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Dear Sirs/Mesdames:

RE: Objection to the Applicant's Cultural Heritage Proposal of a Stand-Alone Façade and six garden planter boxes for the corner of Dow Avenue and Main Street West UHOPA-20-012 and ZAC20-016

We, the undersigned residents of the Ainslie Wood East Neighbourhood, wholeheartedly support the unanimous motion of the Cultural Heritage Committee, which was passed on February 25,

2022, and the unanimous motion passed by the Planning Committee on March 22, 2022, which recommended to Council that 1107 Main Street West, Hamilton be added to the Municipal Heritage Register and to the staff work plan for heritage designation of the property under the Ontario Heritage Act.

It is our sincere hope that the extant building of the Grace Lutheran Church will be utilized for adaptive use or in the alternative that many heritage attributes of the Gothic and Neo-Gothic architecture be utilized in any new redevelopment of the property. We are fully aware of the fact that the property is on an LRT Corridor, and that as such, is subject to the pressures of higher intensification where it can be accommodated. In fact, we support a truly affordable housing redevelopment with subsidized rents for this site, and we believe that the Applicant has missed a splendid opportunity to partner with CMHC, as this federal agency already has a long and meaningful involvement with these lands and with Grace Lutheran Church.

Upon reviewing the Applicant's Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) Report we have regretfully concluded that the Municipality must now independently make the proper determination of the cultural heritage and historical context of the Church site and the degree to which adaptive use, conservation or preservation can be accomplished. This is because we believe that the CHIA Report recently filed by the Applicant did not sufficiently research the history of the property and consequently the Report failed to present the necessary information to determine the full historical context of the property.

We are also of the belief that the Report overly relied upon perceived notions and incorrect assumptions and in the process, it has minimized any adaptive reuse or preservation of the Church and its Gothic and Neo-Gothic architectural and heritage attributes. This unfortunately resulted in either minimal conservation of the building in its entirety or in part, and in respect to the CHIA Report submitted on December 3, 2021, it directly led to the Applicant's recommendation that the City of Hamilton donate an offsite location to allow the Applicant to erect garden beds using salvaged material from the Church.

We are most shocked and dismayed to learn that the Applicant's Planning Consultant, at the meeting of the Planning Committee on March 22, 2022, advised the Committee Members that the Heritage and Planning Staff are "generally supportive" and "supportive" of the Applicant's most recent recommendation – a stand-alone façade of the front door and wall of the Church building with six community garden planter boxes on both sides of the wall - which is to be erected at the corner of Dow Avenue and Main Street West. We strongly believe that this recommendation should be dismissed as being unacceptable for deserving the support by Heritage and Planning Staff. On the contrary we all strongly urge Heritage and Planning Staff to immediately reject the Applicant's recommendation for the following reasons.

The specific inclusion of the six "community garden planters" is presumably to recognize the symbolic role of Grace Lutheran Church as a participant during the years 2010 to 2020 in the Hamilton Victory Gardens food bank program. It is not clear at all as to why the Applicant decided that this specific 10-year period of participation should be perpetually and symbolically commemorated over all of the other aspects of the activities of Grace Lutheran Church,

particularly when Hamilton Victory Gardens has 17 other locations for growing vegetables for food banks throughout the City of Hamilton. It is also puzzling as to why the Applicant ignored the other gardens and walkways and sitting areas on the Church property which were open to the public, such as the meditative “Mary Gardens”, the “Peace Gardens”, the biodiversity of the “Bee Pollinator” garden, and the many other landscaped flower gardens, shrubs and trees located throughout the semi-public grounds. The Applicant also ignored the Church’s strong leadership role and commitment to environmentalism and climate change by being one of the pioneers in disconnecting downspouts into the storm sewer system and only irrigating its entire grounds using a series of rainwater collection barrels.

The Applicant therefore should honour and commemorate the Grace Lutheran Church by expanding the size of the proposed extraordinarily small rear courtyard and utilizing the existing stone benches and salvaged material from the Church to erect a much more appropriate semi-public landscaped courtyard incorporating the same floral themes and gardens that are part of the Church’s landscaped property. Accordingly, we find the Applicant’s attempt to have six “community garden planters” symbolize the cultural heritage of the site, to be demeaning and insulting, as the proposed development represents quite the opposite in terms of environmentalism and the ideals which the Church truly represents.

This is even more acutely felt because the “community garden planters” will rest on a site plan footprint in which several large and beautiful municipal trees will be needlessly cut down or lost because the Applicant refuses to adhere to the setback requirements set out in the zoning by-law, and because the Applicant will be excavating an even larger portion of the lot below grade for a massive underground parking garage. All these actions make a mockery of the Church’s commitment to biodiversity and the environment, its dedication in trying to mitigate the effects of climate change, and its responsibility to maintain watershed recharge by the extensive use of permeable surfaces and rainwater collection barrels.

The proposed stand-alone façade of the front door and wall of the Church is similarly an insufficient and inappropriate replacement for the actual heritage attributes of Grace Lutheran Church. To destroy the Gothic and Neo-Gothic architecture of the Church without any meaningful adaptive reuse or conservation or preservation on the actual interior portion of the proposed redevelopment will be a significant loss of a heritage property for the neighbourhood and all of Hamilton.

The Applicant’s intention to erect a stand-alone façade replication, (which we believe to be totally without any precedent in terms of cultural heritage preservation and which lacks any appreciative value in the realm of public art), and to present this proposal as being in compliance with the actual heritage conservation requirements envisioned under the UHOP and the Ontario Heritage Act, is a terrible precedent for the City of Hamilton. This is because any resident of Hamilton who lives not only along the LRT route, but along any bus route or higher-order traffic corridor, and within the vicinity of a heritage property, will soon be facing similar applications in which Developers will create a “Potemkin village” of their own stand-alone facades in lieu of any meaningful cultural heritage preservation and conservation.

Accordingly, it is our sincere hope that Heritage and Planning Staff of the City of Hamilton will reconsider their support of the Applicant's recommendation and will now advise the Applicant that it must resubmit a new Cultural Heritage proposal which meets the policies and guidelines of the City of Hamilton and the Ontario Heritage Act.

We thank you for your consideration.

Yours very truly,

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