



Small Market Meetings  
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## SPECTRA HIGHLIGHTS DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES

Meeting planners often need variety in the destinations they select for their gatherings. Sometimes it's for practical reasons, other times simply because their delegates would enjoy a change of pace.

For example, a planner who booked a convention center and its facilities in the Midwest one year may feel it's time to better represent its national influence by holding the convention in an Eastern or Western city the following year.

That's what makes Spectra so valuable. The Philadelphia-based entertainment and sports company manages venues of every size and description in all corners of the United States. And it has three areas of expertise with which to serve clients: Food Services and Hospitality, Venue Management, and Ticketing and Fan Engagement.

Spectra is also known for working with local convention and visitors bureaus to make their convention properties more appealing to meeting delegates. "We really work as one team when we are trying to bring in new business," said Karen Totaro, general manager of the Atlantic City Convention Center. "Long ago, many of these convention centers were like big, blank boxes. There was no personality to them, and they didn't reflect what part of the country visitors were in."

That has changed. In Spectra venues, there are more local connections and a show of pride for the local community. For example, Atlantic City staff is working on a big event in the fall and wants to serve "New Jersey Fresh" products at mealtime, like delicious scallops from Cape May, where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean, or the fresh local blueberries. "Anything they can do to make it farm-to-table fresh helps clearly label the event 'New Jersey,'" said Totaro.

### *Unique Experiences*

The off-site events being planned for the Atlantic City event must reflect the uniqueness of that region for out-of-town meeting and event attendees. For example, there will be a special night on the famed boardwalk with all the lights and the huge Ferris wheel in operation. "I think that is what we try to do in all of our Spectra cities," said Totaro.

"Working with the CVBs is one of the most critical elements in creating a successful event," said Shura Garnett, division vice president for Spectra Venue Management, and Food Services and Hospitality. The CVBs are the experts in promoting their cities, and Spectra leans heavily on them to help make an event sparkle.

Garnett is based in St. Charles, Missouri, a historic Missouri River town 25 miles northwest of St. Louis. The city has charming and historic cobblestone streets, trolley cars and many interesting things to see and do along the waterfront. Garnett said a great way to highlight any city's culinary choices is to stage a progressive dinner through that city's entertainment district. Visitors can enjoy an appetizer in one place and walk or ride to a second location for an entree and to a third for dessert or a nightcap. Of course, Spectra can provide food and entertainment services at its many venues nationwide.

In a smaller market like Enid, Oklahoma, which is another Spectra partner, the staff of the Central National Bank Center runs the local CVB.

“We work with them daily,” said Kevin Boryczki, the convention center’s general manager. His staff often sets up tours and events at the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center in Enid, a historical museum that details the captivating story of the settlement and development of northwest Oklahoma, which started with the famed Land Run in 1893. The staff also organizes dinners, for a full experience that can involve the whole community.

### *Community Involvement*

There is also a company directive that the operators of each Spectra property must get involved in making their communities better places to live and work.

“We are charged by our company to help our local nonprofits and charitable organizations,” said Garnett. That may include anything from hosting holiday events for the needy to stuffing backpacks with useful items for disadvantaged kids to picking up trash along highways and waterways. The staff at each Spectra property will perform several of these activities each year.

Garnett said it is a wonderful opportunity for a conference group to participate in some public service work when it comes into a town for a meeting. This has become quite a trend nationwide, especially among church and religious organizations. Many believe that they should not just take from a city; they should also give something back to it before they leave. Spectra believes wholeheartedly in that generous philosophy.