

*Erie Street Plaza Competition Summary
and
Frequently Asked Questions
June 12, 2006*

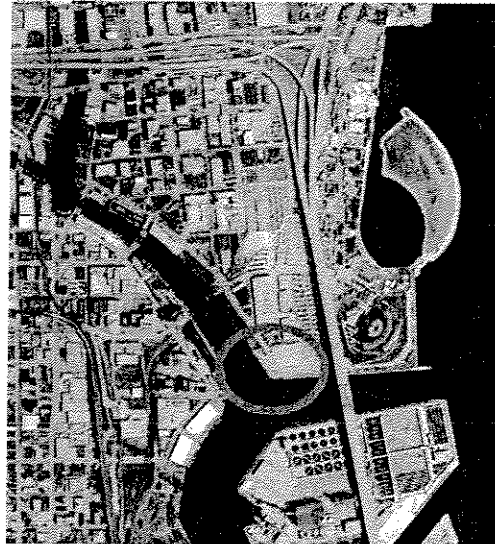
The Third Ward Comprehensive Area Plan, prepared in conjunction with area residents and businesses identifies the Erie Street Plaza as an important open space within the Third Ward and an opportunity to increase public access to Milwaukee's Riverfront and Harborfront. The Third Ward Comprehensive Area Plan was approved and adopted by the Common Council June, 2005.

In order to develop the site as a significant open space befitting the high design standards of the Third Ward, DCD held a major design competition. Of the thirty-seven international responses received, ten firms were selected to come to Milwaukee to interview. Five firms were then selected to complete schematic designs for the plaza.

A jury of five nationally recognized architects, landscape architects and artists was invited to select a winning design from the five finalists.

The winning design team consists of Stoss Landscape Urbanism, a landscape architecture firm from Boston, MA, Vetter Denk Architects from Milwaukee and GAS engineering from Milwaukee.

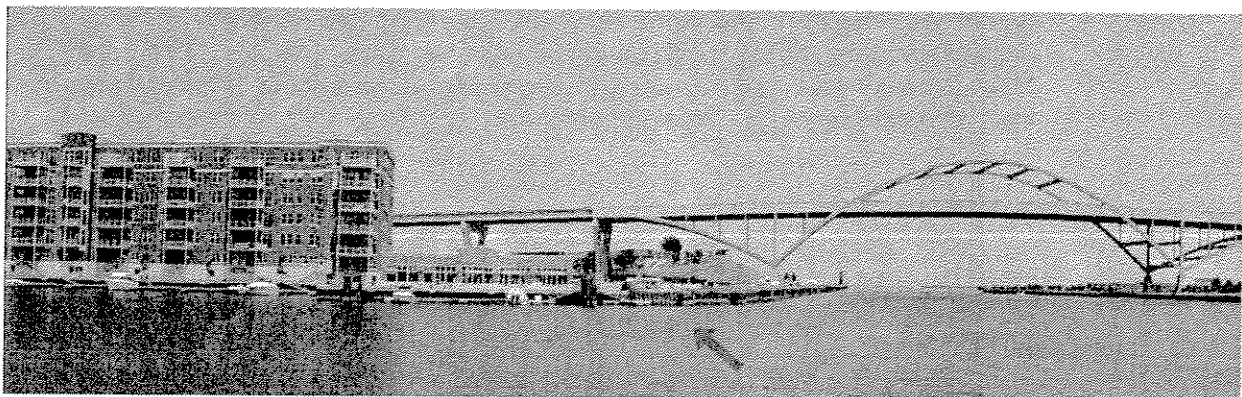
As DCD staff has shared the winning design with various stakeholder groups, several questions have arisen. The following page is a compilation of those questions and answers.



Aerial photograph of the site and surroundings



Oblique photo looking northeast



Panoramic view of the site from across the Milwaukee River

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *Planning, Competition Process and Funding –*

- *Who decided there should be a park/plaza here?*

The Third Ward Comprehensive Area Plan, prepared in conjunction with area businesses and residents and adopted by the Common Council in June 2005, identifies the Erie Street Plaza as an important open space within the Third Ward.

- *How is funding of the plaza related to funding of Erie Street improvements?*

The projects are separate projects and construction for BOTH projects is budgeted in the TIF plan. \$1.2 million for Erie Street improvements and up to \$1 million for creation of Erie Street Plaza.

- *What is the status of Erie Street improvements?*

The Department of Public Works advises that the paving and landscaping for Erie Street will be completed before Summerfest, 2006. The lighting will be installed by the end of the year.

- *What is the cost of the plaza and what have comparable projects cost?*

The estimated construction cost is \$675,000. However, construction plus fees, etc. is approximately \$850,000. A comparable project, the Mason Street Plaza, cost \$573, 565 in 1995. Assuming a 5%/year inflation factor, the current cost would be \$1,081,542.

- *Who was involved in the competition process?*

The Department of City Development organized the process with the assistance of a nationally recognized competition consulting firm who has worked on both large and small-scale competitions. Based on public input expressed during the Third Ward Comprehensive Area Plan, DCD developed the project goals, timeline and detailed site descriptions for the finalists.

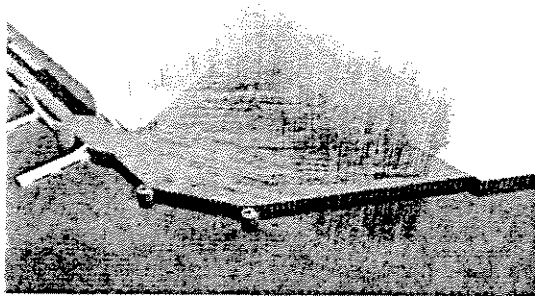
After the five finalists were chosen, a stakeholder workshop was held at the Italian Community Center to allow invited stakeholders to voice their concerns and ideas for the development of the site.

Invited stakeholders included: elected officials, Historic Third Ward Association (HTWA), BID representatives, the adjoining property developer, HTWA architectural review board representatives, Lake Michigan Fisherman's Association representatives, Summerfest representative, DNR, MMSD, Port of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County parks department, Department of Public Works staff, Department of City Development staff.

2. Design –

- *Why was this design chosen?*

The proposed “sustainable garden” will become significant as a local public park. It will resonate with, and complement the other uses and features of the Third Ward. Over time it will become a landmark that will not only appeal to the Third Ward neighborhood, but also to persons from around the City and the region.



The solution works with large numbers of people as well as just one person or a few. As a social place it has high degrees of flexibility – both for different seasons as well as over the years – it has the potential for change and adaptation as this part of the Third Ward changes.



This landscape will be a destination place in the Third Ward – a park or garden for the neighborhood. Because of the unique environmental features the plaza will also be a destination spot for persons in the larger community and region interested in ecological and environmental issues.

errie Street Plaza

Of the proposals submitted, the selected plan appears to have the best chances of being constructed within a reasonable timeframe and within the project budget. The project also will produce minimal intrusion on surrounding sites.

As the design development process proceeded, the Department of Natural Resources has reviewed and approved the project. The revised cost estimates for the 100% bid set are within budget and arranged so that a number of elements could be deducted and added if the bids are higher or lower than anticipated.

- *Is the edge of the site designed to be conducive for fishing?*

The best place for fishing is at the end of the eastern boardwalk. It includes spaces for handicap-accessible fishing as well. The western boardwalk at the river is more congested given the immediate adjacency of the restaurant's outdoor seating. In the plaza and wetland areas, some paving extends near to the shore, but it is interwoven with the plantings—thus we are not designating this edge as fishing area, but imagine it could be used as such, informally.

- *Will there be a loss of parking in the area?*

There will continue to be parking on Erie Street along the edge of the plaza. Parking is currently not allowed on the Erie Street Plaza site, thus there will not be a loss of parking.

- *What affect will the slits cut into the dock wall have on its stability?*
None. The structural engineers on the design team have been involved in the discussions from the start and have approved the modification. The wall is held in place by underground tiebacks that extend about 40-45' back from the water's edge, where they are anchored into a concrete anchor wall. According to the structural engineers, nothing we are doing will affect the structural integrity of the wall.

3. *Bamboo, steam pits and native marsh plantings -*

- *Will bamboo grow here, specifically with the cold winter winds in this location? Will it need to be braced when it gets very tall?*

Certain species of bamboo will grow in our climate. The bamboo species chosen for the project are the *phyllostachys vivax aurocaulis* and the *phyllostachys bisetii*. The two species chosen to grow on the site are listed to have a hardiness rating of -15 °F and -25 °F respectively. Through lots of research and conversations with bamboo growers in the region, we have learned that both are known to be very cold hardy and able to thrive in a zone 5 region where Milwaukee is located, even through cold winters. In general, bamboos are a very resilient plant, and the extensive rhizome structure is able to rejuvenate itself every spring. To aid in the plant's strength, we are taking measures to assure that the ground where the rhizomes will be planted will be protected with a layer of mulch to help keep the rhizomes healthy. These species' aesthetics also work well with the overall design of the site, with distinguishable colors of the culms, and heights at an average of 28 feet when full grown. They also will not need to be braced when very tall. Bamboo culms exhibit plenty of strength and have a tendency to grow straight without additional support structures.

- *Is the steam necessary to grow bamboo in this location?*

Steam is not necessary for the bamboo to grow at this location. However, the added heat and moisture will help to provide a microclimate to maintain the foliage of the bamboo during the winter months and encourage the plant to grow taller. The purpose of the steam is also to provide warm areas in winter to encourage year-round use of the space.

- *Will the bamboo be easily damaged, and what happens if it is damaged?*

Bamboo is a very resilient and fast growing plant, being able to reach its maximum height in a 60-day growth period. Should there be damage to the plant above ground, it does not have to be replaced. It is able to regenerate itself fully by the next growing season.

If the rhizomes underground are damaged or cut, the culm associated with that rhizome will discontinue to grow. Cutting the rhizomes is actually a method bamboo growers use in order to maintain the perimeter of spread for the plant.

- *How will the steam pits be operated and when will the steam be on/off?*
The steam pits can be timed to turn on automatically when the temperature falls below 50 degrees (the exact temperature can be adjusted); this is when the steam effect will be most visible. In addition, the entire system can be shut down so it only operates in colder months (October through March, for instance) and during certain times of the day.
- *What is the water source for the steam and is it safe to be aerosolized?*
After exploring several options, the design and engineering team decided to utilize groundwater for the steam, as it is an abundant resource easily available at the site. Tests and analysis by the city's environmental engineers reveal no threat to human health. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has reviewed and approved the system.
- *How marshy will planting area be for the marsh planting?*
The marsh area has been designed to collect much of the site's stormwater, thus eliminating the need for irrigation. The soil in the marsh will be capable of holding a significant amount of water, while excess water will puddle on the planting areas. In extreme conditions, the flooded marsh will overflow to the river via the slots in the bulkhead wall. Paving paths within the marsh will allow for access even when it is damp.

4. Maintenance –

- *What are the costs of long term maintenance of the plaza, bamboo and marsh areas?*
Long-term maintenance costs will be comparable with other landscape areas found throughout the City. DPW has developed a maintenance estimate based on the maintenance manual prepared by the design team. The annual cost to maintain the plaza is likely to be between \$5,000 and \$20,000, depending upon circumstances each year. Maintenance costs for the first year the plaza is open will be included in the construction contract. If sufficient funds are available in the project budget, an additional two years of maintenance will be funded in the same way. In that event, funds for maintenance outside of the current project budget will not have to be found until 2010.
- *Who will maintain all aspects of the plaza (bamboo, lighting, benches, clean up etc.)?*
Currently the City and BID #2 have an arrangement where the BID maintains some of the City owned segments of the Historic Third Ward riverwalk. To maintain this plaza, we will recommend that the City enter into an agreement with BID 2 to encompass the maintenance of the riverwalk segments and this plaza with appropriate funding.
- *What will prevent trash from accumulating in the marsh grasses? And who will be responsible for clean-up?*
As in any open space, trash may accumulate from time to time. A routine clean-up program will be incorporated into the maintenance agreement.

- *How resilient are the benches to graffiti and what is the procedure for removing graffiti?*

The benches will be constructed of a fiberglass material. There are several products that can be used to simply and effectively remove graffiti from fiberglass.

5. Public Health and Safety -

- *In winter, how much steam will condense and form ice on the ground, posing a potential hazard? Will the steam cause a visual block?*

The steam is intended to produce a soft mist. It will not diminish visibility. The locations of the steam pits are generally within or adjacent to planting areas. If the steam condenses on the ground surface, it will occur on the grassy or planted areas rather than on the walkway surface. *The temperature of the heaters is also adjustable, in order to calibrate an appropriate balance between visual effect, warmth, rate of condensation, etc.*

- *Will the marsh grasses and warmth generated from the steam in winter provide a desirable habitat for rodents?*

The individual planting areas are very small and intended to be planted with perennial plantings that will change with the seasons. Without the presence of a food source, it is unlikely that the plaza plantings will attract additional rodents. The steam pits will be constructed of concrete with insulation along the outside edge to prevent heating of the surrounding soils, thus not an attraction to burrowing rodents.

- *Will the bamboo grove be so dense, that it provides a 'hiding place' for vagrants?*

Bamboo grows from individual stalks in the ground, with fronds or leaves on the upper portion of the plant. The spacing between stalks is too tight to allow for people to squeeze in between, yet it allows for clear views through the groves. Thus, the entire plaza is visible from the street and will be able to be easily patrolled. The other advantage, of course, is that the activity at the adjacent restaurant—both in its dining room and on its outdoor seating areas—will tend to discourage vagrants from gathering here.

- *Will the warm steam pits be an attraction in the winter for homeless?*

The steam pits can be programmed with a timer to only emit heat at certain times of the day/night. In the event that loitering would occur here, it will be handled in the same manner as it is throughout the Third Ward.

- *Are there railings along the entire edge of the river and if not why not?*

Full protective guardrails are typically required by code for elevation drops over 18", but the consistent exception is when that drop occurs at the water's edge. The rationale is two-fold: water is an "obvious danger," where people naturally pay closer attention to their footing and to the safety of themselves and those around them; guardrails at the water's edge would make these edges impractical, even dangerous, from a boating use standpoint, obstructing access from land to water and vice-versa.

Yet this does not give us a free pass—we have to be vigilant to make the edge obvious and to protect the public in especially heavily traveled areas. Thus, typically, a range of measures are put in place that act as layered warnings the closer one gets to the river. Many such measures have already been implemented along the riverwalk, from steps to benches to rails (but not full guardrails).

Here, the design team has worked closely with the city to include a wide range of protective and warning measures:

- rails, where present, are pulled back from the edge of the water by 3'; in order to get past/around/under them, one would have to make a deliberate effort to do so
- at the boardwalk edges, where we anticipate the greatest numbers of people walking by, we've included a 42" high rails with intermediate horizontal rails every 9" or so; these rails then extend as top rails into the plaza and planting areas
- the rails end when the new grades are lowered behind the bulkhead wall, allowing the wall itself to act as the warning system
- a significant portion of the water's edge is planted with either bamboo or marsh plants, which themselves will keep people away from the edge
- three concrete steps / seatwalls, of varying height up to 18", are integrated within the southern half of the site, establishing a warning system by virtue of their physicality—how they make obvious one's approach to the water by the fact that one has to step down three times

6. *Flooding –*

- *If the plaza water is allowed to enter the plaza, is there a potential of water reaching the building?*

NO. Elevations are only being lowered in a small area of the site, away from the building. The proposed boardwalk extension will begin at the elevation of the existing boardwalk at the southwest corner of the site and rise across the south face of the restaurant deck to meet the existing sidewalk along Erie Street; to do so, grade is being raised along this edge by approximately one foot. These measures alone would protect the building from any flooding in the center, lower area of the plaza.

In addition, the site will not flood regularly from the river—in fact, it is anticipated to be a VERY rare event, coinciding only with the highest extreme of the lake's 20-year fluctuation cycle.

