Artists and designers sought to help increase canal’s visibility

INDIANAPOLIS – Canal stakeholders are seeking the expertise of local artists and designers to promote the downtown canal walk and increase its visibility from street level. The Historic Central Canal and White River State Park Cultural District last week issued a request for qualifications (RFQ) for a pilot project to create a highly-visible, artistic place-marker that will act as a gateway, attracting residents and visitors from street level to the canal walk.

“The Historic Central Canal and White River State Park Cultural District is a premiere downtown destination, and we continue to look for new ways to build on this success and support the work of the district stakeholders,” said Keira Amstutz, administrator for the Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission. “Not only will this proposed marker bring more passers-by to the canal cultural district, it will add a public art component to further enhance and beautify the canal walk.”

The RFQ calls for the proposed place-marker to convey the canal’s rich history and provide space for signage at canal level to direct visitors to attractions and locations within the canal cultural district. After the initial marker is in place, more will likely be added in the coming years throughout the canal cultural district near bridges and access points.

The project will be funded by a grant provided by the Cultural Development Commission.

City officials noted other recent efforts to further enhance the canal, including the addition of Italian gondola boat rides, which will begin later this week, and new pedal boats and remote controlled boats. Also, the city is working to add food and drink vendors along the canal this summer, and historic Buggs Temple in 2005 will feature retail establishments, including a restaurant, coffee shop and a Ritters’ Frozen Custard.

As part of Mayor Bart Perterson’s cultural tourism initiative, members of the Indianapolis Cultural Development Commission in 2002 created six cultural districts, including the Historic Central Canal and White River State Park Cultural District, to facilitate the cultural development of distinct locations in the city that offer a unique mix of arts, entertainment and hospitality activities. The other cultural districts include Broad Ripple Village, Indiana Avenue, Fountain Square, Mass Ave and Theater district and the Downtown Wholesale district.
A copy of the RFQ can be obtained by visiting www.culturalindy.org or by calling Renee Degner at 233-2432.