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Facilities

Magic bringing the fun upstairs with kids zone, upscale spaces

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Though its interior design contains touches of arenas in Denver, Los Angeles and Phoenix, Orlando's \$480 million Amway Center will stand out by providing premium amenities for all ticket buyers, whether they're sitting courtside or in the last row of the upper deck, the Magic says.

It's in the nether regions of Amway Center, set to open in less than a year, where much of the energy tied to in-game entertainment will occur, said Alex Martins, the team's chief operating officer. Exhibit A is Stuff's Magic Castle, the working title of a kids zone revolving around the club's dragon mascot.

The team hired RipBang Studios, a Venice, Calif., design firm, to develop a children's destination similar to the APS Gorilla's Greenhouse at US Airways Center, home of the Suns. The RipBang creation, a refurb of an old parking ramp, opened as the Verizon Wireless Jungle in 2005.

In Orlando, Stuff's Magic Castle has many of the same climbing attractions, basketball pop-a-shot games and other interactive elements on the southwest side of the promenade level upstairs, plus food and drink concessions and kids retail stands.

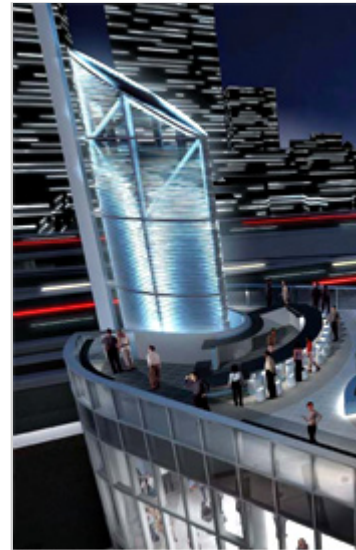
To the left, the Ozone Bar is where Stuff most likely will make his entrance into the arena, a space visible from the bowl. In keeping with the castle theme, RipBang designed a pair of turrets for cheerleaders armed with T-shirt launchers to take aim at upper bowl patrons.

Too often, the cheap seats don't get access to enough of those freebies launched from the event floor, and the team's commitment to keeping folks upstairs engaged should change that perception, Martins said.

Those turrets also host LED displays tied to the level of crowd noise, said RipBang Studios principal Bob Bangham. The louder fans yell, the more animated the displays become, Bangham said.

On the terrace level, midlevel in the arena, the Everyfan's Bar and Food Court behind the basket on the south end reflects its accessibility to all fans. The terrazzo floor, granite bar tops and flat-screen televisions present a high-end look more akin to a premium club, Martins said.

Everyfan's, adopted from a similar layout at Pepsi Center, has views to the court with a drink rail at the front edge. The North Terrace Bar, a smaller gathering spot opposite Everyfan's behind the north basket, has views to the grand lobby below on the back end.



ORLANDO MAGIC / POPULOUS

The arena's glass tower will house the Sky Bar, offering views of downtown Orlando.

The glass tower on the arena's northeast corner, a signature design element, contains the Sky Bar with indoor and outdoor space for 250 to 300 people. At 120 feet above street level, it will provide a spectacular view of downtown Orlando, Martins said.

Amway Center's concessionaire, not yet chosen, will operate the Sky Bar and share revenue with the team on game days. The plan is to open the public lounge for concerts and other special events, and potentially when there are no events in the building, Martins said.

With its nightclub atmosphere, Sky Bar is similar in scope to Hyde Lounge, the chic new hangout at Staples Center, Martins said. The city of Orlando, the Magic's partner in the arena project, will share income with the concessionaire on nights when the NBA team is not playing.

The Magic is talking to current partners Pepsi and Anheuser-Busch about sponsoring bars and lounges. Pending contract approval, Florida Hospital, a team sponsor since the Magic's inception in 1989, will put its name on the arena's practice court.

Technology firm Harris Corp. and Air Tran have signed seven-figure corporate partnerships with branding in the new building. This summer, Amway Global, the consumer products company owned by Magic owner Rich DeVos, signed a 10-year, \$40 million naming-rights agreement.

