



Redevelopment of Guelph's Manor strip club proposed

Scott Tracey, Mercury staff

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GUELPH — When Mike Salisbury drives past the Manor strip club, he sees it not for what it is but for what it once was and, he believes, what it could be again.

"Everyone always says 'That's such a nice building. Too bad it's a strip club,'" Salisbury said.

He hopes to change that.

On Monday, Salisbury will appear before the city's corporate administration, finance and emergency services committee. He's asking for a study looking at the feasibility of redeveloping the Manor site along with a city-owned parcel just east of the club.

The former city councillor is acting as a consultant for club owner Roger Cohen, who is looking to retire.

Despite the cinder-block and neon sign exterior, Salisbury said Cohen has spent thousands of dollars maintaining and restoring the historic home, built in 1891 for former Guelph mayor and brewer George Sleeman and his large family.



Manor site. This concept drawing by architect J. David McAuley depicts the potential redevelopment of the old Sleeman Manor and adjacent city-owned lands. Supplied photo Source: Supplied photo

Salisbury became involved with Cohen after the club owner refused a request from the city to knock down a wall inside the club and improve visibility. When Salisbury, who was then on council, went to see what the problem was he was surprised that so many of the interior and exterior features remain intact.

"I couldn't believe the building I'd driven past so many times and assumed it was a shell of its former self was so spectacular inside," Salisbury said.

Now Cohen is thinking of retiring and looking to ensure the building's history is maintained.

Salisbury suggested effective redevelopment of the Manor property should include redevelopment of the adjacent lands as well. He noted with high-density residential development on both sides and a major mixed-use project slated just along Silvercreek Parkway "it's really carte blanche in terms of what could go there.

"At the end of the day it's not that important what it is, as long as the heritage of the property is maintained and protected," Salisbury said.

Coun. Cam Guthrie said he met with Salisbury and Cohen shortly after the last municipal election to discuss their ideas for the property.

"The (Manor) building should be protected for sure," Guthrie said. "I definitely think there is an opportunity there for something, and that something would certainly be better than what's there now."

Coun. Leanne Piper, a strong proponent of local heritage conservation, likes what she has seen so far.

"I'm very excited," Piper said. "This is a key piece of property that has the potential to be a very significant development."

Piper said the mixed ownership of the property will complicate things, but noted it is not uncommon for municipalities to partner with developers "if it meets certain city goals."

Redevelopment of the Manor site and adjacent lands could help the city meet intensification targets and protect a significant local heritage site, Piper said.

Salisbury speculated many people might get behind the proposal to see the Manor – Guelph's only strip club – shut down.

"There's a huge appetite for that," he conceded. "There are a lot of people jumping on the bandwagon just to see an end to the status quo."

Piper agreed.

"Ever since I've lived here people have been waiting for that building to be transformed into something else, and that's been 20 years," she said.

The corporate administration, finance and emergency services committee meeting is scheduled for 4 p.m. Monday at city hall.

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