

to: Mayor Fred Eisenberger, all Councilors, City of Hamilton

cc: some of the many who are interested in the future of the Gore buildings.

re: Proposed Gore Block Apartments

(to be considered by Mayor and Council, 25 January, 2017)

from: Richard Longley, Past President Architectural Conservancy Ontario
(writing personally, not for ACO)

Hughson Business Space Gore Block Apartments of 15 Dec 2016 improves proposal of 21 April 2016 but it continues to crush "retained" 2nd and 3rd storey facades of 1840s William Thomas buildings by still unsympathetic and inappropriate new build that crushes them from above and below and from the east. It also requires – contrary to recommendations of heritage architects commissioned by Hughson Business Space and by the City - complete demolition of 1870s buildings that have been attached to the Thomas buildings for 140 years and are as crucial as the Thomas buildings are to the integrity of the Gore streetwall.

Considering their municipal AND provincial importance and their location at the centre of Hamilton, the Gore buildings deserve more, in terms of both: conservation and new build.

Needed: a design that conserves all Gore building facades and separates them - in depth - from new build, by a distance that frees the Gore buildings to pursue their individuality and frees the project's architect to design new build that respects heritage but is otherwise independent of it.

How?

18-22 King Street East (William Thomas architect, 1840s):

Delete proposed "pigeon loft" penthouse, consider rooftop patio instead.
(How to compensate for loss of space if penthouse is deleted? See new build, below.)

Continue masonry restoration at street level, that is now proposed for 18–20, across street level of #22, in place of glass storefront that is still proposed for #22.

(Using 1892 Fox Morgan photo - below - as a guide to the form of that masonry.)

If these heritage-respecting changes are made:

William Thomas buildings:

Are not squeezed between an alien penthouse above and an inappropriate glass storefront below. Facades of the Thomas buildings are in harmony, from sidewalk to rooftop.

Provided they are separated by demising walls an appropriate distance (10m?) from new build behind, Thomas buildings are suited to uses appropriate for their heritage, their massing and their location facing Gore Park. (Cafe, restaurant, boutique, gallery diverse small retail and more - uses that seem to be flourishing in Hamilton).

Second and third storeys of the Thomas buildings are attractive to residential and business tenants who appreciate living and working in architectural heritage.

24, 28 and 30 King Street East (1870s, architect unknown)

Late Victorian 24 and 28 are not as old as the pre-Confederation Victorian William Thomas buildings, nor are they by an architect as eminent but they are crucial to the Gore streetwall.

December 15 plan continues to propose complete demolition and rebuild of 24, 28 (with rebuild of #30 that was demolished in 2011). This "development" would retain none of the heritage facades' original features and it would be one storey higher than the original. If built, this additional height will diminish and demean the massing of the Thomas buildings.

Recommend:

Respect recommendation of:

Heritage architect and structural engineer for Hughson Business Space: **duplicate facades of 24 and 28**, with retention of original material as possible

or (preferably)

Peer review by heritage architect and structural engineer for the City: **conserve facades of 24 and 28**.

Implement recommendation that will produce the most authentic conservation outcome.

#30 (demolished in 2011)

Not addressed by the heritage architects and structural engineers consulted.

Proposed design incorporates rebuilt #30, uniformly, into new build, one storey higher than original, that would replace 24 and 28 after their demolition.

Options might include duplicate (based on photographic evidence) or rebuild - no higher than original - in a style that complements heritage of conserved (or duplicated) 24 and 28.

How to compensate for loss of floor area if 24, 28 and rebuilt 30 are not 1-storey higher than original, as proposed? See new build, below.

NEW BUILD –opium dream or heritage of the future?

Set back new build a sufficient distance behind 18-30 (10m?) to separate facades of the Gore buildings from new build and allow independence of the Gore buildings from new build.

Consider **rooftop patios** or green roofs on all of 18-30, with access from Gore buildings below and from new build above and behind Gore buildings.

Consider **re-zoning** the site to allow **new build higher** than what is now proposed. (Condo tower above Tivoli theatre is approved for 22 storeys.)

This would more than compensate for deletion of proposed penthouse above 18-22 and of proposed additional storey above 24, 28 and 30.

Separation of new build from Gore buildings frees architect to **create 21C new build that complements without imitating architecture of the Gore buildings** and provides an impressive - provided it's not oppressive! - backdrop to the Gore buildings.

New build extends south over parking lot towards Main Street and provide much needed enhancing development in that central location.

If N-S depth of parking lot is too deep to covered with new build, consider a podium that extends to Main Street or to a parkette that extends to Main Street.

(A parkette that might be flanked with fingers of new build that do extend from new build podium to the sidewalk of Main Street.)

Connect Gore buildings and new build to the south of them, internally, through N-S shopping arcades that allow movement between King Street and Main Street.

Consider also, an E-W arcade that connects Gore buildings and new build to the south

of them, internally.

Architect, developer and City willing and able, Gore Building conservation with new build to the south of it becomes the epicentre of the Hamilton Renaissance.

Please note, regarding conservation, these proposals do not come from nowhere:

former Mayor Bob Bratina (now MP for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek):

"A city that does not respect its heritage has lost its self esteem."

(in conversation at "Economics of Heritage Conservation" event organized by Heritage Hamilton and Friends of Auchmar, November, 2013)

Robert Miles, Senior Property Manager, Wilson-Blanchard (parent company of Hughson Business Space) regarding the Gore Buildings:

"We will put in stone pillars and rounded windows. We will make it look like it did. We don't have that today. We have dysfunctional stone falling off. We have stucco, brick, tile, a dog's breakfast. We will end up with what we had 100 years ago, with a functional, sellable asset behind it."

(reported by Abigail Cukier in the now defunct blog, YourHamiltonBiz, August 13, 2013)



King Street East, Hamilton, 1892

28

24

22

20-18