

February 23, 2021

Dear City Council Members,

I want to start by saying that I recognize this is hot button issue for the City and its residents, with passionate positions taken on both sides of the proposed development at 3160 Albert Street (also known as the Cook House). As a homeowner on Leopold Crescent, I have an appreciation for heritage homes and what they can bring to a neighbourhood as there are at least four such homes within several hundred yards of my home. I state the above simply to show that my below comments, while strongly in favour of the proposed development, are not blind or without consideration of the arguments on the other side of this issue.

I have followed this matter closely from the beginning, participated in the virtual Town Hall in the Fall and watched the Planning Commission's Special Meeting this past Saturday. While I am certainly not an expert on heritage properties, zoning laws or development laws and bylaws, I do feel with my participation in this process I have a good understanding of the facts and issues relating to this matter. Below please find the four reasons why I support this proposed development and why I believe City Council should approve the proposed development application on Thursday February 24, 2021.

1. **Saves the Cook House** – As I understand it, the main concern voiced in opposition of Mr. Lien's proposal is that the Cook House will be demolished. For anyone who has taken the time to participate in this process and read the proposal and supporting materials submitted by Mr. Lien, you would quickly learn that Mr. Lien is in fact committing millions of dollars to properly restore and maintain the Cook House. I believe there is a strong misconception regarding his intentions with this property and that many believe he will demolish the Cook House to make way for the building of a new condominium complex. That perception, however, is completely false. At the Town Hall meeting we were advised by Mr. Lien that his proposal would save 92% of the Cook House (sunroom and garage would not be saved). Additionally, while the Planning Commission did not review or discuss a letter submitted by Mr. Lien prior to the Special Meeting held on February 21, 2021, the Chair of the Planning Commission did note that he had reviewed the letter and that it contained information regarding amendments to Mr. Lien's development plan that would save 100% of the Cook House. I realize there are rules and procedures for these types of meetings regarding the submission of documents, but it is lost on me as to why the Planning Commission, particularly the Chair, would not review and discuss this additional information prior to making its recommendation to City Council. Regardless, the fact remains that the Cook House will not be demolished or destroyed and that Mr. Lien has committed to saving the entirety of this heritage home. With this commitment it leaves one wondering what else the Planning Commission and/or City Council needs to approve this proposed development?
2. **Proposed Development Complies with the Official City Plan** – The Planning Commission has stated that the proposed re-zoning that would allow the proposed development to move forward fits the Official City Plan but that Mr. Lien's proposal does not as it would be a significant change to the heritage property. First, the historical significance of this property is the Cook House itself. Given Mr. Lien has committed to saving 100% of the Cook House, it begs the question as to how this does not fit with the heritage property? I am confused at how moving the house closer to Albert Street and maintaining and restoring the house changes the "heritage of the property". Second, it is hard to understand how maintaining, restoring and improving the overall structure of the Cook House in its current form and adding a complimentary addition "does not sufficiently

demonstrate compatibility with the surrounding built environment and administration's position is that the proposal is not consistent with the established character of the area and streetscape along the west side of Albert Street" (direct quote from the Planning Commission rejecting Mr. Lien's proposal). It does not take a heritage expert or a planning commission member to recognize that the homes on the west side of Albert Street, before and after the Cook House, range greatly in design, style, age, materials used to build the homes, infill, partial and full renovations, not to mention greatly differing states of repair. There is no one consistent style in which this proposed development would offend, to suggest otherwise is simply untrue. I would be curious to know the objective grading system or scale the Planning Commission used to evaluate the proposed development in comparison to the other homes in the neighbourhood to determine that the proposed development is not compatible with the surrounding built environment and not consistent with the character of the area and streetscape. If the Planning Commission did not use an objective grading system to make this determination, what criteria was used other than the Members' own subjective and personal view of the proposed development as it relates to this specific point?

3. **Increased Property Tax Revenue** – With the increased number of individual housing units on the property there will be additional property taxes in which the City can collect from each unit owner. Mr. Lien advised at the virtual Town Hall and again this past Saturday that this development would generate an increase in property tax revenue to the City by approximately 700%. While I am not aware of the current property taxes of the Cook House, I am going to estimate that those taxes are somewhere in the range of \$7,000.00 - \$8,000.00 a year. If this estimated range is correct, that would be additional property tax revenue for the City of approximately \$49,000.00 - \$56,000.00 a year. If one looks at this over a ten year span, this is additional property tax revenue for the City in the amount of \$490,000.00 – \$560,000.00, as compared to \$70,000.00 - \$80,000.00 for just the home. This is not an insignificant amount of additional property tax revenue for the City on a yearly basis and over a ten year period, surely the City and its citizens would benefit from this additional property tax revenue.
4. **Overwhelming Community Support for the Proposed Development** – The City, in an effort to gauge the citizens' support/opposition to the proposed development, made available a public form for which citizens could voice their opinion. The City has advised that they received a record 1,820 submissions regarding this proposed development, with 1,171 supporting the proposed development, 600 opposed and 49 were presumably indifferent. By the numbers alone, 64% of the people who voiced their opinion support the proposed development. However, when evaluating the significance of the opinions voiced, rather than acknowledging the significant support for the proposal, on Saturday the Planning Commission focused on the fact that 1,105 submissions were made anonymously and that this somehow discredited the support shown for the development. If the City and/or the Planning Commission only wanted submissions by those willing to do provide their name or address or some identifying feature, that this is such an important factor in weighing the support or opposition to this proposed development, they certainly could have made this a requirement of the form in which they created, however they did not. What is further confusing is that during the Special Meeting on Saturday, one of Planning Commission Members (I apologize I cannot recall her name), prior to asking Mr. Lien a question about those who voiced their opinion, acknowledged that nearly 2/3 of those who responded to the request for comment from the City supported the development but that she was disregarding this because the support was anonymous and as such put significantly more weight into those who appeared on that day. It is confusing how an objective Planning Commission Member can

make such a statement and that neither the Chair nor any other Planning Commission Member addressed her stance on this point. Regardless of whether the support or opposition was anonymous or not or in person (virtual or telephone), voicing one's opinion in the manner in which citizens have been instructed by the City is all that matters. Accordingly, the numbers demonstrate that the community clearly supports this proposed development and the City must acknowledge this in their deliberations.

In considering both the pros and cons on both sides of this issue, it seems common sense to me that there must be a middle ground here in which both the City and Mr. Lien can come to an agreement to allow for this development to move forward. I have a hard time believing that between the two parties there is no way to come to an agreement on how to maintain and restore the Cook House while at the same time allowing further complimentary development on the property given all the benefits noted above. In this citizen's humble opinion, it is in fact the duty of the City to work with Mr. Lien to see that this project gets off the ground.

In closing, I want to thank City Council for providing me the opportunity to voice my opinion on the proposed development and I sincerely hope the Members seriously consider each of these points when making their decision on this development.

Sincerely,



Gordon Pritchard

Leopold Crescent Home Owner