

REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Rick Cockfield, Manager of Strategic Planning & Continuous Improvement

DATE: November 27, 2018

REPORT NO.: Admin-2018-0038

RE: Barber Mill Update

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report ADMIN-2018-0038, dated November 27, 2018, regarding Barber Mill Update, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct the CAO to continue his discussions and pursue opportunities with the principle owners of the Barber Mill toward redevelopment of the site in a manner that respects its cultural heritage significance.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this report is to provide a history and update on the Barber Mill property. The property at 99 River Drive is the location of the “Barber Mill,” a former industrial complex of buildings that housed various industries on the banks of the Credit River in Georgetown since 1864. The mill site covers 5.24 hectares. The property contains the remains of the industrial paper-making industry in Georgetown that produced paper from 1854 until 1948. A Confidential staff report, ADMIN-2018-00036, on this same Council agenda addresses specific property standards enforcement matters associated with the Barber Mill site.

The property has been owned by Everlast Group of Brampton since 2003. Everlast Group has filed several development applications on the property since that time. Initially a residential condominium tower, hotel and adaptive re-use of the existing heritage buildings for retail/commercial use were proposed.

A second proposal in 2010 was for a hotel and adaptive re-use of the existing heritage buildings for retail/commercial use. In each case, the Everlast Group partially advanced the development applications through the approvals process and then ceased activity on the projects. Currently, the Everlast Group has two open development applications associated with the property as described later in this report.

The following is a chronological history of the key activities associated with the re-development of the property since 2004.

2004

In 2004 Everlast filed applications to amend the Town's Official Plan and Zoning By-law (D09/Barber Mill) and also a Site Plan application to seek permission to construct a 14-storey residential apartment building containing 240 residential units, a 4-storey hotel with 42 suites, a refurbished retail/commercial building and underground parking. A Public Meeting was held on October 18, 2004, in association with Staff Report PD-2004-0058, to advise Council and the public of applications and proposal

2006 & 2007

Little progress had been made on the project following the Public Meeting in October 2004. Over that period Town and external agency staff met with the Applicant and their consulting team on numerous occasions to discuss the proposal. The Applicant submitted various technical studies and comments were provided from Town staff and external agencies, including the Region of Halton and Credit Valley Conservation Authority (CVC). However, the condo, hotel and retail/commercial building did not advance to a point where staff could prepare a recommendation or consideration by Council.

2008

The historic importance of the property was recognized by Town Council in 2008 when the property was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act through By-law 2008-0113.

2010

In 2010 Everlast Group amended their OPA and Site Plan applications to eliminate the residential component of their proposal (14-storey apartment building). The proposal for a new hotel and the adaptive re-use of the heritage buildings for a variety of commercial and retail purposes remained.

It should be noted that a Zoning By-law Amendment was not required to facilitate the hotel and commercial/retail building proposal. This was because the Barber Mill site had been excluded from Zoning By-law 2010-0050 when Council approved it in July 2010 because previous By-law 57-91 allowed for a hotel and commercial/retail uses on the property.

A public meeting was held on June 28, 2010, in association with Staff Report PDS-2010-0059, regarding the revised OPA application. The meeting was well attended by the public who expressed various perspectives on the future of the property.

Similar to the original proposal in 2004, the revised concept did not progress to a recommendation report stage. The development applications deal with complex site and regulatory issues requiring multi-agency review and various approvals. The redevelopment issues included: the location of the property in the Credit River valley, adjacent to the river and in the floodplain, site contamination due to the industrial use of the property, surrounding environmentally sensitive areas and various other issues.

Staff worked with the Everlast Group and review agencies, including Credit Valley Conservation, to advance the applications but the coordination of the work by the applicant that is necessary to successfully gain the development approvals is costly and complex. The applications remain open for a hotel and adaptive re-use of the heritage buildings for a variety of commercial and retail purposes.

2011

In April 2011 the property Everlast Group sent a letter in response to a notice of concern from the Fire Department regarding the public safety hazard presented by the current site conditions and breaches of the perimeter fence around the property. In that letter the Everlast Group indicated that the preferred approach was demolition of the structures on the property. The Everlast Group also indicated that they are waiting to hear from the Town regarding the processing of open development applications on the property to facilitate a redevelopment project.

In late 2011, the Everlast Group sent a demolition permit clearance form and letter advising the Town that the buildings on the property had deteriorated beyond repair and that the Everlast Group intended to demolish all of the structures on the property and rebuild similar structures. The Town Solicitor advised the Everlast Group of the requirements for filing a demolition permit involving a property designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and also advised of the sanctions set out in the Heritage Act for illegal demolition.

Given the Everlast Group's submissions and in order to have a complete understanding of the opportunities and constraints associated with the Barber Mill site, the Town retained George Robb Architect (GRA) Ojdrovic Engineering, and MHBC Consulting to prepare a report. The consultants' mandate was to:

- complete a peer review of Everlast Group's structural engineer's report which contends that the buildings on the site are largely beyond repair and restrict options to wholesale demolition;
- provide independent advice to Council on the site conditions, some assessment of the extent of possible retention of structures, and the overall impact of structural deterioration on the cultural heritage status of the property;
- provide some recommendations on the scope of building retention and or adaptive re-use of the buildings and site; and
- offer some suggestions on implementation.

2012

The consultants' report entitled "Site Analysis and Feasibility of Redevelopment – Barber Mill, Georgetown" (the "GRA report") was completed in 2012.

The GRA report addressed the following:

- Cultural heritage value of the Barber Mill
- Building condition assessment concluding that, although the buildings are in poor condition, they are not significantly worse than they were in 2006, and they are not beyond repair with the exception of several buildings identified in the report as requiring controlled demolition for public safety reasons. As such, they do not concur with the conclusions of Everlast Group's structural assessment that all the buildings on the Barber Mill property are beyond repair with no alternative but demolition and reconstruction of similar buildings.
- Commentary on the Town's Property Standards By-law and its applicability to the Barber Mill site. It was noted that the Everlast Group has been served with an order to comply with the by-law on several occasions. These orders have dealt with the maintenance of the perimeter fencing, however, there continue to be challenges in this respect. The consultants advise that the next logical step in keeping with the Town's Property Standards By-law would be barricading all window and door openings to prevent entry.
- "Mothballing" the historic structures on site. "Mothballing" generally describes the temporary closing up of buildings to protect them from the weather and to secure them from vandalism while planning for adaptive reuse and/or securing funding for a project.
- Strategies employed at various mill sites, primarily in Ontario, that are in public and private ownership. The strategies include:
 1. Do nothing after public safety issues are addressed
 2. Stabilize as a "ruin"
 3. Stabilize as a "ruin" in a park
 4. Commercial Adaptive reuse with minimal interventions
 5. Commercial large scale Adaptive reuse
- Proposal for a Phase One Action Plan to conserve the cultural heritage resources on the site, pending a future direction for adaptive reuse. The Action Plan is comprised of the following components:
 - Enforce the Property Standards By-law to ensure that all buildings are secured against entry by unauthorized persons and all yards are clean and free of litter, salvage and from other objects that might create a nuisance, or a health, fire, safety or accident hazard;
 - Take measures to mitigate against the further deterioration of the fabric of the buildings to remain including roof repair, stabilization of masonry walls and temporary flashings where appropriate;

- Controlled selective demolition of portions of buildings deemed unsuitable for reuse;
 - Salvage of materials from the building to be removed for potential future reuse.
- Information on incentive programs offered by some municipalities for heritage buildings. These include: relief from 40% of the municipal portion of property taxes for designated properties, Community Improvement Plan programs and the use of density and/or height bonusing in accordance with Section 37 of The Planning Act in exchange for community benefits such as the conservation of heritage landscapes or buildings [It should be noted that the Town's Community Improvement Plan programs funding/structure is not adequate to provide any meaningful financial support for a project of this size];
- Conclusions summarizing the various recommendations to conserve the cultural heritage resources. A specific recommendation was included regarding the benefits for the Town to establish an Enhanced Property Standards By-law.

Based on the recommendations contained in the GRA report and the Planning Report No. PDS-2012-0062, a Property Standards Order was issued by the Town in October 2012. The Everlast Group was requested to secure all the openings in the buildings against entry of unauthorized persons, provide bracing of some laterally supported walls, repair the fence around the property and gate where damaged, remove graffiti from exterior walls, and provide controlled selective demolition of the buildings deemed unstable for reuse.

At the time, staff inspections of the property revealed that the fence and gate had been repaired (the new solid metal fence was installed against the existing chain link fence, approximately 80% of its perimeter). All the wall openings had been covered with sheets of plywood, as requested in the Property Standards Order.

2013

In response to the Property Standards Order to undertake selective demolition of buildings on the site, the Everlast Group submitted a Heritage Permit application in March 2013 to demolish these buildings. The professional engineer's report submitted in support of the application proposed controlled, partial demolition. Building Services staff reviewed this report and found it acceptable. As a result, through staff report INF-2013-0021 Council, as regulated under Section 34.(2) of the Ontario Heritage Act, consented to demolish portions of buildings deemed unsuitable for reuse.

Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan

In 2013, following extensive community consultation, the Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan was endorsed by Council. The Barber Mill is identified as a key cultural heritage feature in the Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan. The Plan states that *“The old Barber Paper Mill is a heritage jewel in Halton Hills and a resource that should be protected, preserved, and enhanced as a community resource”*. In addition is stated that the preservation of the ruins and the integration of a significant public interpretive feature should be condition of re-developing the site.

The Recommendation in the Cultural Master Plan respecting the Barber Mill is stated as follows:

The development of the Barber Mill as a Heritage Interpretive Feature (Potentials Plan) by:

- *Protecting and preserving the building’s remnants/ruins*
- *Developing the site as a public space with interpretive feature at the site*
- *Preserving access to the river’s edge.*

2015

In 2015 Council directed staff to review and amend the Property Standards By-law as recommended in the GRA report. On June 22, 2015, Council approved Report CS-2015-0020 regarding amendments to the Town of Halton Hills Property Standards By-law 2008-0137. Those amendments included provisions for enforcing maintenance of heritage properties. The report also recommended the contracting of a Built Heritage Specialist to be on retainer to provide expert knowledge on required repairs and maintenance of heritage attributes on designated heritage properties.

In late November, 2015 Council approved the Award of Proposal – Built Heritage Specialist contract, to Spencer R. Higgins, Architect Incorporated (the ‘Heritage Specialist’).

In addition, in 2015 Everlast Group proposed a 128 unit - 18 storey building on this site through the pre-consultation process. However, the still active OPA, ZBA and Site Plan applications were never updated to reflect the revised 2015 proposal.

2016

The Heritage Specialist commenced inspections of the Barber Mill property in 2016. The complexity of issues surrounding how to protect the remains of the property led to several site visits by the Heritage Specialist and enforcement staff, to examine and record building conditions, note heritage features, and determine best methods to maintain the remains. The Heritage Specialist also attended several meetings with enforcement and planning staff.

A meeting with the property Everlast Group, its representatives, and town staff also took place to discuss issues surrounding securing the site, safety matters and next steps.

2017

The Heritage Impact Assessment on the Barber Mill Paper Mill was completed in 2017. The Heritage Impact Assessment completed by the Heritage Specialist goes into great lengths as to the condition of the property, and a mitigation strategy. The Heritage Specialist needed over a year to complete the impact assessment due to the various complexities, and the high number of site visits required to conduct the necessary research.

2018

Staff reviewed the extensive analysis and recommendations contained in the Heritage Impact Assessment on the Barber Mill Paper Mill undertaken by Spencer R. Higgins, Architect Incorporated. A Confidential staff report, ADMIN-2018-00036, on this Council agenda addresses specific property standards enforcement matters arising from the Heritage Impact Assessment. The Heritage Impact Assessment is available to the public in the Clerks Office.

Contents of the Heritage Impact Assessment

A summary of the general findings from the Heritage Impact Assessment are as follows:

- All of the roofs in the heritage complex are leaking leading to extensive deterioration
- Stabilization of the heritage complex requires utilization of a conservation specialist professional advice and the engagement of contractors experienced in repair and conservation of cultural property
- Expenditures in the order of \$10 million will be necessary to properly stabilize and mothball the site.
- The recommended repairs are summarized as follows:
 - Correct life-saving issues such as missing handrails at floor openings and stabilize loose masonry
 - Provide more effective security to both the site and the structures
 - Remove standing water and debris from building interiors and site
 - Stabilize foundation settlement cracks and potential erosion points at every edge
 - Provide structural repairs
 - Provide repairs to stabilize the brickwork and masonry
 - Repair or replace roofs so structures are weathertight and direct roof runoff away from the buildings
 - Reinststate dry heat and security lighting to the inside of the structures.

COMMENTS:

There have been recent communications between Planning staff and the property owners of the Barber Mill site, Everlast Group regarding a revised proposal. Planning staff indicate that Everlast has also been in contact with staff from Credit Valley Conservation and Halton Region. These have been informal conversations and at this time there have not been any additional submissions by Everlast Group associated with the open development applications related to the Barber Mill site. In addition, the CAO has reached out to the principles of the Everlast Group to discuss what opportunities exist to facilitate moving the development of the Barber Mill site forward. Any new proposal or application for the site will require a Pre-Consultation process so that up to date staff comments and submission requirements can be provided to the Everlast Group.

Next Steps

Staff will continue to make themselves available to discuss redevelopment opportunities with the Everlast Group in a manner that respects the Ontario Heritage Act designation and is in keeping with the Halton Hills Cultural Master Plan. Enforcement staff will continue to monitor the site and work with the Everlast Group to ensure that property standards on the site are maintained. In addition, the CAO will continue to pursue opportunities with the Everlast Group to facilitate redevelopment.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

This report is administrative in nature and therefore there is not a direct relationship with the Town's strategic plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are currently no financial impacts associated with this report.

CONSULTATION:

Staff from Enforcement & Planning have continually consulted with regard to this property.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

It is recognized that the Barber Mill property is the subject of widespread community interest and a key cultural heritage feature. Staff will engage the community on the future of the Barber Mill as opportunities arise in keeping with the Town's Public Engagement Charter.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life. This report addresses the Town's cultural vibrancy.

CONCLUSION:

The Barber Mill property is a key cultural heritage feature. The historic importance of the property was recognized by Town Council in 2008 when the property was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Town will continue to monitor the site and work with the property owner, the Everlast Group, to identify opportunities for feasible redevelopment of the site that respects its cultural heritage significance.

Reviewed and Approved by,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Marshall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brent Marshall, CAO