Would Casa Loma work as a restaurant?

The towering Gothic Revival palace of Casa Loma could become home to a fine dining restaurant if a proposal by the owners of the Liberty Grand banquet hall at Exhibition Place gets the green light.

Liberty Entertainment Group wants to lease the property for 20 years and turn much of the ground floor into a dining room while the library and sun room would be converted for functions like weddings and conferences. The tenants, if approved, would also invest about $7 million in repairs and improvements to the structure.

The 110-year-old château was built for financier and soldier Henry Pellatt by E. J. Lennox, the designer behind Old City Hall, King Edward Hotel, and the west wing of the government building at Queen’s Park, in 1903.

Pellatt is famous for financing the Toronto Electric Light Company, the city’s first power provider that played a crucial role in the arrival of electric streetcars.

The rambling property with its gardens and outbuildings was sold to the City of Toronto during the Depression and operated as a tourist attraction by the Kiwanis Club for 73 years. Declining attendance prompted the city to take over the property in 2011.

The proposal doesn't include several other buildings on the Casa Loma estate, including the Hunting Lodge, Potting Shed, and stables. A feasibility study into turning these buildings into a museum of Toronto, along with the Liberty Entertainment lease deal, is on the agenda for the next meeting of the executive committee.

Should Casa Loma become a restaurant? Could the main building be better used as a Toronto...
museum? Could the city do more with one of its most famous mansions?

Chris Bateman is a staff writer at blogTO. Follow him on Twitter at @chrisbateman.

Image: Bastian Sander in the blogTO Flickr pool.

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