



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

Sunday, October 15, 2017

Members of the Planning and Environment Committee:

Tanya Park (Chair) – tpark@london.ca
Maureen Cassidy – mcassidy@london.ca
Jesse Helmer – jhelmer@london.ca
Anna Hopkins – ahopkins@london.ca
Stephen Turner – sturner@london.ca

Sonia Wise – swise@london.ca

Barb Debbert – bdebbert@london.ca

Re: Notices of Application – Commercial Parking Lots at 192-196 Central Avenue, 193-197 Central Avenue, 200 Albert Street (TZ-8802) as well as 324 York Street

Dear Councillors, Ms. Wise, and Ms. Debbert,

The London Region Branch of Architectural Conservancy Ontario (ACO) wishes to provide input regarding the applications for zoning by-law amendments to permit the continued operation of surface parking lots at the above four locations. The application in respect of the first three lots is now before the Planning & Environment Committee. The application in respect of the fourth lot is expected to follow in approximately six weeks.

Developers such as Rygar Properties, Terracorp, Tricar, and others are willing, even anxious, to construct high-rise apartment buildings in downtown London. Heritage buildings and heritage streetscapes are under routine threat from this development pressure. One of the key reasons for this is that owners of the surface parking lots in the downtown core appear unwilling to sell to interested developers. In response, these developers feel that they must purchase and then demolish heritage buildings.

According to a January 15, 2017 article in *The London Free Press*, “Developers in the city who declined to be identified have said they approached Farhi to buy land, but he will not sell.”
(<http://www.lfpress.com/2017/01/15/pressure-may-be-building-but-shmuel-farhi-isnt--yet>)

We encourage the Planning & Environment Committee, and City Council, to put an end to temporary use provisions that encourage land owners to hold on to vacant land and profit from it, thereby steering development pressure to less desirable locations (e.g. with pre-existing buildings) in the downtown core.

In conjunction with SHIFT London and the soon-be-constructed Bus Rapid Transit system, we Londoners must become accustomed to using public transit on a more consistent basis. As ridership increases, service frequency and scheduling will improve. Weaning us from our reliance on downtown parking is one step in this direction. Fewer parking spaces will encourage more public transit users and fewer automobile commuters. With less competition from surface parking lots, developers may become more interested in constructing high-quality parking garages (such as these



primarily US examples: <https://architizer.com/blog/house-of-cars/>) and including more extensive commercial underground parking in proposed developments.

Denial of this zoning application would be a helpful step to encouraging more appropriate downtown development. At the same time, it may help to diminish some of the considerable motor vehicle congestion in the downtown core thus improving quality of life for those who live and/or work downtown.

Thank you for considering our comments. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Mike Bloxam
President, London Region Branch
Architectural Conservancy Ontario

CC:
Cathy Saunders, City Clerk – csaunders@london.ca
Heather Lysynski, PEC Committee Secretary – hlysynsk@london.ca