



2018 couldn't have been more eventful for the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority. The year was marked by a commitment to build a 28-story addition to the Hilton Columbus Downtown, which, when it opens in early 2022, will give the city its first 1,000-room convention hotel. The Authority also announced plans for a new state-of-the-art Ohio Center Garage to accommodate growing Convention Center needs, and made its case for a ticket fee to benefit the arts and permit needed capital expenditures at Nationwide Arena. Speaking of that venue, our civic arena welcomed what has since been described as possibly the greatest NCAA Women's Final Four ever played, with champion Notre Dame winning with a buzzer beater shot. Our look back at 2018 comes with a warning: Brace yourself for 2019!

March 12, 2018

Convention Facilities Authority, Local Leaders Discuss Commitment to Hilton Columbus Downtown Expansion

The Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (CFA), Columbus Mayor Andrew Ginther and Franklin County Board of Commissioners President Kevin Boyce on Monday, March 12 expressed their commitment to a 22-story expansion of Hilton Columbus Downtown, a project designed to give the city its first 1,000-room convention hotel.

Gathered at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, local leaders and guests heard the perspectives of those responsible for bringing the project together as well as that of a key Convention Center client who said the project will add significantly to Columbus' attractiveness as a destination for conventions, trade shows and sporting events.

The City Council and Board of Commissioners intend to consider legislation whereby they will share equally in providing financial backing of bonds issued by the CFA for the expansion. Hilton Columbus Downtown is owned by the CFA, which also owns Nationwide Arena, the Convention Center and several Convention Center parking facilities.

Local leaders have long discussed the need for a 1,000-room convention hotel, which allows planners to house all or most attendees in a single hotel near the event venue.

"In the past, Columbus' lack of a 1,000-room convention hotel might have discouraged our associations from considering Columbus as a convention destination," said Scott Wiley, immediate past board chair of the American Society of Association Executives. "This project is a game-changer."



Initial concepts are for a 22-story tower to be built adjacent to the Convention Center directly across from the existing Hilton on High Street. It would offer 470 rooms, giving Hilton Columbus Downtown a total of 1,002 rooms. Following city and county approval of the financing proposal, the next step will be to choose a design team, construction manager and an underwriting team to determine final details. The project will break ground in 2019 with the tower opening in late 2021.

Hilton Columbus Downtown opened in 2012 and has resulted in substantial revenue from groups Columbus would not otherwise have been able to host.

Besides Ginther, Boyce and Wiley, speakers included CFA Board Members Jim Kunk, Rhett Ricart and Brian Ross; Global Head of Full Service Brands for Hilton David Marr; and Classic Productions CEO Jim Lorimer.

Convention Facilities Authority Selects Corna Kokosing and Elford to Build Ohio Center Parking Garage

The Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (CFA) on Tuesday, April 17 selected a joint venture by two central Ohio construction firms to build its newest parking garage.

Voting at its April meeting, the Convention Authority Board chose Corna Kokosing and Elford (CKE) as the project's construction manager at-risk. Construction of the 650-vehicle parking facility on the east side of the Greater Columbus Convention Center is expected to begin this August and be completed in early 2020.

The two locally owned construction firms have a long track record of building garages next to fully functional facilities. Those projects include the Easton Town Center's Gramercy Garage, OhioHealth Riverside Methodist's Red Garage, The Hubbard Garage, and the Nationwide Children's Hospital Near East Garage and office. CKE previously led the on-time and on-budget completion of the Greater Columbus Convention Center's \$140 million renovation and expansion.

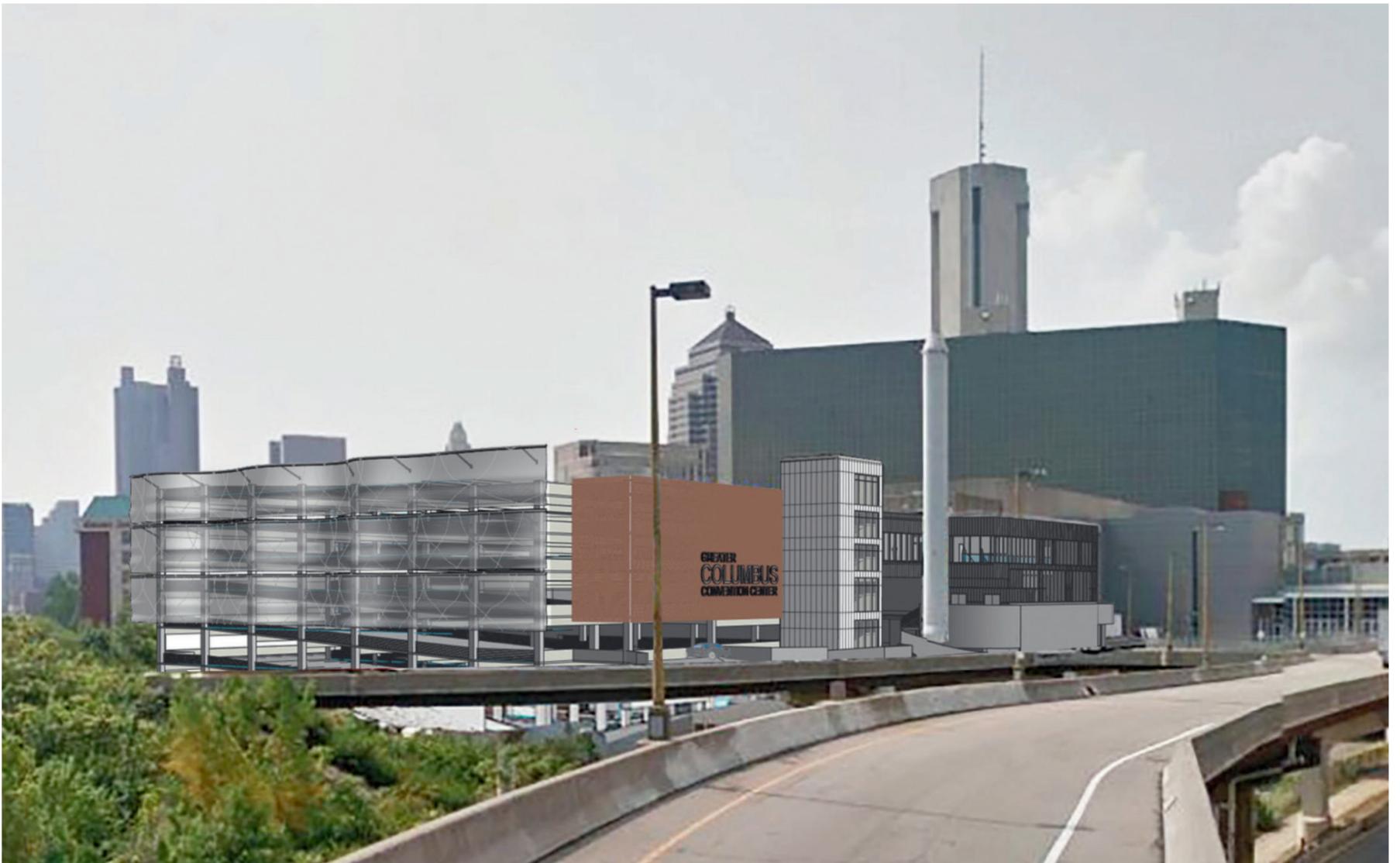
"Our previous work with CKE, their presentation of qualifications and their track record of success on major construction projects throughout central Ohio made our choice a logical one," said Convention Authority Board Chair Sally W. Bloomfield. "We look forward to collaborating with the CKE team to provide the community with a state-of-the art parking experience that meets the city's growing needs."

The CFA originally announced its plans for the Ohio Center Garage in October 2017. The facility will adjoin the Convention Center's Battelle Grand ballroom, with vehicular access from the Third Street ramps north of the Drury Inn. Pedestrians will have a direct link to the Convention Center from the new garage as well as immediate access to the 22-story Hilton Columbus Downtown hotel expansion expected to open in 2022.

The cost of the new garage will be \$20.5 million and will be financed by revenues from the net operations of the CFA's parking facilities.

The Ohio Center Garage is just the CFA's latest response to growing demand for parking in the Arena District, downtown, and the Short North Arts District. In early 2016, the CFA opened the 800-space Goodale Garage, which is attached to the north end of the Convention Center by a sky bridge. When opened, the Ohio Center Garage, will bring the number of parking spaces managed by the Convention Center to more than 4,700.

The CFA also owns the Vine Street Garage, the South Garage and the East Lot, as well as the Convention Center, Nationwide Arena and the Hilton Columbus Downtown hotel.



Video and Motion Graphic Artists Will Soon Have Venue to Show Works: Convention Center



If you're a video or motion graphics artist in Columbus, you'll have a hard time finding a place to show your works outside of a commercial application.

That's about to change. In late June, Reese Brothers Productions, the curator of the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority's (CFA's) art collection, will issue a call for art on behalf of the CFA, which just so happens to own a 60-foot long, 7-foot high LED video wall at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. It will focus on video and motion graphic artists, both experienced and new. While the LED video wall is a space to promote events within the building and in the surrounding neighborhood, it also is a place to bring visitors face to face with Columbus history through videos and graphics.

"We're going to open it up to all video and motion graphic artists to showcase their digital art," said the Reese Brothers' Jim Reese. "We're getting feedback from artists that there's no other place in central Ohio that gives them the opportunity to showcase their work."

Reese already is working in partnership with university students, faculty, digital software experts and others to understand the requirements for art that would appear on the video wall and to test initial concepts.

Collaborations include students and faculty in the film studies program at The Ohio State University and initial works by Greater Columbus Arts Council Media Arts Fellows. Other initial test content is being produced by students and faculty at Columbus State Community College and Columbus College of Art and Design.

Works that appear permanently on the video wall will need to be "creative, visually stunning and historically-related," Reese says. "I think this is going to be the tip of the iceberg in terms of creativity and wow."

Meanwhile, the CFA continues to add to its existing art collection, already the largest accumulation of local art in Franklin County. A new tile mural by G. Josey Joseph now adorns the stairwell leading from the South Garage into the Convention Center. Joseph's work is a colorful abstract that resembles a tightly knit weave of doodles. The original work, converted to tiles for the stairwell, hangs in the D pod in the North building.

In the South Atrium, visitors also can now enjoy 29 life masks fashioned by artist Emma Haase. The masks, all impressions of family members, are made of glass; the artist calls attention to family similarities by highlighting those features in copper.

Smart Farm Proves to Be a Smart Idea for Convention Center

For anyone walking through the North Building of the Greater Columbus Convention Center, the Smart Farm is hard to miss. Tucked into a wall behind plate glass and surrounded by LED lights, the green shoots and leaves of basil, chives, kale and other edible plants grow from their vertical hydroponic perches, destined for savory meals at the Convention Center.

“It’s the first fully contained hydroponic farm at a convention center anywhere in the country,” says Daniel Palawasta, general manager of Levy Restaurants at the Convention Center. “It represents a commitment by Levy (the Convention Center’s food and beverage partner) to provide a fresh garden concept within the building.”

Installed in July 2017, the Smart Farm presented a learning curve – not only for how to farm the herbs successfully, but how to build the farm itself, Palawasta says. Constructing and getting the farm operational was a collaboration among Palawasta; Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority Senior Project Manager Scott Reed; LMN Architects, which led the design of the facility’s recent renovation and expansion; and Bright Agrotech, a Wyoming-based designer of vertical hydroponic farms.

Another challenge was getting the growing lights just right. The plants in the Smart Farm need a lot of light, but they can’t shine so powerfully that they become annoying to visitors in the building, Palawasta says. So, his team worked with food scientists to develop a unique lighting schedule that avoided full light intensity during the day while still allowing plants to get the type of light they need.

“Because different plants thrive in different parts of the light spectrum, we use several different wavelengths during the day,” he explains. “Passersby may see all white, all blue or all pink during the day. Then, it’s full intensity overnight.”

He noted that this innovative approach may have contributed to a grow cycle that is much shorter than anticipated before the farm became operational.

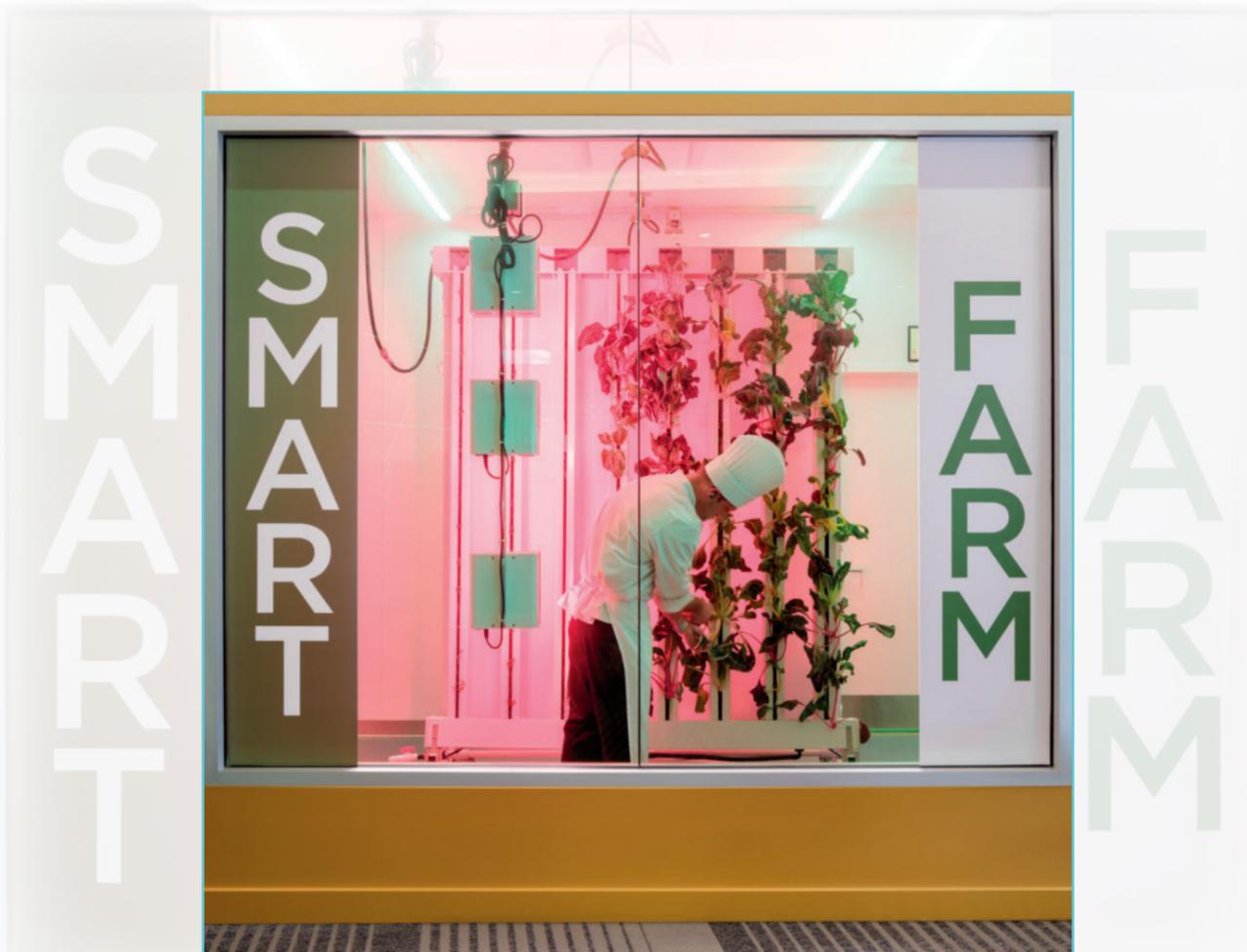
Today, the Smart Farm provides herbs and other foods that supplement or accent the foods being sold at catered events or at the South Café and Marketplace.

“There are days when we feed 4,000 to 5,000 people,” Palawasta says. “We don’t buy basil anymore, and the chives also meet all our needs.”

Other produce – the farm was also growing kale, rainbow chard and bok choy earlier this month – would require more square footage to feed that many people.

Eventually, the herbs grown at the Smart Farm could even find their way into breads and savory pastries. Levy’s new Convention Center pastry chef Stephanie DeCaprio so far has focused on sweets, due to customer demand. But there are plans now to expand into other bakery items that could use some of what’s grown at the Smart Farm.

While most of the produce is destined for use within the Convention Center, there are opportunities to spread the “grow local” concept to others. That includes periodic donations to Lifecare Alliance, which operates services including Meals on Wheels. Additionally, the farm partnered with a local autism agency to provide employment opportunities.



Columbus Shows World What It's Made of During NCAA Women's Final Four



The NCAA Women's Final Four played in Columbus over Easter weekend and is being called possibly the greatest in history, with some of the best basketball games ever played.

Visitors, sportscasters, coaches and others in town for three sold-out games at Nationwide Arena heaped praise on both the city and organizers, calling the event a nearly flawless weekend of excitement and hospitality.

Linda Logan, Executive Director of the Greater Columbus Sports Commission, says the smile still hasn't left her face.

"I was most pleased about our community and how people played their part, whether they were volunteers, families, government leaders or those in the hospitality industry," she says. "We had wonderful engagement from both the public and private partners who raised \$2.6 million to support the event, as well as tremendous support from our mayor, county commissioners, city council, police and fire. One sportscaster asked at the end of her broadcast 'When are we coming back to Columbus?' That was great to hear."

As the games were played at Nationwide Arena, the entire Arena District was transformed into a festival atmosphere with special programs and events that drew thousands of visitors and residents to the area. Meanwhile, Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority-owned venues rose to the occasion. Arena District hotels housed the teams and coaches, while the CFA-owned Hilton Columbus Downtown hosted the NCAA staff, the women's basketball committee and sponsors.

At the same time, the Greater Columbus Convention Center welcomed more than 2,300 delegates to the 2018 Women's Basketball Coaches Association Convention from March 29 through April 1 in conjunction with the Final Four.

The NCAA had announced in late 2014 that it had chosen Columbus from among a list of finalists, including Dallas, Houston, Nashville, New Orleans, Pittsburgh and Tampa. While there were a number of factors that led the NCAA to select Columbus, Logan thinks the announcement was a sign that Columbus had finally grown into the role. One key was the opening of the Hilton Columbus Downtown across from the Convention Center in 2012.

"We bid on the Final Four in 2007 and learned in 2008 we didn't get it. There were a couple of reasons for that, but it helped us build the story about our need for another convention hotel. Many of our board members feel it was a defining moment as it made the community work harder, and the Hilton was announced soon after."

The recent announcement of a 22-story Hilton expansion adjacent to the Convention Center – a project that will give Columbus its first 1,000-room convention hotel – is another step in Columbus' ability to compete for larger sporting events and conventions, Logan says.



October 18, 2018

Ticket Fee Vital to Future of Nationwide Arena

An overwhelmingly supportive crowd jammed Columbus City Council chambers Oct. 11 to speak in favor of a ticket fee to provide the arts and Nationwide Arena with funds needed for long-term viability.

The meeting was the first public hearing held by City Council's Rules and Reference Committee on a Greater Columbus Arts Council proposal to levy a 7 percent surcharge on tickets to arts events, entertainment and professional sports. The proposal would generate an estimated \$14 million a year, of which 70 percent would go back to arts and cultural organizations and 30 percent – or about \$4.2 million a year – would go to Arena building improvements.

Funding capital improvements has been difficult from the moment the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (CFA) took ownership of the Arena in 2012. Capital improvement funds were to come from the Arena's share of casino tax revenues. However, revenues never reached projections. During 2018, the CFA expected to receive about \$5.1 million in casino tax revenues. Of that amount, \$4.68 million was needed for arena operations, \$165,000 for land lease payments and \$263,000 for property taxes. "Without capital reinvestment, the Arena won't meet our community's sports and entertainment needs for the next 20 years," CFA Executive Director Don Brown testified. "Without reinvestment, the Arena will slide into obsolescence just like downtown Cincinnati's U.S. Bank arena. Like Cincinnati, Columbus will no longer be able to host major national conventions and sporting events."

"Without capital reinvestment, the Arena won't meet our community's sports and entertainment needs for the next 20 years," FCCFA Executive Director Don Brown testified.



While the Arena desperately needs additional capital improvement funds, Brown reiterated the CFA's support for greater arts funding, noting that, "we have invested and built the largest contemporary collection of Columbus art, which residents and visitors can see free of charge throughout our facilities. We could have established an Arena facility fee and retained all the proceeds for capital needs of the Arena, but we felt it was important to contribute to the overall need of the arts community, and that's why we've joined forces with the Arts Council in support of this proposal." Arts Council President Tom Katzenmeyer refuted opponents' claims that imposing a fee would drive lower attendance at Columbus venues where tickets are sold. He noted that the Arts Council commissioned a study to examine the effects of similar ticket fees in 29 cities and that "we don't see anything that shows a negative impact."

Currently, 63 Ohio cities, and all of the cities Columbus competes with, have such fees. The highest fee within Columbus' competitive set is Indianapolis, at 10 percent; Cleveland's is 8 percent.

The Arts Council's proposal exempts a number of events such as fundraisers for nonprofits, race and walk registrations, tickets costing less than \$10 and live performances at venues with 400 seats or less.

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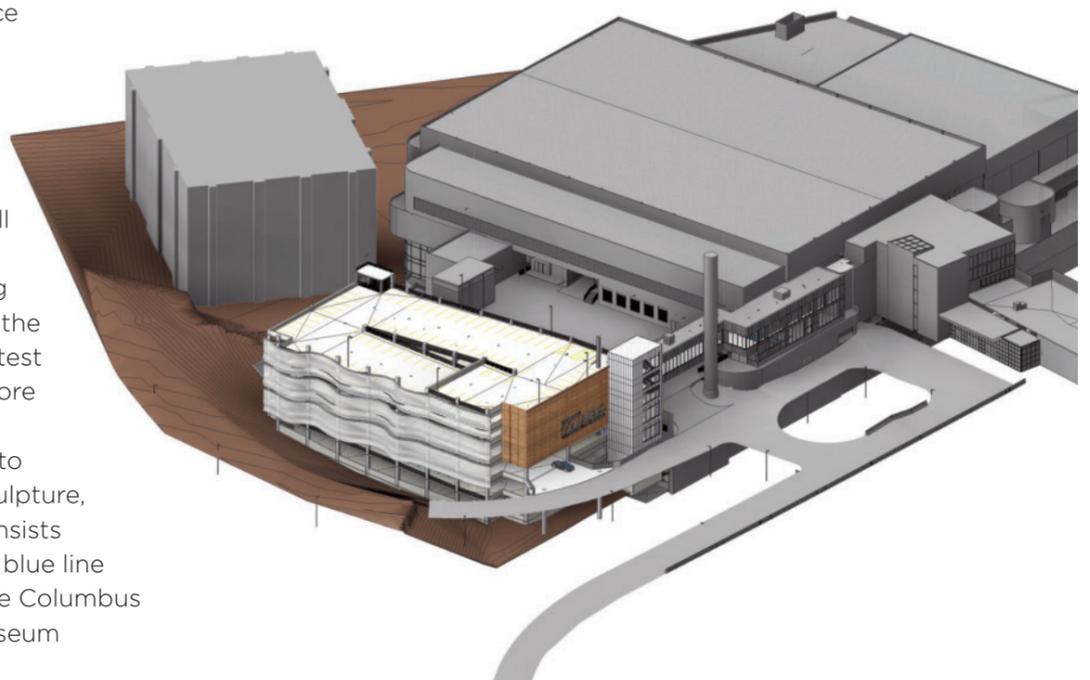
New Ohio Center Garage Will Dazzle

By the end of 2018, work will begin at the site of a new Convention Center garage unlike any other in the city. When complete, the \$20 million Ohio Center Garage, a 650-space parking facility on the east side of the Greater Columbus Convention Center, will be notable as much for its dazzle as for its state-of-the-art function.

The Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority's (CFA's) board in 2018 selected architect Schooley Caldwell to design the Ohio Center Garage, which will be built on the CFA's main service lot. The garage will serve a growing number of Convention Center visitors as well as guests at the soon-to-expand Hilton Columbus Downtown. While the latest technology will make parking and payments easier and more efficient, users may first notice a familiar sculpture on the outside of the building. A huge neon installation adjacent to the north side of the garage will light up the night. The sculpture, by internationally renowned artist Stephen Antonakos, consists of a red circle and a partial pink arc bisected by a straight blue line and a squiggly green line. The piece was acquired from the Columbus Museum of Art, which was unable to keep it when the museum expanded several years ago.

On the east side of the garage, night travelers heading south into downtown on Third Street, will be mesmerized by waving sheets of an architectural polycarbonate mesh material, lit by LED lights that can shift colors continually. The design was inspired by environmental artist and sculptor Ned Kahn.

Once inside, parkers using elevator lobbies will be greeted by ceramic tile art installations similar to those already in place at the CFA South, Vine Street and Goodale garages, said CFA Senior Project Manager Scott Reed. The garage is expected to open in 2020. While construction on the actual garage structure won't begin until Spring 2019, site work is imminent and a new Convention Center cooling tower required to make way for the new garage will soon go up. The cooling tower will be delivered on several trucks by the end of the month, to be erected in place by a crane.



In the meantime, Schooley Caldwell has been working diligently in developing design and construction documents to guide final plans for the garage.

"The design team has completed several early document packages for new cooling towers, site work, utilities and foundations, which will allow for portions of construction to begin prior to the full garage documents being complete," explained Josh Cosgrove, Project Manager for Corna Kokosing, which is building the garage.

The CFA will keep area businesses up-to-date on activities that may affect them through the duration of the project.

Convention Center Upgrades Result in Energy Savings, LEED Silver

The improvements to the Greater Columbus Convention Center were just about as impressive as a \$140 million investment could buy. Completed in 2017, the project added 137,000 square feet of new space and renovated 800,000 square feet of existing space. The investment included major additions to the center's art collection, installation of state-of-the-art digital signage, and new and upscaled meeting and exhibition spaces.

Behind the scenes, that investment included energy efficiencies that are now paying off big time. Compared to energy consumption before the project, the Convention Center has reduced total annual building energy use by 32 percent and total energy costs by more than 25 percent.

That's even with a bigger building to heat and cool.

“Nearly all the lighting in the building and our garages was replaced with more efficient LED lighting,” said Sally Bloomfield, Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority’s (CFA’s) board chair. “We noticed immediately that the energy bill went down, and we were able to sell back some of the usage in a credit program with American Electric Power.”

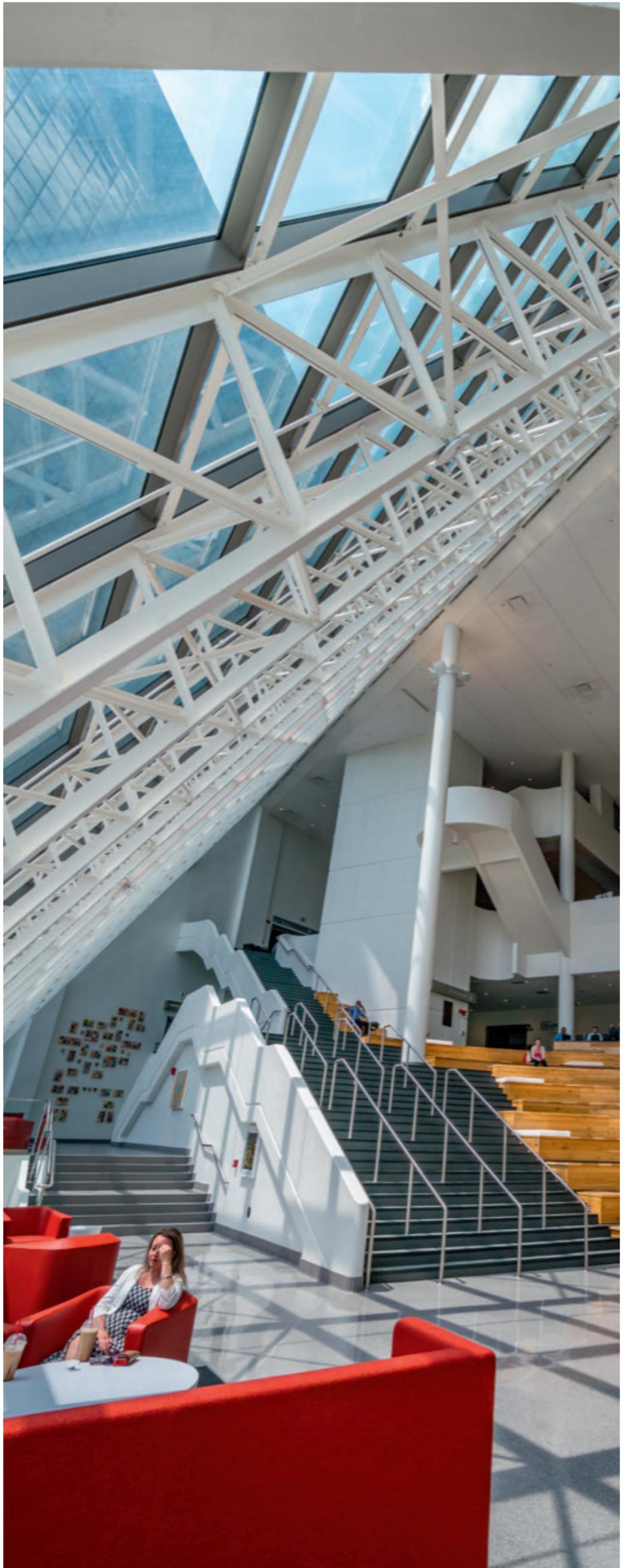
Other areas benefiting from new LED lighting included 40 restrooms, where automatic lighting now activates only when someone is present.

Savings also resulted from improved window efficiency in both the North and South Atriums, where the large single-pane windows gave way to double-paned windows, said Scott Reed, the CFA's senior project manager. A solar shade in the North Atrium automatically lowers to prevent direct sunlight into that space, he said. Not only do these new features save energy, but they increase visitor comfort in sunny parts of the building. Additional savings should be realized with installation of a new, more energy-efficient cooling tower for the Connector and South Building areas of the Center. The Ohio Center Garage, is scheduled for completion in 2020.

Finally, the Greater Columbus Convention Center sports more efficient restroom plumbing systems, which are expected to reduce water consumption by 10 percent annually through the use of low-flow fixtures.

All of the improvements have led to a LEED Silver certification for the addition, and a LEED Silver designation is expected for the building that existed before the project.

“It might be another year or so,” said Scott Reed, FCCFA Senior Project Manager, regarding the existing building LEED Silver certification. “We’re still doing testing, but we should achieve it.”



Convention Facilities Authority Selects Design, Underwriting Teams for Hilton Columbus Downtown Expansion

The Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority (CFA) has selected Cooper Carry as the design and engineering firm for a major expansion of the Hilton Columbus Downtown.

Piper Jaffray was selected as the senior managing underwriter for the CFA's estimated \$180 million bond issuance to finance the project.

Based in Atlanta, Georgia and Alexandria, Virginia, Cooper Carry provides architecture, planning, landscape architecture, interior design, environmental graphic design and sustainability consulting services worldwide. Founded in 1960, the firm specializes in the design of corporate, education, government, hospitality, mixed-use, office, residential, retail, science and technology, and transit projects, and has designed projects in 45 states and globally in the Caribbean, Middle East, Asia, Africa and Central America.

The firm, which was instrumental in the design of the Hilton Cleveland Downtown, will partner with Columbus architects Meyers + Associates to provide construction administration services. New York City-based Jeffrey Beers International will serve as the interior and restaurant designer.

Piper Jaffray is a leading investment bank and asset management firm headquartered in Minneapolis, with 58 offices in 49 cities, including Columbus. The firm's Hospitality Finance Group will be responsible for developing the plan of finance to underwrite the successful hotel project.

"The Convention Facilities Authority is excited to have these outstanding partners on our team and looks forward to working with them to successfully complete a landmark project for Columbus," said Sally Bloomfield, Chair of the Convention Authority Board.

The CFA - which owns the Hilton Columbus Downtown, Nationwide Arena, the Convention Center, and several Convention Center parking facilities - announced plans for the project in March 2018. Built next to the Greater Columbus Convention Center directly across from the existing Hilton Columbus Downtown on High Street, the expansion will add 470 rooms to the facility and give Columbus its first 1,000-room convention hotel.

The project is expected to break ground in mid-2019 with the tower addition opening in the first quarter of 2022.




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These images reflect the architect's inspiration for the interior of the new Hilton.