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# 2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD



## The CityDeck

Chris Reed, President, Stoss Landscape Urbanism



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# 2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DATA



# PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name The CityDeck Location \_\_\_\_\_ City Green Bay State WI

Owner The City of Green Bay

Project Use(s) Waterfront Park, Public Open Space, Historic Trail, Docks, Events Space

Project Size CityDeck: 2.5 acres; Fox River Plan additional 2.5 acres Total Development Cost \$12 million

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) \_\_\_\_\_

Date Initiated 2005 Percent Completed by December 1, 2014 100%

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) November 2012 Project Website (if appropriate) greenbaywi.gov/CityDeck

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates \_\_\_\_\_

## Application submitted by:

Name Chris Reed Title President

Organization Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Address 423 W Broadway #304 City/State/Zip Boston, MA 02127

Telephone ( 617 ) 464-1140 Fax ( 617 ) 464-1142

E-mail cr@stoss.net Website (if appropriate) www.stoss.net

## Perspective Sheets:

Organization	Name	E-mail
Public Agencies <u>The City of Green Bay, Office of the Mayor</u>	<u>James J. Schmitt</u>	<u>jschmitt@greenbaywi.gov</u>
Architect/Designer <u>Stoss Landscape Urbanism</u>	<u>Chris Reed</u>	<u>cr@stoss.net</u>
Developer <u>Vetter Denk</u>	<u>John Vetter</u>	<u>jvetter@vetterdenk.com</u>
Professional Consultant <u>GRAEF</u>	<u>Jeff Rosner</u>	<u>jeff.rosner@graef-usa.com</u>
Community Group <u>Downtown Green Bay, Inc.</u>	<u>Jeff Mirkes</u>	<u>JeffM@downtowngreebay.com</u>
Other _____		

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

- Direct Mailing     Direct Email     Previous Selection Committee member     Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Online Notice     Previous RBA entrant     Professional Organization
- Social Media     Bruner/Loeb Forum

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Signature  Digitally signed by Chris Reed Date December 9, 2014

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**2015**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**PROJECT**  
**AT-A-GLANCE**



# PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

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This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

The CityDeck  
Project Name

Address City/State/ZIP Green Bay, WI 54301

1. Give a brief overview of the project. Approximately 500 words.

The CityDeck, the heart of a \$250 million multi-phase redevelopment centered on this new linear riverfront open space, reconnects the people of Green Bay with the Fox River. This newly revitalized riverfront, one of the region's most precious natural resources and the heart of Green Bay, a small city in the Upper MidWest of the United States, is a place for families to mix with workers and residents, kick back to enjoy a performance or the sunset, quickly becoming the city's community front porch.

The CityDeck, a quarter mile long, 2.5 acre linear open space situated between two bridges runs along the edge of the Fox River, animated by residents, workers, and visitors, connecting once again, the city to the river and increasing opportunities for social life with festivals, concerts, and everyday events in all seasons. The deck creates both a flexible space for civic gatherings and has framed opportunities for new mixed-use development, infusing downtown with new life, 24/7.

Planning for the project began in 2004 with the call for a revitalized waterfront springing up from community planning organizations as well as from the office of the newly-elected mayor. Prior to the project's start, the surrounding area had turned its back to the river, replacing important downtown industry with infrastructural barriers and abandoned warehouses. Adjacent parcels were empty or in use as parking lots; nearby downtown parcels were also empty or utilized only during business hours. Unsurprisingly, there was little social or civic life, and little reason to visit; the elevated walk along the existing river bulkhead walls prevented any direct access down to the river—or up to the city from recreational boats.

To address these challenges, the design team tasked itself with identifying broader urban design strategies for new open space and development along the river. Planning and urban design for the project, encompassing 5 acres of waterfront and 8 square blocks on each side of the river sought to reconnect city streets and create new development parcels where symbiotic programmatic relationships between proposed buildings and open space would reinforce one another. Mixed use development projects were conceived in concert with the new open spaces including a commercial building, new waterfront apartments and condos, the new Children's Museum of Green Bay, new office space, and a host of new restaurant and retail spaces that open directly onto the CityDeck and the Fox River. In addition, the city has been able to attract two new corporate headquarters to relocate from outside the city, expand the Green Bay KI Convention Center, and a new boutique hotel, and many new restaurants and retail development. All development was initiated in close collaboration with City leaders and various local, regional, state, and federal regulatory agencies—as well as with the broader public.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.) Approximately 500 words.

The CityDeck and Green Bay downtown redevelopment effort represented a truly innovative approach to community revitalization, bringing together city and government public agencies and institutions; private developers and owners; and non-profit and community organizers, to better the City of Green Bay and improve the lives of those who live, work, and play downtown and along the river.

Planning along Downtown and the Fox River, as well as the design and construction of The CityDeck, began in 2004 and continued through the completion of The CityDeck in 2012, a period of 8 years when many American cities, especially the post-industrial cities of the Mid-West, were experiencing severe financial contraction, population shrinkage, and divestment from businesses and institutions. Development in Green Bay, however, continues today as families, institutions, and businesses are attracted to the new liveliness of downtown and the riverfront. Public programming, taken on by a cooperative agreement between the City and community groups like Downtown Green Bay, whose involvement in the project began early in the process. In the early stages of planning, Downtown Green Bay worked cooperatively to activate the riverfront with food, music, pop-up markets, and events, to give people a taste of what was to come, while also inviting and gauging feedback, information that was passed on to the city, to developers, and to designers. Today, they continue to provide activities, events, and investment along the river, providing a reason for people to come, not just for an afternoon, but to settle downtown.

The City and various non-profit civic organizations have taken to programming the space almost year-round. St Patrick's Day and Christmas Parades end or pass by here; the Cellcom Green Bay Marathon traverses the length of the project. "Fridays on the Fox" (summer entertainment and music events), "Dine on the Deck" (regular Wednesday lunch events), Irish dance troupes, dueling pianos, at least one wedding, and an Elvis sighting are among the activities that continue to attract crowds. Yoga, a winter ice skating rink, café and restaurant terraces, and a full year-round program of new events—tailgating, arts, 4th July, etc.

The powerful partnerships developed between organizations like Downtown Green Bay, private developers, city officials at the highest levels, and the support of the community, The CityDeck has proven the effectiveness of cooperative investment in civic and community process, illuminating opportunities that cities, designers, and developers across the country can employ.

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# 2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION



# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project? Approximately 500 words.

The CityDeck and Downtown redevelopment started from a desire to create a better place, a better community for families and kids at the heart of the old city. This desire was led by Green Bay resident Jeff Witte, who saw an opportunity to introduce planners, designers, and developers who had been successfully revitalizing waterfronts, to the newly elected city government, opening a dialogue on the importance of place-making in Green Bay. The City, led by newly-elected mayor and former businessman John Schmitt—who had established an agenda of strong community and family values—saw an opportunity to create a vibrant place for residents and visitors along the riverfront and within the historic center of the city. The common values centered on improving the lives of families by encouraging them to settle, not in the suburbs, but within a vibrant, revitalized downtown, ignited a common passion.

Though there was interest in economic revitalization—the modest Mid-Western city had experienced decades of decline—there was an understanding by all involved that a cultural revitalization focused on community and social space was not only necessary, but central to the endeavor. Furthermore, the city wanted to instill community pride in its industrial heritage, its riverfront, and its downtown. With this in mind, the riverfront was envisioned, not as property to be exploited, but as a vibrant place to live, work, and play—and incorporating the interests of residential, commercial, retail, institutional, and public open space uses to create a 24/7, 365 days, four season destination and home.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project? Approximately 500 words.

The CityDeck exists in what was historically the heart of Green Bay, and of northern Wisconsin. The thriving riverfront was home to a combination of small commercial industries, residential neighborhoods, and recreational waterfront activities. Meat packing and paper mills shared the riverfront with boating and fishing. By the 1980s, however, the city had turned its back on the river. Parking lots sprawled across the river's edge. A downtown shopping mall replaced locally owned shops and destroyed the historic grid and accessible scale.

And though the city continued to grow modestly for the next twenty years, empty warehouses, the now-failing mall, empty parking lots, and buildings with backs toward the river became the prevailing character of the city. Dead ends created by the sprawling mall and parking lots, disrupted the feel of the city and made it uninviting. Though boating continued along the river, downtown Green Bay offered no way to get down to the river, no way to get up to the city for boaters, and nothing to attract residents or visitors, with no activity along the waterfront. The site, and more generally, downtown Green Bay, were socially and economically dead.

In early 2004, the demolition of a parking garage urged city leaders to think about opportunities for new commercial and residential development. Introduction to residents like Jeff Witte encouraged them also to consider ways of creating new open space and cultural amenities. The effect of these considerations have reverberated throughout Green Bay, reigniting interest in the downtown, reintroducing the river to residents, and changing the lives not only those who live downtown, but those who visit, work, and play there.

Though only 60 feet wide, CityDeck's influence, through thoughtful planning, design, and development, has extended the impact of the project well into the core of downtown Green Bay. With new opportunity for activities along the waterfront, businesses, restaurants, developers, even the Children's Museum of Green Bay, have turned once again toward the river, feeding off of its energy and encouraging further development downtown. With growing interest in the city center, two national corporations were encouraged to build headquarters, replacing the failed mall and restoring the grid and character of the historic downtown. The convention center is currently undergoing expansion, bringing new events and activities to the city. Condo and apartment buildings, planned in close synchronization with The CityDeck have both improved on the opportunities for living in the city, but provided a first wave of renewed excitement.

Green Bay is a city of more than 100,000 people, many of whom had no opportunity, let alone desire, to come to the river. Summers bring Dine on the Deck, Fridays on the Fox, and Fire over the Fox. Each year, the St. Patrick's day parade marches along the river's edge. During falls, CityDeck hosts the Fall Fest, and winters bring ice skating. In 2012, it was estimated that over 120,000 people visited for any of the dozens of annual events along The CityDeck, and even more walked along the path daily, on their way to work, to a restaurant, theater event, or just to walk home as the sun sets.

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. Approximately 400 words.

Planning The CityDeck and developing the Fox River and Downtown Revitalization Plan was an intensive, multi-year community process, incorporating city officials, community planners, private developers, and most importantly, members of the community. The public was clamoring for this kind of project. Residents and business people showed up to City Council meetings to voice strong support and demand the council's support to move forward. Though it was important to all that the process involve the community in this public investment, the desires of the city government, planners, and designers, reflected in the pride and ownership displayed by the public, was key to guaranteeing the success of the project.

The project also involved extensive inter-agency coordination from local, state, and federal governments as well as full participation from the developer community. Owners of adjacent sites worked closely with the designers to coordinate seams, connections, shared uses, and symbiotic relationships between building and landscape, and to make the full plan work. Early coordination with Downtown Green Bay and other non-profit community planning organizations provided interim programming to help the community become excited about the project, and to help adjust the design to the needs of the community. Restaurants, apartments, and businesses were incorporated into the plans for the park and deck, maximizing opportunities for public engagement.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. Approximately 400 words.

The CityDeck utilized an innovative approach to financing that required no changes to residential taxes in the City of Green Bay, a goal that was important to reach during the period coinciding with the economic downturn of 2007. Funds were raised from state and federal grant programs, through Tax Increment Financing, as well as through private donation, a strategy that has proven successful as the project continues to gain support from the community and encourage development along the riverfront, and throughout downtown.

Total Funding Required \$12,000,000

Financial Resources:

Tax Increment Financing \$5,250,000

State & Federal Grants \$3,250,000

Private Community donations \$3,500,000

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? Approximately 400 words.

The story of Green Bay, a modest Mid-Western city of just over 100,000, is the story of many cities. The mistakes of 20th century industrial and urban planning had radically changed the face of the city. The process and collaboration of the city, planners, developers and designers repaired the mistakes of past decades, reestablishing frameworks for a vital downtown riverfront that celebrates the region's most precious natural resource. That this project, completed from 2004 to 2012, was accomplished during the heart of an economic recessions is a testament to the will of a city, and the innovative process of its proponents.

The project was supported by great leadership from the city's mayor, organizations like Downtown Green Bay, and businesses and entrepreneurs working downtown, and from the continued support of the public. Because of this, the project's character is unique to Green Bay, but its underlying principals could be shared by other cities, and communities. The investment the city and private developers together, provided around social and cultural values led to the revitalizing of a city's heart and of a vibrant waterfront.

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**2015**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**REPRESENTATIVE**  
**PERSPECTIVE**



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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name	Jeff Mirkes	Title	Executive Director
Organization	Downtown Green Bay, Inc.	Telephone	(920) 437-3423
Address	130 E. Walnut Street, Suite 501	City/State/ZIP	Green Bay, WI 54301
Fax ( )		E-mail	JeffM@downtowngreenbay.com

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Signature	Jeff Mirkes	Date	12/8/14
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Digitally signed by Jeff Mirkes  
 DN: cn=Jeff Mirkes, o=Downtown Green Bay, Inc., ou=Executive Director,  
 email=JeffM@downtowngreenbay.com, c=US  
 Date: 2014.12.09 10:54:20 -0600

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

Downtown Green Bay, Inc. (DGBI) is a Business Improvement District that works to improve and preserve the social and economic conditions in Downtown Green Bay through activation, development and beautification. DGBI is uniquely positioned to work as a marketing tool for developments, businesses and attractions like the CityDeck. DGBI was involved in marketing and promoting the CityDeck long before it was constructed and still works to market and promote today.

Prior to the start of construction DGBI was instrumental in advocating for the approval of the waterfront redevelopment plan in which with CityDeck was a significant component. DGBI shared the plans through "What's Up Downtown" a weekly e-newsletter, community presentations and more. The City of Green Bay partnered with DGBI to host "Good Morning Downtown," a presentation to introduce the community, City Council and media to the plan prior to the City Council meeting in which the Council approved the project and plan.

Throughout the construction DGBI was a marketing tool for the development. Staff photographed construction progress regularly and used social media, "What's Up Downtown" and the website to spread the excitement far and wide. DGBI worked with the City to ensure event logistics were considered in site development, knowing this new community asset would be largely popular for weddings, community celebrations and a variety of other events and activities.

Beyond promoting and advocating for the project DGBI staff planned key event series that would kick off the first year the CityDeck was open. The first was the grand opening of the CityDeck. The event immediately followed the AT&T Green Bay Holiday Parade. Nearly 10,000 people attended the celebration. The atmosphere was electric. High School bands, a dedication and the outstanding, high-energy UW-Wisconsin Badger Band all put the exclamation point on what our community was going to make of this new amenity. Since the opening, DGBI has coordinated around 20 events annually on the CityDeck with approximately 38,000 attendees yearly. As Downtown Green Bay has continued to grow and develop, in large part due to the development of the CityDeck, the staff have witnessed a growth in other community organization's interest in the CityDeck. In 2014 alone, 75 total events were held on the CityDeck with approximately 200,000 attendees.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

One of the major issues concerning this project was how to get something so substantial approved for Downtown Green Bay, when no one wanted to invest in Downtown. There were very few developments happening in the downtown and many community members believed it should have been written off. With the Mayor's leadership and the strong team, including Stoss Landscape Architects, the City of Green Bay City Council, Redevelopment Authority, Planning and Economic Development Departments, community organizations like DGBI and leaders throughout the community, who advocated for and moved this initiative forward. The CityDeck has clearly become a key destination and venue for the Green Bay community to celebrate, gather, experience arts and culture and reconnect with a vibrant and robust downtown.

# COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

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3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

Like many port and working river communities, Green Bay turned its back to the river over the years. The waterfront was used as a place for industry and parking cars. A rusty dock wall was all that separated the city from the river on the east side. The Fox River was seen as nothing more than a polluted river with no reason to get too close. In addition, during the 1960s most of Green Bay's downtown was demolished to make way for the Port Plaza Mall. Just 30 years later the mall failed like many others in downtowns across the country. For nearly two decades, downtown was not the place to be. In 2003, Mayor Jim Schmitt was elected and put the focus back into the heart of the city. In 2005, the Waterfront Plan was adopted that included development of the CityDeck. Today, Green Bay is connecting with the Fox River in ways not seen in decades. DGBI believes strongly that the CityDeck has been the catalyst for all of this.

The CityDeck has been hugely beneficial to the community. Not only do 75 events with approximately 200,000 attendees take place, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands more people visit the CityDeck throughout the year for a variety of reasons. Employees exercise over the lunch hour or stroll down for a bite to eat in the warm sun. Strollers enjoy evening sunsets with friends and loved ones. It's a place for gathering for any reason. The CityDeck is growing into a "must-stop" for wedding and prom pictures. It's where parents and grandparents take children to squeal and giggle all summer long in the splash pad and more recently it's becoming the place to locate or grow a business.

Since the development of the CityDeck, Downtown Green Bay has experienced a renaissance of new activity. Nearly \$200 million in development projects are under construction or on the way, almost 200 events call Downtown Green Bay home, and close to 1.5 million people visit downtown annually for events and entertainment.

The riverfront office occupancy has boasted 6 of 7 offices with 100% occupancy. Residential occupancy along the waterfront hovers around 100% continuously. Some apartment complexes along the river have waitlists regularly. In addition, 210 new residential units are planned or under construction with 183 of the units on the CityDeck.

Green Bay is an entirely different community today than it was just five and ten years ago.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

Nothing worthwhile is ever easy. Quality projects within a community take time, compromise, collaboration and other resources are always required to come together to make a project happen. As any community takes on a particular initiative they weigh whether or not it is worthwhile. DGBI does not believe we would change the CityDeck process or project. Sure there are always tweaks that can be made and hindsight is always 20/20, but we believe we received the best outcome possible and now have an incredible community asset.

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**2015**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**PUBLIC AGENCY**  
**PERSPECTIVE**




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This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name	James J. Schmitt	Title	Mayor, Green Bay
Organization	City of Green Bay	Telephone	(920) 448-3005
Address	100 N Jefferson Street	City/State/ZIP	Green Bay, WI 54301
Fax	(920) 448-3081	E-mail	jimsc@greenbaywi.gov

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Signature  Date 12/9/14

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements). Approximately 400 words.

The City of Green Bay owns, maintains and manages the CityDeck as one of our 63 parks citywide. As the lead agency in the development of this public/private partnership project we rezoned the area to a Public Zoning District to preserve the area for public access. Additionally, the City of Green Bay assisted in the land division to ensure compliance with State and local codes, oversaw the site plan review process and participated in the overall design and functionality of CityDeck.

As a city set on the banks of a working river, staff worked closely with Stoss to accommodate an unobstructed shipping channel and maximize recreational life on the Fox River. All of this was accomplished on a narrow site while preserving the connection of the Fox River Recreational Trail. The vision for this project started with public input and the passion of our citizens to reengage with the waterfront in our downtown. It was clear early on that a simple 4 foot wide trail was not sufficient, but rather, this project required a creative flare with visual impacts reminiscent of first-rate architecture. Community support for this project remains strong as CityDeck events (Dine on the Deck, Waterboard Warriors, Fridays on the Fox, Maestro Mondays, etc.) grow in popularity.

Funding was provided by private donors and local, state and federal grants.

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

The CityDeck was intended to become the gathering area for all of the residents in Northeast Wisconsin and as its popularity continues to grow, the CityDeck is proving itself as a significant public access point to the Fox River shoreline, a convenient public boat docking area and prominent recreational area. The development of this area continues to heighten the importance of protecting and preserving the Fox River. The linear nature of the CityDeck provided barriers to becoming a social gathering area in the way town squares serve other communities. With this in mind, the design was scaled to create a myriad of gathering spaces for any sized group integrated into the neighboring street grid. The desire to serve as a prominent gathering place while working within the linear site resulted in the various stages, landings, or piers.

## PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

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3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

The CityDeck has served as the ultimate catalyst project, presenting nearly 10 significant new development or redevelopment projects within a two block area. Highlighting the list of projects includes Schreiber Foods Headquarters and Global Technology Center (nearly \$90 million new construction, +400 jobs), Associated Bank Headquarters (\$6 million renovation, 350-400 jobs), CityDeck Landing Apartments (\$10 million, 76 units), Metreau Apartments (\$18 million, 107 apartment units), WaterMark Office Building (\$12 million renovation) and Meyer Theatre's Backstage at the Meyer (\$4 million addition and renovation to the historic Meyer Theatre). Furthermore, events on CityDeck bring more than 200,000 people to downtown Green Bay annually. The CityDeck has truly transformed our city and reconfirmed Green Bay as the premier urban area in Northeast Wisconsin.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities? Approximately 400 words.

This may not serve as a new model of public/private partnerships, but the CityDeck certainly reaffirms the potential for greatness when the public sector and private sector join forces. Without the participation from Shopko, Wisconsin Public Service, SMA Construction Services, Stoss, State of Wisconsin and many others the CityDeck would not be here today. Due to the waterfront nature of this project and the working international port along the Fox River, great partnerships were developed with the DNR, EPA, Harbor Commission and others. The major takeaway for other communities is to develop a solid coalition and maintain a high level of communication with all stakeholders.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

To pick one most successful component on this project would not be fair. Previous questions can confirm the greatness and importance of this project. I firmly believe the ultimate success of this project won't fully be known for decades to come. Generations of children will run through the water fountain, parents will enjoy live music, neighbors will dine together and only after this project serves all of our generations will we understand its success.

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**2015**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**PROFESSIONAL**  
**CONSULTANT**  
**PERSPECTIVE**



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This sheet is to be filled out by a professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, legal, or other services. Copies may be given to other professionals if desired.

Name	Jeffrey S. Rosner, P.E.	Title	Principal/Structural Engineer
Organization	GRAEF	Telephone	(920) 592-9440
Address	1150 Springhurst Drive, #201	City/State/ZIP	Green Bay, WI 54304
Fax	(920) 592-9440	E-mail	jeff.rosner@graef-usa.com

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Signature	Jeffrey S. Rosner, P.E.		Date	12-8-14
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1. What role did you or your organization play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

Structural design consultant for The CityDeck. Responsible for structurally sound design of the over water structures and various other landscape elements.

2. Describe the project's impact on its community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

The CityDeck has been an great anchor in revitalizing the downtown area. The downtown was previously focused away from the river and has kept the public away from experiencing the benefits of waterfront exposure. This project has reversed the previous trend and given the public unique access to the waterfront. It is used year round by the public and provides an outdoor escape for people to enjoy the outdoors in the downtown area. The CityDeck has spurred other development (commercial/residential) along the length of the project as well as in the downtown area. The access to the river has opened up various opportunities for the City to promote the downtown and various venues hosted on the project. The future of the downtown area appears to be growing around the vision of The CityDeck.

# PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

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3. How might this project be instructive to others in your profession? Approximately 400 words.

The CityDeck is fairly unique within the Civil Engineering profession. The project was designed upon a contaminated site with existing structures and poor soils. It is a great example for developing a once dead site with little public access into a open and multi-user friendly project. Existing foundations were reused to support portions of the project. Structures were designed out in the water with fluctuating water elevations and winter time ice challenges. Floating structures were also designed for ease of removal by the City during the winter months. Multiple construction materials were used to create the unique design and deliver the Architect's vision.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

I would consider the most successful aspects to be the focus on the river, waterfront access for the public, and anchor project for downtown revitalization. CityDeck is an attraction and venue for the City. Most events held downtown tie into The CityDeck one way or another and bring people to the river. It has become a social atmosphere as well as a place to just hang out. Development has been spurred with a major company remaining downtown building it's corporate headquarters. Additional commercial and residential develop has started anchoring the ends of The CityDeck. Expansion of the convention center is occurring as well as other development. Most of the development ties into The CityDeck and riverfront. Not only does the public have access to the waterfront, the people using the water have access to downtown. It will only become more popular as the downtown area develops. Finally, The CityDeck will eventually serve as a gateway project once the Fox River is opened up further upstream for navigation up the length of the Fox River.

I am really not aware of what the least successful aspects would be. From what was previously located at the project site and from what the City was trying to accomplish, it appears that The CityDeck has far exceeded their expectations.

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**2015**  
**RUDY BRUNER AWARD**  
**ARCHITECT**  
**OR DESIGNER**  
**PERSPECTIVE**



Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet is to be filled out by a design professional who worked as a consultant on the project, providing design, planning, or other services. Copies may be given to other design professionals if desired.

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Signature  Digitally signed by Chris Reed Date December 9, 2014

1. Describe the design concept of this project, including urban design considerations, choice of materials, scale, etc. Approximately 400 words.

The first move was to re-connect downtown with the river, by re-establishing the historic street grid in an 8-block area to provide unimpeded access to the riverfront. New mixed-use development was planned to ensure round-the-clock activity in downtown, with a combination of workers, residents, and visitors at various times of day. Active ground floors were also important, so retail and commercial activities were planned, as well as a relocated Children’s Museum, to bring the streets and the riverfront open space to life.

The CityDeck open space design is strategic, in that it uses a flexible kit of parts (wooden boardwalk, wood benches, wood structures, pavers, lawn, tree plantings, and rails) in order to help negotiate a complicated subsurface terrain of utilities, foundations, and river wall revetments. It also allows for direct river access without having to cut down the existing bulkhead walls, which would have doubled the cost of the project.

A simple wooden surface harkens to regional traditions of wooden docks that residents have used for swimming and boating, in both lakes and rivers. Here, the wood surface folds in a variety of ways, first to create benches and lounges that offer people choice in how they sit and hang out. The benches aggregate in certain areas, particularly in the center of the site, to create collective spaces for small performances and an interactive water feature. At the water’s edge, the wooden surface folds up and over the bulkhead wall, creating overlooks and fishing spots that allow people fantastic views to the still-working river and its lakeboat and recreational traffic. These large surfaces also slope and step down to create gathering spaces and a small amphitheater that face the river, that allow people to gather at and over the water, to watch river activities and water-skiing events. They allow direct access to a series of floating docks and pathways, which for the first time allow people to boat to downtown, dock, and come up for lunch or dinner along the riverfront or at a downtown restaurant. And they create a floating walkway that allows for yet another close experience of the river.

In and among the wooden benches and boardwalks, shaded lawns offer softer areas for picnicking, and wide pathways double as a critical link in a regional bike trail and as gathering spaces for special events. The customized green pavers were chosen carefully to complement a palette of Kentucky coffee trees, Liberty elms, and Ginkgo trees—all that come alive in the fall in blazing yellows, just in time for football season and with a subtle nod to the city’s famous green-and-gold Packers.

2. Describe the most important social and programmatic functions of the design. Approximately 400 words.

One of the biggest challenges was how to maintain the river as a working river while simultaneously adding new social and cultural life to its banks. Allowing the new wooden platforms and docks to reach out into the river so people could touch the water was critical, but it was done in a way to keep all shipping lanes open and to set back the heaviest activity a safe distance from these uses.

Beyond that, the mayor was especially interested in a riverfront that would be a great place for everyday uses—walking, biking, sitting, hanging out, eating lunch, watching sunsets, etc.—while also allowing for the staging of events that would draw people from across the city and region to enjoy the river and city life. Many small and medium-scale gathering spaces were designed in—some with stepped seating, others larger plaza areas for art fairs and farmer’s markets and the like. But they were designed in such a way that they were welcoming when scheduled activities were not present—it was important to not have spaces that looked like empty amphitheatres without events. So the bench designs were critical: they break down the overall scale of the place, they are configured to allow people to sit or lounge in various ways, and they are equally comfortable with crowds as with just a few people. Everything serves double-duty, and is designed to be flexible. A widened bike path turns into a plaza that can be used for occasional events; the plaza includes an interactive water feature that complements small activities or can simply be turned off for large activities. And clusters of space both on land and over the river can be used in combination with one another for larger-scale events and gatherings.

Since its opening, the CityDeck has come to life and brought a new-found energy to the riverfront. The city and various non-profit groups collaborate to host a wide variety of events through all four seasons, including Fridays on the Fox music events; Dine on the Deck food festivals; winter ice skating; summer boating events and water-skiing displays; and Tall Ships festivals. The CityDeck is also utilized as a portion of the route of the annual Green Bay marathon and Christmas Parade, due to its easy connections to the street grid and the regional bike trail.

Finally, it was important to plan and design interior and exterior spaces simultaneously, in order that the activity in one place can spill over into an adjacent space, benefitting both. Thus, all retail and restaurant spaces in the new and renovated developments along the river were designed with seamless transitions between inside and outside, so people can move in among a range of activities and offerings. The Hagemester Park Restaurant, for instance, which moved to the riverfront because of the activity the CityDeck was generating, can now both take advantage of the adjacent riverfront open space activity and bring its own life and energy to it.

## ARCHITECT OR DESIGNER PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the major challenges of designing this project and any design trade-offs or compromises required to complete the project. Approximately 400 words.

The site was especially narrow—50 to 60 feet maximum—and it was fraught with a tangle of underlying utilities of many types and at many elevations; of former building and bridge abutment foundations; and of seven different bulkhead wall segments, each from a different era, each with its own unique set of tie-backs and anchor walls.

New regulatory requirements meant that the elevation of the ground need to be raised for flood protection for existing and new adjacent structures, which created elevational complexities for building entries and street tie-ins, especially where existing structures were close. Stormwater regulations required runoff interception and as much infiltration as possible, so that dirty water was not going directly into the river. And fire regulations demanded access for fire trucks all along the riverfront. All this meant very tight coordination of engineered soils that could simultaneously support the weight of heavy vehicles, allow for stormwater infiltration, support the nutrient needs of plants, not be too heavy so as to put undue surge loads against existing buildings that could then topple, and not be too light so as to float away during flood events. And all new foundations and support utilities needed to thread their way between and among all the existing stuff underground.

Budgets were very tight. The city had pledged not to further burden residential taxpayers with the cost of these improvements, so a combination of alternate funding strategies were pursued while costs were held to a level that could produce both quality design and value to surrounding development. Various combinations of wood and paver surfaces were studied in ways that maximized planned uses, that ensured that places that people actually touched or sat would be would for its warmth and texture, and that everything was designed to serve 2, 3 or 4 purposes simultaneously. For instance, the elevation change that allows the project to meet flood regulations doubles as a location for folded seating; stormwater infiltration happens directly below it, elevated café terraces are created immediately adjacent to the buildings, and the seam itself beneath the benches is illuminated as a design feature that lends a distinct character to the project at night.

The biggest challenge, though, was the global recession. The project was planned and designed just prior to the recession, and early stages of street and utility relocation started, phase one of the open space was commenced, and a new residential condominium building was constructed and opened. But the recession posed enormous challenges to funding streams, to the ability of developers to move forward and to attain funding themselves, and to the release of previously allocated state and federal funds for open space construction. So the mayor and non-profits stepped in, opening up portions of the open space that were finished in order to program them and bring people to the waterfront. Events like Dine on the Deck and First Fridays took place in temporary locations in order to stimulate activity, to buy time while complex financial negotiations were being pursued, and to signal to residents and developers that a new era of city life had begun. These efforts were enormously successful and helped to keep up people's energy and optimism. More phases of the open space were inaugurated, and eventually financial deals were put in place that further diversified planned uses in the adjacent development, including affordable and new market housing. Remarkably, this mayor and this city were able to oversee continued construction and development throughout the entirety of the recession, completely re-making its downtown riverfront in the single most challenging economic period of our lifetime. Unlike many other small and large American cities where development and construction screeched to a halt, the modest but persistent efforts of the mayor, council, redevelopment authority, citizens, and developers here put Green Bay forward as a model for how to accomplish far-sighted and impactful riverfront development and design in economically efficient and strategic ways.

4. Describe the ways in which the design relates to its urban context. Approximately 400 words.

The project re-creates its urban context and links it into larger-scale street and trail networks, all in an effort to provide better access to the river and riverfront in a variety of ways and at a number of scales. The street grid was re-established to allow for better traffic and pedestrian flow through downtown and to connect directly to the river. This network also opens views to the river, giving it a presence multiple blocks away—reminding people in downtown that Green Bay is, first and foremost, a river city. And a road that ran partially along the river, preventing any kind of pedestrian or recreational use, was eliminated so that the entire immediate riverfront would be automobile-free. Continuous streets now start at the river and extend multiple blocks through downtown, further activating formerly sleepy storefronts as new cafes, restaurants and businesses.

Older existing buildings, including a riverfront warehouse, have now been converted to multi-use facilities, with formerly blank fronts opening up directly onto the streets and CityDeck with retail and commercial space. An entirely new line of apartment and condominium buildings and commercial developments have opened or are under construction all along the riverfront, giving the city a continuous and active downtown edge. The Fox River trail, a regional bicycle and recreation trail, is fully integrated into the CityDeck and extends for miles in both directions, offering visitors who live a distance from downtown a direct, safe, and healthy connection to downtown.

These landside improvements were critical in giving folks in downtown and in surrounding neighborhoods direct access to a revitalized riverfront, and direct access down to the water. But equally important were a number of water-borne facilities that tapped into an incredible and active boating community on the Fox River and out into the bay of Green Bay. Floating docks at the river's edge allow anyone in a boat to dock temporarily, without a permit, and then come up into the riverfront to enjoy events and riverside meals, or to venture further into downtown to enjoy a wealth of new retail and cultural facilities. These docks importantly extend the reach of the CityDeck far and wide—both regionally and extending to all of Lake Michigan—and they give boaters a singular new food and social and cultural destination, unequalled for many many miles around

# **VISUAL REPRESENTATION**



**THE SITE OF CITYDECK WAS PLAGUED BY UNDERUTILIZED PARKING LOTS, INSURMOUNTABLE WATERFRONT INFRASTRUCTURE AND AN ABANDONED WAREHOUSE, CREATING LITTLE INCENTIVE TO VENTURE ALONG THE WATER OR VISIT FROM DOWNTOWN.**

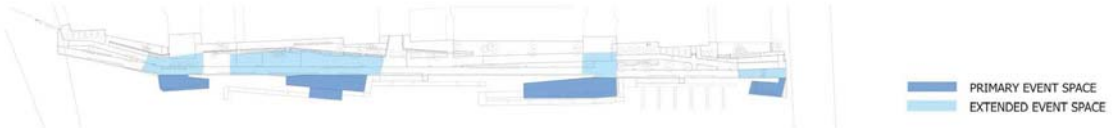


**THE CITY OF GREEN BAY, COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS, DEVELOPERS, AND DESIGNERS CREATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT BY CREATING A PLACE THAT INVITED THE COMMUNITY TO RECONNECT TO THE WATER, ENCOURAGED BUSINESSES TO RELOCATE TO DOWNTOWN, AND THE CITY TO REINVEST IN ITS RIVER.**

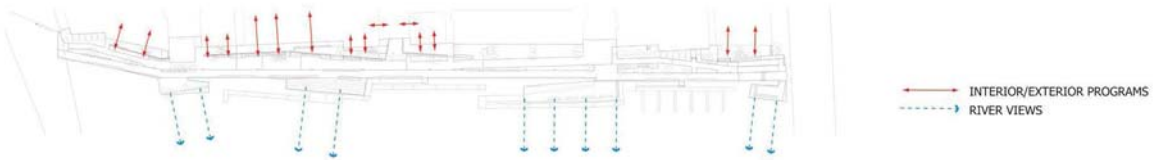


Mike Roemer

**EVENT SPACES**



**VIEWS**

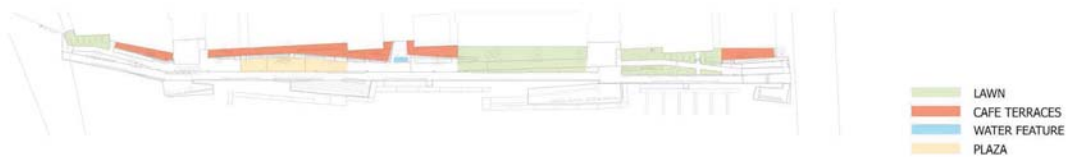


**RESTAURANTS, BARS, LOCAL BUSINESSES WERE ALL INCORPORATED INTO THE PLANNING AND DESIGN DECISIONS FOR THE CITYDECK ITSELF. PERFORMANCE SPACES WERE PLACED ADJACENT TO OUTDOOR EATING AREAS AND PARCELS DESIGNATED FOR NEW RESTAURANTS WERE GIVEN ACCESS TO THE WATER AND SUNSET VIEWS.**

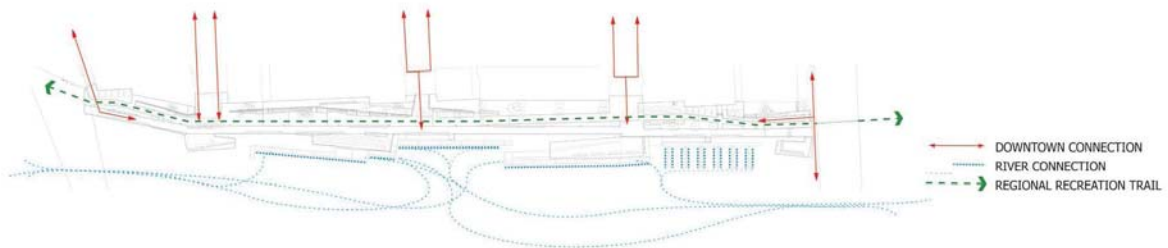


Mike Roemer

UPLAND PROGRAMS



CONNECTIONS



EVENT SPACES, AND PROGRAMMING WERE PLANNED TO CONNECT TO DOWNTOWN AND TO BRING RESIDENTS AND VISITORS CLOSER TO THE WATER



Mike Roemer

**PHASE 1 OF THE PROJECT WAS COMPLETED WITHIN FOUR YEARS OF THE FIRST PLANNING MEETINGS, TRULY OPENING THE RIVERFRONT TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME**



**THE FOX RIVER CONTINUES TO BE AN ACTIVE INDUSTRIAL WATERWAY. THE OPPORTUNITY TO REACH OUT AND TOUCH THIS IMPORTANT HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY WAS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE TO CAPTURE THROUGHOUT PROJECT PLANNING, DESIGN, AND IMPLEMENTATION**







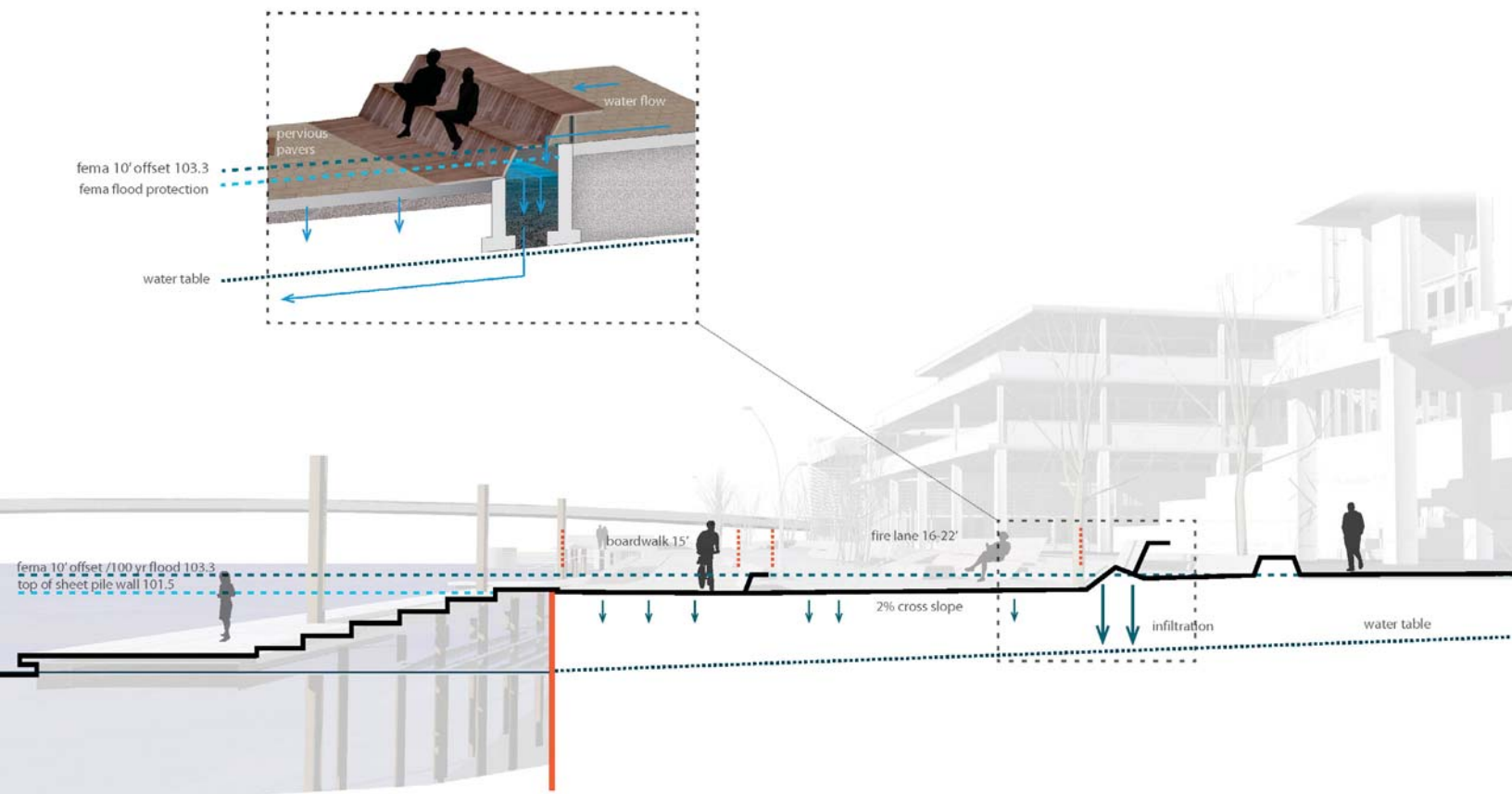
**BENCHES ALONG THE WATER'S EDGE ARE DESIGNED FOR A VARIETY OF BODIES AND OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR GATHERING...**



...OR FOR A QUIET EVENING ALONE



Jeff Mirkes



**GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, INTEGRATING STORMWATER FILTRATION AND FLOOD CONTROL**



Jeff Mirkes

THE CITYDECK HOSTS SUMMER FESTIVALS, CONCERTS, CHARITY RUNS, AS WELL AS CASUAL GATHERINGS AND SUNSET YOGA



Mike Roemer

**THE CITYDECK IS AN EVERYDAY DESTINATION, INVITING THE FAMILIES TO ENJOY THE RIVERFRONT**



Mike Roemer

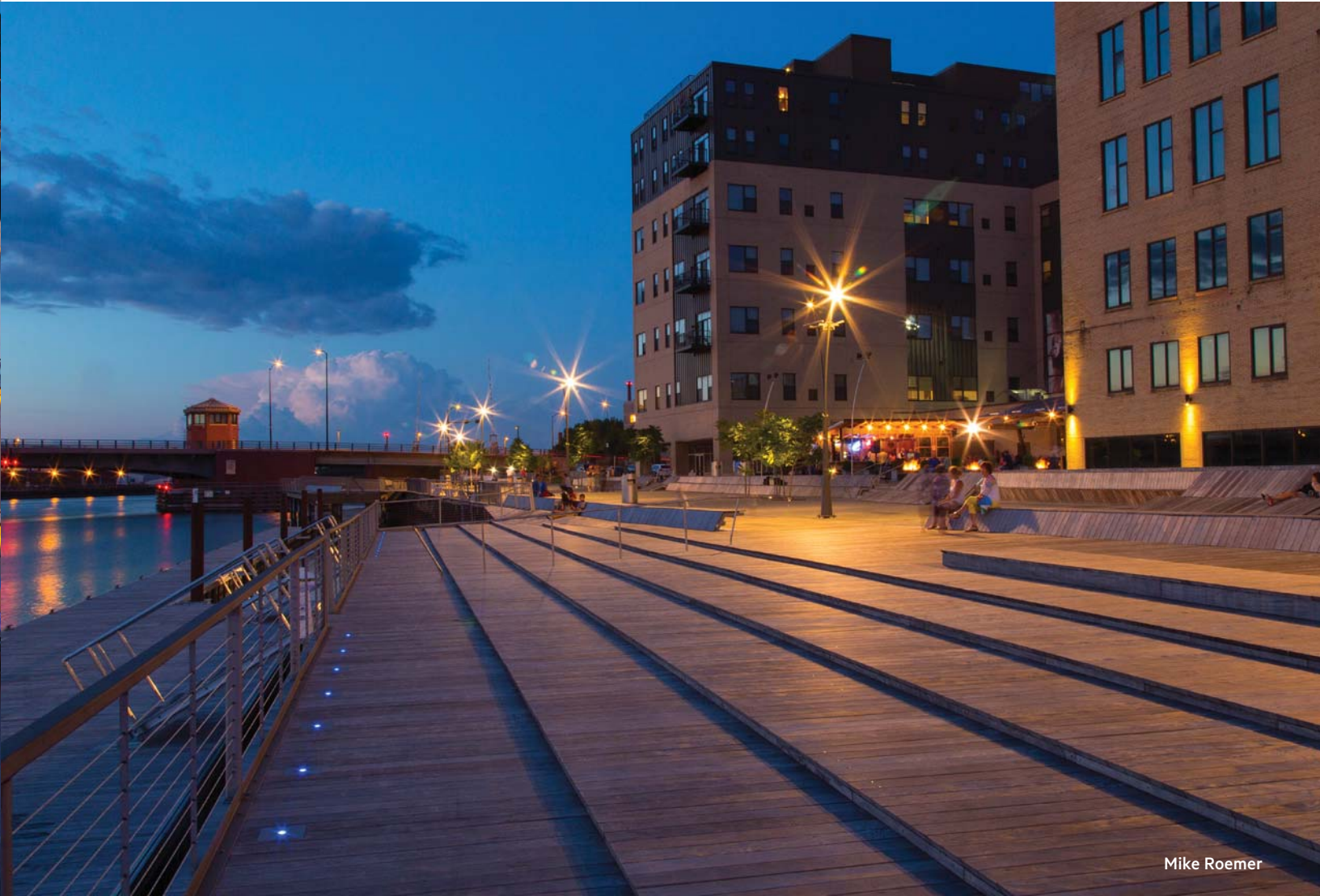


Mike Roemer



Mike Roemer

DEVELOPERS AND DESIGNERS WORKED TOGETHER TO CREATE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES ALONG THE RIVERFRONT



Mike Roemer

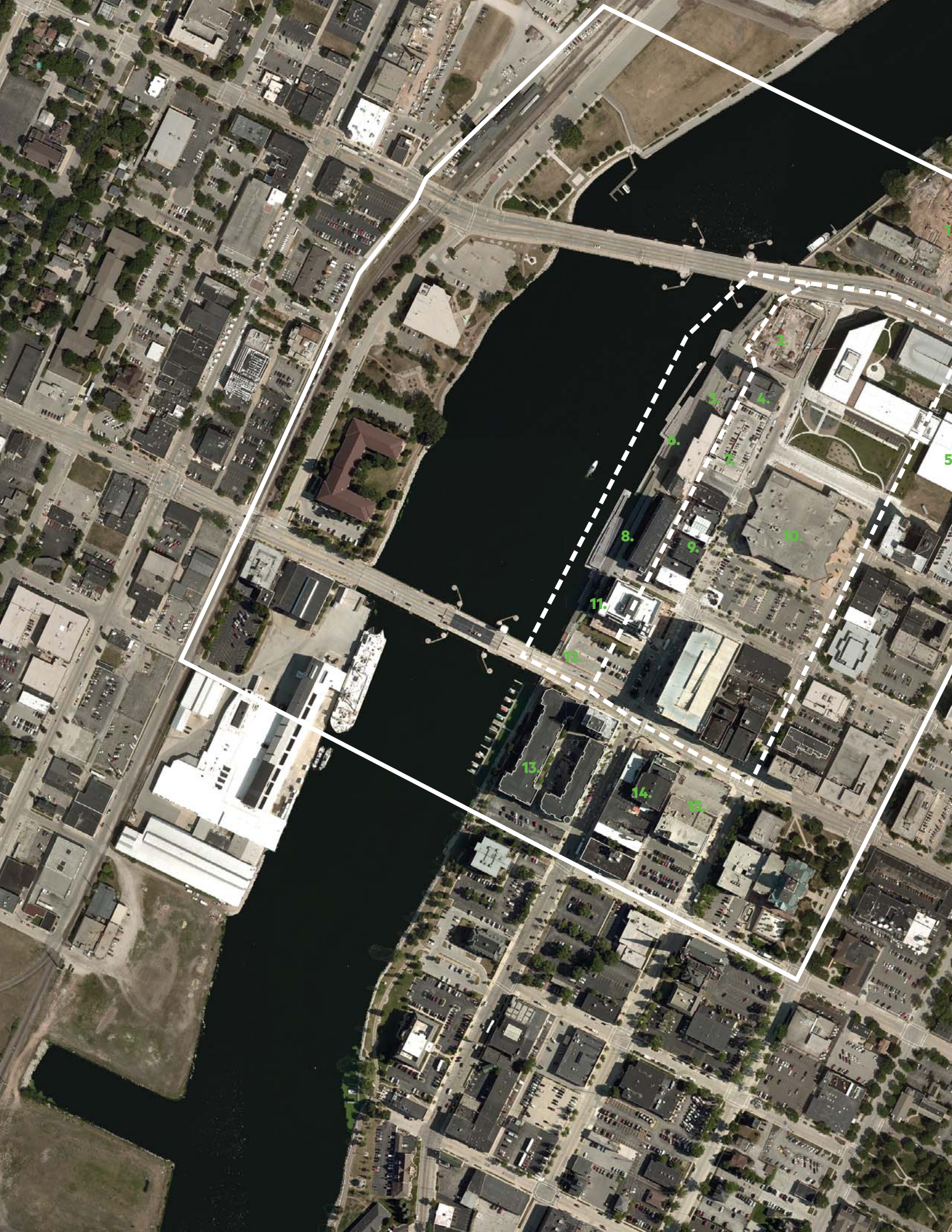
**A NEW RESTAURANT ALONG THE RIVERFRONT SPILLS OUT ONTO THE CITYDECK AS RESIDENTS AND VISITORS ENJOY RELAXING ON THE BENCHES**

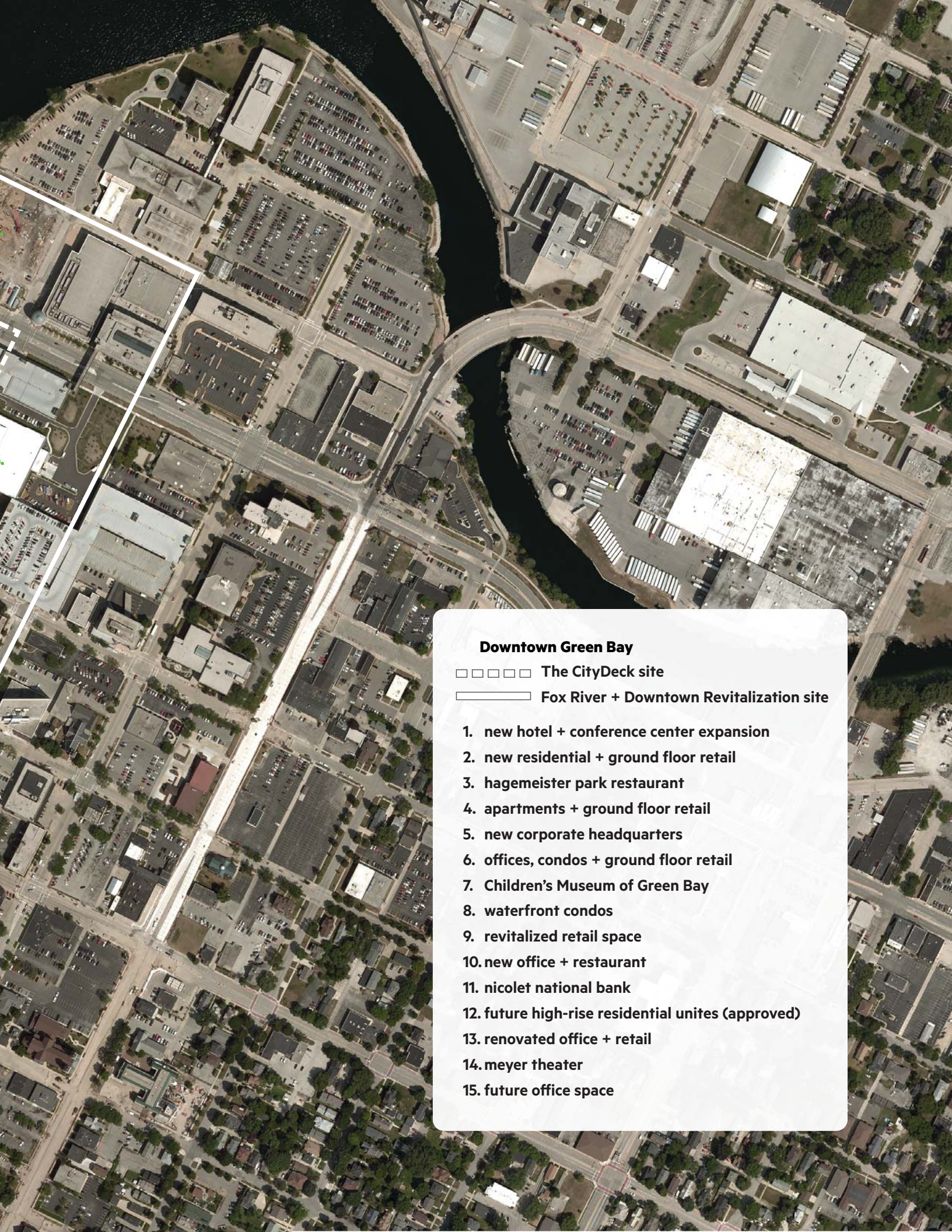


Jeff Mirkes



Mike Roemer





### **Downtown Green Bay**

□□□□□ The CityDeck site

▬▬▬▬▬ Fox River + Downtown Revitalization site

1. new hotel + conference center expansion
2. new residential + ground floor retail
3. hagemester park restaurant
4. apartments + ground floor retail
5. new corporate headquarters
6. offices, condos + ground floor retail
7. Children's Museum of Green Bay
8. waterfront condos
9. revitalized retail space
10. new office + restaurant
11. nicolet national bank
12. future high-rise residential unites (approved)
13. renovated office + retail
14. meyer theater
15. future office space

NITSCHKE BRIDGE

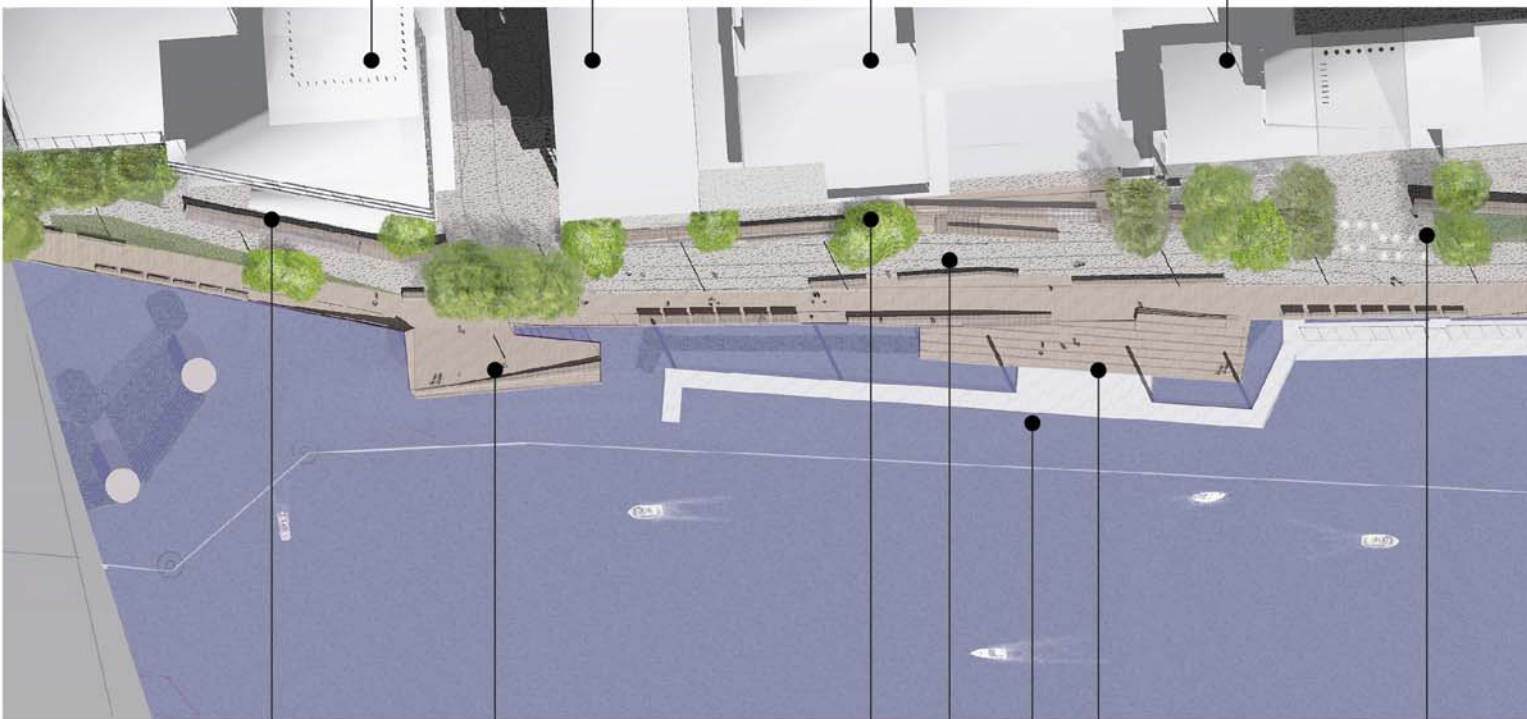
MIXED USE  
MARKET, CAFE,  
CONDOMINIUMS

ADMIRAL FLATLEY COURT

APARTMENTS

MIXED USE CAFES,  
RESTAURANT,  
CHILDREN'S  
MUSEUM, OFFICES,  
CONDOMINIUMS

PINE STREET



CAFE  
TERRACE

SHOPKO  
LANDING  
OVERLOOK

CAFE  
TERRACE

PINE STREET  
STEPS + STAGE

INTER  
WATER  
FEATU

EXTENDED  
AMPHITHEATER

TRANSIENT DOCKS  
(PUBLIC)



0 40 FT 80 FT

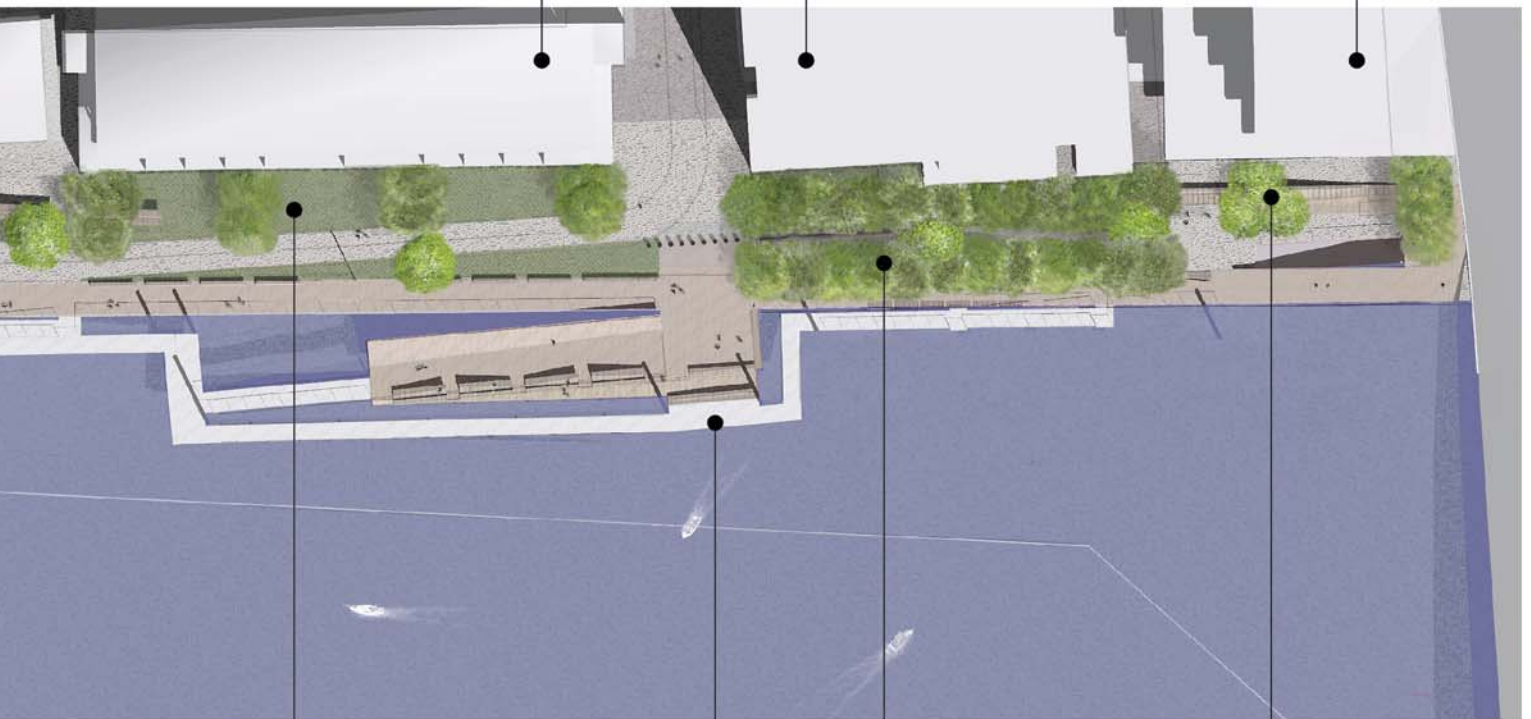
CONDOMINIUMS

CHERRY STREET

BANK

MIXED USE  
RETAIL /  
CAFE, OFFICES  
CONDOMINIUMS

WALNUT STREET



ACTIVE  
RECREATION  
AREA

LAWN

GROVE

CHERRY STREET  
LANDING

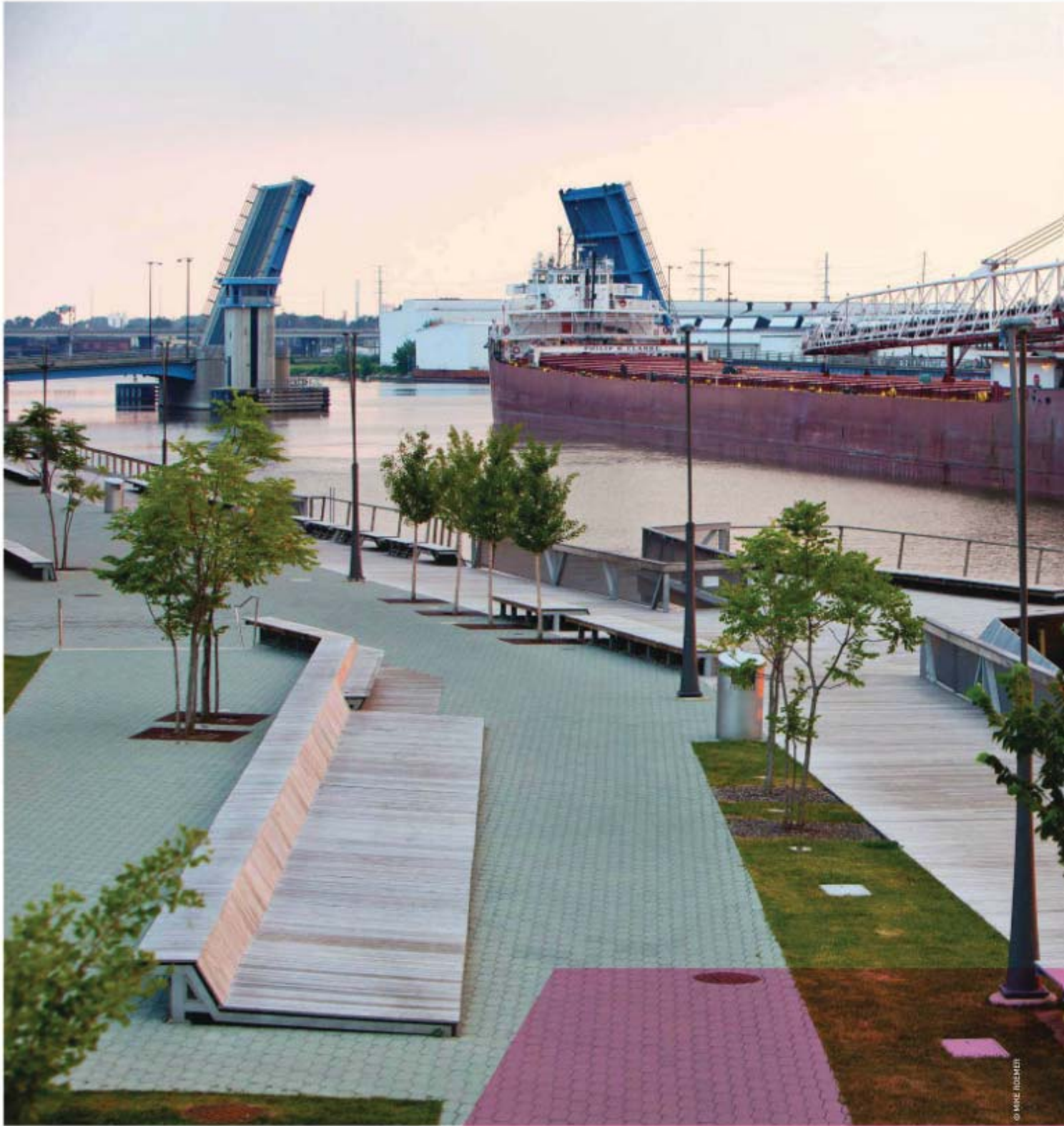
CAFE / RETAIL  
TERRACE

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# SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Essay for Landscape Architecture Magazine, published by the American Society of Landscape Architects  
So Inclined . Landscape Architecture Magazine . vol 101 no 11 . November 2011

Photo Essay . Text by Mayor James J. Schmitt . Source Books in Landscape Architecture  
Knwilton School of Architecture . The Ohio State University . 2013



© MARK ROSEMAN

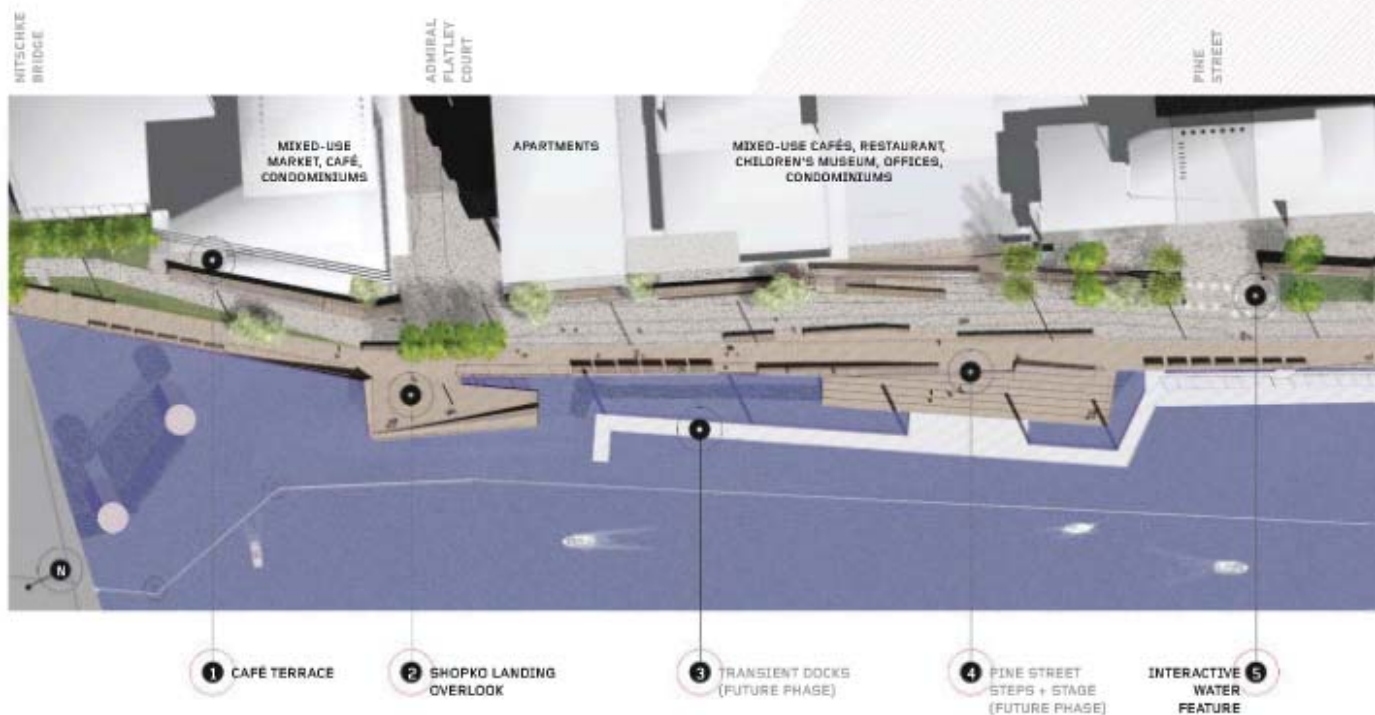


**LEFT**  
CityDeck flanks the east side of the industrial Fox River, whose waters are still plied by massive Great Lakes cargo ships.

**H**ERE'S SOMETHING NEW: AN ARTICLE ABOUT GREEN BAY THAT DOESN'T MENTION THE PACKERS. Well, maybe just in this first paragraph. The title came back to Titledown last year when the lowest-seeded team in the playoffs improbably won Super Bowl XLV. Green Bay, an improbable NFL town to begin with (population 101,000, very small media market), went justifiably nuts for the green and gold, a team that, in many ways, the city had been building from the ground up for a decade or more. But this wasn't going to be an article about football, right? OK. No more football.

Also building slowly from within in Green Bay over the past decade was a downtown renaissance almost as improbable as, well, you know. The visible culmination of that renaissance is the CityDeck, a three-block-long waterfront plaza and promenade, designed by the Boston-based firm Stoss Landscape Urbanism. CityDeck is composed of angled wood planes and custom concrete pavers, and it features an array of built-in wood seating that seems extruded up from the boardwalk itself. On what used to be derelict waterfront, this unique design anchors a scrum of new and renovated buildings jostling for views and urban pedestrian traffic. For downtown Green Bay to go from uncompetitive to contender took some design talent, yes, but also a committed community and a charismatic mayor.

**I** was about five minutes early for my meeting with Mayor Jim Schmitt in his office, and within 10 minutes he was speed-walking out the door, with me in tow, because he wanted to show me his downtown. Schmitt was first elected in 2003. He's a native of Green Bay and for years ran a company that turned waste paper into disposable tissues like the ones barbers put around your neck. His paper background is very Green Bay: It's an industry and shipping town. The city, which sits where the Fox River flows into its namesake bay, has the classic combination of Great Lakes water access and



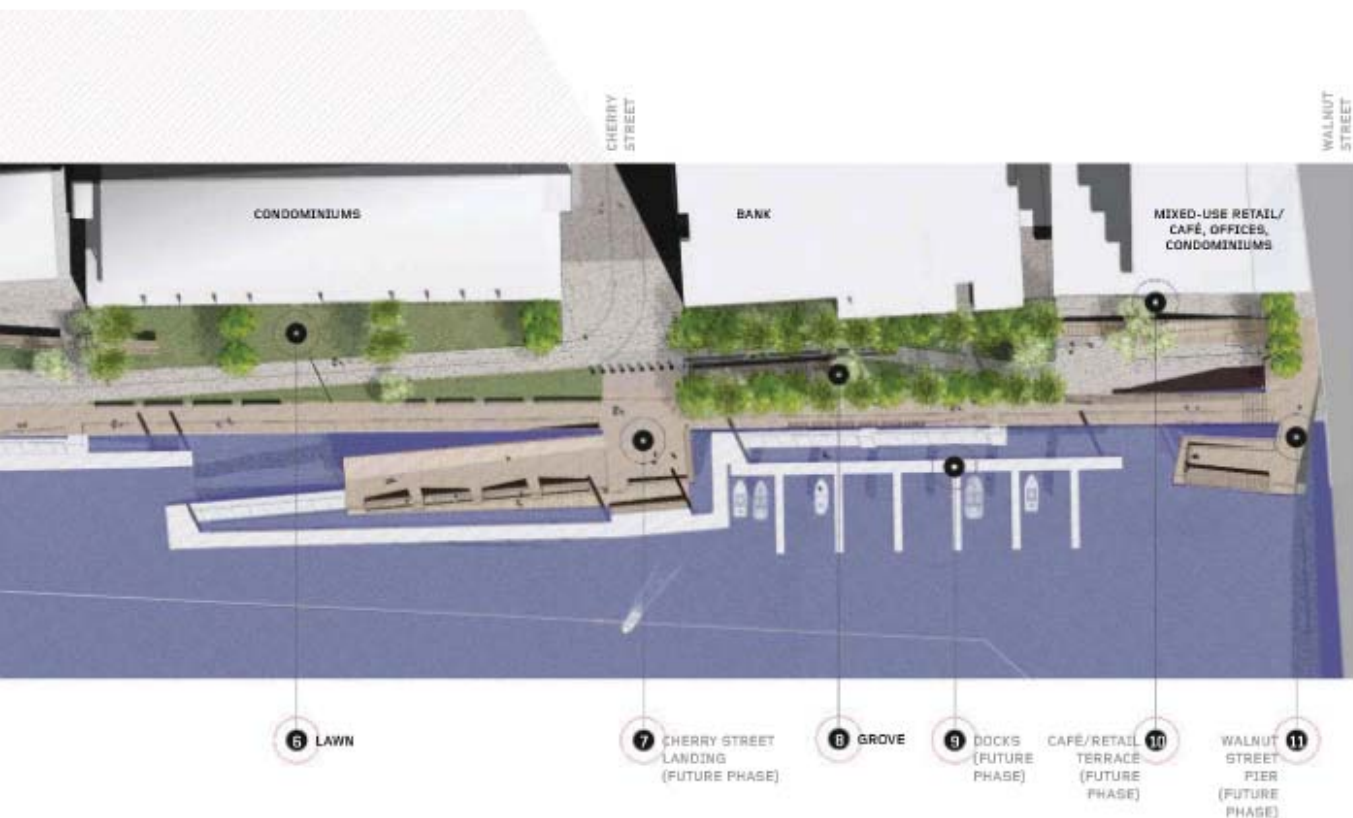
**ABOVE**  
A lineup of summer programs activate the design with weeknight concerts and lunchtime food vendors.

proximity to Midwestern forests and farmlands that has given rise to plenty of similar resource-driven cities: Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Toledo. The boats still call today. More than 200 commercial vessels per year—some of them massive ocean freighters—dock at about 15 active terminals up and down the Fox River.

Green Bay's waterfront used to bustle with both industrial and social activity. Downtown was, just like everywhere else, the heart of the city. Then, in the 1960s, also just like everywhere else, business started to move to the outskirts and the core began to die. As a stopgap measure, a mall was built downtown, severing the urban grid. At the same time, industries were moving out, ship traffic was declining, and the waterfront became neglected. It turned into a site for parking and garbage collection.

**G**reen Bay has long been at the fringes of my life. Growing up, my family would vacation in Door County, skirting the city to the east on our drive up from Chicago. I now live in Minneapolis, and since 2005 my mother has lived full time in Door County's Sturgeon Bay, just to the north. Regular visits there with my wife and two young children require a vertigo-inducing drive over the Leo Frigo Memorial Bridge, which rises up over the Fox River (and, in fact, the entire city) just north of downtown. I have seen the piles of black coal and white limestone sitting inches from the slack water of the Fox; the massive freighters groaning their way upstream, all the downtown drawbridges open; the frozen, wind-scalloped bay and a city frosted in white, all quiet.

STUSS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PLAN © MAREK TOJEMSKI PHOTO



I would never have imagined something like the CityDeck could be built here. I've seen plenty of snazzy waterfronts in other cities—more vaunted cities, destination cities: Toronto, Seattle, Chicago. But in Green Bay? Improbable.

The mayor's take: "We're going to have something so unique down here, something so special, that it's going to be the first step in revitalizing our whole downtown." He campaigned on this (he just won his third term) and shepherded the entire process, and at times he was derided for spending public money on what some called "the mayor's yellow brick road." Schmitt sees the CityDeck as one piece, albeit a critical piece, of a total downtown redevelopment. But on the CityDeck specifically, he argues that Green Bay could have done something more modest—that many would have expected something more modest—but that the city needed to look 50 years forward and ask itself what it would be known for then.

I first laid eyes on the CityDeck about three hours before meeting the mayor. I can't remember the last time I was in downtown Green Bay and, notably, neither could my mother, when I mentioned to her I would be visiting the city for this article. She comes to town to shop, but never into the center. We decided to make a day of it, booked rooms at the Days Inn, just steps from the waterfront, and enjoyed a picture-perfect late summer day strolling the boardwalk before I went to meet the mayor.

CityDeck stretches for three blocks along the western shore of the Fox, between the Ray Nitschke and Walnut Street bridges. It is built on top of the existing river bulkhead wall. Described

GREEN BAY'S MAYOR, JIM SCHMITT, THOUGHT THE CITY NEEDED TO LOOK 50 YEARS FORWARD AND ASK WHAT IT WOULD BE KNOWN FOR THEN.



**TOP**

The seating is designed to give ample choice of posture and purpose.

**INSET**

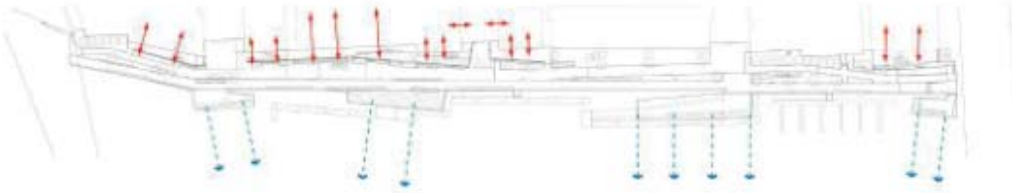
A fountain-jet water feature (which can be activated by anyone at the touch of a button) entertains visitors.

most simplistically, CityDeck features two basic materials: a wide ipe wood boardwalk at the river's edge and a linear and slightly narrower concrete paver plaza between the boardwalk and buildings. The geometry of the spaces is pleasantly erratic, edges joggling in and out seemingly by whim, here cinching the space a little tighter, there extending a belvedere out over the river. The boardwalk portion is punctuated by seating—made of the same ipe—that rises up from the walking surface in various shapes and configurations.

I couldn't drag the landscape architect, Chris Reed, ASLA, of Stoss, out to Green Bay from Boston for an afternoon, so I talked to him by phone once I got home. He told me that his earliest concepts, envisioned back in 2004 when he was asked to prepare a larger master plan for the downtown waterfront, featured the wooden planes of the boardwalk. Back then, he says, he wanted a series of wooden platforms that would "start up at the city grid and fold their way up and down, creating a diversity of spaces along the very tight waterfront." Upon further investigation of the bulkhead wall during detailed design, Reed found that what he thought was a uniform river edge was in fact a mess of different elevations, structures, and ages of construction. The design, then, had to remain flexible, but Stoss had already laid the groundwork for that with its minimalist concept. The geometrically independent triad of design elements—boardwalk, paver plaza, and seating—could flex and move as needed to address the underlying reality. ↻

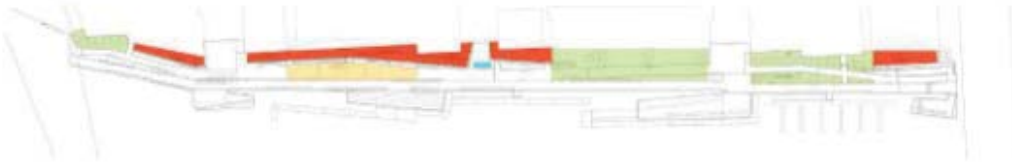


### VIEWS



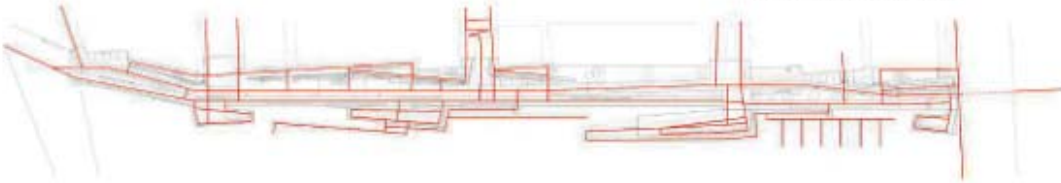
- INTERIOR/EXTERIOR PROGRAMS
- - - RIVER VIEWS

### UPLAND PROGRAMS



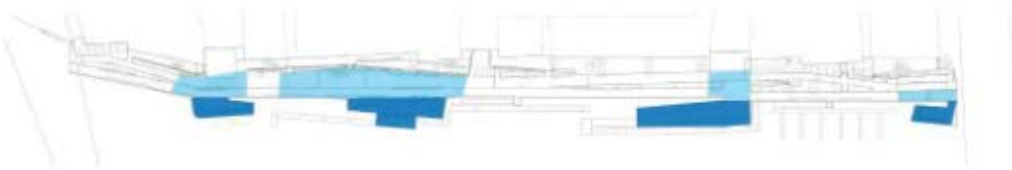
- LAWN
- CAFÉ TERRACES
- WATER FEATURE
- PLAZA

### PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION



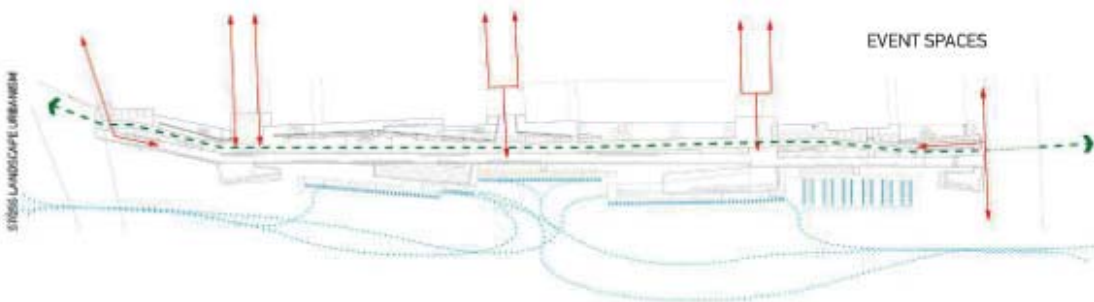
- PEDESTRIAN CONNECTION

### CONNECTIONS



- PRIMARY EVENT SPACE
- EXTENDED EVENT SPACE

### EVENT SPACES



- DOWNTOWN CONNECTION
- RIVER CONNECTION
- REGIONAL RECREATION TRAIL

STUSS LANDSCAPE URBANISM

THE DESIGN IS FLASHY AND SUBTLE AT THE SAME TIME—PURE ARTISTRY FROM A SIMPLE MOTIF.

↳ Embedded within this simple flow of space, says Reed, is a deliberate diversity of scales meant to provide comfort for individuals, small groups, and large gatherings. At the individual level, he says, are the benches: "The whole idea here is that we could fold the wood surfaces in ways that could accommodate the human body in a number of different ways depending on people's moods and people's body types."

CityDeck features about 10 different seating options, all with a rigid angular geometry that reflects the plaza's edges. All are long and linear, either just behind the railing at the water's edge or nosed up to the boardwalk farther back to form the boundary between the wood and the pavers. Some are backless and look like the number 7 in cross section, while some reverse the 7's acute angle to create a sloped-out vertical support. Some seating is double height, with a lower bench's back forming the leg rest of an upper, backless seat. Some are chairs, like beach chairs in stasis, but with width enough for dozens. Large groups can gather on several large platforms, like the Shop Ko

**BELOW**

CityDeck was built in conjunction with redevelopment of the waterfront, such as these high-end condominiums with stunning sunset views over the Fox River.



Landing, a deck with a folded surface meant to conjure the fractured ice found in the Fox River in winter (several more will be built over the next few years as phases 2 and 3).

I specifically asked Reed about his middle scale, the small group gathering spaces, because the CityDeck struck me as very linear. He pointed to two locations. There's the spot where the outer edge of the boardwalk inflects a little, rotating a few benches to face slightly toward each other. And the upper terrace between the CityDeck itself and a forthcoming restaurant elevates some seating above the fray. I agree there are some interesting places to sit alone or as a couple, and I agree (though I didn't happen to be there on a festival day) that the large gathering spaces likely work very well, but when I visited the project I had been generally concerned about the seating, and Reed's short list of middle-scale moments didn't reassure me. The inflection he references is a widely obtuse angle, and a stairway passes between the seats right at the point of the angle. That doesn't make for sociable seating. The rest of CityDeck's seating is arranged in straight lines, but there are no parallel lines. It is impossible to sit across from someone anywhere on the site, and a group of, say, five or six people would have to sit side by side and crane their necks forward to speak to one another.

When my mother and I walked the length of the deck before my meeting with the mayor, we raved about the project. It is definitely memorable. It has an aesthetic that is engaging and unique. But when I met up with her again after meeting Mayor Schmitt, she was still walking the boardwalk, book in hand. She had been unable to find anywhere comfortable to sit. So I

started trying out benches. And looking around. It was maybe 80 degrees, with a light breeze, on a Thursday afternoon. Small groups were walking around, obviously happy, but not sitting anywhere. The number 7 cross-sectional benches are fine, but their partners, the ones with the kicked-forward base, are difficult to even sit down on, because you have to stand so far forward of the seat. I was moderately comfortable in the chaises longues, but the backs are perfectly straight, rather than curving toward vertical to support the head. I'm 5-foot-10 and felt all right, but my mother, at 5-foot-4, just didn't fit. The double-layer benches usually have the kick-forward base, so they're tricky, too, and the upper seat, above the backrest, hit me just below the shoulder blades. And since the detail has that upper seat's slatting extending forward over the vertical slats of the backrest, a pointy edge occurs right at the upper back. Reed told me that Stoss prototyped each seating option at full scale, out of plywood, and had various staff members of various sizes try them out, making adjustments before finalizing them. That's a sound design process, so I am at a loss to explain my own discomfort on site.

Normally I wouldn't harp on seating so much, but this project is all about the seating. True, there are exquisite details throughout: the locally made pavers are custom, of a pleasing trapezoidal shape, and laid as an underlying field that never exactly matches the angle of the boardwalk; the water-edge railing switches from heavy maritime timber to thin delicate metal, creating important variation in what could have been a monotonous line; and the benches themselves, aesthetically, are striking and gorgeous. But when both the mayor

**RIGHT**  
The Shepley Landing is the primary large gathering space right now, but two larger terraces will be built next year in phase two.



and landscape architect talk about re-creating the social heart of downtown, I can't help but wish there was some sociable seating in downtown's heart.

That heart, though, on the whole seems to be rebounding. My mother and I had dinner at Republic Chophouse a few blocks from the waterfront. The mayor and I had popped in there on our whirlwind tour. He considers it one of many downtown success stories: It's new, and would never have opened downtown 10 years ago. A block or so away is Koko, a sushi restaurant that relocated in from the suburbs after the CityDeck opened. Riverfront Lofts is a new condominium building that faces the water. It has 26 units and an assessed value of \$22 million. At the other end of the deck is Lofts on the Fox, apartments with the same views as Riverfront but aimed at middle-class earners (and it has deck-facing retail on the ground floor). In between sits an old department store building being converted into one of the more diverse mixed-use projects I have encountered: a restaurant with dining out on the CityDeck, offices, residential units, a parking garage, and a brand-new children's museum.

And the old mall, the mall that some say put the nail in downtown's coffin? While I was in town it was being demolished, with the Days Inn soon to follow, to be replaced by the corporate headquarters and technology center of a major processed cheese company (please hold your cheesehead jokes). That company will bring 550 new employees downtown.

As a born and raised Midwesterner, I have seen many potentially excellent projects dumbed down by an embedded regional practicality and reluctance to stand out. This is especially true in smaller, grittier cities like Green Bay. But Reed told me his work in Green Bay, coming on the heels of another smaller waterfront plaza in Milwaukee, has been some of the most rewarding in his career. "Midwestern pragmatism," he said, "doesn't exclude ambition for what [Midwesterners] want out of their city life and social life and for their kids." A cornerstone of Stoss's work is solving practical problems—infrastructure problems, social problems, environmental problems—while also creating innovative landscapes. It's a tough balance, but well suited to places like Green Bay.

The design does achieve that balance. It does manage to be flashy and subtle at the same time. I keep turning it over in my head: First it strikes me with its boldness and angularity, then I come down from the initial high and realize it's just wood and pavers, and then I see again the pure artistry that Stoss

managed from such a simple motif. And during our phone call, Reed lobbed one more subtlety at me: The custom pavers have tiny flecks of green, so they have a verdigris tinge in certain lights, and the trees all turn yellow in the fall, just as Sundays become dedicated to, well, you know.

Mayor Schmitt thinks that Reed understood the city from the beginning, and I have to agree. If the seating were what seating should be, I would consider this one of the most interesting, contextually appropriate projects I have had the privilege to visit—and it's just three blocks long and had a total budget of only \$12 million (that's for all three phases). And what's more, CityDeck is truly a catalyst for all the rest.





**ABOVE**  
A beautiful, unexpected design has already brought newfound prosperity to downtown Green Bay.

“We still have a lot of work to do,” the mayor told me, gesturing around a bustling downtown that a decade ago just wasn’t worth visiting, “but we couldn’t be doing these [redevelopments] unless we reactivated and reconnected the community with the waterfront.

“Eight years ago,” he continued, in a parting comment, “we were hopeful. But now....” He trailed off with a grin. Nice that a Green Bay mayor can say that—about the city, instead of the team. ●

ADAM REGN ARVIDSON, FASLA, IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO *LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE*. HIS MOTHER PLANS TO BRING HER FRIENDS TO DOWNTOWN GREEN BAY MORE OFTEN.

**Project Credits**

**CLIENT** CITY OF GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN. **DESIGNER** STOSS LANDSCAPE URBANISM, BOSTON (CHRIS REED, ASLA, PRINCIPAL, LEAD DESIGNER; SCOTT BISHOP, ASLA, PROJECT MANAGER; DESIGN TEAM: TIM BARNER; CATHY BRAASCH; STEVE CARLUCCI; JILL DESIMINI; ADRIAN FEHRMANN, ASLA; CARL FRUSHOUR, ASLA; KRISTIN MALONE; CHRIS MUSKOFF; SUSAN FITZGERALD; JANA KIENITZ; LISL KOTHEIMER; BRYAN MIYAHARA; GRAHAM PALMER; MEGAN STUDER; AND SARAH WRIGHT). **URBAN DESIGN** VETTER DENK, MILWAUKEE. **STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING** GRAEF ANHALT SCHLOEMER AND ASSOCIATES, GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN. **CIVIL AND GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING** STS CONSULTANTS/AECOM, GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN. **LIGHTING DESIGN** LIGHT THIS!, BOSTON. **SOIL SCIENCE** PINE + SWALLOW, GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS. **ELECTRICAL AND PLUMBING** CLARK DIETZ, GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN. **COST** WF BAIRD ASSOCIATES, MADISON, WISCONSIN. **GENERAL CONTRACTOR** THE SELMER COMPANY, GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN.

# URBAN ECOTONE: DIALOGUES ON THE CITYDECK

John Dixon Hunt  
University of Pennsylvania

On either side of the Fox River in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Stoss Landscape Urbanism, the Boston-based practice established by Chris Reed, has created two urban ecotones that each facilitate a series of interesting and contemporary dialogues between the past and the present, between the river and its city, between land and water, and between green spaces and buildings.

## SEASONAL LIFE

Within the context of Green Bay, the dynamics of life display a full seasonal repertoire, where climate, foliage, and daily habits keep pace with the changing year. Despite its place name, there are traditionally *four* colors for the seasons: white, light green, dark green, and yellow/brown. Wisconsin enjoys all these, along with the more subtle modulations of color and life as people negotiate these altering conditions. And the abundant algae that colors both Green Bay itself and the river that flows into it are another kind of green, strikingly so when propelled by a strong wind from the northeast, the “seiche” reverses the flow and colors the river itself.

But there are also other modulations beside the colors of the seasons—between present and past, between city and countryside, and between dry land and water, all of which intersect in their turn, and differently, with the seasons and community life. To address these

exchanges, and to perceive how *changes*—which are *the* fundamental aspect of all landscape architecture—Stoss Landscape Urbanism has proposed, and is establishing, a new character for each side of the Fox River. The most obvious aspect of these changes is twofold: an ecological zone on the west bank and a diversified social life on the east. The latter site gives its name to the CityDeck.

## RIVER LIFE

On the eastern shore, between the Dousman Street and West Walnut Street bridges, existing buildings had largely turned their back on the river by the end of the twentieth century, or were empty, and redundant spaces were used for parking: the city that lay behind saw little interest in the river, with no relationship with the water, or paid no attention to its significance. The river, nonetheless, had been the lifeline of this community since the seventeenth century. A city such as Green Bay, with a river, has a very distinct edge, for self-evidently it has dry land and then there is wet water. It allows little treaty between them. I know of many other towns and rivers with a similar disinclination to believe in the other’s existence: like Rochefort in western France, famous for sailors returning from the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I also grew up in an English city—Bristol—famous above all for being the port



from which many Cabot ships sailed to the Americas, and while I loved to watch the ships (not much bigger than Cabot's vessels) navigate down the River Avon, the city itself had spurned the water's edge and repudiated the insertion of the water into its very heart; my only reason for visiting it was as a naval cadet visiting a former minesweeper that was CEMENTED to the bottom of the harbor! Both Rochefort and Bristol have regained the water and its relevance to the city that it used to serve.

Here at Green Bay, there are still freighters that ply the river and head out into Lake Michigan, and the sight of them and of the infrastructure that serves them—cranes and derricks, and the raised bridges—are an essential part of the place, past and present. But it is not just that the river here is now approachable, with walkways alongside it (not cantilevered high above the water) but accessible to those who stroll there, who can sit and watch the river traffic or even hang their legs over the edges of the overlooks. Small boats can use the river, there will be floats on the water, and small spaceship-like crafts can play on the surface.

#### WORK AND PLAY

By providing distinct space for pedestrians in the context of this working riverscape and facilitating necessary connections with surrounding trail and vehicular networks CityDeck creates a both an approachable and accessible riverfront for the City of Green Bay, WI.

## CITY LIFE

The river also dialogues now with the city: urban features are catalyzed by the CityDeck—cafés, condominiums, amphitheatres, offices, and retail outlets; then there are the social activities—concerts and children playing in the squirting fountains. And despite the fairly narrow width of the riverside strip (50–60 feet wide), the sense of interpenetration is further enhanced by the streets that emerge onto it, bringing the activity of the street to the water's edge. The bridges that bracket the area will also allow views into the new space as motorists and pedestrians cross the river. Moreover, the “strip” is not straight-edged at the water's edge, but pushes out with landing stages, docks for small craft, small inlets, and overlooks.

CityDeck revitalizes its hitherto barren edge condition between river and city, and does so visibly and eagerly. However, the relationship between history and present day existence is always harder for landscape architects to achieve (or even work for). “Authenticity” is a fraught word in both landscape and historic preservation, for the stigma of “nostalgia” haunts every attempt to reclaim vestiges of the past: the past needs to be made “new” (a famous *cri de coeur* of modernists, like Ezra Pound), not refashioned in a make-believe world of ersatz lifestyles and theatre scenery. The historical past of Green Bay consisted of fur trade and timber (then lumber and paper milling), and of course the ships that moved them outwards. Today, we still have the ships (reduced in number and as large as the river allows) and what furs might be seen are *faux* and sported by the seasonably fashionable or trimming the hoods of jackets in green and yellow. And then above all there is the pleasure of the wooden boards along the walkway, the material of the lovely series of wooden seats and benches, articulated in forms that allow

all manner of occupation—sitting and lying—allowing a great variety of people to achieve a kind of unobtrusive community along these structures. Anyone who has even a hint of the historical past will appreciate this eloquent woodwork, and its use *here* was deliberate and is particularly apt. Their steel underpinning and brackets, however, are visible and modern.

The past also evidenced the interplay of the original permanent settlement of white traders with the immense unexplored world of a larger American landscape. Now my fifty-year-old memories of a summer spent in the Wisconsin countryside are very nostalgic! Yet versions of that world are still palpable in the lawns and trees, along the eastern walkway, and will be much more evident when the ecological zone on the western bank is established. There, the ecology—new wetlands and stormwater processing terraces—is coextensive with their educational value. Today, we must learn to *see* and understand ecology as well as to know that it is there.

The local, and famous football team, the Green Bay Packers, have a reputation for being “cool” and unaggressive (see *The New York Times*, November 25, 2011, section B10). CityDeck is also, we could say, “cool,” “neat,” as well as elegant and wholesome.



#### DYNAMIC PROMANADE

All along the eastern shore's promenade a continuity of materials is activated by the dynamics of form and specifics of program. Spaces are scaled by fields of shade, subtleties of slope, and animations of surface. When hosting events the promade welcomes the community as a whole while offering the single user an intimacy of space that is made discoverable much more than pre-determined.



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## RETURNING TO THE RIVER


**The city of Green Bay is a wonderful city, but it had a lot of opportunity, I felt—in 2003 when I first ran for mayor—that we weren’t capitalizing on. First and foremost was that we had built this city with our backs to the river. The Fox River is a beautiful river, an active river. It’s got some shipping, some recreation, and just even with nothing it’s a beautiful piece of nature, a God-given resource that the city for whatever reason didn’t take advantage of.**

**[When we began this project] we talked about how we’re no longer going to have our backs to the river. [The river is] going to be the front of our city. And we’re going to activate the waterfront. We’re going to put in some public space. We’re going to put in some commercial, some residential. And it was really that discussion that obviously people bought into and that got the whole waterfront, riverfront development project going.**

**It was really after being elected and doing some research that we came across the talents of Chris Reed through a developer, Jim Vetter, who wanted to do some work here in Green Bay. And that’s what got this all going.**

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## THE START OF SOMETHING

Initially we held a series of charrettes and public meetings for input on what citizens would like to see in terms of public space along the waterfront and Chris led that. [The community] really just wanted to see us take more advantage of the waterfront. Whether it was a business person, a retiree, or young student; everyone simply said, *“Look, we need to do something down here. We need to have public space. We need to have events. We need to have a place where we can recreate, where we can exercise and we can hold events.”*

Some people did have ideas that we just couldn't do or that didn't make sense in our downtown. We couldn't replicate Chicago's Shedd Aquarium in our downtown or develop the river on both sides, similar to a place like San Antonio. But as much as people talked about these other projects, like Louisville and others, at the end of the day they wanted something unique and special—that was always clear. So, as much as they said so-and-so did this and so-and-so did that, we never set out to duplicate what other cities had done.

Our thought was . . . we are Green Bay. We wanted to focus on nature and the river. Obviously we wanted to increase use but we didn't want to overbuild it.





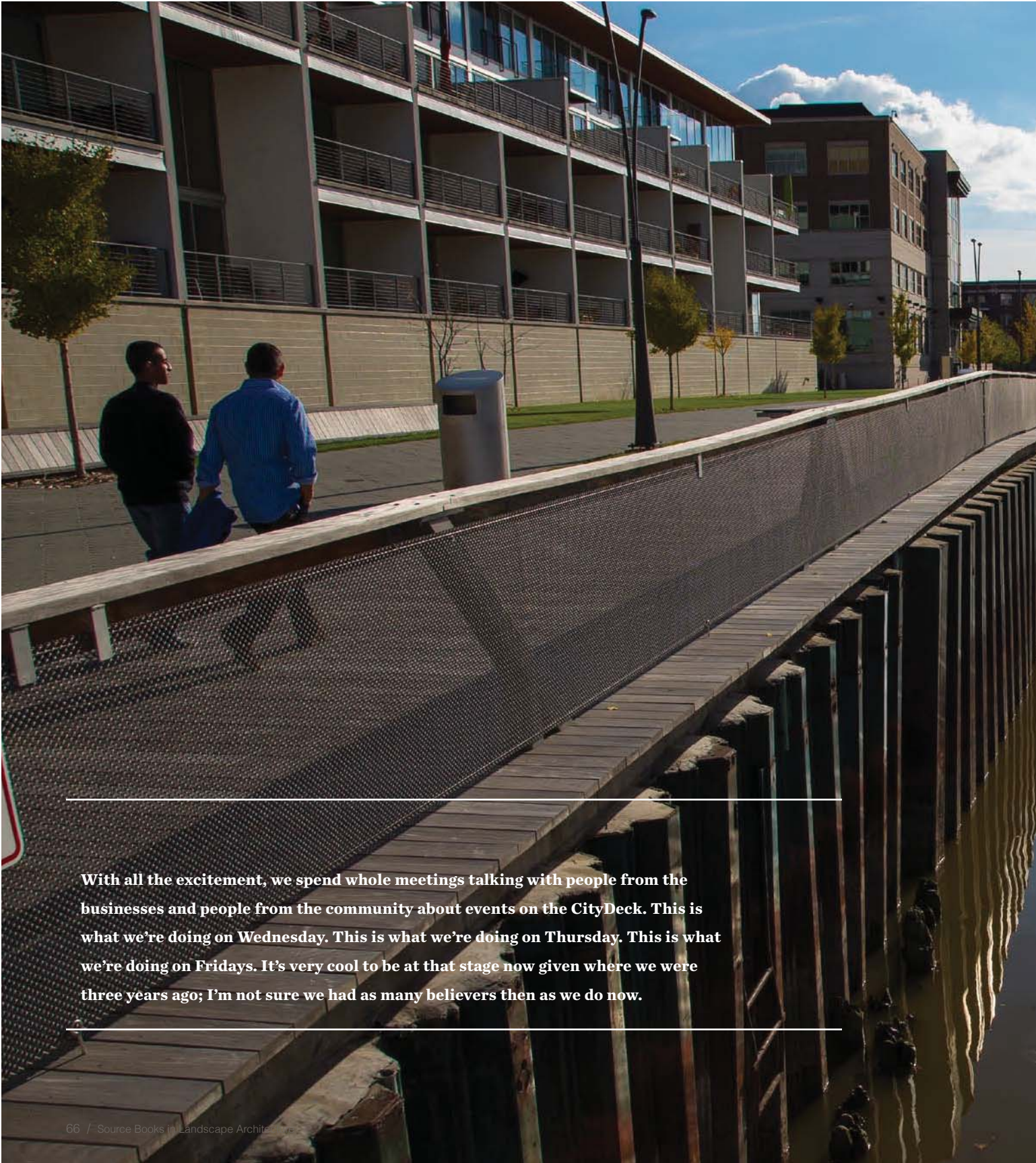


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## ABOUT TOWN

There was some work being done and development taking place knowing full well that we were going to develop the CityDeck along the waterfront; that we were going to activate the waterfront some way, somehow. But it was really when the CityDeck got going that there was more interest from some of the smaller businesses. Now some really exciting things are being added such as the Children’s Museum and Hagemeister Park, a waterfront restaurant. Neither of those things would have happened without the CityDeck being completed. Initially some people just weren’t as big as believers as many of us. So now that that project is solidified and people are using it, now the next phase is a little easier, and some of those that doubted the project are asking, *“Where’s the outdoor ice skating rink?”*

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**With all the excitement, we spend whole meetings talking with people from the businesses and people from the community about events on the CityDeck. This is what we're doing on Wednesday. This is what we're doing on Thursday. This is what we're doing on Fridays. It's very cool to be at that stage now given where we were three years ago; I'm not sure we had as many believers then as we do now.**

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Kids and families never came downtown before. Now, they can take the Fox River Trail. They can be on their bikes; it's safe. They can park their bikes. This generation, they're going to grow up with that. They're going to say, "*Yeah downtown's urban living—it's awesome.*" You don't have to live in the suburbs.

One of the best things is that my youngest daughter thinks Green Bay has always had a downtown and a CityDeck. I think that's really cool. My oldest daughter, now I think she's going to live in a city. I don't think she's going to have a car. I think she gets how good a city can be if it's designed right and has the amenities and if it's affordable. [That] means a lot to me.

And people talk about downtown and the river now. It wasn't that long ago that people were really questioning this project. And now, today, it is all about what new events are planned for the CityDeck. It's unbelievable that that's three or four years. It's great. I love it!

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