

## **Re: Proposed Heritage Designation of 72 Gordon Street – 2025-210**

Dear Members of City Council,

I am writing to provide a community perspective on the proposed heritage designation of 72 Gordon Street, as outlined in the Notice of Intention to Designate dated March 27, 2025. I have carefully reviewed the objection submitted by the property owner. While I recognize the significant concerns they have raised, it is essential also to consider the broader, balanced viewpoint. I acknowledge the owner's perspective while firmly advocating for the community's collective interest in heritage preservation and thoughtful urban development.

Council, it is essential to understand the property owner's viewpoint. They have expressed valid concerns regarding the potential impact of the proposed designation on their ability to fully enjoy, use, develop, and convey their property. The recent changes to the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) under Bill 23—specifically the two-year time limit for listed properties and the five-year re-listing moratorium—are understandably top of mind for property owners and have amplified feelings of uncertainty. It is reasonable that they may feel their autonomy is being challenged. However, we must reassure them that designation introduces a new framework that, when approached collaboratively, can unlock viable and constructive opportunities for development and long-term value.

### **The Unique Value of 72 Gordon Street**

I urge City Council also to recognize and uphold the unique cultural heritage value of 72 Gordon Street, as outlined in the staff report and the Notice of Intention to Designate. While the owner describes the property as "not rare, unique, artistic nor technical" and lacking "significance to the community," the staff assessment identifies clear heritage attributes that align with the established criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06:

- **Design/Physical Value:** As a rare and representative example of an interwar-period industrial building—one of the few remaining in Guelph and the last of its kind in its former industrial area—72 Gordon Street holds significant architectural value. Its red rug brick construction, distinctive pilasters with corbelled heads, and stepped plinths reflect a utilitarian industrial aesthetic of its time, offering a tangible link to Guelph's manufacturing past.
- **Historical/Associative Value:** The property is directly associated with the MacKey Bread Company, a significant contributor to Ontario's bread production industrialization. Its preservation helps tell the story of Guelph's food-production industry and broader economic development.
- **Contextual Value:** The building contributes meaningfully to the character of the Gordon and Surrey streetscapes. It remains functionally, visually, and historically linked to the city's former industrial lands, reinforcing Gordon Street's legacy as a corridor of movement and commerce.

Beyond these formal criteria, the property is prominent along a well-traveled main street. It is a daily visual landmark for thousands who pass by on foot, by bike, bus, or car. Its presence—whether consciously noticed or not—has become part of Guelph's visual identity and sense of place. How we approach this site can set an essential standard for balancing growth and heritage in our evolving downtown.

## **Heritage Designation: A Catalyst for Thoughtful Development**

Heritage designation is not a prohibition on development nor an absolute restriction on property rights. Instead, it provides a framework for integrating historical significance into contemporary urban planning. Development can—and often should—proceed in ways that celebrate our built heritage.

Numerous successful examples across Ontario and Canada demonstrate the potential of adaptive reuse and heritage-informed development. In cities such as Toronto, Kitchener, Hamilton, and beyond, former industrial and commercial properties have been transformed into vibrant residential, office, and mixed-use spaces while retaining their essential historic character in some form. These projects have enhanced community identity, added density, and delivered unique economic and aesthetic value.

They show that preservation does not mean stagnation but **progress with character**.

### **Opportunities for the Property Owner**

To the property owner, I emphasize that heritage designation can enhance a property's distinctiveness and long-term value. Designation can attract investment, increase community interest, and create a stronger sense of place.

Notably, the Ontario Heritage Act includes explicit provisions for alterations and development. The process is not designed to hinder change but to guide it in a way sensitive to a property's heritage attributes. It encourages collaboration between owners and the City, allowing redevelopment plans to respect historical value while accommodating modern needs. Designation can serve as a platform for creative problem-solving—not a barrier.

### **A Shared Responsibility for the Future**

I strongly encourage Council to affirm the designation of 72 Gordon Street. This is vital in preserving Guelph's unique character and fostering thoughtful, heritage-informed development, demonstrating a commitment to our city's past while building toward an authentic future.

As downtown Guelph continues to grow and intensify, cases like 72 Gordon Street will emerge repeatedly. Protecting this property sets a crucial precedent for how the City manages development that respects our historic buildings. I urge Council to actively support the property owner in navigating this framework by ensuring timely access to dedicated heritage planning resources for comprehensive pre-application consultations, providing clear information on any available financial incentives, grants, or tax breaks, and encouraging a flexible approach to design approvals that fosters innovative, sympathetic architectural solutions.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Steven Petric  
Guelph

