

Clerks Office
GIC - Wednesday, May 1, 2024
Proposal to Rename the former St Marks Church

Dear Members of City Council

Please do not support the proposal to Rename the former St Marks Church Magnolia Hall

Engage Hamilton, did not follow the "Policy Statement of Intent".

- Continue the traditional practice of naming municipal property, buildings, and features after significant geographical or historical elements
- Recognize on an exceptional basis, significant contributions that organizations or individuals have made to the public life and the well-being of the City of Hamilton

There is nothing significant geographically or historically for Magnolia Hall. Magnolias can be found throughout southern Ontario, brought here through US nursery stock, via China and Asia.

HISTORY:

The Durand Neighbourhood Association and its residents came together in the early 70's to bring stability to their neighbourhood. It has been involved in urban city planning, revitalization of a decaying downtown, control of development and demolition, support of innovative housing, preservation of heritage sites, saving a public school, creating a park and encouraging public participation in municipal decision-making. Durand recently celebrated 50 years of uninterrupted community service.

As for St Mark's, if it were not for former Aldermen Agro, McCullough, Mayor Bob Morrow, LACAC and the Durand Neighbourhood Association, there would not have been this new community /event space and public garden. Since the early 1990s, the advocacy through decades of former and current DNA Board Members, engaged Duranders and other municipal leaders including Andrea Horwath, Ron Corsini, Bob Bratina, Fred Eisenberger Jason Farr, Culture & Tourism Staff, Anna Bradford, Ian Kerr Wilson and Heritage Planner Nina Chapple has been unwavering. The Association and Duranders remained adamant that St Marks be a community space and a green space for this downtown dense neighbourhood; staving off another hi-rise development, several Request For Proposals for best and highest use, and a purchase by an organization that not only failed to find the funds but was in legal difficulties!

Finally, in 2015, the council-directed St Marks Feasibility Study was presented to the Council

Duranders and the Ward 2 community were actively involved;

- \$100,000 from Ward 2's 2014 Participatory Budget;
- \$280,000 from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) – sesquicentennial project;
- \$280,000 from the Tourism and Culture Division's Capital block funding for 2016 – pending Council's approval;

- \$400,000 from Ward 2's 2015 Area Rating – sesquicentennial project.
- volunteered with Staff opening St Marks to Doors Open in 2016. We received almost 500 visitors.
- Participating in the 2022 groundbreaking ceremony

*When the restoration was approved by Council in 2016, to recognize the efforts the Durand Neighbourhood Association and the Community, the DNA would be permitted to use the facility for meetings and events with the provision they help to look after the gardens of the designated open space. I was a the Chair of the Garden Team that met with staff during this time. I am glad to hear that Staff are still engaged with the DNA to finally have a community space to hold their meetings.

In light of the engagement of the DNA and the Durand community over the last 30 years, the public participation exercise Engage Hamilton Rename St Marks was inadequate and skewed. Names were suggested by the Staff and the Councillor. For any that wished to suggest an alternate name, instructions were given to not use St Marks. Yet, for any of us who have followed the timeline once the Feasibility Study was approved by the Council, the former St Marks was referred to as St Marks Centre both on the website and the onsite display board at St Marks during the entire restoration and new build.

There was no Town Hall or opportunity to hear from Duranders who do not participate in FB. I recall one Spectator newspaper article.

Surely the volunteer efforts and advocacy of this outstanding Association and Duranders to engage its community should be recognized. Lets call the former St Marks **Durand Hall**. Only fitting to celebrate the efforts of Duranders since 1972!

Janice Brown

DNA Board Member-1995-2023

Durand Honorary Member 2024