

To: Hamilton City Council

June 23, 2017

Re: Proposed permanent closure and sale of the Dundas Public Laneway

Dear Mayor and Members of Council:

I am writing in regard to an item that will appear on your Council meeting agenda on Wednesday, June 28, 2017.

Specifically, the agenda item is the permanent closure and sale of a Dundas public unassumed alleyway, between Sydenham Road, Cross Street, Alma Street, and Victoria Street, Dundas.

On Monday, June 19, the public works committee voted to recommend closure and sale of this public laneway, one that has been in the community over 160 years. I was one of the 30 Dundas residents who spoke in opposition to this at the meeting. There, members of the committee were informed of 650 signatures that the Public Laneway Initiative has collected in opposition to the sale. There is overwhelming opposition to the public laneway's closure and sale, but the Public Works committee, chaired by the Dundas city councillor, Arlene Vanderbeek, voted in favour of the very few who support its closure, for their own private interests.

You should be aware that I did make Ms. Vanderbeek aware of my concerns, in writing, earlier this year.

There are a myriad of concerns with this closure and sale of the public laneway. They include:

- the fact that the laneway is in the heritage district, and its closure will permanently change the heritage layout of the district
- the fact that the applicant paved the laneway and erected a fence, all with no consequence, and will now have to apply for a heritage permit 'retroactively' . This flies in the face of the purpose of protections for heritage structures.
- that the city is appearing to go against many of its own policies and mission statements, as this laneway encourages active transportation (a key part of the battle against climate change) and is a core part of the walkability of the community of Dundas
- the appearance that the private interests of an individual with powerful connections has somehow trumped the collective community interests of residents of Dundas, despite the overwhelming opposition to the public laneway's closure and sale

The primary reason given by Ms. Vanderbeek for the closure and sale of the public laneway is 'safety', based upon a dubious 'safety study' that took place, coincidentally, after residents in Dundas began to raise their voices in opposition to the privatization of the laneway. There do not appear to be any

reports of safety issues prior to this 'study', nor vocalizations of concerns that implored Ms. Vanderbeek and the city to act in the interests of 'safety'. In fact, residents who have lived for many, many years near the laneway have refuted Ms. Vanderbeek's assertion that there is a problem with safety on the public laneway, and have instead cited how the laneway is a safe place for community members to walk away from busy streets.

I can attest to this myself. I live on Watsons Lane and I often come through the Dundas Driving Park into the heritage district to make my way to the downtown area.

As a resident of Dundas, and a proud Hamiltonian, I am urging you to vote against the closure and sale of the public laneway. The interests of the wider community must take precedence over those of individual private citizens, and it is the role of our elected municipal leaders to take those interests into full consideration. At the very least, this decision should be put on hold so that a full investigation of the concerns that numerous Dundas residents have raised can be done.

Thank you very much for your immediate attention to this time-sensitive matter.

Sincerely,

Chantal Mancini

