

Winnipeg Free Press - PRINT EDITION

# What might have been at pumping station

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Posted: 1:00 AM | Comments: 0 (including replies)



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*Leon Moryl (right), partner Keith Budd (middle) and brewmaster Stephan Lieftuechter planned to turn the James Avenue Pumping Station into a brew pub, restaurant and museum.*

After first reading Brent Bellamy's Pumping station conundrum (Free Press, July 9) and Lisa Abrams' July 11 letter, Pining for a produce market, we felt the need to respond.

In late 1996, we approached the City of Winnipeg regarding the purchase of the then-mothballed (since 1986) the James Avenue Pumping Station. After clearing all 26 city departments, the building was

declared surplus city property.

In April 1997, we were granted a six-month option to pursue our plans for the adapted reuse of this incredible building, which bore a Grade II historical designation.

Our goal was to maintain all of the original pumping equipment and build a floor plate over the eastern half of the footprint, or approximately 8,000 square feet.

That developed space was to accommodate a 250-seat restaurant and what would have been at that time Manitoba's first brew pub.

We were extremely diligent in our efforts to develop this idea and spent several hundred thousand dollars to prepare a variety of documents: a business feasibility study, a financing information memorandum, an investment proposal, a museum feasibility study, as well as preliminary architectural and engineering plans, along with an estimate of construction costs.

Over two years, we invested thousands of hours of our time and successfully attracted the support of numerous organizations, including the city's historic buildings committee, Heritage Winnipeg, the Centre Plan committee, Winnipeg 2000, the Downtown BIZ, CentreVenture, the Winnipeg Fringe Festival, the Manitoba Department of Tourism and the Business Development Bank of Canada.

It seemed that whoever we approached immediately recognized the viability of this project and the significant impact it could have as a catalyst for development in the East Exchange.

Just like Abrams recognizes in her letter, we also considered the incorporation of a market space to add viability to the project.

Over the course of the year it took us to move the proposal forward, we were granted an additional six-month extension.

The bureaucratic permission we sought took many months to obtain. When we appeared before the property and development committee, our time was running out. We were told several parties were now interested in acquiring this unique building, though we never saw any details.

The city's real estate department had determined the pumping station was worth \$264,000 based on market conditions.

That number did not fit well into our proposal. Our extensive discussions with our investment partners could not move forward without adjustments, including the renegotiation of the price of the building. Construction costs were considerable but not the main barrier.

We felt in considering the integrity of the heritage structure and future of the area for urban development, the price adjustment on a neglected building was a small modification that would further the success of all parties, including a city council that could have gained considerable accolades for progress.

We proposed a purchase price of \$1.

This was the same amount Red River College paid for an entire city block on Princess Street. Look what's there now.

We were prepared to invest \$2.5 million to create a destination location. Instead of working with us, the property and development committee rejected our offer and put out a request for proposals.

Over the course of the next year, little happened. Eventually, they sold the building to a Winnipeg restaurateur for an undisclosed sum and then bought it back two years later for \$500,000 more than the

selling price.

So much for "vision" at the council level.

Once harpooned by political agendas, we had to walk away from our vision. One that would have (and still could) reflect what happened in Toronto, Denver, and other urban cores.

Leon Moryl of Winnipeg and Keith Budd of Vancouver were the proponents of the Pump House Restaurant and Brewing Co.

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