



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Supplemental Report – Designation of Queen Street West, between University Avenue and Bathurst Street, as a Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (Ward 20 – Trinity-Spadina)

Date:	May 15, 2007
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto & East York Community Council
From:	Barbara Leonhardt, Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division
Wards:	Ward 20 Trinity-Spadina
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

On September 25, 26, and 27, 2006, Council referred the final report on the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District Study Area to the next meeting of the Toronto Preservation Board for subsequent submission to the Toronto and East York Community Council.

Council requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, to (i) arrange a meeting with affected property owners between Bathurst Street and University Avenue to inform them of the benefits and constraints of the proposed Heritage Conservation District and to answer any questions, and (ii) to report directly to the Toronto Preservation Board with recommendations to address the concerns of property owners.

This report addresses the direction given by Council at its September 2006 meeting and recommends that Council designate Queen Street West from University Avenue to Bathurst Street as a Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

- (1) Council adopt the recommendations contained within the report entitled “Designation of Queen Street West, between University Avenue and Bathurst Street, as a Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (Ward 20 – Trinity-Spadina)” dated August 14, 2006 from the Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division; and
- (2) the appropriate City officials be authorized to take whatever action is necessary to give effect thereto.

Financial Impact

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

DECISION HISTORY

On September 25, 26, and 27, 2006, Council referred the final report on the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District Study Area to the next meeting of the Toronto Preservation Board for subsequent submission to the Toronto and East York Community Council. Council requested the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, arrange a meeting with the affected business property owners between Bathurst Street and University Avenue to inform them of the benefits or constraints of the proposed Heritage Conservation District designation, and to report directly to the Toronto Preservation Board with further recommendations that will address the concerns of the business property owners.

Designation of Queen Street West, between University Avenue and Bathurst Street, as a Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (Ward 20 – Trinity-Spadina) Final Report:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/te/te060913/it018.pdf>

Decision Document Referring Matter to Staff:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060925/cofa.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The need for a heritage study of Queen Street West was identified during the public consultations regarding the proposed new Canada Life office tower at the northwest corner of Queen Street West and Simcoe Street in the early 2000s.

On May 17, 18, 19, 2005, City Council approved a report recommending the establishment of a Heritage Conservation District Study Area along Queen Street West between University Avenue and Bathurst Street. Office for Urbanism was selected as the consultant through an RFP process and commenced study of the area including consultation with the community. A final report was before City Council on September 25, 26, 27, 2006 and was referred back to staff in order to arrange a meeting with affected property owners to respond to questions about the benefits or constraints of the proposed designation as a Heritage Conservation District.

COMMENTS

On April 18th, 2007, Heritage Preservation Services staff of the City Planning Division hosted a meeting with the Ward Councillor for property owners within the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District Study Area. Approximately 330 invitations were sent to property owners listed on the tax assessment rolls. Approximately 40 people attended the meeting and staff received 1 email and 2 telephone calls in total. The meeting included a discussion of financial incentives available to designated properties. In general, the issues raised at the meeting included:

- Queen Street West is a successful shopping district. Why would the city be interested in giving a tax rebate to these properties. Doesn't the City need the money?
- With property taxes going up due to the City's financial situation, how does a tax rebate program work within the financial constraints facing the City?
- Why implement an HCD if the property owners don't support it?
- The existing facades are too narrow and don't support good retail.
- Why not designate the entire city to ensure the protection of all heritage buildings.

The meeting concluded with strong opposition from the participants to the proposed Heritage Conservation District. Participants requested additional consultation between the affected owners, the local Councillor, and city staff prior to further consideration of the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District.

Prior Consultation:

A total of seven public meetings were hosted by the consultant and city staff between October 2005 and May 2006 to discuss issues associated with the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District Study Area. To start the public participation process, the consultant held a series of one-on-one interviews with stakeholders, including property and business owners and residents. A Local Advisory Committee was also formed from a group of self-identified stakeholders, which provided advice to the consultant team prior to each milestone in the process. Three public open houses were held during the study period. Notification of these meetings included placing posters on Queen Street West (in English and Chinese), distributing flyers and contacting community, stakeholder and resident groups. Non-resident property owners were advised by mail of these meetings.

Many of the meetings were held at City TV and the Rex Hotel at the invitation of their management, and all of these meetings were well attended. Progress and findings were reported, questions asked and answered and there was lively debate about the merits and implications, for all parties involved, of a Heritage Conservation District.

City staff were in attendance at all of the meetings held on this project and are of the opinion that the consultant has been successful in ensuring local involvement in this proposal. Staff also believe that the study and its conclusions have, in general, been well received by the residents and business and property owners. The draft District Plan has been posted on the City's website. All property owners and identified stakeholders have been notified of the Toronto Preservation Board and Community Council meetings at which the proposed designation was considered.

Staff is satisfied that sufficient consultation with all affected parties has occurred and is consistent with the level of public consultation that occurred for other Heritage Conservation Districts that were approved by Council and the Ontario Municipal Board. Furthermore, staff is of the opinion that based on the feedback received, a strong majority of property owners and community residents support the Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District.

Report on Financial Incentives:

At its meeting on September 13, 2006, the Toronto and East York Community Council requested the Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division to report to City Council on September 25, 2006 on the financial tools that need to be made available to property owners in Conservation Heritage Districts, particularly in Heritage Districts of a commercial nature.

Staff will prepare a full report on financial incentives for heritage properties in the future after the identification of all available tools and in consultation with other City Divisions on impacts and implementation issues.

CONTACT

Denise Gendron
Manager, Heritage Preservation Services
Tel: 416-338-1075
Fax: 416-392-1973
E-mail: dgendron@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Barbara Leonhardt
Director, Policy and Research