

Architecture in New Jersey

Trenton Makes: Green Office Tower and Economic Growth

Vista Center Will Be First LEED Platinum Office Building on Northeast Corridor

Trenton, N.J. — Daniel R. Brenna Jr. of Capital Real Estate Group and architects RMJM unveiled the design for Vista Center, a new LEED Platinum office tower in Trenton, which will be the city's largest commercial development in decades. At a time of economic crisis, this major investment will bring new jobs, revenue and an iconic tower to New Jersey's Capital City. Trenton's Planning Board unanimously approved the preliminary site plan in late 2008.

Vista Center is a 25-story, 700,000-square-foot Class A office building planned directly adjacent to the Trenton Transit Center, the second busiest train station on New Jersey's Northeast Corridor, which runs from Boston to Washington. The transit-oriented development will include 12,000 square feet of ground-level retail, a parking garage for more than 1,140 cars and two public art components – a plaza with a signature sculpture and lobby with a video art installation.

"Vista Center signals a new future for Trenton that will bring new jobs and economic opportunity in a spectacular 'green' tower," said Brenna. "The project will enable corporations and partnerships to upgrade to the best workspace available, enjoy incredible rail and highway access for employees, increase worker productivity and reduce occupancy costs to zero as a result of available financial incentives. This is the only project of its kind for companies that qualify."

The project is targeting a LEED Platinum certification by the U.S. Green Building Council – the highest sustainability rating offered – which would make it the first Platinum office tower located directly at a Northeast Corridor Hub. The Trenton Transit Center, which is the final phase of a \$75 million renovation program, is a major hub along the Northeast Corridor, served by NJ Transit, AMTRAK, SEPTA and the NJ Riverline. The combination of four train lines and a location seconds from U.S. Route 1 provide exceptional connectivity to the region's workforce.

Trenton native Daniel Brenna assembled a world-class development team for the project: In addition to RMJM Hillier serving as architects, Cushman and Wakefield is exclusive office leasing agent; Langan Engineering is the project engineer; Turner Construction Company is serving as construction consultant, and Buro Happold is sustainability engineer.

Trenton Mayor Douglas Palmer said he looks forward to working with the development and leasing team to secure a lead tenant for Vista Center. "Our support of this project and Dan's intense commitment to realizing this vision will pay off for Trenton and for our residents," he commented. "Trenton will have the premier office building in the State and will demonstrate how well-conceived plans that incorporate smart growth principles, green design and transit oriented locations can be the key to urban revitalization."

Sustainable Design Creates Strong Iconic Image for Trenton

The concept for Vista Center emerged from a larger urban plan that envisions great potential for this area – adjacent to the Trenton Transit Center and within walking distance to Trenton's historic neighborhoods, offices and cultural facilities. The tower and plazas will effectively fill in the gaps around the train station and provide pedestrian pathways.

"The design aims to create a memorable gateway to the city that will attract people and businesses because they want to work in a building that is beautiful, healthy, energy-efficient, and you don't need a car to get there," says Sergio Coscia, RMJM architect and the project's designer. "The City of Trenton and the developer are setting a wonderful example for the rest of the state and the region on the importance of investing in transit-oriented development and sustainable design."

Design of the tower focused on creating a strong, signature image for Trenton with inviting public spaces that would draw people from the train station. The 25-story building's slender profile, as it wraps around the site, will give it a monumental, elegant appearance. The form of the building has as much to do with solar orientation as the shape of the site itself. Sustainability guided RMJM's approach from the beginning, so that meant minimizing east/west exposures to sunlight – to prevent excessive heat gain – and maximizing the northern and southern exposures.

The building was designed to increase employee productivity, according to Coscia. "The floor plans and high ceilings will foster a more pleasant working environment by bringing daylight deep into the building and a high-performance air distribution system will optimize indoor environmental quality," he explained. Other sustainable features will include:

- Roof-mounted solar panels to generate renewable energy and reduce common area charges
- Low VOC interior finishes ensuring healthier air quality for occupants
- Storm water collected from the roof and diverted to a bioswale and rain garden
- Indigenous landscaping reduces the need for permanent irrigation
- Energy efficient lighting with daylight dimming to lower electric bills
- Building structure to contain local materials with high percentage of recycled content
- High performance façades with low-e glazing to reduce heating and cooling expenses

Project Offers Financial Incentives for Tenants and Boost to Trenton's Economy

Vista Center also offers a unique combination of financial incentives for users. It is the first office building in Trenton to be qualified under the State's new Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit, landmark legislation that provides major tax breaks to employers with 200 or more employees who locate in Vista Center. The program allows tenants to take a credit against their New Jersey Corporate Income Tax equal to the entire project capital costs in equal installments over 10 years. The credit can potentially subsidize the full amount of a tenant's rent.

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In addition, the property is located in an Urban Enterprise Zone, offering further advantages for tenants. This includes credits for certain new hires, unemployment insurance discounts and sales tax exemptions on purchases of supplies and equipment. Utility discounts also are available under PSE&G's urban area rate program.

"Given today's economy, Vista Center offers an unparalleled opportunity," said Joseph Sarno, executive director of Cushman & Wakefield. "The combination of financial incentives and a premier location with access to New Jersey, New York City and Philadelphia will allow tenants to upgrade to a Class A green office environment with everything brand new and state-of-the-art in one of the best locations in the tri-state area. There's nothing else like it in the region."

Vista Center will be a major catalyst in Trenton's revitalization, with 300 jobs during construction phases and 2,800 permanent new jobs on build out, according to Brenna. "The City will realize more than \$35 million in estimated real estate taxes from Vista Center over 30 years as well as increased demand for housing and retail services," he said. In addition, estimates from real estate advisors BBPC & Associates indicate the potential for new office workers to spend more than \$18 million annually at local businesses. Urban Land Institute studies show that urban center jobs create significant housing demand. The development of Vista Center could spur more than \$100 million in new residential construction

Vista Center marketing is being led by Cushman & Wakefield's Edison, N.J. office. Joseph Sarno and Robert Dinner are heading the team, working closely with Jon Marks, Jeremy Neuer and Michael Gordon.

Cushman & Wakefield's Philadelphia office is also working on this assignment represented by Roger McManimon.

The building is suitable for large corporate users with space divisible to 200,000 square feet. "The first tenants to make commitments here will be key, and they will have the opportunity to impact final design elements, building systems and other construction features to be virtually custom planned for their specific use," Dinner noted. He added that from the start of construction, the timetable for delivery will be approximately 24 months.

"As the nation's leading green builder, Turner Construction Company is very proud to be part of the team helping to deliver this landmark LEED Platinum project, the first in the state of New Jersey," said Tom Reilly, vice president and general manager of Turner Construction Company.

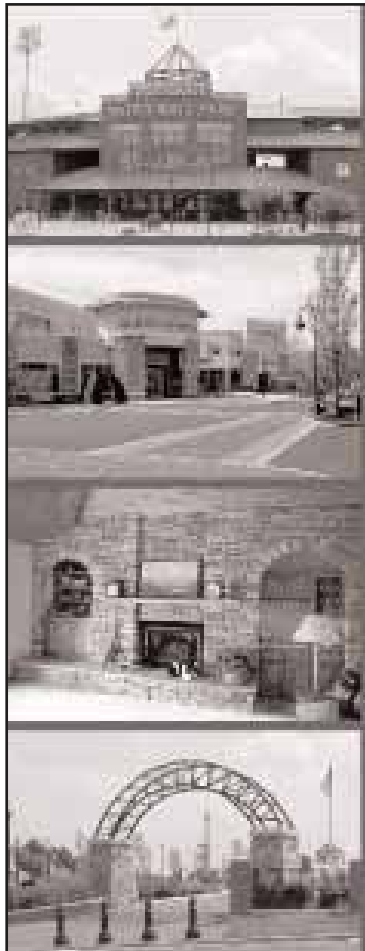
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