

**From:** Chris Osborne [<mailto:schamhorst1943@yahoo.ca>]

**Sent:** June-05-19 9:45 AM

**To:** External - CommonClerk

**Subject:** ATTN: Mayor and Council - Letter Against Removal of the Lower West HCA

### **King St. West - Removal of Heritage Conservation Area**

My name is Christopher Osborne, and I am presently the owner of two historic properties in the West side and pursuing the purchase of a third. I officially requested in December of 2017 that one of my buildings, located one block over from the present Lower West HCA; at 152 Watson Street, be designated as a heritage building so as I may protect its exterior appearance for the long-term. Access to grant monies are something of secondary concern, but I will address that later. My intent is to add my other properties to the Heritage Register, as that will not only protect their value as a contributor to the aesthetic appearance of the street or neighbourhood, but also protect their property and resale values. The retention of value for properties located in HCA's is well documented by City Staff.

I believe that more education and direct conversation is needed between the residents and owners of property in the West Saint John area with the Heritage Development Board. When I was approached over a year ago by Mr. Laskey to sign his petition, it was made clear to me at that time his primary concern was the financial implications of owning a heritage property. When Mr. Laskey made his pitch I was not given any other reason to sign and while I can empathize with his situation, I cannot agree that financial grounds make a good case to remove a building from the HCA. There are programs intended to assist financially, and these programs should be strengthened and better publicized and utilized. The visual integrity of some of the homes in the surrounding area may have been disrupted by poor stewardship, however for the Heritage Development Board or Council to Recommend that more be done to hasten the alterations of the area would be to accelerate decline, not halt it. In fact the Lower West side still retains the vast majority of its original buildings, on their original plots, more reason that the HCA should be expanded, not removed before more of the architectural fabric of the area is lost or destroyed.

There are other properties in the Lower West HCA which contribute to the area, and with removal of designation, they could easily slide backwards, which has been clearly shown with the removal of St. George's Church. Once removed a property is likely to be altered in a non-sympathetic way, further degrading its heritage and resale value for what often amounts to a passing situation or a 'flash in the pan' proposal. I will also note that there are a number of names on the petition, such as our previous neighbour Mike Stuart, who no longer reside in the area, and lived there for only a brief time as a short-term tenant.

As a strong proponent of our Built Heritage I cannot agree with his request to remove the buildings in the Lower West HCA, especially whereas it is my goal to have more added. Reinvestment in property is a significant expense, and while it is true that maintaining a Heritage Property is more costly at times, the bylaw only affects the exterior visual elements, and those in the HCA are free to do as they wish with the rest of the property, something which I believe has been grossly misunderstood and misstated by many in the community. While the applicants building and other in the HCA may not be 100% true to original, few seldom are, as is evidenced by the other application you have received for approval on Orange Street.

Tourists and locals alike can clearly see the benefits of steady and progressive investment in our built heritage in the uptown, and it is imperative that we do not lose sight of the fact that our entire city needs to benefit from the Heritage By-Laws, not just a small selection in the uptown core. I recommend that creative solutions to Mr. Laskey's problems be offered up, rather than removal from the proper zoning for such buildings.

In closing, I would like to read you a short passage from a carpenter's handbook, published in the 1920's with an opening quote written by John Ruskin;

***“When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for; and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say, as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them, 'See! This our father did for us.'”***

Christopher Osborne

Past President of Heritage Saint John & Owner of 152 Watson Street, West.