

Council should reconsider tearing down pier buildings

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A group of Port Hope residents are hoping to change the minds of their elected officials.

The Pier Group, formed to stop the proposed demolition of century-old buildings on the Ward 1 centre pier, hopes council has a change of heart and will reconsider its decision to tear down the three industrial heritage buildings, as part of the Waterfront Master Plan, unveiled last month.

“For now, The Pier Group assumes the decision was made in haste and that as the light dawns and the public becomes better aware of the possibilities, council will change its mind,” said media spokesperson Michael Wallace.

Stepping back and taking a second look at the possibilities of the three buildings would be a good exercise for Port Hope council, despite what its initial report states.

Heritage buildings — no matter their current state — on waterfront properties are rare, and examples such as Toronto’s Distillery District, a 19th century industrial site rehabilitated into a major tourist draw; the old cutlery-box factory in Newcastle; and Cornwall’s Weave Shed Buildings, show that former industrial sites can be put to imaginative new uses. Although Port Hope’s waterfront is a different beast because of the Cameco facility, people will still pay top dollar to see the sun rise on Lake Ontario every morning.

Surely many developers would be interested in a large tract of waterfront property for housing, much like neighbouring Cobourg. Or, if a developer doesn’t feel the buildings can be turned into condominiums or apartments, maybe a business is looking for a beautiful waterfront property to open an office, which could also bring much-needed jobs to the community.

Of course, it would be imperative for the local heritage committees to play a part in any revamp of these century-old buildings as waterfront rejuvenation continues. But Port Hope has a reputation for preserving its heritage buildings and this avenue should be explored again.

Although councillors may not have originally thought about the potential of these buildings, revisiting their decision would be best, because any opportunity to make use of existing century buildings on the waterfront should not be overlooked.

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