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## Report 2026-004

**Report Title:** Existing GPL – Options for Future Uses

**Committee Name:** Public Works

**Committee Meeting Date:** January 5, 2026

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**Approved by:** Glenn Dees, Acting CAO

**Council Meeting Date:** January 21, 2026

**Strategic Plan Priorities:**  Innovate for Service Excellence  
 Ignite Economic Opportunity  
 Foster a Thriving Community  
 Propel Sustainable Growth  
 Champion a Vibrant Future

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### Recommendation

**That** the Public Works Committee, having considered Report 2026-004 ‘Existing GPL - Options for Future Uses’, recommend that County Council identify this item for separate discussion at the January 21, 2026 County Council meeting and provide staff with further direction on which option, if any, to proceed with; and

**Further That** the Committee recommend that County Council direct staff to retain a consultant to initiate further evaluation and pre-design work for the selected option, if any.”

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## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide County Council with high level options for future uses of the existing Golden Plough Lodge (GPL).

## Background

County Council passed the following resolution at the October 28, 2025 Special Council Meeting:

*Now Therefore Be It Resolved That County Council, having considered Report 2025-209 '2025-2026 Winter Warming Centre Considerations', adopt the following:*

- *That County Council directs staff to pursue opening the winter warming centre at County headquarters, Council Chambers, 555 Courthouse Road, Cobourg, Ontario, with the following restrictions: From November 1st to March 31st, from 8:00 p.m. until 8:00 a.m. and that staff adopt the rules used in Durham Region for operating a Warming Hub and;*
- *That County Council request Cobourg Council consider a blanket ECE License exemption for 555 Courthouse Road in Cobourg for an overnight warming centre for the winter 2025/2026 season or that Cobourg Council permit the issuance of a 3rd license and to consider an application for an overnight warming centre in Cobourg at 555 Courthouse Road in Cobourg for the winter 2025/2026 season;*
- **Further That Council directs staff to investigate options for the "Old GPL" building for future uses.**

This report is to address the last bullet point in the resolution and to provide options for the existing GPL.

As part of the pre-design work for the Golden Plough Lodge and Northumberland County Archives and Museum Redevelopment Project, a building condition assessment was completed by D.G. Biddle in 2017. The report outlined architectural, mechanical and electrical deficiencies and the summary stated:

*'Generally, this building is in poor condition. There is extensive past deferred maintenance that needs to be addressed as well as repairs to the deteriorating building and mechanical systems resulting from its age. Although there appears to be great efforts in the past decade to bring these deferred maintenance items back to working order, the items of concern are widespread and costly. Until any of these recommended repairs/upgrades are executed, you can expect the condition of the building to deteriorate and worsen. Existing mechanical systems alone have reached a critical state and large-scale failure and replacement is imminent.'*

An Asbestos Assessment and Recommendation report was also completed in March 1994, identifying areas throughout the building with asbestos containing materials.

The decision to build a new Golden Plough Lodge, incorporating the Archives and Museum instead of renovating the existing GPL, was approved by County Council in 2017 through resolution No. 2017-08-23-184, based on Report No. 2017-54. The report provided three options: 'Do Nothing', 'Renovate Current Facility', and 'Construct New Facility'.

The 'Do Nothing' option was not an option as Provincial Legislation would not permit the County to continue operating a facility without compliance with the new Long Term Care standards.

The 'Renovate Current Facility' was ruled out based on costs to renovate the building based on the age, condition, building layout and construction and the requirement to meet current building code and Long-Term Care standards.

The 'Construct New Facility' was recommended as the preferred option to meet the required Ministry of Long-term Care (MLTC) design standards and current building, fire, accessibility codes, incorporate operational efficiencies and have the least disruption to the current operations.

A Pre-Demolition Designated Substance and Hazardous Materials Survey of the existing GPL was completed in 2022 to finalize the abatement requirements. Based on the survey, the total cost to complete the abatement, removal of the underground storage tank, and additional time to complete the scope of work is approximately \$1.5M and is included in Phase 2 of the contract with Matheson Constructors for the GPL/NCAM Redevelopment project.

### **Consultations**

In developing and reviewing options for the existing GPL, County staff consulted with internal County departments including Facilities, Social Services, Emergency Management Health and Safety, GPL, Planning, and Finance. Staff also consulted with Salter Pilon Architecture (SPA), the Consultant for the GPL/NCAM Redevelopment project and BTY Group (BTY), the County's external Project Manager on the GPL/NCAM project to assist in the development and review of the considerations for each option.

### **Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations**

Demolition of the existing GPL is currently included as Phase 2 of the Contract with Matheson Constructors for the GPL/NCAM Redevelopment Project. Any changes to the demolition will require a change to the contract with cost and schedule impacts.

Any redevelopment or change in use will likely trigger new permitting requirements including the need for a new building permit and site plan approvals. Use of the site as a warming room space or shelter space will likely require a license pursuant to the Town of Cobourg's By-law 018-2024 (Emergency Care Establishment Licensing By-law).

### **Discussion / Options**

Staff considered three (3) options for repurposing the existing GPL for a potential future use. Since the resolution to explore future uses of the existing GPL was part of the resolution for the 2025/2026 warming room, the options consider this as the future use. While many of the considerations still apply, further evaluation of the options would be required if there is a different direction or parameters for future use of the building.

- 1) Keep the entire existing building and renovate/repurpose (Attachment 1)
- 2) Keep the existing auditorium, chapel and surrounding administrative space at the south end of the building (Attachment 2) and do a complete renovation to meet current codes and standards
- 3) Complete demolition as planned and build stand alone building on 555 Courthouse Road Campus (modular or permanent structure)

## Option 1 – Keep entire building

Attachment 1 (figure 1) shows the existing building overlaid on the approved site plan for the GPL/NCAM/Northumberland County Campus. Considerations and implications with keeping the entire facility are outlined below:

- This option offers the most space to accommodate the largest number of people for a future use.
- The proposed road that travels north south will have to be relocated, likely to the east side of the site. This road is intended to aid in internal vehicle circulation of the site and it serves as the public bus loop.
- The bus loop will need to be relocated with the relocated road. This will also mean that the bus stop will need to be moved. The original location of the new bus stop was designed to be in a central location for close access to the new GPL, Halcyon Place and 555 Courthouse Road.
- A new entrance and parking lot configuration will need to be developed for Halcyon Place.
- The existing GPL parking lot will need to be further evaluated to determine what can be kept, renovated and demolished.
- The addition to the existing County parking lot for 555 Courthouse Road would no longer be viable. A Traffic Assessment would likely be needed to fully understand the implications of keeping this building operational long term.
- The site redesign will require architectural, landscape, civil and electrical engineering services, along with a new site plan application process. Further consultation with the Town of Cobourg planning department would be required before exploring this option further.
- The Asbestos Assessment & Recommendations report, prepared March 1994, identified friable and potentially friable asbestos containing materials. As reported above, a Pre-Demolition Designated Substance and Hazardous Materials Survey of the existing GPL was completed in 2022 to finalize the abatement requirements. Full abatement of the building will be required as part of the renovation.
- The Building Condition Assessment, dated September 18, 2017, reported the building condition was generally “in poor condition”.
- Extensive maintenance and repairs to the deteriorating building and mechanical systems are required to get it back to working order for long term use. The items of concern were noted as “widespread and costly”. In order to fully understand the implications of a building wide renovation, additional studies will be required along with a detailed review from the Architectural, Mechanical, Electrical and Structural consultants.
- A building permit application process will be required and would require the building to meet current codes and standards.
- This option will likely take 3-6 months to fully evaluate, 8-12 months to design, including all of the requisite approvals, and approximately 20-24 months of construction.
- This option will impact contracts for the GPL/NCAM redevelopment project.

## Option 2 – Keep the auditorium and surrounding area

Attachment 1 (figure 2) shows this portion of the existing building overlaid on the approved site plan for the GPL/NCAM/Northumberland County Campus. Considerations and implications with keeping a portion of the facility are outlined below:

- The central road through the site is avoided and can be maintained.
- Pedestrian circulation will need to be revised slightly, as the building conflicts with the new trails.
- Similar to Option 1, parking will need to be considered. The site redesign will require architectural, landscape, civil and electrical engineering services, along with a new site plan application process. Further consultation with the Town of Cobourg planning department would be required before exploring this option further.
- Demolition of the remaining portion of the building would proceed as originally planned. Full abatement will be required, as per the pre-demolition requirements for the entire building prior to the demolition and renovation of the portion to remain.
- In addition to the challenges identified under Option 1. The building envelope will need to be redesigned. Because the existing mechanical and electrical rooms, and the majority of those systems would be demolished, an entirely new mechanical and electrical system would need to be designed and provided. This would include new HVAC units, ductwork, plumbing lines and fixtures; and potentially a new fire suppression system.
- In order to fully understand the implications of a renovation to the portions of the building not demolished, additional studies will be required along with a detailed review from Architectural, Mechanical, Electrical and Structural consultants.
- A building permit application process will be required and would require the remaining portion of the building to meet current codes and standards.
- This option will likely take 3-4 months to fully evaluate, 8-9 months to design, including all of the requisite approvals, and approximately 16-20 months of construction.
- This option will impact contracts for the GPL/NCAM redevelopment project.

### Option 3 – New building

Attachment 1 (figure 3) shows a conceptual option for a new stand alone building on the GPL/NCAM/County Campus.

- a) Modular option – purchase stand alone modular building with washrooms, kitchenette, and office space to be located on vacant land between Burnham Street and new campus road
- b) Construct building - slab on grade, building with washrooms, large multi-functional room, office space, kitchenette

Considerations for this option include:

- All 3 phases of the original GPL/NCAM project will be completed as planned and the campus as approved, is maintained.
- The iteration shown on Attachment 3 assumes a total disconnection to the County northern parking lot and provides its own entrance road and small parking area for staff, volunteers and visitors.
- The addition of a new building (either modular/temporary or permanent structure) will require architectural, landscape, civil and electrical engineering services, along with a new site plan approval application process.
- A new modular building can be designed to include its own HVAC system and plumbing fixtures and power supply would need to be evaluated by an electrical engineer and a system designed to tie it in.
- A permanent building would require a full set of engineering drawings for all aspects of the building.

- The modular option is minimally intensive from a building design perspective but will still require a permit. Further consultation with the Town of Cobourg planning department would be required before exploring this option further (both modular and permanent structure).
- The modular option will likely take 1 to 2 months to evaluate, 2 to 4 months to design, including all of the requisite approvals, and less than a year of construction.
- A new permanent building will likely take 1 to 2 months to evaluate, 8 to 12 months to design, including all of the requisite approvals, and approximately a year of construction.
- The evaluation, planning and design for this option could proceed simultaneously with Phase 2/3 of the GPL/NCAM redevelopment project, but construction could not commence until Phase 3 is complete.

Comparison of options:

Option	Benefits/Pros	Disadvantage/Cons
1- Keep entire facility and renovate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largest space to accommodate more occupants</li> <li>• Updated to meet current building code, Fire code, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) etc.</li> <li>• Removes designated substances as indicated in the Designated Substances Survey (DSS)</li> <li>• Reduces the current operating/maintenance costs</li> <li>• Increased building efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High cost for studies, design and construction</li> <li>• Long design and construction schedule</li> <li>• Potential to uncover unknown issues that require additional cost</li> <li>• Impacts approved site plan and existing contract for demolition of site works</li> <li>• Additional planning and building requirements may be required depending on intended use</li> <li>• Does not align with original intent of approved campus design and creation of surplus lands with flexibility for</li> </ul>

		future community needs
2 – Keep auditorium and surrounding space and renovate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated to meet current building code, Fire code, AODA</li> <li>• Removes designated substances as indicated in the DSS</li> <li>• Reduced operating/maintenance costs compared to existing building and by reducing the size of the building</li> <li>• Increased building efficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to high costs for studies, design and construction</li> <li>• Longer design and construction schedule compared to modular option</li> <li>• Potential to uncover unknown issues that require additional cost</li> <li>• Impacts approved site plan and existing contract for demolition of site works</li> <li>• Additional planning and building requirements may be required depending on intended use</li> <li>• Does not align with original intent of approved campus design and creation of surplus lands with flexibility for future community needs</li> </ul>
3 - New building on 555 Courthouse Road Campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not impact approved site plan or contract for demolition and site works of the campus</li> <li>• Purpose built for intended use</li> <li>• Meets current codes and standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional planning and building requirements may be required depending on intended use</li> <li>• Construction would not</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shorter design and construction schedule compared to renovation options</li> <li>• Lower cost for design and construction compared to other options</li> </ul>	commence until Phase 2/3 of the GPLNCAM Redevelopment project is complete
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For all options, depending on the intended use, further consultation with the Town of Cobourg would be required with respect to the Emergency Care Establishment (ECE) bylaw. If the intent is for a warming room and/or shelter, an exemption would be required from the current bylaw to allow three (3) ECE licenses in Cobourg.

**Financial Impact**

High level order of magnitude estimates for each option are provided in the table below. These estimates are based on average cost per square foot for renovations/new builds as provided by the Consultants. These costs will change depending on the determined use of the building, and findings from the studies for the existing GPL (architectural, structural, etc.) that confirm requirements and may uncover additional items to be addressed. The cost estimates do not include consulting fees for planning, design, permitting fees, or contract administration and other support during construction.

Options	Order of Magnitude Cost Estimate (excluding HST)
Option 1 – Full Renovation of Auditorium and surrounding rooms	\$35M to \$55M
Option 2 – Minor Renovation (as needed only) of Auditorium and surrounding rooms	\$7.5M to \$12M
Option 3A – New Building (~2,000 sq. ft) - Modular	\$1.6M to \$2.2M
Option 3B – New Building (~2,000 sq. ft) – permanent structure	\$2.5M to \$3.0M

**Member Municipality Impacts**

N/A

**Conclusion / Outcomes**

This report provides options and considerations for the future use of the existing GPL. Further investigation and studies are required to proceed with any of the options depending on the intended occupancy and use of the facility and to further refine the planning, design and construction requirements. Based on the review that has been completed Option 3 would have

the least impact on the current Phase 2 and 3 for the existing GPL/NCAM redevelopment project, meets the original intent of the campus design, and is the most cost effective based on the assumptions in the report. If Council would like to proceed with Option 3 or any of the other Options, it is recommended that the County retain a Consultant to initiate the planning and design stage for the project.

### **Attachments**

1. Report 2026-104 ATTACH 1 'Existing GPL Options'