



Heard on the Street: Water conversation continues, fresh fish market and HighPoint Flats

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MUSKEGON, MI – This just might turn into the year of “water” in Muskegon.

It seems to be the year that the community redirects its attention to its greatest assets – the water resources of Lake Michigan, Muskegon Lake and the Muskegon River.

The Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition seems as if will do its part in keeping local residents thinking about the current condition of our waters and waterfronts and the important roles they play in our community’s future.

The coalition – a gathering of business, government and nonprofit leaders concerned about the “triple bottomline” of sustainability – will lead the community conversation on water as the year progresses.

That conversation has been loud and intense over issues such as the redevelopment of the Sappi paper mill property and the suggested relocation of Fisherman’s Landing. Quieter has been the behind-the-scenes discussions among major West Michigan businesses and Muskegon Lake property owners on port development.

The sustainability group meets monthly and will hear in succeeding months about the city of Muskegon’s waterfront master plan, the legal ramifications of waterfront planning, environmental issues and the economic development potential of it all. By fall, the group hopes to have a public forum on the topic.

Along with The Muskegon Chronicle’s and MLive’s continuation of **the “Water Runs Through Us” series**, the



Marge Beaver | Muskegon Chronicle

Water discussions this year have ranged from Fisherman's Landing relocation, Sappi paper mill property redevelopment to MLive's look at the issue with the "Water Runs Through Us" series. Now the Muskegon Area Sustainability Coalition looks as if it will enter the public conversation.

water debate should heat up as 2012 continues.

Fishmonger's Wife on the move

Muskegon's west end lost a fresh fish market when Raymors Fish went out of business last year on West Sherman Boulevard. But fish lovers will be thrilled to hear that **the Fishmonger's Wife** will expand from its offerings at the Muskegon Farmer's Market to a permanent retail location further toward the lake on West Sherman Boulevard.

The word from the owner is that work will continue on the future fish market building during late spring and early summer. The plan is for the Fishmonger's Wife to reemerge at the farmer's market in mid-June and the retail shop open sometime in mid-summer.

HighPoint Flats taking a new direction?

Grand Rapids developer and Shoreline Inn owner Jon Rooks has struggled to pull off a downtown condominium redevelopment of the former Comerica Bank tower building.

The HighPoint Flats condo project has had buyer interest, but Rooks has had problems finding bank financing in the current real estate market and credit climate.

Downtown promoters are suggesting the redevelopment of the tower building may come in the form of market-rate apartments rather than condominium flats for sale. Work continues to find a way to create more residential units in downtown Muskegon, they say.



Parkland Development Co.

These are the latest drawings on what the former Comerica Bank tower building could look like as a residential development.

Moving the farmer's market

Nothing makes officials at Muskegon City Hall cringe more than a new round of suggestions on relocating the Muskegon Farmer's Market from its current Yuba Street site on the northeast side of the U.S. 31 business route near downtown. Discussions for years have been for moving the market to a more central downtown location as part of a larger redevelopment effort.

I don't think city officials are opposed to such discussions but relocating the farmer's market always raises the objections of farmers and customers reluctant to change. The discussions never progress to a solid relocation plan.

But, here we go again.

Downtown development boosters have a couple of ideas for the farmer's market. One, already reported, is to **create a commercial "market" on the foundation parking lot property on Morris Street** as part of an overall redevelopment of the site.

Another idea being discussed is to have the market relocate to one of the vacant parcels on the former Muskegon Mall property. Where any of these ideas will go is anyone's guess, but critical farmers and customers would do well just to relax.

Until community and city leaders have a solid concept that is adequately funded outside of city finances, it is merely a discussion. In the meantime, let the downtown dreams that were generated in the Imagine Muskegon plan continue to play out.

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