



Photos by Brandy Baker / The Detroit News

Walled Lake Western High swim coach Stuart Mair relaxes at the Bearclaw Coffee Company in Walled Lake. The city aims to expand the boundaries of the Downtown Development Authority to include the historic Lakefront Area.

# Reshaping Walled Lake

## Downtown project aims to play up shoreline

BY JON ZEMKE  
Special to *The Detroit News*

**WALLED LAKE** — City officials are planning to significantly reshape downtown, and they're hoping to better incorporate the shores of Walled Lake in the process.

To do so, they hope to expand the boundaries of the city's Downtown Development Authority, a tax-capturing body that uses the money for downtown improvements, to include the historic Lakefront Area.

The idea is to focus city resources on reinvigorating downtown to take advantage of its position on Walled Lake's northern edge. The DDA can spend only the money it captures, about \$1 million a year, on projects within its boundaries. Also on the table is a new City Hall with restaurants, banquet space, a wedding chapel, and the one thing merchants clamor for most: more parking.

"By refocusing our attention on expanding the boundaries, we could spend captured tax dollars in those expanded boundaries," DDA Chair Casey Ambrose said.

Expanding the authority's boundaries to the lakefront area would allow it to make



Jerry Johnson, left, and Boathouse restaurant co-owner Fred Jadan do renovations at the eatery. A new hall would bring more parking and foot traffic to the city, officials say.

infrastructure and streetscape improvements in the city's most distinctive area.

The lake is a big reason Julie McCall started a business in downtown's Lakefront Area. She opened the Bearclaw Coffee Company, a coffee shop, on East Walled Lake Drive two months ago with its view in mind.

"That draws the people to the coffee shop," McCall said. "They want to sit and relax and enjoy the view of the lake."

Increased parking and foot traffic are some of the advantages city officials claim will come with a new City

Hall in the Lakefront Area.

Birmingham developer Bedros Avedian is proposing a public-private deal to build a three-story, multi-use building on East Walled Lake Drive between Ferland and Witherall streets, according to City Manager Jerry Walker.

Avedian would own the first and third floors. The city would own the second floor. "We are really cramped in our operating facility so that takes away from our efficiency," Walker said of the current City Hall quarters.

He added the proposed City Hall would allow the city to sell the current hall and

### What's next

The Walled Lake City Council will discuss plans for a new City Hall and to reshape the city's Downtown Development Authority's boundaries at its first meeting in October. For information, call (248) 624-4847.

put it back on the tax rolls.

"Really it's a win-win on both sides for the city," Walker said.

Walker said the project could move forward as early as next spring if the county agrees to adjust the Downtown Development Authority boundaries and the Walled Lake City Council approves the new hall plans.

John Semma hopes it works out that way. He is remodeling the old Key Largo restaurant in the Lakefront Area into a sports bar. He thinks both ideas will help make downtown Walled Lake a destination in Oakland County.

"Where in Oakland County do you have a downtown district on a lake like this?" Semma said. "It (downtown's future) is going to be fantastic."

Jon Zemke is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.