

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** A Plea regarding the motion to Historically Designate 84 York Boulevard

From: Tim Rosenberger

Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 3:22 AM

To: Office of the Mayor <mailto:Officeofthe.Mayor@hamilton.ca>

Subject: A Plea regarding the motion to Historically Designate 84 York Boulevard

To Her Honour Mayor Horwath and/or trusted Mayoral Staff,

My name is Tim Rosenberger, a resident of Ward 1 and a member of Philpott Memorial Church for 14 years. Over that time I have had various roles related to facilities planning, involving both maintenance and improvements. I wrote a letter in opposition to the notice of intention to designate, but was not able to participate in the meeting of the planning committee because it was in direct conflict with my daughter's college graduation in Ottawa.

What follows is not the official position of the church. It is instead my gathered thoughts as the congregation has wrestled with various issues over many years.

I am writing to ask that you consider my words below, and to consider voting against the current resolution going to full council to place the particular heritage designation on the specified portions of the building at 84 York Boulevard. I recognize that the Heritage department does an excellent job of identifying locations with historical and cultural value, and that 84 York Boulevard represents fragments of Hamilton's history that may not be particularly well known. However, it is the role of council to weigh that value against the cost to other initiatives and community priorities.

As I worked on this letter, the content became long, so I am providing a point form summary here:

- The congregation has undergone a beautiful transformation in recent years, opening its heart to those struggling around it by implementing program elements that specifically address human needs for resources and welcome into positive community and personal relationships. The outcome is that we have built a diverse internal community that embraces across traditional socio-economic, racial and cultural divisions.
- The long-term and operating cost to remain in the buildings currently occupied by the congregation is very high – well beyond the resources of the community to sustain.
- Beyond the cost of maintaining the status quo the current buildings are considered deficient for congregational purposes on the grounds of limited accessibility and risks associated with old utilities and structure. There is also a high operational carbon footprint associated with heating and cooling this large, old collection of occupied spaces.
- Proceeds from the sale of properties including 84 York Boulevard are essential to plans for relocation within walking distance to facilities tailored to the services we want to provide with the desired improvements in accessibility, and carbon footprint reduction. Being on major transit routes I hope for adoption of public transit in place of personal cars by many congregants, further reducing our congregational carbon footprint on a per capita basis. We have also started a discussion about how we might integrate affordable housing into the new site, though this would likely happen as a second phase of development.
- Designation of 84 York Boulevard as a protected historical property has the potential to derail the completion of the sale of the property, which would strip us of the funds to complete construction

at the new site and leave us with liability for the payments we have already received. At the very least, time and financial resources will be consumed while sorting out the situation, reducing the resources available for the beneficial ends we intend.

- I also am concerned that even with the best of intentions to save it, the buildings at 84 York Boulevard will suffer the same arc that the Tivoli Theatre at James and York seems to be on – that lack of a financially viable plan to preserve the buildings will in the end lead to a loss due to decay. In the meanwhile, the broader community suffers the general opportunity loss of the benefit that would have been realized by allowing earlier purposeful demolition and sooner redevelopment toward a dense, lively locale to support local businesses and cultural amenities.

Outside of the direct impacts on our congregation, it seems to me that the creation of as much housing as possible (even if somewhat upscale) lowers the pressure on existing housing regarding upscaling and condo conversions. This may be somewhat simplistic, but there is some truth in it. A similar message was sent to my local councillor, Maureen Wilson.

Sincerely, respectfully, and with best regards,

Tim Rosenberger

PS what follows below is an elaboration on some of the points above. Not all points have been given such treatment.

The sustaining objective of the congregation's work as an organization has been to honour God by investing in people. In recent years we have had a bit of a change of heart and have made a massive increase in the scope of our programming, to support the physical neighbors of the building - the unhoused, precariously housed, newcomers to Canada and people in similar situations that defy clean categorization. We aim to help people sustain life and hope, and to make positive life changes. In the midst of connecting people to practical life needs we have been laying the groundwork for our own transformation into a more diverse congregation cutting across socio-economic and racial lines.

Our attachment to the building has been strong, and we wrestled with options to permit us to continue to occupy the current building while renovating to maintain structural integrity and to provide full accessibility and safety. Besides the millions of dollars (that we did not have) to address the deterioration of the superficial faux stone facade, the underlying brick structure and roof structure, the building has issues of limited accessibility, lead pipes, other old water pipes that cannot withstand exposure to the full line pressure of the city water supply and many other issues related to compliance with fire and electrical codes that would become applicable if we were to go ahead with any more substantial renovations of the building. There is also concern about the operational carbon footprint of the facility as there is limited insulation and vapour barrier in the building. To address this would also involve a massive cost and would subtly but significantly impact many aspects of the building including heritage features such as doors and windows.

Several purchase and sale agreements at market rates for properties owned by the congregation allowed us both to acquire other properties, and to renovate and re-built those properties to provide appropriate, accessible spaces to continue and expand these programs. We were even beginning discussions about the feasibility of incorporating affordable housing into the redevelopment of the new properties, though more likely as part of a second phase of building.