



Councillor Josh Matlow

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Carol Kaustinen
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Re: GM7.5 Old City Hall – Future Tenant Options

Dear Chair & Committee Members,

I am writing to ask you to consider the accompanying recommendations regarding Old City Hall.

Old City Hall is one of the few sites in Toronto recognized by the Federal government as having historical value. This is a National Historical Site and has been since 1984. Indeed, it was our city's seat of government from 1899 to 1966.

Toronto has a shameful track record with regard to preserving its heritage. Many of our city's most important landmarks have already been bulldozed.

Moreover, even when Toronto has been successful at protecting important buildings, the efforts have largely resulted in a literally hollow conservation practice known as façadism. Heritage preservation should extend deeper than a building's exterior. One need only look at the increasing number of churches being converted from places of congregation to private residences to see that Toronto is still losing its past, even if the physical shell of that building remains intact. We have an opportunity to do much more than perform "heritage taxidermy" at our Old City Hall.

While this report is not recommending that Old City Hall be torn down, suggesting that this significant part of Toronto's history become another shopping mall is selling our city short. Home decor and beauty stores are hardly appropriate future uses for this space, in light of the important civic functions performed here over more than a century. In addition, having predominantly private office and retail leases does not meet the City's dated objective of retaining unfettered public access to this building.

Some would argue that the provincial courts currently occupying Old City Hall – while a public service – have not been a great use of this space. I would agree. Any tenant requiring the public to

pass through a metal detector to appreciate the building runs counter to the foundations of open government that this structure represents.

Since 2012, I have been actively working to establish a City of Toronto museum at Casa Loma's under-utilized North Campus. While I still think this location is feasible, there is no question that Old City Hall is a more desirable place for this purpose from geographic, historical, and functional perspectives.

The initiative to establish a city museum began with former Mayor David Crombie forty years ago, yet Toronto remains one of the few cities of its size and prominence without a dedicated space to tell its stories. It is a shame that the majority of Toronto's historical collection (comprised of over 1.3 million cultural artifacts and archaeological specimens) remains out of public view in warehouses.

Now that the incompatible court functions are no longer an impediment, we have a rare opportunity to finally move forward with housing a city museum in a building that truly merits showcasing Toronto's rich socio-cultural and architectural history.

Recommendations:

1. Amend Recommendation (4) so that it now reads: "City Council direct staff to release the exclusive reservation placed on the courtyard area of Old City Hall for the future use of the Toronto Museum Project and to create publicly accessible space within the courtyard and lobby areas as part of a new tenant solution which prioritizes space for the Toronto Museum Project or other appropriate public use, subsequent to the expiration of the existing lease with the Tenant."
2. Amend Recommendation (5) so that it now reads: "City Council direct staff to commence Stage Three of the Old City Hall tenant options study to seek and secure one or more capital partners for a long-term ground lease of Old City Hall, which prioritizes space for the Toronto Museum Project or other appropriate public use, once the current lease with the Tenant has expired. Any office or retail tenants will be complementary to the prevailing public purpose. (i.e. museum cafe, gift shop, etc.)."

Sincerely,

Josh Matlow
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