

November 1, 2021

Mayor and Councillors  
City of Stratford  
City Hall  
Stratford, ON N5A 2L3

Dear Mayor Mathieson and Councillors of the City of Stratford:

Re: Proposed Ontario Street Redevelopment — Stratford's Time to Lead

On November 8 you have a historic decision to make.

You will be deciding this issue — whether to okay the proposed redevelopment of part of Ontario Street between Queen and Trow Streets— *right in the middle of COP26*, the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

We are all coming late to grasping the grave threat that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions pose to our economy, our society and our safety. COP26 is perhaps humanity's last best hope of summoning the will to tackle the existential crisis of our time. This will require world-wide commitment and action.

Everyone will need to do their part. Individuals, businesses and organizations, communities and governments at all levels. Governments and politicians especially have the responsibility to lead, and to lead-by-example.

The decision you have to make here — on proposal for new construction with complete destruction of three older structures — is a tailor-made opportunity to demonstrate climate change leadership.

You have heard cogent arguments against this proposed development based on planning, heritage, and stable neighbourhoods. This moment though requires you to confront the GHG/environmental reasons for turning this particular proposal back:

- Demolishing sound buildings to make way for new builds entirely wastes resources (the materials and embodied energy in a structure);
- Demolition activity, including transporting the waste, releases carbon emissions (this is part of the embodied carbon or carbon footprint of a building which stays locked up if demolition is avoided);
- New construction is heavily concrete-reliant; cement, the key ingredient, is one of the largest contributors of GHG emissions in the built environment;

- Crucially, *the emissions created by demolition and new construction cannot be offset, no matter how energy-efficient the new structure might be.*

In short, keeping, retrofitting and reusing the Ontario Street buildings — and integrating them into a less intensive redevelopment — is the environmentally better solution. Say that's what you're looking for, and you'll see what happens.

It is perhaps for Stratford and its citizens alone to decide what kinds of neighbourhoods it wants and how much it values its history and heritage (although why have Heritage Corridors and Heritage Areas if you don't respect them?). Those of us in St. Marys and elsewhere, though, are free to hold you to account for the environmental repercussions of your decisions, which ultimately affect us all.

A global climate emergency can't be met with the same old approaches. COP26 is a challenge to you, like everyone, to think about what we can do every day to combat climate change. But as municipal leaders you are called on to do more: *to use a tough environmental lens in making planning and development decisions.*

On November 8: This isn't about protecting the past but using our older building stock to find solutions for the future. Step it up, Stratford.

Sincerely,

Dan Schneider  
St. Marys

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