

Re: St. George and Ann Block Limited 84-86 St. George Street and 175-197 Ann Street

Planning Application File # OZ-9127

Dear Members of Council,

We would appreciate if Council could please consider the following points on the referral of Planning Application OZ-9127.

Red Herrings

- The referral requires 13 'affordable' housing units of varying sizes of no more than 80% of a luxury student housing development in exchange for a bonus zone. This exchange will not replace the current affordability of the existing rentals that number at least a dozen. Currently, families, students and adults occupy the rental units on Ann St. and St. George St. **The referral is misguided.**
- The Unity Project, an agency that helps low income individuals find housing, was forced to Appeal the city's 'affordable' housing policy because it is not effective. They tried to talk to Council but you would not listen and it resulted in an Appeal – an unnecessary cost to taxpayers and a burden to the not-for-profit agency. **Please wait until a decision on the policy is made at the Ontario Land Tribunal.**
- A suggestion was made that the best way to celebrate the history of the Kent Brewery is to demolish the building and build a new craft brewery on site that brews traditional English Ale. **Never was it suggested that a new brewery can be established in the actual original Kent Brewery. Or a craft brewery museum that celebrates London's successful brewery history and promotes current breweries. The idea was always to push demolition.**
- The Kent Brewery and the homes of the Hamilton Family have been repurposed in the past from a cigar factory, cheese factory and now a rental and automotive shop, and therefore are not of heritage value. **All buildings aged 150 years and older have been repurposed in some form or another. It is egregious to discredit the heritage value of these buildings simply because it has not been a brewery for 150 years continuously and the brewers died.**
- The Fugitive Slave Chapel has been moved therefore the Kent Brewery and the homes of the Hamilton Family can also be moved. **The Chapel was pressured to move and it has suffered since and placed an unreasonable financial burden on the protectors of the Chapel.**

- There are already highrises on the block and therefore more can be added. **This development will compromise adjacent buildings and over intensify the land. Highrises should not be built so close together. If not carefully planned, over intensification will lead to urban decay.**
- York Development insists that it must build an over intensified building to make it economically viable. **There are dozens of community developers that make good money on building community-type housing. Please recognize this as a pressure point being applied on Council Members.**

If you don't know your history, you don't know who you are.

Heritage

The expectation of the community is that these heritage buildings will be protected, preserved and any future development will incorporate these buildings respectfully into the design. That is the policy in the London Plan and the Near Campus Neighbourhood Policy and that's what makes interesting architecture and streetscapes. That is what happened in Hyde Park when a heritage tea house was preserved and a new high density development was approved behind the house. **That is the expectation here.** Just because you think these buildings are ugly doesn't mean that they deserve to be demolished. The Ontario Heritage Act protects heritage buildings from individual 'taste' because designation is not subjective. It is based on a criteria entrenched in law, and evaluated by professionals that are educated in matters of heritage.

Student Housing

North Talbot residents do not want more student housing. They have made this very clear to the Ward 13 Councillor. Both Councillor Fyfe-Millar and Councillor Hamou appeared on Rogers Cable TV together soon after being appointed to Council discussing concentrated student housing in their Wards. Councillor Fyfe-Millar stated clearly on the program that more student housing should be discouraged in neighbourhoods that have absorbed more than their fair share of temporary housing. This is true in his neighbourhood of Blackfriars and same standard needs to be applied here.

This planning application was rejected in part by staff because it is temporary student housing. It discriminates against any person looking for housing that is not a student and concentration of temporary housing destabilizes neighbourhoods and creates deadzones for months at a time. Typically, student leases are 12 month leases but occupied for 6-8 months of a year.

Land Limitations

The CP Railway wants a 'crash wall' built because the site is too close to the rail line and potentially places hundreds of people in harm's way. A 'crash wall' is extreme.

The Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change will not issue 'water taking' permits for this development if it interferes with the geothermal heating and cooling system of neighbouring buildings – a sustainable and climate change friendly source of energy. It will not issue permits if it hurts the environment.

The site sits on a high water table and is not stable. This is the same reason why an underpass cannot be built on Richmond St. to accommodate a rapid transit line.

Council Decisions

Council's disregard for the guiding principles of the London Plan has resulted in chaotic and adhoc development approvals and have eroded confidence in decision making. It results in unnecessary Appeals to the Ontario Land Tribunal and a cost to taxpayers. The gentrification of luxury rentals is pushing low income people out of the Core which is - by design and age as it was built before the age of the automobile - a walkable and access community. It pushes homeowners out of the Core because they cannot afford their property taxes. **This should be ALL part of planning an inclusive City.**

Mayor Ed Holder and Counillor John Fyfe-Millar

Mayor Ed Holder has accepted thousands of campaign dollars from 'Soufan' donors and Councillor John Fyfe-Millar has also received a large campaign donation from a 'Soufan' donor. **Both the Mayor and Ward 13 Councillor should recuse themselves from this file.** Councillor Fyfe-Millar reported at Committee that he spoke to area residents who did not support this development, he confirmed that concentrations of student housing is detrimental to neighbourhoods and then proceeded to dismissed all of it at Committee except for enhanced landscaping. It is understandable to question the motives of both politicians on this file.

For all the above reasons, please accept the staff recommendation for refusal of this application on all points. This will not prevent York Development from submitting a new application.

Sincerely,

AnnaMaria Valastro and Jill Jacobson

North Talbot Residents