

34 – 38 Hazelton Avenue, Alteration to a Designated Heritage Property

Date:	March 2, 2009
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division
Wards:	Toronto Centre – Ward 27
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends refusal of an application to alter an individually listed and Part V designated heritage property at 34-38 Hazelton Avenue. The subject property at 34 Hazelton Avenue is located on the west side of Hazelton Street between Yorkville and Webster Avenues. The site is occupied by a two story over ground level former educational facility (St. Basil's School), constructed in 1928 in a Gothic revival architectural style. The structure was designed by Toronto architect J.M. Cowen.

The property is within the Yorkville Hazelton Heritage Conservation District (HCD) and therefore is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act per By-Law 622-2002. In designating the district, Council also endorsed a set of Guidelines with regards to alterations, demolitions and new construction within the district.

Additionally, the structure at 34 Hazelton Avenue is an individually listed structure (this listing predates the district designation) as adopted by Toronto City Council in February 2002. The property is specifically identified for its cultural heritage value.

The cultural value of the structure is related to its design or physical value as a representative example of Neo-Gothic style. This style is evident at the exterior walls and along the roofline, with particular attention to the principal (east) façade. Historic significance of the structure is reflected in the architectural practice of J.M. Cowen, who prepared plans for St. Basil's Separate School in his capacity as the official architect. Cultural value is also conveyed through its contextual significance in supporting the character of the HCD. With its scale and setback, the school building complements the low-scale appearance of the area.

The project proposes to substantially alter the existing heritage structure by removing exterior walls and the internal structural system and constructing an eight storey condominium building with ground level commercial use. The front facade of the building would be retained and would be incorporated into the overall project. The new condominium building with ground storey retail would be seven stories over a commercial ground level (with an additional mechanical roof penthouse). The height of the new structure would rise five stories, excluding the rooftop penthouse, above the existing structure's height. These additional floors would be setback approximately seven meters from the most forward projecting (central) bay of the existing façade.

The design of the structure at the front elevation would also develop a sunken (below grade) forecourt to provide access to non-residential uses at that floor level.

This application does not meet the intent of the Official Plan in protecting heritage resources. The proposed alterations would damage the heritage character of the property and significantly alter the streetscape of Hazelton Avenue and does not meet the YHHCD Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council refuse the application to alter 34-38 Hazelton Avenue made by the applicant; and
2. City Council authorize the City Solicitor and City Staff to attend the Ontario Municipal Board hearing, should Council refuse this application and the refusal be appealed to the Board.

Financial Impact

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

DECISION HISTORY

The applicant has submitted applications on June 11, 2008 for an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment (Application Number: 08 169177 STE 27 OZ). The OPA/ZBL report will be heard concurrently at the TEYCC meeting with this report.

The property was included on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in February 2002 and was also designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act as it is contained within the Yorkville-Hazelton Heritage Conservation District. The district designation was enacted by City Council on August 1, 2002 per by-law 622-2002.

In designating the district, Council also endorsed a set of Guidelines with regards to alterations, demolitions and new construction within the district.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In early 2006, a previous alteration project was approved by Council, adding one setback storey to the subject heritage building. Though the project proposed to demolish the interior portion of the structure, the character-defining features of the entire principal facade were retained and/or reconstructed with no alterations that further obscured or otherwise screened exterior cladding or architectural features of the building. Also, the scale of the project was consistent with the two to four storey structures that extend along the Hazelton Avenue frontage. Thus, the previous project was, on balance, in conformance with the Guidelines as established for the Yorkville Hazelton HCD. The current project increases considerably the scale and massing from that previously approved. Therefore, the current project cannot be considered as a modification of the previous approval.

In June 11, 2008, the current application was submitted. The original project scheme conceptualized a more intensive alteration, with an additional floor level and further intervention at the building's front façade (i.e. removal of side bays with primary entries, metal cladding on heritage façade, etc) than that described and attached herein. Community Planning and HPS staff worked with the applicant so that the originally submitted project scheme was revised.

Proposal

As previously stated in the summary, the project proposes to remove three walls of the structure while retaining the front façade. The remaining façade would subsequently be incorporated into the new building. The new condominium building with ground storey retail would be seven stories over a commercial ground level (with an additional mechanical roof penthouse). The height of the new structure would rise five stories, excluding the rooftop penthouse, above the existing structure's height. These additional floors would be setback approximately 7 meters from the most forward projecting (central) bay of the existing façade.

The design of the structure at the front elevation would also develop a sunken (below grade) forecourt to provide access to non-residential uses at that floor level.

The alteration application included a Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) prepared by ERA Architects, submitted June 23, 2008.

Policy Framework

Official Plan

Section 3.1.5 of the City of Toronto Official Plan directs that significant heritage resources will be conserved by listing properties of architectural and/or historic interest on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties; designating properties; entering into conservation agreements with owners of heritage properties; and designating areas with a concentration of heritage resources as heritage conservation districts. The Plan directs the adoption of guidelines to maintain and improve the character of such districts.

Ontario Heritage Act

In reference to the Province of Ontario's 2005 Provincial Policy Statement, Section 2.6.3 states: "Development and Site alteration may be permitted on adjacent lands to protected heritage property where the proposed development and site alteration has been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that the heritage attributes of the protected heritage property will be conserved."

Under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act, an owner must obtain a permit from the municipality to alter a designated property in an HCD. If Council refuses the application the owner may appeal the decision to the Ontario Municipal Board.

Yorkville-Hazelton Heritage Conservation District Plan (YHHCD Plan)

The YHHCD Plan was adopted by City Council to be used as a guide to manage property alteration and development with a view to the preservation of the existing architectural character of the district and its streetscape. The Guidelines (Section 2.0) of the YHHCD Plan define the Heritage District Characteristics and set out standards in order to provide guidance to alterations and new development that will complement the existing character.

The YHHCD Plan focuses primarily on reviewing alterations that are visible from a public vantage point. All exterior alteration and development visible from the street within the district will require prior approval of Heritage Preservation Services, and in some cases City Council (YHHCD Plan, Section 3).

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

On March 3, 4 and 5, 2008, City Council adopted Parks Canada's *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Standards and Guidelines)* as the official document guiding planning, stewardship and conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/cc/decisions/2008-03-03-cc17-dd.pdf>).

Community Consultation

A formal community consultation meeting was held regarding the application on October 2, 2008. Staff, the Ward Councillor and the applicant's heritage consultant and architect were on hand to answer questions from the community. A number of concerns were expressed with respect to the overdevelopment of the site. In general, the community expressed a desire to see development consistent with the scale of the surrounding HCD.

COMMENTS

Description of Heritage Value

Architectural Character

The subject property at 34 Hazelton Avenue is located on the west side of Hazelton Street between Yorkville and Webster Avenues. The site is occupied by a two story over ground

level former educational facility (St. Basil's School), constructed in 1928 in a Gothic revival architectural style. The structure was designed by Toronto architect J.M. Cowen.

The structure at 34 Hazelton Avenue is an individually listed structure (in addition to its designation under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act). This listing predates the district designation and was adopted by Toronto City Council in February 2002. The property is specifically identified for its cultural heritage value.

The cultural value of the structure is related to its design or physical value as a representative example of Neo-Gothic style. This style is evident at the exterior walls and along the roofline, with particular attention to the principal (east) façade. Historic significance of the structure is reflected in the architectural practice of J.M. Cowan, who prepared plans for St. Basil's Separate School in his capacity as the official architect. Cultural value is also conveyed through its contextual significance in supporting the character of the HCD. With its scale and setback, the school building complements the low-scale appearance of the area.

Streetscape Character

St Basil's School at 34 Hazelton Avenue is a significant part of the neighbourhood of Yorkville and the streetscape of Hazelton Avenue. The building is a long standing reminder of the history of the Roman Catholic community in Toronto and is a nicely detailed example of a schoolhouse designed in the Collegiate Gothic style.

34-38 Hazelton is currently situated within a well-preserved mix of 19th century, Victorian housing types which were built together and share a similar relationship with the street. While St. Basil's school offsets the otherwise residential streetscape of Hazelton Avenue, its low scale and symmetric composition compliment the context of the neighbourhood and street. The property, as part of the HCD, features salient attributes which contribute to the district's character, namely: a consistent relationship in scale, height, mass and materials with other structures (most other structures range from two to four stories in height along the Hazelton Avenue frontage) on the block face. Moreover, the structure reinforces the vernacular of Hazelton Avenue by relating to adjacent structures via similar street setback and faced rhythm.

Project Comments

As one of Toronto's original streetcar suburbs, Yorkville Hazelton HCD contains a wealth of historic structures. Of the almost 200 properties within the area, more than 65% were built before 1900, and there are 39 that are either listed or designated (including 34 Hazelton). The mixed use street car suburb is primarily residential in character but also contains commercial and institutional structures. In sum, the structure is important individually and as an important component of both the Heritage Conservation District and the Hazelton Avenue streetscape.

Yorkville Hazelton HCD Guidelines

Section 2.2 Additions to existing buildings

The alteration of the property does not meet the criteria necessary to be compliant with applicable standards and guidelines that regulate such additions in the district.

These guidelines provide that, “additions must be compatible with the character, scale and form of the existing building, while being clearly distinguishable from the original heritage building. The additions must not detract from or obscure the heritage features of the building.”

The project does not comply with the following guidelines:

2.2.2 Design, Form and Massing

“The style of the addition should be compatible with the mass, height, window and door openings, material and color of the existing building.” Essentially, additions should “be located at an inconspicuous elevation of the building to reduce visibility from the street and must not overwhelm the existing building.”

The height and scale of the project would impact the resource and district. While additional floor levels are minimally setback, the project would be approximately three times the height of the existing heritage resource and would be highly visible along the public right of way within the HCD. The scale of the additional floor levels would overwhelm the existing two to four storey building wall condition that currently exists along the street within the HCD.

In addition, the solid masonry foundation at the base would be substituted for an excavated forecourt level with extensive use of storefront glazing and limited architectural framing, thereby replacing a solid masonry base.

2.1.5 Cladding and Trim and 2.1.6 Foundations

“Alteration to original cladding and trim on principal elevations should be avoided. Replacement materials are to be the same or similar to the materials being replaced.”

The storefront design at the base of façade would utilize large surfaces of glass (storefront with butt-jointed glazing) with minimal architectural framing visible from the street. This changes the foundation base from a solid connection that anchors the structure to the ground to one in which the building façade visually floats.

Standards and Guidelines

The project contravenes Parks Canada *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* in that the project through removal of three walls and internal structure in conjunction with the added floor levels would (1) not adopt a strategy of minimal intervention in order to conserve the structure’s heritage value; and, (2) the new project addition is not subordinate to and does not conserve the heritage value of the heritage building in terms of scale and design. Rooftop additions should be set back from the front wall plane and be as inconspicuous as possible.

CONCLUSION

The scale and nature of the proposed project are not appropriate and will damage the heritage character of the property and streetscape character of Hazelton Avenue and the heritage conservation district. Heritage Preservation Services staff recommends that City Council refuse the application.

CONTACT

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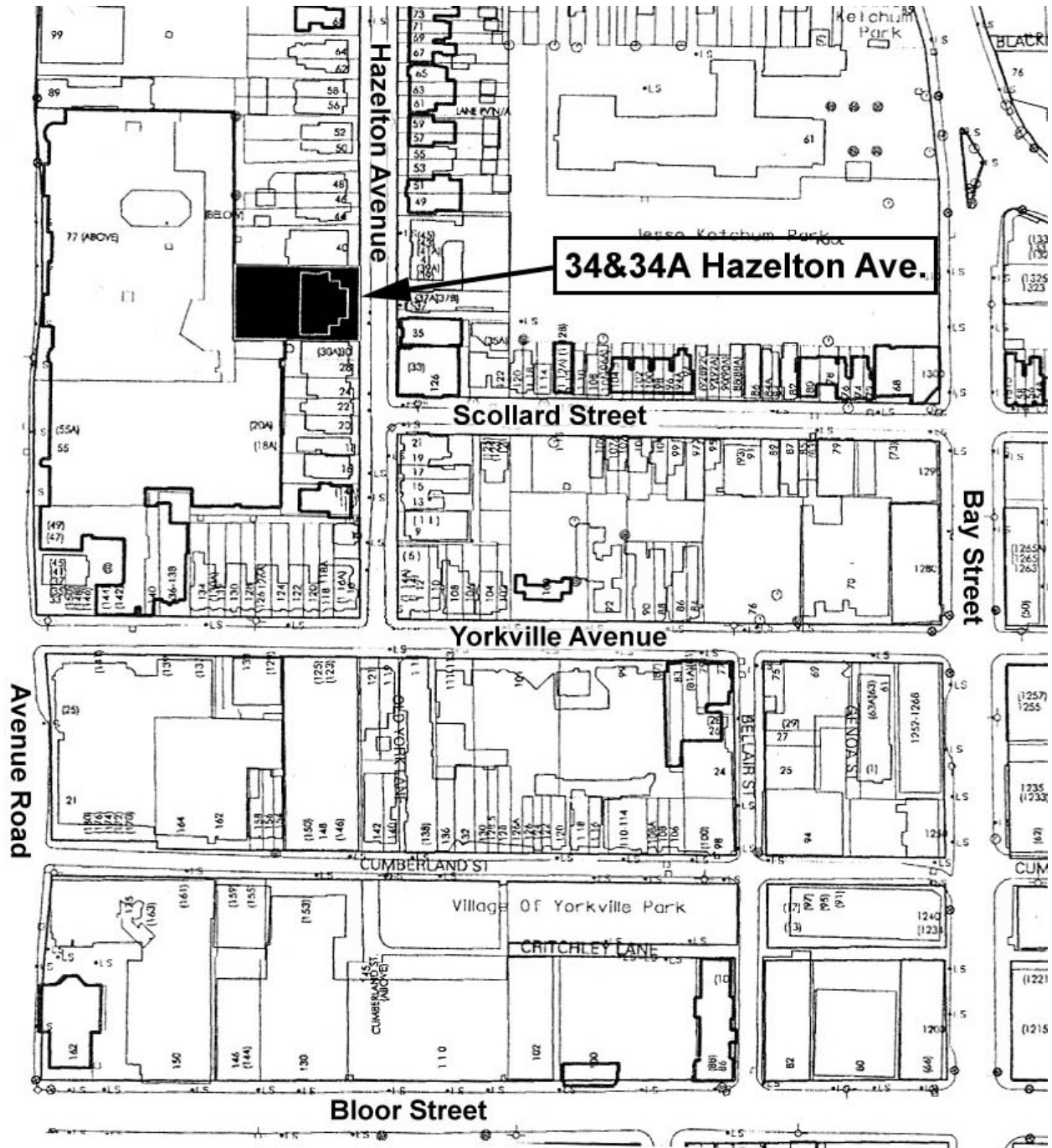
SIGNATURE

Barbara Leonhardt
Director, Policy & Research
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No.1 - Location Map
Attachment No. 2 – Existing Structure Photos
Attachment No. 3 – Site/Landscape Plan
Attachment No. 4 – Ground Floor Plan
Attachment No. 5 – Front Elevation
Attachment No. 6 – Side (North) Elevation
Attachment No. 7 – Building Section with uses

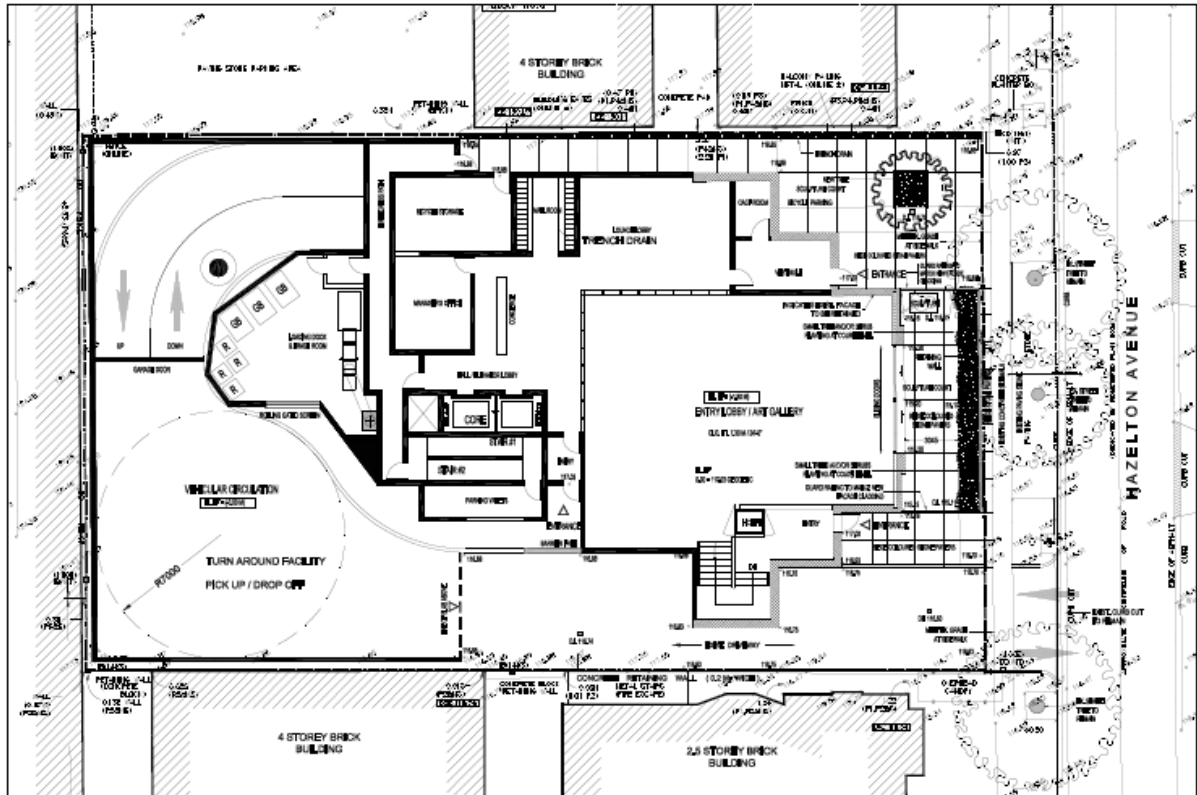
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This location map is for information purposes only.
The exact boundaries of the property are not shown



SITE/LANDSCAPE PLAN: 34-38 HAZELTON AVE ATTACHMENT NO. 3



ATTACHMENT NO. 4

