

Remodeled Minneapolis Armory to host days-long entertainment during Super Bowl

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The Minneapolis Armory will be the site of a high-production lineup of concerts during the week of next year's Super Bowl.

The historic building, two blocks from U.S. Bank Stadium in downtown Minneapolis, is transforming from a parking garage to an events space with room for 8,400 people. Nomadic Entertainment Group and its Nomadic Live arm, which played host to Taylor Swift and Bruno Mars for performances in Houston during this year's Super Bowl, partnered with developer and building owner Ned Abdul to design the space.

The three-night celebration will go from Feb. 1 to 3, with talks of possibly adding a postgame concert on Feb. 4. The promoters plan to announce performers in September, with tickets

expected to go on sale in October. Tickets will likely be in the \$150 to \$250 range for general admission.

“People aren’t just coming to watch an artist,” Jack Murphy, president of Nomadic Entertainment Group, said. “They are coming for an experience.”

On Thursday, Murphy gave a sneak peek of the building and plans for Super Bowl events. Murphy and Abdul have been in discussions since last fall. “We’re honored to host them in our facility, and we think it’s a great start for us,” Abdul said.

Murphy said he was attracted to the Armory because of its downtown location, unique space and the chance to influence its design during remodeling. “I have this unbelievable opportunity to be in a venue as historic as this,” he said.



This rendering, provided by Nomadic, shows what the remodeled Minneapolis Armory will look like during a concert.

By contrast, for this year’s Super Bowl in Houston, Nomadic in two months built a temporary structure that accommodated 9,000 people.

The stage for the shows at the Armory will be on the northeastern part of the building, with a stage for a DJ on the opposite side. The floor is expected to fit about 4,000 standing guests and there will be two levels of open balconies on the sides. Two levels of parking will also be available in the building.

Construction is expected to be complete by December, though Abdul estimated it could finish in late October or November. After the Super Bowl, the facility will be a permanent events space that can be used for anything such as musical and theatrical performances to sports events, Abdul said, as he stressed the space’s flexibility.

“So many different things have been done in there over the years,” he said. “Honestly, a lot of those uses are going to come back.”

Abdul, head of Minneapolis-based Swervo Development, purchased the Armory for \$6 million in 2015. The Armory has been under construction for the past 18 months. Besides the main space, an attached restaurant is also in the works.

Built in 1935, the Armory was initially used by the Minnesota National Guard. It later was the site of trade shows, political conventions, boxing tournaments and was a part-time home of the Minneapolis Lakers.

The Armory was also the backdrop for several music videos, such as Prince's "1999." In recent years, it was a parking garage.

Earlier this year, the city officially designated it as a local historic landmark due to its history and several building details like its WPA-era mural paintings. Murphy said there will be nods to the building's history, such as a showcase of Lakers jerseys.

On Thursday, the inner structure of the building was taking shape with construction crews drilling and sawing away through the afternoon. An ornate chandelier provided a hint of some of the building's glamour.

Murphy's plans for Minneapolis don't stop at the Super Bowl. Next month, Nomadic will announce plans with another music venue in Minnesota geared to entertain a younger crowd than what the Armory's events will likely attract, Murphy said.

The Minneapolis Armory is just one piece of the transformation of the area around U.S. Bank Stadium that's now being called East Town. At a panel Thursday, city and development leaders said \$91 million of public investment in the neighborhood helped spur \$569 million in private investments.

Within a span of a few years, the area that used to be taken up by a large swath of parking lots has been redeveloped.

"You look out of these windows and you try to remember what was here before. ... This is a brand-new neighborhood created out of almost nothing," Mayor Betsy Hodges said.