

City's heritage stock dwindles as another old home burns

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Staff

Another one bites the dust — maybe.

The McCauley House, designated by the City under the Heritage Act for preservation due to its historical significance, fell victim to fire on the weekend.

While damage to the structure hasn't been determined yet, the blaze might have dealt the final blow to the vacant 130-year-old home that, like several other old homes in Mississauga, succumb to neglect or arson.

According to police and fire department information, the fire broke out just after 9:20 p.m. Sunday at the house located at Eglinton Ave. and Glen Erin Dr. just opposite Erin Mills Town Centre.

The damage was contained to the inside of the house, but it is believed the fire was deliberately set because a gasoline canister was found at the scene, according to reports.

Owned by the Erin Mills Development Corp., the house had been rented out and occupied until about a year ago, but since has fallen prey to vandals who have slowly picked away the ornate facade, not to mention ripping out interior walls and ceilings.

Attempts by the owner to keep trespassers out have failed as plywood nailed to the doors and windows are torn away almost as soon as they are put up, and a fence around the perimeter has failed to ward off the attacks.

Ironically, the fire comes just weeks after a former member of Mississauga's Heritage Advisory Committee complained to his ex-colleague's about the McCauley House's precarious situation.

In a letter to the committee, Paul McGuigan predicted the house would meet the same senseless end as have other historically designated properties.

"Little, if anything, has apparently been done to change the course of this pattern," he wrote.

Councillor Katie Mahoney, who chairs the heritage committee, acknowledges that many historically significant homes have met similar ends, but insists there is not much that can be done about it.

"Ultimately, it is up to the owner of the property to safeguard it," she said. "In this case, the owner has complied with all City requirements."

She said from the information she has received from the fire department, she believes the fire was set deliberately. But, she added, that little damage was done to the outside of the building.

"It is too early to say for sure, but I don't think it is a write off," she said.

The Ward 8 councillor is also buoyed that a potential buyer for the home has contacted her office with thoughts of moving it.

"The person who called wasn't concerned about the damage, so they think it is salvageable," she said. "So there's still hope."



The historic McCauley House near the Erin Mills Town Centre is little more than a shell after fire gutted the building Sunday. Arson is suspected.

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