

on the WATERFRONT

DAY FIVE

ON THE WATERFRONT PART FIVE OF A SIX PART SERIES | BY MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION
Photography by BRIAN THOMPSON Brantford Expositor/QMI Agency

Going Lower Downtown

MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION
Expositor Staff

If you think the once barren fields along Market Street South are buzzing with new businesses and services, take an invitation from the Waterfront Master Plan to stroll down the avenue 20 years from now.

That's when the master plan suggests you might look to the left

or right and see a more exciting panorama.

The document contains a long-term redevelopment vision for the area between Icomm Drive and Veterans Memorial Parkway that it calls Lower Downtown.

Drawn up by the consulting team that wrote the master plan, it offers a futuristic new core of homes, facilities, amenities, activities and better access to the Grand

River waterfront.

"This is not a development proposal and it does not force the relocation or elimination of existing uses," the master plan stresses.

"It is simply one demonstration of many possible ways the Lower Downtown could evolve over the very long term when landowners are prepared to redevelop."

It also makes clear that the Lower Downtown would "serve as a complement to the historic downtown, accommodating large-scale functions not suitable for the historic areas while providing for a critic mass of people living nearby."

And it calls for a special development plan for the area to be drawn

up at an estimated cost of \$100,000.

In the meantime, the waterfront master plan advises that the city establish some guidelines for the area to ensure that short-term decisions don't become a barrier to future ideas.

The Lower Downtown strategy turns on a recommended action that would radically change the current view of the area between Icomm Drive and Veterans Memorial Parkway.

Right now, the Brantford Casino, the civic centre, Earl Haig Park and the Freshco plaza sit at a lower elevation the closer they are to the Grand, and is inhibited by a continuous underused frontage before



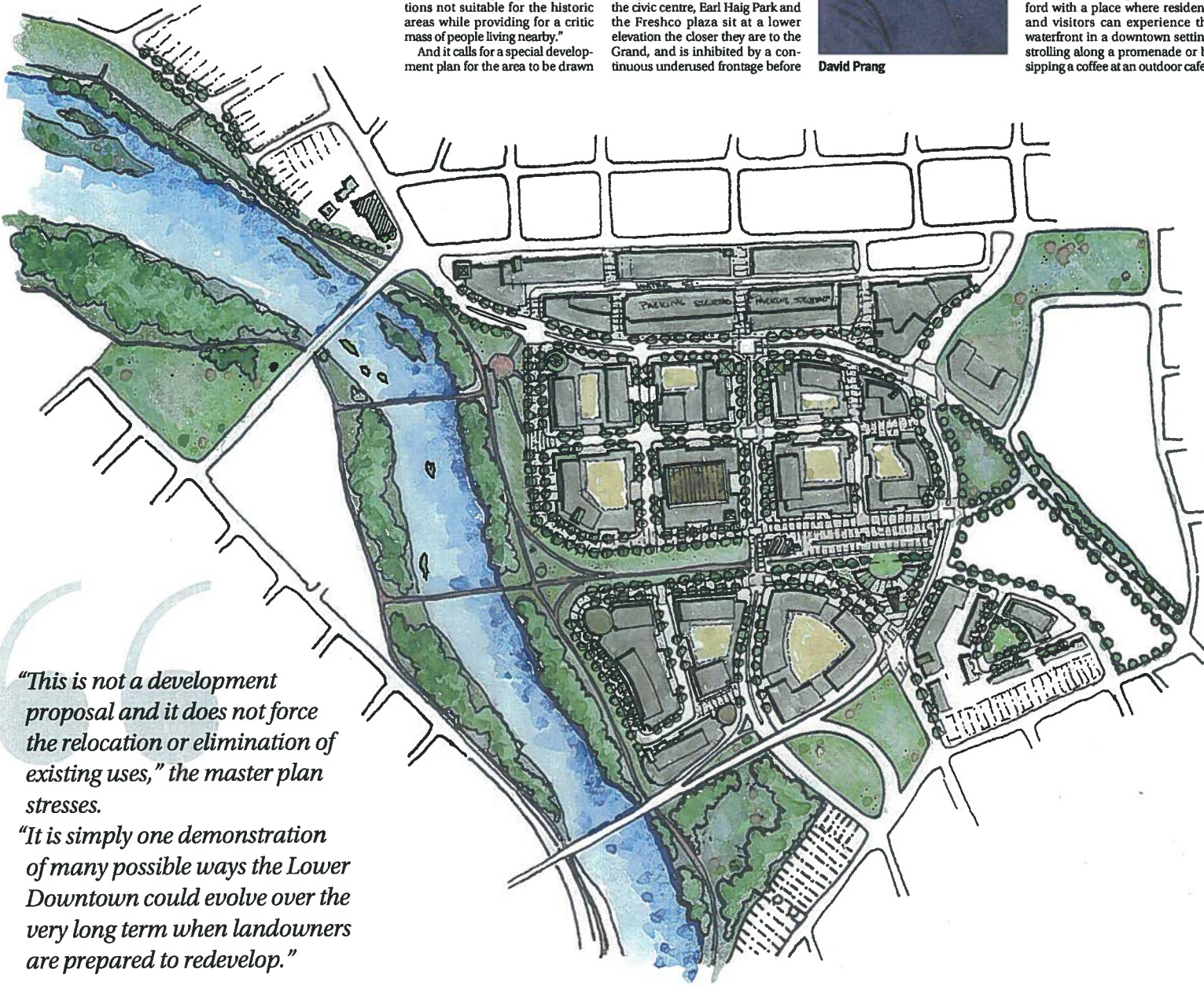
David Prang

the dyke.

According to the strategy, the current railway spur line that serves only one business north of the Lorne Bridge in Holmedale would be removed through negotiation, opening up the area to the south to new opportunities that would bring the waterfront closer.

"It would enable the creation of a new and exciting urban waterfront attraction," the master plan says in inviting tones.

"This initiative provides Brantford with a place where residents and visitors can experience the waterfront in a downtown setting, strolling along a promenade or by sipping a coffee at an outdoor cafe."



"This is not a development proposal and it does not force the relocation or elimination of existing uses," the master plan stresses.

"It is simply one demonstration of many possible ways the Lower Downtown could evolve over the very long term when landowners are prepared to redevelop."



ON THE WATERFRONT

Brantford is undertaking a massive reconsideration of its waterfront, a stretch of more than 25 kilometres of the Grand River and with more than 70 kilometres of trails from where it enters the city in the northwest to where it leaves in the Oxbow.

The city recently approved the Waterfront Master Plan after a year of study, numerous public consultation meetings, workshop sessions with stakeholders and experts, and hours of debate at meetings of council.

Ready for implementation in the next term of council, the master plan holds a multitude of ideas that would greatly transform key areas of the city along the waterfront.

Over the past year, Expositor reporter Michael-Allan Marion attended most of the sessions, conducted many separate interviews, and did his own research on important issues in the writing of the master plan.

On The Waterfront, a six-day series, is the result of his coverage.

SATURDAY – 20 Years, 43 Recommendations, \$8 million.

One Waterfront Master Plan: Priceless

MONDAY – Tracing the Legacy of the Grand River Settlements

TUESDAY – The Northwest: An Eco-Haven to be Guarded

WEDNESDAY – Rediscovering Holmedale's Charm

THURSDAY – Going Lower Downtown

FRIDAY – Eagle Place: A New Southern Gateway



LOCALLY OWNED AND OPERATED

EST. 1977

END-OF-SUMMER CLEARANCE

SEMI ON-GROUND MILLENNIUM		LIBERTY • STEEL		COLISEUM • ALUMINUM	
SIZE	SALE PRICE	LIST	SALE PRICE	LIST	SALE PRICE
18'	\$6,999	\$2,999	\$2,699	\$6,249	\$4,299
21'	\$7,299	\$3,899	\$2,999	\$9,049	\$6,699
12.5' x 21.5'	\$7,999	\$3,999	\$3,299	\$10,499	\$8,899
15' x 24'	\$8,799	\$5,199	\$4,599	\$12,499	\$8,699
15' x 30'	\$10,699				

\$89

MONTH

FROM

\$37

PER MONTH

FROM

\$59

PER MONTH



A swing bench behind the Brantford Armouries allows one to linger and take in the view of the Grand River.

Mohawk: A renewed park experience

Mohawk Lake, the Canal and Mohawk Park are a trio of amenities sorely in need of refurbishment, but could be turned into one destination park, says the Waterfront Master Plan.

The master plan carries a package of recommendations for projects bearing an overall, long-term price tag of \$2.5 million for the three amenities that start with the Canal fed by East Ward Creek and Shallow Creek Park at the edge of the downtown, and move east to a confluence with the Grand.

"Mohawk Park, Lake and Canal are an obvious unique amenity for Brantford," the master plan says.

"With the combination of its natural features, history and remaining heritage resources, this is an obvious location as a major focus."

The master plan sees opportunities not only to upgrade all the facilities, but to expand their range of attractions.

Mohawk Lake and the Canal were originally dredged in the late 19th Century to provide a bypass to the Grand River. The remnants of the Alfred Watts powerhouse and penstocks remain near the canal outlet to the Grand.

The master plan advocates cleaning up the canal and building linear greenways and street improvements along the Greenwich Street and Forest Road sides.

Meanwhile, Mohawk Lake has gone over the past half-century from a popular site for boating, concerts and other community events to a deteriorated, polluted, sadly neglected body of water infested by carp.

Although the city has undertaken studies to assess the best method of improving the lake's water quality, the recommendations have not been implemented due to lack of capital financing.

It says the ruins of the hydro generation plant "offer an opportunity for conservation and interpretation of their cultural significance and extend the cultural significance of Mohawk Park."

Mohawk Park has a multitude of facilities including a pavilion, a bandshell, sports fields, playground, disc golf and a new splash pad.

The master plan says all except the splash pad need upgrades.

THE LOWER DOWNTOWN OF TOMORROW COULD INCLUDE:

- An Icomm Drive realigned slightly to the south to bring it closer to the new development, and enable greater use of more property on the north side of the road.
- An improved pedestrian link to the downtown at Market Street.
- A new walkable street pattern between Icomm and Veterans Memorial Parkway that is similar to the historic downtown.
- A mix of housing and commercial enterprises.
- A promenade and water-side street fronted by a mix of ventures, including restaurants and cafes.
- A redeveloped Brantford and Dis-

trict Civic Centre with more uses to make it a destination place.

• A possible new location of the farmers market beside the historic rail station (the former Iron Horse restaurant).

David Prang, chairman of the Downtown Brantford Business Improvement Association, said he likes the concept because it presents many interesting ideas to develop an area that would be complementary to what's already in the core.

"The downtown already is the most built-up area and when it gets filled up, the area south of Icomm Drive would be a natural place for more investment to go if it is directed well," he said.

Prang agrees with the master

plan's contention that the Lower Downtown should be a priority area for development along the waterfront because it has a lot of underused land around its present buildings and offers opportunities to bring the core closer to the river.

"We have turned our backs on the river and this is a chance to return to it," he said.

"It also makes good sense that we use the infrastructure that already exists there instead of having to go to the expense of installing it in fresh areas."

Coun. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, who chairs the Waterfront Task Force and represents the area, rejoices at the master plan's call to begin planning the area better.

"Right now it's a free-for-all. It's

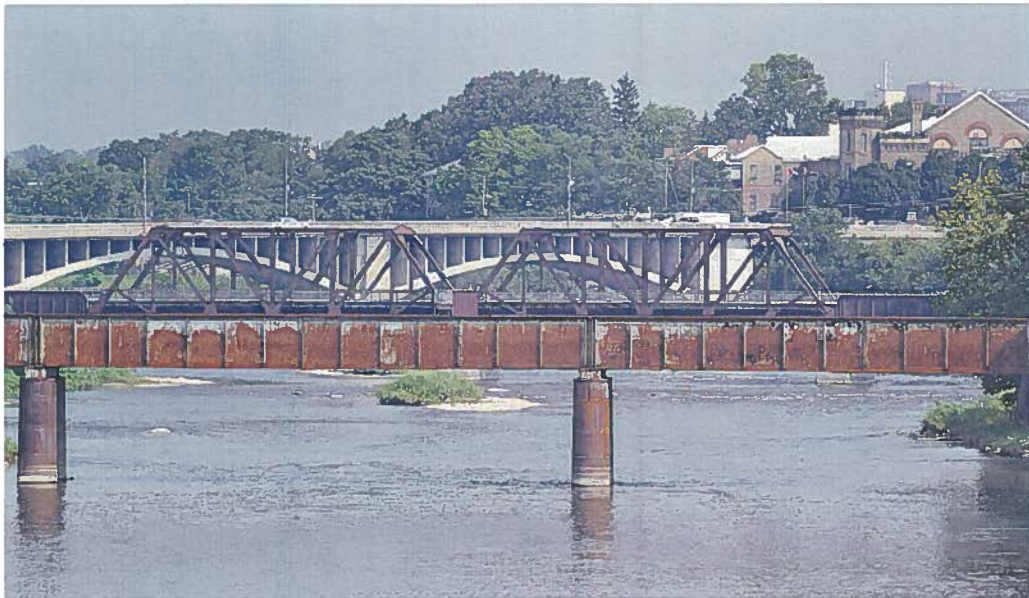
whatever wants to come in, comes in without much thought to what is best," she said.

"The number of new businesses setting up in and around the plaza shows the population in the area is growing. The investment is good to see, but it needs direction."

She wants the new council to take to heart one of the master plan's recommendations that a study be commissioned at an early opportunity that would set out a framework to guide the development.

"Considering what is already coming, we need to move quickly to prepare the way."

mamarion@theexpositor.com



A view from the BSAR (Brantford Southern Access Route) bridge over the Grand River, showing former railway bridges and the Lorne Bridge spanning the river.

Here are the main recommended projects:

- Upgrade the facilities in Mohawk Park. Cost: \$2 million.
- Remove the fence around the perimeter of Mohawk Park. Cost: \$100,000.
- Prepare detailed design for streetscape improvements on Greenwich Street and Forest Road. Cost: \$60,000.
- Prepare a park plan for a new park on the site of the Alfred Watts Hydro generation plant. Cost: \$40,000.
- Secure a continuous linear greenway along the length of all components. Cost: to be determined based on consultation with staff and landowners

"The downtown already is the most built-up area and when it gets filled up, the area south of Icomm Drive would be a natural place for more investment to go if it is directed well."

David Prang, chairman of the Downtown Brantford Business Improvement Association



A view of the Grand River running through the downtown Brantford Area.

POOL CLEANERS Power for Above Ground					IN-GROUND POOL CLEANERS					IN-STOCK SOLAR BLANKETS 29%		POOL TOYS & INFLATABLES CLEARANCE PRICED	
Model	Name	Reg. Price	SAVE	Sale Price	Model	Name	Reg. Price	SAVE	Sale Price				
611582	POWERFUL	\$199.99	\$75	\$124.99	861	KREEPY	\$449.99	\$\$\$	SEE STORE FOR DETAILS				
862	EZ VAC	\$229.99	\$75	\$154.99	1177	POLARIS-ATV	\$599.99	\$100	\$499.99				
796	POLARIS-65	\$329.99	\$75	\$254.99	793	POLARIS-360	\$649.99	\$100	\$549.99				
36183	ROVER	\$499.99	\$100	\$399.99	1619705	XTREME	\$999.99	\$250	\$749.99				
					361815	TURBO-T	\$999.99	\$250	\$749.99				
					1100799	AQUABOT	\$1299.99	\$300	\$999.99				

Hooton's International Pool & Spa Centres 320 North Park Street, 519-751-0800 • www.hooton.ca