

REPORT FROM THE MANAGER OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

DESCRIPTION

Re: Municipal Property at 255 Highway 108 (former Pearson Civic Centre site)

RECOMMENDATION

That the Report of the Manager of Economic Development be received

AND THAT Council amend resolution 360/19 to strike out the following: “for a new build of an arts and culture centre at the existing location of 255 Highway 108; and that staff be directed to start working on plans and costing for redevelopment on that site.”

AND THAT the property at 255 Highway 108 be declared surplus to the needs of the municipality.

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of Council held on October 15, 2019, Council passed motion 360/19:

That Council approve the recommendation of the Elliot Lake Arts & Culture Advisory Committee and the Elliot Lake Nuclear & Mining Museum Board for the demolition of the Lester B. Pearson Civic Centre for a new build of an arts and culture centre at the existing location of 255 Highway 108; and that staff be directed to start working on plans and costing for redevelopment on that site.

Since the passing of that motion in 2019, various developments outlined in this report (and in a memo from the CAO on the July 11th Council agenda) have had a material impact on the ongoing efforts related to the arts and culture infrastructure and programs in the community.

ANALYSIS

There are several issues at play surrounding the recommendations.

Arts Centre(s)

The City’s application to the Green and Inclusive Community Build (GICB) Grant was declined in June. This would have applied roughly \$11M in funding towards the roughly \$21M build. In the absence of this grant, the scope of the project would need to be revisited. Recent worldwide inflation means that even when removing the costlier green components, the project remains challenging to finance at \$19M.

The City is also working on renovation plans that would see the former reel-to-reel provide arts space in the community. Ultimately, the building footprint required may be different from originally planned.

151 Ontario

Council passed a resolution in April 2022 that saw the location of future recreation spaces moved from 151 Ontario Ave to the Centennial Arena site. This opens up a large portion of land in the City's downtown core that could feasibly host some or all of the arts and culture facilities needed.

255 Highway 108

The location of the former Lester B Pearson Civic Centre is highly visible and attractive for various uses. The high value location would serve as a prime location for several commercial endeavours including a hotel. To this point, staff have received several inquiries but have had to decline further action as:

- a) The property was subject to a standing grant application under the GICB
- b) There was a standing resolution of Council stating that the property was to be the home of the new Arts Centre.

At the Arts and Culture Hub Steering Committee meeting held on June 24th, the committee was presented with a list of pros and cons pertaining to the move of the arts hub off from the 255 Highway 108 location by one of the committee members. Ultimately there was no specific decision from the committee to forward to Council as a recommendation.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Without an appraisal of the land, the financial impact remains unknown.

That being said, due to visibility, the location at 255 Highway 108 would likely fetch a greater resale value than the 151 location for a hotel application. Further revenue would also be generated through taxation should the site be developed as a commercial lot as opposed to a municipal use.

SUMMARY

This report is intended to focus solely on the vacant lot on Highway 108. Given the constantly changing environment and financing unknowns that remain, staff is recommending that the land be declared surplus and potentially sold to contribute to the tax base and community economic development (while efforts continue on a parallel track to replace the lost assets from the Civic Centre).