

166 John Street,
London, Ontario, N6A 1P1
July 10, 2018

Re: the demolition request for 172 Central Avenue

I am not in the habit of writing letters to council members or letters to the editor, but I have been roused by the thought that an architectural gem in my neighbourhood—172 Central Avenue—is being considered for demolition.

I live at 166 John Street and have admired this house on 172 Central for many years. The house is both imposing and stately, but it is built on a human scale that fits in elegantly with the rest of the brick houses on the block. Italianate in style, it has a very pleasing symmetry that charms the eye. I have lived in the neighbourhood for over 40 years and have walked past the house frequently. Especially in the last 12 years, when I have had a dog that requires many daily walks, I pass the house every day and have had many chances to admire the features that make this house special: the inviting circular driveway with the tree in the centre; the deeply overhanging eaves with the carved brackets; the attractive brickwork quoins at the corners; the symmetry of the windows on the front face; and the nifty gable right in the centre of the house.

In the past year, alas, I have noticed the house has been empty and it was with considerable dismay that I learned about the demolition request. My strong hope is that Council will decline this request and instead preserve 172 Central as an important element in the neighbourhood. As Stewart Brand puts it in his book, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens after they're Built*, almost any building that is one hundred years old or more becomes attractive. The house at 172 Central started off as a most attractive building and its appeal has only increased since the 1880s, when it was first built. It has a charm and quality that can never be recovered, once the building is destroyed.

I was unaware, until recently, that 172 Central Avenue also has considerable historical significance as the home of an important person, as described in Joe Belanger's Dec 4, 2016 story in the *London Free Press* ("It took a 20-year journey to publish the story of an inspiring Mohawk doctor and leader" <https://lfpres.com/2016/12/04/it-took-a-20-year-journey-to-publish-the-story-of-an-inspiring-mohawk-doctor-and-leader/wcm/5c27a7b8-7052-4636-7aad-0e6aa2584606>). Its first owner and occupant, Dr. Oronhyatekha, was a Mohawk of the Six Nations who qualified as a physician and surgeon in 1867—among the very first doctors of First Nations heritage to qualify in Canada—and opened a practice in downtown London. In demolishing the house, London would also be erasing some of the history that links early London to the Six Nations community.

For cultural, historical, and architectural reasons, the house at 172 Central should be preserved as a heritage building in North Talbot, not torn down.

Sincerely,

Catherine Ross

