

**Best Land Reclamation Award Submission 2010
City of Pembroke, Ontario
Waterfront Park**

Eligibility:

The Pembroke Waterfront Park was developed on former industrial land that had become vacant wasteland and underutilized open space on the Ottawa River, just a block north of downtown.

History:

This beautiful Waterfront Park was once home to a sawmill and boat building yards during the late 1800's when Pembroke was a bustling frontier centre for logging. Situated on the Ottawa River, where the Muskrat River flows into it, the site was perfect for capturing the huge white pines that were destined for Britain and her Majesty's fleet of sailing ships. The Cockburn Pointer Boats, which were purpose built to ply the log filled waters and capture the huge timber cribs, were built along the edge of shore for more than a century as well.

As logging gave way to other industries, the sawmill eventually closed, as did the Cockburn Pointer Boat building centre, and what was left was over 50 acres of wood chips, splinters and sawdust piles. Between the late 1940's and 1998, a little marina operated at the water's edge, and a small parking area next to the river was cordoned off with a rusty steel guardrail to keep cars from rolling into it. A single baseball diamond was established in the 60's, and a little rotting wood gazebo provided a bit of shade to the few people who would come down and watch the river flow.

In fact, it was a spectacular setting with fantastic spots for viewing the sunsets...but it sat underutilized, underappreciated, and undervalued for decades until the late 90's when the Kiwanis Club first built a 1.5 km walkway and bike path along the river's edge. As plans and programs and projects started being developed to celebrate the Millennium. It was at this point, that then Mayor Les Scott asked community volunteer and visionary, Fred Blackstein, to form the Millennium project volunteer committee for the City of Pembroke. And the rest, as they say is "his story"! What evolved over the course of 1998 - 2000 was an incredible effort involving thousands of volunteers who came from across Renfrew County - not just the City of Pembroke -to lend a hand and create a much needed "people place" in the heart of the Ottawa Valley.

On July 1, 2000 over 20,000 gathered to celebrate their joint efforts. Together, they had built a 2000 board boardwalk, a 600 seat amphitheatre, a stunning bandstand, several picnic gazebos with historical displays and tableaus, several gardens, a woodland chapel and a fully accessible gathering place for community events and people of all ages.

But the work didn't stop on July 1, 2000. In fact, it has become an ongoing project, and the park has become the crown jewel of Pembroke, and indeed the entire region, with several additional installations over the last decade including: a children's playground, the Portage Sundial, a Timber Crib and Pointer Boat display, and a lovely Waterfall Garden. Still being shepherded by Fred Blackstein and his volunteers (including his wife Barbara, an artist and master gardener) there are more plans in the development stages to expand the gardens and to build on the notion of community stewardship, with various groups adopting gardens in the park and caring for them throughout the year(s).



Overcoming Challenges:

The first challenge to creating the park was some initial resistance by a small, but vocal, group of elderly citizens who were challenging any changes to the existing area. However, renowned for being inclusive, Fred quickly enlisted their help and sought their advice about some of the design elements and they soon became his “advisors” throughout the first two years of development.

The second challenge, and possibly the most threatening, was money. Established in partnership with the Canada Millennium Partnership Program, the initial municipal park reserve of \$85,000 was leveraged in 1999 to help create a park that’s current value is in excess of \$2 million. Through the ongoing use of volunteers, and students needing community service hours, much has been accomplished. A recent endowment was also anonymously donated to the Waterfront Park with the provision that the money be used to continue to enhance the park, and its accessibility for all people regardless of any special challenges they might possess.

Sustainability:

This past year (2010) it was formally announced that a new campus for Algonquin College will be built in 2011 at the Waterfront on 14 acres of land that is currently open space. The College is very excited to be a part of the Waterfront and vows to become a positive steward of the lands upon which the campus will be built. The students enrolled in the Forestry, Adventure Naturalist, and Police Foundations programs will all be part of the ongoing park maintenance, preservation and conservation efforts - a perfect community partnership between the college and the municipality.

Each spring and fall, the Pembroke Communities in Bloom committee, with the assistance of several community groups hosts a waterfront clean up, which has grown in the past decade to include several youth groups as well as local businesses. Service clubs, in particular the Kiwanis Club, have chosen the park as one of their primary beneficiaries, and have helped with tree plantings, and maintenance of the initial walkway and bike path that connects the Waterfront to Riverside Park to the west. As well, Algonquin Forestry students have used the park as an “outdoor lab”, and have helped with brushing, clearing and maintenance since the park was first developed.

Special programs, such as Waterfront Live! have been developed which provides free, local nightly entertainment throughout July and August (as well as outdoor movie night on Tuesdays) at the Amphitheatre and draws crowds of 300 - 600 people every evening. Local hotels receive the entertainment programs and send their guests down to enjoy the spectacular setting. Many enjoy dinner in downtown followed by an evening stroll - expanding the economic impact of the park as it has become a special destination for visitors and residents alike. As well, the annual Waterfront Festival is a music event held every August at the Waterfront which attracts over 10,000 people over the course of 3 days, drawing people to the park for great Ottawa Valley entertainment.

The gardens, which are focal points at key intersections of the park, are maintained by local volunteers, the Horticultural Society, and city Parks staff. The city maintains a parks budget and designates staff to ensure that the park is kept in a state of good repair. New plans include building community gardens to be “adopted” by community groups in an ongoing effort to maintain this beautiful site. Indigenous perennial species are encouraged, with the occasional use of annuals for a splash of colour. There have been over 2000 trees planted throughout the park since 2000, all indigenous to Renfrew County including red and white pine, sugar maple, and oak.

The success of Pembroke’s Waterfront Park has been a topic at several conferences and conventions, including the Ontario East Municipal Conference and the International Plowing Match, as other municipalities seek to duplicate the outstanding success of the Heart of the Ottawa Valley!

A recent article in the Pembroke Daily Observer provides a brief overview of the park’s development:

<http://www.thedailyobserver.ca/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=2713201>

Communities in Bloom
Best Land Reclamation Award Submission 2010
City of Pembroke, Ontario

The Waterfront Park



Supporting Materials: Photos, Press Clippings

Invitation to the Grand Opening of The Waterfront, July 1, 2000

*Thanks to All
who helped our
Millennium Dreams
come true...*

Canadian Millennium Partnership Program
City of Pembroke
Clouthier Construction
County of Renfrew
Greer Galloway Engineers
KI Pembroke
King's Sport
Kiwanis Club of Pembroke
Morris Thuenen Architects
Laurentian Valley Townships
Pembroke Fiddling & Step Dancing Assoc.
Pembroke Horticultural Society
Pembroke Kinettes
Pemco Steel
Royal Canadian Airforce (438 Wing)
Royal Canadian Legion (Branch 72)
Rotary Club of Pembroke
Star 96

Algonquin College Forestry Students
Direct Fasteners Ltd.
Cashway Building Centre
C. A. Reiche & Sons Lumber
Heideman & Sons
Pembroke & Area High School Students
Renfrew City Homebuilders Assoc.
Rossow Homecare
Shaw Lumber
Sheldon Davis Lumber
Sunset Nursery

*And to everyone who
purchased a board
or bench along
The Boardwalk,
our sincere thanks.*



the heart of the ottawa valley

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*As we enter a new Millennium
the City of Pembroke has chosen to
mark this unique occasion by turning
the downtown Waterfront into a place
where people can gather to celebrate.*

*Whether it's a morning stroll
along the Boardwalk, an afternoon
spent discovering the rich history of
our area, a quiet meditation at the
woodland chapel, or a concert under
the stars, our new Waterfront is a
lasting gift to the people of Pembroke.*

www.city.pembroke.on.ca

the heart of the ottawa valley

The Waterfront 2000!
Y2K eh!
prepare to party in pembroke



You're Invited!
Join us at
**The Waterfront
July 1, 2000**
as we celebrate
our past,
our present,
and our future
in the heart of
the Ottawa Valley!

the heart of the ottawa valley

Welcome to The Waterfront! *

RIVERWALK AMPHITHEATRE

Pembroke's home for entertainment at The Waterfront is carved from a specially created hillside and has eight levels, each one a sweeping arc of over 40m in length, to provide seating for 500. Using the ground level area doubles capacity to accommodate about 1000 spectators.

Three stairways lead to the upper levels, while wheelchairs are easily accommodated at ground level. Each level is supported vertically with attractive landscaping stones, and the horizontal part of each row is well maintained grass, with a stone border.

The Amphitheatre faces northeast, overlooking the majestic Ottawa River beyond The Bandstand.



Pick a Plank!
Choose your own board on The Boardwalk.

For only 2000 cents (\$20.00), you can pick your own plank, and have it inscribed with your name. There will be 2000 boards along The Boardwalk, as well as many benches and four gazebos, filled with historical displays, where you can stop and admire the spectacular view.

Find out how you can be a part of history, or pay lasting tribute to a friend or relative.

Pembroke City Hall
613-735-6821

There are 3 km of 4"x 4"s lying under The Boardwalk. 40,000 deck screws hold it all together, and if laid end to end, the boards would stretch 10 km!

What do you do with 250 tandem truckloads of fill? Build a hill for an Amphitheatre, of course!

The Bandstand

The multi-sided Bandstand is nestled within the circular arc of the amphitheatre. With a stage area of over 70 sq. m. it can hold large groups and orchestras as well as smaller bands and entertainment activities. Rail and pillar construction allows an excellent view of the stage from all levels of The Amphitheatre, including the ground level seating area. The Bandstand is fully lit, with floodlights recessed under the cathedral style ceiling illuminating the entire stage area.

Without a legion of volunteers and a community with spirit to spare, none of this could be built.

This is your new Waterfront. Don't miss it! Enjoy it!

the heart of the ottawa valley

the heart of the ottawa valley

the heart of the ottawa valley



The Waterfront is designed to respect and echo the logging history of the area. Square timber shade and picnic structures, and monuments including the timber crib and pointer boat are key elements.



Volunteers, the Pembroke Horticultural Society, City of Pembroke summer students (Bloomers) and Algonquin College students are critical to the maintenance and upkeep of the park.



The park is used year round for special events, including Canada Day, the Waterfront Festival, Snospre, and last December, the Olympic Torch Relay Celebrations.



The Waterfront is a four season destination for visitors and residents alike. A people place for the celebration of nature, quiet contemplation, family fun, and fitness. It's heavily used, and a tremendous source of well placed, well deserved, community pride.



Pembroke waterfront thriving in city's centre

Posted By TINA PEPLINSKIE

August 15, 2010

More than a decade after the waterfront was unveiled as the city's it has evolve into Pembroke's people place.

On any given night, especially during the summer months, the well used from children running around the playground to people boardwalk, others taking in the beautiful sunset from one of the enjoying live entertainment at the Riverwalk Amphitheatre.

The whole thing started as the vision of then Mayor Les Scott who committee dedicated to coming up with a project to celebrate the create something that could be used and enjoyed by everyone in the years to come, explained Fred Blackstein, volunteer co-ordinator for waterfront beautification. "The thinking was that we have this we didn't have a waterfront," he said. The key to the success of the was built for the people by the people.

Examples of the support garnered by the committee include the picnic tables which were constructed by high school students, giving ownership in the park, and many professionals who donated time develop plans and sit on committees. Making it all possible was the volunteer committees, focusing on everything from construction to environment and the acoustics of the bandshell.

The chapel was the first component of the project, completed in prior to the large unveiling July 1, 2000. It is still used regularly for and church services.

Construction for the main components, including the 2,000-board boardwalk, amphitheatre and bandshell, began in April that year and ran for 100 days with two volunteers shifts running each day. "The community really rallied around this project," Mr. Blackstein said. The boards were sold out almost immediately, which is a way of depicting and preserving the city's history particularly through the 1800s and early 1900s.

Prior to putting the shovel in the ground, committee members did a lot of research and travelled around Ontario visiting other waterfront communities gathering ideas. One of the biggest largest components was the amphitheatre, which was constructed using 250 loads of donated fill. Another challenge was building a bandstand that was not only attractive but also had good acoustics.

The committee was lucky enough to acquire the plans for the bandshell in Maple Ridge, British Columbia which had won a North American bandstand competition for its sound, Mr. Blackstein explained. The amphitheatre is home to a very successful summer concert series Waterfront Live which features local entertainers.

Depending on the weather, it attracts between 300 and 600 people a night. For those who are unable to get out of their vehicles, they are also able to enjoy the entertainment by tuning into a private radio station that can be picked up as far away as Miramichi Lodge. Initially, there was a lot of discussion about how to join the existing Kiwanis Way to the new boardwalk, which is how the courtyard was developed in the centre as an entry to tie everything together. Since the Millennium project was unveiled, expansion and improvements have er the years.

Additional components have include the construction of a boaters' comfort station which houses shower and laundry facilities, an extension of the boardwalk in 2003 to the parking lot to make the boardwalk accessible to everyone without having to go across the grass, the Portage Sundial was added in 2007, casting the time on a bed of crushed limestone, the timber crib, and most recently a waterfall was created near the amphitheatre along with a new area providing shade for nearby picnic tables.

Because the boardwalk is the largest deck structure in Eastern Ontario, it requires a lot of ongoing maintenance. This summer Ryan Labelle, a construction technology student at Bishop Smith Catholic High School is spending his time focusing on construction and carpentry duties such as replacing and securing boards. Ryan is being paid through donated money. That is one of the keys to the ongoing work at the waterfront, the donations that continue to flow. The city of Pembroke initially earmarked \$85,000 from its parks budget for the project, which was used to leverage other grants so the expansion had no impact on taxpayers. The current value of the waterfront is estimated at \$1.5 million.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the park this summer, additional upkeep and maintenance was undertaken, including new edging for the gardens, additional mulch and pruning of trees. Mr. Blackstein noted the visit from the international Communities in Bloom judges also triggered the work.



Millennium project

different areas are strolling along the many benches or

struck a volunteer Millennium and community for the ongoing beautiful river but project is that it

benches and them a sense of and energy to hard work of 14 history, the

1999 as a test run outdoor weddings

As the number of visitors to the waterfront increased over the years, so did the request from other municipalities that were also planing improvements to their waterfronts. Most recently, Mr. Blackstein was in Quyon, Quebec, where they are embarking on the a heritage boardwalk. Peterborough also has recently built a bandshell similar to Pembroke's and the Niagara Region boasts a brand new boardwalk in Charles Daley Park near St. Catherines which is a direct copy of the Pembroke facility, he noted.

The next and most significant improvement in the area will be the construction of the new Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley campus on the land adjacent to the amphitheatre. Mr. Blackstein believes the college is good for the waterfront and the waterfront is good for the college. The connection between the college and the waterfront is not a new one, however, as he noted Algonquin College students and staff were on hand for the first volunteer shift to begin construction on the boardwalk and said the forestry students continue to be a resource for various projects at the waterfront.

From the college's point of view, the new campus will forge a greater linkage between Pembroke's downtown and its waterfront. "As a people place it will be both an attraction and an asset to the waterfront creating more reasons for people to spend time in the area, and thereby creating new business opportunities for merchants," said Jamie Bramburger, manager of community and student affairs at Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley. He believes the college has the potential to enhance existing community events such as the Pembroke Waterfront Festival or the Old Time Fiddling and Step Dancing Competition. He encourages people to imagine activities taking place at the college, whether they be an art show, craft fair or music lessons for inspiring musicians.

"The college will be an asset to the community, beyond the teaching and learning that takes place during regular business hours on campus," he added. Since December, a large billboard has been on display indicating it is the future location of the college and that the college will be open in the fall of 2012.

Although construction isn't slated to begin until next spring, there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes, noted college dean Karen Davies. This is the first time she has been involved in a project of this magnitude and she is surprised by the number of small details that must be considered. "We are starting to see the process take shape," she said, overlooking the land where the college will be built. She said everyone is engaged in the process and as the design is closer to being finalized the college has every intention of giving members of the community an opportunity to view the plans and make comments. "People will have an opportunity to see what we're designing, but we're not there yet," Ms. Davies said.

As the college recruiters begin recruiting students for the fall of 2011, they will be promoting the new campus for students enrolling in two-year programs as they will begin their second year in a brand new building, Mr. Bramburger noted. He hopes the beauty of the area will attract students and parents, and create expanded tourism opportunities for the city as more people learn about what a great place Pembroke is.

When the college set out to build the new college at the waterfront, a \$36-million price tag was set for the project, with \$2.5 million being raised through a capital campaign. To date about half of the money has been raised. Helping to kick-start the fundraising was the service clubs that stepped up and committed money almost immediately. "These clubs are well-respected in the community so it helped to get individuals involved as well," Ms. Davies said. "Every donation helps us meet our target."

Tina Peplinskie is a **Daily Observer** reporter

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