

# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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April 27, 2005

To: Toronto Preservation Board  
Planning and Transportation Committee

From: Chief Planner and General Manager, City Planning Division

Subject: 71 Front Street West - Union Station Historic Structures Report  
Toronto Centre Rosedale - Ward 28

Purpose:

To endorse the Historic Structures Report for Union Station as part of the background research and documentation of existing condition and as a guide for the revitalization of Union Station.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Historic Structures Report for Union Station be endorsed as part of the background research and documentation and as a guide for the redevelopment of Union Station.

Background:

The property at 71 Front Street West is located on the south side of Front Street West between Bay Street and York Street as shown in Attachment No. 1. The property contains Union Station as shown in attachment No. 2 which opened in 1927 and designed by Ross & Macdonald, Hugh G. Jones and John Lyle. City Council listed the property on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1973, and passed an Intention to Designate the property under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* in December 1975. Union Station was declared a National Historic Site by the Government of Canada in 1985 and designated under the Heritage Railway Stations Protection Act in 1989.

In August 2000, the City purchased the Station and GO Transit purchased the rail corridor and train sheds. As a condition of the sale of the property, the Federal Government required that Union Station be protected by a Heritage Easement Agreement (HEA) held by the Federal Minister of Canadian Heritage (Parks Canada). This HEA was registered in August 2000. The areas protected by this HEA are described in detail in the Baseline Documentation Report prepared at that time by Parks Canada that contains a photographic inventory of the heritage features within the Station Complex. Any alterations affecting areas identified in the HEA require the approval of the City and Parks Canada.

There is a three-stage approval process by which requests for alterations are submitted to Parks Canada for review. The HSR, which is a Conservation Strategy, has been requested by Parks Canada as a required component of the first stage of that process. The second and third stages represent the further progression of the detailed design.

In July 2002, City Council selected Union Pearson Group (UPG) as the preferred proponent to restore, develop and operate Union Station, and directed staff to negotiate the appropriate agreements to give effect to their proposal. City staff and the Union Pearson Group continue to finalize closing documentation, including all the necessary approvals for the concept design. The City is in the process of Designating the building as well as entering into a Heritage Easement Agreement with UPG.

#### Comments:

The Historic Structures Report (HSR) has been prepared at the request of Parks Canada by the firm of Fournier Gersovitz Moss & Associates architectes (heritage consultants to the Union Pearson Group). The HSR provides background research, an existing condition report and a conservation strategy. It will inform and guide all decisions about possible changes to the structure in ways that both respect the heritage values of the building and of its associated elements, and answer the repair and upgrading needs.

The HSR, which can be viewed on the City's website at [http://www.toronto.ca/union\\_station/](http://www.toronto.ca/union_station/) is divided into three chapters:

#### 1. Heritage Character Analysis

The first chapter, written by Professor Angela Carr, defines Union Station's significant heritage features and related character-defining elements within the broad context of railway station design in Canada and site specific design considerations in Toronto.

The much anticipated "New Union Station" played a dominant role in John Lyle's plan of 1911, which was part of the City Beautiful movement in Toronto. The proposal for Federal Avenue would have positioned the central pavilion of Union Station as the terminus of a north-south avenue linking a grand Plaza flanked by Osgoode Hall on the West and Lennox's City Hall to the East. Lyle's plan would have imposed the grand principles of Beaux-Arts planning on Toronto that Haussmann had applied to Paris and Burnham to Chicago.

A train station in an urban centre plays an important symbolic role and key function as a doorway for the city. The analysis in the HSR places Union Station within the context of worldwide architectural expression of the time and in terms of railway station design in Canada. It also reviews the substantial heritage reference documents, which detail the station's heritage values and character-defining elements.

As the HSR documents, the programmatic requirements of the Station have changed dramatically since it opened over seventy-five years ago. Professor Carr's analysis confirms the importance of the heritage values previously documented and provides an understanding of the evolution of the building since that time in a manner that will inform decisions regarding appropriate interventions and re-interpretations of contemporary requirements within the built form.

## 2. Building Condition Analysis

The second chapter provides an analysis of the physical condition and performance of the Station complex and its various elements. Almost all spaces in Union Station were surveyed with the exception of the trainshed, which is owned by GO Transit and the interior of the east wing, which was fully renovated as a result of a fire many years ago and is occupied by the Bank of Nova Scotia under a long term lease.

The Building Condition Analysis is based on a combination of investigations undertaken by both City and UPG consultants. This section presents a thorough discussion of the materials and assemblies of the construction as well as mechanical/electrical systems, life safety and accessibility. In addition to documenting existing conditions, and assessing the contribution of the various building elements to the heritage character of the Station, recommendations are made as to how to address deficiencies and consider design options regarding alterations.

## 3. Conservation Strategy

The third chapter provides a road map for the future by identifying Heritage Zones and priorities for conservation related to those zones and defining intervention principles that balance user needs, upgrading requirements and objectives with heritage conservation concerns.

This section contains floor by floor colour-coded plans that communicate areas to be preserved, rehabilitated or restored and address the complex challenge of balancing heritage resources with the transportation demands, urban design concerns and commercial viability of the Station.

The UPG proposal is to revitalize the Station to function as a modern transportation hub, incorporating retail and office space, while maintaining and respecting its heritage features. This document identifies areas within the UPG proposal for preservation, rehabilitation or restoration. Conservation principles are addressed both universally as well as being targeted to specific spaces and features in the Station.

Conclusions:

The HSR represents a comprehensive record of the history of the station and effectively documents the existing condition. The HSR provides key background information on the Station in terms of its history and existing heritage fabric. This document will be a valuable guide in assessing alterations proposed in the revitalization strategy for Union Station as well as day to day interventions necessary to maintain the Station.

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List of Attachments:

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map (71 Front Street West)  
Attachment No. 2 – Photographs (71 Front Street West)



