

Port Atwater seeks public works funds

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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 \$55 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."

Swanson said one alternative that's been proposed is a new access ramp from the Chrysler to the development.

Improvement may also be needed at the I-94/Chrysler interchange, but MDOT doesn't have any solutions for alleviating traffic congestion on the two freeways, Swanson said.

Bill Lontz, of the Michigan Department of Commerce manufacturing and development division, said the department became involved because of the project's size and potential impact.

The commerce department doesn't get involved

with any project, Lontz said. "This is billion dollar project with a 10-year construction life."

So far, the commerce department has acted as an adviser for the project, directing Amerivest Properties in its dealings with MDOT and the department of natural resource (DNR), Lontz said.

The DNR became involved because it was necessary to add nearly 50 feet of land into the river, Lontz said.

As the project moves forward, Lontz said the department will become more involved in helping the project get financing.

"We haven't done much on the project yet, other than guide them and help them avoid the trouble spots," he said, adding the commerce department is taking the same role it took in the Mazda manufacturing plant in Flat Rock.

Developer George said he and Palmer chose the riverfront because it is a viable area, and new development succeeds best when it's near other successful developments. "For development to work (in the city), the area has to grow contiguously — that's why we start at the riverfront."

"It's not going to happen overnight — it will take a long time (for Detroit to redevelop), but people won't come back unless there's some first class developments for them to come back to," George said.

"We feel we will have a sophisticated enough project that people will want to come down," George said.

George said financing the project will not be difficult as long as he and Palmer can get the state and federal aid for infrastructure improvements.

Once the federal and state funds come through, George said he and Palmer will be able to begin getting commitments for tenants in the development. "Financing is not an issue as long as you have the tenants."

Project open to riverfront

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Brian Palmer, president of Amerivest, together with Michael George, co-owner, president and chief executive officer of Melody Farms, formed the company in 1985. Palmer calls Port Atwater "an outstanding use of downtown riverfront that all Detroiters and visitors will find exciting and stimulating."

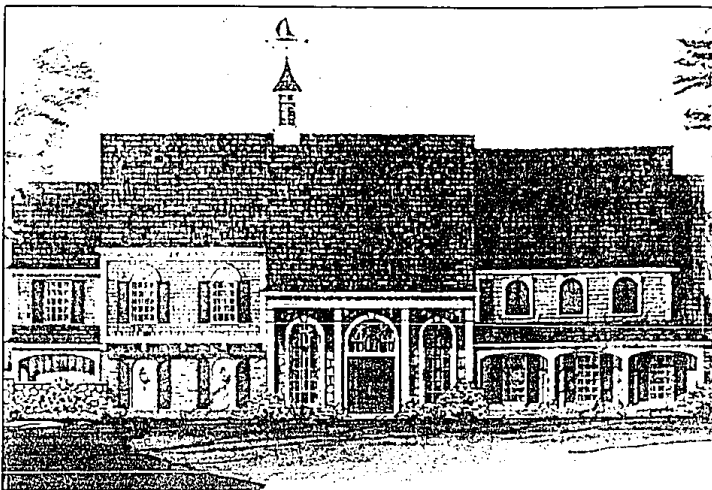
According to an economic impact analysis prepared by the public accounting and consulting firm of BDO Seidman, Port Atwater will create nearly 12,000 jobs generating more than \$487 million in annual payroll at its completion and hundreds of

construction-related jobs over the next 12 years.

The Seidman study also projects up to \$568 million in annual sales revenue that will be generated by the development and \$60 million in annual tax revenues that will be generated for the city and state.

The economic impact analysis demonstrates the "multiplier effect" on the city, area and state economies of \$426 million as a result of increased visitor traffic, office tenants, hotel guests and more recreational dollars being spent downtown.

Dale Northrup is an architectural historian and college professor who lives in Troy.



Robertson Brothers Community Developers has broken ground on a \$1.2 million Palladian-style clubhouse within the \$180 million Heathers, a 435-unit condominium project in Bloomfield Hills. The 8,300-

square foot clubhouse will feature a 1,400-square-foot pool, three tennis courts, locker rooms and grille style room and bar to serve 60.

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