



# Dream Building Project Our FAIRBOARD has a dream and a need to build; what's the trips, and land mines

Cara Muhlenkamp CFE Mercer County Fair Executive Director  
Howard Call CFE Summit Co. Fair Project Overview  
Saturday January 17, 2026

- Summit County Fair Intent, 3<sup>rd</sup> 12 month rental facility open space 9000 Sq Ft to supplement the 6000 sq foot Hall, the 44,000 sq ft All Purpose Arena Complex. Complete Facility for stand alone operation and Fair Gate Entrance
- Viable to lease: Study of venues for weddings, Tradeshow space needed for these shows that need 9000 Sq Feet was extremely rare size in the county
  
- The Project: Our New Exhibit Hall, Banquet Hall
- Planning started in March 2024 of the Intent, Usage: Rental Income
  1. Ohio Basic Building code requirements general review of Type # of building A-2
  2. Hired Design engineering firm with concept drawing of the intent Design
  3. Discussion with Local Fire Inspector who must approve the plans of concerns before final design
  4. Phase 1 funding in place, Proceed with Drawings, plan approval
  5. Today: January 2026, Enclosed, Annex heated, Drywall complete, Painted, Fire suppression and Main Hall Heat build out started

**First Land Mine for final plans** 9 months Ohio Law dictates initial time to review, submit questions back to engineering and answer then after that no time limit to respond back to owner

**2<sup>nd</sup> Land Mine** OBBC changes to occupancy numbers per square Foot  
Back to design mode, Fire suppression, Fire signal monitoring ++

**3<sup>rd</sup> Land Mine** removed 3 old structures to prepare site, Fair opens with no Gate A building, no 36 exhibit spaces

**4<sup>th</sup> Land Mine,** Lack of skilled Labor, too many projects in the tri county area eating up labor, concrete, block

Cost Initial \$1.2 million Revised cost code changes \$1.5M

Funding: State Grant \$600,000 Donations \$400,000

Loan \$150,000

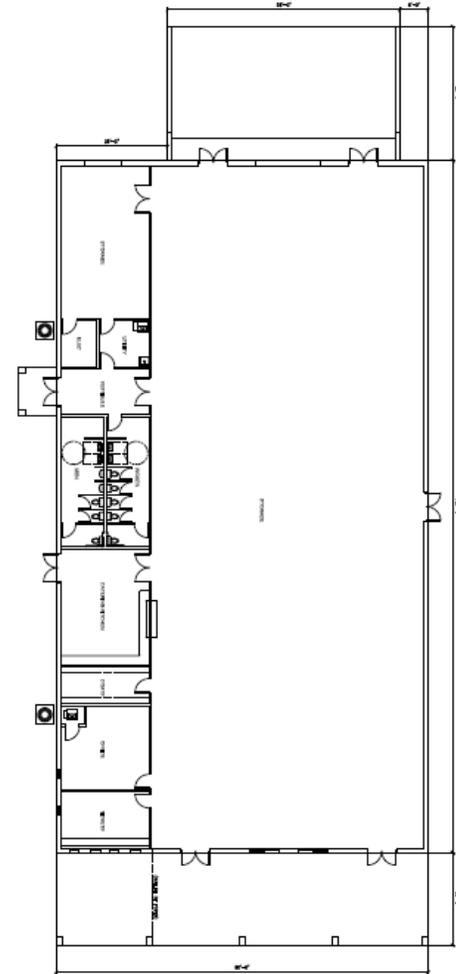
2<sup>nd</sup> Donation campaign to raise \$350,000 Started 12-1-25

First rental July 26, 2026, County Fair

Expected rental cost per day \$3000 plus utilities



1. 12,000 sq Feet
2. 9000 sq feet meeting space
3. Dining capacity 600+
4. Catering Kitchen
5. Restrooms accessible from outside Hall locked
6. Main Gate Ticketing windows
7. **No Weapons past entry Doors**



## Who are the layers controlling your project and the delays

1. Local Zoning approval for demolition
2. Local Zoning approval for new build
3. County Building Department
4. The U.S. Soil and Water Conservation Service (Water Runoff Controls)
5. Sanitary Sewer authority
6. Fresh water Supply authority
7. Demands for structural experts types of construction that county inspectors are not proficient in.





Front entrance Ticket windows x 6, 2 decorative garage doors for fair entrance, exit vendor load-in, plenty of room for bag check security. 2 sets entry doors for rentals  
Large store front will be 10x 15 LED Digital Programed Sign wall





# Mercer County Fairgrounds Expansion



The Project: Market Hall & Grand Event Center



Planning Started 09.2019



Intent: To create an additional venue in the area capable of accommodating 700 or more guests – a versatile facility designed to host a wide range of events. This project aims to enhance local tourism and generate a positive economic impact for the region. In our area the average day visitor spends \$124.00 on day trips while an overnight visitor spends \$400.00

# The Road Map

## Market Hall (14,000 sq ft)

- Old County Highway Department Building – Transform into a rental venue suited for weddings, business meetings, fundraising events, and much more.
- Worked with an architect from start to finish. We had multiple primes and bid each out individually in effort to work with as many local contractors as possible. Bids were requested from our local sponsors.
- A local contractor has donated his services as the General Contractor to help oversee the project. His business is not doing any of the work, but he is assisting in coordinating all the contractors working on the project.
- Market Hall held it's first event in March of 2023.

## Grand Event Center (70,000 sq ft – Phase 1)

- At the conclusion of Market Hall construction, we started working with Priefert out of Texas. They specialize in designing event facilities. They reviewed our goals, budget, and worked with a local architect to give us a layout that allowed us to phase the project.
- Design Build – local contractors/sponsors interested in the project were asked to review the engineer's designs and then make suggestions before state prints were submitted. By doing this we did not over design the project and made it more cost effective.
- Again, our local contractor is acting as the G.C. and coordinating the construction.

# Funding

## Market Hall: \$2 Million

- Fully funded.
- Gap loan obtained to cover the 5-year commitments.
- Grants

## Grand Event Center: \$4 Million

- Phase 1 is fully funded
- Gap loan obtained to cover the 5-year commitments.
- Grants
- Interior needs are being fundraised – items needed to hold the 2026 Fair
- Fundraising is underway for Phase 2 & 3



# Roadblocks & Layers Controlling Project

Roadblocks

Gas line

Funding & working with a budget

Tariffs

We don't typically run into roadblocks because the instant a problem arises, someone locally helps to overcome the problem. Our community works together for the betterment of the area.

Layers  
Controlling  
Project

State Inspector

Fire Marshall

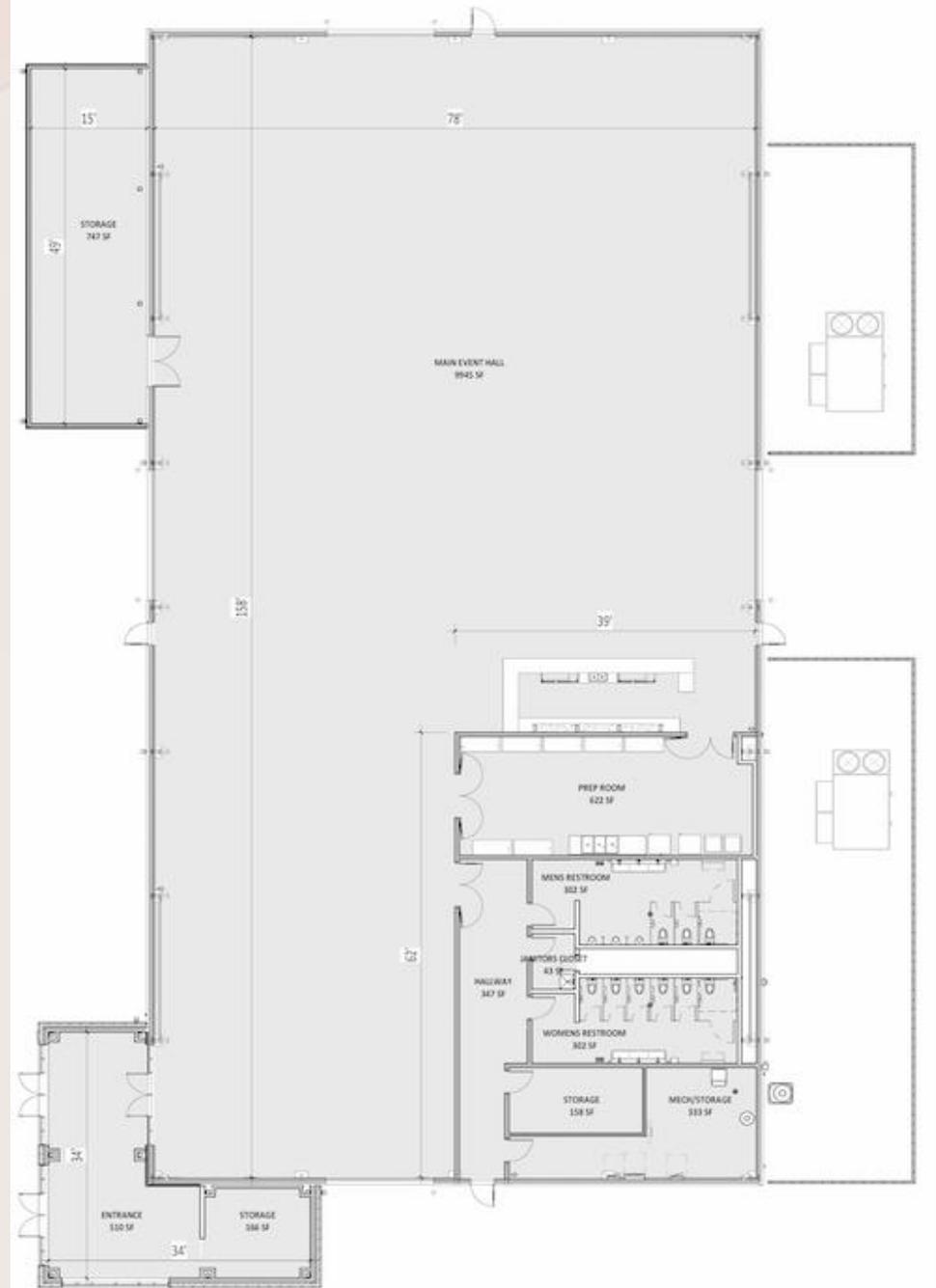
Engineer

Electrical Department

Gas Company

Water Department

# Market Hall Blueprint



# Market Hall Progress Photos





# Grand Event Center Progress Photos

