

## **+VG Awarded** New Civic Museum, Archive & POA Court The New Building will become a “beacon in the landscape” for Elgin County

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Paul Sapounzi of The Ventin Group Ltd. introduced himself and his Simcoe architectural firm to Elgin councilors recently; as they prepare to build a new combined county museum and archives, provincial offences court and council chamber building.

Mr. Sapounzi is a senior partner in the firm which, although he didn't mention it in his presentation, was responsible for overseeing the restoration of the ground floor and exterior of Aylmer Old Town Hall in the late 1970s and then again for the second-storey opera house in the late 1980s. He told Elgin councilors, “This is an important project, not just for our firm, but for the county.”

The new building would establish “a campus of civic service, of justice, as well as strengthening of cultural commitment to this community,” on vacant land just south of the county administration building. “We are a firm that is really committed to working as a team.”

The Ventin Group believed in taking a secondary role in realizing the dreams and aspirations of a community, he said. The late Carlos Ventin established the firm in 1972, Mr. Sapounzi said, and built a reputation in cultural and community related architecture.

While his company didn't get the contract in the end to oversee the current renovation and expansion of the Elgin County courthouse, he believed The Ventin Group played a role in saving it, he said, acting as an advocate on behalf of the community to the provincial government and specifically infrastructure Ontario

The team for the Elgin museum, archives, court and council chamber building will include Paul, engineer Dennis Vass and Kevin Church, another partner who will be the onsite project manager.

The Ventin Group had undertaken projects for the Ontario government at Queen's Park in Toronto, at that city's Union

Station and for many municipalities and universities.

The Ventin Group would “embrace and enhance” tourism opportunities offered by the London and Port Stanley Railway line behind the building site, he said. He also promised to make the building as self-sustaining as possible to reduce the cost to operate it.

The company had designed many provincial offenses courthouse, as well as the Law Society of Upper Canada in Toronto and understood the needs and challenges of such a building, he continued. A courthouse had to allow the separate and safe circulation of the public, prisoners and the judiciary, he said.

The Ventin Group had considerable experience designing museums and archives including most recently, the conversion of the former convent into such a facility in Guelph. “We're very proud of that project”, he said.

The Ventin Group had to meld a sizeable modern glass-walled addition to the former convent. He hoped Elgin's new building would “become a beacon in the landscape” in the same way.

He promised his company “will meet your schedule” for building, and try to exceed it. Decisions made at the start of any such project were especially important, he said. Poor choices could result in the cutting of important elements further down the line, he warned. Warden David Marr, Deputy Mayor of Central Elgin said, “It certainly looks like an exciting project for us,” and one that had been discussed at the council table “for quite a while.”

+VG Architects is a full-service architectural firm offering new design, expansions and heritage restorations for cultural, educational, municipal, justice, healthcare, residential and recreational facilities. Our staff of +50 operates in three offices in Ontario in Brantford, Toronto and Kitchener.

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