

Using our heritage and Civic Study we'll soon have The Greening of Milton

Editor's note: After almost six months of study, asking questions, looking through the old records and preparing plans, the Lyon-Turner Partnership has submitted its Milton Civic Study.

The consulting firm was commissioned by the town to do this report and funded it with \$15,000 of taxpayers' money to map out what the town must do to retain its small town image while setting itself up to cope with the pressures of business and community life in the 80's.

Barry Lyon and Peter Turner said "the recommendations in our report, if implemented, will help ensure that the community keeps in touch with its needs and continues to grow and mature in the best interests of its residents and business community."

In essence the object is to retain and promote Milton's heritage. In fact, the entire report is centred on the use of landmarks and local traditions as a drawing-focal point from which to attach 1980's thoughts about culture and socio-demographics.

Only by retaining the heritage and attaching the interest of all Milton's 28,000 residents can this be accomplished, the consultants conclude.

And already we can look on Main St. at the work of Benny Crisci and Doug Brown to completely renovate their stores with the parameters of the civic report guiding the restoration work.

News Editor Jim Robinson breaks down the Milton Civic Report into what has been done, what can be done now, and what must still be done to keep Milton unique, yet vibrant.

It is doubtful that any of Milton's 28,000 people will be rushing to their neighbor's home to announce with quiet satisfaction the Milton Chamber of Commerce Civic Committee report on how the town will be "revitalized" has been submitted in its final draft.

Despite the fact the people of Milton paid for the report with \$15,000 of municipal tax dollars and they should be asking what they got in return for that amount, interest—except for the Civic Committee and a handful of merchants—is below the abysmal.

Most residents realize the merchants on Main St. are trying to do something, but they just aren't sure that it is. Residents have seen the flower boxes and the meandering semi-mall roadway, and almost to a person, they either dislike it or don't care.

sprawl, strip plazas, and skyscraping condominium blocks.

The raison d'être for the report goes back about two years to the time when the separate but closely allied Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA) Committee launched its drive to spruce up Main St. to make it more attractive to shoppers, and hopefully attract people with consumer dollars out of the malls and back into the core business district.

Simultaneously the Chamber of Commerce was interested in applying its own "revitalization" program to the regional town of Milton to include not just the core, but all areas and give us a new image.

For the purpose of this story we will concentrate on the Civic Committee, which was formed out of the need perceived by the Chamber.

The Chamber of Commerce saw it wasn't that Milton had a bad image, it just had, well, a shoddy looking one.

Stores on Main St. with empty interiors, vandals on the streets, even a tacy-looking "Welcome to Milton" sign on the outskirts of town which hadn't seen paint for about five years.

Milton has some pretty little places like the mill pond, Rattlesnake Point and Victoria Square; but if you aren't a resident, you probably would never find them. That's because these pluses were simply not being promoted for their considerable worth.

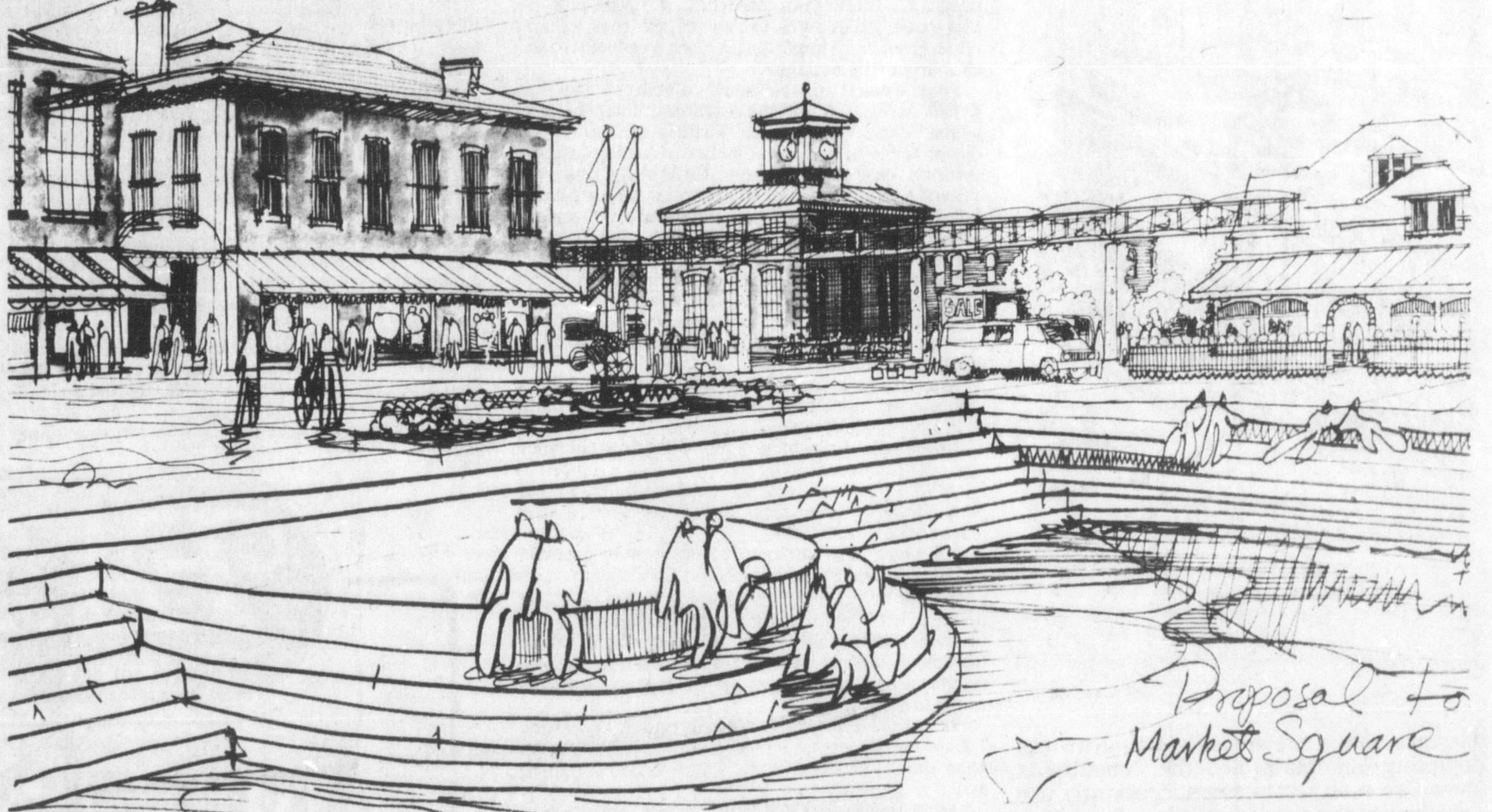
The process of deciding to prepare a report, who should do the work, and convincing town council to spend \$15,000 for it is a story unto itself; so suffice it to say the firm headed by Barry Lyon and Peter Turner was commissioned in the autumn of last year by the Civic Committee which was headed by Chairman Bert Walton.

The terms of reference for the study called for Turner and Lyon to "prepare plans which would assist in planning and promoting Milton and its business community over the coming decade."

"Particular emphasis was asked to be placed on appropriate methods of improving and ensuring the health and vitality of the community at large and on the revitalization of the downtown business area."

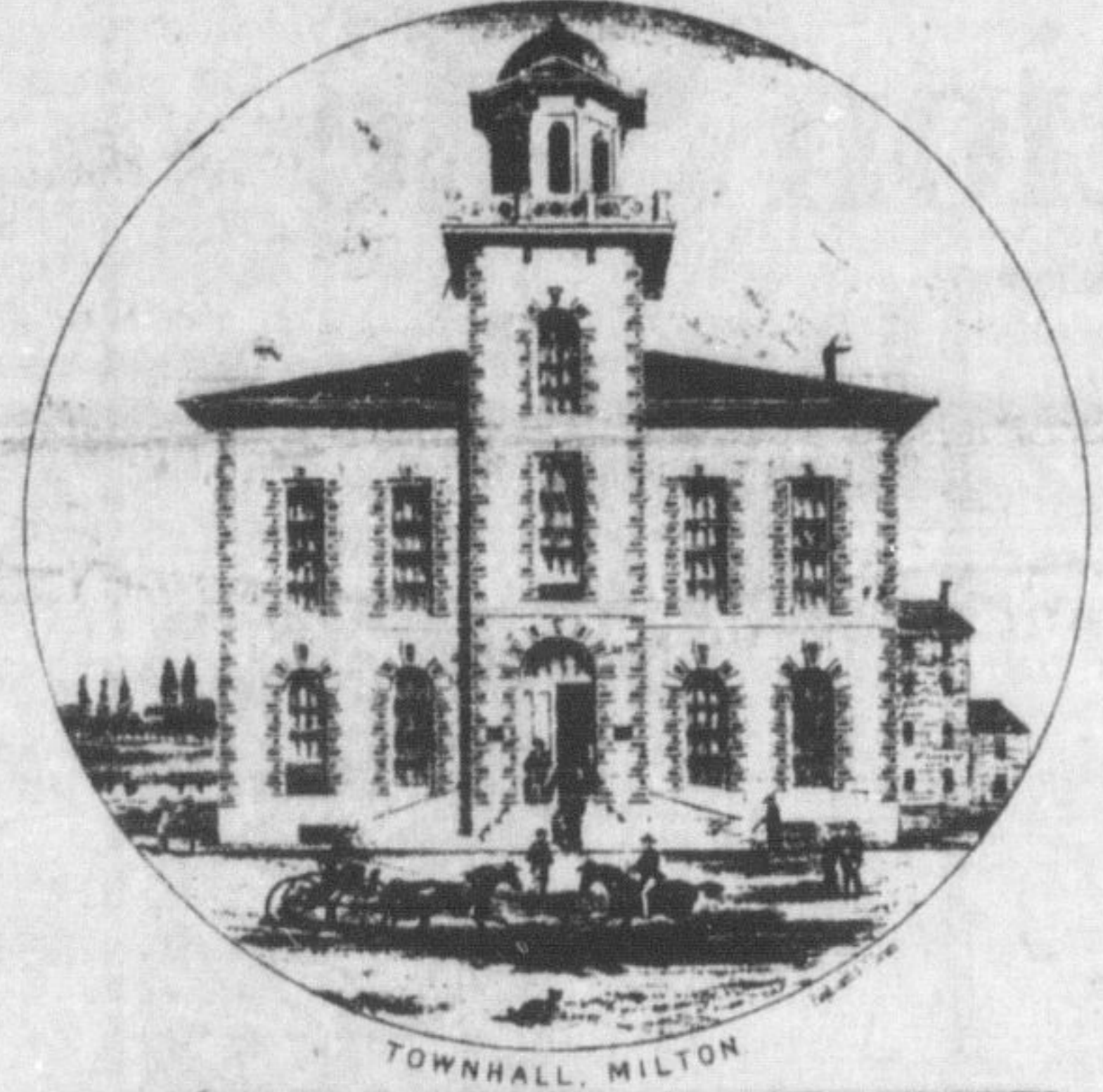
The consultants were also asked "to review Milton's Campbellville business area and to suggest ways and means of improving the utilization of Milton's abundant natural resources and historic assets." Launching what is now called the Civic Study, Lyon and Turner began by researching the history of the town with the help of Jim Dills. Residents and business people were asked about their opinions of the business area.

All the words and surveys were concluded recently at which time the report was presented to the Civic



Most ambitious recommendation. This artist's conception shows the area behind the town hall and old post office which Lyon and Turner feel should be expanded into a community centre area.

The stepped bank for pedestrians is at the water culvert and the area behind and between the town hall and post office is to be turned into a new farmers' market with expanded operation hours.



Express our heritage. This old drawing shows the town hall as it looked in the 1890's. One of the hopes of the Civic Study is to make it look this way again.

And this is quite out of character for a town which has tried so hard to keep a unique "friendly" attitude with its people and institutions.

The report, prepared by the Lyon-Turner Partnership, will never get wide circulation, even in the town, despite the fact it represents a blue print form of modest operandi to any small town anxious to retain its local charm and stay vibrant in the face of urban

Committee with a long list of recommendations which the consultants feel must be followed.

"The health and vitality of a community cannot be ensured through following a simple formula."

"The answers to well-managed urban growth and effective community service are the result of many decisions taken on many issues.

Those, needless to say, are very high-sounding words.

It is one thing to hand in a study and it is quite another to put it into practice.

Yet Barry Lyon and Peter Turner are convinced that close adherence to the recommendations they put forward are going to, at the very least, establish the core from which the rest of a "revitalized" Milton can grow.

And the Civic Committee certainly has enough recommendations to look at—20 in fact.

The first recommendation, and the one considered key by Lyon and Turner, is to give the Milton downtown area priority in all future programs.

This runs counter to those who thought the report would provide an umbrella plan to "revitalize" the entire 111-square mile regional town, but it does dovetail nicely with the Downtown Business Improvement Area Committee, which just this past weekend closed off Main St. to introduce the new face of business Milton to residents.

Lyon and Turner note, "more than any other physical attribute, the image of the community is established by the quality, popularity and interest of its downtown area."

Next door Mississauga and Brampton have no such core of beautiful old buildings, but have been mired in strip plazas and instant food outlets. Not so will be the case of Milton.

"Milton is particularly fortunate in having one of the most interesting downtowns in Ontario.

Can Milton become another Niagara-on-the-Lake? The consultants think so.

While we do not have the lakeside scenery, Milton has three of the largest conservation areas on the Niagara Escarpment. Couple that with several museums and low-key tourist attractions, there is much within the oft-quoted "10-minute drive."

The downtown core, then, must be the centre of all activities. A charming municipal face will be long remembered by those who visit.

"It is in the town's best interest that it invest in the future health and prosperity of its downtown area."

"The town and its business community should establish five and 10-year plans for improvements, including new community facilities, parking improvements, street and sidewalk maintenance, lighting, signage, and landscaping."

"In so many respects, as goes Main St., so goes Milton," the consultants said.

Some of the first recommendations have to do with road and sidewalk controls and it is not until recommendation six, the consultants come up with another surprise.

During the discussion leading up to the hiring of Lyon and Turner, there was much talk about coming up with a new image or "theme" for the town.

The consultants, however, feel differently. "There is no need to a new theme for Milton.

"By anticipating and planning for possible problems, Milton has an excellent chance of maintaining its special character while remaining vibrant and productive in the face of large competitive urban pressures," they stated to the Civic Committee.

Lyon and Turner said they also hoped "this study will take its place as one of the better used tools by which the town and its business community will be able to prepare sensibly to assure the town of future prosperity."

TO PARKING

TO MILL POND NATURE TRAIL



Using a laneway to advantage. This would be the way Lyon and Turner see the prospects of Montgomery Lane. Using street furniture and innovative walkways, the idea would be to attract people into the area.

"It already has one, in the form of the impressive inventory of historically significant homes and commercial buildings in its downtown area."

"These buildings give the downtown area much of its potential as an area of special identity, of strong interest and appeal to residents and visitors alike."

The consultants have therefore stressed the council must "impose" developmental guidelines on all properties with a view to "maintaining the historic quality and theme of the downtown area and on sites having a significant visual impact on main vehicular access points to the town."

As previously mentioned, two Milton merchants have already started renovations and one, Doug Brown, says he was sparked by the report to change his white-painted, and orange peeling brick front, to make it look as if it was just built at the turn of the century, i.e., warm and inviting.

"New development and building improvements should reflect and respect this heritage through sympathetic architectural treatments contributing toward a unified downtown streetscape," the consultants said and that is the line that prompted Doug Brown.

Milton Council and staff are currently on record as planning to move to the disused but historically significant old court house and jail. Carlos Ventin, who has just completed renovating the Wellington County Jail in Guelph, is currently working on the Milton court house and jail at Victoria Square.

That means the current town hall building will be abandoned and it will be joined by the adjacent post office building which already is empty following a move to the new post office on Brown St. earlier this year.

Not only are both these buildings festooned with stone carvings and bell towers, they lie at the major intersection of the town, Main and Martin Sts.

The town in considering turning the two buildings into offices but the consultants were against this idea.

"This site can contribute more than any other to the economic vitality, spirit and function of the downtown area."

They want the town to stop the idea of commercial-office development and discontinue submissions for this approach. Instead they believe Milton should invite new proposals "more appropriately scaled to the character of Main St."

What do they feel is appropriate? It would be a multi-purpose farmers' market with associated new development such as boutiques. The whole thing would be called Farmers' Market Square and would be replete with a courtyard-meeting place behind the

Continued on Pg. D2

Country Ceramics
Smith and Jones Fine Foods
The Mill Pond Tea Room
Milton Hardware

Better signs. Providing better signage in the town is one of the major objectives of the Civic Study. These are a suggested form, but by no means what the new signs in Milton should look like.