

5151 Yonge Street – Inclusion on Heritage Inventory

Date:	March 23, 2009
To:	Toronto Preservation Board North York Community Council
From:	Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division
Wards:	Willowdale – Ward 23
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council include the property at 5151 Yonge Street (North York Hydro Building, 1929) on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

The Inclusion of the property on the City's heritage inventory would enable staff to monitor applications affecting the site and encourage the retention of its heritage attributes and values.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council include the property at 5151 Yonge Street (North York Hydro Building, 1929) on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

Financial Impact

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

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Following research and evaluation staff have determined that the property at 5151 Yonge Street merits inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. The inclusion of the property on the City's heritage inventory would enable staff to monitor the site and encourage the retention of its heritage attributes and values.

COMMENTS

The property at 5151 Yonge Street is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto's Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Standing in its original location on the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Empress Avenue and designed in the Edwardian Classical Style, the former North York Hydro Building (1929) was the first purpose-built office building constructed for the utility.

A location map (Attachment No. 1) and photographs (Attachment No. 2) are attached. The Reasons for Listing (Attachment No. 3) is the Statement of Significance that includes a statement of the cultural heritage value of the property with a description of its heritage attributes.

CONTACT

Mary L. MacDonald
Acting Manager, Heritage Preservation Services
Telephone: 416-338-1079
Fax: 416-392-1973
E-mail: mmacdon7@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

Barbara Leonhardt
Director, Policy & Research
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map
Attachment No. 2 – Photographs
Attachment No. 3 – Reasons for Listing (Statement of Significance)

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The arrow marks the location of the property.

This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown.



North York Hydro Building (1929)

Description

The property at 5151 Yonge Street is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Located on the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Empress Avenue, the North York Hydro Building (1929, with the upper floor added in 1948) is a 2-storey office building.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value:

North York Hydro Building (1929) has associative value for its direct links to an institution that is significant to the community. Following the creation of the Township of North York in 1922 (which separated from York Township), the new municipality established its Hydro-Electric Power Commission the next year. The Commission occupied temporary quarters until November 1929 when it opened this building as its first purpose-built office building on Yonge Street. In 1948, the single-storey structure was enlarged with the addition of the complementary second floor. The utility's operations were consolidated in this location until 1954, when the first in a series of new facilities opened on Goddard Street. Among other uses, the North York Hydro Building (1929) later housed the offices of the North York Historical Board and the Ontario Historical Society.

The North York Hydro Building (1929) is a representative example of an early 20th century office building that was designed to accommodate the services of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission for the Township of North York. Its design is indicative of Edwardian Classicism, the style favoured for public buildings after 1900. The style is reflected in the simple lines of the structure, the symmetrical placement of the main entrance and fenestration, and the traditional red brick cladding with brick and stone trim. The design is elevated with the Classical detailing, particularly the cornices, the flat arches with keystones that mark many of the window openings, and the treatment of the principal (west) façade with the frontispiece and the stone door surround with an entablature.

Contextually, the North York Hydro Building (1929) is historically linked to its surroundings. It stands in its original location on the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Empress Avenue opposite the David Gibson House (c. 1851) at 5172 Yonge Street, a local landmark that is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. The North York Hydro Building (1929) was built as part of the early 20th century development of North York Township, where low-scale buildings appeared along Yonge Street between Sheppard Avenue and Finch Avenue in the commercial and institutional centre of the municipality.

The North York Hydro Building (1929) is particularly significant as the only surviving member of an enclave of early 20th century municipal buildings that were placed on Yonge Street near the intersection of Empress Avenue. The Township's original purpose-built Municipal Building (1923) at #5145 Yonge and the first Fire Hall (also known as the Ivan M. Nelson Fire Hall and dating to 1942) at #5125 Yonge have been demolished, with architectural elements from the former fire hall incorporated in the Empress Walk condominium and retail complex at the southeast corner of Yonge Street and Empress Avenue.

Heritage Attributes:

The heritage attributes relating to the cultural heritage value of the North York Hydro Building (1929) as the first purpose-built office building for the utility that was designed in the Edwardian Classical style and is historically linked to its surroundings are:

- The scale, form and massing
- The two-storey rectangular plan under a flat roofline
- The red brick cladding, with the brick and stone detailing
- On the principal (west) façade and the south elevation facing Empress Avenue, the symmetrical placement of the flat-headed window openings, and the Classical detailing
- The main centrally placed entrance on Yonge Street, with the secondary entry on Empress Avenue
- The placement of the structure in its original location on the corner lot