

**Hau, Lucy**

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**Subject:** FW: Item #14 - Development Services Committee - April 23, 2013

**From:** Amanda Helderman  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 23, 2013 2:49 PM  
**To:** Mayor & Councillors; Huycke, Stephen  
**Cc:** Robin Banerjee  
**Subject:** Item #14 - Development Services Committee - April 23, 2013

Mayor and Councillors,

We are writing to you regarding the City of Markham's denial for a demolition permit for a structure on 26 Albert Street. We encourage the position of the City that it is important to preserve our heritage. It is a public value that is worth defending and government has a role in this. We are arguing, however, that the City of Markham needs to work toward implementing a better policy. From a few cases in Markham's old village in the past few years, it has become obvious that Markham's heritage conservation policy does not work. Until a new policy framework is developed, the City should work to mitigate the harmful consequences of its flawed heritage conservation policy.

As you know, effective heritage conservation policy does not only consist of denying building or demolition permit requests for heritage buildings. It also requires attention for upkeep and maintenance of our heritage before it is too late to hold onto it. The assistance of professionally skilled staff who understand what is involved in maintaining heritage buildings that are hundreds of years old is also needed. We are arguing that the City of Markham's lack of attention to professional maintenance and upkeep of heritage buildings has had a hand in the deplorable state that the heritage building on 26 Albert Street finds itself in today.

The previous owner has gradually "demolished" this building "by neglect". This is a practice that the City claims it wants to discourage, even though the policies it has in place currently do nothing but encourage it. Upkeep, maintenance and restoration of heritage buildings are not actively encouraged, supported or enforced.

The willful practice of "demolition by neglect" has been applied in this case, long before the current owner, Mr. Crabtree, purchased the property. Throughout the early 2000s several neighbours complained repeatedly about the state of disrepair of the structure and neglect of the property as a whole. The building finally became uninhabitable before or around 2005 and has since stood vacant, unheated and partially open to the elements. In response to neighbours' complaints, the then-Town of Markham did nothing.

The former owner, responsible for the neglect described above, still resides in our neighbourhood and is in the process of letting more structures fall into a state of disrepair. The City of Markham currently seems to be sending the signal that it chooses not to act upon this and turns a blind eye.

We are recommending that the City of Markham adopts a more balanced policy to conserve its heritage.

- Until a better selection of policy instruments is developed, we are asking that the City of Markham assumes its part of the responsibility for letting the structure fall into a state of disrepair, despite repeated complaints from concerned neighbours.
- If the City of Markham is serious about conservation of this structure, it should offer its expertise and work with the current owner, Mr. Crabtree, to find a workable and cost-effective solution to preserve and move the structure.
- Should a cost-effective and workable solution not be within reach, the City should consider allowing the structure to be demolished to prevent health and safety issues and to maintain the aesthetics of the neighbourhood.

Sincerely,

Robin Banerjee  
Amanda Helderman