



Architectural Conservancy Ontario – London Region Branch  
Grosvenor Lodge  
1017 Western Rd  
London, ON N6G 1G5

May 3, 2017

Members of the Planning & Environment Committee:

Tanya Park (chair) – [tpark@london.ca](mailto:tpark@london.ca)  
Maureen Cassidy – [mcassidy@london.ca](mailto:mcassidy@london.ca)  
Jesse Helmer – [jhelmer@london.ca](mailto:jhelmer@london.ca)  
Anna Hopkins – [ahopkins@london.ca](mailto:ahopkins@london.ca)  
Stephen Turner – [sturner@london.ca](mailto:sturner@london.ca)

**Re: File OZ8462 – 560 and 562 Wellington Street**

Dear chair and members of the Planning & Environment Committee,

The London Region Branch of Architectural Conservancy Ontario (ACO) wishes to state its objections to Auburn Developments's proposed 22-storey residential tower on the site of 560 and 562 Wellington Street, London, overlooking Victoria Park, and to the associated proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment application. We encourage the City to insist that the property owner redevelop the property, if it wishes to do so, in accordance with the London Plan and the current zoning by-law.

Our reasons are as follows:

- The proposed building is more than 5 times higher than is currently permitted by the Official Plan, almost 4 times higher than the maximum taking bonusing into account. As a matter of policy, we do not believe that the City should entertain a proposal that is this far outside the bounds of what has been deemed desirable and acceptable by the planning experts who drafted the London Plan and the city councillors who approved it.
- Approval of the proposed development would not seem to be in accordance with Sections 13.1 and 13.3.6 of the city's Official Plan, nor with Policy 4.3 under the West Woodfield HCD Plan. On this point, we respectfully disagree with the findings of the Heritage Impact Assessment report submitted by the proponent. Its shortcomings are self-evident. In the interests of brevity, we will not address those findings in detail in this submission. The adverse impact of this development on the West Woodfield HCD and on Victoria Park would be significant and irreversible.
- To our knowledge, there is no recent precedent in London's core for such a significant departure from Official Plan and HCD Plan principles. It is our understanding that the downtown high-rise development projects approved in recent years have been consistent with Official Plan and HCD Plan principles. According to the March 18, 2015 report of the Urban Design Peer Review Panel, "The subject development if allowed as proposed would be precedent setting in its contravention of existing city policy." The current proposal does not differ materially, in our view, from the proposal on which the 2015 report was based.
- The proposed development is too tall for its location. It would undermine the integrity of the West Woodfield Heritage Conservation District, of which it is a part. It would have an adverse impact on the ambiance of

Victoria Park, a London gem. At 22 storeys, the proposed building would be more than twice as high as the West Woodfield HCD's recommended maximum height for the adjacent City Hall Precinct (8 to 10 storeys for buildings facing Wellington Street, 3 storeys for buildings adjacent to houses on Wolfe Street). The City Hall Precinct is tentatively defined to include the parking lot across Wolfe Street from 560-562 Wellington Street, but to exclude 560-562 Wellington Street itself. The proposed building is almost twice as tall as the tallest buildings (12 storeys) currently situated within approximately 3 blocks of the subject site. We have attached renderings from the proponent's Heritage Impact Assessment document to illustrate the height contrast between the proposed building and its neighbours. We would note that the mid-rise building to the left of the rendering does not appear to actually exist.

- The proposed development is inconsistent with the Ontario Municipal Board's 2015 decision in *CHC MPAR Church Holdings v. City of Toronto*. In that case, the proponent wished to construct a 32-storey building adjacent to a designated property. The OMB determined that respectful separation distance was critical to conserving the heritage attributes of the neighbouring designated and listed properties. The 560-562 Wellington Street site is immediately adjacent to two properties (294 Wolfe Street and 568 Wellington Street) that are designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (as part of the West Woodfield HCD).
- The suggested design and massing are out of character with West Woodfield, a neighbourhood of Victorian homes, and with the other homes bounding Victoria Park.
- This development would set a precedent for inappropriate construction in other London Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs). There is little purpose to HCDs if their architectural heritage value is not to be respected by the City of London. Rules are of no use if exceptions are always granted to anyone who requests one.
- To our knowledge, the impact of this proposal on Victoria Park itself has not been researched. Changes to wind and sunlight patterns may have an adverse impact on vegetation and on public enjoyment of the park.
- The development would set a precedent for other very tall buildings around Victoria Park. Victoria Park is much, much smaller than New York's Central Park (for example). Arguments that compare the two parks are not valid. If Victoria Park were to become surrounded by 22-storey buildings, it and its trees would be deprived of much sunlight. It would no longer be the appealing downtown gathering place that it is today.
- Comparisons of this proposed development to the tall buildings that surround parts of Central Park in New York are inaccurate, in our opinion. Central Park is 4 km long and 800 m wide. Victoria Park is approximately 400 m long and 200 m wide. The proposed building is approximately 38% as high as Victoria Park is wide and 19% as high as Victoria Park is long. A comparable building on the east or west side of Central Park would be 304 m high. A comparable building on the north or south side of Central Park would be 760 m high. The tallest building facing Central Park appears to be 220 Central Park South (under construction: 290 m, 66 storeys when completed). This building is on the south side of the park. Its height is less than 8% of the length of the park. The second tallest building facing the park appears to be the Trump International Hotel and Tower (177 m, 44 storeys). It is situated on the west side of the park, in the extreme SW corner. Its height is 22% of the width of the park and less than 5% of the length of the park. Other buildings facing Central Park appear to be much shorter. In other words, the proposed development at 560-562 Wellington Street is proportionately much higher than even the tallest buildings facing Central Park in New York.

While ACO London supports infill development in the core as per the London Plan, we would suggest:

- A policy of strict adherence to the London Plan, the City's new Official Plan
- Proactive communication of that policy to potential developers in the very early stages of discussions with City planning staff: this would permit developers to minimize unnecessary expense and to focus on their energy on sites that the city has identified as appropriate for development or redevelopment
- Improvement of the process for identifying appropriate land parcels for infill development, including existing vacant lots, parking lots, or sites containing buildings that are not deemed to have cultural, contextual, or architectural merit, and improvement in the approach to communication of those parcels to interested developers
- A special effort to discourage development proposals that may adversely affect West Woodfield's residents and the physical fabric of its Heritage Conservation District
- Implementation of Tall Building Design Guidelines, similar to those in place for the City of Toronto

Sincerely,

Mike Bloxam  
President, London Region Branch  
Architectural Conservancy Ontario

CC:  
Cathy Saunders, City Clerk – csaunders@london.ca

### **Addendum to ACO London Submission to PEC – May 2017**

#### **From the Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act:**

2.6.1 *Significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved.*

2.6.3 Planning authorities shall not permit *development and site alteration on adjacent lands to protected heritage property* except where the proposed *development and site alteration* has been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that the *heritage attributes* of the *protected heritage property* will be *conserved*.

#### **From the Ontario Heritage Act:**

**41.2 (1)** Despite any other general or special Act, if a heritage conservation district plan is in effect in a municipality, the council of the municipality shall not,

- a) carry out any public work in the district that is contrary to the objectives set out in the plan; or
- b) pass a by-law for any purpose that is contrary to the objectives set out in the plan.

**From the January 11, 2017 LACH Report:**

5. Revised Notice of Application by Auburn Developments Inc. re properties located at 560 and 562 Wellington Street

That the following comments of the London Advisory Committee on Heritage, with respect to the application by Auburn Developments Inc., relating to the properties located at 560 & 562 Wellington Street, BE FORWARDED to the Civic Administration for consideration:

- a) the London Advisory Committee on Heritage (LACH) strongly disputes the conclusions of the Heritage Impact Assessment (2016), prepared by Stantec, for the properties located at 560 & 562 Wellington Street; and
- b) the LACH encourages the reassessment of the following matters with respect to compatibility of the proposed application with the West Woodfield Heritage Conservation District Plan guidelines, Victoria Park and the adjacent properties:
  - i) the height of the building;
  - ii) the massing of the building;
  - iii) the setbacks of the building;
  - iv) the design of exterior facades; and,
  - v) shadowing impacts onto adjacent heritage properties.

**From the City of Toronto Tall Building Design Guidelines (March 25, 2013):**

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

The City of Toronto values its heritage properties and requires that they be protected and that new development conserve the integrity of their cultural heritage value, attributes, and character, consistent with accepted principles of good heritage conservation (see Appendix A: Heritage Conservation Principles). Not every property is suitable for tall building development as a result of constraints imposed by its size or by the fact that such development may be incompatible with conserving heritage properties on or adjacent to a development site or within a Heritage Conservation District.

Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs) are special areas dense with heritage properties and a unique historic character. The character and values of HCDs will be conserved to ensure that their significance is not diminished by incremental or sweeping change.

**From Stantec's 2016 Heritage Impact Assessment:**

The image on the next page contrasts the height of the proposed building vis à vis its neighbours. We would note that the mid-rise building to the left of the rendering does not appear to actually exist.

