



REPORT TO

CORPORATE SERVICES, STRATEGIC
PLANNING AND PROPERTY
COMMITTEE

**PERMITTING OF LORETTO ABBEY FOR SPECIAL EVENTS
WARD 5**

*“Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
Ephesians 6:23(NRSVCE)*

Drafted	Meeting Date
March 26, 2025	April 10, 2025
A. Rizzi Costa, Sr. Manager, Community Use of Schools E. Pallotta, Head, Development Services M. Loberto, Superintendent, Planning and Development Services	
<p>RECOMMENDATION REPORT</p>	

Vision: *IN GOD'S IMAGE: Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope.*

Mission: *Nurturing the faith development and academic excellence of our Catholic learning community through the love of God, neighbour, and self*



MULTI-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
2022 - 2025

IN GOD'S IMAGE: Growing in Knowledge, with Justice and Hope



Brendan Browne
Director of Education

Adrian Della Mora
Associate Director of Academic Affairs & Chief Operating Officer

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Associate Director of Corporate Services and Chief Commercial Officer

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to a motion approved by the Board on September 19, 2024, this report provides information regarding the permitting of Loretto Abbey Catholic Secondary School for weddings, photography, and other special events.

In October 2020, the Board received funding from the Ministry of Education for an addition and retrofit at Loretto Abbey. The extensive construction work is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2025, with the most intensive and disruptive activities taking place after school hours and during the summer. The permitting of indoor facilities and outdoor space will be restricted during this time. Given that the potential permit uses outlined in the motion cannot be accommodated during the construction period, staff do not recommend the permitting of this facility.

The report also outlines concerns with permits for special events, including requirements for religious ceremonies, zoning permissions, and impacts on the surrounding residential neighbourhood which further supports the staff position on the permitting of Loretto Abbey.

B. BACKGROUND

1. ***Loretto Abbey Catholic Secondary School is located on an approximately 12-acre property at 101 Mason Boulevard.*** The designated heritage building has an OTG (on-the-ground) capacity of 480 students.
2. ***In October 2020, the Ministry of Education provided approximately \$24 million in Capital Priorities funding for an addition and retrofit to address oversubscription issues at Loretto Abbey.*** The project will include retrofitting of the existing building to maintain unique elements while providing updated modern learning environments. The addition and retrofit will accommodate current and future student populations, with a total capacity of 1,100 pupil places.
3. ***Demolition of the infirmary has commenced and is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2025.*** Prior to the start of the capital addition, restoration and renewal work is scheduled for the upcoming summer to repair foundation walls, stairways, and walkways around portions of the building. Construction of the new addition is anticipated to begin later this summer, and along with the retrofit, the site will be under construction for multiple years. A field improvement project is slated to commence following the completion of the addition.

4. ***The Loretto Abbey facility accommodates after hours permits for sporting activities, community support programs, and school functions.*** In addition, since 2015, there has been an agreement in place with the National Catholic Broadcasting Council for use of the school Chapel and ancillary spaces to record and televise Mass services.
5. ***On September 19, 2024, the Board approved a motion regarding permitting the grounds and facilities at Loretto Abbey for special events.*** The school receives requests for the use of the facility for events such as weddings, anniversaries, funerals, and photography. To date, these requests have not been accommodated.

The approved motion included the following direction:

“Therefore be it resolved that Loretto Abbey and its grounds be considered as venue to be permitted for photography, weddings/ engagements, and other special events; and

Be it further resolved that staff prepare a report on the impacts and revenues may be generated from permitting the grounds and facilities at Loretto Abbey Catholic Secondary School.”

C. EVIDENCE/RESEARCH/ANALYSIS

1. ***The extensive construction work associated with the addition and interior renovation creates significant challenges in accommodating after hours permit uses.*** Construction activities will intensify during periods when students are not in the facility, including after school hours and summers. These periods provide the only opportunity for the contractor to complete disruptive and noisy work and will include inaccessible areas of the site to allow for an adequate construction work zone and the movement of required vehicles on the property.

The ability to permit the facility will be extremely limited during the construction period to ensure that the work can proceed without interruptions which could impact both the project schedule and cost. All current permit uses are being reviewed. As such, there are no revenue implications in the short to medium term, as this site will be largely inaccessible or severely limited in its potential permitted uses.

2. ***The introduction of potential permit uses outlined in the approved motion cannot be accommodated while the school and site are under construction.*** The capital work will limit outdoor use opportunities and restricts the ability to provide after hours permits without severely interrupting the types of events contemplated in the proposed uses.

As a result, staff do not recommend the consideration of Loretto Abbey for special event uses.

3. *Staff have also identified concerns regarding the proposed special event uses, including requirements for Catholic Sacrament ceremonies, potential zoning concerns, and impacts on the surrounding neighbourhood.*
 - **Religious requirements:** The Chapel at Loretto Abbey is a consecrated Roman Catholic Chapel, which restricts the ability of the space to accommodate religious Sacrament ceremonies. The Archdiocese has advised that in accordance with Canon Law, Catholic weddings and Sacrament ceremonies can only be held in Parishes, as all records must be properly maintained and accessible on-site to comply with diocesan requirements. Furthermore, ceremonies for other faiths are restricted in Roman Catholic Chapels to preserve the sanctity and Catholic identity of the space. Accommodating multi-faith ceremonies would require a formal process to deconsecrate or secularize the space, which includes permission from the Archbishop.
 - **Zoning concerns:** The Loretto Abbey secondary school site has an R3 zoning designation, which permits the school use. Properties designated for educational uses are typically limited to related activities which support or are ancillary to the primary use of a school. Activities such as operating a commercial event venue and providing an outdoor photography setting would likely not meet the threshold of ancillary use and contravene the intent and permissions of the zoning by-law. Potential zoning violations may result in the City taking enforcement actions, which could include fines to the Board.
 - **Neighbourhood impacts:** The uses being considered have the potential to generate additional vehicular traffic in the area. Larger gatherings may also exceed the available parking capacity at the school, creating on-street parking concerns in the surrounding residential neighbourhood. In addition, the operating hours and rules for potential special events would need to be consistent with the residential setting of the school.
4. *These additional considerations and issues further the staff recommendation, as they severely constrain the ability to generate revenue on the site in addition to the increased maintenance and administrative costs associated with such an endeavour.*

D. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Board does not proceed with the issuance of permits for special events at Loretto Abbey, with further consideration of this matter following the completion of the capital project.