REPORT OF THE
PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT FACILITATOR
ON THE
LISTER BLOCK
HAMILTON, ONTARIO

Submitted by:
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September 27, 2006
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ON THE LISTER BLOCK, HAMILTON, ONTARIO

Following the agreement of Hamilton City Council in June of this year to a 60 day pause before the execution of a demolition permit for the Lister Block, I was asked by the Minister of Culture to chair a working group which represents a cross section of Hamiltonians. Since that initial motion Council has been gracious to provide us with additional time to complete our work and, in particular, to examine in detail your space needs relative to the rehabilitation of the building. We appreciate your assistance and co-operation.

Our task was to develop a common understanding among the parties involved, of the facts and the challenges/opportunities presented by the Lister Block, ensure that all conservation options for the Lister Block are fully considered and finally to find solutions which are hopefully acceptable to all parties. In my report to you today, I believe that the Working Group has successfully completed those tasks and our conclusions speak to that success.

As you know we have kept our work confidential over the last number of months to ensure that we would be free to explore all options but we wanted Hamilton City Council to be the first to receive this report and the report of technical experts which I will speak to in a moment.

I will also be advising the Minister of Culture on the outcome of our work, as she is interested because of the heritage value of the Lister Block which is designated as an Historic Site by the City of Hamilton and based on an evaluation by the Ontario Heritage Trust is of Provincial significance.

Members of the Working Group include the following:

Mayor Larry Di Ianni
Councillor Maria Pearson
Dr. Grant Head, President, Hamilton Heritage Foundation
Anthony Butler, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario
Bill Curran, Hamilton and Burlington Society of Architects
Kathy Drewitt, General Manager, Downtown Hamilton BIA
Brian Henley, local historian
Joseph Mancinelli, International Vice President, L.I.U.N.A.
Warren Green, Hi-Rise Developments
Shawn Marr, Hi-Rise Developments
Tim McCabe, Director, Real Estate and Development, City of Hamilton
Since June we have held regular and at times intense meetings along with detailed site visits with the developer and technical experts. We have also been assisted by two expert heritage architects whose services were made available to us by the Ministry of Culture. Mr. Julian Smith of Julian Smith Architects and Mr. Clinton Brown of Clinton Brown Company Architecture. Both these gentlemen are international experts in their fields and have provided invaluable assistance to the Working Group in reaching its conclusions. They will also be providing an overview of a report they have prepared which speaks to the heritage value and the means by which this important property can be rehabilitated. You have that report before you today.

I also want to acknowledge the assistance and co-operation of Mayor Di Ianni and Councillor Pearson along with city staff who actively participated on the working group.

At the beginning of this process, each party had key interests which I would like to paraphrase:

- **City of Hamilton** - Responsibilities under the Heritage Act and the need for leasable space at a comparable price to the earlier proposal which will suit and meet the accommodation needs of city staff and a project which would be an incentive for downtown revitalization

- **Heritage community** - see the Lister Block retained and rehabilitated.

- **Developers and owners** - a feasible project, return on investment and linkage to redevelopment of the rest of the block.

- **BIA** – a result which will lead to downtown revitalization and investment.

I am encouraged by the discussions we have had to date and I am pleased to report that all of these interests can be addressed with the conclusions we have reached as a Working Group.

Our key conclusions are as follows:

- **Finance** - The General Manager of Finance and Corporate Services, Mr. Joseph Rinaldo will speak to financial details but it is our conclusion that this space can be adapted and rehabilitated for a price comparable to demolishing and replicating the building which was previously supported by Council. We also recognize that this project requires an increase in the Provincial subsidy for the accommodation of Public Health in this building.
- **Heritage value** – As noted in the Heritage Report this building can be rehabilitated in a cost effective and efficient manner – the building has local, provincial and national historic significance and its key attributes will be maintained through this rehabilitation. We believe this approach has support from the heritage community and Ministry of Culture and is consistent with the assessments made by the Ontario Heritage Trust.

- **Accommodation** – the rehabilitation of this building will create first class office and retail space with above average standards for employee comfort and satisfaction – this meets the city’s needs for the health department accommodation and supports a retail link to the rest of Downtown Hamilton. We have worked with the Medical Officer of Health and her staff to ensure that the needs of her department and clients are fully met and that the accommodation is as good and, in many respects better than that which could be obtained in a new structure.

- **Downtown revitalization** – rehabilitation of the Lister Block is the first step in redevelopment of the entire block and will be a cornerstone of downtown revitalization – evidence from other jurisdictions in Ontario demonstrates that rehabilitation of buildings of this nature has a net economic benefit in terms of generating further investment and raising the economic value of the downtown.

The Working Group recognizes that rehabilitation of the Lister Block is only the first step, a return on investment for the city and developer and a revitalized downtown is dependent on securing and implementing the redevelopment of the entire block, this is why we recognize that work must continue between the city and property owners to secure the redevelopment of the rest of the block, but on its own, the rehabilitation and re-use of the Lister Block is viable.

I would have liked to present to you today a plan that shows the rehabilitated Lister Block and a plan for an additional 40,000 plus square feet for the rest of the city block, but time did not permit the completion of the second phase. I am assured however that that work is well underway.

Based on the above we would ask that Council direct staff to undertake timely discussions and negotiations with the developers/land owners to finalize a proposed agreement and lease arrangement to serve as a basis for the necessary approvals to rehabilitate the Lister Block. We would also ask that staff be directed to continue work to secure a second phase of redevelopment of the remainder of the block.

I want to thank Council and the Minister of Culture for the opportunity to work on this project which I believe will lead to an exciting opportunity for the City, its residents and your downtown. I also want to thank the Working Group for their thoughtfulness, patience and insight during this process.