



## Can Norwich Plan revitalize downtown Acton?

It is a well known merchandising fact that people like to shop where the surroundings are pleasant.

Over the last two weeks the Free Press has polled merchants and shoppers in the downtown area and both groups seemed to agree that too much business was going out of town and something should be done about it before it was too late. Other nearby towns have experienced the same symptoms and some have done something about it.

In December of 1961, the downtown merchants of Oakville were faced with a mounting series of problems relating directly to shopping centres and big cities. They decided that action must be taken to preserve their position as suppliers to residents of Oakville. They engaged the services of a merchandising consultant who decided that the best way for the merchants of Oakville to pull up their collective socks would be to implement the Norwich Plan.

What is it?

It's named after the city of Norwich, England, where the Civic Trust proposed a joint project which would show how the appearance of some given area in the city could be improved without major alteration or expense. So they picked out one street—Magdalen—because its problems were felt to be typical of other streets in other areas.

Through the years, Magdalen St. through carelessness, thoughtlessness and haphazard development lost much of its charm and character, much like the business sections of downtown Ontario have done through the years.

What was needed, planners said, was for the street to be looked at as a whole by an experienced eye appraising its potential. Then, if everyone was willing, a plan of renovation and redecoration would be prepared.

Good points would be emphasized, bad points camouflaged and a pleasing new face

presented to the world.

It was not a rebuilding. It was simply a restoration and repainting project.

The appearance of Magdalen St. started a movement that soon crossed the ocean. Oakville was the first Canadian municipality to implement the plan.

Streets and women have one problem in common—they both want to be in style and yet present a different appearance.

Many people who hear of the Norwich Plan for the first time visualize a scheme where every street is made to look like every other street—punched out with a cookie cutter or pulled down and rebuilt from scratch at enormous expense. But that's not the idea. Rather, it is to make each and every street as different as possible with a personality and appearance all its own.

All that is required to implement the Norwich Plan is that the street or area be examined by an experienced eye and an organized plan set up to bring out the points of

beauty, cover ugly blemishes or remove them entirely.

Costs should be in the region of normal redecorating expenses for the premises, unless very drastic alterations are called for. And it works.

The plan is more of an investment than an expense.

Communities where the plan has been adopted and completed have reported an increase in business from 15 to 30 per cent and still rising.

There are other dividends too. Besides the greater interest in trade, there is greater pride in the community and more attractive working conditions.

One of the most important features of the Plan is it is adaptable to any community or street regardless of background or locality. One point to remember, however, is that the street or area defined should be as far as possible one entity with a definite beginning and end, or with a clear cut perimeter.

The Plan is not a panacea for all the ills plaguing the community but it could be the first step toward making our home town the place we want it to be.

Planning is sometimes forgotten in our busy world but now in the midst of some of the greatest changes in history people are beginning to ask if we haven't sacrificed some of the beauty and convenience of our own district.

Towns and cities where the Plan has been adopted are pleased with the results. Right now the Town of Milton is considering such a plan and meetings have been held. Oakville was the first municipality in Canada to adopt it. Niagara Falls has implemented the plan and Bolton.

Acton is not the only town with a decaying downtown core.

The publisher of the Georgetown Herald said he is afraid the downtown section of his town will soon be a service centre rather than a mecca for shoppers. Brampton newspaper

people report downtown Brampton is "dead" while the bulk of shoppers patronize suburban malls.

Will Acton wait for a similar fate?

As downtown merchant Ben Rachlin has said: a facelift of the premises never hurts and it may attract a purchaser for the first time but only congeniality, honest value and good service keeps customers.

These are other necessary ingredients if Acton is to have a thriving downtown core where shoppers are welcomed and feel at home. Obviously many shoppers already feel that way about Acton's main stem as the downtown poll showed but the same people criticized the appearance of the downtown, the condition of some of the older buildings and the lack of choice.

The Norwich Plan would seem to be the "viable alternative" society is concerned with today and could revitalize the downtown area.

# The Acton Free Press

Ninety-Eighth Year. — No. 7

ACTON, ONTARIO, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 1972

Fourteen Pages—Fifteen Cents.



BIBLE SCHOOL STUDENTS line up in front of the stone school at Robert Little school as classes resume after a mid morning break. The school is sponsored by Bethel Christian Reformed Church and has 9 to 12 classes for five to 12 year-olds. (Photo by D. Pink)

## North can't agree about boundaries

Future municipal boundaries in a regional government setup are a contentious issue with 30 council and staff members from the five North Halton municipalities.

A meeting last Wednesday in Milton failed to reach any agreement about boundary lines, which took up so much of the meeting, there was no time left to discuss the functions of two levels of government.

Representatives from Acton, Esquesing, Georgetown, Milton and Nassagaweya are at loggerheads about which is the most important issue but the boundary dispute emerged as the main priority.

The meeting was closed to the press. It is another in a series which the northern municipalities of Halton will hold to dispense with preliminary manoeuvring prior to the second major meeting involving the entire county set for September 9.

The first one was held to discuss recommendations in the TECO report, an outline of recommendations for regional government from the clerks and treasurers in the county, to implement regional government. The division of power between two levels of government and boundaries were the most contentious issues at the first meeting.

The TECO report was the first attempt to achieve some coherent steps since Queens Park asked the county to submit regional government proposals

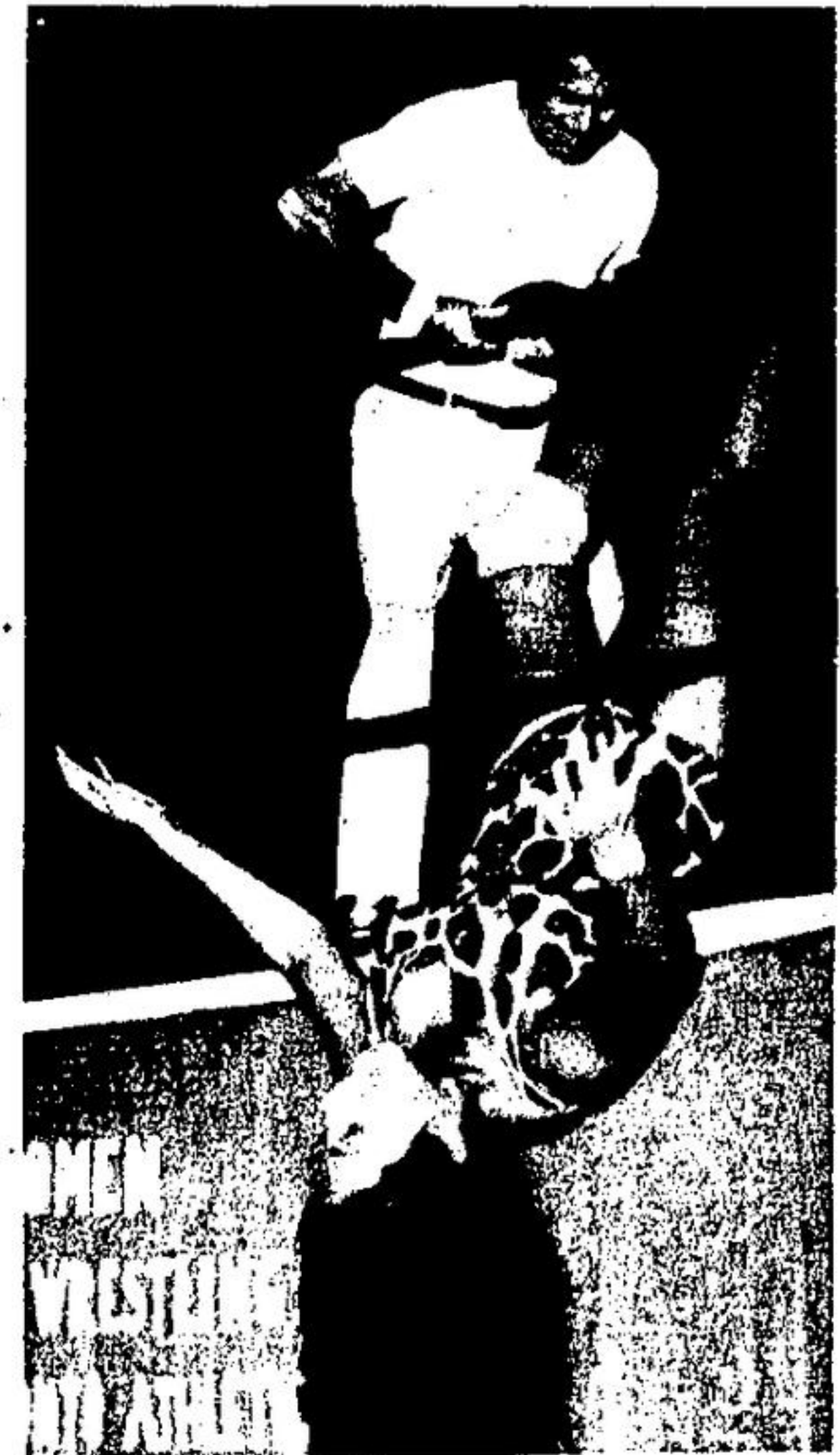
for consideration. It followed a number of studies from Queens Park.

The TECO report lumped Acton, Georgetown and most of Esquesing into one of five lower-tier municipalities or boroughs. Milton, a small portion of North Oakville and most of Nassagaweya would comprise another. A portion of Northern Nassagaweya would be given to Wellington County, Oakville would remain virtually the same, Burlington retain all the rich assessment land in their present boundaries and a new municipality would be created containing North Burlington with Waterdown, East Flamborough and parts of West Flamborough and Puslinch townships.

Boundaries were to be based on watersheds which the TECO committee decided would make ideal guidelines.

Under the TECO two tier plan many responsibilities held by local municipalities would be turned over to the regional council. The scheme came after 20 meetings and more than three months of study by the TECO committee.

The TECO report encountered some heavy opposition in its first airing in April but most municipalities did not have the time to study proposals thoroughly and the North of Halton is trying to settle many of the contentious issues before the second meeting September 9.



SORRY 'MAM, but we don't allow no hangin' around here! For story and more pictures see the Free Press sports pages.

## Kevin Parker captures further skating laurels

Fresh from his first place finish at an invitational summer free skating competition at St. Catharines, 11-year-old Kevin Parker of R.R. 1, Campbellville, skated to higher and further laurels Sunday by winning the juvenile men's championship of the 11th summer figure skating championships sponsored by the Central Ontario Section of the Canadian Figure Skating Association.

Five hundred and twenty young skaters from four provinces and 14 U.S. states were entered in the competitions held at the Lakeshore arena in Metro Toronto.

Competing against older and more experienced blade artists, the young Nassagaweya skater, a member of the Guelph Figure Skating Club, outpointed Ron Veirs of Troy, New York and Mark Bystek of Woodstock, the



KEVIN PARKER

other two prize winners in the class. There were 24 skaters in the class, divided into three sections. Kevin won his section and then competed in the finals where his artistry on the blades won a huge trophy and gold medal.

He was accompanied to the competitions by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ernie Parker, and the club professional Mrs. Lynn Pocock. He was the only skater from the Guelph club to compete in the competitions, which is the largest held in the summer. He was entered on the recommendation of the club professional. Kevin also did well in the

bronze interpretive skating, placing sixth in a large class. It was his first attempt at competitive interpretive skating. He has been in three competitions this year but up until Sunday had competed in pre-juvenile contests. Sunday's championship was his first juvenile class.

Kevin started skating with the Acton Figure Skating Club and transferred to the Guelph club when the family moved to their new home on the Guelph Line, near Brookville.

He is skating this summer at Galt arena and although he did not arrive home until two in the morning after his triumph was urging his father to take him to Galt for lessons at 10 a.m. the next morning.

## Nursing graduate

Shirley Lynn Stewart, R.R. 2, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Stewart, graduated on July 28 from the Kitchener-Waterloo Hospital. There were 60 nurses in her class. Attending the graduation exercises were members of her family.

Miss Stewart will be on the staff of the Kitchener-Waterloo hospital.



SHIRLEY LYNN STEWART

## Miss Acton Fair in contest today

Miss Acton Fair Brenda Bruce enters competition at the C.N.E. for the title of Miss Ontario Fair. Events begin this morning in the new contest, which has entries from all over Ontario. Miss Bruce was chosen at last year's Acton fair.

## Free Press takes three awards

The Acton Free Press took three prizes in the Canada-wide Better Newspapers Competitions, it was announced this week by the Canadian Community Newspapers Association.

The awards are being presented this week at the annual convention of the Association in Montreal's Hotel Bonaventure. Judging was done by Information Canada.

The Free Press received the highest marks of any newspaper in the competitions for its editorial page which won the P. George Pearce Memorial Award, donated by the Gananogue (Ont.) Reporter and the Creston (B.C. Review) while the Delhi (Ont.) News Record and the Wingham (Ont.) Advance Times shared third place.



The Acton paper took second prize in both the best all-round newspaper and best front page competitions in its own class, being edged out by the Gananogue (Ont.) Reporter for these awards. Third place went to the Espanola (Ont.) Standard and the Durham (Ont.) Chronicle respectively in the competitions, which were dominated by the Ontario newspapers. High marks were also obtained by the Free Press in the competition for best sports page, best Christmas edition and best women's pages although no prizes were won. The

Brampton/Bramalea Guardian took the top prize for best sports page while the Steinbach (Manitoba) Carillon News was awarded the top spot for a Christmas edition.

The three national awards join three prizes won in the Ontario Better Newspaper Awards this year—a first for general excellence, top correspondent and a third for the editorial pages in an all-Ontario class.

The Free Press was the only Halton or Wellington County newspaper to make the winners circle. The Brampton/Bramalea Guardian, one of several newspapers owned by Inland Publishers, formerly a subsidiary of the now defunct Toronto Telegram took first place in the Best All-Round competitions in the top circulation class.