

Letters and articles

Letter to major mayoralty candidates

On behalf of **The Beach and East Toronto Historical Society (TBETHS)**, we would like to congratulate you on your candidacy for Mayor of Toronto and wish you every success throughout the upcoming municipal election campaign.

Since 1974, TBETHS has been dedicated to preserving, promoting, and celebrating the rich history and built heritage of Toronto's east end, specifically between Coxwell Avenue and Victoria Park Avenue, and between Lake Ontario and the southern boundary of the former Borough of East York. Through research, education, advocacy, and community engagement, we work to ensure that the stories, places, and character of our neighbourhood is preserved for future generations.

Toronto's historic neighbourhoods are among the city's greatest assets. They contribute to our identity, attract visitors, strengthen local economies, and create a sense of place that cannot be recreated once it is lost. Yet many heritage buildings across the city are increasingly vulnerable.

In recent years, changes to Ontario's heritage legislation have significantly altered how municipalities can identify and protect heritage properties. At the same time, many residents and heritage organizations have become increasingly concerned that the City of Toronto has not acted quickly enough to strengthen local protections or establish a clear path forward for properties at risk.

These concerns have become particularly evident in our community following the listing and subsequent removal from the City's Heritage Register of several historic properties along Main Street and Gerrard Street East, including:

- *143, 155, 161 and 167 Main Street*
- *154 and 164 Main Street*
- *2201–2207 Gerrard Street East*

With one of these properties already now scheduled for demolition and redevelopment, many residents fear this represents the beginning of a broader loss of historically significant buildings within our neighbourhood.

Another recent example is the destruction of the Art Deco façade at the commercial buildings located at 968-976 Kingston Road and 281-285 Scarborough Road in April. These are buildings TBETHS had identified to the city as architecturally, historically and contextually significant in February 2019, only for the City's Heritage Planning Services to do nothing with that information for over seven years until it was too late.

We must be clear that we recognise and support that Toronto must continue to grow and evolve and at the same time address its growing housing crisis. Not every old building can or should be preserved.

However, we strongly reject the false choice between development and heritage preservation. Heritage preservation and responsible development are not mutually exclusive. Well-planned development can respect the city's history whilst accommodating new housing and economic growth. We believe strong municipal leadership is essential in achieving that balance.

With this in mind, we would welcome your thoughts on:

- *Your vision for protecting Toronto's built heritage.*
- *How the City can better respond to recent provincial changes affecting heritage conservation.*
- *Strengthening heritage planning and ensuring important buildings are identified and protected before they are threatened.*
- *The role heritage conservation can play in creating vibrant, complete communities.*
- *How City Council can better engage local historical societies and community organizations in heritage planning.*

We believe your responses to these questions are an opportunity to discuss practical solutions that protect Toronto's history and heritage while also supporting thoughtful growth.

We recognise how busy your campaign schedule will be, but should time permit, we would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you during the campaign to discuss these issues further.

If you are interested, please contact us at contactTBETHS@gmail.com and we would be pleased to arrange a meeting.

Thank you for your time and for your willingness to serve the people of Toronto. We wish you every success during the campaign and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, The Board of Directors, The Beach and East Toronto Historical Society

Letter to councillor candidates, Ward 19 Beaches East York

On behalf of the Beach and East Toronto Historical Society, we would like to congratulate you on your candidacy to represent Ward 19 Beaches–East York on Toronto City Council and wish you every success throughout the election campaign.

Since 1974, TBETHS has been dedicated to preserving, promoting, and celebrating the rich history and built heritage of Toronto's east end, specifically between Coxwell Avenue and Victoria Park Avenue, and between Lake Ontario and the southern boundary of the former Borough of East York.

Our members are passionate about protecting the unique character of where we live. Through research, education, advocacy, and community engagement, we work to ensure that the stories, places, and character of our neighbourhood is preserved for future generations.

If you are successful in becoming the next City Councillor for Beaches–East York, you will help to shape decisions affecting neighbourhood planning, redevelopment, heritage conservation, and community character.

These issues have become increasingly important following recent provincial legislative changes in Ontario affecting heritage protection and altering how municipalities can identify and protect heritage properties. There is growing concern that the City of Toronto has not responded with sufficient urgency to these changes and not done enough to strengthen local protections or establish a clear path forward for properties at risk.

Our community has experienced these challenges firsthand through the listing and subsequent removal from the City's Heritage Register of several historic properties along Main Street and Gerrard Street East, including:

- 143, 155, 161 and 167 Main Street;
- 154 and 164 Main Street; and
- 2201–2207 Gerrard Street East

With one of these buildings already scheduled for demolition and redevelopment, many residents are concerned that significant elements of our community's history could be permanently lost.

Another recent example is the destruction of the Art Deco façade at the commercial buildings located at 968-976 Kingston Road and 281-285 Scarborough Road in April. Buildings TBETHS had identified to the city as architecturally, historically and contextually significant in February 2019, only for the City's Heritage Planning Services to do nothing with that information for over seven years until it was too late.

We recognise and understand that Ward 19 will continue to experience growth and redevelopment.

We understand and know that not every old building can or should be preserved and that more needs to be done to address Toronto's growing housing crisis.

However, we strongly reject the false choice between development and heritage preservation. We believe development and heritage conservation can and should work together, not compete with one another, to create neighbourhoods that retain their unique identity whilst accommodating new housing and economic growth.

We believe strong local leadership in our Ward is essential in achieving that balance.

With this in mind, we would welcome your thoughts on:

- Your vision for protecting the heritage character of Beaches–East York.
- How you would advocate for stronger heritage protection at City Hall.
- Lessons learned from the recent Main Street and Gerrard Street heritage listings and removals and other recent loss of heritage in the Ward.
- How local residents and community organisations can play a greater role in heritage planning.
- Your priorities for ensuring future redevelopment respects the unique history and character of our community.

Your responses to these questions are an opportunity to discuss practical solutions that ensure that heritage remains an active part of planning decisions within Ward 19.

We recognise how busy your campaign schedule will be, but should time permit, we would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you during the campaign these issues further.

If you are interested, please contact us at contactTBETHS@gmail.com and we would be pleased to arrange a meeting.

Thank you for your time and for your willingness to serve the residents of Beaches–East York.

We wish you every success during the campaign and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, The Board of Directors, The Beach and East Toronto Historical Society

Letters to the Editor

Historical Society calls on candidates to make heritage preservation a priority

As Toronto prepares for this autumn's upcoming municipal election, The Beach and East Toronto Historical Society (TBETHS) is calling on candidates for Mayor and Ward 19 Beaches-East York City Councillor to make heritage preservation a priority.

TBETHS has written to all major mayoral candidates and the candidates seeking election in Ward 19, inviting them to comment and discuss the future of heritage conservation in The Beach and East Toronto. TBETHS' concern is simple: once a heritage building is demolished, it is gone forever.

Recent changes to Ontario's heritage legislation have significantly altered how municipalities can identify and protect heritage properties. At the same time, many in our community are concerned that the City of Toronto has not acted decisively enough to respond to these changes or strengthen local heritage protections.

Those concerns have become very real in our neighbourhood.

The recent listing, and subsequent removal from the City's Heritage Register, of historic properties at 143, 155, 161 and 167 Main St., 154 and 164 Main St., and 2201-2207 Gerrard St. E. has left many residents questioning whether important heritage buildings are receiving the protection they deserve - especially since one of these buildings is now already scheduled for demolition and redevelopment.

TBETHS recognises that the city and our part of it must grow and evolve. We support thoughtful redevelopment that respects both the need for new housing and the preservation of the buildings and streetscapes that give our neighbourhood its unique identity.

Heritage conservation is not about preventing change, it is about ensuring that change respects the communities and character that have been built

over generations.

During this election campaign, we hope candidates will share their vision for protecting Toronto's heritage, strengthening heritage planning, and working collaboratively with local historical societies and residents before more irreplaceable buildings are lost.

We will keep you updated on what we hear back, if anything, from candidates on our website.

We encourage everyone who cares about the history and character of our neighbourhood to ask municipal candidates where they stand on heritage preservation.

The decisions made over the next four years will help determine what parts of The Beach and East Toronto's past remain standing for future generations.

**The Board of Directors
The Beach and
East Toronto Historical Society**