

65 Front Street East - Alteration to a Heritage Property and Intention to Designate, Part IV, Section 29, Ontario Heritage Act

Date:	June 2, 2009
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division
Wards:	Toronto Centre-Rosedale – Ward 28
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the proposed alterations to the heritage property at 65 Front Street East. This report further recommends the designation of this property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value.

This report addresses an application to provide a 1-storey addition to the building and undertake restoration work on the Front Street East and Church Street facades. The proposed rehabilitation project preserves the remaining heritage fabric of the building and provides for the restoration of significant architectural elements. The restoration of this heritage building will greatly contribute to the heritage integrity of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood, most poignantly at this prominent intersection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve the alterations to the heritage property at 65 Front Street East, substantially in accordance with the plans and drawings prepared by Gregory Patterson Architect dated May 22, 2009, date stamped received by Heritage Preservation Services on May 22, 2009, and on file with the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services subject to the owner:

- a. Prior to the issuance of any building permit for 65 Front Street East including a permit for the demolition, excavation and/or shoring of the subject property;

providing a Letter of Credit in a form and an amount satisfactory to the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, to secure the heritage conservation work included in the above-noted drawings;

providing building permit drawings including detailed descriptions / specifications for the proposed heritage conservation work to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;
 - b. Prior to the release of the Letter of Credit;

completing the heritage conservation work by a qualified heritage conservation contractor to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;

providing a Letter of Substantial Completion for the conservation work signed by the project architect and heritage consultant;
2. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 65 Front Street East under Part IV, Section 29 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, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act; and
 4. If there are 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.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report. The public Notice of Intention to Designate will be advertised on the City's web site in accordance with the City of Toronto Act provisions.

DECISION HISTORY

The property at 65 Front Street East was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties on November 21 and 23, 1973. The owner has no objection to the designation of the site as part of this application.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The property owner and their architect first met with City Staff (including Heritage Preservation Services) on February 14, 2008. The initial proposal included the addition of two floors to the existing building.

The applicant proceeded to submit a Committee of Adjustment application for a variance to increase the gross floor area to accommodate a one-storey addition to the building. At its meeting of October 8, 2008, the Committee of Adjustment deferred consideration of the application for three months to allow further discussions between the property owner and City staff.

Subsequent to this decision, the applicant's architect and heritage consultant met on several occasions with Heritage Preservation Services (December 5, 2008, March 26, 2009 and April 22, 2009), and the property owner and their consultant team met with Councillor McConnell and City staff (April 23, 2009).

This proposal requires a Committee of Adjustment application for the following variances: gross floor area (approximately 906.61 square metres over limit of 1684.29 square metres), parking (2 parking spaces required), building height at the street line (approximately 0.4 metres over limit of 16.0 metres), and penetrating the angular plane. The applicant has not yet applied for a building permit.

COMMENTS

Background

The property at 65 Front Street East (Attachment No. 2) contains a building which originally functioned as the John Smith and Company Warehouse (1869).

This warehouse form building is associated with Toronto's 19th century mercantile history. This property crosses the original shoreline and was intended to form part of the 'Walks and Gardens' waterfront plan by John Howard (1853). Instead this area of the harbour was filled and developed for commercial use; it housed wharves, a railway line and a multitude of warehouses, many with storefronts on Front Street East from which to sell their goods.

The building is prominently located at the south-east corner of the intersection of Front Street East, Wellington Street East and Church Street, and opposite the Gooderham Building (commonly referred to as the Flatiron Building). It forms an integral part of the 19th century mercantile buildings along the south side of Front Street East and Church Street, and contributes to the historic character of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood.

The building is a good example of a masonry warehouse in the city's original commercial district. As shown in the historic photographs (Attachment No. 3) it featured fine architectural elements including, but not limited to: gothic influenced brick arches with stone keystones over primary ground floor openings and third floor windows (altered circa 1970); wood windows with divided lights (altered circa 1970); stone sills and lintels at window openings (altered circa 1970); decorative brick corbelling at the eave line; a metal cornice and a hipped roof.

Proposal

The subject property is located at the south-east corner of Front Street East and Church Street (Attachment Nos. 1 & 2). The application proposes a 1-storey addition to the building and exterior restoration work (Attachment Nos. 4, 5 & 6).

Heritage Comments

It is the general practice of Heritage Preservation Services to support applications for additional floors on heritage buildings where the proposed addition is stepped back such that it is not visible from the street. However, this application is an exception as the proposal: incorporates strategies to mitigate the impact of the addition on the heritage building; preserves the existing heritage fabric; and presents a unique opportunity to restore the architectural attributes of a prominent heritage building. As indicated above, the attributes of the building were heavily impacted by previous unsympathetic alterations. Further, the restoration of this building will greatly contribute to the heritage integrity of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood, specifically as part of the Front and Church street walls and the 'five corners' intersection.

In accordance with the Parks Canada *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* specifically the section entitled "New Additions to Historic Places" (Attachment No. 7), this proposal incorporates the following strategies to mitigate the impact of the proposed additional floor on the heritage building:

- the existing hipped roof form has been maintained such that the perceived height of the new addition as viewed from the street is limited to approximately 7'-0" (2.41m);
- the eave line of the new addition aligns with the top of the roof parapet of the heritage building at 67 Front Street East in order to provide a continuous street wall height;
- the structural columns of the addition rest on the existing exterior wall as recommended in the structural analysis of the building, but the new wall between is stepped back;
- the new addition is visually compatible in form with the heritage building yet visually distinct in its design and material; and
- there is a significant heritage conservation scope of work, most notably the restoration of architectural attributes removed as part of previous alterations.

As this building forms part of the prominent ‘five corners’ intersection, the heritage conservation work is focused on restoring the gothic-influenced architectural features on the Front Street East façade and the three north-most bays on Church Street. This work includes, but is not limited to:

- providing a new stone sill (water table) near grade and repair the brickwork below;
- restoring the masonry arch above the main entrance on Front Street;
- restoring stone window lintels and sills;
- restoring the masonry window arches on the upper floor windows; and
- providing new windows with a divided light pattern (except at the existing storefront).

Along the remainder of the Church Street façade this work includes, but is not limited to:

- providing a new stone sill (water table) near grade and parge below;
- restoring the original date stone; and
- providing new windows with a divided light pattern (except at the lower level).

And, across the two façades, the existing grey mortar joints circa 1970s and selected bricks are to be tinted to match the original masonry colour.

Reasons for Designation

Staff is requesting as a condition of approval, that the property at 65 Front Street East be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Reasons for Designation are contained in Attachment No. 8.

The property at 65 Front Street East is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario. Located on the southeast corner of Front Street East and Church Street, the John Smith and Company Warehouse (1869) has design value as a rare surviving example of a commercial warehouse with Gothic Revival detailing that, contextually, is historically linked to the development of Front Street East in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood.

A location map (Attachment No. 1) and photographs (Attachment Nos. 2 & 3) are attached. The Reasons for Designation (Statement of Significance – Attachment No. 8) are intended to be posted on the City of Toronto’s web site and served on the owners of 65 Front Street East and on the Ontario Heritage Trust according to the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Reasons for Designation include a statement of the cultural heritage value of the property with a description of its heritage attributes.

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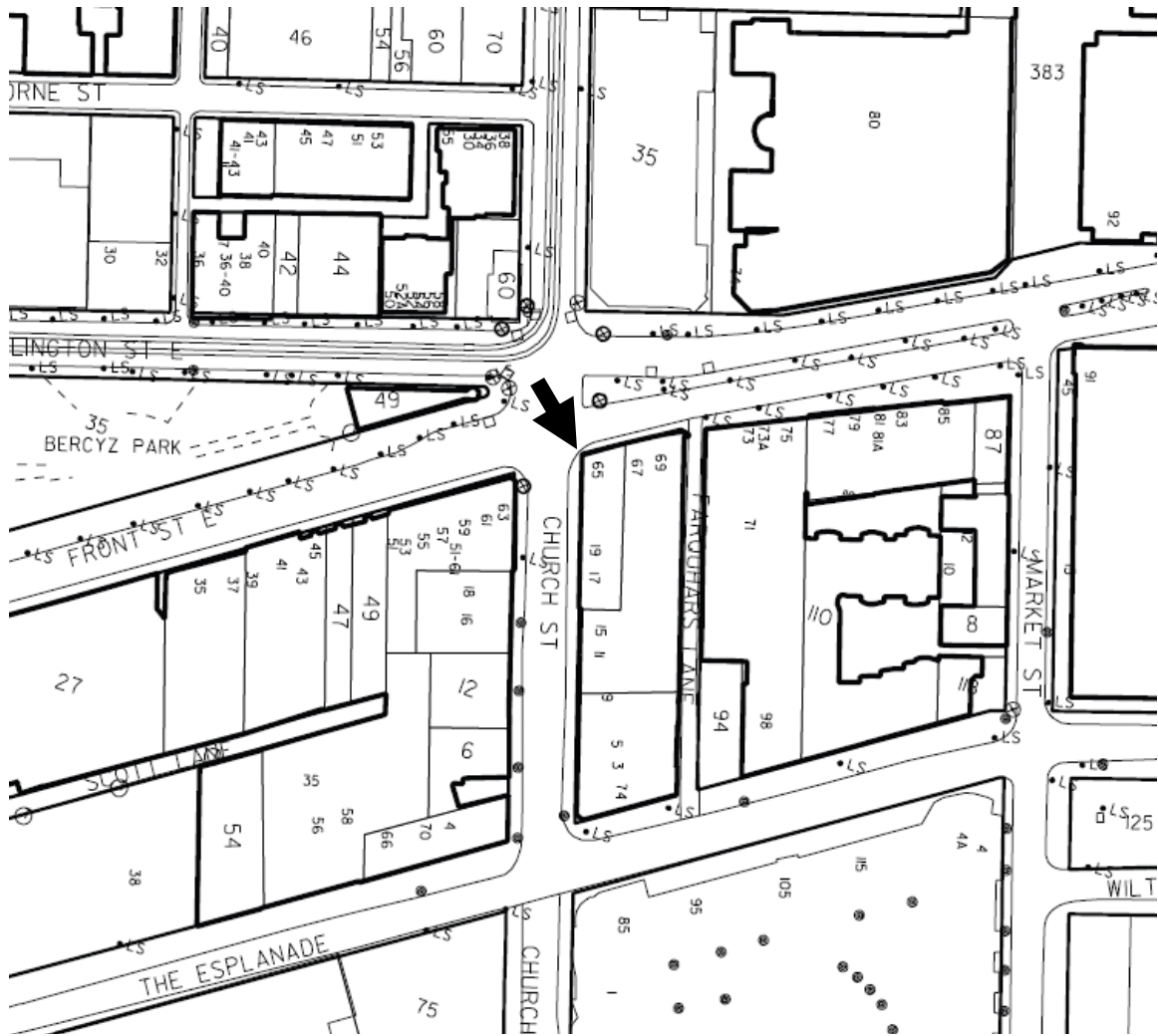
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Barbara Leonhardt
Director, Policy and Research
City Planning Division

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map
Attachment No. 2 - Existing Structure
Attachment No. 3 – Historic Photographs
Attachment No. 4 – Proposed Elevations
Attachment No. 5 – Proposed Sections
Attachment No. 6 – Renderings
Attachment No. 7 - Guidelines
Attachment No. 8 - Reasons for Designation



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



Corner View: North (Front St E) and West (Church St) Elevations



North (Front St E) Elevation



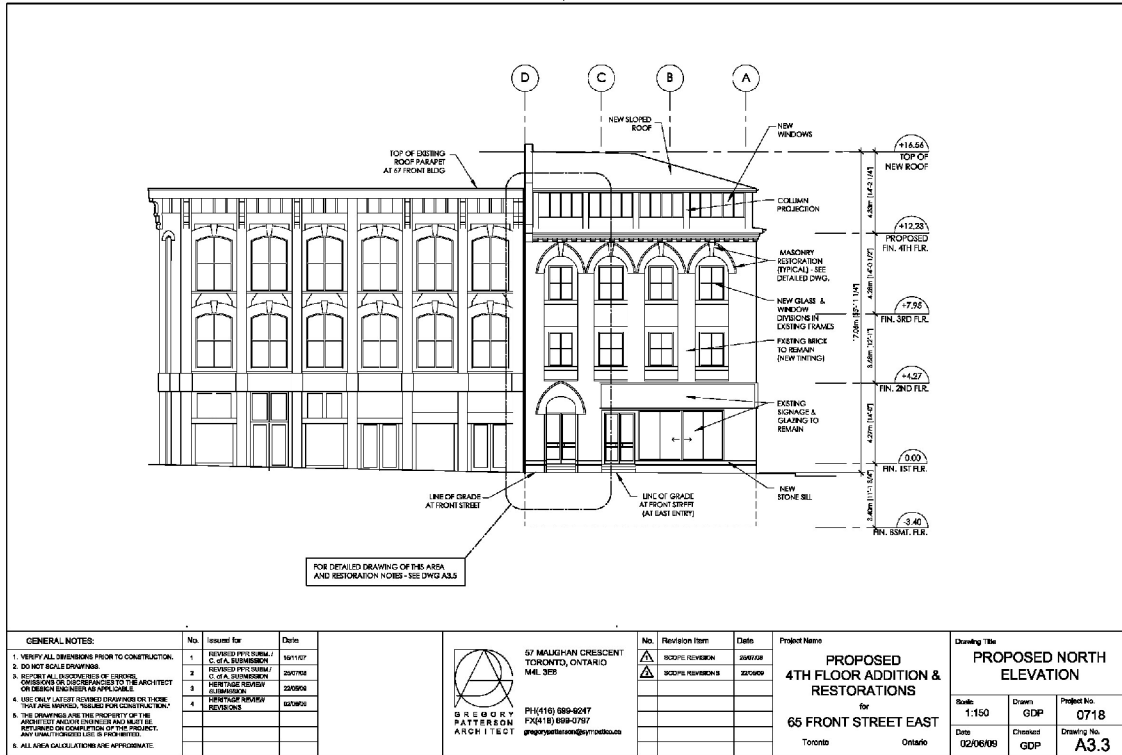
Detail at West (Church St) Elevation



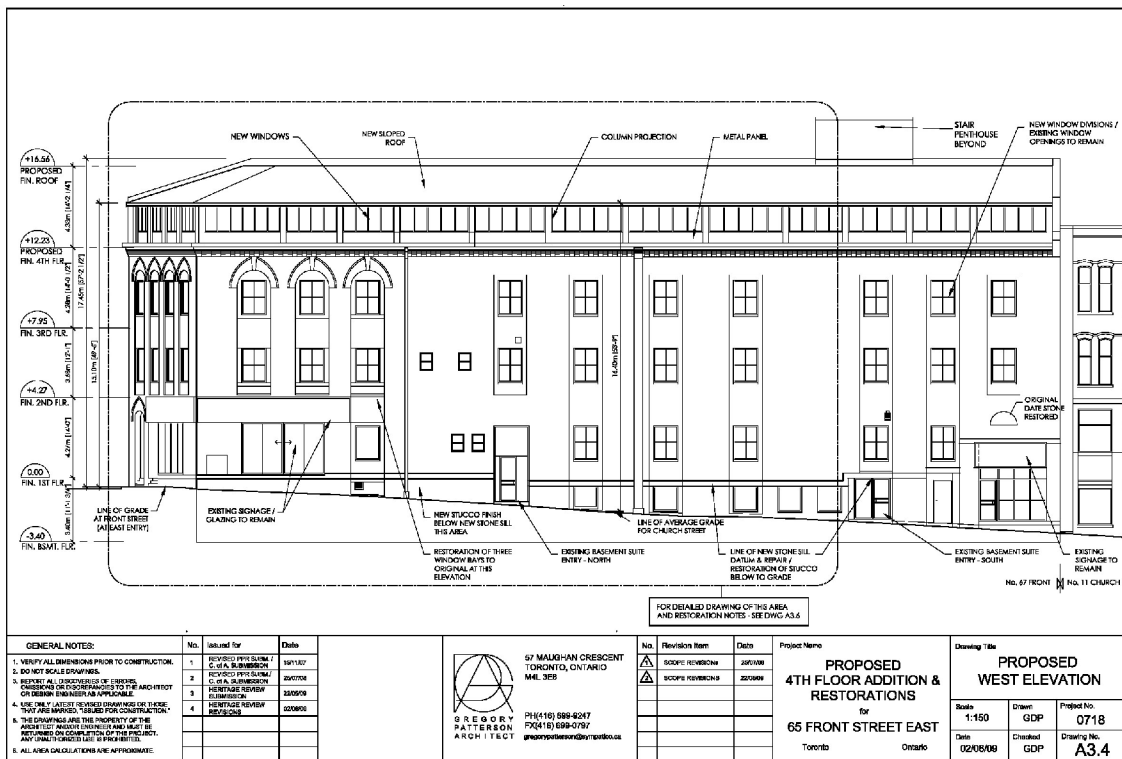
Bird's eye view of Front Street East and Toronto Harbour c. 1924
(City of Toronto Archives)



Looking east on Front Street East, June 10, 1913 – subject property at far right
(City of Toronto Archives)



Proposed North Elevation



Proposed West Elevation



View looking south-east from the Gooderham / Flatiron Building

New Additions to Historic Places

Recommended

Placing functions and services required for the proposed use in existing non-character-defining spaces rather than constructing a new addition.

Constructing a new addition to retain as many of the historic materials as possible and to ensure that the character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed, or the heritage value undermined.

Designing a new addition in a manner that draws a clear distinction between what is historic and what is new.

Considering the design for an attached exterior addition in terms of its relationship to the historic place as well as the historic district or neighbourhood. Design for the new work may be contemporary or may reference design motifs from the historic place. In either case, it should be compatible in terms of mass, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and colour, yet be distinguishable from the historic place.

Placing a new addition on a non-character-defining portion and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic place.

When required for a new use of a building, designing a rooftop addition that is set back from the wall plane such that it is as inconspicuous as possible when viewed from the public realm.

Not Recommended

Constructing a new addition when the proposed use could be met by altering existing non-character-defining spaces.

Constructing a new addition so that the character-defining features of the historic resource are obscured, damaged or destroyed, or the heritage value is otherwise undermined.

Duplicating the exact form, material, style and detailing of the historic resource in a new addition so that the new work appears to be part of the historic place.

Replicating a historic style or period in a new addition.

Designing and constructing new additions that diminish or eliminate the historic character of the resource, including its design, materials, workmanship, location or setting.

Designing a new addition that obscures, damages or destroys character-defining features of the historic place or undermines its heritage value.

Constructing a rooftop addition to a building so that the historic appearance of the building is radically changed.



This addition to a bank in Calgary, Alberta was built as a greenhouse type rooftop structure set back from the wall plane. The existing high parapet, making it as inconspicuous as possible from the street, largely conceals it. While distinguishable from the elaborate sandstone exterior of the original building, it is physically and visually compatible, and subordinate to, the historic building.

John Smith and Company Warehouse

Description

The property at 65 Front Street East is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the categories of design and contextual value. Located on the southeast corner of Front Street East and Church Street, the John Smith and Company Warehouse (1869) is a three-storey commercial building that was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1973.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The John Smith and Company Warehouse has design value as a rare surviving example of a late 19th century warehouse in Toronto that displays decorative detailing from the Gothic Revival style. Commercial buildings with the distinctive pointed-arch motifs and patterned brickwork identified with the Gothic Revival were relatively rare in Toronto, particularly along Front Street East where most of the warehouses favoured Renaissance Revival and Second Empire designs, often with cast iron storefronts. Therefore, the John Smith and Company Warehouse stands as an important reminder of the application of Gothic Revival styling to a commercial warehouse in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood. The building retains its contrasting buff brick cornice that draws attention to the facades on Front and Church streets. While alterations to the structure have resulted in the removal of the distinctive pointed-arch detailing, these elements remain visible in the brickwork above the first- and third-storey openings and are documented in historical photographs.

Contextually, the John Smith and Company Warehouse is historically linked to its surroundings on Front Street East where it anchors the southeast corner of Church Street in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood. Front Street originated as Palace Street and formed the south boundary of the Town of York. Ignoring the townsite's grid pattern of streets, Front Street was curved west of Jarvis Street to follow the shore of Lake Ontario. In the 1850s, the shoreline was extended by landfill, The Esplanade was established south of Front Street, and railway lines were built along the waterfront where additional wharves were located. With these improvements and the proximity to St. Lawrence Market (1844) at Front and Jarvis streets, wholesale merchants and manufacturers financed large warehouses with accessible basements to take advantage of the sloping lots along the south side of Front Street East. The first full-scale warehouses on Front Street East were built near the market in the late 1850s, with the next phase of construction extending westward past Church Street. The John Smith and Company Warehouse (1869) was commissioned for a firm of wholesale grocers, and subsequently acquired by Cramp,

Torrances and Company, importers of tea and produce from “East and West India.” The John Smith and Company Warehouse and its neighbours contributed to the reputation of Front Street East as the commercial heart of Toronto in the 19th century. Change began in the early 1900s when the King-Spadina neighbourhood emerged as the city’s new warehousing and manufacturing centre. By the close of World War II, many of the Front Street warehouses were in disrepair and subsequently demolished. The City of Toronto promoted the revitalization of the neighbourhood in the 1960s with the restoration of St. Lawrence Market. This success was followed by the occupancy of the John Smith and Company Warehouse and the other surviving warehouses along Front Street East with restaurants, offices, specialty shops and art galleries. Today, the John Smith and Company Warehouse contributes to the historical character of the St. Lawrence neighbourhood, which contains a collection of complementary commercial warehouses from the Victorian era that are recognized on the City’s heritage inventory, along with City-wide landmarks including the Second City Hall (1844) and St. Lawrence Hall (1851). The John Smith and Company Warehouse anchors the unique intersection created by the convergence of Front Street East, Wellington Street East and Church Street, which is overlooked by the landmark Flatiron Building (1892).

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the John Smith and Company Warehouse related to its stated cultural heritage value are:

- The scale, form and massing
- The three-storey rectangular plan under a hipped roof
- The red brick cladding with brick and stone detailing
- On the principal (north) façade on Front Street East and the long west elevation on Church Street, the pattern and placement of the door and window openings
- The first-storey storefront (north and west), which has been altered, where an original round-arched opening remains in the left (east) bay on the north facade
- In the second and third stories, the organization of the fenestration by piers
- The decorative detailing, with the contrasting yellow brick cornice with stone brackets
- Its location anchoring the southeast corner of Front Street East and Church Street where it overlooks the Flatiron Building and Berczy Park