

# 'Incredible potential' lies in untouched third canal

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*David Donnelly, an intern architect from St. Catharines whose proposal to revamp the former third Welland canal was recently recognized by the Ontario Association of Architects. - Kris Dube , The Welland Tribune*

A St. Catharines man has a plan for the third Welland Canal, which has been sitting untouched for a hundred years.

Closed in 1912, the third canal was more than 40 kilometres long and opened to vessels in 1881.

David Donnelly, a 25-year-old intern with Hamilton-based Thier + Curran Architects Inc., came up with a project to revamp the derelict canal while he was a student at McGill University.

His plan is one of seven recently selected by the Ontario Association of Architects in its first-ever SHIFT Challenge, a competition meant to spur thinking and conversation about the intersection between architecture and societal issues, with a focus on infrastructure.

The competition calls on architects from Ontario to demonstrate how architectural thinking can promote social equity, reduce isolation or embody social justice.

Donnelly's project, which he worked on with McGill professor Martin Bressani, proposes a park system and a series of pavilions designed to educate hikers and bikers about the canal's history.

It would begin at Lock 3 where St.Catharines museum is located, then cross the current canal, via a pedestrian swing bridge.

From there, it would continue south, east of General Motors, following the route of the third canal.

The park would conclude at Lock 7, site of Thorold and Beaverdams Historical Museum.

"It's a part of local history, a part of Canadian history, that's been underutilized," said Donnelly.

"It has incredible potential to be repurposed and reused."

Donnelly said it would be nice for his project to get the attention of governments and agencies that would consider his idea.

"At the very least, we could get a public conversation going," he said, noting Mountain Locks Park in St. Catharines is one local facility created to make use of the second canal.

"In my opinion, there's a lot more to do and a lot more potential for these spaces."

He said the Welland Canal is "fundamental to the history of the Niagara region" and many of its closed sections are very physically evident and traceable.

"They're hard to ignore, but they sort of are being ignored," he said.