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Committee to face Exchange dilemma

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A battle is brewing between heritage advocates and downtown revitalization types over an East Exchange warehouse that's slated to become a new home for Sport Manitoba. But there are conflicting reports about what's planned for the 124-year-old structure formally known as the Smart Bag Company Building.

In Friday's *Free Press*, I wrote a short news story about Prosperity Knitwear's request to remove its factory outlet at 145 Pacific Ave. from the city's heritage building registry. (In my haste to knock off the story, I stupidly wrote "145 Princess Ave." My apologies.)

Prosperity Knitwear, which has suffered through the downturn in the garment industry, wants to knock down the older, three-storey component of the building and sell the land below. The city's historical buildings committee, however, has recommended city councillors protect the structure from demolition because it's an "outstandingly early, rare and handsome example of the Romanesque Revival style" of architecture, in the words of heritage planners.

A decision will come on Tuesday, when council's property and development committee will hear arguments for and against heritage protection.

That's also when Sport Manitoba is expected to confirm its plans to move into the neighbouring five-storey component of the building and erect a new development where the three-storey component stands.

According to Rob Galston at urbanist blog *The Rise & Sprawl*, Sport Manitoba may build a parkade on the property. But a well-placed city hall source insists a "major recreation complex" is slated for the lot instead.

An inner-city rec centre would be an easier sell to the property and development committee, which faces the tough job of choosing between the recommendations of the city's own heritage experts and a new development that could increase the city's tax base.

More expropriation news

CITY planners have asked council to authorize a new set of land expropriations -- but they have nothing to do with the southwest rapid-transit corridor.

On Tuesday, council's property and development committee will be asked to approve a plan to expropriate portions of three McGillivray Boulevard properties.

The land is needed to allow construction crews to complete the \$15.2-million widening of McGillivray Boulevard between Waverley Street and Columbia Drive this summer.

As is the case with all expropriations, the city will only seize the properties if it can't reach agreements to purchase them by conventional means.

All three parcels of land desired by the city are currently used as parking lots.

New café to grace city hall

THE owners of a Henderson Highway café have won the opportunity to renovate and operate a restaurant at city hall.

Late last year, Partners Delicatessen courtyard abruptly shuttered its doors in the city hall courtyard, leaving politicians and civil servants without a lunch spot.

After a short search for a replacement, city property managers selected a bid by Grace Café, which has promised to transform the spartan space into a "stress-free, calm environment with music, a couple of comfy couches and loveseats" and an electric fireplace, according to a report that must be approved by council's downtown development committee on Monday.

Grace Café has been in business on Henderson Highway for 10 years, the report states. The company was selected over Salisbury House and cafeteria operators Emperico Food Services and Ritty's Café.

No fire sale for fire hall

IN other city property news, Winnipeg plans to sell an inner-city fire hall that most recently housed a glass-repair shop for more than three times the building's estimated market value.

City real estate managers plan to sell the former fire hall at 354 Sherbrook St., which had an internally estimated market value of \$51,500, to the neighbouring Lions Club of Winnipeg Seniors Home for \$188,200.

The second-highest bid for the property was \$60,000.

The sale to the Lions Club still faces property-committee approval on Tuesday.

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