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## Rand work hinges on upgrade of sewer line

### *Project called vital to downtown*

NORTH TONAWANDA — The largest renovation project in the city in 50 years cannot proceed without an upgrade of existing underground storm sewers, the city engineer said Tuesday at a workshop meeting of the Common Council.

Before the 113-year-old former Remington Rand building can meet environmental standards and be converted into a \$17 million residential- commercial project, a storm sewer line must be extended and revamped, Dale W. Marshall told city aldermen.

“The project won’t pass the [environment] test without this,” Marshall said.

Marshall wasn’t asking for much — a 900-foot downtown pipe under Sweeney and Marion streets and related engineering work at a cost of about \$122,000.

The pitch fell on favorable ears, and Council members gave Marshall tentative approval to go ahead and seek the funding. “The Remington Rand project is vitally important for the downtown,” said Council President Brett M. Sommer.

Mayor Lawrence V. Soos couldn’t attend the workshop meeting, but Jeffrey N. Mis, his executive assistant, said the mayor is fully behind the project. The long-abandoned building at 184 Sweeney St. is in a prime location facing the Erie Canal and has been eyed as a key revitalization project since 2003.

Developer Anthony M. Kissling, who owns properties in Buffalo and New York City, is waiting for the green light for his plan to convert the 160,000- square-foot building into more than 50 loft apartments, a restaurant, an incubator for high-tech firms and a boat museum.

“This [storm sewer project] is 100 percent for the city, and Kissling benefits, too,” Marshall added.

The Rand building occupies about half of a seven-acre area downtown that experiences heavy flooding during extremely wet weather. The storm sewer upgrade will alleviate the flooding, Marshall said.

“We have an existing problem with storm water backing up,” Sommer agreed, “and the Remington Rand project will add to the problem.”

Kissling has already received financial help for the project, including a \$1 million state grant, through the Restore New York program, and \$400,000 a year in Niagara County tax breaks. He is waiting on final environmental approval.

Marshall said that his department can start work on the storm sewers in the next couple of weeks and that the Rand project could get under way before the end of the year.

Kissling said he plans to build 51 two-bedroom lofts ranging in size from 1,500 to 2,200 square feet. The development will also include a conference area and rooftop garden.

The commercial area will be designed for start-up businesses run by people involved in such work as computer design and other high-tech pursuits, photography and consulting work.

Marshall sees the development, practically next to the Erie Canal, as the centerpiece and catalyst for promoting downtown North Tonawanda as “a boating destination.”

Even though the annual Canal Fest attracts many of boaters throughout the United States and Canada , the downtown Erie Canal area is still a largely untapped tourist attraction, Marshall said.

Built in 1895, the red brick building has a storied history. The original building housed Power House No. 4 of the Buffalo and Niagara Falls Electric Railway Co. It was bought by a company owned by J. H. Rand Sr. The Herschell-Spillman company, which would become the largest manufacturer of carousels in America, moved into the building in 1899.

In 1951, Remington Rand produced the world’s first mainframe computer for the U. S. Census Bureau. The building shut down in the mid-1970s and sat idle until Kissling unveiled his project in 2006.