

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

August 3, 2006

To: Toronto Preservation Board
Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division

Subject: 285 Spadina Avenue (Standard Theatre) - Inclusion on the City of Toronto
Inventory of Heritage Properties and Intention to Designate under Part IV of the
Ontario Heritage Act
Trinity-Spadina - Ward 20

Purpose:

This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 285 Spadina Avenue (Standard Theatre) under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report. The cost of publishing the notice of intention to designate in the daily newspaper is included in the 2006 Policy and Research budget.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) City Council include the property at 285 Spadina Avenue (Standard Theatre) on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties;
- (2) City Council state its intention to designate the property at 285 Spadina Avenue (Standard Theatre) under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*;
- (3) if there are no objections to the designation in accordance with Section 29(6) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the solicitor be authorized to introduce the Bills in Council designating the property under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*;
- (4) if there are any objections in accordance with Section 29(7) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the Clerk be directed to refer the proposed designation to the Conservation Review Board; and

- (5) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

In researching and evaluating the subject property, staff have determined that the original Standard Theatre survives on the interior. Opening as a Yiddish theatre in 1921, the Standard Theatre hosted musical performances, theatrical productions and political meetings until 1935 when it was converted to a movie house. After World War II, it was the site of the Victory Burlesque and, in the 1970s, a Chinese theatre associated with the evolution of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West as the hub of the Chinatown West neighbourhood.

The property merits inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties and designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value. By stating its intention to designate the property, City Council can control its demolition and potential redevelopment.

Comments:

The property at 285 Spadina Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value or interest, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario. A location map (Attachment No. 1) and photographs (Attachment No. 2) are attached.

The following Statement of Reasons for Designation is intended for publication according to the provisions of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The Reasons for Designation are attached (Attachment No. 3) and include a statement of the cultural heritage value and description of the heritage attributes of the property. The complete Reasons for Designation will be served on the property owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust and included in the designating by-law.

Statement of Reasons for Designation

The property at 285 Spadina Avenue is recommended for designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value or interest. Anchoring the northeast corner of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West, the Standard Theatre (1921) has design, historical and contextual value. As a representative example of an early 20th century theatre that is located near a prominent intersection, the Standard Theatre is associated with the political and cultural development of the Jewish community in Toronto.

The Reasons for Designation, including a description of the heritage attributes of the property, are available for viewing from the City Clerk or from Heritage Preservation Services, Policy and Research, City Planning Division, City of Toronto.

Conclusions:

It is recommended that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 285 Spadina Avenue (Standard Theatre) under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

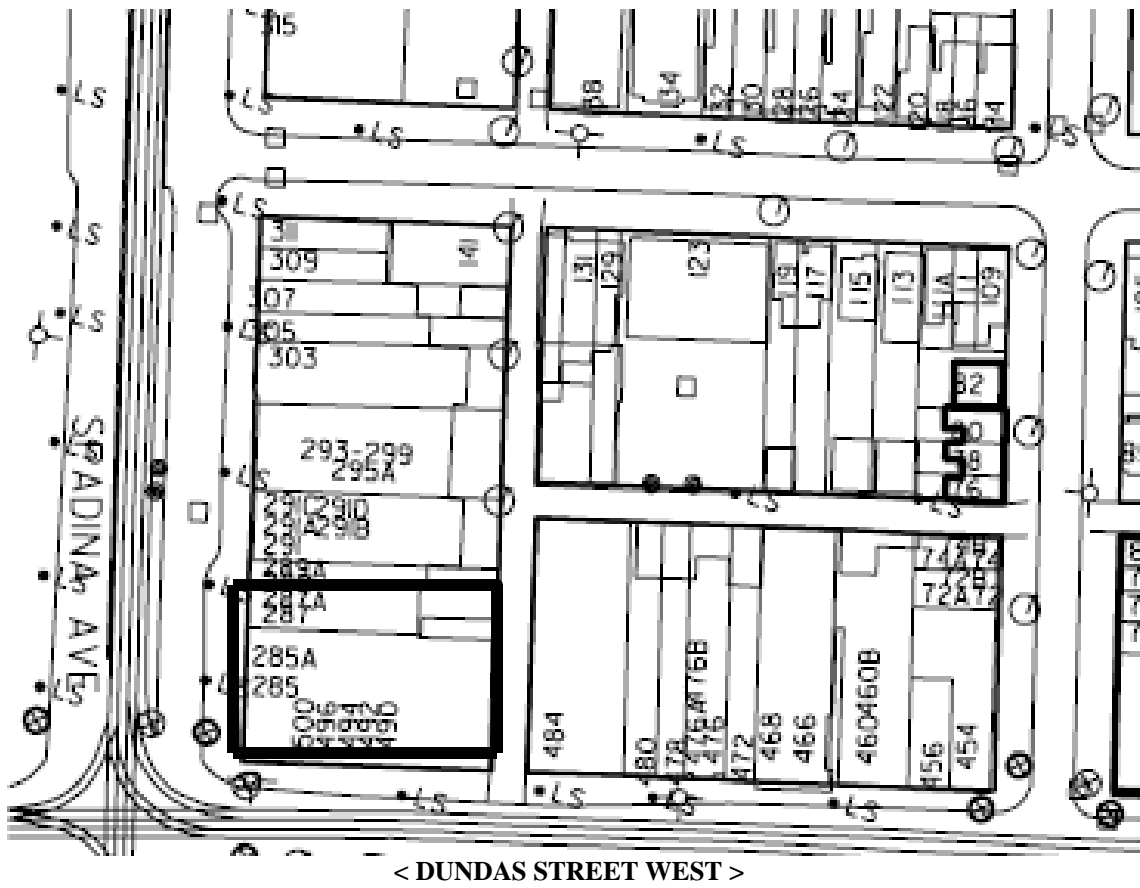
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List of Attachments:

Attachment No. 1 Location Map (285 Spadina Avenue)
Attachment No. 2 Photographs (285 Spadina Avenue)
Attachment No. 3 Reasons for Designation (285 Spadina Avenue)





Principal (west) facade



Interior theatre

285 Spadina Avenue: Standard TheatreDescription

The property at 285 Spadina Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value, and meets the criteria for municipal designation under the three categories of design or physical value, historical or associative value, and contextual value. Located on the northeast corner of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West, the Standard Theatre opened on August 18, 1921 as a Yiddish theatre associated with the Jewish community in the neighbourhood along Spadina Avenue. In 1935, it was converted to a movie house named The Strand. After World War II, the premises became the venue for the Victory Burlesque and, in the 1970s, were converted to a Chinese language theatre.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The cultural heritage value of the property at 285 Spadina Avenue relates to its design or physical value as a representative example of a post-World War I movie theatre. Its design features the abstracted Classical detailing associated with the Art Deco style, which was particularly popular for theatres during this period.

Historically, the Standard Theatre is directly associated with the cultural and political development of Toronto's Jewish community. Described as one of the finest Yiddish theatres in North America (Donegan, Spadina Avenue, 1985), the Standard Theatre hosted theatrical productions with its own stock company and welcomed touring companies from New York City. The theatre was also the setting for political meetings, including a well-publicized gathering in 1929 to commemorate the death of Lenin that resulted in a police raid.

The Standard Theatre reflects the work of Benjamin Brown, one of Toronto's first practicing Jewish architects. Brown's other commissions on Spadina Avenue included the Tower Building (1927) at #110, the Balfour Building (1930) at #117 and the Fashion Building (1926) at #126, which are recognized on the City's heritage inventory.

The Standard Theatre contributes contextually to Spadina Avenue where it occupies a prominent location at the northeast corner of Dundas Street West.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Standard Theatre relating to its design or physical value as a representative example of a theatre from the post-World War I era are found on the principal (west) façade and south elevation, the roof above the latter walls, and on the interior as described below, consisting of:

- The three-storey structure, which is clad with buff brick and trimmed with brick and cast stone
- Beneath the flat roof, the narrow cornice that extends along the principal (west) façade and wraps around the south elevation
- The organization of the principal (west) façade, which is divided into three parts by a central frontispiece with pairs of brick piers, decorated cast stone capitals, a dentilled cornice, and a brick parapet
- On the west façade, above the first-floor storefronts (where the entrances and fenestration have been altered), the flat-headed window openings in the upper stories with brick flat arches and stone sills
- The south elevation, which is blank above the first-floor storefronts (this wall is included in the Reasons for Designation because of its prominent location on Dundas Street West)
- On the interior (which was altered in the 1970s according to the designs of Toronto architect Mandel Sprachman), the auditorium with the stage, the side walls with the Classical decoration, and the recessed ceiling (the tiered seating is not included in the Reasons for Designation)

Concealed by the neighbouring buildings, the north elevation and rear (east) wall are not included in the Reasons for Designation.