

Guild studio cannot be salvaged following Christmas Day fire ***Local politician to petition for studio to be rebuilt***

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The studio building on the historic Guild Inn site was unable to be salvaged after a devastating Christmas Day fire.

Ward 43 (Scarborough East) Councillor Paul Ainslie said city engineering officials examined the property and made the decision to remove the remains of the building.

"They determined the structure wasn't safe, that it was really beyond repair and that for safety reasons it should be torn down as soon as possible," he said.

The studio building at the entrance to the sprawling property ignited in the early morning hours of Dec. 25. Fire crews arrived on the scene shortly after 5 a.m. and stayed much of the day dousing the fire from outside the building.

At the time, Toronto fire officials said the cause of the fire was unknown and there were no obvious signs of arson. The fire marshal's office did not launch an investigation.

Ainslie said the city's insurance company did send in an investigator.

"They weren't able to determine the cause of the fire," he said.

The studio had been on the property in one form or another for 80 years. It was created by joining two buildings that were used as a stable and garage, and was used for years by artists and then later as a venue for wedding receptions and community events. It hadn't been open to the public for several years

The city was working to renovate the building so it could once again be used by the public. The roof had been done this past summer and the washrooms were scheduled to be done next.

Ainslie lobbied to have the piece of Scarborough's history preserved. He will now make a different request of council.

"I would like the studio to be rebuilt on the current site or on another suitable location on the property," he said.

Following the fire, officials estimated the property loss at \$200,000, but the loss of history is much greater.

In an interview at the end of December, Scarborough's archivist Rick Schofield said the building dates back to at least the 1930s. When Spencer and Rosa Clark acquired the Guild property in 1932, two small buildings stood near the original Bickford residence (known today as the Guild Inn). A small frame structure and a two-car garage were moved together to create the L-shaped studio. It was later converted to conference facilities.

Schofield said thousands of people who have happy memories from their wedding reception at the studio experienced the loss. He had his own wedding reception there and attended those of several of his friends.

"This (loss) has an awful lot of people involved in it," he said.

The fire was contained to the one building and there was no one inside when the fire started.