

Canadian architect may 'rebuild' Plattsburgh

By LOIS CLERMONT
Staff Writer

PLATTSBURGH — Frank Arvay, the Canadian architect who plans to build a \$17 million mall downtown, has zeroed in on Plattsburgh as "a city on the move."

Arvay has been responsible for buildings like Le Maisonneuve and Reliance Tower in Montreal, although most local people remember him for the controversial Turner Heights Apartments.

In 1957, his family moved to Hamilton, Ontario from Hungary where his father had worked as a builder. Arvay decided he wanted to be a professional architect himself and attended Ryerson Polytechnic Institute in Toronto and Sir George Williams University in Montreal, where he studied engineering.

Fresh out of college, Arvay was hired by the John Ryan Company in Hamilton, which at the time had a staff of four. When he left, about 10 years later, Ryan Associates had 60 employees.

Arvay, who seldom talks about himself, took some credit for that firm's growth. "I built most of it (the company) myself," he said.

Arvay was president of the international office in Montreal before a disagreement with Ryan ended their partnership in 1976.

He and his brother, James, worked together on

several projects, including Turner Heights Apartments.

After the Expo '67 and the 1976 Olympics were over, construction demands fell into a slump in Montreal, Arvay said. He started to look south and said he "saw great potential" in Plattsburgh.

"I saw a need for better housing," he said. "It seemed to me like someone forgot about Plattsburgh and walked away."

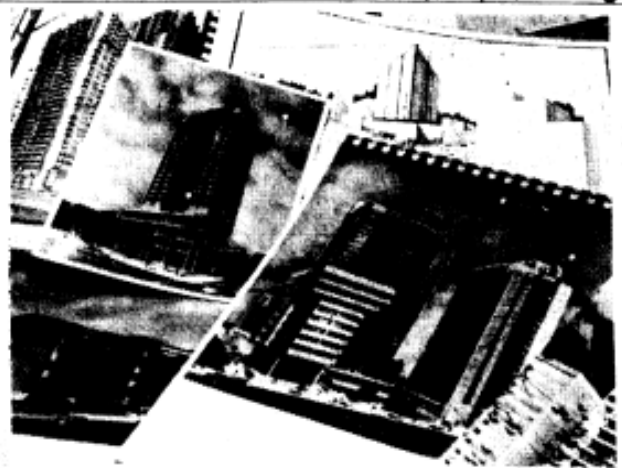
Arvay says he likes the "country, open-style living" here. The city's in a perfect area because of its proximity to Montreal and New York City, he said.

"You have the best of both worlds here," he said. "I can sail, I like the relaxed atmosphere of the people. The manner of the world here is like it was during my childhood in Hungary. People conduct business with a handshake. You would never find that in a bigger city."

Arvay said Plattsburgh will always be the "hub" of the area — and that the mall he plans to build over the municipal parking lot will trigger business expansion in the city.

"This is Plattsburgh's moment to grow," he predicts.

Arvay's plan is to create a facility that will give the city 24-hour activity seven days a week. He's already been contacted by seven local businesses, including a beauty salon, jeweler and restaurant, which want spaces reserved for them in the mall.



Past accomplishments

Pictured are sketchings of some of the buildings Frank Arvay has worked on in the past. He plans to build a \$17 million mall over the city parking lot. (P-R staff photo)

He said there's a good chance Montreal stores may want to locate in Plattsburgh. Arvay thinks some of the businesses that are in the Pyramid Mall now will probably open a city store also.

The first phase of the project will see the construction of a 40- to 50-store mall, condominiums, senior citizens housing and a hotel with more than

90 rooms.

In the second phase, Arvay may expand the size of the mall and build an office tower, which he thinks will be in demand by then.

The mall's construction depends on the city getting funding from a government grant.