

Pilon, Janet

Subject: proposed relocation of Marr-Phillipo house, Ancaster

From: David Molnar

Sent: Monday, October 11, 2021 3:21 PM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

Subject: proposed relocation of Marr-Phillipo house, Ancaster

Clerk: Please place the following letter on the agenda for the next council meeting at which the topic of the proposed relocation of the Marr-Phillipo house in Ancaster will be discussed by Hamilton City Council (I believe that council meeting will be Wednesday, October 13, 2021). Thank you.

Respected members of Hamilton City council,

Please take a few minutes to read and consider the following concerns which my wife Donna and I have about the proposed move of the Marr-Phillipo house in Ancaster where we reside. We believe that moving the house may result in its destruction and loss or at the very least, its removal from the main core area where it should be left for all to appreciate. We ask you to please advise the developer to leave the home where it is – on our main street (Wilson Street) where it's heritage and character may continue to contribute to Ancaster's historic village core area.

We are very concerned that this precious 1840 building is to be relocated to the rear of the lot on Wilson Street, to 15 Lorne Avenue, an address which does not exist. The move to this location is very risky, since the building has lost much of the mortar supporting its stonework. It is extremely fragile. It may not survive.

Further, not only will it be lost to view from Wilson Street (out of sight, out of mind), but its relocation opens up the possibility of a roadway allowing traffic access to Lorne Avenue from the massive commercial and condominium development which is planned, and from there onto Lodor, Academy and Church Streets. It also raises the possibility of cut-throughs between Wilson Street and Lorne Avenue, increasing a problem that already exists in that cut-through corridor between Wilson and Rousseaux.

As the Spec article says, the reason for relocating was to clean up hydrocarbon contamination from a gas station a few meters away, contamination which is **presumed** to be below the building. However, there was no drill-testing of the ground below the building to justify this move. If no contamination had been found, their justification for the relocation would have disappeared, but they have avoided this potential problem.

City staff recommended against the move as "premature" because of the lack of evidence supporting it. Even Councillor Ferguson, who supports the move, has said that evidence for the move is "scant". But the real reason emerges when the developer's lawyer says the relocation will open up the property for "greater intensification and greater use." Here is the key. They have no idea if the contamination is under the building, did not test to find out, but the building needs to be moved because, as developer Manchia has said in previous Ancaster News articles, otherwise he would refuse to build on the property. Such threats are completely inappropriate. Holding the City and Ancaster residents to ransom for increased profits is not a legitimate bargaining chip. Nor is it acceptable to Ancaster residents to dramatically change our historic core area (Ancaster is the third oldest community - established as a police village in 1793 - behind Kingston and Niagara on the Lake) to please developers or suite their plans. In fact, their plans need to suit the (existing) character and nature of our beautiful, well preserved village - not the other way around.

I believe that we need to be very careful about 'Urban intensification' insofar as not every community needs to look like downtown Toronto. What historically significant landmarks would exist on our planet today if short sighted developers, planners and politicians had decided that the Coliseum in Italy, or Acropolis in Greece and many other similar edifices (which are much valued assets of those areas of the globe today) were simply old buildings which were unimportant and should be torn down to make way for more of the usual architectural drivel we see so much of today. What if the Tower of Pizza had been determined by planners to be leaning, defective and dangerous by developers and was demolished to make way for buildings which, frankly, no one would care anything about now. Things are only original once – and they are very easily lost to the frenzy of real estate development which grips the planet on a recurring basis.

Surely there are other ways to clean up any possible pollution which may exist on the subject lands without moving the home in question – it has been done many times with far less significant edifices. There are also many more creative development ideas which could be incorporated into a new development proposal for the land in question – ideas which would leave the subject home undisturbed. The onus should be on the developer to protect any existing structure if they want to (re)redevelop a parcel of land which contains significant buildings and/or is integral to the character of the community in which the developer is doing business. Instead of spending money on planners and representatives to "sell" a community – and its elected representatives - on the merits of on their demolition plan and moving a significant dwelling, developers should be spending that money on designers who will incorporate the existing dwelling into the (re)development proposal and to develop/present ideas which will protect and incorporate the existing building into any new construction proposal. It is not unreasonable to expect that from him and he would be more welcomed by residents if they could see that he actually had considered them in his plans.

I understand that there is some concern about possible pollution on the subject lands (from a long removed gas station) but we have read reports from professionals such as hydrogeologists which clearly state that it is not necessary to relocate the structure in question in order to determine if pollution exists or to remedy the problem if it does exist. There are many less invasive ways to address that problem, and the developer/builder should be made to understand that it is his responsibility to put forth the proposal/plan which best suits the area and which most effectively protects existing landmarks which are important to local residents.

Ancaster is (and has been for some time) literally under siege from nearly every angle and area by developers and builders. Developers have filled in every nook and cranny and built out to the limits of the urban boundary. Our population has increased from c.14,000 when we moved to Ancaster in 1975 to over 40,000 currently. We are not against progress in the form of housing or other necessary or useful development which fits into the existing nature and character of our community but I believe that we need to take a moment out from the real estate hysteria which has gripped society to consider the long term impacts of our actions and decisions in those areas which will forever change the nature and character of such communities. Once significant buildings are lost to mindless, uncontrolled, profit centric (re)development, they are lost forever and the character of that community is drastically altered forever – long after the real estate development fever will have subsided. Ancaster and other communities which surround the City of Hamilton proper should not be viewed as simply areas of expansion for the City - we must consider carefully the impact of “urban intensification” on communities such as ours because that philosophy is simply not appropriate for all communities (at least not to the extent that it might be implemented in core areas of major cities).

Lastly, if politicians want the smoldering remains of opposition to amalgamation to die out they should try to better understand the reasons why people live in places like Ancaster and why we are adamant about preserving such communities. Elected representatives should more carefully consider the needs and wants of residents of those communities rather than putting the needs and wants of developers at the forefront. City staff politicians and staff must not view communities such as Ancaster as simply growth areas for the mother ship City and steamroller them in an effort to make all communities look like downtown Hamilton or Toronto (I say that having grown up as an inner city kid on Madison avenue, Wentworth Street and Grant Avenue).

Please let the developer/proponent in question – and all developers/builders who want to work in our community - know that there are intrinsic differences between the various areas of our great City and they must consider the residents and the character of those individual areas before imposing their will on them. In this particular case, they should create a plan which has greater consideration for Ancaster’s existing character and heritage before they

may proceed with development of that site. It is possible – and will pay dividends – but guidance must be given them by you, your colleagues and staff. As residents of Hamilton we expect that from you.

Thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter and best wishes on your continued good work on behalf of all Hamiltonians.

Respectfully,

David and Donna Molnar