

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2012
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	INFORMATION REPORT INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO 165 ELMWOOD AVENUE EAST (NORMAL SCHOOL)

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Director of Planning and City Planner, the following actions **BE TAKEN** with respect to the property located at 165 Elmwood Avenue East (the former Normal School):

- (a) Infrastructure Ontario (IO) **BE ADVISED** of the previous position of Municipal Council (September 21, 2004, attached) regarding the “Village Green”, noting that this remains the position of the Municipal Council regarding this significant community open space;
- (b) Infrastructure Ontario (IO) **BE ADVISED** that Municipal Council considers the retention of the former Normal School and its re-use in an appropriate manner as important and significant to the City and the Old South community; and,
- (c) Infrastructure Ontario (IO) **BE REQUESTED** to provide up to six months for the City to undertake a process to determine possible municipal needs and potential community partners for the appropriate re-use of the Normal School building, and to undertake the due diligence required should the City wish to acquire the Normal School to ascertain the requirements and costs associated with ensuring that the building meets current Building Code and accessibility requirements for possible future public use;

IT BEING NOTED THAT no funds have been identified for the acquisition of this property.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
--

Information Report, Planning Committee, August 21, 2006.

Municipal Council Resolution, December 6, 2005.

Delegation, Planning Committee, September 13, 2004

BACKGROUND

The former Normal School and “Village Green” are important landmarks in the Old South community. The building was constructed between 1898 and 1900. The property was the location of the third Normal School (Teacher’s College) in the Province after Toronto and Ottawa, and served that purpose until 1958. Between 1958 and 1963, the building was occupied as a Junior High School, and then as the Education Centre offices for the London Board of Education until 1984. In 1985, it became the headquarters of the London and Middlesex County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, who remained there until 2004. The building has been vacant since that time.

The entire property (165 Elmwood Avenue East) was designated by the City in 1985 under Section 29 (Part IV) of the Ontario Heritage Act. The property is also subject to a Heritage Conservation Easement held by the Ontario Heritage Trust. The City's designation applies to the entire property, and relates to the exterior and the interior entrance hall and grand staircase. The Heritage Conservation Easement relates to the same building elements, as well as the green space associated with the building.

The City has recently been advised that Infrastructure Ontario intends to declare the lands surplus (Realty Disposal and Vacant Space Notice) on April 19, 2012. This will initiate a 30 day window for the City to determine if the building is required for municipal purposes. While there is likely no immediate need by the City for this building, there is great interest in the community for possible users who may be "partners" with the City in the reuse of the building.

The site is designated "Office Area" in the City's Official Plan, which is intended to provide for small and medium scale (up to 5000 square metres) of office uses outside the Downtown in purpose designed office buildings. A limited range of secondary uses, such as eat-in restaurants and financial institutions are also permitted. The lands are zoned HER/OF, which would permit professional offices up to 5000 square metres. The HER zone does not permit additions in the front or exterior side yard, and would require that any replacement building occupy the same volume, floor area, height, mass and general design as what existed on the site prior to its demolition or removal.

There has been a great deal of community interest in the future of both the Normal School and the Village Green. The Community has also expressed its desire to work in partnership with the City to secure an appropriate user for the building once the Province has declared the building surplus to their needs. The purpose of this report is to inform the Province of the City's longstanding desire that once the Province has declared the building surplus that the Village Green be provided to the City to continue its use as parkland, and that discussions with the Province regarding the transfer of the Green to the City commence. It is also recommended that the Province (Infrastructure Ontario) provide the City with sufficient time to work with the Province and the community to secure possible partners for the re-use and retention of the building, and that the City values the retention of the Normal School building as an important and valuable community landmark.

The Province has recently completed significant exterior restoration work to the Normal School. Staff have also been provided access to the building to observe its current condition. Staff have not undertaken an evaluation of the building systems (HVAC, mechanicals, etc), nor has there been an assessment of possible designated substances. The Province has provided information and reports to the City that have been undertaken to evaluate possible uses for the building.

CONCLUSION

As the Province is to soon initiate the process for the disposal of these surplus lands, the City will be provided the opportunity to determine if the site is required for municipal purposes. The City has clearly stated its position regarding the Village Green, and Municipal Council has previously directed staff to enter into discussions with the Province with respect to the severance and transfer to the City of the Village Green. The City has not taken a position on the future use of the Normal School building, nor has an evaluation been undertaken to determine possible municipal needs.

It is recommended that the City request that Infrastructure Ontario provide sufficient time for the City to undertake a consultation process to determine possible municipal needs and potential community partners for the appropriate re-use of the Normal School building, and to undertake the due diligence required should the City wish to acquire the Normal School to ascertain the requirements and costs associated with ensuring that the building meets current building code and accessibility requirements for possible future public use.

SUBMITTED BY:
GREGG BARRETT, AICP MANAGER, CITY PLANNING AND RESEARCH
RECOMMENDED BY:
JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER

Attach: Appendix "A"- Municipal Council Resolution, September 21, 2004
Appendix "B"- Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest (Architectural
Reasons for Designation)-By-law L.S.P 2854-377

Y:\Shared\policy\HERITAGE\ORC (Ontario Realty Corp) Buildings\Mgr Feeney(Normal School)\FACReportMar2012.docx