

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING COMMENTS

3.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MEETING – Demolition Request for Heritage Listed Property – 172 Central Avenue

- Gus Mitsis, part-owner, 172 Central Avenue – advising that he is a Real Estate Investor and has lived in London for fifty years; indicating that, for the past twenty years, he has been active in the core by buying, preserving and maintaining properties, none of which he has demolished; stating that his partners and him have a strong appreciation for local history, architecture and take pride in ownership of their properties; advising that the existing building at 172 Central Avenue is a two and a half storey residential building constructed in 1882 in the Italianate style; indicating that the existing building has been modified and is not entirely in its original form; stating that original front and east porches, documented in the 1907 fire insurance plan have been removed, the entire brick has been painted, the two chimneys are not symmetrical and have been rebuilt to different heights and shapes, the front door, presently on the home, is not original and the wood shutters are replicas with no hardware evident from period style shutters, the front staircase and railings are not original and some of the windows have been replaced with aluminum and vinyl replacement windows; advising that the property is not located in a Heritage Conservation District but is listed on the Heritage Building Inventory; however, not designated; advising that the project that they are proposing for 172 Central Avenue is a multi-unit residential building that has six units; advising that the building will exhibit a replica of the existing Italianate façade and will be two and a half storeys in height; pointing out that architectural elements such as existing decorative soffit brackets, coin corners, circle gable vents, wood shutters, arched windows and formal staircase will be incorporated in the new design and the stately presence of the building will be retained by keeping the same ceiling heights; most importantly a plaque honouring Dr. Oronhyatekha will be erected near the city sidewalk; noting that this plaque will celebrate and inform the public of Dr. Oronhyatekha's life and his admirable achievements and will also have a website address for an in-depth biography on him; indicating that the current conditions of 172 Central Avenue are that the building is constructed using charred timbers, logs and planks salvaged from the Carling Brewery fire in 1879; advising that this was verified by the Heritage Planner during his visit; due to the unconventional methods of construction, the use of salvage materials and many alterations over the years, the building structure has been compromised as stated in the Engineering report; the structural integrity of the building is compromised including, but not limited to, wood, floor joists, wood studs, wood lintels, single brick masonry support for floor joists and beams and roof and ceiling joists; essentially, to retain the existing building, a new building has to be built inside the existing building and in order to achieve this, the exterior of the building has to be shored, both internally and externally so that perimeter walls will not move; stating that this plan raises serious structural safety concerns and does not prevent future issues with the exterior cladding; based on the exterior of the structure and restoration cost estimates retained, demolition and reconstruction is the practical and cost effective solution; over the years, there have been structures in the City of London that were initially intended to be historical preservations but later became replications of the originals, two of the high profile projects that come to mind are the Talbot Streetscape and the Sir Adam Beck estate; these projects demonstrate that while preservation is the preferred method of retaining heritage buildings, replication can also be effective; in both these scenarios, condition, life span and feasibility were the main contributing factors in the replication of these structures; noting that the same contributing factors exist with this structure and are the reasons why they are asking for demolition and reconstruction; given the opportunity to replicate the façade into the new building will allow them to preserve the spirit of the Italianate style and the character of the streetscape; advising that this building has the least amount of detail of any of the Italianate styles, there are no detailed lintels, sills, freeze boards or brick patterns and for those reasons this façade can be replicated with very little difficulty; concluding that the project that they are proposing falls within the scope of the London Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement, it emphasizes infill development which reduces growth costs, is part of a walkable community, is accessible to public transit, helps revitalize the neighbourhood and supports local businesses; stating that multi-unit buildings, whether large or small in scale, benefit the district and the City of London; this project will address the growing demand for residences in the heart of the city and will offer a vibrant, diverse, safe and attractive alternative form of living; advising that their proposal will allow the new 172 Central Avenue and Dr. Oronhyatekha's legacy to stand

out and to stand tall for the next one hundred thirty-six years; respectfully asking the Planning and Environment Committee to recommend in favour of demolition and support for the redevelopment of 172 Central Avenue.

- Peter Mitsis, co-owner, 172 Central Avenue – clearing the air because a lot of social media has been floating around and stating that they are supposedly building a high rise residential development; advising that they are not, it is a six unit walk up style building; indicating that he had the honour and privilege to give the Chief of the Oneida Reserve, her name is Jessica Hill, on Saturday she called him and insisted that she have a tour of the home because she had ancestral ties to the house; advising that her Great-Great-Grandmother, Nellie Martin, Helen Nelly-Martin, who was married to John Smoke, she was Dr. Oronhyatekha's Father's Sister; reading the e-mail because they received it late last night "I am a distant relative of Dr. Oronhyatekha, he was a Nephew of my Great-Great-Grandmother. He was a doctor to the community of the Oneida Nation of the Thames of which I am a member and currently newly elected Chief. I think it would be fitting if he was memorialized by the restoration of the building at 172 Central Avenue in some form. I have been on the inside of the building and understand that it is currently not fit for habitation and not designated as heritage site although it could have and should have been many years ago. Since it is not designated, I think that the ideas of the Mitsis brothers to restore the front of the building to be an original replica of the current building and erect a memorial sign in the front of the home recognizing Dr. Oronhyatekha and his admirable achievements including a website that explains his life would be suffice as recognition. Secondly it would be fitting to memorialize Dr. Oronhyatekha and his years and service to the community doctor to Oneida Nation on the Thames who had family ties to my Father's maternal family. Should the Mitsis brothers be successful in their bid to rebuild and restore the front of the new building to look exactly like the original building, the details of this proposed memorial to Dr. Oronhyatekha-Martin in our community could be discussed at a later date."; Dr. Oronhyatekha was a remarkable individual and made great accomplishments; we all recognize that and we are not taking anything away from the First Nations people, he wants to make that clear; expressing disappointment to himself, his family and to the Chief of the Oneida that the City, based on a knee jerk reaction, after their submission of demolition, all of a sudden ran to the books and dug up all this history when this history was available and he should have been recognized many, many years ago but was not; it is pretty sad to see that all of a sudden he has become important but he was never important twenty, thirty or forty years ago when the history books have all sorts of details with respect to his accomplishments; advising that the focus here is not whether the public will stop and question whether the bricks and mortar are the original to the house but rather what his legacy is and was; this is about recognition and most importantly education; their project to replicate will not take any significant design or legacy from Dr. Oronhyatekha; stating that they are a small family business, they have a remarkable track record with neighbours and tenants; advising that this property was purchased as an investment and therefore has to be feasible just like any municipal project; this is not publicly funded and according to the Heritage Planner, there are no applicable funds for this property; if there are any grants or funds available through the First Nations people, he would encourage any dialogue; they would sit down and discuss that; concluding that he strongly believes that their proposal to replicate the façade as it stands today and erecting plaques and memorials and donation of building materials to the First Nations people for healing and meditation rooms should clearly demonstrate their commitment and appreciation and to our character towards his legacy and towards historical attributes of the structure.
- Jennifer Grainger, President, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, London Branch – advising that she is not going to go over the history and the architectural details of the building again because Mr. K. Gonyou, Heritage Planner, has already done that quite well but she would like to point out that they do believe that this home is a significant historical and architectural gem despite the fact that its interior, at the moment, has been allowed to deteriorate; indicating that at the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, they are not in favour of tearing down our heritage and replacing it with replicas; they are not in favour of façades such as we see downtown hanging on the Bud Centre or what happened to the Adam Beck house; instead they would encourage the City to ask the Mitsis family to please find a way to incorporate the entire house into the development; stating that, in one of her letters to the Planning and Environment Committee, she mentioned that the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario has been endeavouring to find a second engineering opinion on the home's condition; unfortunately, they have not as yet been able to find a Structural Engineer; advising that she is not certain what the time

frame is on this at this point, but at any rate what she said in her letter was that they would ask the Planning and Environment Committee to please defer making a decision until they could get another opinion on this structure; however, what they really would like the Planning and Environment Committee to do is to turn down the demolition request this afternoon and to please ask the family to find a way to save the building in its entirety.

- Patricia Cullimore, 156 Central Avenue – advising that her property is near the subject building; indicating that her home is one hundred eighteen years old so it is also a period building and it still bears the original street signs; noting that she has resided at this address for over thirty-five years; expressing support for the demolition of the building at 172 Central Avenue provided the newly constructed building preserves the character of the residential homes in their neighbourhood; stating that she has known the owner of 172 Central Avenue, the applicant for the demolition, for twenty years as he owns the property next door to her at 154 Central Avenue; advising that he has been a responsible landlord, which, in their neighbourhood, is a rare thing; indicating that he renovated his properties at 154 and 143 Central Avenue going to great lengths to preserve the period facades with respect to decorative woodwork on the gables, gingerbread trim, railings and skirting; advising that it was she who first suggested that he approach the owners of 172 Central Avenue when she learned that they were interested in selling; knowing the original intention of the applicant was to renovate the house and turn it into apartments and, with that intention, he spent several months last Fall and Winter gutting the house; it was only after the interior had been shelled out that structural weaknesses such as charred joists supporting first and second floors, which had been repurposed from a building previously exposed to fire were discovered which brings us here today; a key reason this demolition is so contentious is the historical relevance of 172 Central Avenue; as she mentioned earlier, she has resided at 156 Central Avenue for over thirty-five years; indicating that there is no heritage plaque on the house and the heritage designation for their neighbourhood is still being decided which begs the question that how long does it take to get a heritage designation; the house is over one hundred twenty years old; wondering why are we only having this discussion now on the eve of a potential demolition; to be consistent with Mayor Matt Brown's position to reinvigorate the core, we need feet on the street, which in other words means people living downtown and as it is quite obvious that the house at 172 Central Avenue is unoccupied, it has attracted an unprecedented number of homeless individuals to their neighbourhood, some of whom are armed with knives, who trespass on their properties, tear through their trash and discard their used syringes; encouraging the City to be expedient in their decision making so that the progress of 172 Central Avenue can occur.
- Stacia Loft, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory – bringing greetings on behalf of Chief R. Donald Maracle and Tyendinaga Mohawk Council; thinking of important and influential Indigenous people there is a long list of deserving individuals, Dr. Oronhyatekha is one of them; Oronhyatekha, or Peter Martin Junior was born in 1841 to Peter Martin of Six Nations and Lydia Loft of Tyendinaga; born into prominent and influential families from both communities, he was destined to be a forward thinking individual and a person active in supporting and advocating for his people; during his early years Oronhyatekha was educated at the Mohawk Institute for 1851 to 1854; he departed from the Institute as a bright and ambitious young man; shortly after his time there Oronhyatekha was influenced by adults in his life who showed him that further education was necessary for him to be successful; he went on to attend Oxford University and eventually graduated from the University of Toronto as a Medical Doctor; becoming licensed in May of 1867; it is important to keep in mind the environment in which Oronhyatekha obtained such an education; he faced many obstacles including racism and unjust treatment under legislation at the time where the *Indian Act* restricted many of them from participating in or benefitting from things like higher education or even Council meetings such as this; after becoming licensed, Dr. Oronhyatekha did serve the community of Tyendinaga for a period of time as the attending physician; around this time he met and married Eleanor Ellen Hill and had six children, only two of whom survived to adulthood; his son William Ackland Heywood went on to become a physician just like his father and his daughter, Catherine Evangeline Karakwineh "Benna", was involved in the orphanage on Fosters Island which is just adjacent to the Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory on the Bay of Quinte; Dr. Oronhyatekha went on to achieve other great accomplishments in the areas of business and politics; in 1872 he was elected Chairman of the Grand General Indian Council of Ontario an organization formed of Anishinaabe/Haudenosaunee communities

in Ontario; he was active and voiced in the Council's positions on the injustices against his Indigenous brothers and sisters; in the late 1800's, Dr. Oronhyatekha was busy in London and Toronto, having a home at 172 Central Avenue right here in London; his efforts focused him on the Independent Order of Foresters (IOF) and bringing that fraternal group into a better business position for longevity; he used his sense of business savvy and opportunities that were put before him to grow the Foresters into over two hundred and fifty thousand members across the world; as the first non-white member of the IOF, this is a remarkable accomplishment; during his time with the IOF, Dr. Oronhyatekha had the opportunity to meet King George V and Queen Mary and created friendships and networks with many influential people including both Sir John A. MacDonald and Teddy Roosevelt; possibly hosting a number of these influential friends and acquaintances in his home in London at 172 Central Avenue; in 2005, Dr. Oronhyatekha was bestowed the honour of Canadian Figure of National Historical Significance and a plaque was erected at Christ Church in His Majesty's Chapel, his final resting place in Tyendinaga; when he died in 1907, his body was returned to Tyendinaga in a great procession and it is said that over ten thousand people lined the streets for his funeral; Dr. Oronhyatekha was a man of great connections between the Indigenous and Non-Indigenous society; he bridged many gaps between these two worlds and ordinally defended his culture and supported his Mohawk language and devoted himself to the strengthening of his people; it is with this information that she, on behalf of Chief R. Donald Maracle and the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte strongly oppose the demolition of Dr. Oronhyatekha's historic home at 172 Central Avenue and ask that you, as the Committee, take steps to maintain his home and its historical designation.

- Gerald Killen – expressing surprise to find himself speaking to this issue as he came to support the no Tricar tower; stating that there is a fire in his belly being reignited and he was surprised to see his good old friend John Lutman over there; expressing surprise that he is not up almost dangling over the boards here; advising that he is not going to repeat anything that anybody else has said, he is going to bring a bit of context; outlining that he was an Ontario historian for forty years, and he still is, at King's University College, he has been President of the Ontario Historical Society, President of the Champlain Society and for half a dozen years sat on the Ontario Conservation Review Board; noting that he was the Chair of the Ontario Conservation Review Board for years; advising that he toured the Province and there are many, many reasons for designating or de-designating as well, buildings of architectural and historical significance; bringing this piece of context to this discussion; indicating that he has not seen a better proposal and background study in support of designating a building than this one and he would be very, very saddened to see the Planning and Environment Committee not designate this building, it is not going to prevent demolition in the long term perhaps but it gives people time to deal with the issue of what to do with this enormously significant building.
- Anna Maria Valastro, 1 – 133 John Street – indicating that her house is one hundred forty-two years old; advising that all of these houses that are very old will have structural problems and none of them would be to code; fifty years ago, the house that she lives in, she can barely remember this, but the house sank and it had to be excavated all the way down to the footings, the foundation had to be restructured; you can see it if you go into the house now; thinking that this is an issue of the wrong person buying the wrong house; there is really nothing wrong with this house, it is repairable; advising that she does not think that there has ever been an intention to restore the house because the budget; no one really goes into these projects with a restoration budget and she does not think that this house should be punished for being one hundred thirty-six years old; thinking that the consequences, we lose out on so much because it does not fit what the original developers idea was; this house can be resold and the right person can come along and buy it, make a lot of money on it, keep its integrity; we are looking for something that is going to enhance the heritage of this neighbourhood; this neighbourhood is rich in heritage and we have lost so much in the last few years, we have lost all of the cottages on Piccadilly Street that housed railroad workers and when we lost those houses we lost Carling Creek which was opened in the 1980's, it was an open creek, we lost the Monastery, Locust Mount went up in flames, Talbot School from the 1800's, they did not want to appropriate that building and that got destroyed, there was a demolition at 167 John Street, Peter Cuddy's house is idle, the original plans have been abandoned for that house and this neighbourhood is rich not just in architecture but who built this neighbourhood and who lived there and it is important to have an

understanding of the history of this neighbourhood; indicating that their neighbourhood is ravaged by investment property owners, some of them are really good and some of them just are using up the buildings; realizing people are saying high praises of the new property owners but she just wants to tell you really quickly that back in November, 2017, just by sheer coincidence, she found a listing for 172 Central Avenue on the student housing listings at Western and these apartments were coming available as of May, 2018, they were two – five bedroom units with a couple others which are not permissible in the Near Campus Neighbourhood that went onto By-law Enforcement; feeling that it is just not the right owner for this particular house and there is really nothing wrong with this house and a lot of people in their neighbourhood want it celebrated and if that means another owner so be it; advising that she does not believe that you should squeeze someone's idea into a house that cannot accommodate those ideas.

- John Lutman, Author, "The Historic Heart of London" – advising that, in 1975, with his Research Assistant, they conducted the first heritage surveys of the City of London; beginning in London West and then over to Talbot Street area and then Woodfield; advising that in the Talbot Street area, 172 Central Avenue stood out for its architectural significance; noting that a building does not have to be super ornate to be historically or architecturally significant and certainly the research that John and he undertook is still available in the Heritage Planner's Office and certainly with "The Historic Heart of London", the research which formed the basis of this book informed the historical and architectural community in London about this building, not that it had not been known before but the information became available; advising that he is not going to repeat all of the arguments that have been given previously but the building is not unknown, it is a historic building in terms of its history and architecture and to retain that building in its original form, not as a reproduction, as we see in the Beck estate and in the Talbot Streetscape he thinks would be very wrong indeed.
- Alan R. Patton, - providing a history lesson; stating that these gentlemen spoke about the Talbot streetscape on the block between Talbot Street and King Street where the Budweiser Centre is now and there was a strong citizen effort, this was some years ago, to save the Talbot streetscape and he was retained by the Talbot Street Coalition to save it; advising that the entire block was owned by Cambridge Leaseholds, a major developer in town, for those of you that do not have a memory of that or your memory has faded, you will remember that it was going to be probably the single largest urban redevelopment outside of the City of Toronto, certainly in Southwestern Ontario; but there was a group of heritage people who insisted that the Talbot streetscape be retained in its entirety and he was happy to be their lawyer and he fought and he fought and he fought and, at the end of the day, Cambridge Leaseholds President, Lauren Braithwaite, said personally and in a letter, that he is fed up with London, she will not invest another penny here and he left; indicating that nobody would buy the block so who buys it, the City of London; what do they do with it, they build a new development, a hockey rink; what do they do, they replicate a very small portion of the Talbot façade on a corner of the building with a layer of yellow brick probably not to the full depth and put a silly little plaque on it; advising that this gentleman is doing better than that, cities change, they build up, they get torn down; half of downtown London has been that way; certainly Toronto has as well; that is what cities do and urban regeneration is important and this area needs that.
- Keith Jameson, Six Nations of the Grand River Territory near Brantford – indicating that he recently published a book co-authored between himself and Michelle Hamilton, a Professor at Western University; stating that it took him twenty years to work this gentleman's life through, when he brought her on it took another five and they were done; however it is published and available now; reiterating that he spent that much time on him and he also worked with the Royal Ontario Museum and the Woodland Cultural Centre to build what was the first full collection donated to the formation of the Royal Ontario Museum; advising that, twenty years ago, that collection had never seen the light of day; it had been hidden in vaults, dispersed all over the place, all over Toronto and he was brought on to find all of these pieces through the Museum and in other locations around the Province and out of the Province; advising that he got to travel to Oxford University in England to visit his room there and it is designated, his room at Oxford University, in his dorm, there is a plaque there, there are photos and there are various documents associated with him and some that he wrote; indicating that it is an immortalized story, a very real story, a very contemporary story; while it was well known relative to the communities themselves, associated with Dr. Oronhyatekha, they

knew who he was and they maintained his memory; it is simply the systems around us and the institutions around us who chose not to tell it; advising that now we have an opportunity and that is what he thinks we have here, an opportunity to use something that people can see and they can touch and that they can somehow experience and it is something that works exceptionally well in the sense that the current ideas, in most Provinces now, and it is starting to get to the communities and municipalities, is the notion of acknowledgement of his people, the First Nations people across Canada, Indigenous people, that they exist and that they have contributed extensively to the formation and the development of the country and he thinks that is what it does, it gives the Committee an opportunity as a City and as a municipality to participate in moving that story; believing that people really want to do something; they ought not to be marginalized anymore and this gives the Committee the opportunity to do precisely that to trend that back so that they are part of the country and he thinks that is what Dr. Oronhyatekha represents; indicating that it presents a tremendous inspiration to everyone but particularly Mohawk people to bring their kids forward and to say things were rough and they have been very tough but they do not have to be; you need not be put down by that, it gives them a sense that if you try hard enough, it does not matter what the odds are, you will get through it and he thinks we are grasping that; advising that this has occurred recently in a number of different places around a number of different things; encouraging the Committee to consider the impact, as a focal point and as an opportunity with the preservation of that facility, with that building; appreciating any consideration that the Committee might give that opportunity.

- Michelle Hamilton, Associate Professor of History, Western University – advising that she will not repeat the accomplishments of Dr. Oronhyatekha as she thinks those are well known; indicating that there are two things she would really like to say; one is to building on what the previous speaker has just said in a more formal way and that is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has recently called upon every public agency and every Canadian of whatever background you might be to recognize the accomplishments and the fact that Indigenous people were here before settlers were and certainly Dr. Oronhyatekha is the perfect person to use as an example of that; stating that he served both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous patients wherever he went as a doctor and he was accepted by many in a racial tolerance which was unusual at the time; advising that her second point is that Mr. K. Gonyou, Heritage Planner, did a good job suggesting where else he has been commemorated but she would like to say that all of the buildings associated with Dr. Oronhyatekha, whether they were business buildings or his personal homes have been knocked down; stating that the only one left is here in London; indicating that the building in Toronto was simply a rental property, he rented it from a physician friend of his and he rented the main floor and lived there for part of his life; in essence, 172 Central Avenue is the only building left associated with him in North America.
- Sean O'Connell - advising that he did not expect to be speaking today; indicating that he normally sits here and observes things; everything that is going on at City Hall; stating that he has traveled all over the world and when he has traveled, he has always looked for those little hidden gems and hearing the presentation and seeing that building, that is a hidden gem, that is something that most Londoners probably did not realize existed and is something that we should be proud of and better utilize for our tourism industry or just for the simple fact of the historical significance of the building; expressing happiness for having learned about this because it is one of those places that you would just like to go see just to see what it is like and if we can pour a little bit of money into it to conserve it and make sure that it is there, he thinks that we should do that.
- Janet Hunten, 253 Huron Street – advising that the cultural importance is supreme but also the architectural importance of this building; indicating that the Talbot neighbourhood is next on the list for Heritage Conservation District and this is very much a landmark building in that neighbourhood and an integral part of it; looking forward to that; we must remember that a replica is never the same as an original as we have heard discussed today.