



Buildings on the Brink - 2009

Heritage London Foundation announces its 2009 list of “Buildings on the Brink”

This is the fourth annual edition of Heritage London Foundation’s list of 5 threatened heritage buildings in the city of London. One of the messages evident in this year’s selection is the risk associated with vacant or seemingly abandoned buildings. Recent devastating experiences with Locust Mount, the Elijah Leonard home on Talbot Street, and St. Thomas’ Alma College show, in the extreme, the results of neglect and non-use of valuable historic and heritage structures.

Heritage London Foundation is an innovative non-profit corporation, founded in 1981, which advocates the preservation of significant heritage properties. Created when the wrecker’s ball was rapidly destroying many of London’s architectural treasures, Heritage London Foundation now provides viable contemporary uses for two beautiful city-owned properties, the Elsie Perrin Williams Estate and Grosvenor Lodge, and is open to future projects. Today these buildings are popular sites for weddings, business conferences and private gatherings, as well as housing offices for heritage and environmental organizations. Revenues assist the foundation to preserve, protect and promote our heritage for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Members of Heritage London Foundation also support the goals of the organization. Membership is open to anyone interested in supporting this worthy association. For more information, contact our offices at (hlfelsie@execulink.com) at (519) 432-7961.

2009 Buildings on the Brink

Five Threatened Heritage Properties in the London area

1. The Antiquities Shoppe 129-131 Wellington Street

The building was built as a store and home for the owners in 1873 when the south east part of the city was being populated by people working in London's burgeoning oil processing industry. The wood sided building is unusual due to the use of equal sized rectangular wood sheathing with beveled edges to give the appearance of a stone block structure. This is also evident in the white painted panels at the corners to imitate quoins on a masonry building. The property is historically and architecturally important and is deserving of heritage designation.



Photo courtesy of SJMA

Threats:

- The store currently occupying the building is closing which will leave the structure vacant.
- Engineering inspections have uncovered major problems with the foundation of the structure itself.

Recommendations:

- The easy answer is to make the needed repairs and to have the building designated.
- In this case economics interferes with this easy solution as the cost of repair and restoration are significantly beyond the value of the property. It needs a sympathetic champion with the determination and resources to do what is necessary to repair and restore the building or it could be lost.

2. Kappa Alpha Theta Fraternity 100 Cheapside Street

This home has served as women's fraternity home for many years, although originally built in 1899 as a family home in an area of other stately London houses. It is built in the "shingle" style, where elements of the wooden framework are evident to the exterior complimented by the use of shaped shingles in the gables.

Threats:

- The house is now vacant in preparation for renovations and restoration. The major concern would be if this process became lengthy, the house is exposed to mistreatment.

Recommendation:

- Ensure that the house and grounds are maintained and secured as fundraising for the restoration project is completed.
- As Priority 1 in the City's Inventory of Heritage Resources, the building deserves to be designated.



3. Theta Phi Fraternity 270 St James Street

This house dates c1898 and is sited on a prominent corner of the Bishop Hellmuth Heritage Conservation District. It has been the home of a men's fraternity for members attending the University of Western Ontario, most recently by the Theta Phi chapter. It is built in the Queen Anne Revival style, just one of the numerous styles popular when this area was developed and gives the streetscape such character.



Threat:

- The house is obviously vacant as can be seen by the boarded over windows and is a potential target for the type of abuse we have seen in other similar situations.
- The building is believed to be for sale but has been in this derelict appearing condition for a few months.

Recommendation:

- While the home is part of a designated community, it desperately needs to be brought back into active use, hopefully by a buyer sympathetic to the nature of the surrounding neighbourhood.

4. 764 Waterloo Street

This is another house within the Bishop Hellmuth Heritage Conservation District. It was built c1905 in a style influenced by Queen Anne Revival architecture. This compact storey and a half home seems to be in reasonable shape and the owners of the property are maintaining the building.

Threat:

- The property has been unoccupied for quite some time and, although it appears to be secure, there is concern that this property could also suffer abuse or damage.

Recommendation:

- Without knowing what would be needed to bring the home into active use, it would be best if the building had a real purpose and function.
- The owners should consider renting or selling the property, if it is of no use to them.



5. 809 Queens Ave.

This yellow brick Ontario cottage was built in 1907. It is a wonderful example of the style with features including raised brick cornice, decorative quoins at the corners and masonry keystones over the windows. It is listed as Priority 1 in the City's Inventory of Heritage Assets and is within the boundary of the old East Village Heritage Conservation District.



Threat:

- Victim of a recent fire, the building now sits vacant and could be at risk of further damage or vandalizing.

Recommendations:

- Secure the building to reduce further threats and plan restoration as soon as possible. This quaint home needs to be returned to active life.