

To: Members of the Planning and Environment Committee, City of London

From: Anne Pappmehl

Date: October 14, 2012

Re: Stanton Drain

I am deeply disturbed to learn of the plan to destroy this invaluable wetlands heritage site, known as the Stanton Drain, to make way for development.

It is unfortunate that since the City's urban growth boundary was extended in 1993 that the planning process seems to have been hijacked by the short-sighted interests of certain politicians and developers. What has resulted is a city with uncontrolled urban sprawl, perpetual grid lock and eyesore commercial and residential developments that takes into consideration neither human needs nor natural systems. What is particularly troubling is the cavalier way in which some of the most valuable natural systems, such as forests and wetlands have been unceremoniously destroyed and degraded in the name of progress.

A recent example of this is the clear cutting of a swath of Reservoir Hill to make way for a 12-story apartment dwelling. The site plan was opposed by many of us local residents, including myself, as well as several politicians and even the City's own staff for many good reasons, not the least of which was public safety. For one thing, the structure is too large for that slope. For another, it is well known that when trees are clear cut on a slope like that, soil erosion tends to occur and along with it, the potential for landslides. Given that there is a very highly travelled main road directly beneath the hill, this is a very serious public safety risk.

It's a similar situation with wetlands. They protect people and property from flooding. With impending climate change and potential for far more severe weather related events (flooding, extreme storms), we can no longer afford to destroy a wetlands area that is not only habitat to a diverse array of flora and fauna, but also plays an important role in flood control management because they serve as a flood water storage area. One of the most monumental case studies of what happens when you destroy wetlands for development played out in New Orleans in 2005 with Hurricane Katrina. About ten months before Katrina struck, it was predicted in *National Geographic* that the coastal wetland destruction would cause massive flooding in the event of a severe hurricane. Sadly that prediction came to pass – with catastrophic loss of life, property and livelihood. Realizing this, many U.S. agencies like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are actually undertaking projects like wetlands restoration. That we in London would even entertain in this day and age the idea of destroying such a valuable asset like Stanton Drain is defies all logic.

The destruction of the Stanton Drain, Reservoir Hill and other natural system in this city for so-called economic development is not an example of how a progressive city operates. Progressive and sustainable cities seek to minimize environmentally destructive impacts of building and designing by integrating and or aligning themselves with living processes. There is no pressing need for development of this area when many homes and commercial spaces in already established areas are sitting vacant. London is known for having the highest per capita amount of retail space in all of Canada. It makes no sense to continue developing in this manner, as it does not result in sustainable economic development – rather it's wasteful and destructive. Similarly, it is not necessary for the City to spend money on initiatives like Reforest London when all we have to do is stop destroying the trees that we have.

I urge the Planning Committee to overturn this decision and not let the Stanton Drain wetlands area be destroyed for an expensive storm water pond.