

## **WATERFRONT PROJECTS**

### ***Willingdon Pier / Performance Bandstand / Discovery Centre***

At the interim workshop with the ACE committee in May, three solid concepts were proposed for development at Willingdon Beach Park that can offer dramatic benefits long term for tourism, the waterfront development, arts and culture and the community at large. All three scored at or near the top of the range of ideas reviewed and all were short-listed for business case development.

Since then, many people, within and outside the community, including several in the "attractions" business have agreed that these are "very big" ideas for Powell River, and, that together they can have a profound affect on re-defining the image of Powell River, on attracting tourism, and adding to the arts and cultural wealth of the community. They were seen to be potential "signature" attractions in the marketing of Powell River.

It is recommended that these concepts be housed within the Waterfront Development Corporation for inclusion in the overall waterfront development scheme.

These three concepts will require substantial funding to create and, once established, will not offer any significant revenue potential. Their value is represented by the long-term benefits they bring to the image and fabric of the community, to tourism marketing, and to enhancement of Willingdon Beach. Funding should be possible from within the commercial development opportunities along the length of the Powell River waterfront.

We have amended our thinking on both the pier and performance bandstand concepts to some degree and believe that we have added focus and value by doing so. The Discovery Centre concept remains close to our original thinking. Each are detailed below in terms of design considerations, timing, cost estimates (to the degree possible), and programming. Given a likely timetable of 5+ years for the development and implementation of the various waterfront development projects, we have assigned priorities to these concepts and provided recommendations on staging their entry into community marketing and arts and cultural programming as early as next year.

### ***Willingdon Pier***

Of the three concepts, the Willingdon Pier with the carousel at the end is the first priority, because of the immediate impact it can offer to the image and tourism marketing of the area. We propose that PRREDS and the new Waterfront Development Corporation conduct a design and engineering study as soon as possible to determine the feasibility and cost projections for this project. A preliminary estimate for such a study is in the range of \$60,000 and it would take an estimated 6 months to complete.

Ideally, the pier would be constructed during the next 2 years and ready to open for the summer of 2005. The design features of the pier, once confirmed, could be featured in marketing promotional materials and programs going into the summer of 2004 to help promote image marketing and build anticipation inside and outside the community.

We have come up with a design concept for the pier that is unique, striking, and practical. It ties nicely into the music theme recommended as a key element in the positioning of the community,

and offers excellent opportunities to showcase arts and cultural programming. It will set Powell River apart from other communities and will be talked about and promoted for years to come. The proposed design is based on a musical bass clef as shown below:



Extending off the rock berm now in place on Willingdon Beach, a fixed pier in the shape of a bass clef would be built heading outward and curling back towards shore. Beginning at about 5-6 metres in width at the start, it widens to perhaps 15 metres at it's widest, thereby providing a venue for arts and craft shows and musicians along the way. The length is substantial, to perhaps 200 metres. The existing carousel sits dramatically on the inner pod at the end of the curl and operates seasonally. The two pods, extending off shore from and linked with walkways to the main pier, offer additional viewpoints, a fishing pier, a concession stand or a staging area for accessing the proposed dive site under consideration.

The natural shape provides protection to the beach area to the left of the pier entrance and affords space inside the curl, and inside the arms linking the two pods for the provision of short-term moorage to attract islanders and passing boaters. We see the pier being built of wood from the area and set on pilings imbedded in the ocean bottom. The design will feature local architecture and culture, including the Sliammon Nation, and the continuation of the musical theme in lighting standards and railings.

Many people in the community commented on the loss to Powell River when the former pier was destroyed and expressed a desire for its return. This Willingdon Pier delivers on that desire in very dramatic ways. As the "signature" image for community marketing it will help re-define the positioning of Powell River and set it apart of all others. This is a priority project for Powell River to embrace.

### ***The Performance Bandstand***

During the early stages of the project, while interviewing people in the arts and cultural community and assessing the range of existing performance facilities, we were convinced that a performance stage at Willingdon Beach would be the one new venue to recommend for the foreseeable future. That led to the concept of a floating stage positioned on the water and in front of the old arena location, set to take advantage of the potential of natural amphitheatre seating on the banks. This stage would be designed to present concerts and community events. The feasibility was based on the current use of a barge for annual fireworks presentation with storage within the concrete ships breakwater. The concept included the possibility of attaching a performance stage to the pier with the ability, through some sort of mechanism, to move the stage from the pier into position in front of the beach for performances and back again for storage.

We have concluded, for the reasons outlined below, that better options exist.

- After observing the tides at work in the beach area, we concluded that there were many technical challenges to operating a stage in that area, to the degree that the concept should be re-thought.
- The idea to re-create a pier at Willingdon Beach, in the unique design recommended, and with the carousel at the end is a big concept. We felt that the stage could not be added into that design effectively and would detract from the impact.
- Given that the main purpose of the stage was for concerts and other musical presentations, we concluded that a better, and simpler concept was available on land within the existing park area.

Therefore, the recommendation is now to build a more traditional "bandstand" within the Willingdon Beach area on a site to be determined in conjunction with the Waterfront Development Corporation proposals for park and commercial development within the area. The design feature of the bandstand, either a gazebo style or shell style, or hybrid between the two, needs to be determined, depending on the possibilities afforded by the site conditions. To maximize use, drainage will be important for the audience, as will be the types of seating offered. Cover will be important for the performers as will support facilities such as washrooms, storage, access, etc. Sound will need to be well handled, both monitors for the performers and enhancement for the audience. Lighting is also a key consideration for evening performances. The assumption is that concerts offered are free to the public so no box office or lobby area is required.

The concept is that this would be a purpose built, mostly wood structure using local materials and perhaps volunteer labour. The costs will be determined from the size of the facility and from the site conditions that prevail. An estimate of \$100 per square foot is suggested, to include the venue, performer support areas, technical gear, seating and landscaping. For a 3,000 square foot facility, that would represent \$300,000 before consideration of donated materials, or volunteer assistance. The feasibility study, sound and lighting consultants and design costs and contingency will add an estimated 25% for a total of \$375,000, before consideration of donated materials or labour.

From a timing point of view, it is recommended that this project be integrated with the overall waterfront development planning with a target for completion by the summer of 2005.

This venue would be a significant addition to the arts and cultural offerings in the community, both for residents and visitors. It can take full advantage of the current music calendar in the community, and the new initiatives underway by the Academy of Music, such as the Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific, Victoria Symphony Orchestra Residency, and the proposed Jazz Festival. It also becomes a venue to showcase the wealth of local musical talent in the community on a summer schedule of events.

### ***Discovery Centre***

A new high technology, interactive showcase "Discovery" or Welcome Centre has been recommended to eventually replace the existing Visitor's Centre and outdated information deliver system (brochures, trade shows, etc). The location proposed is at Willingdon Beach at the corner of Alberni Street and Marine Avenue, to be provided for by Waterfront Development Corporation within proposals for the development of the old arena site and extensions to the

Willingdon Beach park amenities. The ultimate design, funding and delivery of the Centre and timetable for implementation are dependent on those development plans.

We envision the location at the site incorporating 3 floors of space with the main floor, directly off street level, encompassing a small theatre and several interactive plasma screen story-telling stations showcasing the attributes of what the area has to offer. An upper floor would house marketing offices and meeting areas for an expanded community marketing team. A lower floor would feature a community gallery designed to feature the arts and cultural talents within the region.

### *Programming and Content*

Assuming a facility can be provided to the community through the waterfront development the following guidelines have been developed for programming and content costs:

- An interactive presentation area can be designed to fit any size of space, as low as 500 square feet, but recommendations are for 2000+ square feet for planning purposes. The view is that each of the three floors envisioned in this case would require that space, thereby suggesting an overall facility of some 6000+ square feet.
- Creative costs for storylines, themes and visuals can cost upwards of \$100,000, depending on the degree to which these already exist in the community.
- The contents for a first class 2000+ square foot main presentation area, including the audio/visual equipment, theatre lighting, exhibits screens, story stations, fixtures, furnishings, installation, and the like, will run upwards to \$400,000.
- Maintenance and updating costs are additional and not estimated at this stage. However, the system can be managed, online, by the supplier and the image materials and stories have a general life span of 3-5 years.
- The design phase for content is estimated at some 8-10 weeks and the time estimated to complete the center programming is estimated at about 6 months.

### *Website*

A key element and partner to a facility is a virtual Discovery Centre web site, delivering the same content, over the net, to an audience worldwide. This is a significant opportunity now for Powell River, in anticipation of the delivery of a Willingdon Beach facility in the future.

For introduction in the spring of 2004, we recommend a complete make over of the Discover Powell River web site to create a virtual Discovery Centre, with interactive "story stations" and using all current technology available. The material content for such a make-over including storylines, and imagery will flow out of the re-branding and strategic marketing planning process that has been proposed. It should include all the "positioning pillars" of Powell River: adventure sports and recreation, gateway to the beauty of the region, life quality, arts and culture, and the Sliammon Nation.

The estimated cost for this project is estimated at \$60,000, including creative and high band width "flash" technology. For an example of this technology, go to [www.storydriven.com](http://www.storydriven.com). The company, Envisioning + Storytelling, behind that web site, is considered one of the best in the field. An HTML version, deemed necessary in this application, would add costs of about \$15,000 and hardware improvements like a new server might add another \$5000 for a total project cost of \$80,000.

### *Visitor Centre Upgrade*

Another opportunity in the interim, before a new facility is available, is to update the current Visitor's Centre on Marine Avenue. It could be updated and expanded to encompass the entire lower floor (with marketing staff relocated upstairs or elsewhere). In that additional space, interactive plasma "story stations" could be introduced to compliment the current written materials and to start the transition to a potential new site in a step-by-step process. A very preliminary cost estimate for this opportunity is \$50,000 to facility upgrades, and up to \$200,000 for equipment and programming. Timing is suggested for completion for the summer of 2005. However, if the new Discovery Centre facility can be delivered within a 5 year timetable, this opportunity should not be pursued.

Planning for a high quality Discovery Centre is considered a high priority, providing new and modern delivery systems to promote all the attributes of Powell River both on-line and on-site. It is an integral part of the overall recommendations to centralize and substantially upgrade and expand the marketing efforts on behalf of the region.

The starting point for the On-line Discovery Centre is now, with the ultimate goal being a new facility and tourist attraction on the Willingdon Beach waterfront, the central gathering point for the community and tourists.