

Merit Award

Bird Houk Collaborative

Category: Landscape Architecture Conceptual

Client: The Stonehenge Company

Graphics: Paul Kelley



Plan

Port Clinton is a small city on Lake Erie known as the “Walleye Capital of the World”. With a seasonal economy dependent on tourism and less than 6500 residents to support it, the town struggles financially. The locals joke that their town has become a “parking lot” for surrounding Lake Erie islands such as Put-In-Bay.

In 2006, the city qualified for a \$2.5 million grant to build a 170 dock transient marina, allowing boaters from nearby Toledo and Cleveland to visit. Realizing they could leverage this into much needed economic development; the city issued an RFP. They would contribute a valuable park site strategically located between the lake and the historic downtown, and wanted a development plan that would revitalize the city.

The landscape architects interviewed local business owners and city leaders and became familiar with the town. They were convinced that to be successful, the development program needed to be based on the following goals:

- Economic Sustainability- a mixed-use development requiring minimal amounts of public financing would be more readily absorbed into the marketplace, be more resilient to market downturns and grow the tax base by adding new citizens, businesses and jobs
- Public Accessibility- although parts of the development need to be private, the waterfront should be completely accessible and pedestrian oriented, with an area designed for festivals, boat shows and other community events
- Authentic and Contextual- development should complement the “Main Street” character of the historic downtown, link to the wetlands/beaches and create year round family oriented activities that will stimulate the downtown
- Public Value- create a unique waterfront experience capable of attracting visitors and office workers and provide year round activities that represent a worthy tradeoff for the lost parkland

The proposal anticipates private investment of approximately \$120M, and is designed to minimize Port Clinton’s financial obligations. The economic model proposed would yield over \$3.75M annually, with a \$2.0M surplus available for public infrastructure improvements near the parcel and in the historic downtown. The creation of multiple long-term revenue streams coupled with diversity of uses ensures the development will be sustainable. We estimate the development will create approximately 650 jobs at buildout.

Besides the new transient marina, the project includes 300 private slips, 318 owner-occupied residential units, 104,000 sf retail and 60,000 sf office space. Public amenities include a riverfront promenade, amphitheater, maritime village & museum, fishing piers, stocked fishing pond and a re-vegetated wetland with non-impact walkways. The promenade, framed by 2-4 story buildings with retail shops and restaurants/cafes, links the new marina with the historic downtown.

The City has interest from developers interested in building a “theme oriented” water park hotel on this site. While not relying on public funding, these projects are trendy, contribute little to the public realm and typically fail to create long-term sustainable growth. This proposal shows how landscape architects can help towns with economic development because they understand how to create synergy and value through place making in a way that complements and enhances local character.

Plan: This shows the marina at near capacity. The 170 slip transient marina is on the left side, and connects to a pier with new residential condominiums flanking it. The private marina is to the right, and a clubhouse facility anchors the marina and can be used by visitors as well as members.

Figure A: This sketch shows the character we envision for this transitional space that connects the downtown to the Riverfront Promenade. Styled after a fishing village not unlike Nantucket, this area contains the historic Waterworks building that we hope to restore into a public museum with the projected surplus TIF revenue.

Figure B: Another view of the new marina; broad boardwalks and promenades are proposed around the entire pier, making this a very unique and accessible waterfront. A mixture of first floor retail and civic uses would frame the walkways, creating interest and linking visitors to the historic downtown as well.

Figure C: This new marina would allow boaters from all over the region to visit Port Clinton, which is something that could spark economic revitalization in the town. Residential condominiums are proposed here to take advantage of excellent lake and river views, and public fishing piers are proposed on the south side of those buildings.

Figure D: This sketch shows the importance of connecting the new marina to the historic downtown. Even though much of the new development proposed will be private, it will be mixed uses that frame this critical public gathering space for the community. Note the amphitheater in the center and the Maritime Village to the upper right of this view.



Figure A



Figure B



Figure C

Figure D

