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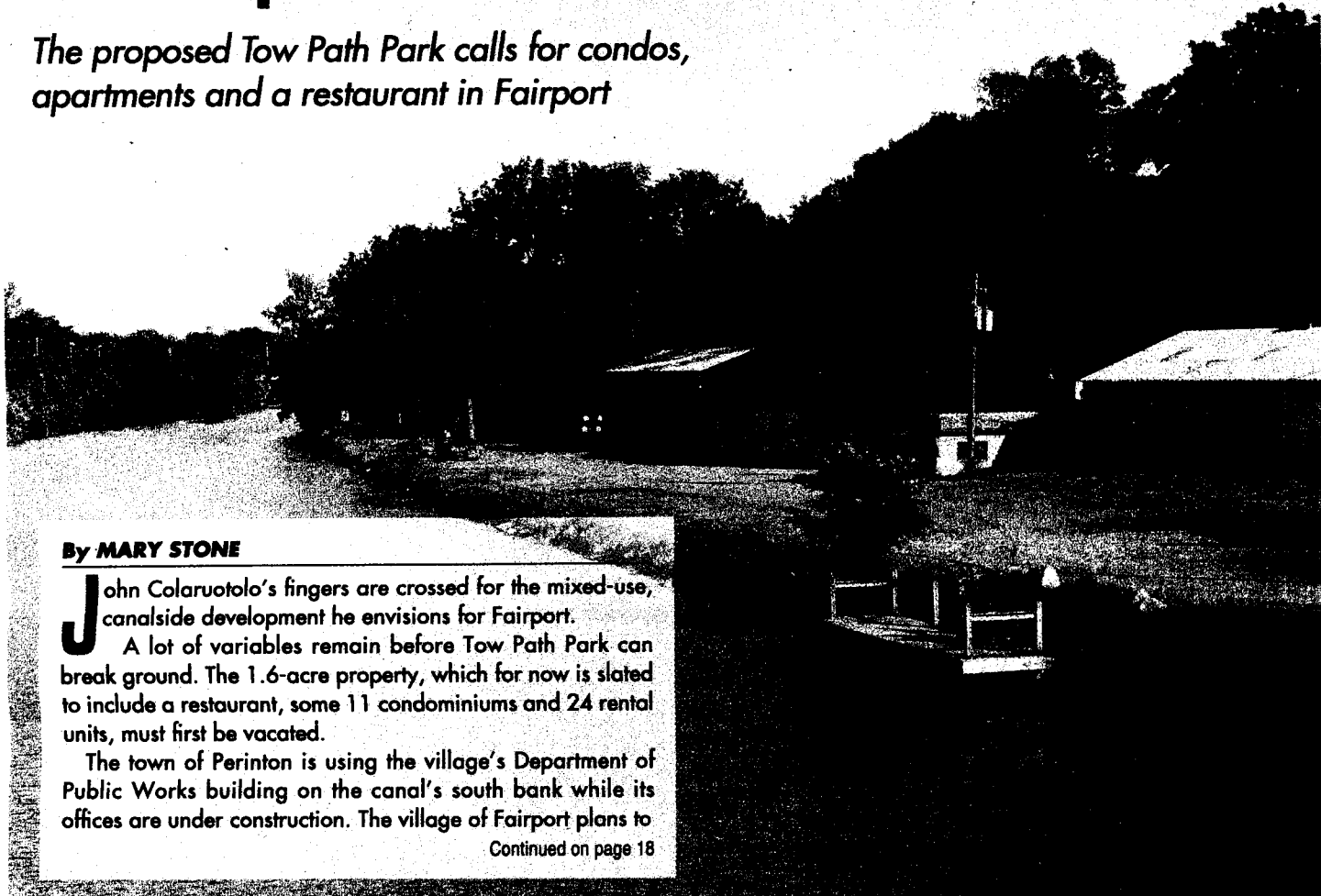
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A new path for site on the Erie Canal

The proposed Tow Path Park calls for condos, apartments and a restaurant in Fairport



By **MARY STONE**

John Colaruotolo's fingers are crossed for the mixed-use, canalside development he envisions for Fairport.

A lot of variables remain before Tow Path Park can break ground. The 1.6-acre property, which for now is slated to include a restaurant, some 11 condominiums and 24 rental units, must first be vacated.

The town of Perinton is using the village's Department of Public Works building on the canal's south bank while its offices are under construction. The village of Fairport plans to

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demolish the building at the end of Perinton's lease term next spring and sell the property to Colaruotolo's construction company, Anco Builders Inc.

Anco is known for developing high-end residential neighborhoods; Colaruotolo is widely known as the director of winemaking operations at the winery his father founded, Casa Larga Vineyards in Fairport.

The restaurant Colaruotolo plans for the development would feature wines from Casa Larga. Visits to the vineyard are rising, he said.

"We like the idea of the canal being involved with the winery," he said. "The canal in Fairport is a destination in New York, but we have lots of visitors from all over the country. This year specifically tourism has been up because people aren't traveling very far. I think this project will just add to the whole experience of this area."

He added, "We've always admired Fairport, and (these plans are) a way of having my input on the development of the village in a neat way. I'm just excited about it and jumping at the chance. So I'm really hoping this will all work out."

Anco has gotten its initial site assessment. The main stumbling block that remains, he said, is waiting until the spring for the town to move out.

"We're just trying to get the ground work done with the village up front before

we start going through formal hearings for the final approval," he said.

Kathy Keogh, associate broker at Nothnagle Realtors' Fairport office, said so far the public seems to approve of Anco's plans. She has no direct involvement with the project.

"I'm very excited about it. I think that will be very popular. I think people really like the village living, and I think once it gets going it's going to be very well-received.

"The public is positive," she said, but added, "I'm not too excited about apartments there. I know they're talking about that, but I'm not sure why.

"I think townhomes would be a lot more popular there than apartments, but I'm sure they've done their research on why they think that's a good idea."

Colaruotolo said the development mix had to do with the property's zoning. From a planning perspective, he said, it was the right way to do it.

"A lot of times in development, when you look at zoning it's stratified from industrial to commercial, multifamily to townhouses and homes for sale. And that piece of property lends itself to that type of progression in terms of one end being somewhat commercial, where people can interact and have a social gathering place, and the multifamily brings it down to the next level of zoning, and then you end up with the condos or townhouses, and they bump up to single-family homes."

John Antetomaso, Greater Rochester As-

sociation of Realtors Inc. president and an agent at Re/Max Plus, said in areas such as Fairport, Perinton, Irondequoit and Brighton, opportunities for new construction are limited. Developers have to be creative.

"As towns continue to push for more green space it truly affects the new construction markets," he said. "Builders are trying hard to find smaller in-fill pieces to create some opportunities for new construction. When opportunities come up like 11 units on the canal, this opens up a great site for the developer but also an opportunity exists for a buyer to obtain a new construction opportunity."

For two years, Aristo Development Inc. has been building out its 22-house development project along the Erie Canal in Fairport. Aristo acquired the 10.6-acre property in 2004 for approximately \$440,000. Home prices at Canal Grove, located off Garden Drive, are \$300,000 to \$450,000. Since construction on Canal Grove started in 2006, 11 houses have sold.

Colaruotolo said his firm has worked closely with the village to develop his concept for the canal to help ensure the approval process goes smoothly.

The village of Fairport is applying for a state grant worth more than \$500,000 to install additional docking near the development.

Kal Wysokowski, executive director for Fairport's office of community and economic development, is leading that effort.

Public access to the waterfront is going to be essential to Colaruotolo's success

there, she said.

"The addition of boat docks, benches, landscaping, a pavilion and pedestrian lighting add character and continuity along the existing waterfront. John understands how important this is to us and has helped us incorporate our desire for public use of the docks into his residential and commercial project," Wysokowski said.

Colaruotolo said the cost of his project and the units he plans to build for now are unclear. The site work and the rising cost of construction materials will determine much of the pricing.

"Hopefully we'll see some stabilization in the pricing because materials right now are pretty much at an all-time high, especially petroleum-based materials. Transporting materials from one location to another, that alone has a significant impact on price," he said.

The unknown variables and potential hurdles are hard to deal with but they are becoming more common today, regardless of the development type or where it is, Colaruotolo explained. Three other construction projects he has under way have their own issues, he added.

"It's like with anything else, these projects do take a long time," he said. "I get frustrated myself because I like to move as quickly as possible, but you need to go through all the steps in order for it to happen. But I think once we get past all of the site work analysis, then from there on this project should move really quick."

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