



Philpott Church

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June 29, 2025

City of Hamilton

Planning Committee & Cultural Heritage Planning Staff

Attention: Ken Coit, Director, Heritage and Urban Design

Dear Ken,

RE: Philpott Memorial Church – 84 York Blvd, Hamilton – Potential Heritage Designation and Easement

We are writing on behalf of Philpott Church to provide an update on the property at 84 York Blvd and to respectfully request reconsideration of the proposed heritage designation currently under consideration.

Over the past several years, there has been extensive discussion and documentation between the Church and the City concerning this matter. We believe it is important to clarify the background, as well as the Church's current circumstances and position.

At the outset, we wish to highlight these important facts before providing more detail below:

- (a) Philpott Church is thriving and growing. However the existing building cannot meet its congregation's needs, and after extensive consultation over several years we have determined that it is not feasible to update the building to meet our needs. We are in the process of relocating to another site in downtown Hamilton, and this relocation is heavily dependent on the sale of 84 York Blvd, Hamilton.
- (b) The only Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) that the Church is aware of for this property determined that, due to the poor condition of the building, it cannot feasibly be preserved, relocated, or integrated into new development.
- (c) The CHIA indicated that there are some specific heritage elements of the building worth protecting by salvage and reuse, which the Church was open to accepting through a narrow heritage easement.
- (d) The City's potential designation of the property has totally disrupted a firm and unconditional sale of the property. If the City does designate the property, the significant risks are that
 - (i) the 84 York Blvd property could become vacant, unused, unrepaired, and a major embarrassment to the City being right in the middle of the downtown and entertainment district; and
 - (ii) the Church may no longer be able to maintain its physical presence and ministry in the downtown.

History and Decision to Relocate

Philpott Memorial Church has been part of downtown Hamilton for over 120 years. Over this time, we have seen our neighbourhood evolve, and we are committed to continuing our presence and service in the downtown core. However, our existing building at 84 York Blvd has reached the end of its useful life. The structure is no longer safe, suitable, or economically viable to repair. A structural condition analysis concluded that the building should be demolished due to severe deterioration of the masonry envelope. The mortar is delaminating, and the underlying brick is too degraded to support any meaningful restoration. The City is well aware of these conditions.

After careful study and extensive consultation, the congregation made the decision to relocate. We are currently investing in a new home for the Church at 160 King Street East – a project that will allow us to remain in the heart of Hamilton and continue our mission. The funding for this new facility will only be made possible through the sale of 84 York Blvd. As such, we entered into an Agreement of Purchase and Sale in 2021, with closing scheduled for late 2024. Significant deposits were made by the purchaser and released to the Church for use toward construction, secured by a mortgage on the property.

The City's Heritage Review

In 2023, before the Church could conclude its sale transaction, a single member of the public submitted a heritage request in respect of the property, and the City began examining heritage designation options for the property. In relation to this, a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) was prepared by MacNaughton Hermsen Britton Clarkson Planning Limited (MHBC), which was submitted to City staff in October 2023. The CHIA concluded that, among other things:

- The building cannot feasibly be preserved, relocated, or integrated into new development;
- The appropriate conservation strategy is commemoration and the salvage and reuse of select elements; and
- The only elements worth preserving are (i) the exterior columns, (ii) the wood double doors in the portico, (iii) the date stone, (iv) the lunette window in the frontispiece gate, and (v) the stained-glass windows.

After extensive investigations and building assessments, and representations by the developer and the Church to the Planning Committee, the City determined that the proper avenue to protect the heritage elements of the property was by way of a “heritage easement”. While the draft easement proposed by the City rightly required the preservation of the architectural features set out in the CHIA, it went beyond that by also including very specific and onerous building requirements that are not related to heritage preservation, namely that the developer must include a specific number of family units and affordable units.

As a direct result of the potential heritage designation with inclusion of these building conditions, the buyer refused to close the sale transaction – a complex transaction that took years to develop and may now be financially very difficult to unwind.

As a congregation, we applaud the intent of the city to provide affordable housing for its marginalized people, but in this instance, adding this requirement to the heritage easement has had the opposite effect of threatening the viability of a church whose key ministries include assisting these needy people.

While a future owner may be able to repair, improve or redevelop the property within the bounds of a narrow and appropriate heritage easement, the specific and onerous building conditions proposed by the City would handcuff the site, depress its market value, and render the property much more difficult to sell.

Ultimately, if the City proceeds with a heritage designation, or insists on the overreaching heritage easement building requirements, it creates a very real risk that the Church will be left in a financial position that may be difficult to recover from, potentially jeopardizing its long-standing presence and mission in Hamilton.

Requested Outcomes

Accordingly, we respectfully submit two clear requests:

1. Primary Request – Discontinuation of the Heritage Process:

We ask that the City withdraw from the heritage designation and easement process at this time and allow these matters to be revisited only in the context of a future planning application.

This approach would preserve the opportunity for meaningful input while not prematurely binding the future of the property.

2. Alternative Request – Narrowing of the Easement to Heritage Preservation

If the City determines that immediate protection is necessary, we urge that any heritage easement be strictly limited to the actual heritage related architectural requirements set out in the CHIA prepared by MHBC and recommended by City staff in paragraph 12(a) of Planning Committee Minutes 24-010.

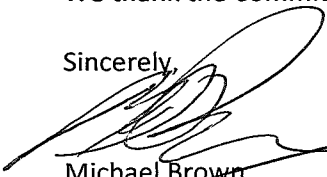
This limited easement would properly reflect the cultural heritage value of the building while respecting the dire structural condition and the site's future potential. It would also align with the recommendations of the CHIA.

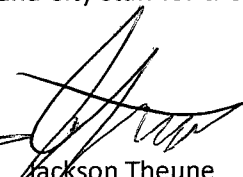
Additionally, our legal counsel has raised concerns about whether the City has the authority under Section 37 of the Ontario Heritage Act to impose affordable housing requirements in a heritage easement. The Act authorizes easements only "for the conservation of property of cultural heritage value or interest." A requirement to build affordable housing units is not a conservation measure. It is a planning condition, and not one appropriately included into a Section 37 easement agreement.

Philpott Church remains committed to downtown Hamilton. We are not asking to erase the past — only to be given the opportunity to build a viable future. The present path risks undermining that future entirely, with no clear benefit to the City or its citizens.

We thank the Committee and City staff for their continued time and attention.

Sincerely,


Michael Brown
Chair, Board of Elders


Jackson Theune
Interim Lead Pastor


Ralph Benedict
Chair, Finance Committee


Malcolm Sears
Chair, Building Committee