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## Crain's Saturday Extra: Convention business bounce-back, Grand Prix returns and a guide to neat old buildings in the news

AMY ELLIOTT BRAGG 

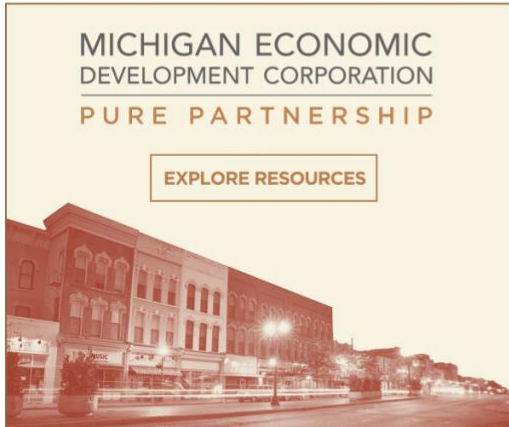
The big story: "Back flips"



*TCF Center has been many things for us this year, but it's time for it to just be a convention center again.*

I can't improve on [this lead](#) by Crain's senior editor Chad Livengood, so I won't even try. Just enjoy it!

When Gov. Gretchen Whitmer announced mid-day May 20 that all coronavirus restrictions on event capacities will go away July 1, the phones started ringing at TCF Center's sales department.



By day's end, an unnamed company had booked a 15,000-employee holiday party in December, said Karen Totaro, general manager of TCF Center.

"Our director of sales came down the hallway doing back flips," Totaro said.

It's been a weird year for convention centers — places predicated on the assumption that it's safe and desirable for thousands of people from all over the world to get together in a large indoor space and shake

hands. And yet they were also the staging grounds for some of the year's most dramatic scenes. Look at TCF Center alone: converted to a field hospital, which blessedly was not needed. Stormed while votes were counted during the 2020 presidential election. Transformed into a drive-through mass vaccination site. What a witness to everything we've been through this year! Wandering through the auto show will hit differently, whenever we do that again.

But there's good reason many business owners are looking forward to that moment. Conventions have an important ripple effect, not only in the business that convention-goers bring to restaurants and hotels but, for example, when leisure travelers can't get a room at the hotel near the convention center, so take their business to a hotel in a different part of town.

It won't happen overnight, maybe not even until 2022 (which is going to be like a year's worth of Septembers, and if you've done even a few hours of event planning in Detroit, you know exactly what I mean), since big events need lots of runway. But the conventioners are coming, whether you're ready to shake hands with them or not.