

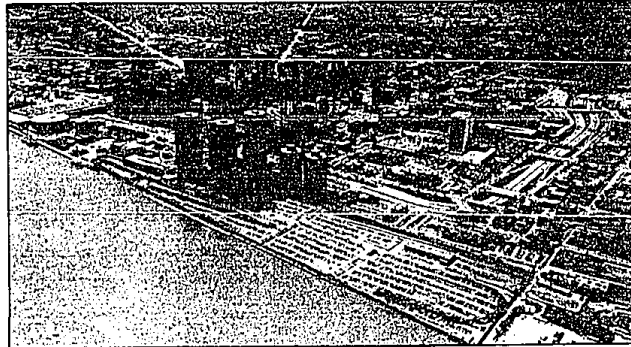
# Building Scene

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300



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(F) 11



Outline shows the site of the proposed Port Atwater development next to the Renaissance Center.



Port Atwater will be built in three phases and will include office and residential towers and three marinas.

## Development returns river to the public

By Dale Northrup  
special writer

With the planning vision of Amerivest Properties of Farmington Hills, Detroit is in the process of recapturing more of its riverfront.

The project is Port Atwater, which extends 3,500 feet along the Detroit River and includes hotel, office, retail and recreational facilities adjacent to Renaissance Center.

It will consist of 6.8 million square feet, including parking facilities, on 30 acres of riverfront property in Detroit's central business district from Hart Plaza, east to Rivard Street, bounded on the south by the river and on the north by Franklin Street.

Whereas Renaissance Center has been accused of setting itself apart from the city behind massive berms that contain its mechanical systems, Port Atwater allows for the greatest exposure on the Detroit River of any project in the city's history.

THE MASTER planning is being done by Minoru Yamasaki Associates of Troy. According to Paul Berlin, senior associate in charge of planning, Atwater Street had to be realigned to facilitate returning the river's edge to the public. This involved adding 50 feet of fill in the river at the west/southwest section of the project and extending the waterfront approximately 600 feet. A landscaped pedestrian plaza with adjoining marinas will complement the site.

Five years of planning and negotiating between Amerivest, the city's planning commission and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources set the stage for the start of the project. (See related story.)

Phase One, bounded by the river, Beaubien and St. Antoine streets involves a 600,000-square-foot tower for mixed use. Adjacent to the tower will be a suite-concept hotel consisting of three individual floor plans.

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Contained within the tower are to be retail, restaurants and support facilities. The tower is being designed by Minoru Yamasaki Associates.

Phase Two to the east involves two office towers, one 40 stories with 900,000 square feet and one 35 stories with 750,000 square feet, as well as two, 28-story residential towers to the west of Renaissance Center, each containing 300 units. The construction timetable is slated from 1992 to 2000.

Phase Three, terminating at Rivard Street, will include two 20-story residential towers with 150 units each. The initial design calls for a series of stepped setbacks perhaps allowing for individual apartment terraces lending a view of the river. The construction timetable is from 2000 to 2002, but could be completed concurrently with Phase Two subject to market conditions and absorption rates.

THREE MARINAS will allow residents and visitors access to the riverfront. Port Atwater will be the single most public-oriented design attempted since the Civic Center development.

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## Public works funds needed

By Gerald Frawley  
staff writer

Developers of the proposed Port Atwater are awaiting word on whether state or federal funds will be made available for road, water line and sewer improvements before the project can proceed. They expect to hear on the availability of funds in early 1990. The largest private project in downtown Detroit's history is being developed by a partnership between Melody Corp. president Michael George and Amerivest Properties president Brian Palmer. Both companies are based in Farmington Hills.

George and Palmer also were expected to apply for Michigan transportation economic development funds, according to Bill Swanson of the department's planning division.

George said he got into the venture when Palmer, who was working on a project for Melody Corp. at the time, asked him if he would be interested in becoming an investor in a major downtown development endeavor.

"It seemed like a good opportunity at the time, since the Canadian-American Free Trade Pact was moving towards reality and there seems to be a trend towards re-centralization," George said.

THE DEVELOPMENT'S tenants, he said, will be out-of-state firms trying to cash in on the Canadian-American Free Trade agreement since Michigan is ideally located to capitalize on the pact.

George said he expects some firms will also relocate from the suburbs and other areas of Michigan. "We'll probably even get some people from within the city."

But Swanson of the transportation department, said in order for the project to work people will need to get to it — which is where the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) comes in. According to the economic impact statement developed by the Detroit-based accounting firm BDO Seidman, the development will generate nearly 12,000 jobs when complete — nearly 4,000 in phase one alone.

Swanson said a project as large as Port Atwater is bound to have an effect on traffic patterns as far away as the I-75 and I-94 interchanges. "We're glad we're getting involved in the planning early in the game."

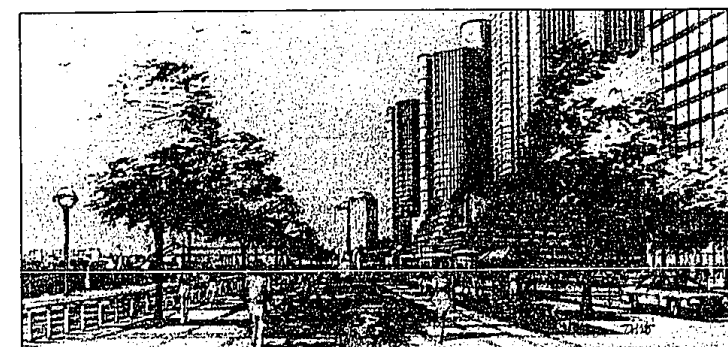
"We know what is happening with other cities, and it will happen here," he said, referring to development along urban riverfronts. "Development exploits the riverfront."

Before construction can even begin, roads, sewers and water lines will have to be relocated and improved at an estimated cost of \$55 million, Swanson said. The city of Detroit has already committed \$10 million dollars. But it will take more than \$35 million to make sure transportation needs are adequately met, he said.

CURRENT ESTIMATES indicate the project will generate 31,640 trips per day by the time it is complete, Swanson said. "That's a lot of traffic to dump onto the road system."

By using computer models, Swanson said MDOT can predict project traffic patterns. "Logically, those folks are going to go in and out of there and they'll take the Chrysler — and that's already overpacked."

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Port Atwater master plan by Minoru Yamasaki Associates.

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