

August 21st 2015

Members of the Planning and Environment Committee
City of London
London, Ontario, Canada

To whom it may concern,

As a former resident of the City of London, and former member of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage, I must express my sincere disappointment that the City of London would consider allowing the demolition of the Priority 1 and Priority 2 structures at the properties 505, 507 & 511 Talbot Street.

Having lived in the Cherryhill/Blackfriars area for four years, and having spent much time enjoying downtown London, I think it would be a considerable shame to see these three attractive heritage structures demolished. In my opinion, removing these buildings would seemingly isolate the historic church that is adjacent to the properties. Removing further historic buildings from the Talbot streetscape would change the delightful juxtaposition of historic and new buildings that marks the edge of the downtown core, changing the nature of the streetscape to purely modern high rises. As well, it seems regrettable to consider demolishing three structures that, if they were located a block or two away, would have fallen under the Downtown heritage protection. These buildings are not derelict, they are not abandoned, and until recently one of the buildings was home to a popular pub and restaurant. These buildings have proven that they can be adaptively reused, and that they can serve a purpose.

I came to London in 2010 as a graduate student at Western University, and lived there until the end of 2014. In just those four years I developed a significant passion for the history and architectural treasures of the city, and a deep respect for the individuals that work to preserve it. Having served a nearly two year tenure on LACH, I understand the struggle that often occurs to balance heritage with development. I think there are numerous instances, particularly in recent years, where the city has produced some truly inspired examples of adaptive reuse, or sensitive new growth. However, this project does not appear to be one of those instances, and it would be a shame if in a few years we are left to lament the loss of three more heritage properties.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this matter.

Sincerely,

Kira Westby
Curator, Bulkley Valley Museum
Smithers, British Columbia
Former London resident and LACH member