



“A VISION FOR JACKSONVILLE”

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS JACKSONVILLE

CONTACT:

David L. Engdahl, AIA Emeritus

dengd@aol.com

Cell: 904-504-4447

Jacksonville, FL – May 10, 2021 – The Jacksonville Chapter of The American Institute of Architects (AIA Jacksonville) released today “[A Vision for Jacksonville](#)”, a short video summarizing a riverfront vision which a chapter team has been developing since 2015.

The AIA Jacksonville vision consists of a series of pedestrian activity nodes, perhaps twelve, developed along the riverwalks at key points with pedestrian links connecting from the river into the city. Activity nodes will have a Jacksonville-centric theme relating to the city’s history and culture. Each is envisioned to be centered around a 15- to 20-foot-tall icon relating to the respective theme.

All activity nodes will be anchored by a 100-foot-tall waveform Marker visible from one node to another. Lasers on the Markers will provide for light shows along the banks and connecting across the river. The AIA visioning team believes the Markers, in aggregate, will provide a uniquely Jacksonville riverfront identity both day and night.

The AIA vision is strictly that, a vision, not a plan or masterplan which mandates specific locations for the activity nodes, nor the specific story of Jacksonville history or culture to be featured at each respective node. The AIA vision provides a broad framework for all projects, past, present and future, featuring our Jacksonville story and engaging all constituencies in our community and visitors alike.

AIA Jacksonville is a chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) representing and serving its Florida members in Duval, Clay, St. Johns and Nassau Counties. Within these counties, AIA Jacksonville represents and serves more than 400 individual member architects, associates, and allied design professionals who are working in fields allied to architecture. For more information, visit www.aiajacksonville.org.

Headquartered in Washington, DC, AIA consistently works to create more valuable, healthy, secure and sustainable buildings, neighborhoods and communities. Through more than 200 international, state and local chapters, AIA advocates for public policies that promote economic vitality and public wellbeing. For more information, visit www.aia.org.

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Background and Summary

A Vision for Jacksonville, a short video, has been released by The Jacksonville Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Jacksonville) summarizing its five-year initiative focused on creating a unique framework and context for development of the downtown Jacksonville riverfront.

Link: www.AIAJacksonville.org

Background

A group of experienced members of AIA Jacksonville has been meeting regularly since 2011, organizing events and activities which facilitated their involvement and participation in the AIA, particularly engagement with the emerging design professionals (EDPs). Meetings included the current AIA chapter president and the leader of the EDPs. During these meetings, discussion of accomplishing a real project for the community was a constant topic.

In 2015, we discussed the many proposed large public and private projects planned along both banks of the St. Johns River downtown with no overall context or vision as to how they would fit together to create a composition which is unique to Jacksonville. Many of the projects were led by developers, whose planning was primarily focused on their individual projects and sites. We discussed how the magnitude of any of the projects proposed would not singly constitute a Jacksonville riverfront identity. Under the leadership of John Zona and Dave Engdahl, an AIA committee was formed to undertake the initiative of developing an overall river-focused vision for downtown Jacksonville.

Vision Summary

We began studying other well-known cities which were developed around a river, how the river was leveraged as the center of events and activities, and how the river tied into the city forming a comprehensive and unique whole. We compared the scale of those cities and rivers to Jacksonville. We reviewed the approved Northbank and Southbank Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) plans, which recommend beginning development at the riverfront and then progressively into the city.

The committee further pursued development of an initial vision conceived by architects John Zona and Dave Engdahl. This vision consists of a series of pedestrian activity nodes, perhaps twelve, developed along the riverwalks at key points, spaced about a 10-minute walk apart, with pedestrian links connecting from the river into the city. Activity nodes will focus on respective Jacksonville-centric themes relating to the city's history and culture. Each is envisioned to be centered around a 15- to 20-foot-tall icon relating to the theme. This vision creates a comprehensive framework into which existing, current and unknown future projects will fit on both sides of the river.



To visually connect the activity nodes along and across the river, each will be anchored by a vertical element, 100-foot-tall, which we designated a Marker. Markers will denote the activity node locations and will be visible from one node to another. After the group studied possible appropriate Marker images, architect-sculptor Engdahl created a water-focused design, a waveform sculpture which all Jacksonville constituencies can understand and to which they can easily relate. Lasers on the Markers will provide for light shows between Markers along the banks and connecting across the river. The AIA visioning team believes the Markers, in aggregate, will provide a uniquely Jacksonville riverfront identity both day and night.

In her role as District 5 Councilwoman and later as leader of the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA), Lori Boyer encouraged us, providing opportunities for us to make interim progress presentations of our vision to various City of Jacksonville entities and others such as the city consultant engaged to create the riverfront development standards. The concept of individual aspects of Jacksonville's unique story of history and culture as themes for the respective activity nodes emerged from our interface with Boyer. DIA adopted some of our ideas as the vision was evolving. *Arbus Magazine* featured our in-progress vision twice. We participated in charette work sessions in conceptualizing activity nodes for the USS Adams (now USS Oreleck), Friendship Fountain and the Times-Union Performing Arts Center. As the AIA committee work concluded, the team created a short video which summarizes its vision for Jacksonville.

The AIA vision is strictly that, a vision, not a plan or masterplan which mandates specific locations for the activity nodes, nor the specific story of Jacksonville history or culture to be featured at each respective node. The AIA vision provides a broad framework for all projects, past, present and future, featuring our Jacksonville story and engaging all constituencies in our community and visitors alike.

Team

Many members from AIA Jacksonville participated during development of the vision. We invited others from outside the AIA chapter to share their ideas. All time and expertise by the AIA team was contributed pro bono. A core group of nine was engaged throughout the visioning process.

Chris Allen, AIA

Tom Duke, AIA

Dave Engdahl, AIA Emeritus

Chris Flagg, ASLA

David Laffitte, FAIA

Ted Pappas, FAIA

Brandon Pouch, AIA

Alan Wilson, AIA

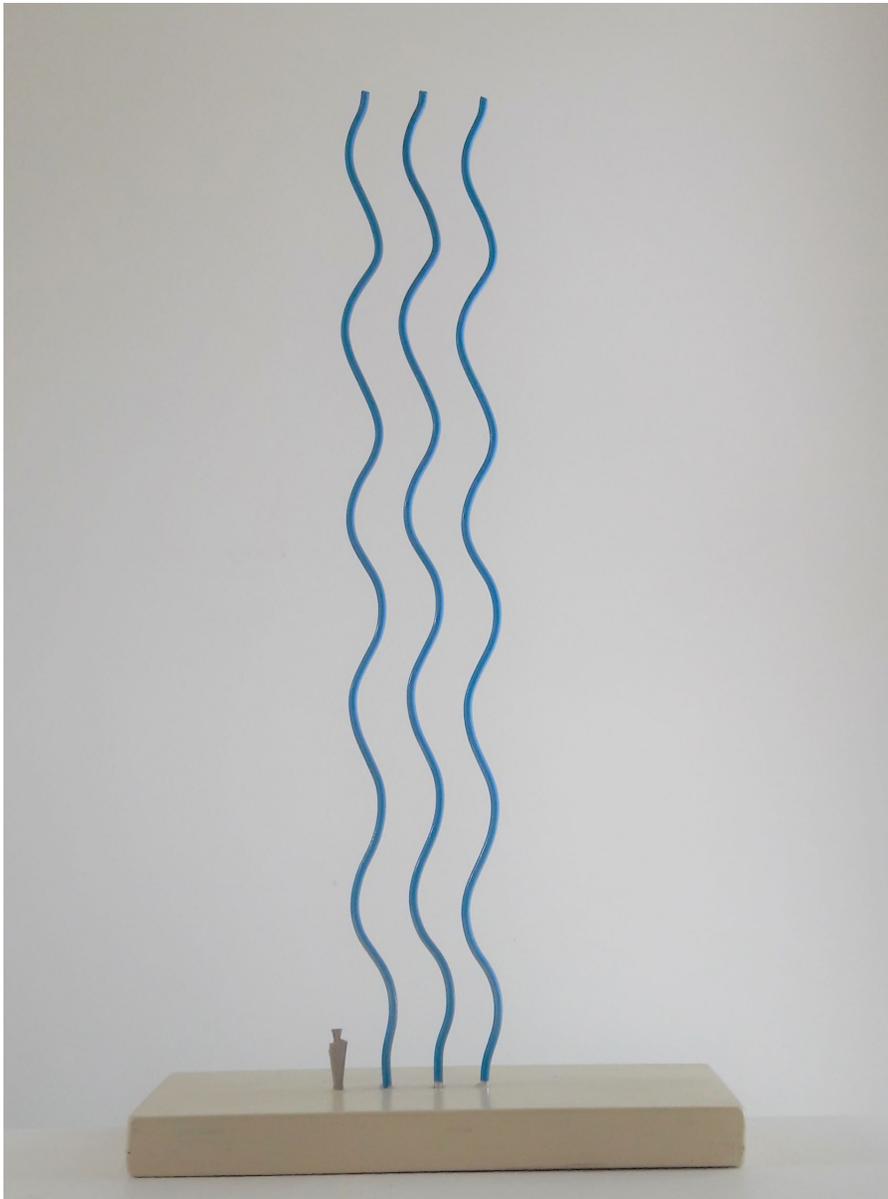
John Zona, AIA

In addition to the team listed above, architect Yves Rathle created early renderings of our vision. Susan Masucci of ruckus advertising + design joined the team pro bono the past two years to assist with presentation and promotion. We also engaged CROP Creative Media to produce the video. Architectural illustrator Ron Garnett produced the artist concept sketches of possible themed activity nodes.

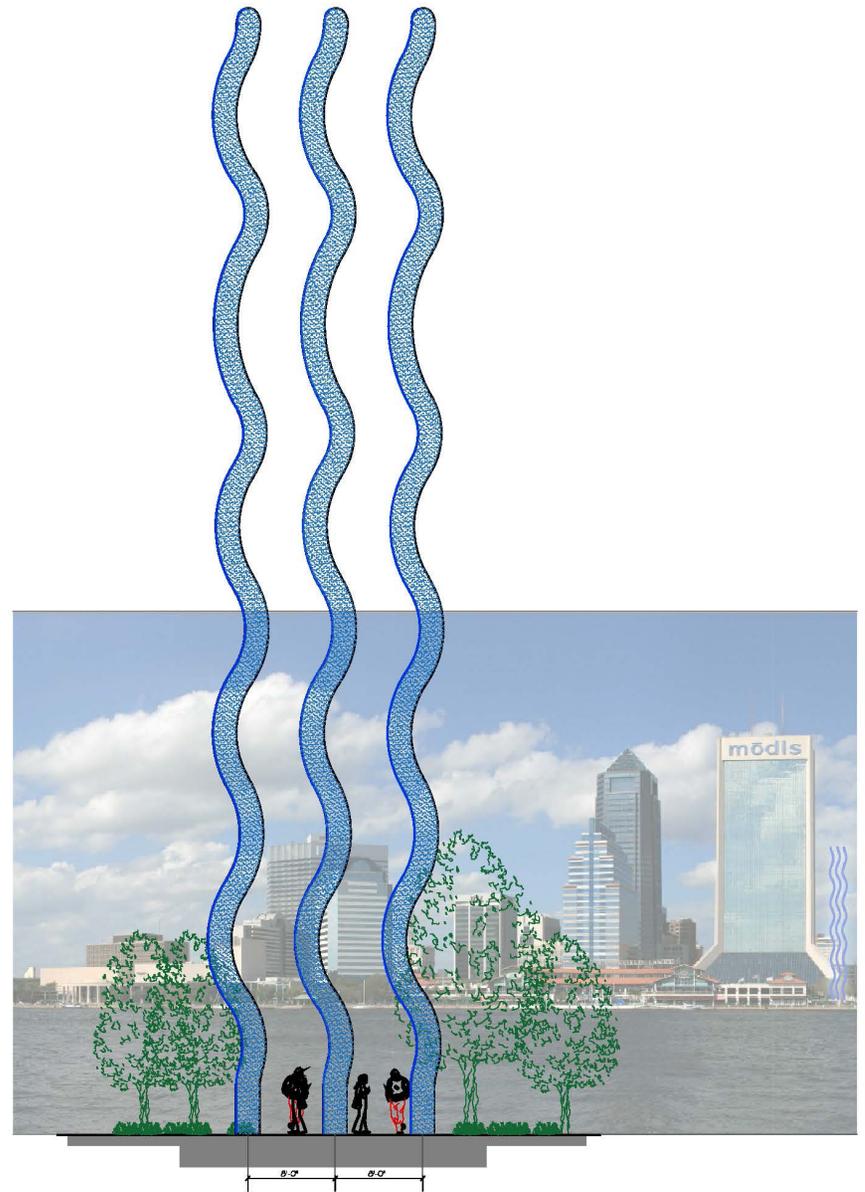
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Email: dengd@aol.com | Mobile: 904-504-4447



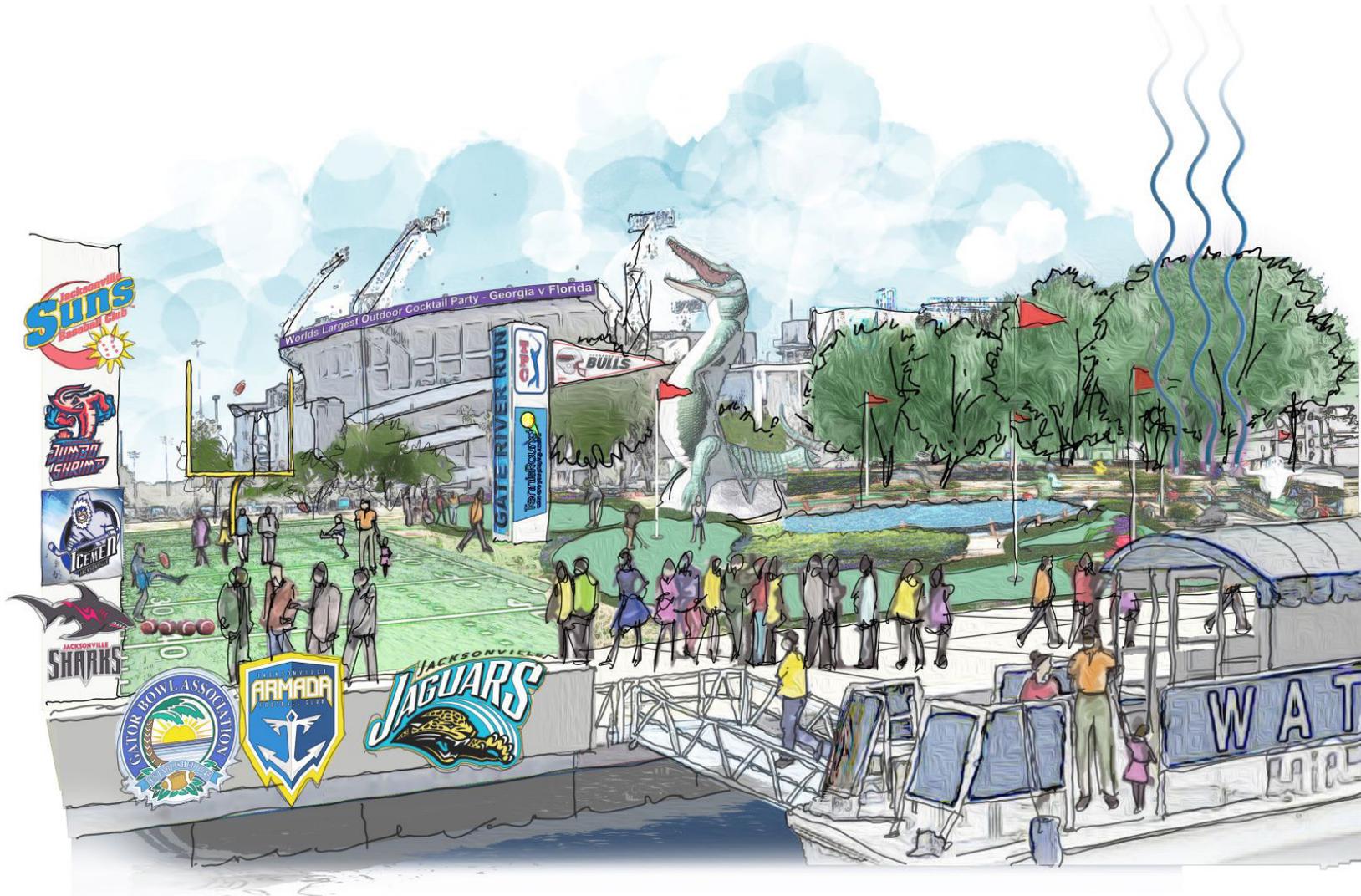
Model of Marker, shown to scale



Marker Schematic



Node Markers across St. Johns River



Concept of Sports Activity Node



Concept of Railroads Activity Node



Concept of United States Navy Activity Node



Concept of Music Activity Node



Concept of Health & Wellness Activity Node



Concept of Historic Dixieland Park Activity Node



AIA Vision for Jacksonville: Laser Light Show



AIA Vision for Jacksonville: Laser Light Show



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