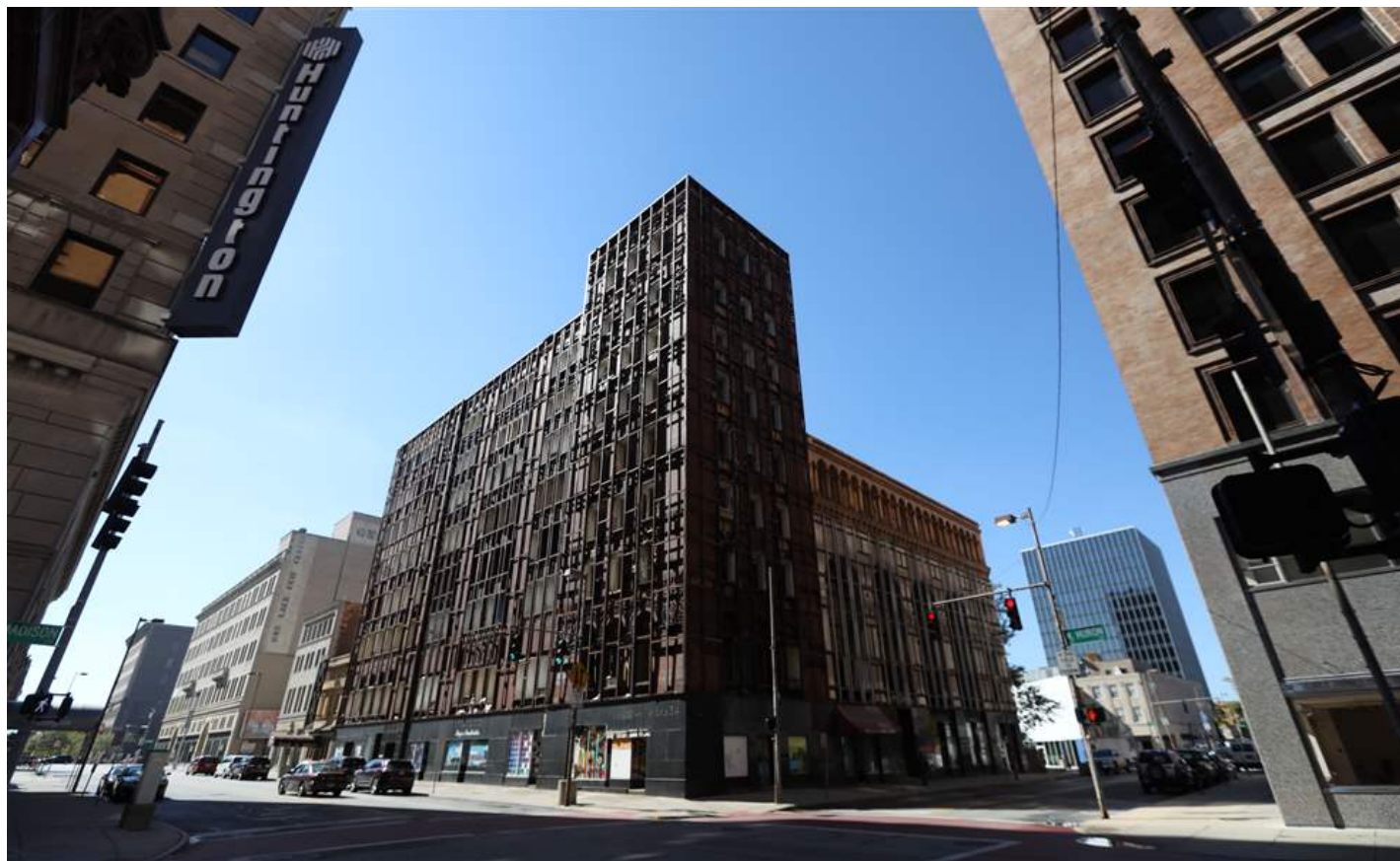


## Toledo City Council reviews Nasby Building sale, setting \$4 million aside

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BY IGNAZIO MESSINA

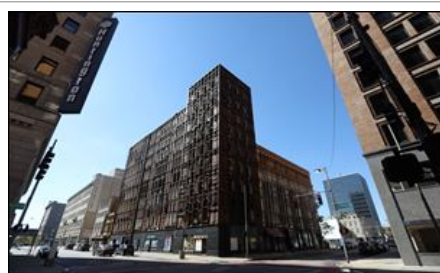
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The Nasby Building in downtown Toledo.

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The Nasby Building in downtown Toledo.

Toledo City Council Tuesday reviewed plans to sell the blighted Nasby Building downtown, lock up \$4 million in an escrow account to pay off the debt on a different downtown building, and hire two law firms to sue opioid manufacturers and suppliers for the harm the addiction epidemic has caused in the city.

The three separate ordinances were debated during council's 2 p.m. agenda review and could be approved next week at its regular meeting.

The Hicks-Hudson administration wants council to approve selling the city-owned vacant building at the southwest corner of Huron Street and Madison Avenue to a company called Nasby LLC for \$10. If the company has not completed renovations into a planned mixed-used development with commercial, residential, and office space within five years, it must pay the city \$250,000.

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The deal also requires the city to acquire the adjacent properties at 611 and 617 Madison Ave. — which includes the bus station on the east side of North Erie Street owned by the Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority — and include those in the sale to Nasby LLC, according to a Toledo City Council ordinance.

Councilman Peter Ujvagi said the city for "practically 20 years" and during multiple mayoral administrations, let the building deteriorate through neglect and vandalism.

"I am hopeful this is finally the deal that can make this happen," he said.

Mr. Ujvagi also asked for details on the developer and the proposed plans for the building.

Council also could vote next week to set aside \$4 million — which has been incorrectly sitting in the city's capital improvement fund — and use it to pay down the city's debt on what is left from a \$7.47 million bond lent in 1995 to Macy's Apartments LLC, later known as LaSalle Apartments LLC.

The city owes \$4.25 million on the building.

City officials revealed in September that there is \$9 million unappropriated in Toledo's capital improvement fund. A letter from city Law Director Adam Loukx initially said \$4 million of that amount was earmarked for the Macy's debt, but a day later he and Mayor Paula Hicks-Hudson said there was nothing on paper that restricted that money for just that debt.

The city of Toledo sold bonds in the late 1990s to help finance the Macy's redevelopment. The city received \$4.53 million when the building was sold in 2014 since it was the first lien holder.

Mr. Loukx said the money should have been deposited into the city's general fund years ago.

The proposed legislation would move the \$4 million to the city's general fund and then into an escrow account.

"This allows us to retire that debt ... [and] get that off the books today," he said.

Also Tuesday, council reviewed the mayor's proposal to hire Climaco, Wilcox, Peca & Garofoli Co., LPA; and Napoli Shkolnik PLLC to sue for opioid-related costs.

The law firms represent several other cities, including Dayton and Parma, Ohio, in similar suits "arising out of the alleged fraudulent and negligent marketing and distribution of prescription drugs including hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, methadone, and related to the opioid epidemic effecting this community," council's ordinance said.

It is a retainer agreement mandating the law firms are only paid if they are successful in court, Mr. Loukx said.

On Aug. 28, 2017, Toledo mayoral candidate Wade Kapszukiewicz, the Lucas County treasurer, said the city should join a lawsuit against opioid manufacturers and suppliers.

Mr. Kapszukiewicz, an unendorsed Democrat, announced his stand at a news conference outside the Lucas County Courthouse where he was joined by a couple who lost their son to heroin addiction that began with the use of prescription drugs.

Mr. Kapszukiewicz also called for creation of a regional opioid response team including Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa counties.

"The mayor is once again trying to make up for lost time," Mr. Kapszukiewicz said Tuesday. "While I applaud her finally landing on the right side of the issue, just like pursuing Amazon HQ2 and declaring Lake Erie impaired, it shouldn't take an election for her to show leadership."

City spokesman Carrie Hartman last month said Mayor Hicks-Hudson asked the city law department to research the city's legal options and was also working with Ohio Mayors Alliance for more than a year to promote legislative action. Ms. Hartman also said the mayor was working with Cities Thrive Coalition, a national organization made up of 185 American cities that aims to tackle addiction and substance abuse problems through comprehensive mental health programs and awareness.

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