

# GETTING TO KNOW *Bob-Lo*



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PHOTOGRAPHY MAX WEDGE

**OPPOSITE:** Gena Boschin and her daughter Alyssa dip their toes in the water on Bob-Lo's white sand beach. **BELOW:** The Bob-Lo Island Discovery Centre at the mainland dock welcomes visitors and prospective homeowners. **RIGHT:** A historic plaque pays tribute to Bob-Lo's importance during the War of 1812. The blockhouses, which are being restored, were barracks where the soldiers were stationed. **BOTTOM:** The Bob-Lo team (l-r) includes real estate professionals Daphne Coltri, Meghan Boschin and marketing director Gena Boschin.



**N**No longer the legendary amusement park of days gone by, Bob-Lo Island is sometimes thought of as an exclusive, somewhat reclusive enclave of high-end homes.

Not so, says Gena Boschin, a new full-time resident who also happens to be Bob-Lo's marketing director. "We are open to everyone," she states. "The Bob-Lo dream is here for all."

"The island is a magical place," adds Meghan Boschin, Gena's sister-in-law, a pioneering resident of the island and Bob-Lo's real estate agent of record with **Deerbrook Realty Inc. Brokerage**. "There truly is something here for everyone. Bring your family and come spend the day. You'll see what we mean."

Islanders are a passionate bunch. Those who live here describe leaving the mainland in terms reserved for a spiritual experience. "Stress washes away," "A peacefulness comes over you," and "You can feel your shoulders coming down," are just some of the things they say.

Can a 272-acre island in the middle of the Detroit River really bestow such calm? Could a five-minute ferry ride truly bring such peace?

On a bright, early-summer morning the OUR HOMES team set out to find out. *Continued on page 40*



**LEFT:** The ferry runs every twenty minutes. Residents pay an annual fee, which includes unlimited use for themselves, friends and family. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Condominium living on Bob-Lo comes with superb grounds, fantastic views and all the bird watching you can handle. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** While the condos start around \$200,000 the island also offers the opportunity to indulge your greatest architectural fantasies.



familiar to the Muskoka lakes, to the grand Victorians you might find in upstate New York, the waterfront homes may differ architecturally but they have one thing in common – they share a magnificent river view. Across the water, the town of Amherstburg and its historic fort, Fort Malden, are on the Canadian side and Grosse Isle Michigan is on the other.

On the interior side of the road, the homes back onto a serene green space and represent a wide range of styles and prices. In fact, between the condos, the twin villas and the single-family homes, there is a price range that appeals to just about everyone – from the low \$200,000s to the sky's-the-limit.

Currently at 130 homes, the island's master plan allows for a maximum of 400 residences. The green space will be preserved, while the biking trails and white sand beach will remain pristine. The eagles will continue to build their nests and the giant snapping turtle that lives in Gena's backyard will remain undisturbed – like a prehistoric garden ornament.

Imagine a sophisticated small town – a place where you get to know your neighbours, where your children are not only allowed to go out and play, they are encouraged to “get out and run,” because the streets are quiet, the community

*Continued on page 42*



**TOP:** A wide range of architectural styles is on display throughout the island. This grand home reveals a Muskoka-cottage pedigree. **ABOVE:** Twin villas are an example of the mid-range homes available on the island. **RIGHT:** The Marina Restaurant is a great place to have a glass of wine and watch the world go by. There is live music during the summer. It's a real gathering place for islanders, boaters and visitors. **FAR RIGHT:** The marina has a relaxed, friendly vibe. Boaters from the U.S. and Canada moor their boats here during the summer months.



**THE FERRY PULLS AWAY** from the Amherstburg dock, leaving a frothy white frill in its wake. Birds soar overhead and the fresh river air fills our lungs. The ferry ride does seem to offer a moment of transition between work and home life – a stepping away from the hustle and bustle. Brief as it may be, there is the sense you've crossed the divide. Far from an inconvenience, the ferry is a pleasure. It runs every 20 minutes all year round, so there's always one coming or going. “People wonder about this,” says Gena. “But the ferry really isn't a problem. It can take less time than making a left turn at a busy traffic light.”

As you drive off the ferry and onto the island, which is situated horizontally in the river, like a cruise ship running north to south, the road takes you on a winding coastal drive past a wide variety of homes. Dotting the waterside are, indeed, majestic, architecturally splendid, custom-built homes the island is known for. From the cottage-style



safe and people look out for each other.

At lunch, we stop at the Marina Restaurant, sit outside on the patio overlooking the water and watch as the boats come and go. "It's perfect for a boating lifestyle," says Meghan. "The marina is open from May 24 until the end of September. And we want people to know that they can come over and spend the day here. It's not a closed community. Bring your family. Spend the day at the beach. Go for a bike ride. Have lunch or dinner at the Marina. Of course, you may never want to leave. But that's fine. I can find you a perfect home!"

Lighthouse Park and Whitesands Beach on the north side of the island are historic sites that figured in the War of 1812. Of course, neither the whitetail deer nor the 50-plus species of birds that make the island their home give much thought to the battles that may have been fought here – or to the legendary amusement park and dance hall that attracted day-trippers during two-thirds of the 20th century. These days, picnickers, bikers, birders, boaters and hikers share the island's charms with the wildlife, while the hurdy-gurdy music and the barker's cries have



**RIGHT:** A peaceful view of Lighthouse Park and Whitesands Beach. **BELOW:** An island traffic jam. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A father and son enjoy their hammock and each other's company.



**ABOVE AND FAR RIGHT:** Two of the island's historic sites: the Lighthouse and the Maritime Monument. **RIGHT:** A "Mayberry Moment". Four young fisherman are off to try their luck on a warm summer Saturday morning.



become a distant memory.

The island's pull exerts itself. As the day passes, a deer is spotted among the trees, the water turns a soft violet in the afternoon sun and leaving seems almost impossible. "That's how it was for my family," says Gena. "We were living in South Windsor and always thought that someday, maybe we would buy a place on Bob-Lo. We looked at a variety of city neighbourhoods and realized that for the space, the lifestyle and the price, we would never find anything to equal Bob-Lo. Plus every time we came to visit Meghan, we found it harder and harder to leave. Then one day, my husband and I just looked at each other and said why wait? And we decided. Someday is now."

Someday is now. It's a philosophy that strikes a chord. As the ferry bobs in the water, waiting to take us back, we all find ourselves wondering...

And that's when I realize.

We've been Bob-Loed! **OH**

The island is open to the public. Ferry fares are \$6.00 per vehicle for those going over to eat at the restaurant. For people going to the island to simply spend the day, the fare is \$20.00 per vehicle.