

London, Ontario N6A 1X3
June 10, 2024

Planning and Environment Committee, City of London
300 Dufferin Avenue
London, Ontario N6A 4L9

RE: Proposed Vinyl Railings at 332 St. James Street

To the Mayor and Members of the Planning and Environment Committee,

As a resident of the Bishop Hellmuth Heritage Conservation District and a homeowner arranging for the restoration of my own front porch along the lines prescribed in the HCD Guidelines for the area, I am disturbed by my neighbour's expressed plans to install the vinyl railing submitted to Council for approval. I know, from my many years spent as a Professional Heritage Consultant how much thought and effort goes into preparing the guidelines for a Heritage Conservation District. Recommendations as to the importance of such issues as porch styles and materials are not made lightly nor are they made to affect areas that are not important for the public experience of a neighbourhood (e.g., back porches). Home buyers and owners in an HCD should be able to depend on respect for those guidelines as a means of retaining the definitive qualities that make the neighbourhood a unique, inviting place for residents and visitors.

Vinyl is not an appropriate material for prominent use on the facades of the houses in our HCD. Even if painted, it cannot mimic wood with consistent success. It has a harder, less subtle, texture, and it reflects light in a harsher, less layered and varied way.

Moreover, the shape of the balusters proposed for use at 332 St. James Street is inappropriate for porches in our neighbourhood, which are products of the Edwardian Classical period. I am consistently impressed, when walking around the neighbourhood, by the variety of ways various balusters echo their Classical forerunners and also by the imaginative ways in which various homeowners have painted the balusters so as to bring out aspects of their shapes. The proposed baluster design for 332 St. James Street is more reminiscent of the legs found on Colonial Revival family room tables.

I am well aware that many members of our current Council are, at best, sceptical about the merits and importance of heritage elements in our City. Even if personally uninterested in the City's history and its heritage features, they should recognize the power its irreplaceable heritage has in giving London variety, aesthetic interest, the ability to attract tourists, and a sense of the city's uniqueness.

Thank you for considering these arguments.
Nancy Z. Tausky