and costs \$45,000 per night, exclud-

ing taxes and fees, according to *Bloomberg*.

The landmark building now known as The Mark hotel first opened in 1927 before it was acquired by Alexico Group, a luxury real estate and hotel developer, in 2006. After a three-year renovation, Alexico opened The Mark in 2009 as "New York's Most Boldly Lavish Hotel," according to *Bloomberg*.

Representatives from Alexico Group did not return *USAE* request for comment by press deadline but declined to comment on *Bloomberg* requests.

According to reports, Alexico Group, led by Izak Senbahar, has not made a final decision, and could retain ownership of the property.

Palm Springs

continued from page 3

ducted by IBCCES, 78% of respondents reported hesitation when traveling due to the lack of autism-certified options. With this certification, Greater Palm Springs joins a growing number of destinations that are prioritizing accessibility.

"IBCCES is honored to designate Greater Palm Springs as a Certified Autism Destination, highlighting

their valley-wide effort to create a community that welcomes all visitors, including autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals," said Myron Pincomb, IBCCES Chairman. "This prestigious achievement represents a significant step in accessibility, ensuring both visitors and community members alike can experience all Greater Palm Springs has to offer with confidence and ease. We look forward to seeing the impact this designation will have on the entire valley."

NEWS

New Jersey: Little State, Lotta Wow

There's more to New Jersey than its ideal location — although it is perfectly nestled between New York City and Philadelphia. Whether your members live down the road, along the Eastern Seaboard or around the globe, arriving in and navigating around New Jersey is easy. It's within driving distance for a large swath of the population — and five major airports connect the rest. Most importantly, this smallish state is big on personality, packed with possibility and it'll wow your membership every chance it gets.

Venues With A Wow Factor

In addition to traditional group settings, New Jersey boasts unconventional venues to inspire and deliver an exceptional experience for your membership. Raise a stein to your mission at [Departed Soles Brewing Company](#), Jersey City's first post-Prohibition microbrewery and maker of traditional and gluten-free craft beers. Fire up the locomotive for ingenuity at Northlandz, a unique venue in Flemington that holds the Guinness World Record for the longest small-scale model railway track. Or let the salty air of coastal Cape May Court House inspire your membership at [The Peninsula](#), a meticulously renovated 1854 mansion. You can even host a relaxed outdoor networking event that incorporates its French country-inspired heated swimming pool.

Wow-Worthy Accommodations

Plan an ultra-exclusive retreat at the [Inn at Glencairn](#), a *Condé Nast Traveler* Readers' Choice Award winner located just outside Princeton. Engaging your membership is a sure bet when you host your annual conference and reserve overnight accommodations in

luxurious guestrooms at [Ocean Casino Resort](#) or [Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa](#) in Atlantic City, New Jersey's dazzling gaming and entertainment destination by the sea. Wrap members in Victorian charm at Cape May's [Carol Villa Hotel](#), where they can wake up to this popular resort town's most coveted breakfast in the famed Mad Batter Restaurant. Or reserve them rooms with views of the endless waves in [The Breakers on the Ocean](#), a desirable vacation destination in Spring Lake.

Recreation That Wows

Members always appreciate planned group outings or leisure time to experience the destination. Ignite the spirit of competition in the Topgolf Swing Suite at [iPlay America](#) in Freehold, featuring virtual golf, hockey, baseball, football, carnival games and more. Go green with the signature Inspiration Series Teambuilding at [Crystal Springs Resort](#), located high in the rugged Kittatinny Ridge of northern New Jersey. This eco-focused series includes everything from a Bee Hive Box Build to Foraging with a Botanical Hiker and a Sustainable Farm Tour to An Afternoon in the Orchard. Take your members out to the game at [TD Bank Ballpark](#), home of the New York Yankees Double-A Affiliate Somerset Patriots, or across the finish line at [Meadowlands Racetrack](#) — where you can secure a Skybox Suite to catch the pulse-pounding action or host an unforgettable, one-of-a-kind gala in an expansive trackside setting at this entertainment venue in East Rutherford.

One Culinary Wow After Another

Being hailed as the Garden State, you know New Jersey's farm-to-table



fare is beyond compare. Feast fabulously on chef-driven menus at Ninety Acres. Sip and savor fine wines and fresh cuisine at Renault Winery. Dine at the popular Chart House. And don't miss out on the state's famous diner culture, something your members must

experience before heading home.

As a year-round destination, any season is the right season for your association to gather in New Jersey — and the time to plan for your membership's wow is...right now. You can begin [here](#).

Around Associations

Dierks Bentley to Take Center Stage at 2025 NBAA-BACE Keynote... Multiplatinum artist, pilot and aviation champion Dierks Bentley will provide the keynote for the opening day of the 2025 NBAA Business Aviation Convention & Exhibition (NBAA-BACE), October 14–16, in Las Vegas.

"I'm looking forward to sharing my love of aviation and talking about how flying and aviation have impacted my life and career," Bentley said in a video address announcing his plans for the NBAA-BACE keynote. [View the 2025 NBAA-BACE video address from Dierks Bentley.](#)

Bentley's career includes eight No. 1 albums, 22 No. 1 songs and 15 Grammy nominations.

His experience as an aviator began when he earned his pilot's certificate

in his early 20s, flying a single-engine piston airplane. From his earliest days on the concert circuit, Bentley's use of aviation has allowed him to avoid the tour bus, and instead fly to concerts, then quickly return home.

"Just as his music has thrilled audiences around the globe, Dierks's enthusiasm for business aviation allows him to connect with NBAA members in a unique and personal way," said NBAA President & CEO Ed Bolen. "He's just the right fit for an industry that is fundamentally about the unique and powerful connection made when people come together."

Find more information at [nbaa.org](#). **Toy Association Member Survey Reveals Alarming Impact of 145% Tariffs...** The Toy Association recently conducted a member-wide survey to

assess the potential business impact of the newly imposed 145% tariffs on toy imports from China. More than 400 member companies responded, with 46% of small toy companies and 45% of medium-sized firms stating they may soon go out of business due to the current U.S. tariff policy.

Ninety-six percent of domestic toy companies are either small or medium

sized. More than 80% of firms in both segments report canceled orders.

The Toy Association said it will use these results to aggressively advocate for a tariff exemption for toys and ensure the voice of the toy industry is heard by policymakers in Washington, D.C.

Find the complete report at [toyassociation.org](#).

Stay Connected



@USAEnews

Connect IN WASHINGTON, DC

There's only one place that elevates your meeting
with industry experts, local experiences and social impact.



WASHINGTON
DC
WASHINGTON.ORG

THERE'S ONLY ONE DC



#ONLY1DC 📍 National Mall

