



Elevating Attention

Hilton Cleveland Downtown rises along city skyline, just in time for RNC

By Doug Bardwell | Photos by Dave Siegel & Feinknopf

Azure blue skies with puffy white clouds over Mall B are always a welcome sight. Clevelanders and visitors can now enjoy them twice as much with their reflections off the spectacular 32-story Hilton Cleveland Downtown. This \$272 million, 642,000-square-foot, 600-room hotel at 100 Lakeside is the latest and largest hotel to open just in time for the Republican National Convention.

By now, you've probably forgotten about that one-quarter percent sales tax increase that was proposed by the County Commissioners back in July 2007. But the upside is that we now have a new convention center, Global Center for Health Innovation and beautiful new hotel to show for it. Whether you spend a night there, or just stop in to

experience Bar 32 and its jaw-dropping views of Cleveland, you'll undoubtedly appreciate the results

Off to a contentious start

On May 4, 2009, the podium was set up on Mall B, with Public Hall as a backdrop. Mayor Jackson announced to the world that an agreement had

been reached between City Hall and the County Commissioners. A letter of intent had been signed, and the then-titled Medical Mart/Convention Center deal would proceed.

"We are pleased that we have reached an agreement that we think represents the best interests of both the City and County," said

ON THE CORNER The new hotel sits on a prominent location at the corner of Ontario Street and Lakeside Avenue along The Mall.

Commissioner Tim Hagan, then president of the Board of Commissioners.

Not everyone agreed, as concerns were raised with the agreement by many in the community.

A day later, Jeff Appelbaum, chairman of the Construction Project Management Group at Thompson Hine and managing director of Project Management Consultants LLC (PMC), was hired to address those concerns and move the project forward. He began by untangling the original deal and structuring a complicated series of agreements covering the purchase of real estate, the management agreement and construction delivery of the project.

Key to the financing was fast-tracking the project to enable it to receive "shovel-ready" stimulus monies available in 2010. "We were able to put the whole project together using bridging design-build project delivery and special financing in such a way that we were the only project in Ohio that could take advantage of the stimulus money," explains Appelbaum. "So, not only did we get our full requested allocation, we were able to absorb all the other Ohio unallocated funds as well."

Secondarily, fast-tracking was necessary to be "first-to-market" with a Medical Mart to pre-empt competitive projects in Nashville and New York City.

A Construction Administration Agreement was crafted by the commis-



Photo by Fernkopf

sioners in January 2010 to enable the developer, MMPI, to build just the convention center and the Medical Mart. It also provided the County with certain termination rights should MMPI fail to perform adequately. By December 1, the master budget was capped at \$418 million.

Before the year wrapped up, the County was rocked by 37 FBI indict-

ments against county officials, auditor's office employees, sitting judges and contractors.

There must be a better way

In November 2009, the Cuyahoga County electorate voted for a new charter form of government that created a County Executive and 11-member



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Photo by Feinberg

COUPLING RESOURCES The Hilton's main entry is situated along Lakeside Drive directly adjacent to the entry of the Convention Center to encourage a strong connection both visually and physically, according to Cooper Carry, the design/concept architect.

Council. In November 2010, Ed FitzGerald was elected Executive.

In January 2011, just as FitzGerald was being sworn in, construction started on the Convention Center and Medical

Mart projects. As the project got underway, it was apparent that MMPI would not be the ideal operator for the project, and the County began to press its termination rights to remove MMPI as

developer based on its apparent lack of operational management capabilities and the opportunity to achieve substantial savings through their removal.

They were ultimately dismissed by the fall of 2013 and replaced by a non-profit authority (The Cuyahoga County Convention Facilities Development Corporation), which resulted in better operations and substantial savings to the County. During the same period, as the Convention Center and Medical Mart complex neared completion, the County also turned its attention to the need for an attached convention center hotel.

"Funded by Destination Cleveland, we conducted a study in January 2013, which showed that all our major competitor cities [Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cincinnati and Indianapolis] had 500+ room hotels immediately connected to their convention centers," explains Appelbaum. "Meeting planners also confirmed that we were 600 rooms short of being able to attract the most desirable major events."

At the same time, County officials had decided that they were relocating their offices, which would open the northwest corner of the property for hotel development. "So in March/April 2013 we did a quick study including site fit, parametric estimating and preliminary schedule," says Appelbaum.

"We took this information and presented it to FitzGerald and Mayor Jackson



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Photo by Feinberg

CREATING A LINK Since the hotel was already considered when the convention center project began, a penetration point had previously been identified to connect the two.

on May 20, 2013," recalls Appelbaum. "Knowing how much money we had saved on the Convention Center by this time, we were able to present not only a concept plan for the hotel, but also a financing plan and a schedule for completion. Taxpayers would not have to contribute anything additional to get a hotel."

Financing of the project would consist of construction savings already realized, hotel revenue generation, a TIF, bed-tax generated by the hotel itself, and a portion of the quarter percent sales tax.

Without any of the typical governmental delay normally expected, 16 days later, on June 5, 2013, FitzGerald announced the plan for a new hotel with an accelerated schedule for June 2016 completion.

Project fast track

The first step for Project Management Consultants, as owner's rep, was to go out with an RFQ for a Design/Concept Architect. Seventeen national and international design firms responded. From there, a short list was developed and six were invited to present. Cooper Carry, represented by partners Robert Neal and Pope Bullock, won the competition and were given conceptual design responsibility.

"Initially, from a planning perspective, our approach was to better understand the site, as it was envisioned by Daniel Burnham's Group Plan of 1903, and to contribute to the completion of this work," explains Robert Neal, principal



INSPIRED BY INDUSTRY The lobby's central design element is a cylindrical screen composed of two-inch-wide steel members, resembling latticework of Cleveland's many bridges. The screen is canted to mimic centrifugal motion, representing the evolution of industry in the city.

in Cooper Carry's Hospitality Studio. "We designed the building to express a unique character that represented Cleveland's future while borrowing from its rich history."

A former Clevelander, Ellis Katz presented for John Portman & Associates, one of the teams that was in the final running, but was not selected. Determined to come back to Cleveland, and to be a part of the project, Katz accepted an offer from Appelbaum to head up the hospitality group at PMC, which served as the owner's rep for the project.

Subsequently, RFPs were issued for a Bridging Design/Build team and the triverture of Turner/Ozanne/Van Auken Akins Architects was successful. By November, a Design-Build Agreement was created and was signed in 2013. The team then hired VOA Associates of Chicago as Architect of Record based on their hospitality portfolio and experience on similar projects.

The building's interiors were designed by Pam Anderson of Anderson Miller Ltd., directed from the firm's Bloomfield,

Michigan offices. "Anderson Miller quickly embraced the notion to create an authentic experience rooted in its sense of place," Neal says

Finally, RFPs were issued for hotel operator, FF&E (furniture, fixtures and equipment) supplier and OS&E (owners supplies and equipment) supplier. Bray Whaler of Centennial, Colorado obtained the FF&E package, while Hilton Worldwide was successful for both other bids.

"Early in the design process, meetings were held with project stakeholders and the general public," explains Bullock. "From these meetings, several requests were discussed and goals were better defined. The desires for a space where Clevelanders could experience the hotel were first heard at these meetings. As a result, the owners revised the program to include a rooftop bar."

Looking at the eastern side of the building, one notices a slight crease in

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NATURAL CONNECTION Preserved moss panels provide a unique backdrop to the reception desks (top), while meeting rooms (middle, bottom) all feature north exposure for astounding views of Lake Erie's shoreline.

the building's reflective curtain wall of Viracon glass. According to Neal, the crease actually mirrors the crease in the mall itself. "It was important that design expressions were intentional and developed in a way that was reflective of Cleveland," he says. "The metal projections along the lower portion of the building were designed to recall the construction of the iron work history in Cleveland. This approach provided layers of depth and interest to the façade, while recognizing the height of buildings determined in the Group plan."

"The design of the exterior was developed as a collaborative effort, starting with the criteria design presented by Cooper Carry," explains David Stelter, "It was important that design expressions were intentional and developed in a way that was reflective of Cleveland."

Robert Neal
Cooper Carry

senior vice-president, VOA Associates Incorporated. "The slope of the façade and the cantilever at Bar 32 are two of the most unique elements of the design."

"As we developed the design further," says Stelter, "there was a rigorous process of working with the entire team; Turner, Cooper Carry, Harmon (the building enclosure contractor), VOA and our consultants all at the table developing concepts, systems and details working to the final product and assuring the initial design vision was maintained."

"We didn't see our task to design a specific building on a specific site as much as we saw it as an opportunity to contribute to the growth of a city and to build upon ideas that were principally strong. The physical building was the result of understanding those ideas," Neal says.

Beautiful inside and out

"As a member of the design team, we worked closely with the Design



Photo by Feenough





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Architect, Cooper Carry out of Atlanta,” says Pam Anderson, principal of Anderson Miller Ltd. “The overall design aesthetic is contemporary and clean-lined, providing a backdrop for an extensive local art collection commissioned by hotel owner Cuyahoga County. The lobby features a custom designed, patterned terrazzo floor in shades of charcoal to gray and white with silver metal accents in contrast with natural walnut veneer. The floor pattern also extends to the ceiling above, reinforcing the diagonal line of the structure in both locations. Green, preserved moss panels provide an organic relief to the reception area and extend to the oval bar above.”

The hotel contains a \$1.5 million art collection commissioned by project art consultant Kalisher on behalf of Cuyahoga County and produced by its resident artist population. The contemporary collection features large-scale artwork installations and sculpture con-

trasting with the creamy cool envelope of the interior design palette.

“As a design component, we wanted to acknowledge the importance of industry and steel fabrication to the origination and subsequent development of the city of Cleveland,” Anderson says. “The central design element is a cylindrical screen com-

“We now have a world-class hotel that will help attract many more visitors, conferences and meetings to Cleveland.”

Armond Budish

Cuyahoga County Executive Officer

posed of two-inch-wide steel members, resembling the latticework of Cleveland’s many bridges, and housing the reception area and front desk. The screen structure is canted to mimic centrifugal motion. Steel members are ‘spun’ from the central screen, creating a series of smaller screens and illuminated steel elements that appear

to spin to the ceiling above. The steel elements represent the origins of the steel industry in Cleveland and the evolution of these beginnings to a prosperous diversity of business and industry coinciding with the gentrification of what is now the revitalized City of Cleveland.”

Working locally, Robert Klann of Robert P. Madison International, Inc. translated interior design concepts into construction documents. With multiple trips to Detroit to meet with Anderson Miller, each wall, each floor and each ceiling were individually specified. Reflective ceiling plans with distinctive lighting were one of the favorite components they developed.

“It was an extremely collaborative process,” recalls Michelle Crawford, designer for Madison. “Working with Anderson and Stantec [VOA], everything needed to be carefully specified to maintain design intent, but also turned around very quickly to maintain the schedule. We started off with coordination calls once or twice a



EXERCISING OPTIONS A full-sized pool is located on the sixth floor, where you'll also find a dozen Precor machines in the fitness room.

week, and later transitioned to meetings on-site as the building progressed."

There were dozens of unique areas that required special attention, such as the lobby bar, reception area and high-tech meeting rooms, as well as integration of all the artwork. The ballrooms were the ones most people commented on, however.

In the main ballroom on the fifth floor, suspended drywall panels create a diamond-shaped ceiling pattern with diagonal bespoke lighting elements. "These fixtures were created by Preciosa International Inc. in the Czech Republic, who sent their own installation team," Crawford says.

The third floor junior ballroom wasn't without its special ceiling either. Somewhat reminiscent of Lake Erie, "the ceiling panels ripple across the room and suspended octagonal pendant fixtures provide illumination," Crawford says.

Construction starts

As subcontractors were finalizing their bids for the construction contracts, they were each asked to submit their hiring goals for SBE, MBE, FBE, etc. Upon award, their estimated goals were made part of their contractual agreements. At the end of the project, results were compared and all goals were met or exceeded.

"As a 100% female-owned small business firm, we were thrilled to see so many of our fellow MBE/FBE/SBE partners involved," says Jill Akins, principal in Van Auken Akins Architects.

"Having to take time to demolish and abate the former County Administration Building actually gave us time to analyze multiple scenarios and create the ideal accelerated schedule," says Marty Burgwinkle, project executive for Turner

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Photo by Fernkopf

GREEN SCREEN Mirroring the reception area below, Eliot's Bar on the second floor features moss wall paneling that pops visually among the dark woodwork, tile and countertops.

Construction Company. "If the County hadn't agreed to do a double move, the project could have never opened June of this year."

"The largest challenge for this project, seemingly, was the compressed schedule," adds Stelter. "Being brought on board as part of the team in 2013, we quickly assembled our entire team and moved directly into a fast-track process of design packages, keeping pace with work in the field that was commenced as we were still developing documents."

"Another of the keys to our success was having great design-assist subcontractors who were committed to the target budgets and timetables," Burgwinkle says. Having their assistance during the design phase enabled the fast-track completion needed to deliver this project on time.

"Fortunately, much of our design assist team had also worked together on the Convention Center project and were already up to speed on our procurement and diversity goals," says Burgwinkle. "We co-located all their offices with us in one big area, so coordination was just a matter of walking down the hall."

"Our fully integrated team was also a prime reason for our success," adds Jason Jones, general manager of Turner Construction Company. "Ozanne's and VAA's superintendents

and engineers blended perfectly with ours. People never knew what firm they were dealing with; it was just one collaborative effort."

On the design side, Stelter also expressed appreciation for the diligence of all their partners, "Barber & Hoffman, our structural engineer, Karpinski Engineering, our mechanical and electrical engineer, Robert P. Madison International, our local archi-

tect partner, Osborn Engineering, our civil engineer – among others."

With a compressed project timeline and a fixed completion date, the project indeed posed many unique challenges, according to Brian Stewart, project director with technical and engineering consulting firm NV5.

"Before construction started, NV5 worked with Turner to prepare the detailed baseline schedule, taking into

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LOCAL MOTIFThe hotel houses 600 suites and guest rooms (top, bottom), which incorporate Cleveland-themed art and bathrooms that glow with back-lit mirrors (middle).

account concurrent design and construction work, a phased bid/award process, challenging site logistics and planning for the construction of a high-rise building through two winter construction seasons,” he says.

By December 2013, abatement was completed on the old County Administration building and work could begin for the new hotel.

“On a zero lot line, extremely compact site, there was barely enough room to sink the 29 caissons, ranging in size from three feet to seven and a half feet diameter, down to a depth of 200 feet,” explains Jones.

“Because the possibility of a hotel was considered when the convention center was started, a penetration point had previously been identified to connect the two buildings,” says Appelbaum. That connection located at the northeast corner of the lower level in the hotel matched up with the concourse level of the convention center.

As efficiently as the job began, Mother Nature had other ideas come winter.

“Rising 32 stories with a cast-in-place concrete frame for the guest room tower, during the horrendous winter of 2014-2015, we lost 59 days of work due to wind and cold – 14 days in the month of February alone,” relates Burgwinkle. “I’ve never lost that much time to weather on a project before.”

Fortunately, with all the advance planning and scenario evaluations, schedules were adjusted and work continued.

“Daily collaboration with the design-assist partners was extremely important in keeping pace with the fast-track process,” says Brian David, senior vice president with Karpinski Engineering. “Not only do high-rise buildings present many technical challenges, but the design and construction processes were at times moving hand-in-hand – and communication is always key. Our engineers spent many, many hours on-site doing just that – working closely with Turner’s team.”

By October 2015, the building was closed in and protected from the weather.

Lean construction played a major role according to Jones, especially on the tight site, roughly 300 feet by 350 feet. Burgwinkle’s team had done a complete



material status list, so every delivery could be planned and scheduled. Just-in-time deliveries were a requirement with no lay-down areas available.

The other saving grace for the project was BIM (building information modeling) which enabled much of the electrical and mechanical systems to be prefabricated off site, eliminating any cutting in the field.

Electrical outlets were prewired, pipes were pre-cut and entire rack assemblies of pipes could be lowered into place. In the heating plant alone, Burgwinkle explains that there are over 6,000 welds in some rather sizeable piping. Utilizing BIM technology to facilitate prefabrication, 4,500 of the welds were done off-site, under controlled conditions in the shop, and they all fit with precision when delivered to the site. The final benefits were realized in lack of waste, scrap and clean-up needed as the work progressed.

Rich Baxendale, mechanical engineer with Osborn Engineering, notes that special attention was paid in fire pump and standpipe design for the project, specifically regarding working pressure of the system and pressure limitations of the components. "Given the available water supply, the pump was appropriately sized to supply the required flows and pressure throughout the building which was split into two pressure zones through the use of pressure reducing valves," he says. "This approach allowed the design to minimize the required use of high pressure fittings and components."

All the subs brought their A-team tradespeople, according to Jones, and Turner made sure the site was a safe and clean place for the workers, most of whom worked continuing overtime schedules. As the job came to a close, they were awarded recognition from Liberty Mutual for 850,000 man hours without a lost-time accident.

Completion of the project was achieved well in advance of the June 1, 2016 hotel opening date. With early completion and more than \$1 million of contingency monies returned to the owners, everyone judged the construction to be a resounding achievement.

"We couldn't have had a better team," Burgwinkle says. "From Ellis Katz, the owner's rep, to the designers, to our subs and our partners on



WIDE ANGLE A reception area offers expansive views of Lake Erie, FirstEnergy Stadium, Great Lakes Science Center, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and the grassy Mall outside.

the project, this was the perfect team. There was never a hint of finger-pointing; everyone collaborated to bring this project in as planned."

From the hotel's viewpoint

As one of the premier convention center hotel operators, and with a worldwide sales team, Hilton was a logical choice for operator. This is the first hotel in Cleveland for its flagship brand – Hilton Hotels & Resorts.

Hotel General Manager Teri Agosta says she thinks three things set this hotel

apart. "Our staff of 350 clearly reflect the demographics of the community and many of our employees are new to the hospitality business, but all possess great attitudes, wanting to be of utmost service to our guests. Secondly, our views are tremendous, from the second floor 'living room' space, all the way up to Bar 32 on the 32nd floor; and lastly, our art collection is without parallel."

One hundred ninety-four pieces of original art were commissioned for the hotel, all from Ohio artists. Familiar names like Harvey, Duda, Drost and

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PHOTO FINISH A collection of 2,800 submitted "selfies" have been used to create a panoramic Cleveland skyline mosaic on the wall leading to the Convention Center.

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Schreckengost all have work on display. "A dozen Cleveland-based artists were given commissions to create Cleveland-themed murals above the headboards throughout the hotel," adds Agosta.

In addition to professional artists, shutterbugs from across the region submitted "selfies" with the hashtag #MyCLEPhoto, and 2,800 of them have been used to create a panoramic Cleveland skyline mosaic on the wall leading to the Convention Center.

Walking in through the front door, "It's like a hotel and a museum, all in one," said one of the doormen to Agosta. Not only was he correct, you could say it's a living museum, as multi-textured and multi-level moss creates live murals the width of the reception/check-in area and again on the second floor in Eliot's Bar.

In addition to Bar 32 and Eliot's, the Burnham will be the hotel's three-level, signature restaurant, named for Daniel Burnham, architect of the Cleveland Group Plan. Executive Chef Maxime Kien and Chef de Cuisine Ryan Beck promise to offer a wide variety of American fare with help from famed Cleveland restaurateur and consultant Zack Bruell. Together, they toured New Orleans, Charleston and Austin looking for inspiration.

Equipped for convention business

Able to serve the needs of convention-goers, the hotel boasts 600 guest rooms, 37 of which are suites, including two-bay and three-bay suites. All of the rooms are decorated with Cleveland-inspired art, but two of the suites have special themes – the Graffiti Arts suite and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame suite. A stylized map of downtown is woven into the carpet in all the elevator lobbies.



LAKE VIEW The King Ambassador Suite includes a separate living area and parlor with stunning views of the lakefront.

For recreation, a full-sized pool is located on the sixth level, where you'll also find a dozen Precor machines in the fitness room. If you prefer to exercise in private, opt for one of the Hilton Fitness Guestrooms outfitted with in-room yoga or cardio/strength training setups.

For meeting, wedding or banquet needs, the hotel offers more than 50,000 square feet of flexible function space on floors three and five. The Superior is the 20,778-square-foot grand ballroom on the fifth floor, while the Hope junior ballroom on the third floor adds almost 16,000 more. Each can be sub-divided into four or five smaller spaces, and each floor also offers up to four additional separate meeting rooms with full-height lake views.

Still to come

Between now and the end of next year, look for two more additions – both for pedestrians.

An underground connector is currently under construction to take guests from the hotel to the Huntington Garage, across Lakeside Avenue, notes Reed Boden, civil engineer at Osborn Engineering. "The tunnel will connect to the lower level of the hotel, allowing patrons increased parking access with-

out having to endure outdoor elements," Boden says.

Above ground, look for an iconic-designed, elevated walkway over the railroad tracks and the Shoreway, down to the grassy area of the North Coast Harbor.

"With the Hilton Cleveland Downtown, we now have a world-class hotel that will help attract many more visitors, conferences and meetings to Cleveland," says Cuyahoga County Executive Officer Armond Budish. "It's a beautiful hotel, well designed and constructed with maximum views of the city that become greater the higher up you go."

"If not for the Hilton, we would not have attracted the Republican

National Convention," he says. "It also acts together as the third leg of a stool with the Convention Center and the Center for Global Health Innovation all working together to bring more business to the region. And, this in turn will enhance all the other hotels and businesses in the community.

"We're very proud that the hotel reflects our City through its use of artwork throughout the facility and glad to be moving forward with the tunnel access to the parking garage. Our tradesmen in this area are second to none and we're proud that Turner Construction, working with their teams of subcontractors and suppliers, were able to deliver this ahead of schedule and well under budget." **P**

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