



Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee

Hamilton City Hall - 71 Main St. W.,
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

C/o Loren Kolar, Legislative Coordinator,
City of Hamilton

E: loren.kolar@hamilton.ca

(Issued by Email and Post-mail)

February 25, 2022

New Vision United Church

24 Main St. W.

Hamilton, On L8P 1H2

(905) 522-6843

E. officeadmin@newvisionunited.org

Attn: Rev. Dr. Ian Sloan – Minister

Chair, Board of Trustees

Dear Reverend Sloan,

I hope this letter finds you and the Board of Trustees well.

On behalf of the Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee (HMHC), and with approval from City Council, I am reaching out to you regarding 679 Main Street East and 85 Holton Avenue South, Hamilton, (St. Giles United Church).

As the City's Municipal Heritage Committee, our members continue to field concerns from neighbours, heritage advocates and local advocacy groups regarding the uncertain future of St. Giles. Among their ever-growing concerns are signs of demolition by neglect, a declining state of property maintenance and vandalism.

You are more than aware of the significance of the heritage property under your current care. St. Giles is an architectural landmark that has been situated within the Gibson (Ward 3) Neighbourhood for more than 110 years. Beautifully designed in 1912 by well-known Hamilton Architects Stewart and Witton, St. Giles is considered prominently amongst their many great works (Herkimer Apartments, Playhouse Theatre, James Street Armoury, etc.).

Within Stewart & Witton's portfolio, St. Giles is a stunning and unique example of neo-gothic church design. The use of local materials and craftsmanship would not be easily replicated today. If this building were to be demolished, the loss of such a heritage resource would be significant.

Although its time as a place of worship has come to an end, the opportunity and potential for adaptive reuse within the existing walls of St. Giles is extraordinary. We would encourage any heritage property owner to explore creative and meaningful design ideas to integrate existing heritage structures into contemporary development planning.

Rather than demolition, there are numerous examples where places of worship have found new life as residential homes, community hubs and multi-purpose spaces.

Reflecting on past correspondence received from New Vision (dated: June 22, 2021)

In June of 2021, HMHC received a four (4) page letter from New Vision, offering us “*guidance on what to expect from New Vision ahead*”. Sadly, since this time, there appears to have been little to no positive movement forward.

Your letter recounted New Vision’s experience navigating the municipal heritage process. I can tell you that it was very disappointing to hear you describe your overall experience in such a negative manner; considering the positive outcomes taking shape for 24 Main St. West (New Vision - formerly Centenary United Church). The City (including staff, HMHC and Council) has worked alongside New Vision to help expedite designation, at your request, so that you could access municipal funding through their grants and loans program and promote this heritage property as a tourist attraction and revenue generating, music and entertainment venue.

Upon reading your letter, our members shared a common concern that your accounts reflected a perceived experience and did not truly and accurately reflect the events that have transpired since your first interaction with Heritage Planning Staff, HMHC and Council. In reference to this, and in order to move forward in the future, we have worked with City Staff to prepare a timeline that we hope will help clarify key milestones and actions related to the St. Giles property. (See Attachment A).

By definition, as a Municipal Heritage Committee, our mandate it to advise City Council on all heritage matters related to the Ontario Heritage Act;

- To advise and assist City staff and Council on all matters relating to the designation of property, the review of heritage permit applications and other cultural heritage conservation measures under Parts IV and V of the Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.O.18.
- To advise and assist City staff and Council in the preparation, evaluation and maintenance of a list of properties and areas worthy of conservation.
- To advise and assist City staff and Council on any other matters relating to the conservation of listed properties or areas of cultural heritage value or interest.

Although you have notably and publicly taken offense to recommendations forwarded to City Council, these actions fall within the mandate of HMHC. Recommendations included asking for St. Giles to be added to the Municipal Register as well as to Staff’s Work Plan for designation. Placing a property on the Register is not considered a hardship and simply offers 60 days protection from demolition to allow time for meaningful discussion. Designation would offer increased protection for the property, however, it would also allow New Vision access to grants and loans. These recommendations reflect the importance of this historic place.

In your letter, New Vision questioned HMHC's intentions, stating that, *"We wonder if the Committee's actions are meant as disrespect to us [New Vision] as religious use property owners, a disrespect which we have felt we have experienced as early as our first delegation to the Committee in 2014"*. As Chair, I pride myself on maintaining a professional atmosphere and decorum during each and every meeting. Our members treat all properties and property owners with respect and as educated volunteers, demonstrate their dedication to fulfilling our advisory role under the requirements of the Province of Ontario and the Ontario Heritage Act.

In your concluding remarks, you stated that you *"continue to seek open and meaningful dialogue with you [HMHC] over the two places of worship we [New Vision] own. We do this in accordance with the provisions of and in the spirit of the Ontario Heritage Act and the guidance related to it issued by the Province to municipal councils and property owners of places of worship."* Although some past statements issued by New Vision would contradict this, we remain optimistic and would encourage you to demonstrate what it means to be good stewards of our City's heritage and take pride in all of the properties that you own. We welcome open dialogue and look forward to future discussions with the New Vision team and we hope that New Vision will take interim measures to protect and maintain St. Giles while the building remains unused and planning progresses.

In the spirit of Ontario Heritage Week (Feb. 21st – 27th, 2022), we encourage you, the Board of Trustees and New Vision to move forward with an openness to the potential opportunities available to adaptively integrate St. Giles into a community-minded project. A meaningful project that would see St. Giles preserved for the community and once again become a vibrant and thriving place within the Gibson neighbourhood.

Sincerest regards,



Alissa Denham-Robinson, Chair
Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee

Attachments:

1. Appendix A – Timeline – Milestones and Events
2. Appendix B - Correspondence from New Vision, dated June 22, 2021

Cc.

- Mayor Fred Eisenberger
- Hamilton City Council
 - Ward 1 - Councillor Maureen Wilson
 - Ward 2 - Councillor Jason Farr

- Ward 3 - Councillor Nrinder Nann
 - Ward 4 - Councillor Sam Merulla
 - Ward 5 - Councillor Russ Powers
 - Ward 6 - Councillor Tom Jackson
 - Ward 7 - Councillor Esther Pauls
 - Ward 8 - Councillor John-Paul Danko
 - Ward 9 - Councillor Brad Clark
 - Ward 10 - Councillor Maria Pearson
 - Ward 11 - Councillor Brenda Johnson
 - Ward 12 - Councillor Lloyd Ferguson
 - Ward 13 - Councillor Arlene VanderBeek
 - Ward 14 - Councillor Terry Whitehead
 - Ward 15 - Councillor Judi Partridge
- Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee

The following timeline reflects key milestones and events related to the property known as:
24 Main Street West, Hamilton, On (Former Centenary United Church) and
85 Holton Avenue, Hamilton, On (Former St. Giles United Church)

DATE	EVENT
May 2014	Staff notified affected owners by letter of the Downtown Built Heritage Inventory Project recommendations in advance of open house on June 3, 2014
June 3, 2014	DBHI Open House Representative from Centenary attended the DBHI open house and submitted a request for more information on the recommendations to list their property on the Register and add it to staff's designation work plan.
June 9, 2014	Staff responded with the information requested and offered to meet to discuss further.
July 8, 2014	Congregation provided a letter expressing their concerns with 24 Main Street West being identified as a candidate for designation and requesting to not be listed on the Register or staff's work plan for designation.
July 10, 2014	Hamilton Downtown Built Inventory Project Public Consultation (ERA) PED14039
August 21, 2014	HMHC PED14191 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Helen Bradely, Chair of Church Council, St. Giles the Centenary United Church respecting inclusion of Centenary United Church in the list of properties for heritage Designation – delegation request approved, presentation received; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The presentation included, but was not limited to, the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Centenary United Church ▪ Working with our Heritage ▪ Balancing Church Property Interest with Heritage Preservation ▪ Religious Heritage Resource Management Guideline

DATE	EVENT
	<p>The presentation respecting the inclusion of Centenary United Church in the list of properties for heritage designation was received.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">- Motion: Implementation of the Recommendations of the Downtown Built Heritage Inventory Project</p> <p>(a) That the properties listed in Schedule 1 of Appendix "A" attached hereto to the Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee Report 14-009(a) be included in the Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest as nondesignated properties;</p> <p>(b) That staff be directed to add the properties listed in Schedule 2 of Appendix "A" attached hereto to the Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee Report 14-009(a) to the staff's work program for designation;</p> <p>(c) That Schedule 3 of Appendix "A" attached hereto to the Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee Report 14-009(a) be approved as amended to include the Candidates for Designation;</p>
September 16, 2014	Planning Committee (Downtown Built Heritage Inventory)
2015	<p style="text-align: center;">Formal Consultation application (FC-15-052)</p> <p>Development proposal: to remove the portion of the existing church that is located north of Main Street East and to redevelop the balance of the church property with an attached 3-5 storey stepped apartment building consisting of 79 units. The applicant is proposing to develop 81 parking spaces consisting of 18 surface parking spaces and 63 underground parking spaces</p>
June 14, 2017	<p>Council directs staff to make the designation of the former Centenary Church at 24 Main Street West a high priority (at the request of the congregation).</p>
April 17, 2018	<p>Demolition permit application for 85 Holton and 679 Main Street East</p> <p><u>What happened with this demolition permit?</u> Demolition permit cancelled on February 19, 2021 due to non-response of 10 days notice.</p>

DATE	EVENT
May 18, 2018	Staff site visit (from right of way)
May 31, 2018	Staff site visit with representatives of New Vision Church (interior)
June 21, 2018	<p>Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee Designation Report PED18153</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report is in response to a demolition permit submitted for the subject lands on April 17, 2018. ▪ Meets 8 of 9 criteria as defined in O.Reg 9/06 <p>- Motion: The following recommendation was proposed for consideration at the June 27, 2018 Council meeting. (Ritchie/Arndt)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(a) <i>That the designation of 679 Main Street East and 85 Holton Avenue South, Hamilton (former St. Giles United Church), shown in Appendix “A” to Report PED18153, as a property of cultural heritage value pursuant to the provisions of Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, be approved;</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(b) <i>That the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and Description of Heritage Attributes, attached as Appendix “B” to Report PED18153, be approved; and, Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee June 21, 2018 Minutes 18-006 Page 6 of 9</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(c) <i>That the City Clerk be directed to take appropriate action to designate 679 Main Street East and 85 Holton Avenue South, Hamilton (former St. Giles United Church) under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, in accordance with the Notice of Intention to Designate, attached as Appendix “C” to Report PED18153.</i></p>
July 10, 2018	<p>Planning Committee</p> <p>- Motion: <i>To Designate 679 Main Street East and 85 Holton Avenue South, Hamilton (St. Giles United Church) under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act (Referred from Council June 27, 2018) (Item 9.2) (Pearson/Partridge)</i></p>

APPENDIX “A”
TIMELINE – Milestones and Events
New Vision Church
February 25, 2022

DATE	EVENT
	<p>(a) <i>That 679 Main Street East and 85 Holton Avenue South, Hamilton (former St. Giles United Church), not be designated as a property of cultural heritage value pursuant to the provisions of Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act;</i></p> <p>(b) <i>That the owners of St. Giles United Church be requested to work with heritage staff to preserve, in some form, the history of the building at 679 Main Street East and 85 Holton Avenue South.</i></p>
July 13, 2018	Council ratified Planning Committee report
August 18, 2020	<p style="text-align: center;">Formal Consultation application (FC-20-084)</p> <p>The applicant proposes to redevelop the subject lands with a residential development consisting of a six storey multiple dwelling containing 30 residential units; 19, two storey street townhouse dwelling units; and, four, three storey “walk up” multiple dwelling buildings containing a total of 12 residential units. A Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Control application will be required to implement the proposal.</p>
February 11, 2021	Councillor Nann Public Open House regarding 85 Holton Avenue and 679 Main Street East
March 26, 2021	<p style="text-align: center;">Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee (Dr. Sheehan delegation)</p> <p>Motion:</p> <p>(a) <i>That the property known as the Former St. Giles Church, located at 679 Main Street East, and 85 Holton Street South, Hamilton be added to the Municipal Heritage Register as a property of Cultural Heritage Significance;</i></p> <p>(b) <i>That staff be direct to report back to Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee with options for the preservation of the Former St. Giles Church, located at 679 Main Street East, and 85 Holton Street South, Hamilton including Designation and/or Adaptive Reuse; and</i></p> <p>(c) <i>That staff to liaise with property owner of the Former St. Giles Church, located at 679 Main</i></p>

APPENDIX “A”
TIMELINE – Milestones and Events
New Vision Church
February 25, 2022

DATE	EVENT
	<i>Street East, and 85 Holton Street South, Hamilton</i>
April 6, 2021	New Demo application received (cancelled by owner)
April 6, 2021	Planning Committee (delegation requests) Motion: <i>That staff be directed to take appropriate action to designate 679 Main St E and 85 Holton St South under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, including preparation and giving the required public notice of the Notice of Intention to Designate and a Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and Description of Heritage Attributes.</i>
April 14, 2021	Council Letter submitted by MHBC on behalf of owner Motion: <i>That staff be directed to take appropriate action to designate 679 Main St E and 85 Holton St South under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, including preparation and giving the required public notice of the Notice of Intention to Designate and a Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and Description of Heritage Attributes.</i> (a) <i>That the designation of the former St. Giles Church, located at 679 Main Street East, and 85 Holton Avenue South, Hamilton, be referred back to Planning Committee to allow the Ward Councillor time to meet with the applicant and the community with respect to the proposed future development of the site; and</i> (b) <i>That the owner of 85 Holton Avenue be invited to attend a future Planning Committee to present their proposed approach and concept for the development of 85 Holton Avenue, prior to making a formal application for planning approval.</i>
June 10, 2021	Virtual Town Hall held by owner/applicants (afternoon/evening)
June 26, 2021	Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee Correspondence received from Rev. Ian Sloan

APPENDIX "A"
TIMELINE – Milestones and Events
New Vision Church
February 25, 2022

DATE	EVENT
	85 Holton Avenue and 679 Main Street East added to Vacant Building registry (Building was previously on the vacant building registry 2016-2018 but the building permit for demolition was applied for in 2018 and the building was removed from the list)

-End of Document-



APPENDIX "B"
New Vision Correspondence

Mailing Address:
24 Main St. W.
Hamilton ON L8P 1H2
(905) 522 6843

officeadmin@newvisionunited.org

June 22, 2021

The Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee
Loren Kolar, Legislative Coordinator
City of Hamilton
By Email: loren.kolar@hamilton.ca

Dear Chair and Members,

It has been some time since we interacted directly with respect to New Vision's Holton Ave. S. campus. I write to you to review pertinent events and actions that have taken place before and since that interaction in June of 2018, and offer you guidance on what to expect from New Vision ahead.

Our interactions with you as an advisory committee of Hamilton's municipal council began in 2014 as an interaction with you over the effect of the Downtown Inventory of Heritage Buildings that the City notified us it planned to issue. We were notified that our 24 Main W. campus, the former Centenary United Church, was to be listed in the inventory. We objected to it being listed in the inventory because the City of Hamilton had not yet prepared a survey of heritage places of worship, nor instituted any meaningful protocols with respect to how to interact with heritage places of worship property owners as recommended in the *Heritage Places of Worship: A Guide to Conserving Heritage Places of Worship in Ontario Communities* issued by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

Our delegation was not received by the Committee at that meeting until after the Inventory was voted upon and approved – an action on the Committee's part that may prove the point of our 2014 objection.

In the summer of 2015 planning consultants IBI met with City Planning Department staff on behalf of New Vision in a formal consultation regarding redevelopment of our underutilized 85 Holton Ave. S. property. With clear indication from heritage planning staff at that consultation that heritage conservation would be a significant component of the City's response to any development proposal coming forward to the City, New Vision issued an RFP to potential development partners in the fall of 2015 seeking interest in the objectives for the property as outlined in the Formal Consultation report prepared by the City.

We were not able to secure a development partner. Further, our 2013 Capital Expenditure study issued by Edison Engineers confirmed to us what prospective development partners who engaged in preliminary due diligence were telling us: that the building was in very poor shape and would be very expensive to rehabilitate for any purpose.

Based on these determinations, and guided by our religious convictions that our role in the neighbourhood of which we have been a part for over 100 years was changing, we made application in the spring of 2018 for a demolition permit. We understood in making that application that the application would be reviewed by City heritage planning staff, who would take such actions as were reasonable to the planning staff, as a standard part of the application process, since 85 Holton Ave. S. is on the City's *Inventory of Significant Places of Worship in the City of Hamilton 1801-2001*.

The City's heritage planner issued a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment and presented it to the Committee. The Committee adopted the planning staff recommendation that the former St. Giles site be given a municipal heritage designation.

The City Council, however, on the Planning Committee's recommendation, set aside the Heritage Committee's recommendation that the property be designated in July 2018, with the condition that New Vision provide a reasonable statement of heritage significance of the building for the City's heritage files.

It is New Vision's belief that the municipal council acted within the scope of the Ontario Heritage Act in July 2018, and did not find reason to agree with the Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee that the building's heritage significance met the criteria established in the Ontario Heritage Act, 9/06.

This is an important point that we feel the subsequent actions of the Committee suggest the Committee has not reasonably digested.

At its meeting on March 26, 2021, without any substantial interaction with us as property owners, or further research of your own that could call into question the July 2018 decision by the municipal council not to designate, the Committee recommended to the municipal council that the property be placed on the Register of Properties of Municipal Cultural Value or Interest.

We wonder if the Committee's actions are meant as disrespect for us as religious use property owners, a disrespect which we have felt we have experienced as early as our first delegation to the Committee in 2014.

Subsequent to your March 26 meeting and through public reporting of your meeting, we learned that the Building Department incorrectly cancelled our demolition permit *application*. We then simply sought to correct the City to keep the redevelopment processes in order. As it turned out this administrative snafu within the demolition application process has caused considerable embarrassment to both the City and to New Vision in the past few months, including completely unwarranted negative speculation by some City Councillors in a public meeting of our intentions in our attempt to correct the administrative error. We ask you to correct your own understanding of what happened, if you have not done so. One way you could correct your understanding, for example, might be to ask heritage planning staff to dig into that with New Vision and with the Building Department and report to you.

Please note that New Vision had not completed the demolition permit application for the Department to review and adjudicate, and in fact, has not challenged the mistaken cancellation subsequent to the furor that developed as our attempt to be good citizens and neighbours by keeping processes in order was misinterpreted. We are not happy with the vacant and impaired building sitting in the midst of a

neighbourhood of which we value being a part. We want to arrive at a good outcome for our property in light of our changing place in the social fabric as soon as these processes of which you and we are a part permit.

The building remains standing. The reasons in favour of its demolition have not changed. It took us a further two years to find a development partner that could meet our objectives for the property. Our search was guided by the good faith understanding we had with our municipal council respecting our 2018 demolition application. Our development partner has transparently and openly invested resources into studies requested by the current term of Council that deepen the understanding of why this building is not preservable by the municipality without either a) unreasonably taxing the property owners themselves or b) charging proponents of preservation to find the significant sources of funding that enable New Vision to continue its religious presence on this site and in this neighbourhood and have the 1912 building preserved in a circumstance in which time is of the essence, because this vacant and impaired building is a blight upon *our* neighbourhood.

We believe this finding would already be evident without our development partner's good faith investment of resources into explaining it further if the Municipal Heritage Committee had completed the survey of heritage places of worship that it began in 2014. We note that the survey has yet to appear for public comment.

At no point subsequent to the 2018 decision has the Committee reached out to us as property owners of a place of worship in the spirit of the *Heritage Places of Worship: A Guide to Conserving Heritage Places of Worship in Ontario Communities*. New Vision, in contrast, has embraced a feasible future for the 24 Main W site as a municipally designated heritage property, and worked closely with heritage planning staff and economic renewal staff to make the 1868 former Centenary building a highly regarded example of heritage conservation in Hamilton. Once again, had your Committee either completed its survey of heritage places of worship, or engaged us in the spirit of the Provincial heritage places of worship guide, your understanding of the complexity and challenges of these two buildings and our mission as a religious charity might have made you more our ally than our antagonist. We would prefer the former relationship.

As you no doubt are aware, the Ontario Heritage Act has been amended and will be proclaimed July 1 2021. The Province has committed to provide clearer guidelines to municipal councils on how to evaluate and research heritage elements of the built form of their communities as part of its amendment evaluation process. We ask you join us in urging the Province to put those clearer guidelines into property owner and municipal council hands as soon as possible so that other religious property owners and successor municipal heritage committees to yourselves across Ontario have a better legislative environment within which to interact.

A draft revision of the *Heritage Places of Worship: A Guide to Conserving Heritage Places of Worship in Ontario Communities* has been issued for public comment. I close with a quotation from the revised preface and invite you to consider what comment you might wish to make to the revision team during this review period:

Many heritage properties change or are adapted over time, but places of worship may be different in that they often have evolving spiritual value in addition to cultural heritage value. Heritage places of worship may be thought of as “living cultural heritage resources” due to the ongoing need to change or adapt them to new philosophies, doctrines or practices of worship. This should be considered when deciding the best approach to conserving a heritage place of worship (<https://prod-environmental-registry.s3.amazonaws.com/2021-05/POW-FINAL%20DRAFT-compressed.pdf>).

We continue to seek open and meaningful dialogue with you over the two places of worship we own. We do this in accordance with the provisions of and in the spirit of the Ontario Heritage Act and the guidance related to it issued by the Province to municipal councils and property owners of places of worship.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Sloan".

Rev. Dr. Ian Sloan
Minister
Chair, Board of Trustees

cc. Councillor Nann