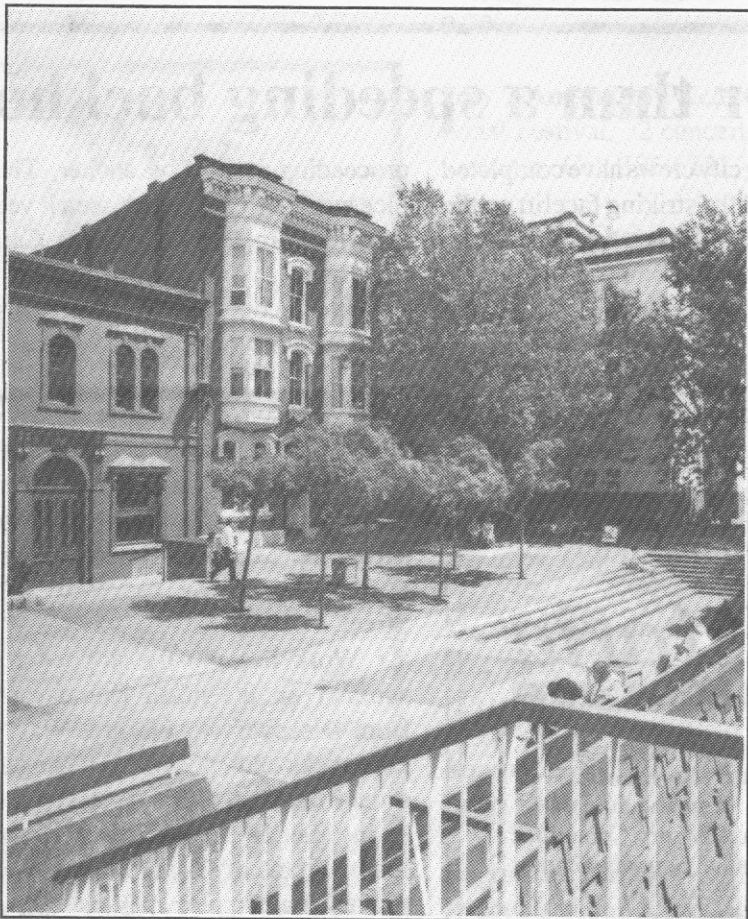


Victoria

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FACELIFT PLANNED FOR BASTION SQUARE



Quiet Bastion Square will be revitalized this summer

Twenty-five years ago, Bastion Square received a national urban design award, recognition for a piece of innovative downtown planning. In the 19th century, this was a busy downtown district, but it had slowly gone downhill.

The modern reshaping of the square in the 1960s brought back vitality. New businesses, stores and restaurants opened, attracting plenty of foot traffic. But these days the square is not as busy, underused by locals and tourists alike.

That is going to change, if the Bastion Square Revitalization Association can implement a multi-faceted plan to bring Bastion Square back to the active, busy place it was a quarter century ago.

"The life has gone out of it," says Carrie Greschner, president of the association. "We want to bring the people back."

She recalls how during last summer's filming of the Mel Gibson-Goldie Hawn movie, *Bird on a Wire*, the film crew filled the square with flowers, tables, benches - and crowds.

"We want that atmosphere all the time."

The association came together at the beginning of this year to discuss the square's dim lighting. Insufficient outdoor lighting made it seem potentially dangerous at night.

But the discussion widened beyond the question of
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night-time security to the larger issue of revitalization.

City Hall was supportive, with \$100,000 from the downtown investment fund.

Downtown co-ordinator Elizabeth Low says it's "seed money."

"It provides a basis for which to ask for other funds."

The city has applied to the Provincial Capital Commission for additional funding. A decision is expected in October.

Meanwhile, detailed plans are being developed. Working with the association are chief city planner Len Vopnfjord, urban design head Mickey Lam, city engineer John Sansom and park design manager Arne McRadu.

The project is still in the early development stages and is estimated to cost \$600,000.

Some dramatic changes are proposed, including replacement of the "wall" on the Wharf Street side of the square - which acts as a barrier to pedestrian traffic - with a more inviting entrance. Other improvements will include better signs, at both the Government Street and Wharf Street entrances, tables and chairs and landscaping.

New heritage-style streetlights have been ordered and are to be installed this summer, brightening the square at night.

Another program to make Bastion Square more inviting is a summer-long series of concerts, every Monday and Friday at noon. The city, the Downtown Advisory Committee, Victoria Musicians Association and recording companies are jointly providing the funds for the free concerts.

(Tuesdays and Thursdays there's music on the Causeway at noon, and Wednesdays, the players will be in Centennial Square. Outdoor concerts will also be staged in Cameron bandshell in Beacon Hill Park Sunday afternoons. "Jazz in the Park" will happen Wednesday nights.

"You have to provide music and colour, not just make it look nice," says Low.

"It's an incredible historic site, unique and special," says Greschner. "And our goal is to make the square a destination once again."
