



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

5 Highland Avenue, Demolition and Replacement of a Structure within the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District

Date:	February 9, 2009
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division
Wards:	Toronto Centre – Rosedale - Ward 27
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the demolition of an “unrated” house in the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District (NRHCD) and approve the design of the replacement structure, in accordance with Section 42 (1) of the Ontario Heritage Act, with a condition that the plans are revised to the approval of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services. The plans should be revised to set the integral double garage back from the front of the house and to eliminate the U-shaped driveway to maximize soft landscaping in the front yard, and preserve a mature City tree.

The existing structure does not contribute to the heritage character of the NRHCD and can be demolished.

The plans for the replacement structure need revision in order to be substantially in accordance with the NRHCD Plan Guidelines.

This consent under the Ontario Heritage Act is in addition to Site Plan approval under the Planning Act, the approval of variances to the existing zoning by-law by Committee of Adjustment and the securing of a demolition permit required under the Building Code Act.

In this proposal the classical proportions of the house façade are thrown off by the addition of an integral double garage set forward from the main façade of the house. The scale and massing of the principal façade with its integral garage appear to be too long and are visually intrusive to the heritage character of the streetscape. The proposal for a U-shaped driveway is not consistent with the zoning, results in too much paving on the front yard and is out of keeping with the landscape character of the NRHCD.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. City Council approve the request to demolish 5 Highland Avenue, an “unrated” structure in the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District, in accordance with Section 42 (1) of the Ontario Heritage Act.
2. City Council approve plans for the replacement building in accordance with Section 42 (4) of the Ontario Heritage Act subject to the owner:
 - a. Revising the plans to set back the garage and remove the U-shaped drive to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;
 - b. Prior to the issuance of any building permit for the replacement structure located at 5 Highland Ave, including a permit for the demolition, excavation, and/or shoring of the subject property, providing building permit drawings and landscape plan satisfactory to the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services.

Financial Impact

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

DECISION HISTORY

In October 2008 Toronto’s Community Planning received a site plan application for this project. The property backs onto a ravine and is subject to the City’s Ravine Protection By-Law and requires TRCA approval. The site plan application is still under review and Council’s direction on this heritage application will inform the site plan review.

HPS staff met with the applicant on site on November 30, 2008. A complete application for the demolition and new structure was received by HPS in January 2009.

In January 2009 the Committee of Adjustment received an application from the owners for minor variances including:

- maximum allowed residential gross floor area is 531.07 square metres – the proposal is to exceed this by 107.42 square metres, the maximum allowed is 35% of the lot area - proposed development would be an additional 7.16 %;
- minimum side lot setback allows for 7.5 metres for that portion of the building exceeding 17 metres in depth - the proposed building has a depth of 22.1 metres and is set back 2.2. metres on the west side and 2.6 metres on the east side;

- hard surfaces (paving) on the front yard for a U-shaped driveway exceed the zoning which requires; 1) 60% of the front yard must be landscaped open space - the proposal is to reduce the landscaped open space to 43% of the front yard area and 2) a minimum of 75% of the front yard area not covered by a permitted driveway shall be soft landscaping – the proposal is to reduce this minimum to 69% of the landscaped area;
- the driveway should not exceed a width of 6 metres – the proposal for the U shaped driveway exceeds the zoning by 14.4 metres.

Community Consultation

A formal community consultation meeting has not been held. However, the North Rosedale Ratepayers Association Heritage Committee was consulted by HPS staff. The Committee provided comments on the application and indicated they have concerns with the siting and massing of the replacement structure (Attachment No 9).

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The subject property is located at 5 Highland Avenue (Attachment No. 1) and is within the NRHCD which was enacted by City Council on Sept. 30, 2004. In designating the NRHCD, Council adopted an evaluation of all buildings within the district and endorsed guidelines for managing change. The heritage evaluation classified buildings in the district as “A”, “B”, “C”, or “unrated.” Buildings evaluated as “A” are considered significant in the national context, “B” rated have city-wide significance and “C” rated contribute to the heritage character of the district.

The existing structure (Attachment No. 2) is classified as “unrated” in the NRHCD. Unrated buildings are not considered to contribute to the heritage character of the district or are too recent to be accurately evaluated for their heritage value. The NRHCD Plan Guidelines permit the demolition of “unrated” buildings provided that the replacement structures conform to the guidelines and the zoning by-law.

Section 42 (1) of the Ontario Heritage Act requires that no owner of a property situated in a heritage conservation district that has been designated by a municipality shall erect, demolish or remove any building or structure on the property or permit the erection, demolition or removal of such a building or structure unless the owner obtains a permit from the municipality. Under Article IV of Section 103-22 of the Municipal Code, Council permission is required for any person to demolish a building within a heritage conservation district. This consent under the Ontario Heritage Act is in addition to the demolition permit required under the Building Code Act and the approval of variances to the existing zoning by-law.

Under Section 42 (4) of the Ontario Heritage Act, Council may grant the permit, refuse the application for the permit or approve the permit with terms and conditions attached.

COMMENTS

Proposal

The owner is proposing to demolish the existing “unrated” two storey brick dwelling, which is approximately 30 years old. The existing house was built over the ravine with only one storey visible from the street. The lower level is built out over the ravine. The existing integral garage is sited in front of the house, however, the overall impression is that the house recedes into the background with landscaping dominating the view from the street. The landscaping includes a berm, boulders, mature shrubs and Norway maples (Attachment No.2). The applicant has provided plans and photographic documentation of the existing building at the request of HPS.

The proposed replacement structure will be slightly smaller in gross floor area than the existing house although still over the allowed zoning. Despite its smaller g.f.a. it will have a much greater visual impact, with the two storey massing set closer to the street rather than set down into the ravine. This siting should allow the owner to comply with the City’s Ravine By-Law, protect mature trees and provide a small terrace and yard area at the back.

The two storey replacement structure will be constructed in buff brick with limestone details. The style is traditional, “classically inspired”, with a Doric entrance portico and cut stone surround, horizontal limestone banding and vertical pilasters. The roof is flat with a parapet and large, detailed chimneys. The integral double garage on the east side is set 5’ 6” feet forward of the front facade. On the second floor over the garage the massing is set back 3’8” from the front façade (Attachment No. 7). The existing landscaping will be replaced with a circular driveway surrounding a planted island.

Context

Highland Avenue is in the “Ravine Lands” streetscape character area described in section 5.2 of the NRHCD Plan and is characterized by: ravine edge topography; “Olmstead” inspired curvilinear subdivision pattern with larger than average lot sizes; good examples of Victorian, Edwardian and Arts and Crafts architecture; varied and asymmetrical elevations balanced with English classicism; complementary mix of inter-war and modern styles; dwelling height and scale of large proportions – grander than average scale; front, side and rear dwelling setbacks vary, but larger than average; front yards characterized by a variety of large trees and leafy canopy; and quality stonework and brick masonry with robust and simple classicized detailing.

Highland Avenue terminates at the Highland Gardens where there is a cul-de-sac, with five more recent unrated structures. The nearest heritage rated properties are directly across the street from number 5 at 2, 4, 6 and 8 Highland Avenue (all rated “C”), and directly east at 7 (rated “C”) 9 and 11 Highland Avenue (both rated “B”) (Attachment No.s 2,3,4).

Guidelines

Section 7.3 of the NRHCD Plan sets out the guidelines for new buildings. New buildings should: contribute to the variety and heritage character of the district; be designed to be compatible with the heritage buildings, in terms of scale, massing, height, setback, and entry level; exhibit a roof profile and eave lines of a height compatible with that of its neighbours; and avoid integral garages and below grade entrances.

Section 7.5 of the Plan includes guidelines for landscape/streetscape encouraging the preservation of existing landscapes, trees and mature vegetation, in both the public and private realm and encouraging the planting of species characteristic to the district, especially when replacing dying specimens.

Comments on Proposed Replacement Structure

The design of the proposed house is a two storey classically inspired centre hall plan (Attachment No. 8). There are many examples of centre hall plan English Revival style homes in the district. However in this proposal the classic proportions are thrown off by the integral double garage which is set forward from the main face of the house, making the overall facade appear to be too long.

The scale and massing of the proposed house and integral garage are out of keeping with the character of the street. The long front façade and two story height will have much greater visual impact on the street than other houses on Highland Avenue and Gardens. The nearby heritage buildings appear to take up less of their lots, and the larger houses have much larger frontages than the subject property (Attachment No.s 3,4). This proposal is lacking in the more typical generous front and side yard setbacks and creates a “wall” effect close to the street (Attachment No. 5).

The setback of the proposed replacement house is similar to the setback of the garage on the existing house and is in line with the house on the east side, 7 Highland Avenue (Attachment No.6). The existing house façade lines up with the S.E. corner of the front façade of the house to the west, 1 Highland Avenue (which angles to address the curve of the street). While the replacement house façade is set further forward into the curve of the street than the existing house, it is still behind the N.W corner 1 Highland Avenue, and is set closer to the street to avoid the ravine. The visibility of the N.W. corner of 5 Highland Avenue should be obscured somewhat if the Norway Maples are retained.

The height of the proposed house is in keeping with the zoning and with the house to the west. It should not impact visually on the house to the east. The proposed flat roofline, while uncharacteristic in the NRHCD, will likely be less visually intrusive than another type of roof in this location, and is consistent with the unrated structure nearby at 1 Highland Gardens (Attachment No. 4). The entry level is consistent with the houses on either side. The proposed materials are buff brick with stone detailing and while red brick predominates there are examples of buff brick in the district.

Integral garages and below grade entrances are strongly discouraged in the district however, in this instance the ravine lot makes it impossible to have a rear garage. Therefore staff are recommending that the appearance of the integral garage be mitigated by setting the front face of the garage back from the façade of the house.

Comments on front yard landscaping

The proposal for a U-shaped driveway is not consistent with the zoning and results in too much paving in the front yard (Attachment No. 6). The NRHCD guidelines encourage the preservation of existing landscapes, trees and mature vegetation and note the characteristic large canopy trees in this area.

CONCLUSION

HPS staff recommends that the design of the replacement building should be revised in order to comply with the guidelines for new buildings and enhance the heritage character of the district. The integral garage should be set back from the front façade in order to improve the character of both the house and streetscape. The appearance of the lengthy massing would be reduced and the symmetry of the façade enhanced by setting back the front of the garage. If the house plan cannot be moved any further back towards the ravine to accommodate this change then the interior layout would have to be altered. The large detailed chimney on the roof closest to the street should be reduced in size to minimize its visual impact.

The U-shaped driveway should be replaced with a driveway that is single lane at the curb widening to two spaces at the front of the garage. A revised landscape plan would further mitigate the visual impact of the reduced setback of the replacement structure from the street. Care should be taken to protect the two City trees at the front of the property (Norway Maples).

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No.1 - Location Plan
Attachment No. 2 – Existing Structure & Adjacent Property
Attachment No. 3 – Neighbouring Houses
Attachment No. 4 – Neighbouring Houses
Attachment No. 5 – Proposed Replacement
Attachment No. 6 – Site Plan
Attachment No. 7 – Plans
Attachment No. 8 - Elevations
Attachment No. 9 - North Rosedale Ratepayers Heritage Committee Comments