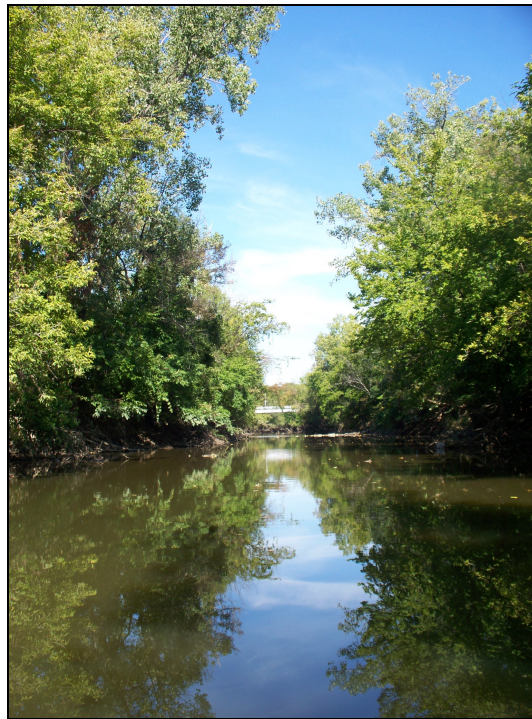




# **President's Commission on the River 2007 Annual Report**



**Prepared by**

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Chair, President's Commission on the River**

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## **2007 ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

With the release of its report entitled *The River Runs Through It* to the President on December 15, 2006, the President's Commission on the River entered 2007 with the aims to identify priority recommendations from the report, initiate project development, and develop associated fund raising efforts. This report provides a summary of the progress on those activities by the Commission and the major accomplishments of the Commission in 2007. The Commission would like to recognize the funding and staff provided by Institutional Advancement, the ongoing support of the Office of the President, and the continued assistance of Dr Dan Johnson, President Emeritus, and Penny Thiessen, Administrative Support.

### **Project Development**

The December 2006 report presented a large number of projects and recommendations that could be undertaken to make many improvements associated with the Ottawa River on campus. During 2007 the Commission continued discussion on many of these projects and decided to focus its efforts on the projects that represented the best opportunities for progress and that would have the great potential for completion. These projects include: Student River Plaza, Rocket Terrace (associated with the new outdoor entrance way to Savage Hall), and a Rain garden demonstration project. More details on these projects is provided within a subsequent section of this report.

### **Communication and Outreach Efforts**

The following activities were undertaken by the Commission in the area of communication and outreach:

- Sponsored and organized the first "Celebrate Our River" event from September 15<sup>th</sup> to September 20<sup>th</sup> which included participation in the community Clean Your Streams Event, a canoe trip down the Ottawa River, a display in the Student Union, a demonstration of a fish sampling, and a private reception; over 150 members of the UT community participated in these activities;
- An informational "postcard" was prepared outlining the important environmental aspects of the river and work of the Commission; over 1,000 copies were distributed including to more than 500 students in several environmental classes during the fall 2007 term;
- News articles on the work and events of the Commission appeared in the *UT News*, *The Independent Collegian*, *EarthWatch News*, and *The Toledo Blade*;
- Presentations of the proposed plans by the Commission for the Ottawa River were given at the 2007 Greening the Campus Conference (Ball State University) and the East Lakes Division, Association of American Geographers meeting (Michigan State University);
- In preparation for the September 15<sup>th</sup> reception for the Celebrate Our River Initiative, a brochure was prepared that included details on the fund raising efforts and conceptual designs for several projects. This brochure will become a distribution piece for potential donors and to information the community of the work of the Commission.
- Updates to the Commission's website ([www.utoledo.edu/commissions/river/index.html](http://www.utoledo.edu/commissions/river/index.html))

- The Commission Chair (and several other members) participated in various community projects and meetings including: the Toledo Rain Garden Initiative, Ottawa River Habitat Inventory Project by TMACOG, and the Secor Dam Removal Project (TMACOG, Village of Ottawa Hills, UT and BGSU faculty researchers, Ohio EPA, Maumee RAP)

### **Celebrate Our River Fund Raising Initiative**

With the assistance of staff from Institutional Development, a subcommittee of the Commission was established to develop an associated fund raising initiative to support the various efforts and proposed projects underway for the Ottawa River on main campus by the Commission. Central to this initiative was the organization of a reception held on September 15<sup>th</sup> in association with the visit of Robert Kennedy Jr. who was on campus to give a public presentation on the topic of “Our Environmental Destiny” for the Shapiro Lecture Series. Over 80 individuals attended the reception and were given an overview of the project development underway along the Ottawa River by the Commission and the importance of this work to enhance the beauty and environmental conditions of main campus. Presentations, displays and a walk along the river were provided during the reception. The fund raising initiative began work on identifying potential donors and the projects that would become priorities for future support.

### **CURRENT PROJECTS UNDER DEVELOPMENT**

#### **Student River Plaza**

This project is located in the area along the Ottawa River between the Carlson Library and the Student Union. The project as currently proposed would create a student gathering place that would also include several other important elements related to the river, such as a walking trail, informational displays, gardens, art work, landscaping, gathering places, seating, bridge improvements and a stream restoration demonstration project. Preliminary conceptual designs have been prepared by The Collaborative Inc (see below). In addition, Diana Attie from the UT Department of Art has completed interpretative sketches for the site (see below). This project has been selected by the Celebrate Our River Initiative as the main priority for their ongoing fund raising efforts.

#### **Student River Plaza Site (current conditions)**





## Student River Plaza Concept

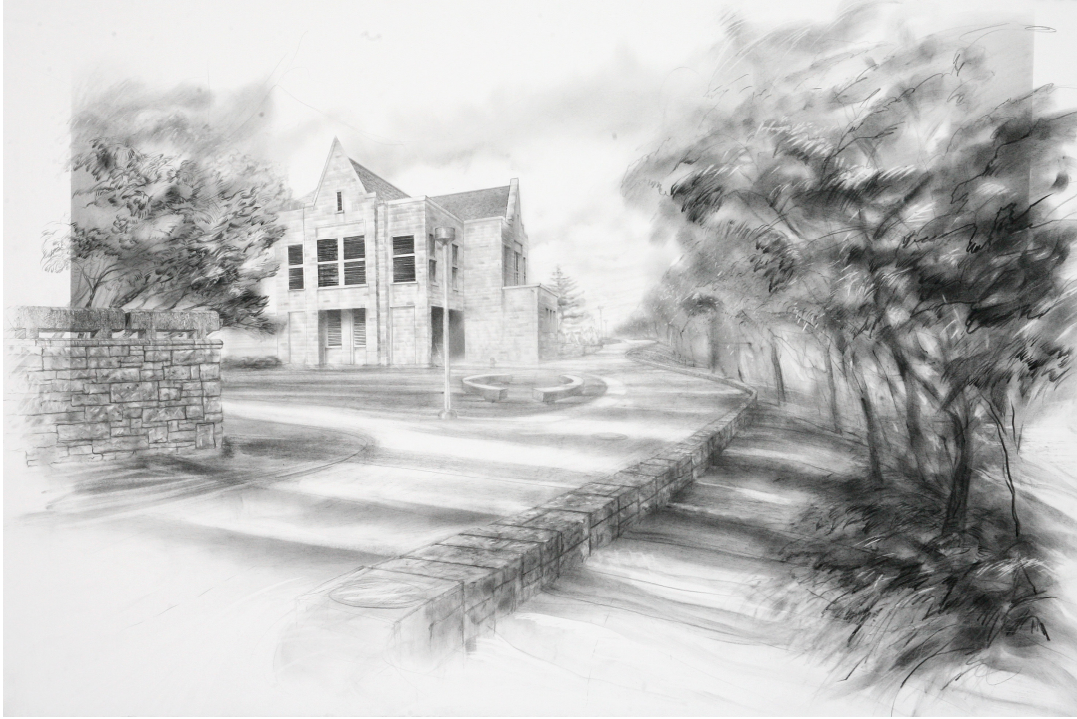


## River Plaza Concept (close-up view)





**River Plaza Design View#1 (prepared by Diana Attie)**



**River Plaza Design View#2 (prepared by Diana Attie)**

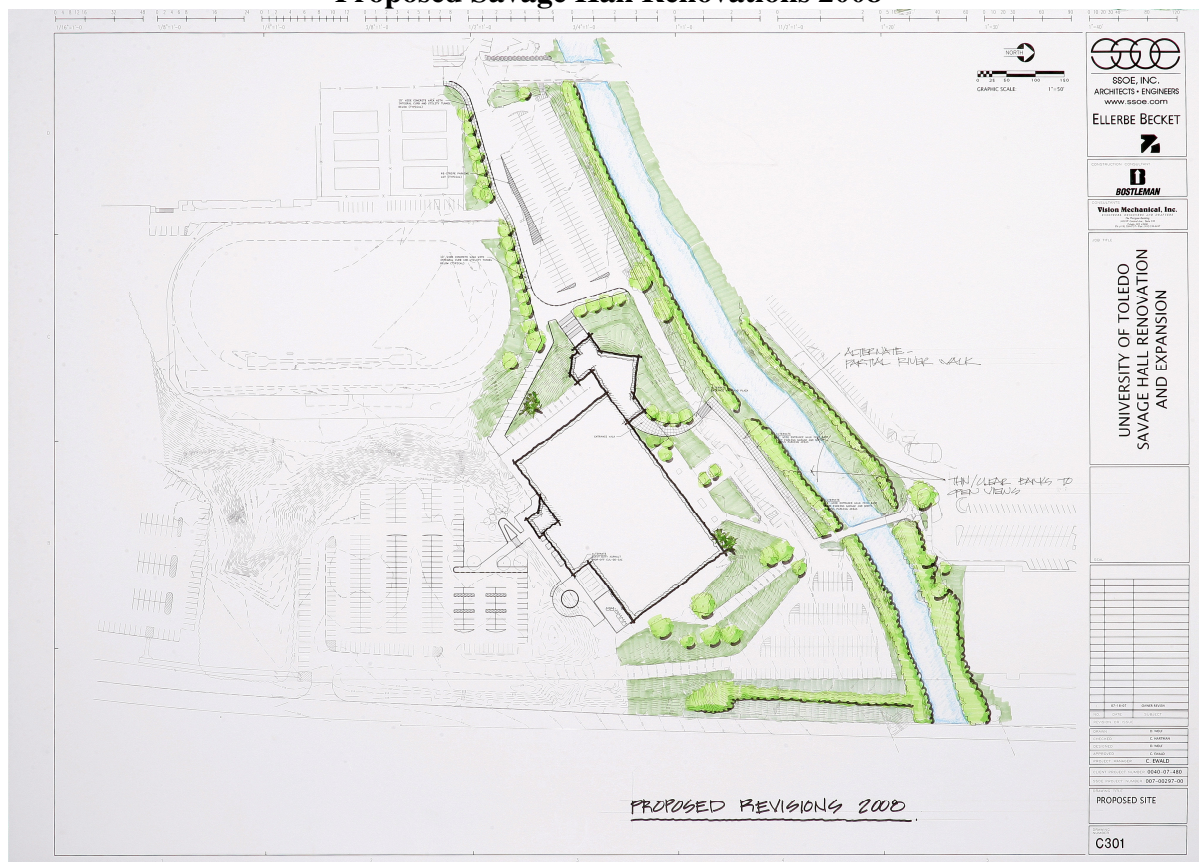




### **Rocket Terrace and new outdoor entrance way to Savage Hall**

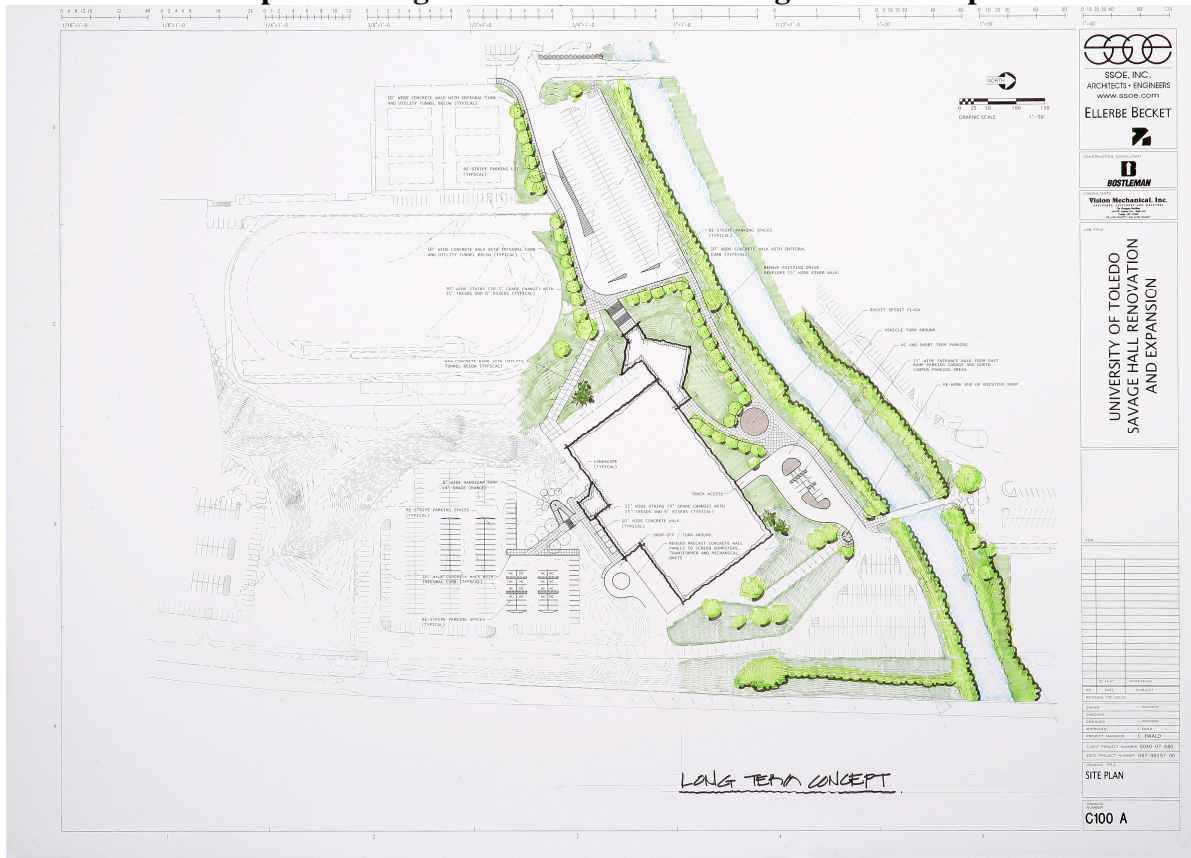
The current renovations to Savage Hall were identified as a potential opportunity for the Commission to pursue several related projects relating to beautification, enhancement, public access and education along the river in the area immediately adjacent to Savage Hall. With the construction of a new main entry way into Savage Hall that will face the river and draw in visitors coming from parking lots, the Ottawa River will become a much more important location for walking to Savage Hall. The Commission, along with Facilities Planning and UT Athletics are aware of the possibilities to improve access along the Ottawa River and provide for an enhanced experience for visitors to the new Savage Hall. At the request of the Commission, SSOE Inc. has prepared preliminary concept designs for this site for consideration in the Savage Hall renovation project (see below). These concepts would provide for opportunities to improve visitor access along the river, beautification enhancements, gathering places, view points overlooking the river, bridge and walkway upgrades, and the potential for information signage. The Commission will continue to be a strong proponent for these concepts and work to promote the river opportunities with the Savage Hall renovations. However, budget support from the Savage Hall renovation project has not been identified.

### **Proposed Savage Hall Renovations 2008**





## Proposed Savage Hall Renovations – Long Term Concept



## Rain Garden Demonstration Project

Rain gardens are planted low areas designed to trap rainwater runoff from parking lots, roads, roofs and other impervious surfaces. By trapping and absorbing this runoff, rain gardens help protect surface water quality and reduce flooding and erosion. The Commission on the River has proposed to design and develop a rain garden immediately West of Lot 10 and North of the tennis courts. This development will occur in conjunction with the construction of an ADA switchback near the same location.

The rain garden is intended as a demonstration project and will be designed in collaboration with the UT Grounds Department and with the help of undergraduate students in engineering and environmental sciences who will perform soil tests, survey elevations, calculate runoff volumes, and recommend plants and soils. Once landscaped and completed, the project will feature an educational sign that explains its function in the landscape. Technical assistance is available through the City of Toledo, Division of Environmental Services. The Toledo Rain Garden Initiative also issue small grants that may help to pay for portions of the costs associated with this project. In addition, the University may qualify for a reduction to their annual municipal storm water utility bill from the City of Toledo if the University begins to treat its storm water discharge through the use of a rain garden before discharging it to the Ottawa River.

### **Lot 10 Rain Garden Project Site**



### **2008 PRIORITIES**

In the upcoming year the Commission has identified the following priorities:

1. Advance the “Celebrate Our River” Fund Raising Initiative so as to engage donors and secure commitments of support towards the target goal of \$3 million (by end of 2009).
2. Identify potential foundation and government grant opportunities in the fields of education and environmental restoration and apply for funds to support projects and related river improvements.
3. Continue to actively participate in related community projects and initiatives underway with the Toledo area associated with the Ottawa River in the areas of environmental research, habitat restoration, public access, and public outreach.
4. Further the development of projects associated with the Ottawa River on main campus, with the priorities of this work focused on the Student River Plaza, Rocket Terrace at Savage Hall, and a rain garden demonstration project.
5. Engage the University and local communities in the work of the Commission and continue to promote the development of projects and provide for the ongoing awareness and education of the Ottawa River on main campus and the need for improvements in the areas of beautification, environmental restoration, public access, education, and student engagement.
6. Host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual “Celebrate Our River” event on campus from September 12-16, 2008 to provide for continued community and university awareness of the work of the Commission and the associated projects underway on the campus.