

# New life for ex-temple?

## Engineering firm thinks big

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What might be Winnipeg's most well-known restaurant building may be taking its menu of services in an entirely new direction.

The former Masonic Temple, after decades as a Mother Tucker's eatery and in more recent years as a bar-and-grill and even a Mexican restaurant, could be transformed into a residential and commercial structure before opening again in the months ahead.

The extensive interior renovation, to cost about \$2.5 million, has been taken on by Winnipeg's Wolfrom Engineering as the firm has its sights on the downtown three-storey building's second level as its next place of business.

"That's where we're going to have our offices. And a sizable mezzanine within that space. So we'll end up with a storey and a half there," Dan Wolfrom, the company's owner, said while showing the work — well underway — last week.

"And we're going to project out along Ellice Avenue. That will be an extension of our space."

Along the Ellice strip, the edifice's second level would add an extended glass-fronted annex in part to make

the property at one with the street.

City hall has approved several plans for the building and appears to be poised to green-light others, though the look and feel of the Donald Street structure — built in 1895 — won't see dramatic changes.

"The building doesn't have a super-rigid historical designation," Wolfrom explained. "We're allowed to do just about anything we want other than demolish it."

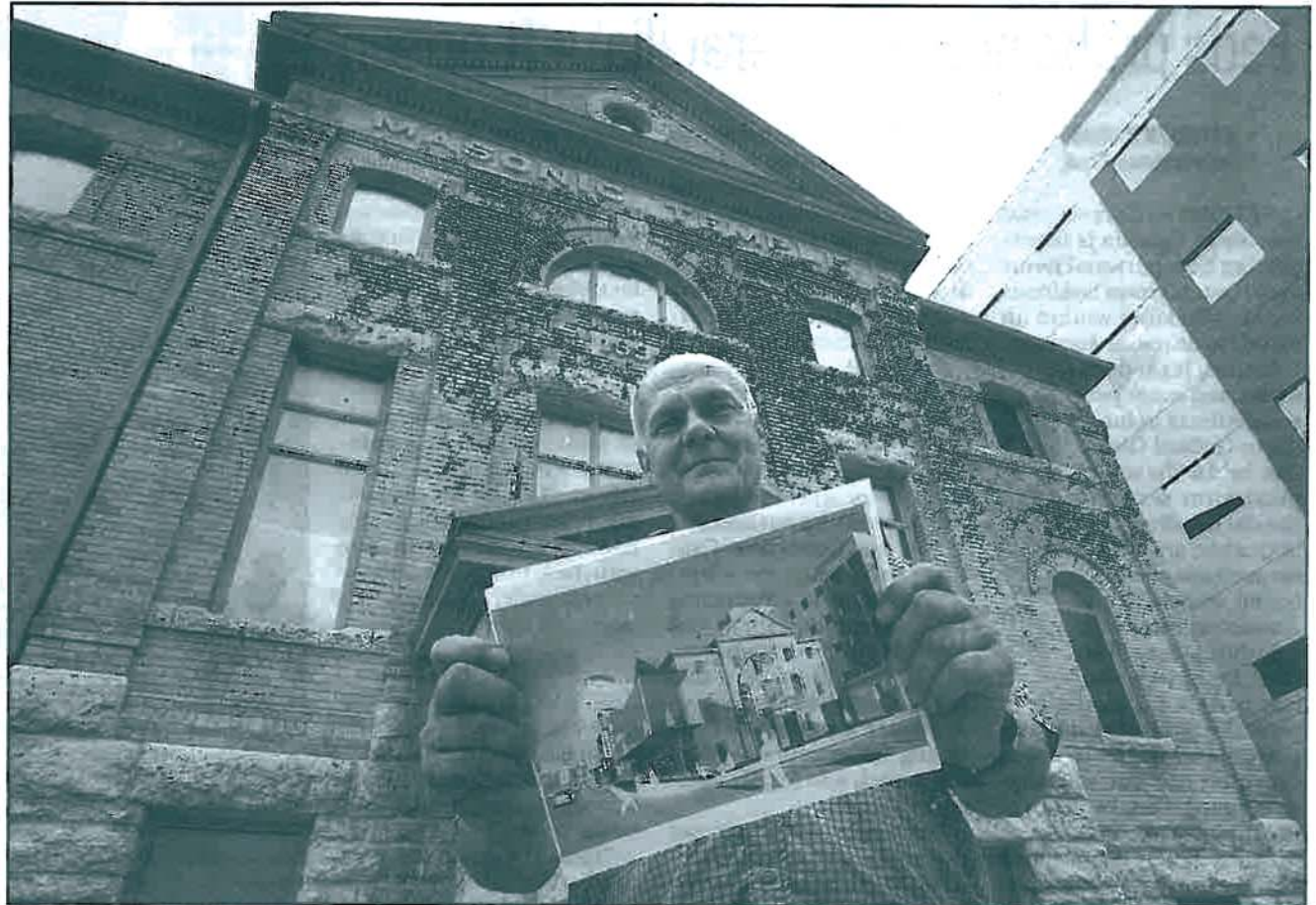
Wolfrom's company is aiming to purchase the structure, though he hasn't revealed its likely price tag.

### Loft-style apartments

What he does make clear is his vision for the building's loft-style apartments on the top level — perhaps a half-dozen suites — and at least one retailer on the ground floor to become a fit with the Mountain Equipment Co-op store nearby on Portage Avenue.

"I'd like to see either retail or a coffee shop. Possibly a sporting goods store or a bicycle shop. It's in spirit with the people who work at our place, and we're trying to augment MEC just around the corner," Wolfrom said, noting his plan stands out sharply from the structure's most recent restaurant identities.

"There is tons of work to do.



JASON HALSTEAD/SUN MEDIA

Dan Wolfrom of Wolfrom Engineering displays plans for the former Masonic Temple building located at the corner of Ellice Avenue and Donald Street. Wolfrom hopes to convert the building into a space combining retail, offices and apartments.

It's just gutted right now. The building has gone through so many transformations."

Where a 16-foot ceiling exists on the second level, Wolfrom pointed to his goal to create an atrium from the ground floor right up to the lofts.

"It will provide access to all levels," he said. "We've got room for lofts, and we'll bring in skylights for the roof and walls."

As for the former temple's reputation as possibly being haunted, he added that any-

thing scary doesn't stand a ghost of a chance of chasing him from the project — or from moving his employees in when it's complete by late fall or winter.

"I haven't seen one. I haven't heard one," Wolfrom

said of the building's legendary ghosts, adding he's prepared to live with them if they show up. "There's been no indication of that, from my perspective."

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