



May 2, 2017

City of London
300 Dufferin Ave
London, ON. N6A 4L9.

Attention: Chair and Members, Planning and Environment Committee

Re: Q.V. On the Park. 560 Wellington St. Proposal.

Downtown London is the organization that focuses on recruitment and retention of investment and businesses in downtown London, Ontario. We are both the London Downtown Business Association (LDBA) and MainStreet London, a downtown revitalization organization, and our expanded boundary encompasses over 1,160 properties and businesses whose taxable assessment is well over \$1 Billion.

Multi-unit residential buildings, such as the one proposed at 560 Wellington St., benefit the downtown, as well as the wider City of London, on a number of levels. First and foremost, multi-unit residential buildings address a growing demand for new residences in the heart of our city. Second, the addition of a large number of new residents to the downtown, which projects such as 560 Wellington St facilitate, benefits our district by bringing new potential customers to the core, new tax dollars to the City, and a more active streetscape for the neighbourhood. We know that growing the residential population is critical to the continued regeneration effort downtown, and that attracting more residents supports both culture and retail in the district. In fact, we believe, and have significant evidence from our hired real estate advisors, that growing the residential base downtown is critical to supporting the businesses that generate significant tax dollars for the City. An increased downtown population makes good business sense for the entire City of London.

On this, Downtown London has recently engaged the services of LiveWorkLearnPlay (LWLP) - a Real Estate Development and Advisory firm based in Toronto and Montreal - to support our efforts for increased downtown regeneration. As a part of their work, the "Market Assessment" report provided to us in December of 2016 shows that currently the downtown has a population of 7,059 residing within the BIA boundary. A "primary market" of this size alone is not robust enough to adequately support the 2.5 million square feet of retail/commercial space within the greater downtown core area. Simply put, more people living downtown are needed to make our retail/commercial spaces vibrant and successful.

Further, the research contained in the Market Assessment also shows that London is an “end user” market – that is, a market where a residential project likely has to be built in order for a developer to be able to sell units. This is fundamentally different than elsewhere in Ontario (particularly within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) where significant investor/pre-sales occur. As a by-product of this “slower” end-user market, only very well established developers are typically capable of actually completing a build of this magnitude in London due to the financial obligations that are created (a longer-term selling period leading to a longer wait for payoff and ultimately more risk).

Given this background, it is the opinion of Downtown London, that the proposed 560 Wellington St project is an important step forward for the downtown core and that Auburn is one of those developers capable of delivering it given the unique market of London. We are fortunate that Auburn have the desire and the capability to build in London’s downtown, which is also their hometown. As a result of this we are writing today in support of the proposed residential development at 560 Wellington St. Auburn Developments have a proven history of successful residential development not only in London but recently in Kitchener and Waterloo.

From our point of view as the downtown board of management, the project makes good sense for the downtown community. We are well aware that London’s downtown is home to an important heritage conservation district (HCD), and we are very sensitive to the efforts to restore and maintain heritage properties in our area. We deal with heritage conservation every day and are the most active organization in sponsoring and funding its revitalization and reuse in a variety of ways, including arranging site visits for consultations with heritage planners and urban designers, as well as leveraging the City’s Façade Loan, Upgrade to Building Code Loan and Tax Grant programs along with our own About Face Façade Grant programs to support rehabilitation of downtown properties. As a result of this, we have come to recognize the need for balance between the goal to preserve and retain these buildings, and the demand for new urban dwellers that will provide much-needed street-level activation and generate year-round economic activity throughout the district for the benefit of the downtown and all of London.

We believe that the proposed development at 560 Wellington St fits with the vision for the downtown as expressed in the City’s Downtown Plan document, “*Our Move Forward*”. This development addresses the goal of achieving greater intensification in the downtown to give us the density that we know is necessary to sustain our community.

Sincerely,



Janette MacDonald
CEO & General Manager



Gerald Gallacher
Chair, LDBA

Don McCallum
Chair, MainStreet London