

32 Upper Avenue
London, Ontario
N6H 2L4

February 26, 2015

Dear Mr. Chair and Members of the Planning and Environment Committee:

Re: Heritage Value of the Hill Street Buildings at Old Victoria Hospital

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the buildings on Hill Street that are part of the Old Victoria Hospital lands. In addition to supporting the retention and adaptive re-use of the four heritage buildings identified in the 2011 South Street Hospital Cultural Heritage Assessment (Tausky Report), I urge the Committee to also consider the significant historical, architectural, and adaptive re-use success already in play on Hill Street.

The Growing Concern Child Care Centre at 385 Hill Street is a fully functioning, historically and architecturally significant building that successfully transitioned into a thriving daycare centre over 20 years ago and which continues to serve the entire city. 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 re-use project.

This contiguous post-World War II streetscape was never given consideration under the mandate for the Tausky Report which has been the basis for all subsequent built heritage retention and demolition discussion. Whether that was done simply out of lack of awareness and understanding of the heritage value of such architecture, plans to keep those buildings that subsequently changed, or some other reasons - we may never know.

As well, few buildings of the post-World War II period have been evaluated or included in the City of London's Heritage Inventory until recently, despite the fact that some are now 70 years old.

Nonetheless, time marches on and we now have a much greater recognition and appreciation of the architectural, historical, and associative value of this significant built heritage.

These buildings are excellent examples of the post-war Modernism that swept across North America in the mid-20th century, succeeding the classical-influenced Beaux Art

styles that feature so prominently in the South Street streetscape. Heritage conservation organizations have been researching and protecting these more recent buildings beginning as early as the 1970's.

The US National Trust for Historic Preservation has been particularly forward-thinking in embracing the hard-won lessons of the nascent heritage conservation movement of the 1960's. They realize that time marches on and the definition of heritage must evolve to continue protecting built heritage at its most vulnerable middle age - when we are bored with buildings, but before they survive long enough to become venerable.

Following the popular Modernist maxims of "Less is More" and "Form Follows Function" these buildings express the clean lines, elegant forms, and strong horizontality of Mid-Century Modernism's style. The honesty of structure and the mix of traditional materials such as glass, wood, stone, brick and newer materials such as steel, concrete, aluminium, composites, and plywood are well displayed.

The innovative designs and building technologies of the post-war period are incorporated into the aesthetics and the construction of the Hill Street buildings much as those of an earlier era were incorporated into the South Street buildings.

Their architectural details are expressed quite differently than previous styles and it can be difficult to compare them with older buildings. They speak different languages but once one is attuned to the new vocabulary, these buildings speak volumes.

Thank you for your interest,
Sandra Miller

(attch.)

385 Hill Street

Former London and District Crippled Children's Treatment Centre (1958)

The Growing Concern Child Care Centre has occupied the building since the early 1990's after the by then re-named Thames Valley Children's Centre moved to Westminster / New Victoria Hospital. This is a highly successful example of a building *specifically* designed for children *still* being used by children - an adaptive re-use match made in heritage heaven!

Historical Value

- First paediatric polio/disability rehabilitation centre of its kind in the province; largest in the country at the time of construction; served up to nine counties across South West Ontario
- Paid for by 33 service clubs with businesses and other organizations as well as thousands of individual donors
- By 1977, when the building was expanded, 2400 children used its services that year

"This is much more than just a treatment centre," [then Premier Leslie Frost] said at the official opening. "It is a training ground for doctors and a field for research into crippling diseases." LFP, June 18, 1959

Architectural Value

- Designed by prominent London architect Peter Tillmann whose firm was successor to the historic Watt & Blackwell firm that designed the adjoining 1922 War Memorial Children's Hospital building and the 1920 Health Services Building
- Built by noted London construction firm Hayman and Sons (in business since 1872, now 5th generation)
- Outstanding and uncommon example of classic International Style Modernism; **after 200 Queens Avenue, this may be the most significant example in the London area**
- **Unique marina canopy roof** - only one of its kind that I know of in the London region
- Turquoise architectural glass alternating with large ribbon windows - classic Modernist hallmark that emphasizes horizontality of the design
- South-facing facade features original aluminum brise-soleil sun shades over the windows
- Lobby features large **custom-designed, hand-painted tile mosaics imported from Spain**
- Playroom features four large 2 x 3 ft **custom-designed, decorative linoleum inlay motifs**
- Lobby also features floor-to-ceiling walnut panelling, marble terrazzo floors, original double stair railings, ceiling light fixtures
- Constructed to allow for **up to six additional storeys**, only one floor was added in 1977
- Underground steam pipes were installed to keep walkways free of ice & snow
- Original architectural drawings held at Western Archives

373 and 351 Hill Street

Victoria Hospital Nurses' Residence & Education Building and H.A. & W.J. Stevenson Medical Library (1961)

Architectural Value

- Designed by noted London architect Charles H. Gillin who studied under renowned American architect Frank Lloyd Wright (Gillin's work includes the original Highland Golf Club, former Greyhound Bus Station, Ginsberg House in Old South, Taylor House in Old North)
- Nurses' Residence & Education Building lobby features heavily grained, floor-to-ceiling pink marble panelling as well as marble mosaic tile and marble terrazzo floors
- Stevenson Medical Library lobby features heavily grained floor-to-ceiling marble walls and marble terrazzo floors
- Library reading room is fully panelled in floor-to-ceiling walnut
- Exterior is pre-cast panels and granite with large windows, bronze railings
- Original architectural drawings held at Western Archives

Historical Value

- Like the older adjoining Gartshore Nurses' Residence, new Victoria Hospital Nurses' Residence & Education Building was home and training grounds for thousands of nurses
- Stevenson Medical Library affiliated with Western University medical school and Victoria Hospital
- Holdsworth Auditorium in the Nurses' Residence & Education Building named in honour of Miss Ione Holdsworth, RN, who cared for Canadian diamond magnate Byron Lee Thurber when he was a patient at Victoria Hospital; in thanks for the excellent care he received, he invited the three nurses who had cared for him to vacation in South Africa where he lived. Miss Holdsworth was the only one who took the trip but she died tragically in an accident during her visit. In his will, Mr. Thurber left \$55,000 to the School of Nursing in her memory and the Auditorium was named in her honour.