

**From:** DEBORAH OATES

**Date:** May 27, 2021 at 7:58:31 PM EDT

**To:** [pec@london.ca](mailto:pec@london.ca)

**Subject:** File: OZ-9157 435-451 Ridout St N ZBA Application

This lovely afternoon, I walked along Ridout Street from Queens to Central and then up through Victoria Park - a route I specifically select for the quiet, tree lined piece of history it offers. I had been at Covent Garden Market and was heading to my home in Old North London.

I am not from London. I was born in Montreal. I have lived in Boston, Mass. and in parts of Vermont and have travelled in Europe - all places where beautiful buildings with stories and distinctive architecture speak to the people and culture of days past and to ideas that helped shape the present.

To be honest, until quite recently, I hadn't thought much about London's heritage or history. Despite living here for the better part of my adult life, working, paying taxes and generally contributing to the community, my time and concern for the city's future were set aside for the everyday concerns of getting on with living and forging my own path. Besides, I had often heard that London's lot was in the "pockets" of developers and so it seemed pointless to wonder otherwise.

But it was shortsighted, if not naive of me, not to realize what a gem this city is with its own unique place and face in southwestern Ontario. I take many bike rides through Old North and Old South, I walk many side streets and lane ways, and I drive west of the city on a daily basis. What I have observed is that so much farmland has been subsumed, so many "Farhi Holdings" signs loom above once active, happy hubs and far, far too much of the history of this area has been scrubbed by speculative developers.

To be clear, I am not against progress.

But boarding up, selling off and either substantially reducing or completely razing pieces of visual heritage is truly shortsighted on the part of London City Council. The proposal to radically alter the Ridout Street Complex will affect more than the future. It will change our history.

I am deeply concerned with the dominating nature of this development proposal. It would loom over and dwarf the Ridout Street Complex, one of London's few National Historic Sites. It would dominate the sightlines and public space associated with Harris Park and the Forks of the Thames, the historic heart of our City. The large addition built by John Labatt Limited as part of the original restoration was and is sympathetic to the historic streetscape. This proposed development is anything but sympathetic. I urge City Councillors to reject the Official Plan and zoning by-law amendment application.

Most sincerely,

Deborah Oates