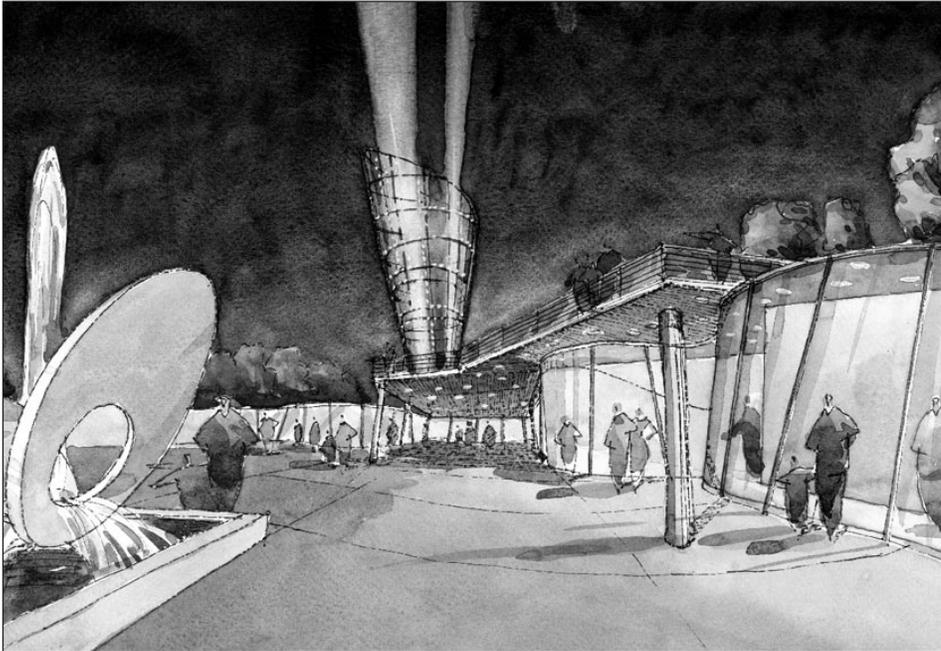


Looking Forward: Windsor's Riverfront Vision Takes Shape

By Kevin Alexander



Celestial Beacon brings attention to the night sky and the place of human activity in the universe.

When the City of Windsor Council unanimously adopted a 25-year implementation plan for Windsor's Central Riverfront on September 5, 2000, the long-held dreams of residents for creating a continuous riverfront open space network moved a step closer to reality (see Ontario Planning Journal, Vol. 15, No. 2). The plan contains guiding principles that will drive future design and construction decisions. This will be the first amendment to the official plan in the New Year.

The Central Riverfront Implementation Plan (CRIP) satisfies phases 1 and 2 of the federal and provincial environmental assessment requirements and ties together park spaces not yet to be developed.

Consultation Process showed that Windsorites care

Windsor's riverfront plays a big part in how Windsorites define their city. To ensure a high-quality planning and design document suitable for expressing this identity, the City invited four teams to participate in a design charrette held in August 1999, for which each team was given an honorarium. The results were circulated to Council, community stakeholders and interest groups.

The design team of Cochrane Brook Planning & Urban Design (now Brook McIlroy Inc.) and the MBTW Group was ultimately selected from among the four teams, to develop the CRIP. Their work structured the experience of the riverfront

around a series of "beacons" tying the eastern (Old Walkerville) and western (Old Sandwich Towne) trailheads together as a cohesive whole. The design of each beacon includes transparent, vertical elements that form a pattern of visible landmarks along the riverfront. Extensive public consultation assisted in the development of the guiding principles.

In October, 1999, the City hosted "Riverwalk", a community event celebrating Windsor's acquisition of the riverfront lands. Over 6000 people attended this event, which won the Festival Ontario award for community participation. Riverwalk offered an opportunity for hundreds of participants to view the design concepts developed during the charrette. Throughout October the design proposals were on display in key locations throughout the city, including Devonshire Mall.

In May last year, the final draft was completed, sent to council and tabled for 30 days as part of the EA process. Once again the final draft was available for public review, and people were asked to comment by July 7. The extensive public input ensured that the final plan received widespread public support.

Riverfront Design focuses on Beacons

The linking design elements include the beacons, circulation, routes, woven into historical narratives, and urban design amenities such as lighting, seating, and walkways.

The Beacons: Five beacons are proposed which explore themes intended to provoke contemplation of time: past, present and future, and to provide a series of destinations where hospitality services such as washrooms, refreshment and information services are located.



Beacons along the water. Collectively, the Beacons create the Central Riverfront's primary orientation system and identity feature

Heritage narratives are expressed through signage, art, interpretation, signs, gardens; collectively, these elements will engage the riverfront visitor; and help to bring history alive, through touch, sound and visual sequences. These elements will serve as excellent vehicles for community involvement and stewardship. Such elements include:

Interpretive Wall: a low linear wall to run parallel to the riverwalk pathway; it will be a gathering place, providing seating, fountains, a water trough, planters, lighting and waste containers.

Circulation Routes: a system that includes Riverside Drive as a scenic drive and pedestrian promenade, the riverfront "Riverwalk" promenade, and a continuous

recreationway (walk/cycle/trail). The east-west pedestrian circulation system feeds back into the neighbourhoods to the south through a series of linear "fingers."

Signage System: to guide people through the various attractions along the riverfront, and help interpret Windsor's rich river-related cultural history.

Urban Design Amenities: lighting, seating, banners, telephones, drinking fountains, safety/interpretive handrails, bike racks and other elements geared for pedestrian comfort and year-round enjoyment. This consistent design approach will help link the various riverfront attractions together.

The City of Windsor's dreams and aspirations are embodied in the community's

vision of a publicly accessible and extensively usable riverfront. This vision will link the Detroit River, the lifeline of past, present, and future generations to the natural environment. This environment has played an integral role in the culture and settlement of this area. The CRIP ensures that this environment and culture continues and its dreams and vision are upheld for generations to come.

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