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Artist shows off new design for Scioto Mile sculpture

by Robert Vitale

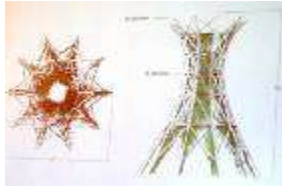


Photo: Courtney Hergesheimer

Brian Tolle, the New York artist who designed a six-story sculpture proposed for the Scioto Mile, unveiled a new design at the Columbus Metropolitan Club today.

The New York artist who's creating a six-story sculpture for Columbus' Downtown riverfront unveiled new designs this afternoon.

The cooling-tower shape that drew criticism two weeks ago after it was first published on Dispatch.com is still there, but it's more elongated and less obvious.

Artist Brian Tolle also has scrapped plans to use mirrored glass, opting instead for an open frame of stainless steel that would host vertical gardens whose plants change color with the seasons.

The bottom of the structure would be anchored to the ground in peaks, not raised up on piers. And the top would rise in peaks as well, creating a crown-like effect.

The changes make the artwork more economical to build and more elegant to view, Tolle said during a talk today at the Columbus Metropolitan Club. Changes had been in the works before the public got its first view of his ideas, he added.

Tolle, who calls his work “The Columbiad,” has been commissioned by Downtown leaders to create a sculpture that would be placed along the new Scioto Mile riverfront park at Town Street.

“I don’t feel that the changes I’ve made to the Columbiad are compromises,” he said. “I think they’re informed decisions.”

Some of the latest details:

- The Columbiad would be 75 feet tall, 57 feet in diameter at its base and 36 feet in diameter at its crown.
- Among the possibilities for plants on the work’s surface is an ivy called Virginia creeper, which grows green in spring and turns red in the fall.
- LED lights on the frame would be illuminated at night and could change colors.

Developer and modern-art collector Ron Pizzuti, who is on the panel that chose Tolle to design the riverfront artwork, said he’s a fan of the design.

Pizzuti is seeking donors to pay for the work, whose price tag hasn’t been disclosed. Mayor Michael B. Coleman supports the project and likes the design, according to spokesman Dan Williamson, but he has said it must be funded with private dollars.