

# Esquimalt gears for renewal

## Council to vote on plan for redeveloping 2.8 hectares of prime real estate in core

By KIM WESTAD  
Times Colonist staff

Esquimalt is preparing for a downtown revitalization project that could see the municipality on the other side of the blue bridge become one of the most progressive in the region.

Council is expected to vote in favour Tuesday night of a planning process that would start the "Esquimalt Village Project."

Essentially, the municipality wants to find out what the community would like to see done with a plethora of municipally owned facilities in the downtown core. Rather than have them developed piecemeal, resulting in patchwork development, the town wants to develop an overall plan for the area. But first, it needs to see what the community wants.

"It's a huge opportunity to shape the community," Mayor Chris Clement said yesterday. "With something as significant as this, we wouldn't be serving the public interest by doing this in haphazard fashion. I agree with the concept of putting energy and resources into the plan-

ning process. We want everything to be open and accountable."

This week's vote is on a motion to start looking for a consultant, who would work with municipal staff, residents and community groups and develop a "vision" and planning principles for the village core. The motion is expected to pass, Clement said. That overall plan would then be used when — or if — the municipality proceeded to develop all or some of the land.

There are few urban municipalities that have the opportunity to potentially redevelop a total of 2.8 hectares of prime real estate in their core, especially at a time when some of the buildings are showing their age and are in need of expensive renovations. The Archie Browning Centre needs about \$800,000 worth of repair work on its roof, and other buildings are also deteriorating, Clement said.

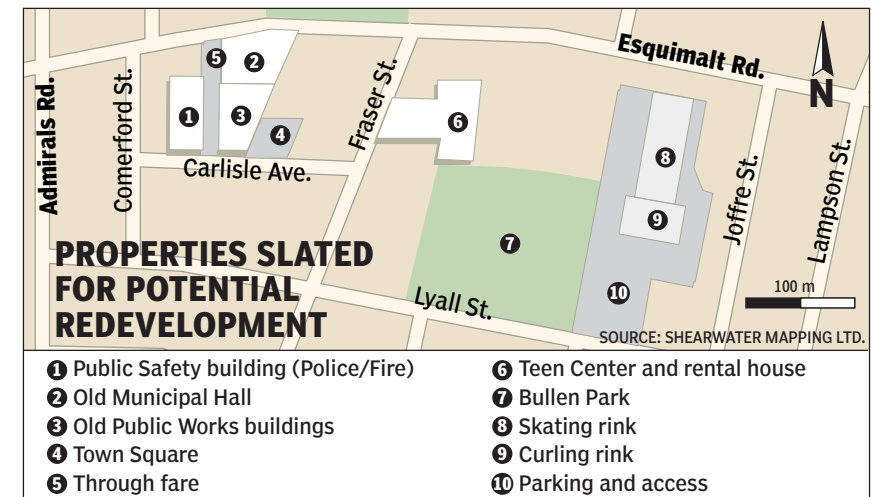
Municipally owned land to be considered in the process includes the public safety building (police and fire), the old municipal hall, the old public works buildings, the town square, the teen centre, a rental house on Fraser Street, Bullen Park, and the skating rink, curling rink and



Mayor Chris Clement: 'It's a huge opportunity to shape the community.'

parking lot that comprise the Archie Browning Centre.

Times have changed for Esquimalt and the Greater Victoria area. About 10 years ago, the municipality floated the idea of redeveloping the old town hall and public works buildings. There was little interest. But a decade later, with property values through the roof in some parts of the region, interest in Esquimalt is growing. Its land prices are lower than most other municipalities, but it's close to downtown and the waterfront. Already, some developers have made overtures but the munic-



PROPERTIES SLATED FOR POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT

- 1 Public Safety building (Police/Fire)
- 2 Old Municipal Hall
- 3 Old Public Works buildings
- 4 Town Square
- 5 Through fare
- 6 Teen Center and rental house
- 7 Bullen Park
- 8 Skating rink
- 9 Curling rink
- 10 Parking and access

ipality wants a plan driven by the community needs in place first.

With the municipality's 17,000 population expected to double in the next 20 years, the official community plan allows for high density in certain commercial areas, with buildings up to 10 storeys.

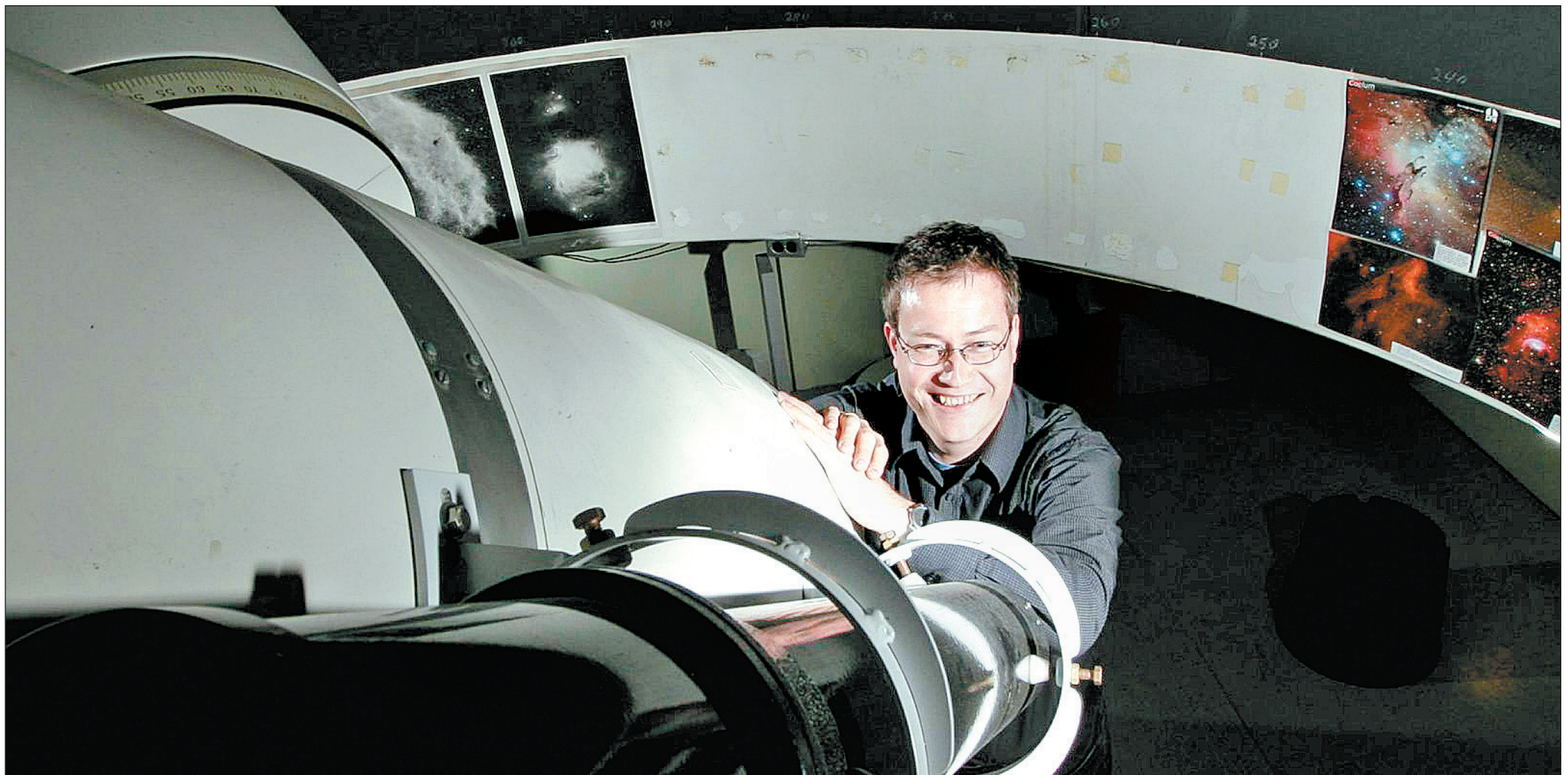
Clement would like to see a mix of residential, commercial, business and the arts, creating a town centre where people could live, work and play — all without needing a vehicle because amenities and necessities would be located within a two-block radius.

"Esquimalt is unique. I can't think of another community where you have the possibility of all the civic facilities and services being within a two-block area."

Clement hopes that any buildings will meet specific environmental standards.

No decisions have been made on whether the land would be sold, leased or see the municipality work in a partnership with the private sector. "We have to be very careful with public assets."

Bullen Park would be left intact, Clement said. The rest of the properties though, are left open for possibilities.



Assistant Prof. Henk Hoekstra, with small telescope on the roof of UVic's Elliott Building, is looking for ways to measure dark energy.

Ray Smith/ Times Colonist

# SEARCH FOR HEAVENLY SECRETS

## Astronomer receives \$45,000 fellowship to study dark matter and energy — the forces we can't see

By SANDRA MCCULLOCH  
Times Colonist staff

It's what you don't see that makes the universe such a fascinating place for UVic astronomer Hendrik Hoekstra.

The 34-year-old native of Holland studies dark matter and dark energy, invisible components that make up a quarter of all matter in the universe. His work on the forefront of this field has earned Hoekstra a \$45,000 fellowship from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.

It's a prestigious award bestowed on North America's best young scientific scholars. Some previous recipients have gone on to win a Nobel Prize.

"It's definitely considered a very good start," said Hoekstra this week.

He finds astronomy "very appealing, very

interesting, very research-oriented," and believes UVic, where he's been for 2½ years, has one of the best departments in Canada.

The field of dark matter and dark energy is complicated to explain, since it deals with forces that can't be seen but can be sensed.

"When you look at how fast things move in our galaxy, at how much stuff you can see, you know that stuff has to be held together by gravity. We see the stuff spinning too fast, moving way too quickly given the gravity we would expect to see there."

Something is pulling at the visible matter in the universe, he explains.

"We know the stuff we're made of, the atoms and stuff we can touch, is only five per cent of the total budget of the universe while 25 per cent is dark matter. It's invisible. It sounds crazy but it's not. It doesn't emit light but it does emit grav-

ity. That's how we know about it, through astronomy."

The university is expanding rapidly but that expansion doesn't seem to be affected by gravity, which pulls matter inward. Scientists are learning that despite gravitational pull, the universe is expanding faster and faster.

The cause of this acceleration is "dark energy," said Hoekstra, which he describes as "a repulsive force and we really have no idea where it comes from."

"There are theories but it really came as a big surprise. My area of research is coming up with ways to measure it. Dark matter and dark energy are one of the most important research topics in physics because it really needs to be explained why the universe has these components."

One of the tools Hoekstra uses is the largest digital camera in the world, the Canada-France-


Hawaii Telescope. "My area of research benefits from really big telescopes," Hoekstra said. "I'm not looking at the stars, I'm just looking at computer screens."

The \$45,000 award that accompanies the fellowship will be put to good use, he said.

"I have to see, along with other research grants, if I can scrape enough together. It definitely helps but the problem is funding in Canada is not particularly good. That's the frustrating part."

The quest to answer the big questions of the universe will keep Hoekstra at UVic for the time being, he said.

"When you have a strong department, you attract good people. When you apply for a job you really look at who are your future colleagues and what future work will they do. UVic is very strong, and has one of the strongest departments in the country."



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