

Speech to Kingston City Council, December 15, 2009

By Rev. Daryl Bell

Thank you Mayor Rosen,... councilors.

My name is Daryl Bell and I've lived in Barriefield now for almost 12 years. I presently work as a multi faith chaplain at Kingston General Hospital.

Before I begin, I must apologize....whenever I see this many people gathered in one place I have an uncontrollable urge....and so in a moment the ushers will be passing out the offering baskets...please give generously.

Take a look at these booklets when you have the opportunity. They contain much that I couldn't fit into a 5 minute presentation...including Barriefield's rich ties to the military.!

I'd like to begin by recapping the Barriefield Village Association's **three** major concerns.

The first being the need to preserve the "cultural heritage landscape" which surrounds the village. When you enter off Highway 15, the village is distinct from its surroundings **because** of its green space; it's **not** just an entrance into another subdivision. It is also on the edge of 2 major routes to our downtown and to 2 UNESCO world heritage sites.

The next concern is that heritage is a fragile thing. Already the village teeters.... having just slightly more heritage homes than new buildings. **Any** new building threatens that delicate balance, once that balance is lost it's gone forever.

Our third concern is for social justice. Speaking personally, for 13 years most of my work has been with some of Kingston's **most** marginalized people. Everyone deserves the opportunity for safe, affordable, quality housing.!

Kingston is in need of... **well planned**....affordable housing.

Our main concern is around integration..... or lack there offor that affordable housing in Barriefield. We can't drop 32 **brand new** units on a piece of land and expect people to feel part of a heritage community. This plan,.... as it is,.... will create isolationnot integration.

History and Housing 2 important issues. Unfortunately people are being forced into 2 camps. You have to be either **for** heritage **or**, for affordable housing.

If you care about heritage preservation you are said to be a NIMBY.

Speaking of the issue of NIMBYit's interesting to note this quote..... taken from a publication created to assist municipalities in dealing with the whole "not in my backyard attitude". The report..... published just last month reads...

"Most of the time, citizen engagement is a very positive and healthy sign of local democracy. Sometimes,.... a housing proposal is just wrong for the neighbourhood –it's out of scale, violates heritage character or has inadequate infrastructure or support services." !

I think Canadian Association for Municipalities may be onto something!! !

They hadn't coined the phrase NIMBY back in the late 1980's when Pittsburgh Township was looking at developing a strip of land in the north of Barriefield called Lilac Row. Back then the issue was uncannily similar to what we are facing today. People who **cared** about heritage preservation were concerned development of land in Barriefield would **alter** and **detract** from the historic village. They organized themselves and went to council to fight the development of the land... in the nameof heritage preservation. They were concerned that the atmosphere of the village would be lost. They recognized the historical village was fragile.

Does that sound familiar?

After many protracted meetings Pittsburgh Township decided **against** heritage concerns and allowed **new** homes to be built. It is ironic that today.... those very houses Barriefield supporters fought against in the name of heritage preservation ...are given as examples of Barriefield village being selective in what they want built.

In actuality the fact the Lilac Row houses exist is a good example of what can go **wrong** when heritage is ignored. Yes, they are beautiful homes... and there are great people living in them..... but they take away from **historic** Barriefield.

There's nothing we can do about that now, but do not doubt the heritage atmosphere of the village suffered because of that development. !

I am firmly opposed to any development of the land on the periphery of Barriefield village. I don't care if it's for affordable housing or for private estates.Heritage depends on us to protect it.

Perhaps there's a better solution; a solution that **preserves** heritage by **using** our green space. Maybe we could develop a park there....a continuation of the rock garden..... or even better..... perhaps a war memorial for those who have died in Afghanistan.... all the while still providing safe affordable housing for people who are currently homeless.

The JE Horton school property will soon be available and.... with **no** re-zoning required could be the site for a long term care facility. It could house the 57 people sitting in KGH... right now, taking up hospital beds and resources, because they can't be discharged as there is no where for them to go.

The Barriefield Village association would embrace **this** proposal to address homelessness..... **Another possibility** for affordable housing is a large limestone building for sale in **the very heart** of Barriefield. It could easily provide 4 **integrated** affordable housing units within the village. In both proposals the heritage landscape would be preserved, the balance of heritage homes to new homes would be kept..... all the while fulfilling a housing need for the homeless.

These are only a few examples of what we can do if we are creative and not blinded by free land.

I think we need to come to the realization that a dollar.... is **too much** to pay for land that will threaten a historically designated village..... in order to create a housing project... that is doomed to struggle. We need to learn from the mistakes of our past and preserve the remaining heritage character of the village.... while providing safe, affordable quality housing for people who need it.

It doesn't have to be housing... **or...** history. Let's find a way through this that values our heritage **and** social justice.