

The Future of the Downtown Owosso Armory Building

This insert to the water bill is intended to gain community input and interest in the outcome of the Owosso Armory. As the construction of the new Armory in Corunna progresses, the State of Michigan Department of Military Affairs intends to sell the downtown Armory and projects the sale to take place in late summer this year.

The City of Owosso, being the “host” community, will have the first right to purchase the site at its appraised value. That decision has not been made. The City has no history of interest in owning the structure, but can act as a link between the present owner and a selected future owner with development standards attached to the sale.

Prior to making the decision on the sale, the Owosso Downtown Development Authority established a committee it calls the *Neighborhood Planning Team*. This Team has met recently and decided that it desires public input to help achieve the best possible use of this magnificent structure. After some introductory facts, this insert becomes a survey and it is our wish that you complete the survey for return with your water bill or delivery by other methods suggested later.

A FEW FACTS

Location/History: The Owosso Armory is located at the end of Exchange Street in downtown Owosso. The building was constructed in 1915 and is Owosso’s second Armory. It is designed as a fortress. The prior use of the site was the Dewey and Stewart flour mill that burned in the 1890’s. The building has housed a Michigan National Guard Unit that will move out this summer. Many who have lived here for quite some time remember the events that took place on the spacious drill floor with balcony viewing—wedding receptions, boxing, wrestling, concerts, and community ceremonies.

Parcel Description: The property extends to the river and is 100 feet in the north-south direction and 215 deep.

The Chamber Building: The Shiawassee Regional Chamber of Commerce Building sits on its own land in front of the Armory. Although there is popular opinion that the Chamber Building should move, this is a business decision of the Chamber that has not been made at this time. For short term planning purposes, it should be presumed, despite their recent efforts to relocate, that the Chamber will remain at this location for the indefinite future.

The Vicinity: The Armory oversees one of the most interesting and historic sections of the Shiawassee River. Owosso’s beginning owes its existence to the nearby rapids that sited a grist mill and flour mill where the energy source of the river’s current was available. The James Miner River Walkway to Corunna begins just north of the Armory. Public property exists north, south and west of the site. The seasonal Farmer’s Market is on the parking lot south of the Armory.

Building Characteristics: The building contains 28,000 square feet of floor space and is two full stories—basement and first floor—and a partial second floor. The drill floor is 6,860 square feet. The front offices have three floors with over 8,000 square feet. There is no elevator. The recent investments include a new roof, complete tuck pointing of the brick walls, new windows and a new boiler. The building is not air-conditioned.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Well a good start is to gain input from our community. The series of words and phrases are offered to maximize the opportunity to express your viewpoints.

Rank the following set of values, land uses and design considerations that should guide the decision on the Armory outcome. Use the sliding scale to score each item.

Very Little Connection		Possible Consideration		Has a Presence		Persuasive Role		Plan For It		Dominant Influence	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		

Value/Use/Design Item	Score	Value/Use/Design Item	Score
1) Historic preservation	_____	2) Beautification	_____
3) Environmental quality	_____	4) Innovative multi-uses	_____
5) Street smart/common sense	_____	6) Focal point of downtown	_____
7) Design upgrades facing river	_____	8) Uses that face the river too	_____
9) Public uses	_____	10) Private land use	_____
11) Replan from Main St. north	_____	12) Reflect local culture	_____
13) Improved sociability	_____	14) Quality of life upgrade	_____
15) Front yard design emphasis*	_____	16) Condominium housing	_____
17) Indoor Farmer's Market	_____	18) Library	_____
19) Riverwalk enhancements	_____	20) Social agency uses	_____
21) Artist community & studios	_____	22) Middle School use	_____
23) Banquet hall/recreation	_____	24) Chamber offices**	_____
*After Chamber Building is moved.		** Into front section of Armory.	

Other (name your suggestions on values, land uses and/or designs):

25) _____

26) _____

Relying on your first instincts, what type of activity do you see happening at the Armory and why is it beneficial?

If you complete this survey and want it considered, please return this to City Hall via mail or personal delivery at 301 W. Main Street, Owosso, MI 48867; or include with your water bill payment. Alternatively for those of you that have a scanner, send a copy to philip.hathaway@ci.owosso.mi.us. A Fax copy can be transmitted to 989-725-0523.

Stay tuned for public reporting of this survey and other progress reports. Thank you!