

Loss of concert hall could help Ottawa's portrait gallery bid

Last Updated: Wednesday, February 27, 2008 | 11:25 AM ET

[CBC News](#)

The City of Ottawa's bid to host the Portrait Gallery of Canada could get a big boost if a proposed concert hall project fails, freeing up its proposed prime downtown site, says an Ottawa city councillor.

Coun. Peter Hume said the space set aside on Elgin Street for the concert hall would be ideal for the new gallery.

"There's work that needs to be done before we can repurpose that space to a portrait gallery and actually put a bid in by the April deadline," he said. **'This will be the site to beat'**

— Coun. Peter Hume

"But I'm confident if we can do that, given its location, given the financial asset that we can bring to the table that this will be the site to beat."

The federal government announced in November that it was asking nine cities, including Ottawa, to submit proposals and compete for the gallery.

In January, a city report said the property sold by the city to the developer Morguard Corp. and earmarked for the concert hall would be a suitable site for the gallery.

One condition of the sale was that the development must have a public space inside.

Morguard said in January that it would not be appropriate to consider the site for the portrait gallery at that time, since the backers of the concert hall had been given until Feb. 28, 2008, to come up with enough funding for the concert hall.

But two days before the Feb. 28 deadline, the concert hall's backers said they had not yet found the major sponsor they needed and would not seek a deadline extension.

The \$38-million project had commitments of \$5.5 million from the city, \$6.1 million from the province and up to \$8 million from the federal government, but needed to find other funding to make up the balance.

\$6.1M up for grabs

Coun. Maria McRae said if the concert hall fails, the city will have another decision to make.

"What do we do with the provincial money? 'Cause my understanding is that money came unfettered to the City of Ottawa," she said. "Do we put that money into some sort of an endowment for the arts?"

McRae added that even if the current concert hall project dies, there may be an opportunity to consider a similar project in the future, when the city redevelops an 18-hectare park in central Ottawa.

"It's possible that there's room for a smaller scale concert hall in Lansdowne Park," she said.

The city has launched a competition to redesign the park.