

Cleveland Medical Mart and Convention Center Design Unveiled

(Seattle, Washington) – Seattle-based architect [LMN](#) recently unveiled the design for The Cleveland Medical Mart and Convention Center (CMMCC), a \$465 million project that will include the nation’s first medical mart, as well as the redesign of the city’s signature public open space, the historic “Burnham Mall.” LMN has led the design in collaboration with landscape architects Gustafson Guthrie Nichol of Seattle.

Cuyahoga County, Ohio teamed up with Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. (MMPI) to create a combined medical mart and convention center. The design challenge was to create a large, modern below-grade convention facility integrated with an above-ground medical mart housing medical device manufacturers and suppliers, while working within the historic parameters of the 1903 Group Plan, updating and reactivating the public realm.

“This project presents an exciting opportunity to take a place of rich historical importance and re-imagine it in a way that is contemporary and progressive while honoring the past,” notes Mark Reddington, FAIA, Design Partner at LMN.

Located at the cultural and commercial core of downtown Cleveland, the project will link the following three components to the context of streets and civic buildings, all while preserving views to Lake Erie:

- The Medical Mart, a 235,000 square-foot permanent showroom space for major medical manufacturers and service providers
- A newly configured 767,000 sfs convention center, including 230,000 square-foot of Class-A exhibition hall with 90,000 sf of state-of-the-art conference and banquet facilities
- A redesign of the Burnham Malls, 600,000 square feet of public open space designed in 1903 by Daniel Burnham connecting the cultural heart of the City with the Lake Erie lakefront.

With the existing convention center situated entirely beneath the Mall, one of the challenges of the project was to preserve existing views to Lake Erie from Lakeside Avenue in the middle of the site, while accommodating increased ceiling heights in the below-grade exhibition hall. The LMN design creates an L-shaped scheme, placing part of the exhibition hall space beneath the Medical Mart and avoiding the need to raise the Mall north of Lakeside.

This design allows the ballroom, which will be reconfigured to achieve a state-of-the-art, column-free space, to remain in its current location overlooking Lake Erie. A series of meeting rooms will link the ballroom to a new entry at the South edge of Lakeside Avenue. This spacious, glass-enclosed space will connect the exhibition hall to the daily activities of Lakeside Avenue and provide an opportunity for natural daylighting and views into the exhibition hall.

The Medical Mart

The five-level Medical Mart structure will be located at the prominent intersection of St Clair Avenue and Ontario Street over a portion of the exhibition hall. As a permanent showroom for medical device manufacturers and suppliers, it is anticipated to be the first facility of its kind to be integrated with a convention center, serving the medical community in an innovative way by linking its showrooms to a world-class exhibit and conference space.

By leveraging Cleveland’s reputation as an innovative and internationally-recognized medical research hub, the Medical Mart will contribute to the growth of Northeast Ohio’s economy and provide a year-round anchor tenant for the Convention Center. Aesthetically, the facility is designed to relate to the Beaux Arts structures framing the Burnham mall in both scale and materiality. A central atrium space, which faces the Mall through a multi-story glass wall, is designed to expose the internal activity of the facility and link the various internal functions to the exterior space of the mall.

Convention Center

The Convention Center has been designed to accommodate a wide variety of industry trade shows, as well as to work in combination with the Medical Mart for health care industry conventions. The programmatic layout will support simultaneous events, with direct access to meeting facilities from the exhibition hall and Medical Mart showrooms.

In order to infuse the convention center space with as much light as possible, the design team incorporated several daylighting strategies. In addition to the entry pavilion, a concourse linking the Medical Mart to the Lakeside Avenue entrance includes clerestory windows.

Below the surface of the north end of the Mall, the Ballroom will become the signature space within the facility. The competition between convention centers often comes down to the quality and amenities of their ballroom spaces, and the Cleveland facility will be well-positioned to leverage its unique location at the edge of Lake Erie. The design of the ballroom's interior design is centered on the flexibility to create a variety of environments depending on use, including rigging light trusses for music performance, theatrical events, fashion shows, and social gatherings.

The Burnham Mall

The Burnham Mall -- the centerpiece of the 1903 Group Plan for Cleveland's civic center -- is one of the most complete examples of the 20th Century "City Beautiful" movement in city planning in the United States. The project's goal is to restore the Mall to its intended use as a grand civic space. In addition, there is a shared desire for an informal and vibrant public space geared toward a growing population of downtown residents.

The LMN/GGN solution for resolving the grade differential gracefully involves making use of the roof structure over the exhibit halls to sculpt the ground plane. The center part of the Mall (Mall B) will become a green carpet that peels up at one end to reveal a large, glassy lobby. This feature will create a dramatic view toward Lake Erie from the inside of the building, as well as a new viewing promontory above it. Looking back from the north at the building from the outside at night, the lobby will glow with light and activity from within, creating a beacon at the south edge of Mall C.

A Decade of Design Conversation Bears Fruit

LMN began working with the Cleveland Planning Commission in 1998 on a feasibility and site selection study. Over the course of the following 11 years, the firm remained periodically engaged on other major conceptual design efforts for a new convention center for the city. LMN was eventually hired by MMPI in March 2010 to create the final design for the project. Site clearing and demolition began on January 3rd, 2011, and construction is expected to be completed in fall 2013.

As a national leader in convention center design, LMN has designed several notable facilities across the country over the last decade -- the most recent being the Vancouver Convention Centre West in British Columbia, which holds the distinction as the first convention center in the world to earn LEED® Platinum certification. Other recent and ongoing convention center projects include the Dena'ina Convention Center in Anchorage, Cincinnati's Duke Energy Convention Center, and the Calgary Convention Centre.

About LMN

LMN provides comprehensive planning and design services to create cultural arts venues, convention centers, higher education facilities, commercial and mixed-use developments, interiors, and urban plans that celebrate and enrich communities. The firm is widely recognized for distinctive, integrated design solutions that are highly responsive to specific social, cultural, economic and environmental influences. For more information, visit www.lmnarchitects.com.

About Gustafson Guthrie Nichol

Gustafson Guthrie Nichol (GGN) is a landscape architecture practice based in Seattle, WA. Founded by partners Kathryn Gustafson, Jennifer Guthrie, and Shannon Nichol, GGN works throughout the Americas and Asia. Its designs, carried by designers with professional backgrounds in landscape, architecture, engineering, graphics, ecology, and other sciences, express the sculptural qualities of contextual landscape.

GGN offers special experience in designing high-use landscapes in complex, urban contexts. GGN's landscapes are widely varied but share qualities as healthy settings for diverse and ever-changing activities. This creates landscapes that are serenely grounded while also feeling alive and comfortable at all times -- whether bustling with crowds, offering moments of contemplation, or doing both at once.

GGN's recent project awards include multiple ASLA National Design Excellence Awards, Tucker Architectural Awards, and AIA/ASLA Honor and Merit awards for Design. GGN's most acclaimed projects include the Lurie Garden of Millennium Park in Chicago, the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Campus in Seattle.

About MMPI

MMPI is the world's leading owner and operator of showroom buildings and trade show facilities, bringing buyers and sellers together in more than 300 market events, trade and consumer shows and conferences each year.

MMPI manages The Merchandise Mart and 350 West Mart Center in Chicago; Market Square, the Suites at Market Square, Hamilton Market, Plaza Suites, Furniture Plaza and the National Furniture Mart in High Point, N.C.; the Architects & Designers Building and 7 W New York in New York; the Boston Design Center in Boston; the L.A. Mart in Los Angeles; and the Washington Design Center and Federal Center Southwest in Washington D.C.

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