

April 6, 2021

To Whom it May Concern:

RE: Supporting Councillor Josh Matlow's Member Motion (MM31.11) "Preserving the Past and Protecting the Future of Little Jamaica" to prioritize a survey of the cultural heritage resources of Little Jamaica recognizing Little Jamaica as a designated heritage site.

This letter serves to express Black Urbanism TO's support for motion (MM31.11) *Preserving the Past and Protecting the Future of Little Jamaica* moved by Councillor Josh Matlow on April 7, 2021. We ask for the full support of Council to ensure that city staff prioritize a comprehensive survey of the cultural heritage of the Little Jamaica neighbourhood, as a part of the Council-adopted Little Jamaica Cultural District initiative (MM24.36, September 30 2020).

As you may recall from the motion **MM24.36 Supporting Black-Owned and Operated Businesses and Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Eglinton Avenue West's "Little Jamaica"**, Council has directed city staff to develop a Cultural District Plan that would include the following:

- Officially recognizes, delineates and designates the neighbourhood as a Jamaican-Caribbean Cultural District;
- Highlights the cultural landscape of the neighbourhood through the creation of a high-profile cultural district that will enhance business and tourism;
- Delineates cultural zones based on local character and the existing or historical business landscape; and
- Explores private and public sector support and partnerships to develop the cultural zones identified in the Plan.

There has been an outpouring of support from the community that a Heritage Conservation District should be considered as part of a Cultural District, as we work collaboratively to preserve this beloved and often neglected part of the city. According to the City of Toronto's Heritage Conservation Districts & Studies webpage, Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs) are intended to:

Guide change in neighbourhoods that represent Toronto's rich social, cultural and architectural history—places that contribute to the livability and appeal of Toronto as a multicultural, sustainable and equitable city. HCDs provide place-based policies that conserve and enhance historic neighbourhoods, while pointing to opportunities for contextually appropriate growth and change (Heritage Conservation Districts & Studies, 2021).

Little Jamaica is most unique among Toronto's neighbourhoods – representing an economic, cultural and social hub for Caribbean, Black and other African Canadian communities for at least the past 50 years. As such, this neighbourhood has contributed to Toronto's rich cultural, social and historical landscape. It goes without saying that to many Black communities, this

neighbourhood is a place to call home and is deserving of a place-based approach to conserving and guiding its future growth.

As we draw near to the close of the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), a time when governments around the globe are redefining their relationships with the Black communities they serve, Black Urbanism TO strongly encourages Council to consider the great loss that is at stake to Black communities, and to the City, should we stand idly by and allow the Black presence, with its untold history and cultural resources to be erased from this neighbourhood, like the many others before it. What would that say about your commitment to the wellbeing of Black communities in this city? On the other hand, we invite you to consider a future in which Little Jamaica is supported in its pursuit to thrive.

Thank you for considering this letter. As Black Urbanism TO looks forward to Council's passing of this motion we recognize that this is a defining moment in our shared history. We hope that you have come to that realization too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Romain Baker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Romain Baker
Chair
Black Urbanism TO