October 27, 2005

Mr. L. Dilanni and Members of Council
City of Hamilton
71 Main St. W.
Hamilton, Ontario L8N 3T4

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of Council:

Re: proposed Residential/Commercial Development
87-89 King St. E. (Report #05037)

The Board of Directors of the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area has reviewed the city’s proposed development at 87-89 King St. E. and has agreed to support the project.

We are pleased to see, at long last, a positive use for this key site in our Downtown core, especially as the development will see a mixed use of commercial space on the ground floor with residential use on the upper floors which is in keeping with the goals of the Downtown Secondary plan. We appreciate the efforts of the city to provide support for the retail component on the ground floor to support the other retail uses along the same block.

However we have some concerns over the proposed development’s projections of a target market for the “rental units” to be university students. Given the difficulties being experienced in other parts of Hamilton with student rental units and given that we have a great deal of difficulties still with young people hanging out in and around Gore Park, the Downtown Hamilton BIA is wary of any further initiatives that would irritate the problem.

The BIA would also not like to see the proposed development be targeted for an “Affordable Housing” project in keeping with the BIA’s Commercial Market Analysis completed by the City in 2005 which states that “the focus for a successful commercial and retail strategy must be on growing the demand side on a short to mid-term basis by intense, better income residential in and adjoining Downtown”. (Page 87). One of the steps in the action plan for the study would be to continue to encourage middle to upper income housing in Downtown. (Page 113).
While the BIA understands the desire of the City to initially attract students to this residential component, it would be our recommendation to not restrict the tenants to students but to register the project as a condominium and ensure that the City moves to condo ownership as soon as possible. It is also our opinion that while student populations in Downtown are desirable because they do support the kinds of businesses we have currently in our core, this type of housing should not be situated on our prime downtown street permanently.

We would like to commend city staff for working diligently on behalf of the Downtown to move this project forward and we thank City Council for their continued support of Downtown values and issues.

Sincerely

John Mokrycke
Chairman

c.c. V. Sarin
K. Extance