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**Innovator says**

## Marina District needs museum, virtual reality

By J. Patrick Eaken  
Press Staff Writer  
[news@presspublications.com](mailto:news@presspublications.com)

As Toledo waits for Mayor-Elect Carty Finkbeiner to take office, the proposed Marina District development has not been entirely dormant.

Another Toledoan — filmmaker, writer, producer, and entrepreneur Michael Drew Shaw — says the Marina District development is alive and well. Shaw has had several meetings with the proposed developers, The Pizzuti Companies of Columbus, and he says his ideas are generating interest.

Shaw is co-founder of American Retrospects, a Toledo-based company specializing in historical commemoratives and television productions which include the award-winning PBS special, "Ohio, A Sentimental Journey", produced in partnership with The Ohio Historical Society for the 2003 bicentennial. Shaw also wrote and narrated "Toledo, A Sentimental Journey" for Toledo's sesquicentennial in 1987.

If Shaw were to have his way, the Marina District would include a 14-story Skyway Visitors Center, a Toledo History Museum, and a virtual reality entertainment gallery. His plans for a visitors' center have been cut to four stories and 50,000 square feet, but that is near Shaw's original plans for 75,800 square feet of total usable space, plus a roof top open air restaurant and reception area.

Shaw suggested the construction of the Skyway Center to coincide with the Marina project and the Veterans Glass City Skyway cable-stay bridge. Now, a planning committee has been formed to assist in the development of the museum as an addition to the Skyway Center.

"The big news is that the museum has the support of the Maumee Valley Historical Society, the Toledo-Lucas County Local History Department, and the University of Toledo History Depart-

ment. The plan is to include and work with all historical societies in neighboring communities," states Shaw.

"The photo gallery and artifacts museum would occupy around 4,000 square feet and would be operated by a non-profit museum society. Proposed funding to create the museum would come from state and federal grants via the Maumee Valley Historical Society. Cost of operating the museum would come from local legacy family and corporate grants and admissions," Shaw explains.

Plans for a Toledo historical museum were first announced by native Toledoan Edward Slack. In a meeting on Oct. 19 that included prominent local historians Fred Folger and Dr. Ernest Weaver, the idea of creating a venue that would tell the story of Toledo's history was presented by Slack, author of the concept.

Slack, who admits having a passion for history, explains, "My goal is three-fold — present exhibits and re-enactments that are historically accurate, provide educational enrichment for visitors young and old, and promote activities that are not only factual but informative and entertaining."

"This is Ed Slack's vision and I encourage him to stay true to his dream. We want to help any way we can," said Shaw.

Shaw added, "Don't let the name fool you. Mr. Slack's museum will include the suburbs of Maumee, Perrysburg, Sylvania, Northwood, Oregon, and Rossford. This time, we've got to get past the usual bickering that goes on between the City of Toledo and the suburbs. Just because it will be located in Toledo doesn't mean that it shouldn't be about everybody."

Slack told The Press that a better name for the museum would be the Toledo "Area" History Museum, because he believes about "35 communities in the Maumee River corridor already have lo-

cal historical societies that may be able to loan, contribute, or add exhibits."

Several aspects of the museum will be discussed at the next meeting of the steering committee on Jan. 18. Shaw and Slack say the proposed museum would be a not-for-profit entity funded in part through grants, and hopefully by many of the Toledo companies which they say are so much a part of the city's rich history.

"We need input and support from the citizenry," Mr. Slack emphasized. "We encourage people to contact us with ideas and suggestions of what they would like to see in their museum. It will belong to all of us, and we want those who live and work here to see it as a proud reflection of our common heritage. The establishment of Toledo's own historical museum is an idea long overdue."

Shaw says a longer-term goal may be for another large exhibit located elsewhere in the Marina District, possibly the Acme Power Plant. Although Shaw met repeatedly with representatives from The Pizzuti Companies, Pizzuti did not include any plans for a museum in the drawings revealed at a press conference in October. Shaw and Slack say they believe the plans may be included in revised drawings.

In addition, Shaw, serving as executive director of the Toledo Skyway Visitors Center, says that a Cleveland based company has been selected as a partner to operate a 6,000 square foot Virtual Entertainment gallery in the Skyway Center.

"The company is a leader in the electronic games industry and will joint venture with Skyway Center to design, install, and maintain cutting edge virtual technology in a sophisticated and uniquely exciting atmosphere. Exotic lighting and special visual effects will be programmed to change on a daily basis to keep the attraction always new," Shaw explains.