

Centennial College, city end partnership for Guild Inn revitalization

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Centennial College, which says it spent close \$1 million on a city-college partnership to revive Scarborough's Guild Inn, acknowledged Wednesday, Nov. 23, the deal has been cancelled by both sides.

"We didn't feel we could take this any further," said Rosanna Cavallaro, associate vice president of marketing and communications.

"None of the proposals (we submitted) seemed to be acceptable to the city."

Centennial signed a letter of intent with Toronto Council in August 2009 both sides hoped would lead to a 76-year lease on the historic former Inn in Guild Park.

The college hoped to add a conference centre and restaurant to the badly-damaged building and restore it by finding a third-party to develop and operate a 120-room hotel next door.

By this spring, however, the college told the city its studies suggested no hotel investors could be found and restoration could be accomplished only by replacing the hotel with as many as 100 condominiums.

After many Guildwood residents met news of the change with anger, Scarborough East Councillor Paul Ainslie gave Centennial until Oct. 31 to remove condos from the plan, then sent a letter announcing the deal was cancelled.

In a release issued Wednesday, the college said Ainslie had "discouraged" efforts by Guildwood residents to examine substituting a "senior-friendly" condo building for the hotel.

"Centennial's proposal was never publicly presented for community feedback," it said.

Cavallaro said Centennial was "transparent" in its actions during the partnership and offered the city a good solution. "I do know that our proposals were sound," she said.

Cavallaro said Centennial incurred nearly \$1 million in costs on its studies and due diligence in the three years since its bid was selected by an advisory group, but she added "I'm not familiar with anybody trying to get that money back."

At a public meeting in his ward last month, however, Ainslie told constituents Centennial had asked the city for money to recoup its costs. "Our lawyers have said, 'Give it your best shot' and no, they have no legal grounds," he said.

The councillor, who maintains no vote at council was required to cancel the LOI, said he would issue a new request for proposals soon for a restaurant and banquet facility in Guild Park.



Centennial College, city end partnership for Guild Inn revitalization. The boarded up Bickford Residence on the Guild Inn grounds. Centennial College officially announced Nov. 23 it was ending a partnership with the city to revitalize the Guild Inn. *Staff file photo/NICK PERRY*

Ainslie suggested this could happen either at the Jan. 30 meeting of council's Government Management Committee, which he chairs, or at a special committee meeting.

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