

Louisville's innovative designs create a distinctive city

“Like no place but Louisville” was the title of a speech the late Barry Bingham Sr., a distinguished civic leader and media magnate, gave to the Downtown Executives Association in 1964, nearly 50 years ago.

Bingham was a tireless advocate for the city.

He called for Louisville to set itself apart from other rival urban areas through attractive, innovative projects.

The late Owsley Brown II, a former chairman of Brown-Forman Corp., and the late Joan Riehm, a longtime civic advocate, likewise championed this vision of improving Louisville through quality-focused initiatives.

And, based on recent developments, their collective hopes for the city are being fulfilled.

Projects worthy of praise

Throughout the metro region, distinctive designs are under way that will enhance Louisville as a desirable destination.

Perhaps no other similar-sized city in America can tout a collection of aesthetic creations warranting accolades as those currently being assembled here.

Among the contributors to this remarkable transformation is the Louisville Free Public Library.

With the unveiling of the Southwest branch, our library system is entering the 21st century with bold, imaginative buildings.

Along with the recently opened Fairdale and Newburg branches, these facilities are re-energizing this critical knowledge resource.

Next, the tradition and renown of Louisville's Olmsted parks legacy is evolving with the world-class addition of 21st Century Parks.

Hopefully, everyone has visited or seen images of the marvelous Creekside Center and Beckley Creek Park near Interstate 64 at The Parklands of Floyds Fork, which are among the first completed initiatives of 21st Century Parks.

And the recently opened Big Four pedestrian bridge is a spectacular exclamation point to the waterfront's extreme makeover in recent times.

Bourbon industry projects enhance uniquely Louisville identity

Adding even more vibrancy to downtown Louisville are several exciting bourbon industry projects: Michter's Distillery in the Fort Nelson Building; the Evan Williams Bourbon Experience, at 528 W. Main St.; and the Jim Beam Global Business Service Center, at Fourth and Liberty streets.

Along with the revitalization of “Whiskey Row” in the 100 block of West Main Street, these locally produced efforts reinforce our unique identity.

Learning to look good

Not to be outdone, school design has evolved from boxy, generic edifices to



GUEST COMMENT

Steve Wiser

colorful, visually striking structures, such as Pleasure Ridge Park High School's performing arts center and the make-overs at Lincoln Elementary School and Eastern High School.

Fourth Street, south of Muhammad Ali Boulevard, is soon to get a much-needed face-lift.

This long-neglected district is being reborn in a dramatic fashion as retailers reopen storefronts along the city streetscape.

And last fall, the Louisville Clock, a local landmark created by the late Louisville sculptor Barney Bright, was relocated to Theater Square.

And the Guthrie-Coke Building, at Fourth and Chestnut streets, is changing from the proverbial ugly duckling to a swan.

New and renewed buildings enhance city

East Market Street, the heart of the area dubbed the NuLu district, keeps chugging along with the almost-completed high-rise Nucleus Innovation Park - Market Street, renovation of the old Bacons location into loft apartments, streetscape upgrades, and new places such as Earth Friends Café and Why Louisville.

The health care industry also is contributing with many projects, including state-of-the-art construction at Norton Suburban Hospital and the coming U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical center.

'Out-of-the-box' proposal helps make dreams come true

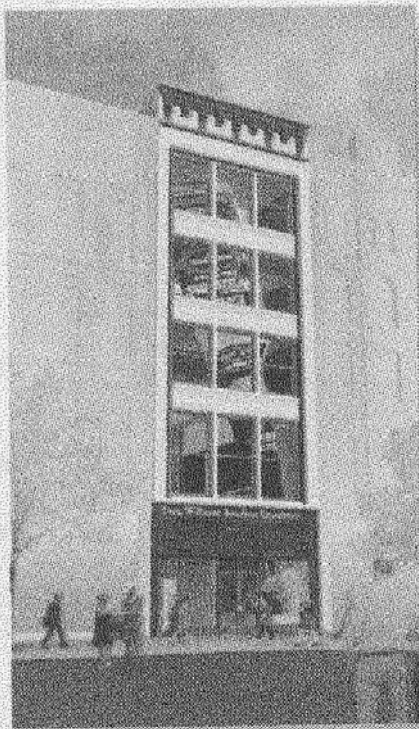
In the conceptual phase is Louisville Water Co.'s proposed “Water Innovation Center,” to be located at River Road and Zorn Avenue. It has the potential to make Louisville a global leader in the development of water technologies.

This “out-of-the-box” proposal is exactly the kind of foresight the three community leaders sought to encourage in their dreams for the city.

There still are challenges to be met, such as in-filling vacant properties and upgrading deteriorated neighborhood areas.

But with the success of the KFC Yum! Center, the Speed Art Museum expansion that is in progress, and the beginning of bridge construction, Louisville is starting to realize its desired potential as envisioned by Bingham, Brown and Riehm as one of the nation's best places in which to live.

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