

FINANCIAL POST

Saturday, June 13, 2009

Waterfront gets \$5.5M worth of 'eye-catching curves'

Presented by



Simcoe Wavedeck

Chelsea Murray, National Post

 A key piece in the ongoing remake of the Toronto waterfront was revealed yesterday: the flamboyant Simcoe Wavedeck, a \$5.5-million flourish of dark red wood and dramatic curvature.

"The people of Toronto have been demanding they have a public, open waterfront," said Mark Wilson, chairman of Waterfront Toronto, "and that's what we're giving them."

A similar deck was built at the foot of Spadina Avenue last year, and another will open at Rees Street in August, but the architect said neither come close to Simcoe's sensuality.

"This is the most explosive one with the most eye-catching curves," said Toronto-based architect Adam Nicklin, who worked with Dutch firm West 8 in designing the wavedecks. "The centre [Simcoe] is the emotional heart of the waterfront. Then, as you move out a bit, they get more subtle."

Before its renovation, the Simcoe slip sported crumbling cement curbs against a narrow Queen's Quay sidewalk. Now it's an inviting waterfront centrepiece that demands attention from passersby -- both for its drama and, possibly, its danger.

At its highest point, wood beams -- made of Canadian lumber -- curl nearly three metres over the water. Its two main humps rise so dramatically from a deep valley at its middle that people trying to walk up and down the slopes were quickly surprised at how steep they become.

Nearing the sidewalk, the waves step down incrementally -- mimicking crags in the Canadian Shield--for accessibility. A fish habitat was also built in the water beneath the deck's slopes. West 8 won the city's waterfront design contest in 2006 with their idea to create a continuous waterfront promenade, allowing people to walk on the lakeshore from Bathurst to Parliament. Keeping with the pedestrian theme, the firm also designed a series of foot bridges to connect the quays.

Similar projects -- including HtO park, the proposed Sugar Beach and the yet-to-be-approved

7/1/2009

Waterfront gets \$5.5M worth of 'eye-c...

Queen's Quay street revitalization project --are part of Waterfront Toronto's plans to reboot the downtown waterfront.

The rippling Simcoe Wavedeck was officially unveiled two weeks ahead of schedule after eight months of construction, by federal and city politicians in order to accommodate a Luminato Cirque du Soleil production this weekend. To promote the Cirque du Soleil show, tutu-wearing acrobats danced across the deck's smooth service during the ceremony and flamboyantly delivered the giant ribbon-cutting scissors to politicians.

© 2009 The National Post Company. All rights reserved. Unauthorized distribution, transmission or republication strictly prohibited.