

Members of the City of Hamilton Planning Committee.

I sincerely hope that listening today to neighbourhood groups and Hamilton citizens who request NO Demolition with the message SAVE the GORE that you will vote in favour of a GORE Heritage Conservation District.

In 1968, Robert Bailey Commissioner of Planning City of Hamilton received a provincial award for his idea of dividing Hamilton into neighbourhoods: The Reasons:

- **To provide a framework for communication and sense of identity**
- **To rally individuals, groups, and other organizations to take pride in their particular corner of their city. In turn, stronger, more identifiable areas are created that will make the city better as a whole because neighborhoods are the strategic building blocks of overall community development.**

Today Beasley, Central, Durand Corktown and Stinson Neighbourhoods are here to request that members of the city council planning committee vote for a GORE Heritage Conservation District and say NO to demolition. The Neighbourhood Associations are speaking out because the GORE is one of Hamilton's most prominent public spaces - the symbolic heart of Hamilton since the 19th century. In December 2013 in a bold move by city council the heritage buildings on King St. East were **designated**. At present with demolition halted a Heritage Conservation District is possible. Some councillors told me and members of neighbourhood associations they are concerned if they vote NO to demolition – the buildings could become unsafe and unsightly. It is important to note that the TACOMA heritage engineering report requested by the city confirms the heritage buildings in question are stable.

I am sorely saddened that the Planning Dept has recommended demolition when a Heritage Conservation District makes good planning and preservation possible. Planners elsewhere consider Heritage Conservation Districts to be one of the most effective tools not only for historic conservation but for good urban design and sound planning. ---Typically resistance centres on concerns about loss of control over one's property,--- impact on property values and bureaucratic processes. On the other hand, there are benefits of Heritage Conservation Districts –the establishment of high standards of maintenance and design that allow the development of and compliance with shared community values and the potential for increased property values.

2. Hamilton currently has 7 HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS put in place to protect the stability and heritage of a particular area.

In 1986 Ward 3 established the St Clair Ave Heritage Conservation District that consists of 23 properties: 21 single family dwellings & two commercial buildings

In 1990 former Councillor Russ Powers was instrumental in establishing the Cross Melville Heritage Conservation District in Dundas –to act as a sounding board for residents and to preview and comment on the acceptability of changes proposed within the District: this area consists of 49 properties, 45 single family dwellings and three churches

Also in 1990 the MacNab-Charles Street Area Heritage Conservation District was established: and consists of seven properties, two multi-unit residences, a church and manse, two residential properties and an office. This Heritage Conservation District was

initiated by a private citizen Jeff Steadman a lawyer with his office at the corner of Bold and MacNab and a resident of Ancaster

In 1992 Ward 3 established the St Clair Blvd Heritage Conservation District; and consists of 38 residential properties

In 1994 former Heritage Consultant City of Hamilton Nina Chapple, along with residents Sue Shaker and Helene Fallen went door to door in Durand to gain approval for the Durand –Markland- Heritage Conservation District: this district consists of 51 residential properties.

In 2000 the Beach Boulevard Heritage Conservation District was approved and consists of 57 residential properties.

Approved in 1996, the Mill Street Heritage Conservation District, located in the former Town of Flamborough is of special interest and importance because this district consists of 108 properties that includes residential, **commercial and institutional buildings**. At last month's Municipal Heritage Committee Meeting Waterdown-Flamborough Councillor Judi Partridge reminded us of the heritage district in her downtown. We are grateful to Councillor Partridge and thank her because she got us thinking about a Heritage Conservation District for the Gore.

With mounting development pressure, heritage conservation districts are playing an increasingly crucial role in preserving the City of Hamilton's historical fabric and the amalgamated towns.

3. Liaising with city council and the Provincial Minister of Culture has played a vital role in the preservation of Hamilton's heritage buildings.

In 1977 Heritage Hamilton Foundation, formed by a group of Hamiltonians concerned with the rapid and continuing loss of our built heritage and prepared to act to assist its preservation, worked with Hamilton City Council and was the catalyst in taking Sandford Place (35-43 Duke Street) from a demolition target to a National Historic Site and now restored to its original function as privately-owned residences.

The SAVE THE LISTER group worked with former Hamilton City Councillor Brian McHattie and sought assistance from then Minister of Culture Caroline DiCocco who formed a provincial task force to save the Lister Building.

(The Gore should have been designated as a Heritage Conservation District many years ago. A look back reveals how many City Councils (not just this City Council) had information on the importance of the Gore, yet did not act. Today you **can** act and protect the Gore buildings via a Heritage Conservation District)

Other presentations will discuss creative solutions and how the city and owner **will have access to funds to restore the GORE buildings** rather than have at least 3- 6 EMPTY HOLES facing Gore Park where valuable heritage buildings now stand. **In terms of available funding I learned from Hazel Milsome Economic Development that if the buildings are designated a grant of 1.1 million dollars is available to the owners of 18-28 King St East via a GORE grant and via a Heritage Conservation District grant.**

(We hope not one member of council would be satisfied if the GORE looked like a plaza – a new and pedestrian unfriendly "Centre". Adaptive reuse of old buildings by small

businesses is creating a vibrant downtown community. There is now a demand for small venues in older buildings in the core.)

A statement by ERA a respected architectural firm who has done a lot of work in Hamilton states *The Gore as a whole is "an outstanding piece of urban design in the centre of Hamilton". The City cannot mess piecemeal with something like that. The Gore has been both a public gathering place and an urban oasis since 1860. A source of civic pride, controversy, and collective memory, the Gore has served as a physical and symbolic anchor for the City of Hamilton for over 150 years. The City of Hamilton itself has identified the GORE as a 'cultural heritage landscape..*

Listed among the *attributes which characterize the urban form of the Gore are:*

*** The uninterrupted rows of prominent commercial and institutional buildings from each major era of Hamilton's development, which enclose and frame the open spaces of the park, sidewalks, and roadway.*

*** The interplay between the buildings, sidewalks, roadway, and park, which are mutually complementary, and which, as an ensemble, represent an outstanding piece of urban design in the centre of Hamilton.*

*** The GORE buildings are part of the cultural fabric of Hamilton and Canada. Two were designed by William Thomas and are pre-1867 confederation. Façadism versus restoration would be a truly unhappy compromise*

I hope I have articulated some of the reasons why the members of Hamilton City Council must work with the owners of these heritage buildings in the Gore to approve a Heritage Conservation District. I want inform you –because you may want to know that the Friends of the Gore have made multiple attempts to request a meeting with Mr Blanchard to discuss the Gore but our requests has either been ignored or refused.

In conclusion – I would like to remind everyone that –

In 1967, Hamilton City Council approved the restoration of Dundurn Castle as Hamilton's centennial project.

We are asking you to approve the Gore as a Heritage Conservation District in celebration of Canada's 150th Anniversary -- Canada's Sesquicentennial.

This is a most worthy project and one that will bring BOTH praise and thanks to the owners and to Hamilton City Council.

The heritage buildings in the GORE must not be demolished to diminish our heritage and take place in a land fill. Even façadism is NOT the solution –



Solution for the GORE --- A Heritage Conservation District.

Thank you.

Diane Gower Dent
President Heritage Hamilton Foundation
Friends of the GORE
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