

April 15th, 2013

To the attention of my municipal government at London City Hall

My wife and I have been residents in the Blackfriar's neighbourhood for 13 years. We purchased our home on Leslie Street because of its proximity to downtown and its strong feeling of community. Within a few months, this neighbourhood will be no more. Two weeks ago, our neighbours learned that the property at 108 Wilson Ave. had been sold to a developer who intends to tear the small family home down and erect a 10 bedroom duplex designed for students and a backyard paved for at least 4 cars. Having students in our community is, in itself, not a problem since there are many students living in small apartments around the area. However, since we found out about the sale of this property, we have since learned that the same developer has bought a house a few doors away at 12 Leslie Street as well as a number of other properties in the immediate area. The developer is aggressively pursuing the purchase of homes in the area and is said to be looking to acquire 5 more properties along Wilson Avenue. The developer is making it difficult for people to turn down his advances because he is offering very attractive terms and, in some cases, bonuses for leaving quickly as well as making offers to help with moving expenses. I spoke to the woman who has lived next to 108 Wilson for many years. She is listing her home tonight because she can't stand the thought of living in the shadow of a boarding house.

It is clear then that this developer is not simply erecting one more student residence in the area but has a much larger plan to create a whole student district in the Blackfriars' Community. I am writing to you as an individual because we do not at the present time have a neighbourhood association since all of these developments have happened very quickly and seem to be moving ahead at an alarming pace.

The area is zoned R-2 and therefore permits duplex housing as well as single family homes. The current definition of a duplex allows up to 10 bedrooms which stretches the limits of what most people think of as a duplex. I know that the City of London is considering changes to the current property bylaws (cf. By-Law No. Z.-1-122125 passed on July 24th last year) to restrict the current definitions. I am also aware that you members of my municipal government are very interested in encouraging people to live, play and work downtown. Because of these factors, I know that you will be extremely concerned about the impending change to Blackfriars.

With the addition of multiple 10 bedroom rental housing units to our neighbourhood, the community known formerly as Petersville will disappear. This will not be a gradual change or a slow integration of temporary and permanent residents. This will be the wholesale destruction of an attractive, affordable and unique community. I imagine, with the new campus of Fanshawe College opening in the fall, that the developer will want these units in place by August.

The development of Blackfriars as a student district is legal and even encouraged by our current bylaws. This being the case, the developer needs no special permits or variances. The developer is not required to consult with or even inform Blackfriars residents. We will wake up, perhaps as early as tomorrow, to find bulldozers gutting our community.

We need your help. As longtime residents, as committed landowners, as proud members of this community we deserve, at the very least, some pause to consider this plan. You are our elected representatives. We need to know what you think about this. Do you approve of this kind of development? At best, we would like your intervention in order to find some acceptable way for this community to continue to exist.

Please do not pass this letter on to some other office to deal with. I can tell you that there is a great deal of anger, frustration, desparation and bitterness alongside resignation and deep sorrow among the residents of Blackfriars. We look across Oxford Street to the Saunby / Gunn / Irwin Streets area and see what is coming here. There used to exist a community much like ours - small, unpretentious homes and well tended gardens. Children rode their bikes safely on the street and grandparents waved to neighbours strolling by. That community has been replaced by money-generating boarding houses filled with temporary residents who vacate the neighbourhood and leave it deserted and quiet for four months in the late spring and summer. **Is this what you want for our city?**

Kevin and Daphne Bice
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