

One particular harbor

By **JOHN MATUSZAK - HP Staff Writer** | **Posted: Wednesday, October 19, 2016 6:00 am**

BENTON HARBOR — Peter Colovos, with Prairie Real Estate Group, says the Twin Cities' waterways have for too long been a barrier between communities.

With the formation of a Harbor Conservancy to discuss the future of the waterfront and surrounding area, Colovos sees the opportunity to build bridges that will benefit everyone.

Last week Colovos formally presented the proposal to St. Joseph's city commissioners, which have agreed to participate, along with Benton Harbor, St. Joseph Township and other public and private stakeholders, including the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, Whirlpool Corp. and Harbor Shores.

Other agencies, such as the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Transportation also will participate. A representative from Gov. Rick Snyder's office also is at the table, Colovos said.

The 600-acre area around the harbors is an asset that any other community would love to have, Colovos said, but he believes it is not being used to its fullest potential.

Residents have a choice to "squander it or utilize it," Colovos said.

The Harbor Conservancy will not set policy, but will be a think tank where those interested in the development of the harbors can meet and share ideas.

Some of those ideas, formulated by Andrews University architecture students, are on display at a recently erected gallery made from shipping containers that stands at Territorial Road and Fifth Street in Benton Harbor. The study was first released in February and envisions a waterfront with condos, restaurants, parks and other amenities. It was previously displayed at the Krasl Art Center.

Colovos said he and others didn't want to see that study sit on a shelf, and discussed the formation of a group to keep the conversation going.

He said the timing is right because Berrien County has decided to dissolve its Harbor Authority as of Jan. 1, turning responsibility for maintaining the harbors and riverways over to local governments.



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Peter Colovos, with the Prairie Real Estate Group, is photographed Tuesday in the Benton Harbor Arts District atop the building that displays a study on the Twin Cities harbors. Colovos and others are enlisting local leaders for a Harbor Conservancy that will plan for the waterfront's future.

Colovos said the Harbor Conservancy could be a stepping stone to a new multi-jurisdictional harbor authority. The Harbor Conservancy is set to disband in two years, but could be extended if needed, he said.

He emphasized the harbors' future should be of concern to everyone interested in the economic development of the Twin Cities. Creating a vibrant environment is necessary to attract and retain a talented work force and to encourage young people to live here.

“We’re competing with the whole world,” Colovos said.

Colovos conceded that future development would benefit his company. “What’s good for the community is good for us.”

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