

Sign Projects

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This artist's rendering shows the new digital LED billboard in Times Square. The screen is 25,610 square feet, and its builder, Mitsubishi Electric, claims it is the highest resolution LED video display in the world. (Image courtesy of Neoscape)

Mitsubishi Claims Highest-Resolution Billboard

BY TONY KINDELSPIRE

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Attracting attention in what is arguably the single largest collection of digital display signage in one spot in the world is no small challenge. But the new kid on the block in New York City's Times Square is, well, about the size of a block. A city block.

The Diamond Vision AVL-ODT10 digital billboard built by **Mitsubishi Electric Corporation** is eight stories high, wider than a football field. It runs the length of 1535 Broadway between 45th and 46th streets.

At nearly 78 feet high and almost 330 feet long, the screen size is 25,610 square feet. And with a pixel density of 2,368 by 10,048—23,793,664 individual pixels, to be exact—it's the highest-definition video display in the world, according to its builder.

Todd Stih, national sales manager for Mitsubishi Electric Power Products, says the key to the quality of the billboard's images lies in his company's "Real Black" LED technology.

Unique Configuration

Using a 3-in-1 surface mount configuration, black LEDs are used instead of the traditional red, green and blue "lamp" style LED products or the standard surface-mount products that use white LEDs.

Mitsubishi claims that its Real Black LED technology is the most significant advancement in large-scale outdoor display technology since cathode ray tubes were displaced by LED diodes in the 1990s. The contrast and viewing angles on the Times Square sign—even if it's in direct sunlight—are unparalleled, Stih says.

"Standing 17 feet away, looking up to the top of the display, which will be 100 feet up, you will see a perfect image," he says. "You could not do that with another product. You would have to be much further back.

"This is the first installation of this magnitude of this product, and (Real Black LED) is a brand-new product."

It's the crystal-clear resolution from virtually any viewing angle that has wowed both crowds and potential customers since the billboard debuted in mid-November, Stih says, adding that 15 other displays using Real Black LED technology are expected to be coming online in North America in the next few months.

Logistic Challenges

The Diamond Vision screen sits atop the 1,900-room **Marriott Marquis**, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2015. The hotel's parent corporation contracted with **Vornado Realty Trust** two years ago to redevelop the hotel's signage and retail components. For the billboard Vornado hired Mitsubishi to design and install it.

A Vornado spokeswoman declined to say exactly what the billboard cost, but the company has said the overall redevelopment project—including the sign—would cost \$140 million.

Mitsubishi was in familiar territory when it landed the contract for the billboard. That company also built what used to be the biggest screen in the world—the video display screen inside **AT&T Stadium** (formerly Cowboy Stadium), in Dallas, Texas, home of the Dallas Cowboys.

But the Times Square project posed some unique logistical challenges, Stih says.

"Unlike a football stadium, where you have the whole place to yourself, here you have three things: You have Times Square, 24/7; you're installing it on a hotel, a 'live' building; and you're doing it in front of the world," he says.

The massive screen was constructed of 500 6' x 8' modules that were staged off-site, Stih says. The company had to work around events at the hotel and the theater showings that took place in the same building, he says.

"From the time we started hanging our attachment steel on the building, to the time of completion was a total of 105 days," Stih says.

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