

CROSSING THE DIVIDE : THE REDEVELOPMENT OF GALT

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SSEF Competition



Cambridge, Grand River

“Core Areas, traditionally known as downtowns, are unique and important components of all cities. They are places that clearly identify one city from another, and often where we take visitors to show them our history, accomplishments, and community identity. Core areas also offer us unique environments in which to live, work and play; offer places that are compact and oriented to people; contain a mix of diverse uses; possess a wealth of historical architecture; and are often built in interesting landscapes. Perhaps most important, people often measure the health, vitality, and quality of life of the overall city by the downtown core areas.”

The City of Cambridge is made up of many unique neighbourhoods and communities, with arguably the most unique place being it's Galt City Centre. The City of Cambridge has been committed to revitalizing this core area since 1998. The Cambridge Revitalization Program is based on the following principles: to approach revitalization in a comprehensive and integrated manner and to account for the different needs and features of each core area. It is this 'Revitalization' of the city that will foster the cities enormous potential for a wide range of activities and functions, which it has not even begun to seek it fully. There is a need in Galt to create a connection to the riverfront, the address and initiate more public amenities, and to marry the opposing sides of the river that strongly feel the divide the river brings with it.

“All development responds to cycles. Just as the United States actively attempted to reestablish the life and viability of its cities’ downtown centers during the 1970’s, today a major new thrust is underway to reclaim those waterfronts from which the entire country grew. After turning our backs on these valuable assets for almost three to four decades and allowing industry and transportation to segregate us from the water’s edge, we are now busy trying to restore what was there to begin with, but also to create even broader uses and activities that will contribute to and raise the overall quality and image of community life.” (Torre, vii)

When a Downtown is presented with the opportunity of having a river run through it, it may choose to either embrace it or to disregard it. In the case of Galt, the river waterfront is underused and ignored. Seldom can a local resident be spotted fishing by the edge of the river, rather it is more frequently used by the homeless if it is used at all. A city, which uses its waterfront successfully, creates places for opportunities for commerce, residential development, recreation, and various industries with a focus on the pedestrian.

“As a hub for every type of transportation, the city at the water’s edge is bombarded constantly by a range of stimuli of foods, goods, systems, people, and vessels, requirements, and technologies such as bulkheads, sea walls, drainage, electrical, transporting devices, and the like. The development of an adequate response of a unique society, one which far more readily accepts change and, in fact, demands a greater diversity. This response creates a cohesive but broad based culture.” (Torre, 3)



Cambridge, Grand River

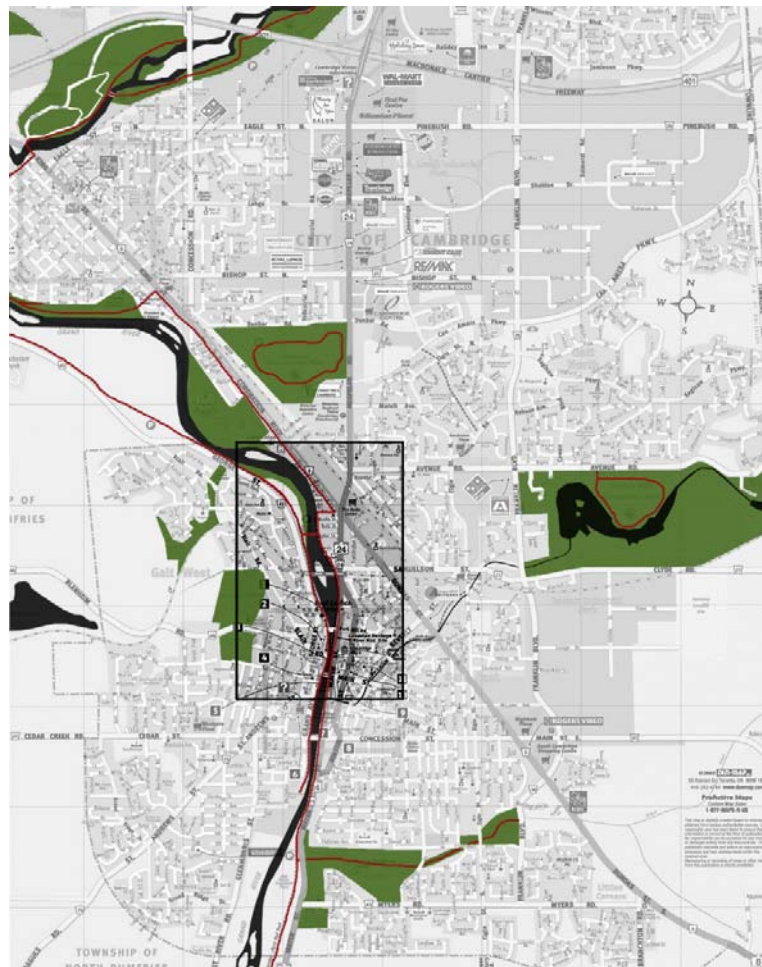
It must be with the motion of the city to provide a focus on the asset of water for recreational purposes, rather than issues of land-use, zoning, liability, security, access and circulation that are only accommodating to only the water's industrial and transportation requisites. The proximity of the bridge to a residential area and street is a concern, as is the park on the end of the river located near the Rowing Club with respect to liability and weather concerns (i.e. flooding). However, "the interaction of the man and this [river's] edge has been the basis of a special relationship, one often characterized by potential danger but also by abundant rewards. The cosmopolitan richness and diversity of [these] cities results from the desire to live at the edge despite impending weather crises and other catastrophes... But amid these and other impending events the cultures respond with an increased vibrancy of life, a desire to live for the moment."(Torre, 2) With the addition of the bridge and accompanying parks at the eastern side, a major attempt is being made to bring the public to the water's edge. The public will no longer be able to ignore the great amenity of the river.



Cambridge, Pathways

To the credit of the city, there are presently several public amenities. The provision of these amenities such as public walkways, bike trails, parks and is very important to a city. Olmsted writes, "Wherever in the world, as an incident of the highways and wharves along its riverbanks, a city has provided opportunity for the people to walk and sit under pleasant conditions where they can watch the water and the life upon it, where they can enjoy the breadth of outlook and the sight of the open sky and the opposite bank and the reflections in the stream, the result has added to the comeliness of the city itself, the health and happiness of the people and their loyalty and local pride." (Torre, viii)

Currently in Galt, there are prominent Trans Canada trails that run throughout the city, as well as several other smaller trails for biking or hiking. Also there are small public parks located throughout the city, with a few just outside the downtown and a couple within it. There needs to be more public space in the downtown, with a focus on the pedestrian.



Cambridge – Trans Canada trails and parks

“In most cities, parks and playgrounds take up large amounts of land. For that reason alone, they have a major impact on the development and character of every city. The idea that parks can spur the improvement of the surrounding city has at times provided equally compelling rationale for public investment. While this strategic approach to investment in parks has taken different forms depending on the city, it usually has been for one of three purposes: initiating urbanization at specific locations, altering land use patterns in surrounding locations, or establishing a comprehensive system that could shape the very character of city life.” (Garvin, 32)

In the case of Galt, the purpose of providing more public amenities, especially near the water, would be all three reasons. In the midst of all of the public amenities provided, there is no river connection for the pedestrian. All of the bridges present are for automobiles, with sidewalks along the edges, most without a division between the road and sidewalk creating a dangerous situation. The location of the bridge would not only begin with a public park, but would link two Trans Canada trails. Currently, there are only these automobile bridges for a pedestrian to cross the river. The addition of a pedestrian bridge would be a step forward in the city, and would provide a solid stepping-stone for the improvement of public amenities.

The addition of the bridge is not only an attempt to connect to the two Trans Canada trails with a pedestrian bridge, but it is also symbolic of the connection that would occur between the opposing sides of the river, that are currently distinctly different. On the east, there is a wealthy residential neighbourhood, while the opposing side houses the immediate downtown core, which consists of predominantly deserted buildings. There is also a major economic difference that can be noticed between the two sides of the river. Examples of cities that are under the same predicament but embrace their waterfront include an example such as Budapest. Though seemingly separate at first, especially in terms of nomenclature (Buda and Pest are the two sides of the river), the city is woven together through six bridges, as well as an intricate public transit system that connects both parts of the city. Once there, one cannot feel the divide between the two parts of the city, and crossing the several-hundred-meter-long bridge is no feat, as hundreds of pedestrians cross it daily. In Galt, a connection needs to be made between the two sides of the river that extends beyond a simple automobile traffic connection. It is the attempt of this project to express this 'crossing' through public amenities and literal connections.

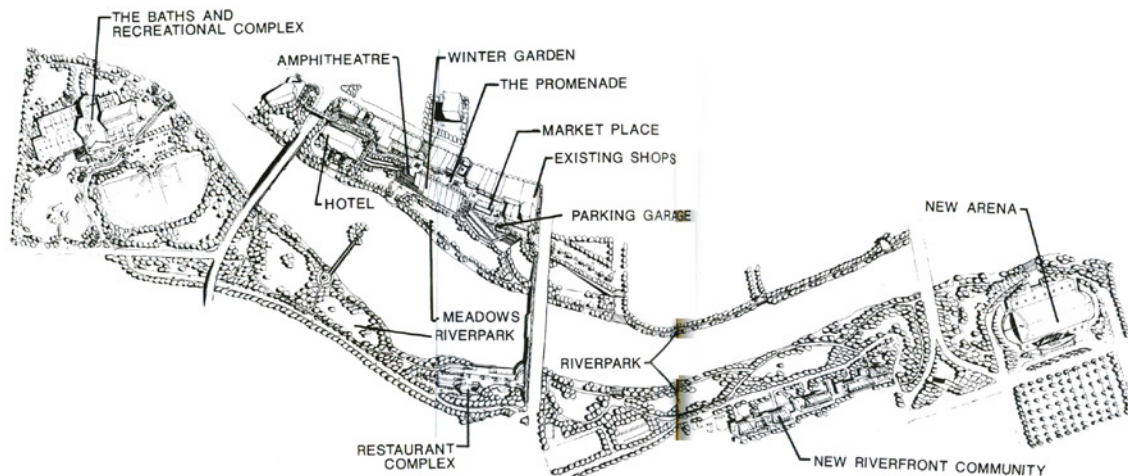


Missoula

An example of a successful city is Missoula, a small town in Montana. It enjoys the resources of a brisk river running through its core and along its edge. In this city, history has allowed recreation to develop while remaining basically unprogrammed. The city held a competition to develop a new waterfront. This new comprehensive waterfront would be one that would create new activities and also include elements with which the new development would be able to finance itself. The area prior to improvement included underused riverfront with the downtown retail's service area backing up to an existing park. There was also a lack of parking space, as well as proper access to the river.

The proposed plan attempted to correct the commercial core area's lack of orientation toward the river by placing a major promenade at what previously has been the rear of the buildings. This would create a second storefront while double-loading the area with additional facilities that would step down to the river's edge. The new elevation allows for a three storey parking garage below grade, which would provide needed access and parking to the marketplace, the promenade, and the park. The steps down also create an amphitheatre, which would display the river and park in the background.

The focus of the overall development is the Winter Garden. The attempt was to make the development useable year-round. Other important contents within the plan included a recreational complex featuring a hot-spring bath and a sauna; a riverfront community; and a 20,000-seat arena. These will serve mainly the regional population and make Missoula a magnet recreation city. Events now held in the city include festivals, kayak races, holiday celebrations, concerts, theatre, and sports events. There is also a great increase in tourism, as well as an overall return of the city to the riverfront.



Missoula Plan

Cambridge is situated in the most prosperous, highly industrialized area of Canada. It has transportation advantages that clearly point to business opportunities. Over the past several years, Cambridge has demonstrated rapid improvements reflecting the economic growth in all sectors of the community including industrial, commercial and retail, housing, public health and social services, education, recreation and tourism. However, it has not even begun to take the necessary motions to make its potential a reality. It is the hope that the over all health, vitality, and quality of life of citizens can be revitalized with an embrace of the riverbank, an emphasis on public amenities, and a connection of the overall downtown area.

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