



The People's Convention

One group plans to turn Charlotte into a social media hub during the DNC

GREG LACOUR



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Solender, Tyndall, Ruckman, and Kane plan to make Charlotte a social media hub during the DNC next fall.

Chris Edwards

year away, and here's what Kane, Solender, Ruckman, and Tyndall—all communications and social media consultants—have in mind: thousands of square feet of space, preferably in an older building uptown near the convention at Time Warner Cable Arena. The lobby will be a gallery for local and national artists. There will be a performance space for bands and speakers, a conference room, and space for get-togethers and news conferences. Also in the works: free Wi-Fi, electrical outlets, and working space for bloggers and other nontraditional media, with some extra room for seminars on blogging, shooting and editing video, and multimedia production, all with twenty-four-hour access as long as the DNC's in town.

“C’mon back,” says Matthew Tyndall, twenty-four, navigating the maze of gray cubicles at WTVI to a windowless office, roughly eight feet by fourteen, where The PPL dwells. “Here’s our dirty office.” Tyndall says he

than cluttered—empty Amazon.com shipping boxes occupy what little extra room he, Justin Ruckman, Michael J. Solender, and Desiree Kane share. They’ll move into bigger digs soon.

They’d better. The Democratic National Convention in Charlotte is a little more than a

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DNC was coming here.”

The project’s name, The PPL, is a play on the Democrats’ tagging of DNC 2012 as “The People’s Convention.” It’s “big, audacious, refreshing, super creative,” says Rick Fitts of WTVI, one of five project partners; the list also includes Crossroads Charlotte and CLT Blog. The 2008 DNC in Denver had the much-publicized Big Tent for bloggers and independent media, considered revolutionary for its time, but it amounted to little more than tables, outlets, and free Wi-Fi. The PPL plans to weld that to the energy of an art gallery/performance hall and the efficiency of a “third place” coworking space, so popular now with the urban creative class.

Ruckman and Tyndall founded CLT Blog in 2008 as a home for Charlotte independent media. Last year, they visited a friend in Vancouver, which was hosting the Winter Olympics, and discovered the W2 Culture+Media House, a coworking space for artists and independent media in a century-old downtown building. They loved the idea, but “Charlotte was just not big enough to have the critical mass to support that kind of thing,” says Ruckman. “That changed when we heard the DNC was coming here.”

So far, the four have concentrated on strategic planning and organization but will break soon into the hard business of funding and finding a location. They’ll need about \$300,000 to break even, and they’re in talks with a pair of uptown institutions (identities TBA) about leasing offices. “People have asked us, ‘Why us?’” Kane says. “Well, why not us?”

*This article appears in the **August 2011** issue of Charlotte Magazine*
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