

Man who bought land for city hall

City's realty director, Bob Johnston moving on

There aren't too many corners of Mississauga Bob Johnston can look at without seeing the imprint of his work.

If he drives along Burnhamthorpe Rd. he sees city hall. He bought the land for the new civic centre and sold the land for the old site on Robert Speck Pkwy in the late 1980s.

Further along Burnhamthorpe to the west, he can admire the wooded expanse of the future Mississauga Gardens land.

Johnston acquired all of those properties from the Chappel, Bird, McEwan and Zaichuk families over a long period of negotiations.

Then there's the drive along Lakeshore Rd. where the City's director of realty services can admire Lakeside Park, acquired from Petro-Canada; Port Credit Harbor, where he recently finished almost a decade of negotiations to lease land from the federal government; and Lakefront Promenade Park, where he again negotiated with the feds about leasing and the relocation of the Port Credit Yacht Club.

Even further east is the Arsenal lands in Lakeview where Johnston helped forge a complicated \$18 million deal among several local, regional and provincial governments that brought the land into City hands while allowing Mississauga to acquire another 200 acres of parkway belt lands in sev-

eral locations throughout the municipality.

After almost 20 years of appraising, buying and selling land for the City of Mississauga, Johnston is leaving public service to establish his own career as a consultant.

The 47-year-old local resident says the time is right to move on, what with the downsizing of government and the general tendency to contract out work. With so many senior staff people being replaced or retiring, "the service I'm providing is disappearing" he says.

That phenomenon, plus the infrastructure program, will mean lots of opportunity for someone like Johnston to ply his skills with both the private and public sectors.

During his tenure, Johnston was also responsible for overseeing the controversial market value reassessment in 1986 and develop-

ing the City's program to acquire cash-in-lieu of parkland. He also led several City's attempts to reform the property tax and assessment systems.

City Clerk Terence Julian called Johnston a "key player" in a large number of municipal initiatives. "He was instrumental in a lot of major, major land deals that were multi-million dollar deals," he said. "He's going to be very, very badly missed."

Johnston, who leaves July 29,

will maintain an office downtown, but he will also have an office in Port Credit, close to the waterfront development he's been nurturing for so long.

While life in government has grown a lot tougher with more work, fewer people and lower pay, Johnston says the thrill was always in working for the benefit of all of the public. "It may sound corny," he says, "but I've always been motivated by working for the public service."



JOHNSTON

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