

POINT VILLAGE SQUARE

Construction of this exciting and innovative design is due to commence shortly. Ryan Ward, LiD Architecture (the award winning designers) outlines the concept.

DUBLIN'S POINT VILLAGE SQUARE is a proposed new public civic space for the city, located in the docklands and providing a connection between the city, the docklands, and Dublin Port. The space will create an atmosphere of high energy, excitement and creativity, generated by a range of activities that will be facilitated here, both day and night, with markets, concerts, exhibitions and outdoor activities. A play of sunlight and shadow during the day will transform into a dynamic lighting effect at night, creating a memorable experience with every visit. The new space, designed by LiD-Architecture, was the winning entry in an RIAI competition to a brief developed in partnership between Dublin City Council and Point Village Company Ltd.

Competition

The Jury consisted of representatives of all these authorities and bodies (and their technical advisers) demonstrating partnership in the vision for the project and collective support of the competition-winning proposal. The Assessors Report described the winning proposal:

"This submission's simple, strong, clear idea effortlessly addresses the brief. The assessors felt that this solution displayed high levels of flexibility, adaptability and toughness in use. The design resonates powerfully with docklands and embraces the temporary nature of the challenge. The basic, building block can be configured endlessly, demonstrating variations for solid and void, for dramatic and lighting purposes and for the integration of varied art forms."

Context

The Point Village Square is located at the focal point of the

Docklands linking the O2 Venue, the District Centre (which contains shopping, and food outlets, a 300 bed hotel, a multiplex cinema) and the new Luas Station. The Point Village Square is also part of an emerging complex of entertainment and cultural buildings including the new theatre designed by Daniel Liebeskind and the new National Conference Centre, designed by Kevin Roche.

The north side of the square is bounded by the 6-7 Storey District Centre, which will contain one and two-storey cafés and bars lining the south-facing edge and spilling outwards on to the square. The O2 arena and its northern entrance bound the southern edge. The east and west edges of the public space are not currently contained. The design proposal proposes to address this by providing both visual containment and protection from Dublin's constant maritime wind and 'breezy' environment.

The square will be well connected to the city and docklands by the Luas line, which terminates directly beside it, by the cycle network and by the Quality Bus Corridor on the East Wall Road.

Temporary Development

The RIAI competition was quite unique for Ireland, as it was for a temporary proposal. It is intended that the site of the competition will in future return to its original proposal - Ireland's tallest building, 'The Watchtower'. However the economic downturn has had a serious effect on the project, now on hold, and the competition was a way for the developer to create a new open public space which would have energy and





buzz in an area which would otherwise be left idle as an empty site in the heart of the Docklands development, and in front of the soon to open District Centre. LiD-Architecture has a background in research into temporary-use urban strategies, in the context of Berlin and Belfast. Although temporary architecture is not a new phenomenon, we saw the competition as a chance to explore how temporary architecture can be an alternative form of urban development in this time of economic downturn within an Irish context. We are interested in how temporary architecture can be used to transform vacant, unfinished or disused sites into vibrant urban spaces. Therefore the planning application was for a temporary development – to exist for a period of four years- and a decision to grant permission was granted by Dublin City Council on 12 February 2010.

Why Containers?

The design also embraces the unique location of the project, on the boundary of the city and the port. The use of the shipping container, a symbol of global trade and exchange, is utilised as the building element, relating to both the Port and the adjacent O2 Arena/Point Depot with its original function as a distribution depot. Easy to assemble, disassemble, transport and re-use, as well as being locally sourced from container holding companies at the port, the shipping container in this context is the ideal sustainable building element. The robust aesthetic of the containers convey the unique condition of a site on the threshold of the city and a working port - The Point Village Square becomes both an edge and a transition from the Docklands to the port beyond.

“There are redundant containers all around the world (most notably in Europe and North America), due to the imbalance in manufactured goods between the West and the Far East, where the majority of the world’s goods are produced. The West imports more than it exports and the imported goods travel in

containers... It is often more economical to buy a new container in China than to send the used one on a return journey. As a result the world’s ports are piled up with empty containers.”

Jure Kotnik: Container Architecture

The containers can be easily stacked to form a permeable and stable screen, with a depth and enclosure that will create an inhabited screen, giving life and a dynamic edge to the Square. During the day, the checker-board pattern of the containers creates an ever changing pattern of light and shade across the square. While at night the containers themselves act as a dynamic lighting concept, where each container acts as an urban scale light fitting, resulting in a lighting atmosphere unique and specific to the Square. The screens are also permeable to the public, allowing access to the square from all sides, with containers on the ground level to open as kiosks or market stalls, with open able side panels as canopies, allowing varied usages from fish mongers, night markets, exhibitions or studios. The screen can be further inhabited at the higher levels, with a continuous viewing gallery at the high levels for events, or the opportunity for daytime to create a linear semi-outdoor gallery.

The inherent advantage of containers is that they are readily available, especially with the relationship to the port and they are relatively inexpensive. They can be used largely in their “as found” condition, with some minor adjustments such as painting, removing doors, installing lighting, etc. The use of containers allows an abundant and locally found resource to be recycled in an innovative way. This re-use extends to the life of the containers beyond the life-span of the square. The containers can be returned to use as transport and storage units, or the entire square can be easily dismantled and re-constructed in another location. In this sense, the Point Village Square registers the reality of the economic down-turn, but celebrates the possibilities of re-using and recycling as a response to a temporary development.