

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

11. Heritage Building Retention - Old Victoria Hospital Lands

- Susan Bentley, Chair, Heritage London Foundation (34 Mayfair Drive) – advising that she provided a communication which is listed in the Planning and Environment Committee Added Agenda; hoping to sum up some of what other people said tonight; noting that she was going to listen very carefully and encourage the Committee to approve of the statements of other members of the community; indicating that she, personally, and most of the Board of the Heritage London Foundation, believe very strongly that all four of these buildings are highly valuable to the community of SoHo itself and to the community of London, not just for their history of hospital use, but the potential for very very exciting development; advising that the reuse of the buildings is what they would passionately support; noting that the Heritage London Foundation, itself, believes massively in adaptive reuse; indicating that there is a huge chance here to make a very significant development; outlining that, in her letter, she refers to the Distillery District in Toronto, there are tons of very exciting examples all over the Province of reuse of exciting old buildings; and, encouraging the Committee to support the London Advisory Committee on Heritage's recommendation to retain all four of these important buildings and, down the road, to keep the Hill Street buildings as well as they are also significant examples of very useful architecture.
- Alice Gibb, Member, SoHo Community Association (19-374 Simcoe Street) – indicating that she is a local historian; speaking to preserving these buildings; noting that her favourite is the old Medical School because we definitely need meeting space in SoHo, we have no places to hold any events that are more than maybe 50 people; indicating that there is a gymnasium in that building and a library; and, reiterating that those are her main points in preserving the buildings for reuse.
- Cheri McLeod, President, SoHo Community Association – indicating that everyone will speak to the history, but her job is to speak to the present and future of the SoHo; advising that she started a list, a few months ago, of all of the resources that they need in SoHo and she made a list of everything that the hospital buildings now offer; advising that a lot of the buildings are still in use, the daycare centre is active every day; noting that it is one of the largest daycares in London, serving 270 children in London a day; noting that the daycare has been there for over 30 years; advising that, in some of the other buildings, there are martial arts groups booking space, there are Western University courses in there right now; reiterating that these buildings are not empty, they are not being mothballed, at least not the buildings on Hill Street; advising that the buildings on Hill Street are being used on a regular basis. *(Secretary's Note: Ms. McLeod showed a video at the meeting.)*
- Benjamin Vasquez, 11-416 English Street – indicating that he is the Chair of the London East Historical Society; advising that he has a couple of different angles that he is coming at these buildings from, but every one of those angles suggests to him that these buildings need to be saved; outlining that the first angle is that, over the past several months, he has developed quite the interest in the work of Watton Blackwell, a very important local architectural firm from the early 20th century; noting that many of the buildings that we are talking about today are from that firm; indicating that it is a firm for which, we in the City, do not have enough general recognition; pointing out that the second historical significance in that, to the best of his knowledge, there are heritage people in this building who can most certainly correct him on this if he is wrong, but to the best of his knowledge, the building on the corner of Waterloo Street and South Street is the only surviving building in London built for the University of Western Ontario that is not on the current campus; advising that most of the buildings associated with that Institution's time are closer to Downtown, the Institutions' Victorian history have been demolished and that is, to the best of his knowledge, the only remaining such structure; indicating that there is an urban streetscape issue here because of the fact that these buildings on South Street comprise an incredible architectural collection, especially, previously, with the main building, but even as they exist today, they are a strong

collection of structures that create a sense of place and create a sense of place unique within London; pointing out that they have already lost significant chunks of the South Street hospital complex, we have lost the Victorian hospital; noting that that happened in the 1940's; indicating that we have lost the main building which was an impressive art deco structure; advising that we need to stop losing elements of our heritage over and over; indicating that time is very much on our side, if we have a proposal for the structure that is going to take three months or six months or a year longer in order to do the project right, then he would much rather see something done on the property that is careful, that takes time and retains the heritage structures; outlining that, as a City we have been reasonably good over the past years paying attention to the history within the Downtown core but there are often oversights regarding history out in the neighbourhoods; advising that history does not just happen Downtown, history has happened across this City, history has happened in Wortley Village, history has happened in Old East and this is one of those instances where we have a really impressive heritage structure that is not Downtown, that is out in the neighbourhoods and therefore, where people are living; advising that it is an opportunity to have heritage be an integral part of people's daily lives so that their understanding of the City that they live in is informed by that City's past; suggesting that the buildings on South Street be preserved; and, advising that there are very strong mid-century modern arguments for preserving the Hill Street buildings but the streetscape on South Street absolutely needs to be preserved.

- Maggie Whalley, President, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, London Region (39-250 North Centre Road) – advising that she provided a communication which is listed in the Planning and Environment Committee Added Agenda; indicating that they feel very strongly that all four of these heritage buildings should be conserved; noting that she is referencing the Colborne building, the War Memorial Children's Hospital, the Gartshore Nurses' Residence and the Health Services building; outlining that these were all identified in the Cultural Heritage Assessment of the Secondary Plan of 2011 as having significant architectural and cultural importance; indicating that this has also been underlined by the fact that their priorities were raised on the *Inventory of Heritage Resources*; indicating that two subsequent reports and studies and advice from the London Advisory Committee on Heritage have underlined their importance; outlining that the reports exist and the criteria have been met for these high priorities; advising that she would like to know why these heritage values are now being put aside; believing that the Committee knows that heritage value lies not only in design value, but in historical association and contextual importance; noting that these last two make up what they call a cultural landscape; advising that a cultural landscape tells our story; pointing out that cultural landscapes are becoming increasingly seen as valuable resources in regeneration initiatives in Cities, Main Street being one example; advising that regeneration is a relatively new maxim, it is part of the whole recycle, reuse and repurpose sequence that is of such importance in today's environmentally aware world; indicating that we know that there are conservation and repurposing costs involved in keeping this built landscape but these have to be looked at in the context of the overall costs; outlining that, if these are weighed against demolition and rebuilding costs, they usually play out to be between five and ten percent of total project costs; expressing that this sudden deadline is forcing the City's hands; noting that the five million dollars that is being offered is, in fact, encouraging the City to demolish; understanding that the RFP process is not yet complete and the market viability of keeping these buildings has surely not been adequately explored; urging the Committee to use your imagination; pointing out that numerous studies, existing projects and their own experience have shown that heritage architecture can enhance and enliven a development, which on this important and appealing riverside site will only make it more attractive to buyers; indicating that they can avoid the word that she coined the other day, a "blandscape" of look-alike, dull and infinitely replicable developments which do not say anything about London's own unique story; advising that heritage buildings are landmarks which help to give identity and stability; and, indicating that heaps of wasted building rubble with a few token architectural elements stuck on to new buildings will most assuredly not do this.

- Delta McNeish, Pastor, Beth Emmanuel Church – indicating that she has been living in SoHo since 2007 and her purpose for living in SoHo is specifically improving the quality of life for the people who, she feels, are important; advising that buildings are important because, without them, we are not going to get anywhere, we will not do anything significant to our culture; asking that consideration be given to saving these buildings, not just for the historic significance, the heritage significance but for people’s significance; outlining that the significance that she is referring to at this point in time is the significance of people’s lives who have been demolished by drugs, demolished by lifestyles that are very very detrimental to themselves and the community; having these buildings in our community speaks well for us as humans, it speaks well for us in terms of our mental structure, our spiritual structure and all of the other structures that we function on; having the ability to save these buildings is in your hands, and, like others, she would like to implore the Committee tonight to save the buildings; and, indicating that they need a rehab building in SoHo, we need a place where we can encourage these people whose lives are really depreciated by drugs and an illicit lifestyle.
- John Manness, 13 Bloomfield Drive – indicating that he is the past Chair of Heritage London Foundation, a Member of ACO London Region and a Member of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage; indicating that demolition is permanent so making that decision should not be a light decision, particularly in this area, this project that we are looking at tonight; advising that it is a substantial project and you have already heard from the community and heard from the heritage folks, which represents two of the circles that was in the staff presentation that was shown earlier in the meeting; addressing the financial side, his understanding is that there is some money available for the demolition of the buildings; noting that he is not sure how restricted or how open that money is; enquiring as to whether or not it is only available for demolition or can it be used for rehabilitation of the heritage buildings on this property; outlining that the value of five million dollars is relatively small; noting that he is cheap and would hate to just throw away five million dollars but, on the other hand, this project is a significant project which will involve much more expense than that; advising that he would far rather have it done right than in a hurry; pointing out that, when we look at the cost of retaining the buildings at approximately \$700,000 to \$900,000 a year, the cost to pay that, by the City of London, over a couple of years to allow for reasonable thought to go into this major project in an up and coming neighbourhood in the City is not a huge cost; expressing support for all of the notions that have been made at the meeting; and, providing perspective on the financial side.
- Hazel Elmslie, 42 Palace Street – indicating that she is a Member of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage and is also on the Executive of a Community Association, but she would like to make perfectly clear that the following remarks are her own and do not reflect on the other organizations that she is involved with; indicating that, without a doubt the destruction of the buildings on this block is a very important decision for City Council; outlining that, as mentioned in other presentations, these buildings represent a significant architectural, scientific, educational, medical, social and cultural part of London’s heritage; advising that her position is that the streetscape on the north side of South Street be maintained and as the significance of the south side of Hill Street has barely been recognized until very recently, she requests that a full heritage study be conducted on them immediately; understanding that this recommendation was prepared by staff as the City may lose five million dollars from the Province if it is not allocated soon; enquiring as to whether or not the City has approached the Province to find out if the deadline can be extended; further enquiring as to whether or not the City has approached the Province to find out if the earmarked funds can be put to another purpose within this overall project; also enquiring that, if the Province will not negotiate, is the loss of five million dollars that significant in the whole scheme of this redevelopment; advising that the public needs to hear the debate on this; asking the Committee to remember that all of these buildings were built before publicly funded health care was available; outlining that the City may own the land and the London Health Sciences Centre may manage the buildings, but it was the citizens of London who designed them, who built them, who paid for them and who used them; pointing out that when she drives by South Street now, she does not mourn the loss of the buildings but the loss of our cultural heritage in its many forms; indicating that if we

further denigrate this heritage by removing almost all of the South Street streetscape, not enough will be left to reinforce our collective memory; relating to the Hill Street properties, it beggars the imagination that this proposal would see the light of day without proper due diligence in the form of a heritage study; advising that the fact that a study was not done on these properties underlines how little of our own history we actually know and how easy it is to lose it; requesting that, for the sake of those pioneers, both scientists and patients, who developed the cobalt bomb and the groundbreaking treatment for polio, among other childhood diseases seldom seen today in North America, right there on Hill Street, give these buildings the consideration that they deserve; and, requesting the Committee to please reject this proposal.

- Gary Smith, 141 Meadowlily Road South –addressing this from a number of different angles, from the Community Neighbourhood Association direction, he thinks it is very important that the Committee sees the numerous members of the community here and the numerous members of this neighbourhood; pointing out that the President of the Community Association has addressed you with regard to the importance of the concerns that they see about this setting, this place, it's retention and it's protection; coming from where he comes from in this City, those are extremely important values; noting that his Neighbourhood Association exists for the specific purpose of the protection and preservation of the heritage and natural features of our area; indicating that he is not sure how many Committee Members have been a part of either forming a Neighbourhood Community Association or what is involved in the maintenance of it; noting that there is a lot of work and he really wants to celebrate Cheri and the SoHo Community Association for how far they have come over the course of the time that he has watched the development of that Neighbourhood Association; indicating that, given the fact that The London Plan and the many years that have been spent working on strengthening neighbourhoods and the value that you place, supposedly, on Community Associations and their voice, he would say that there is an important principle at stake here; pointing the Committee to another piece of actual physical evidence, not sure how many of you have seen the newly rehabilitated Meadowlily Bridge, but, what he really would have liked to have shown you is the old Meadowlily Bridge before it was rehabilitated because whenever you saw that bridge in that state, you would never guess that it could look like the way it looks today; noting that it was covered with a chain link fence, it was covered with rust, it looked like a derelict bridge that basically needed to be torn down; indicating that he is sure that the retention of old buildings and old structures is questionable in the part of some people, but if you walk out there today, he can tell you exactly what it is that you will find – a beautiful setting, a park, more or less, more than a setting than it was before, that is a community gathering place and a place that people feel excited and happy to be a part of and participate in; advising that he thinks that is what some of these people are seeking for, is that kind of identity and that kind of purpose for this place; urging this Committee to reject the proposal by staff and retain these buildings; underlining the importance of not just the individual buildings but what has been said by a number of people here and that is that represents a streetscape, many of them are gone from the City of London; pointing out that he first moved to the City of London when there was still a Talbot streetscape and not a façade on the side of a sports building; remembering exactly what those buildings looked like and what character they had; outlining that he is not exactly sure that that character has been retained by the present use; believing that these buildings could be repurposed; and, wondering about the questions that other people have asked about whether or not these funds could be basically utilized in another manner other than demolition.
- Sandra Miller, Member, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, London Region and Founder, Forest City Modern (32 Upper Avenue) – indicating that she resides in a mid-century modest home; advising that she provided a communication which is listed in the Planning and Environment Committee Added Agenda; showing photographs because she is guessing that the Committee Members do not know the buildings very well and you have probably never been inside them unless you had children in daycare there; pointing out that she is quite disturbed by the Province and the hospital ostensibly paying us to destroy heritage buildings; noting that, thanks to the rushed demolition discussion and the deadline that we seem to be facing, that is kind of what it boils down to; pointing out that, if this money was not, as she understands it, is strictly earmarked for demolition and abatement, if it was not strictly earmarked for demolition, would we be

having this rushed conversation; noting that the answer is probably not; enquiring that, if the money could be used for abatement, rehabilitation and/or mothballing, would we be having this conversation in such a stressed timeline; regarding the Hill Street buildings, in particular, which is what she is going to be talking about, as it is her area of expertise, this contiguous World War II streetscape is fairly unique, it may be the only streetscape of its kind that she knows of in London as opposed to individual buildings; outlining that it was not, as everyone has mentioned, given consideration under the mandate for the 2011 Tausky report, which has been the basis for all of their discussions to do with heritage retention and/or demolition since then; wondering whether that was simply done out of a lack of awareness and understanding of the heritage value of such architecture, whether it was planned to keep these buildings that have subsequently changed or some other reasons we may never know; advising that, until recently, few buildings of the post WWII period have been included and evaluated in the City of London's heritage inventory; noting that that is changing now; pointing out that despite the fact that some of these buildings are now seventy years old, there is no official timeline at which a building can become heritage listed or designated, we can build something tomorrow and have it heritage designated because of its value, its historical or architectural value; advising that buildings that are seventy or sixty years old are getting to the point where they are quite significant architecturally and historically; indicating that, unfortunately, they might not last long enough to become venerable which is how we often think of the South Street streetscape; noting that the buildings also have not had any architectural evaluation of any kind; advising that, nonetheless time marches on and we are now much more aware of these buildings, their history, the architectural appreciation of them and so hopefully they will continue to be added to the heritage inventory and indeed designated; indicating that Susan Gregory, who is the Director of the child care centre, has written a very moving and significant letter that addresses the history of that service and building and she hopes that you will take the time to read it; noting that, unfortunately, Mrs. Gregory was not able to be here tonight to speak to you in person; pointing out that Cheri McLeod has also already spoken to the community value of this building and the services that could be used for these buildings; showing some slides and we can take a quick tour through the building; noting that she hopes that it will be helpful and instructive to you; showing a photograph of 385 Hill Street, which is located at the corner of Colborne Street, was built in 1958 as the London and District Crippled Children's Treatment Centre; noting that it was renamed in 1980 as the Thames Valley Children's Centre, which you may know is now part of the Westminster Campus; advising that the building has been home to the Growing Concerns Child Care Centre for over 20 years, in continuous use; pointing out that it is a thriving business and it serves the entire population of London; advising that the building was constructed to allow for six additional stories; pointing out that this is a very solid building; pointing out that the top floor that you see was actually added in 1977 and is not part of the original structure; identifying that there is the allowance here for a further five additional stories; noting that we are talking about urban density and building up, there is room for five more floors; outlining that she does not know if the day care needs it, but they are bursting at the seams; noting that there is bonusing involved as well; indicating that there is no need to demolish or bankroll the abatement, repurposing or mothballing of this building, it is already an exemplary and highly successful adaptive reuse project; advising that it was the largest polio and disability rehabilitation centre of its kind in the country at the time of its construction in 1958-59, serving up to nine counties across Southwestern Ontario; indicating that it was an innovative team based research, treatment and education facility directly affiliated with the War Memorial Hospital behind it; pointing out that there was literally an open connection and obviously the staff there cared for patients at the crippled children's centre; pointing out that it was also affiliated with the UWO Medical School and the Woodeden residential camp in Kilworth, which is still going today as part of the Easter Seals campaign; outlining that it was built mainly as an outpatient clinic but it also had twenty beds for inpatient care, specifically for children with physical disabilities; thinking we have forgotten the scourge of polio in our community and across our country; showing a photograph of the cornerstone of the building which was paid for by over thirty service clubs across Southwestern Ontario including the Rotary Club; noting that the organization is now Easter Seals Ontario; advising that it was built by the people of Southwestern Ontario for the families and children of Southwestern Ontario; showing a photograph of Premier Lesley Frost who was at the opening with ten year old Trina and six year old Victor who assisted with the official opening on June 18, 1959; indicating that Premier Frost is quoted as saying "This is an example of achievement by people in government working together. We lose greatly if the personal element is left out and things are handed over entirely to government."; pointing out that it was built by prominent London architect Peter Tillman, who is the successor firm to the historic Watt and Blackwell firm that designed the historic 1922 War Memorial Children's Hospital and the Health Services building; indicating that it is an outstanding and uncommon example

of mid-century architecture; pointing out that it is the only one with a marina roof that she knows of in the entire London City and possibly the entire London area, a very unusual roofline for London, it is certainly common in the southern United States; reiterating that it is the only one she knows of in London and it is certainly a metaphor for the magic carpet for children that were treated there; showing a photograph of the rear of the building where you can see the turquoise architectural glass panels and you can see the original aluminum sun screens that were installed at the time of the building and they emphasize the horizontality of the design; showing hand painted custom designed Spanish mosaics that were done for the building, they are part of the interior lobby and obviously suited to a children's facility, which it continues to be today; showing four floor linoleum tiles, they are actually quite large, they are three feet by three feet, they are original to the building, they have been there for 55 years and children have been running over them and playing with them for 55 years and they look like that today; advising that the building features triple stair railings, which is unusual, there were obviously children of many different heights and ages and capacities and they all had their own level of stair railings; noting that they are obviously still used today by the day care centre; pointing out that there is floor to ceiling walnut paneling; showing the other Hill Street buildings, the H.A. and W.J. Memorial Library and the Nurses residence and education building; advising that it was built in 1961 as an expansion of the Gartshore complex; indicating that there was also a need for a clinical medical library at the Victoria Hospital site because there was none at the time; advising that the library was a bequest from Dr. William J. Stevenson and named in honour of himself and his brother; noting that both the brothers were prominent London physicians and professors at UWO and Dr. Hugh Stevenson was a Mayor of London for several years and he was also a Member of Provincial Parliament; pointing out that the lobby is floor to ceiling pink marble, heavily grained, it also has pink marble terrazzo flooring and marble mosaic tile; showing a photograph of the reception desk; remarking that she does not know when you were last in an Institutional building with a pink marble reception desk, but there it is; showing the library foyer that also has floor to ceiling marble terrazzo flooring, wall paneling and the library is floor to ceiling walnut paneling which unfortunately has been divided in half into a meeting room and a mail room; pointing out that the story of Mr. Thurber is going to be her closing note; advising that the Holdsworth Auditorium in the Nurses building was named in honour of Ms. Ione Holdsworth, a nurse who cared for Canadian diamond magnate Byron Lee Thurber when he was a patient at Victoria Hospital; advising that in thanks to the excellent care he received, he invited three nurses who had cared for him on a vacation to South Africa where he lived at the time; advising that Ms. Holdsworth was the only one who took the trip and, unfortunately, she died very suddenly in a tragic accident while she was there; and, advising that Mr. Thurber was devastated, appalled and shocked and, of course, left \$50,000 in his will to which the hospital and the School of Nursing named the auditorium in her memory. (See attached photographs.)

- Nancy Tausky, Heritage Consultant – stating a point that is made in both the letter and the report and that is the importance of that South Street streetscape; commending the staff for choosing to recommend the retention of the two buildings that she did argue were the most important in that report and she still thinks that is true; pointing out that, in destroying the Old Nurses Residence and the Medical Building, you are destroying more than just two buildings, you are destroying a wonderful urban streetscape; and, noting that this is a point that has already been very adequately made, but you are also preserving the context that gives the other two buildings a really strong sense of place that can be valuable to the citizens of London, and, also, as we have heard, for the neighbourhood.