

# BUSINESS

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ABOVE: An artist's rendering of some of the two-storey-attached homes that Hilton Homes is building in Bridgwater Centre. BELOW: Spencer Curtis beside one of the first homes to be built at the development site.

## An old-style new development

### Bridgwater Centre going up

CONSTRUCTION is underway on the first project in Manitoba Housing's back-to-the-future-styled Bridgwater Centre. Winnipeg's Hilton Homes has begun pouring the foundations for the first of 120 multi-family housing units it will build in the town centre.

Dwayne Rewniak, Manitoba Housing's director of land development, said Hilton is the first builder to sign a development agreement for the town centre.

Talks are ongoing with four other developers whose proposals were accepted after a request for proposals (RFP) was issued late last year. Rewniak said Manitoba Housing hopes to finalize agreements with all of them by the end of this month.

He said it's exciting to see work getting underway on the first batch of what is expected to be 1,000 multi-family housing units in the town centre.

"That (multi-family housing) is certainly going to drive the demand for the commercial parcels (of land)," he said the town centre will include



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a mix of high- and low-density multi-family housing, commercial buildings (retail and office space) and mixed-use developments featuring a combination of commercial and residential space.

When Manitoba Housing issued its RFP, it said it envisioned a town centre with a small-town-Manitoba feel to it and features harking back to early-1900s Winnipeg.

That means main streets where contiguous rows of buildings, not parking lots, but up against the sidewalks. Also, commercial buildings with front porches or patios, and outdoor public spaces that include clock towers, plazas, fountains, "shaded, canopied, cantilevered and/or heated walkways" and an abundance of trees, shrubs and flower beds.

"It's looking back to the past for how we develop into the future," Rewniak said at the time. "We're going back to the traditional architectural styles of that era (early 1900s). And it has that walkability aspect, where cars are kind of in the background and the focus is on pedestrians."

Rewniak said 31 parcels of land will be developed in the town centre. Most will be developed by the five developers whose proposals were accepted. But there are two parcels set aside for highrise apartments and some commercial parcels on Centre Street earmarked for mixed-use



buildings with retail space on the ground floor, office space on the next two floors and residential units above that.

The types of businesses in the development include a grocery store, two gas stations and assorted retail shops, restaurants and service-related outlets.

Rewniak said Manitoba Housing officials hope the first commercial projects can get underway as early as next spring.

"But what will drive the commercial side is the development on the multi-family side," he said.

Hilton Homes' Spencer Curtis said the one- and two-storey duplexes and triplexes Hilton will build are more like single-family homes than typical multi-family units, which is why he refers to them as "single-family-

attached homes."

Each will have its own front- and backyard. The homeowners will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their own properties.

"The whole experience of living there will be akin to living in a single-family home, except it will be attached to another home," Curtis said. "We wanted to give people, as close as possible, the single-family-home experience, but at a more affordable price point."

Sixty of the 120 Hilton homes will be two-storey units with walk-out basements facing a lake. They will be about 1,700 square feet, with a base price of about \$360,000. The bungalows and two-storey homes with a back lane at the rear will be about 1,200 square feet and 1,550 square feet, respectively, with a base price of

\$289,000 and \$307,000.

Curtis said 22 of the 42 homes in Phase 1 of Hilton's development will have walk-out basements facing a lake. Homebuyers are expected to begin moving in next summer, and all 42 homes should be completed by next fall.

■ ■ ■

Downtown Winnipeg lost one of its biggest boosters recently with the death of veteran real estate agent Bill Thiessen.

Thiessen, an agent with Re/Max Performance Realty and a former business development officer with CentreVenture Development Corp., died Nov. 21 after a lengthy illness. He was 54.

"He was definitely a champion of the downtown," said Tom Fulton, broker/owner of Re/Max Performance. "He billed himself as the Urban Agent. He was involved in a lot of condo projects in the Exchange District."

"He was never concerned for himself. The welfare of his family was all that mattered," Fulton said.

Thiessen is survived by his wife, Ursula, and two children, Gabriel and Hannah.

*Know of any newsworthy or interesting trends or developments in the local office, retail, or industrial real estate sectors? Let real estate reporter Murray McNeill know at the e-mail address below, or at 697-7254.*

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