

From: Lisa Harrison

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To: 'Kayabaga, Arielle' <akayabaga@london.ca>; 'Cassidy, Maureen' <mcassidy@london.ca>; 'ahopkins@london.ca' <ahopkins@london.ca>; 'jhelmer@london.ca' <jhelmer@london.ca>; 'sturner@london.ca' <sturner@london.ca>

Cc: 'Leif Maitland at lmaitlan@london.ca' <Leif Maitland at lmaitlan@london.ca>

Subject: Input - 556 Wellington Street

Dear Arielle Kayaba, Councillor Ward 13 and members of PEC,

As today is the final day for public input on the development of the Canada Life property at the above address, I wanted to provide some thoughts before it is too late. To start, I understand the staff and LACH have recommended the city refuse this application on grounds of not adequately addressing the heritage requirements of this property. I agree and do hope you will follow this guidance.

As a resident of the area and a downtown business leader, I think I am aligned with others and agree that London should have more residential density in the core. More people on the streets adds a sense of vibrancy and ensures more customers for local businesses. The issue is how to do this. Victoria Park is a jewel in the heart of the city - one to be enhanced, highlighted, cherished and protected. But it is not just the park land itself that needs protecting, it is the neighbourhood, its character and its accessibility for the many. I am not a city planner but when I travel it is clear which cities have carefully planned around their vision and designed to that, as opposed to those who have not. Sadly, Toronto is maybe our closest example of a complete design and vision failure. We are in danger of that in London now.

The Victoria park area, while defined under the city plan as within the downtown core, is really not - it is directly adjacent to a very valuable historic residential neighbourhood. The Development Services Staff have recommended the proposal be refused because it:

- Is not responsive to the immediate heritage context and its character
- does not conserve the designated heritage properties and does not respect their scale, form and heritage design.
- does not appropriately transition to the adjacent properties and district neighbourhood; and
- creates unacceptable negative impacts that are not sufficiently mitigated.

In other words, it meets zoning, but doesn't fit with the neighbourhood. There appears to be no desire/will/ability to alter zoning but I hope you can respect the fact that this property is an integral part of the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation Plan. Recently a friend showed me the West Woodfield heritage conservation plan which states that the "shady tree-lined streets and the picturesque Victoria Park are the core of West Woodfield. The area has changed over the years, but the character of the streetscape endures." So why is it so necessary to so drastically alter that?

I have spoken to a number of residents in the area and even more from "outside". This is not a case of NIMBY. There are other design and footprint options that would still allow developers, also critical to our city's success, to do well financially AND contribute positively to the neighbourhood in which they build. Look at 250 Pall Mall for instance - high density without dominating. It is set back, integrates a convenient drop-off place and has pleasing design features. In general the request for change are not unreasonable and include such things as requests to:

- align the buildings and include setbacks (which would provide better vistas from the park and celebrate the tree-lined streetscapes)

- reduce retail space - how much more do we need; we struggle now to fill our downtown streets and businesses so why take them away from the "real" core; could city council propose the developer change the use of the first floor from retail to residential without having to file for a variance?
- grant access for this property to Princess Ave so that vehicular traffic could be split between Wolfe and Princess streets – perhaps in one way and out the other? Wolfe street was not designed for this volume of traffic and I believe, was actually narrowed years ago. How can you add 400+ residents and not have an impact?

Finally I leave you with this and it is something I think about as a business leader every day. When is enough enough; when is big enough big enough and when did we stop thinking about the good of our communities and start thinking only of ourselves/our bottom line? The developer can make a solid profit and the city can still realize a greater vision, that recognizes the need to have this building support the character of the park and the surrounding neighbourhood. I hope that you will vote to refuse this proposal and challenge the company to do better to enhance this downtown gem.

Best regards,
Lisa Harrison