

## Westin Copley unveils state-of-the-art ballroom

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Mention the word "ballroom," and it evokes images of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire (right) effortlessly gliding across a dance floor.



Ballrooms can also generate a nice revenue stream for the hotels that have them; which is one reason why the [Westin Copley Place Boston](#) invested \$13 million in recently completed renovations for its ballroom and meeting spaces.

Some of the renovations were designed to make turn-around times quicker. Just as the bull gang at the TD Banknorth Garden must shake a leg when the Bruins hockey rink needs to be quickly broken down to make way for the circus, event planners must know how to hustle to get the most of the ballroom space with limited set-up and tear-down time.

Ballroom events have become increasingly dramatic and require a good deal of logistical preparations, said Scott Alpert, director of sales and marketing at [Westin Copley Place](#) (left).



"It's like taking a Broadway show on the road," Alpert said of the logistics behind setting up a ballroom event.

Changes to a ballroom that books roughly one event per day include an updated audio system and extra rigging points for lighting fixtures that give event planners more flexibility to use their creativity, Alpert said.

Alpert said the Westin Copley consulted on renovations with several event planners, including Bryan Rafanelli, owner of [Rafanelli Events](#) in Boston.

Old-fashioned ballrooms with heavy carpeting, flocked wallpaper, and chandeliers can cramp the style of an event planner, he said, and the new neutral-color scheme at the renovated Westin Copley Place Boston ballroom is much appreciated.

"It's like having a blank canvas," Rafanelli said.

With a blank canvas, a planner can use color and lighting schemes to "complement the brand" of the organization that is putting on a ballroom event, he said.

Using "bright jewel colors" like red and turquoise, Rafanelli helped the [Boys and Girls Clubs of Boston](#) last month stage the first event that took place in the Westin Copley Place's renovated ballroom.

With a traditional ballroom, there's a challenge with putting on an annual fund-raising dinner that might draw 500 or 600 people, said boys-and-girls-clubs events director Jill Goldweitz, and that challenge is that guests in the back room can feel left out of the festivities.

Taking advantage of the ballroom's new features, Rafanelli deployed mini-stages on the edges of the room around a larger stage in the room's middle.

The evening's main speakers spoke from the larger stage. Then boys and girls clubs members on the mini stages told the guests about how the clubs had helped transform their lives, Goldweitz said.

The result was dramatic and engaging, she said.

"It was like there was no back of the room," she said. "We'll probably stay with this configuration in the future."