

# on the WATERFRONT

DAY SIX

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

## Eagle Place: A New Southern Gateway



taking the master plan through a yearlong series of workshops and public consultation sessions, Six Nations Haudenosaunee activists three times stopped a contractor hired by the city from installing a sewer line necessary to start one approved development of 99 homes by Cambridge Heritage Management Corp.

They had stopped the project four times the year before.

In March, an alliance of activists and labour union organizers car-

ried out an information campaign in the neighbourhood about the Eagle's Nest Tract claim.

Later that month, they and Eagle Place residents showed up in force at an information meeting where an agent unveiled the plans of the developers, and made clear their opposition.

Jim Windle, who leads TRUE -- Two Row Understanding through Education, a citizen group promoting peaceful resolution of issues between the city and the Haude-



ABOVE: The lower part of River Road looks more like a country scene than an area within the city limits.

LEFT: A paved trail branches away from River Road near Eagle Avenue in Brantford.

RIGHT: A man walks his dog along the dyke near River Road in Eagle Place.

plan bears recommendations for the area that would buttress the natural space along the river, which is Brantford's southern boundary with Brant County.

It would establish a waterfront edge road to define the limit of private development, provide a transition green space between it and Birkett Lane, and improve public access to the Grand.

The master plan also carries a suggested demonstration plan for orderly residential growth on a patch of land between Birkett Lane, Baldwin and Erie held by five developers, and a recommended list of design guidelines for a street grid pattern, the location, distribution and styles of houses, and parking lots.

The question is how feasible are the master plan's recommendations, given the degree of conflict? While a consulting team was



Jim Windle

nosaunee - criticized the master plan for suggesting anything about how to develop a parcel of land that is a hotbed of dispute and has competing Six Nations interests.

Those interests - unmentioned in the master plan - would have a great bearing on any recommended action to enhance and develop that area of the waterfront, Windle argued.

"It's the 200-year-old elephant in the room that nobody wants to talk about," he said.

"I don't believe it should have been put in the master plan to begin with. On the one hand, they don't mention the land claim, on the other, they do a promotion for the developers."

MICHAEL-ALLAN MARION  
Expositor Staff

It could be Brantford's beckoning gateway to visitors from the south, but right now it is more a fierce battleground of ideas and interests.

A visitor crossing the Cockshutt Bridge into Eagle Place neighbourhood and heading north to the Erie Avenue-Birkett Lane intersection quickly arrives at the heart of an

historic disagreement.

A group of developers wants to build subdivisions on several acres of farmland between Birkett Lane and Baldwin Avenue, west and east of Erie.

Residents already living in the area don't want them.

And Six Nations activists and an elected band council want a settlement of one strongest outstanding land claim that covers the area

- the Eagle's Nest Tract -- before anything happens.

The activists have mounted protests, stymied construction at one development site, and have pressed their claim at various public meetings.

Meanwhile, in the middle of all this conflict is the Waterfront Master Plan.

Approved in principle this summer by city council, the master



### 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

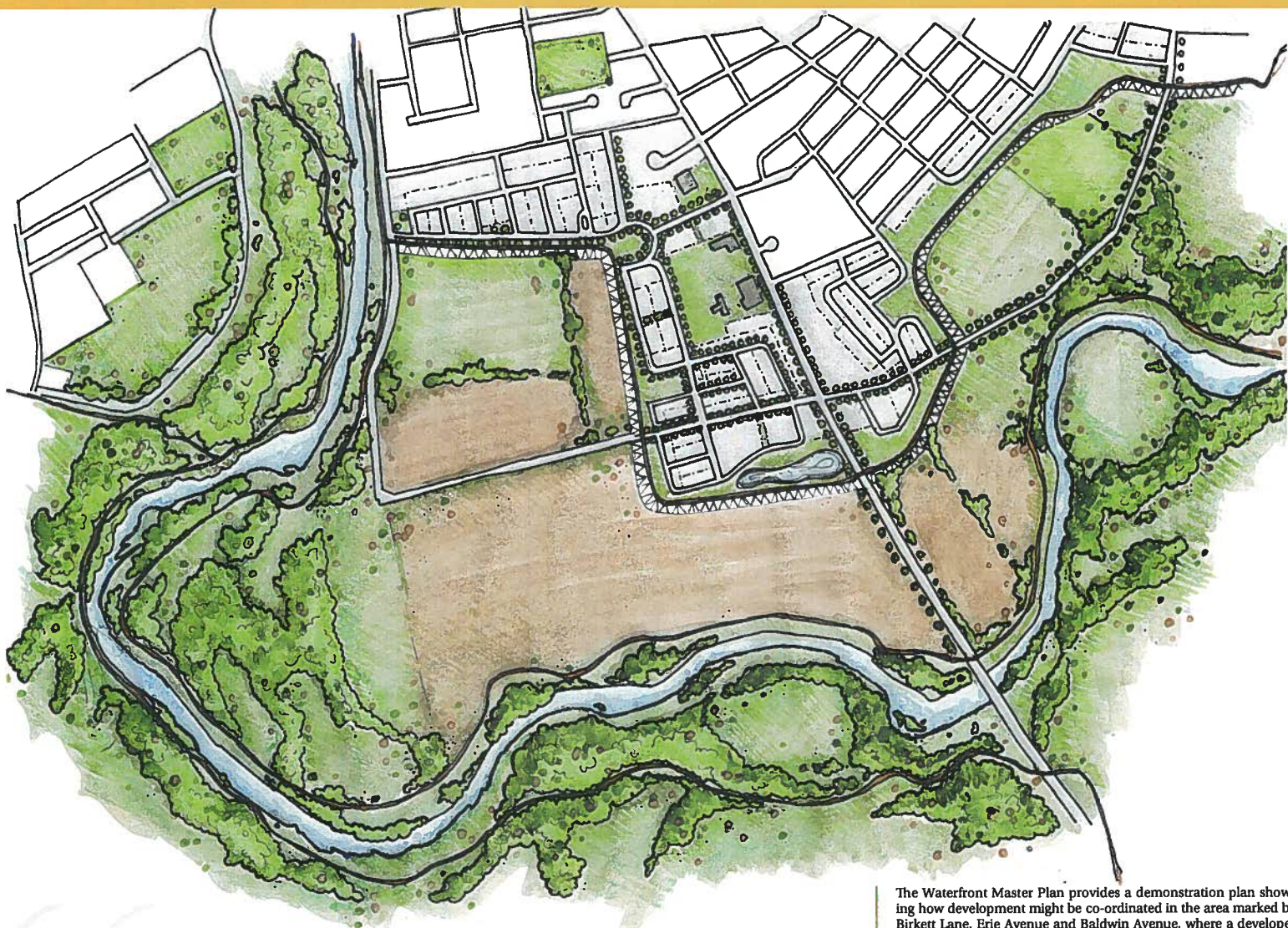
THURSDAY - Going Lower Downtown

FRIDAY - Eagle Place: A New Southern Gateway



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*"This exercise has pointed to the urgency for the federal government to address the outstanding land claims of the Six Nations."*

Windle also considered it presumptuous for those writing the master plan not to have ensured that they at least knew what interests Six Nations may have in the area.

"They don't know what Six Nations would want to do if they had that land. What they're recommending only reflects the city's position on important questions," he said.

"Even though the master plan

could help Six Nations interests in that it could curtail some of the development, it's by only accident because Six Nations is taking the whole question from a different angle."

In a recent letter to Mayor Mike Hancock, Six Nations Chief Coun. Bill Montour made the lack of reference to land claims a point of criticism about the master plan and the process the city used to write it.

Partly because of that omission, he said Six Nations would stand back from the master plan's implementation until its issues with the process are resolved.

In reaction to the complaint, the consulting team that wrote the master plan inserted a reference in an appendix of the final approved draft dealing with implementation.

"Clearly, the waterfront comprises a complexity of conditions and projects with implications to

virtually all city departments, other provincial government agencies, First Nations, adjacent neighbourhoods, businesses, interest groups and residents at large," it says.

"This exercise has pointed to the urgency for the federal government to address the outstanding land claims of the Six Nations."

Coun. Marguerite Ceschi-Smith, who chairs the Waterfront Task Force overseeing the master plan, said the team is sensitive to the land claims issue and other Six Nations interests across the whole Grand River study area.

But when the team considered the future of the Erie Avenue-Birkett Lane area, it had to work within the reality that the land had already been designated for several years for residential development in the city's official plan, and at least one developer (Cambridge) had an approved project, said Ceschi-Smith.

"All the recommendations are saying is that if development must occur in that area, it should be done in a proper way according to the master plan's principles and good planning practices, and this is how it might look. It's not carved in stone.

"There will be a lot of discussion yet, including with Six Nations, before most of the proposed development could go forward."

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The lower part of River Road looks more like a country scene than an area within the city limits.

The Waterfront Master Plan provides a demonstration plan showing how development might be co-ordinated in the area marked by Birkett Lane, Erie Avenue and Baldwin Avenue, where a developer group has plans to build subdivisions (see graphic).

**Here are the main guidelines:**

- Keep a continuous open space along the dyke that links natural features, community facilities and new parks.
- Build a highly-connected network of streets that is linked to the already existing network, and oriented to provide for views of the waterfront, wherever possible.
- Establish a waterfront edge road to limit private development and enhance public access to the Grand River.
- Provide street trees, sidewalks on all streets and accommodate cycling on key routes to the waterfront.
- The Erie Avenue-Birkett Lane intersection could serve as a focal area with commercial-retail opportunities for the neighbourhood.

The Erie Avenue-Birkett Lane area is a green stretch of mostly floodplain territory, contested in a land claims dispute, on the south end of Brantford.

It also is where developers have filed plans of subdivision to build a total of nearly 1,200 housing units:

- West of Erie Avenue and north of Birkett Lane – a 428 unit subdivision plan submitted by Harry and Helga Noderer in 1992. conditions not yet fulfilled.
- Northwest corner of Erie and Birkett – a 99-house subdivision by Cambridge Heritage Management Corp. approved, but repeatedly stalled by native protests.
- 147 Birkett – a 219-unit subdivision planned by Stirling Bridge Ltd., application in progress.
- 339 Erie – a 60-unit townhouse complex by Multani Homes, application in progress.
- Dover Avenue – a 38-unit townhouse complex by Multani Homes, application in progress.
- 104 River Rd. – an eight-house subdivision by Jack, Ruth and Ross Shrum, plan of subdivision conditions not yet fulfilled.

The consulting team writing the master plan took those plans of subdivision into account when drawing up a demonstration plan.

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