

ISLAND LIVING AT IT'S FINEST

By D.J. Tefler Photos by Trevor Booth

The early French settlers called it Bois Blanc (White Woods) because of the island's many birch and beech trees; the British called it BobLo Island.

Strategically located at the mouth of the Detroit River, BobLo Island marks the beginning of the shipping channels for vessels sailing up the river from Lake Erie. It is an island of historical importance dating back to the War of 1812 and undoubtedly served to temporarily shelter slaves fleeing to Canada along the Underground Railroad. During most of the 20th century BobLo Island was home to an amusement park providing decades of family fun and memories for area residents and visitors.

Today BobLo Island is a residential community, an island suburb under the Municipality of Historic Amherstburg, Ontario. It is arguably the most appealing and attractive place to live in all of Southern Ontario. And it might be more affordable than you think.

Peaceful. Picturesque. Secluded. Stands of Carolina forest crowd near the river's edge and the indigenous flora and fauna thrive here. It is a place where eagles nest and deer browse and the seasons pass - as they have for centuries - in natural splendor. It is an island of tranquility amid the noisy discords of the surrounding urban sea.

Just a short ferry ride across the river from Amherstburg, BobLo Island residents have the best of both worlds. An idyllic island home apart and away from it all but still comfortably and conveniently close to all their needs. By the way, the ferry runs every 20 minutes, 24 hours a day, everyday...and in under 5 minutes, you're in your own island paradise.

Although the land itself is privately owned the island is fully serviced. Utilities, garbage pick-up, police and snow removal are provided by the municipality the same as for any other neighbourhood and residents pay municipal property taxes just like residents in other neighbourhoods.

However, this is where the similarities end. BobLo is nothing like any other residential neighbourhood.

"When you purchase property on BobLo Island you are not just buying a lot, you are buying an island," says Gena Boschin. Gena is an island resident and handles sales and marketing for BobLo Island Developments, Inc.

Her sister-in-law Meghan Boschin is real estate agent for Deerbrook Realty and she is the official Island Sales Representative. She also lives on the island.

"There is so much to see and do," says Meghan "the quiet walks, the community pool; enjoying activities by the water, dining at the marina restaurant or just sitting on the beach at White Sands and watching the sun set...and it is exciting to see wildlife like bald eagles and white-tailed deer in your backyard. Living here feels like being a million miles away."

It might feel like it is far away but of course BobLo Island is only minutes away from schools, emergency services and the commercial heart of Amherstburg. It is barely a half hour drive from downtown Windsor and Detroit (18 nautical miles).



Residential development on the island began nearly 20 years ago and even to this day most people believe it will cost a fortune to live here. Gena and Meghan say that is not necessarily true.

"We have something for every budget" explains Gena. "We have one bedroom condos; two and three bedroom townhomes, and of course our gorgeous custom family homes."

"You can choose one of our model homes designed and built by Amico Design & Build Inc. or have your home custom built by your own preferred contractor." She points out that there are some restrictions and rules regarding what you can or can not build.

"All plans must be approved by the BobLo Island Homeowner's Association and designs must be in keeping with the overall esthetics and architectural flow on the island," she says, "We simply want to preserve the intrinsic quality and beauty of the island and community."

And Meghan is quick to point out that these stringent standards does not mean every home will cost a million dollars or more. In fact, in comparison to home prices in other affluent neighbourhoods around Essex County, BobLo Island is surprisingly affordable.

"We can build you a beautiful 2000 sq. ft. custom ranch home on an interior lot starting at \$429,900 including H.S.T." Meghan says, "and our 1600 sq. ft. townhomes with ample yard space begin as low as \$245,000."

She added there is even a manageable budget for singles and young couples. "We have one bedroom condos selling for less than \$175,000."

The point is, living on BobLo Island can be much more affordable than most of us ever realized.

Of course if you do want to invest a few million dollars or more to build a dream home, well, that's fine too.

Today half the 318 designated lots are developed but there are still 159 available. The typical lot size is 75' by 120' and prices start from \$155,000.

Naturally the waterfront lots are the most expensive and most coveted however as Gena points out the interior lots back against the island's nature preserve which runs through the middle of the island from end to end.

"Homeowners will always have nature right in their backyards," she says, adding "and whether your home is on the water or inland, it is still island living."

Island living. While the world noisily clatters all around them, islanders can retreat to a quiet sanctuary. A place of native beauty and solitude. A natural refuge for the mind and body. And what makes living on BobLo Island even more attractive is just how close it is to - everything! Unlike cottagers and people with summer homes up north, BobLo Islanders do not have to brave hours of gridlock or travel hundreds of kilometers to get to that special hideaway. Better still, they do not have to wait for weekends or holidays to enjoy their own private slice of nature.

There is so much more to say about BobLo Island living and the fascinating history of the island itself. However there is not enough space to describe it all. It is important to mention the special bond everyone in the community shares and the common interests they share in preserving this island dream in its natural state while also maintaining the cultural and historical values on the island. For example the pavilion built sometime in the early 1900's is still there and one of the old British Army Block Houses (circa 1800) has been

restored. The project was spearheaded by BobLo Island Homeowner's Association with help from community yard sales and private contributions.

Starting this spring you can sign up for the BobLo Island Parade of Homes. Gena and Meghan are inviting the public to come over and see the island, see the homes and beautiful settings and learn all there is to know about island living.

A word of warning, if you take the tour hold tight to your dreams because once you set foot on BobLo Island you might not want to dream about living anywhere else.

For all you need to know or to arrange a tour time call either Meghan or Gena (listed below) or visit the website: www.bobloresidence.ca



Meaghan Boschin at 519-972-1000



Gena Boschin at 519-736-1111

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