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News

Public gets a chance to judge plans for lakefront

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Tom Breckenridge
Plain Dealer Reporter

Architects and planners are dreaming of a new North Coast Harbor, and the public is invited to judge their visions of a friendlier downtown lakefront.

Dozens of design teams are crafting makeovers of the harbor in a brainstorming competition sponsored by The Plain Dealer, Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative and the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

A panel of judges will select the most promising designs, and the public can make its choice Monday evening at Cleveland State University's Levin College of Urban Affairs.

The event is a way "to get ideas in the hopper and get the creative juices flowing," said Plain Dealer Editor Doug Clifton.

It is meant to pique public interest in the redevelopment of the lakefront and inspire new visions for North Coast Harbor, described as the "front door to Cleveland" by Cleveland Planning Director Chris Ronayne.

Some 50 architects, planners and artists have registered for The Lakefront Challenge, said Ruth Durack, director of the Cleveland Urban

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Design Collaborative.

They will focus on harbors and land bounded by West Third Street on the west, the edge of Burke Lakefront Airport to the east and Lakeside Avenue to the south. The area includes Cleveland Browns Stadium, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, the Great Lakes Science Center, the Steamship William G. Mather Maritime Museum and a bending stretch of the Shoreway.

Planners will consider retail, housing, green space and recreational possibilities, as well as the "edge" access - waterside boardwalks and promenades - that the public has said must be a top priority.

The timing is right for the event, Ronayne said.

The city is in the final phase of a master lakefront plan, focusing on the eight miles from Edgewater Park to Gordon Park. North Coast Harbor, the epicenter of the plan, could see new development next year. That would include the seven acres of Dock 32, which the city will open to public use after recently closing a deal with the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority.

The city has no plans yet to develop the property, although it has landed a \$1.5 million state grant to build a promenade there and build a lift or floating bridge for pedestrians that would link the dock and Voinovich Park.

Brainstormers will also focus on the harbor and a cluster of federal buildings east of East Ninth Street. The city and federal government have discussed moving the federal agencies, including the U.S. Coast Guard, there for years.

City planners also envisioned a pedestrian bridge that would link Mall C, next to City Hall, to the North Coast Harbor area.

Ronayne said the competition "might just inspire the imagination of developers and investors on the lakefront, and that has value to us."

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