

July 21, 2022

Michelle A. Hamilton  
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Dear London Councillors and Member of the Planning and Environment Committee,

As a local historian, a History professor at Western University, and a former member of the Board of Fanshawe Pioneer Village and a current member of the Village's Planning Committee, I write to strongly endorse the move of the Fugitive Slave Chapel from its location on Grey Street to the Village.

The move of the chapel from Thames Street to Grey was met with great hope from the heritage community, the SoHo community, and London's Black community in 2014. Restoration began but halted. Eight years later, the chapel's condition is precarious. I visited the chapel in February of this year with other historians and members of the Village committees. There were sections of the structure through which a person could put their hand inside standing on the outside. I include a few of the photographs I took that day to demonstrate.

It is now or never. Ideally, the chapel should remain on Grey Street next to its sister church Beth Emanuel. But that is no longer realistic. Fanshawe Village presents the only way forward to preserve this building. Moreover, Fanshawe has the expertise to not only care for the building, but also transform the inside into an exhibit and teaching space about Black history in this area, a largely unknown topic for most Londoners. The Fugitive Slave Chapel will attract new visitors to the Village, and also bring Black history to the elementary school curriculum through the city's popular Museum School, the Village's regular visits from classes, summer camps, and other programming for families.

For these reasons I support the necessary alteration of the heritage designation of the Fugitive Slave Chapel so that it may move to Fanshawe Pioneer Village.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michelle A. Hamilton', written over a horizontal line.

Michelle A. Hamilton, PhD

Enc: 4 pictures







