

BANKING/ FINANCE

Trade Show Blues: Exhibitions Go Virtual As Virus Spreads

by David McHugh
and Alexandra Olson

Fine wines and hipster gin. Hunting rifles and knives. Contemporary paintings and million-dollar sports cars. They're all marketed at trade events that are quickly going dark across the globe due to the new coronavirus - and taking with them sales opportunities that may be difficult to make up.

Some companies are taking their shows online with virtual events they stream from their headquarters to reach customers anyway.

But marketing experts and executives warn that there is no substitute for face-to-face contact with potential clients, as exhibition companies try to total up the losses being suffered by an industry that also pumps billions into hotels, restaurants and cabdriver's wallets.

The Geneva International Motor Show resorted to putting automakers' product unveilings and news conferences online Tuesday after this year's show was canceled. BMW presented its sleek i4 electric concept car at a digital news conference from Munich, while competitors Daimler and Volkswagen held their own online events.

The Geneva show was cancelled after local authorities barred gatherings of more than 1,000 people to halt the spread of the virus, which has sickened over 90,000 people globally and led to 3,100 deaths as of Tuesday. While some car companies were already trying online presentations before the virus in an effort to expand their reach to social media, there is no real substitute to seeing a product in person or meeting people in the industry.

"It's not just about purchases. For many products it is also about reinforcing a kind of community building," said Gernot Gehrke, professor of management and event-industry marketing at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Hanover.

Trade shows, which can bring sales long after the event, are "a point of contact in a customer journey, if you like, that aims at a stable relationship to customers, and also to people and organizations that might become customers."

They are also big business. Exhibitors pay in advance to book space and lose their money on such last-minute cancellations caused by health concerns. The Geneva auto show was expected to generate \$250 million for the wider city area. "This is a dramatic loss for everyone," said Oliver Rihs, managing director of the Geneva show, which plans to go ahead next year.

Trade fairs are a tradition in Germany, where some 160 to 180 are held every year, reaping \$16 billion from visitors and exhibitors and pumping a total of 28 billion euros into the local economy as well as providing 230,000 jobs, 100,000 of them full-time positions.

Art Basel, the modern and contemporary art fair, moved up the debut of a new digital initiative after its Hong Kong fair was cancelled due to the virus. The online viewing rooms will be live March 20-25 after two VIP preview days. The digital initiative will be open for free to galleries that had been accepted to participate in the Hong Kong fair. The rooms allow collectors to browse through thousands of works and directly contact galleries.

But online showings would be a poor option for the luxury watch industry, which is reeling from the cancellation of two major industry events, Baselworld and Watches & Wonders Geneva.

"The watch industry is a touch-and-feel industry. The only way to get a feel for these incredible luxury products is to hold them in your hands and look at them and engage in the emotion of what goes into the making of these incredible masterpieces," said Roberta Naas, who has written several books on the watches and founded the website ATimelyPerspective.com.

Other big cancellations include the Mobile World Congress last month in Barcelona, Spain, the biggest industry show for wireless technology.

In Chicago, the International Housewares Association this week canceled its annual show set for mid-March. It was expected to draw more than 56,000 visitors and more than 47,000 nights booked in the city's hotels.

A slew of others have been postponed that might be less known to the public but are a big deal in particular industries. This month, the exhibition center in Duesseldorf, Germany, has alone seen the postponement of fairs for: wine and spirits, metalworking and manufacturing technology, energy storage, and wire and cables. In Nuremberg, IWA OutdoorClassic, a hunting and outdoor gear show, was pushed back to September.

Gamers Developers Conference, a major event for video game developers in San Francisco, was postponed last week after a growing number of companies dropped out, including Amazon, Sony, Facebook, Electronic Arts, Unity and Epic. Facebook is planning to go forward with GDC-related announcements via video, online Q&A sessions and other digital formats. But smaller game developers and software companies can't make up for the loss of exposure of the March 16-20 event.

Jacob Navok, CEO of Genvid, said his software development company had planned several announcements at GDC regarding games. He had planned a keynote address, a round table discussion and an evening party with more than 120 guests. Unlike Facebook, his company does not have the capacity to hold virtual versions of those events.

"Nobody would watch because I have no way to market that. I'm not able to draw people to these things by myself," said Navok.

Instead, Navok said he plans to spend the week flying to San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle to meet with some of the major companies. He also will repackage his keynote address for interviews with industry journalists. But he will not be able to meet with many game publishers from other parts of the U.S. and Canada. And he will miss out on the impromptu interactions that happen when people stop by his booth.

"It will suffice, but it cannot replace that in-person presentation and the ability to meet the people that randomly happen across your product," said Navok. "It's a big week of announcements. We are still going to do it. We are going to have to — but that in person momentum is not going to be there."

David McHugh and Alexandra Olson report for the Associated Press.



CITY OF DORAL NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

All residents, property owners and other interested parties are hereby notified of a **Council Zoning Meeting** on **Wednesday, March 18, 2020 beginning at 6:00 PM**, to consider the following amendment to the City of Doral's Zoning Map. The City Council will consider this item for **FIRST READING**. This meeting will be held at the **City of Doral, Government Center, Council Chambers located at 8401 NW 53rd Terrace, Doral, Florida, 33166**.

The City of Doral proposes to adopt the following Ordinance:

ORDINANCE No. 2020-08

AN ORDINANCE OF THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DORAL, FLORIDA, APPROVING/DENYING AN AMENDMENT TO THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP OF THE CITY OF DORAL DESIGNATING A NEW VOLUNTARY OVERLAY DISTRICT ENTITLED "DORAL ARTS REUSE DISTRICT" LOCATED NORTH OF DOWNTOWN DORAL, CONSISTING OF APPROXIMATELY 113 ACRES, BOUNDED BY NW 87 AVENUE ON THE WEST, NW 58 STREET ON THE NORTH, NW 79 AVENUE ON THE EAST AND NW 54 STREET ON THE SOUTH; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

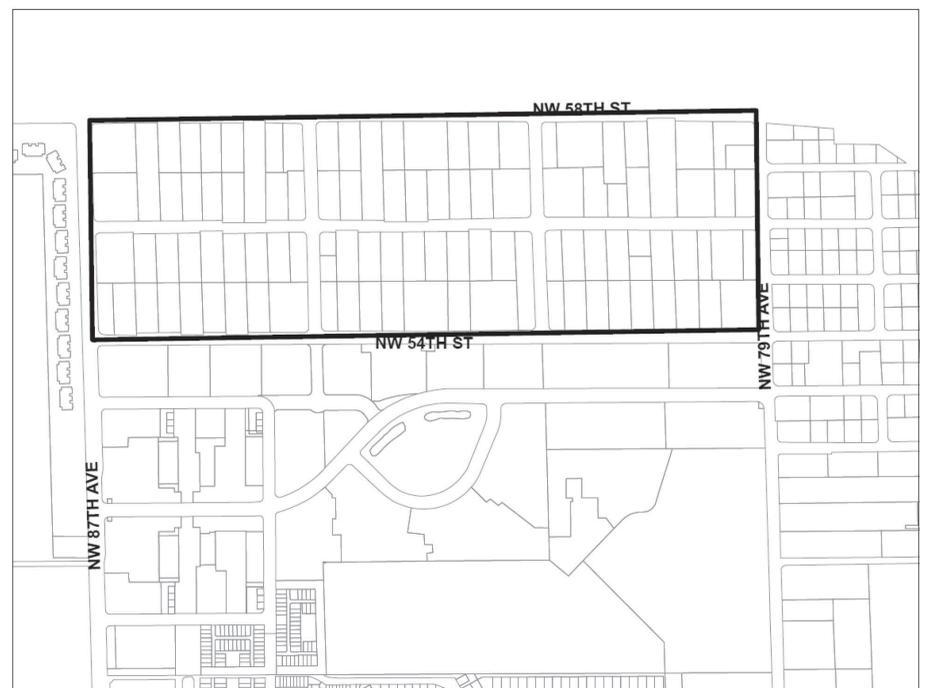
HEARING NO.: 20-03-DOR-09

APPLICANT: City of Doral

LOCATION: Area located north of Downtown Doral, bounded by NW 87th Avenue on the west, NW 58th street on the north, NW 79th Avenue on the east and NW 54th Street on the south.

REQUEST: The City of Doral (the "Applicant") is requesting Mayor and City Council approval for an amendment to the City of Doral's Official Zoning Map designating a new voluntary overlay district entitled "Doral Arts Reuse District".

Location Map



Information relating the subject application is on file and may be examined in the City of Doral, Planning and Zoning Department Located at **8401 NW 53rd Terrace, Doral, FL. 33166**. All persons are invited to appear at this meeting or be represented by an agent, or to express their views in writing addressed to the City Clerk, **8401 NW 53rd Terrace, Doral, FL. 33166**. Maps and other data pertaining to these applications are available for public inspection during normal business hours in City Hall. Any persons wishing to speak at a public hearing should register with the City Clerk prior to that item being heard. Inquiries regarding the item may be directed to the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL.

Pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes If a person decides to appeal any decisions made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. This notice does not constitute consent by the City for introduction or admission of otherwise inadmissible or irrelevant evidence, nor does it authorize challenges or appeals not otherwise allowed by law. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, all persons who are disabled and who need special accommodations to participate in this meeting because of that disability should contact the Planning and Zoning Department at 305-59-DORAL no later than three (3) business days prior to the proceeding.

NOTE: If you are not able to communicate, or are not comfortable expressing yourself, in the English language, it is your responsibility to bring with you an English-speaking interpreter when conducting business at the City of Doral during the zoning application process up to, and including, appearance at a hearing. This person may be a friend, relative or someone else. A minor cannot serve as a valid interpreter. The City of Doral DOES NOT provide interpretation services during the zoning application process or during any quasi-judicial proceeding.

NOTA: Si usted no está en capacidad de comunicarse, o no se siente cómodo al expresarse en inglés, es de su responsabilidad traer un intérprete de idioma inglés cuando trate asuntos públicos o de negocios con la Ciudad de Doral durante el proceso de solicitudes de zonificación, incluyendo su comparecencia a una audiencia. Esta persona puede ser un amigo, familiar o alguien que le haga la traducción durante su comparecencia a la audiencia. Un menor de edad no puede ser intérprete. La Ciudad de Doral NO suministra servicio de traducción durante ningún procedimiento durante el proceso de solicitudes de zonificación.

Connie Diaz, MMC
City Clerk
City of Doral