

# River Heritage Center

Paducah, Kentucky

**Role:** Planning and Conceptual Design

**Building Area:** 70,000 sf

**Description:** Enjoying advantages of site and situation that are shared by few other cities in North America, Paducah is the hub of the worlds greatest river transportation industries. The new dollar sign 23 million River Heritage Center was conceived as a dramatic "icon" building symbolizing Paducah's important role in the development of this vast river transportation network which encompasses the waters of the Ohio, Cumberland, Tennessee, and Mississippi Rivers. The Center's mission is to foster a sense of pride and respect for the natural environments and history of the people and resources of this unique area; to explain its past, present and future industrial and technological activities; and to attract more visitors to Paducah and the region.

Located in a key position within the city, the Center's beautiful riverside site provides panoramic views of the Ohio River and the extensive river traffic. A key design concept was to make the River Heritage Center appear to be part of the city and river.

The public areas of the 69,500 sf Center houses 27,000 sf of interactive exhibits focusing on regional natural environments, industries, technology and culture; a 100-seat interactive theater; several classrooms; a major special events space; public dining facilities; and a museum store. Most of the public areas of the building are on the upper levels, above the flood wall, to maximize views out over the river. A strong visual connection with the river is also provided on the first level. From the cantilevered glass entry canopy, an open vista through the lobby terminates with a framed view of the river through a new 35 ft wide opening in the flood wall. The glass tower at the building entry, with its exciting multi-level water exhibit, connects the exhibit levels on the third, fourth, and fifth floors. Cantilevered over the flood wall along most of the length of the building, a covered exhibit deck with outdoor exhibits and seating areas overlooks the river.

In addition to providing architectural design servers, our work on this project included exhibit conceptual planning, institutional planning (defining the mission, roles, and activity programs of the new Center), operational planning (defining staffing and space needs), and a feasibility assessment (projecting annual visitation, operating costs, and operating revenues).





