

London City Hall
300 Dufferin Avenue
London, Ontario

To the Mayor and Members of London City Council:

RE: Requests for Rezoning at 50 King Street and 499 Ridout Street

Although I've been warned by every City of London staff member or Counsellor I know that this development will go through more or less as proposed, I'm writing in the hope that some significant changes in the design can be made and that some of the zoning requests will be refused.

It is important that whatever is built next to our the historic Court House respect the heritage building. Its western half comprises the oldest building still standing in the city. Its castellated style reflects its British founders, and its original importance as the governing site of London and the huge London District, embodying most of western Ontario, was indicated by its location, allowing it to be seen as one approached London along any branches of the Thames, the main mode of transportation at the time of its building. Thus it was responsible for founding our city, ensuring its growth, determining its character, and overseeing the early development of the lands to the east and west and north to the Bruce peninsula. It's significance has been recognized in its designation as a National Heritage Site.

There are many ways in which a building on the location of the proposed high rises, even one higher than the Court House, could indicate respect for its estimable neighbour:

1. By avoiding the impression of dwarfing the heritage structure by building
 - a. an excessively high adjacent structure,
 - b. a podium higher than the heritage building,
 - c. allowing the newer building to appear more prominent at street level by projecting further forward.
2. By setting the Bstoreys above the podium several feet back from the edge of the podium.
3. By muting the colour(s) of the new building.
4. By avoiding irregularities in the profile of the new structure that attract the eye to its surface.

The proposal currently under consideration, while potentially an interesting and effective design in a different setting, instead works here to disparage the historic icon.

I realize -- and hope -- that the design currently displayed on the rezoning request may not represent the final form of the proposed development; it can serve as illustration of what to avoid when building next to the City's most important heritage site. The excessive height of

the proposed towers overwhelm the Court House -- and their riverside surrounding. The visual impact of the large white squares which define the building's surface and give interest and form to the currently proposed buildings make the features of the Court House appear like those of a tiny toy.. The suggested extension of the building to the sidewalk and a higher podium would also emphasize the skyscraper's greater mass, especially when perceived from ground level. Moreover, the building's extension towards the river effectively hides the view of the courthouse from the south branch of the river. Despite the developer's rumoured intention to produce a careful restoration of the Court House, the design currently shown for the King Street location seems to be an exercise in belittling it.

For these reasons, I strongly oppose the requests for rezoning that would allow the podium to be taller than the Court House and to extend to the sidewalk. I would also like to see the towers reach to a less excessive height and to possess facades that appeared less showy but more elegant.

Thank you for reading this rather long submission and for considering these points.

Respectively Submitted,

Nancy Z. Tausky

Heritage Consultant

Author: *Victorian Architecture in London and Southwestern Ontario: Symbols of Aspiration* (with Lynne D. DiStefano, Univ. of Toronto Press); *London: From Site to City* (Broadview Press)