

EDITORIAL: CLOSER TO RIVER VISION

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OPINION: Developers Lyall Green and Brian Bartels and the Hamilton City Council should be congratulated for their initiative regarding the historic Hamilton Club in Grantham St.

The owners of the building, which is more than 100 years old, have offered to sell it to the council for \$1 and move it to a site next to the Celebrating Age Centre on Victoria St.

The riverside development they are planning to replace it with will apparently include offices, and a small retail centre with a restaurant, cafe and boutique shops.

Mr Green has touted the plan as a move toward turning the city towards the river – amen to that.

It would be tremendous if it inspired similar vision in other city developers.

Hopefully it will also give some impetus to the Millennium project which has been on the council's books in various guises for more than a decade but gone nowhere.

The project involved building a pedestrian/cycle bridge across the river near the Ferrybank, a jetty and an esplanade with shop, cafes and bars. But it has foundered as successive councils have failed to act on the vision.

No-one has the stomach at present for big spending of ratepayers' money but hopefully the project can get back on the drawing board when times are better.

The Millennium Foundation which is behind the project recently asked the council to transfer \$1.9 million away from a planned Claudelands Bridge clip-on and to put it towards the pedestrian bridge project.

Meanwhile, it is satisfying to see the Hamilton Club's iconic building is not going to be lost to a city which has precious little of heritage value left.

All up, it is heartening and exciting to see businesses working closely with the council to produce such a result.

Of course the new river development has yet to be built.

It will be interesting to see what is produced and just how architects go about ensuring the building embraces the river.

Hopefully it is the start of a new direction for the city – literally, the central business district turning around 180 degrees to utilise its best asset.