

# Bricktown Canal will mark 10th with unveiling of extension plans

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The Bricktown Association is looking back and unveiling plans for its future at a news conference today with a tribute to early developers Neal Horton and Jim Brewer and a discussion of a potential expansion of the Bricktown Canal.

Jim Cowan, director of the Bricktown Association, said today's ceremonies — timed to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the canal's opening, will include the unveiling of the Bricktown Walk of Fame.

Horton was the original developer of Bricktown, having formed the Warehouse Development Co. in 1979 to buy and renovate buildings along E Sheridan Avenue. Horton's effort ended in bankruptcy in the mid-1980s, a victim of the oil bust. Horton died in 1993. Brewer bought many of Horton's former properties and is credited with launching the district as an entertainment venue. He died last year.

"As we look back on the Bricktown visionaries and how they looked ahead, it's important that today we look into the future for what Bricktown can be," Cowan said. "As we look at potential new developments we need to make sure Bricktown stays connected in any way possible."

Cowan said the association's proposal for the canal extension will be fully detailed, including potential ways to pay for it, at the news conference. But in an interview Wednesday, Cowan shared plans that show several potential routes for a canal extension.

"We want to put a concept plan out there that shows all the possibilities. Just as Neal Horton and Jim Brewer dreamed of the future, we're dreaming of a future for Bricktown. We don't know what will come to fruition, but we think it's important to dream, think and ask what the possibilities are."

Plans include center

The plans include links to a potential new convention center being pitched by the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber to be a part of a MAPS 3 ballot. Cowan confirmed connection with a new convention center is important to the association.

"As we try to understand what potentially can happen to the future of downtown, where construction can be, where different venues can be, we feel that seamless connectivity is important. As our downtown grows, we want to be sure that our many years of public and private investment in Bricktown is protected. The best way to do that is to connect to important venues, the convention center being at the top of the list."

Engineer Tim Johnson, who prepared the renderings for the Bricktown Association, also designed the north half of the canal as part of the original MAPS program.

Johnson said his original work included preparing master plans for a potential canal extension and that the waterway was designed for expansion, especially where it deadends at Reno Avenue and the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe Railway viaduct.

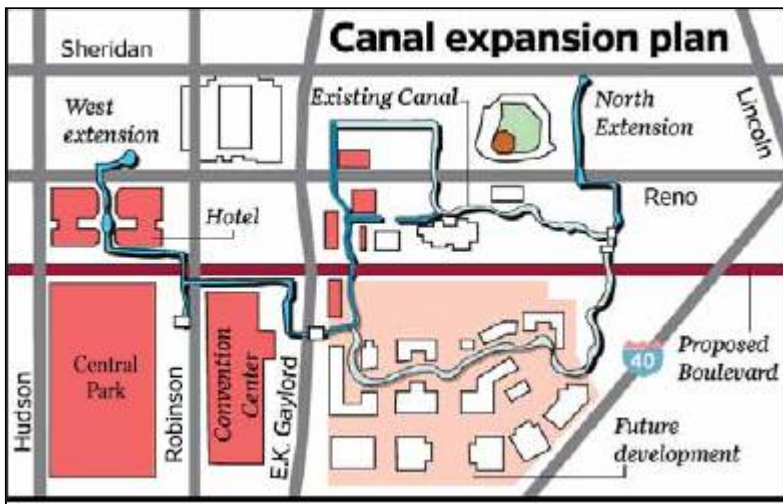
"All of the locations we've shown the meandering canal are possible constructionwise," Johnson said.

"The most difficult would be the east extension along Joe Carter because Reno Avenue would have to be readjusted.

"On all the others we chose possible paths based on how they might work," he said.  
Response to critics

In recent weeks, Jeff Speck, a consultant hired by the city to look at walkability downtown, and former Mayor Kirk Humphreys, who oversaw completion of the first MAPS program, noted Bricktown has fallen short because surface parking and undeveloped lots still line the canal. Cowan responded such criticisms are not a reason to stop discussion of extending the waterway.

"I would say those are legitimate criticisms," Cowan said. "As we start working toward the future, the way we look at Bricktown is very different today than we did 10 to 15 years ago. We're looking at the whole picture and how the other districts relate to us. Ten to 15 years ago, it was all about what can we do to add excitement to this district. We're looking at a much larger scale now, how does it fit in and how does it all piece together."



The map shows several different paths a canal extension could follow under a plan to be unveiled today by the Bricktown Association. Potential canal extensions could include a connection with a convention center, future hotel and central park being considered as part of a potential MAPS 3 ballot.