

# Campus Martius

**DETROIT, MICHIGAN**  
**CLIENT: DETROIT MAYOR'S**  
**TASKFORCE; DETROIT 300**  
**2003**



Above, left: PPS's concept plan for Campus Martius.

Above, right: Campus Martius in 2000.

Opposite: The new Campus Martius opened in November, 2004.

In late 1999, PPS worked with the City of Detroit to reclaim an empty concrete island less than two acres in size that had historically functioned as the heart of downtown, and still served as the origin from which all addresses and numbered streets in Detroit begin. PPS worked with the community to develop a vision for a park that would become, in the Mayor's words, "the best public space in the world." PPS's design suggestions envisioned an entire district of public uses to tie the park into a larger revitalization effort. The park itself was seen as a place to attract people day and night and provide activities for different ages and types of groups year round.

The City held a grand opening for the new Campus Martius in November, 2004. It was an immediate home run with the people of Detroit and surrounding communities. People are coming back downtown for concerts, outdoor movies, to admire the ever-changing flower gardens, meet a date at the Park Cafe, or simply sit and relax. A big attraction for everyone is to rub shoulders with all the other people there.

\$500 million of new investment has flowed into the area since plans for Campus Martius were announced, including a new office building across the street, new retail shops, and loft developments in many of the area's old buildings. Most significantly, the Compuware computer firm moved its headquarters and 4,000 employees from the suburbs to a new building near the square. "Compuware would

not have come downtown without the park," notes Bob Gregory of Detroit 300. "They didn't want just a building. They wanted a lively district, where their workers would have things to do."

A key accomplishment of Campus Martius has been its ability to attract visitors of all kinds. "We've been surprised by how many people from the suburbs are coming here," says Gregory. "The quality of the space attracts everyone from rich to poor. The programs are all family-oriented. One of the measures of a good place according to PPS is if you see women and kids using it. Well, that happens in Campus Martius. Everyone is there."

More than 200 events, ranging from the Detroit International Jazz Festival to a story hour for kids, are held over the summer. The square's popularity also extends to the winter months. The ice rink is open--and crowded--125 days a year. A large holiday tree is decorated, and lit up in a gala public ceremony. And the Paris-style park chairs, which can be moved so people are able to find a nice place to sit in the sun or away from the wind, are kept out all year.

"The park has delivered on its promise to be a gathering spot for everybody," says Gregory. "People call it 'beautiful' and say it looks like 'a real city.' It changes the image of Detroit in everyone's mind. They see the square on TV, hear about what's happening there and they see Detroit differently."