



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

97 St. George Street – Intention to Designate under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act and Authority to Enter into a Heritage Easement Agreement

Date:	March 27, 2009
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division
Wards:	Trinity-Spadina – Ward 20
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 97 St. George Street (John Downey House) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act and grant authority to enter into a heritage easement agreement. The property was listed on the inaugural City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1973.

The property is owned by the University of Toronto, which is proposing to make alterations to the heritage property at 97 St. George Street as part of the expansion of the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management. The University has agreed to the designation of the property and to enter into a heritage easement agreement with the City of Toronto.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 97 St. George Street (John Downey House) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act;
2. 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;

3. 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; and
4. City Council grant authority for the execution of a Heritage Easement Agreement under Section 37 of the Ontario Heritage Act with the owner of the property at 97 St. George Street (John Downey House).

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.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The University of Toronto is proposing alterations to the existing building at 97 St. George Street as part of the expansion of the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management, located in the neighbouring complex at 105 St. George Street. The John Downey House was constructed as a late 19th century residential building, extended in the early 20th century for institutional use, and occupied by the University since the 1960s. The proposed alterations to the site would retain the John Downey House in its entirety, and the portions of the southeast wing that are visible from St. George Street.

COMMENTS

The property at 97 St. George Street 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 east side of St. George Street, north of Hoskin Avenue, the John Downey House (1890) is a representative example of a surviving late 19th century residential building with a high degree of craftsmanship that is associated with the businessman Albert Nordheimer and the former Canadian School of Missions and contributes contextually to the character of St. George Street.

A location map (Attachment No. 1) and Photographs (Attachment No. 2) are attached. The Reasons for Designation (Statement of Significance) are intended to be posted on the City of Toronto's web site and served on the owners of 97 St. George Street and on the Ontario Heritage Trust according to the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Reasons for Designation (Statement of Significance) include a statement of the cultural heritage value of the property with a description of its heritage attributes.

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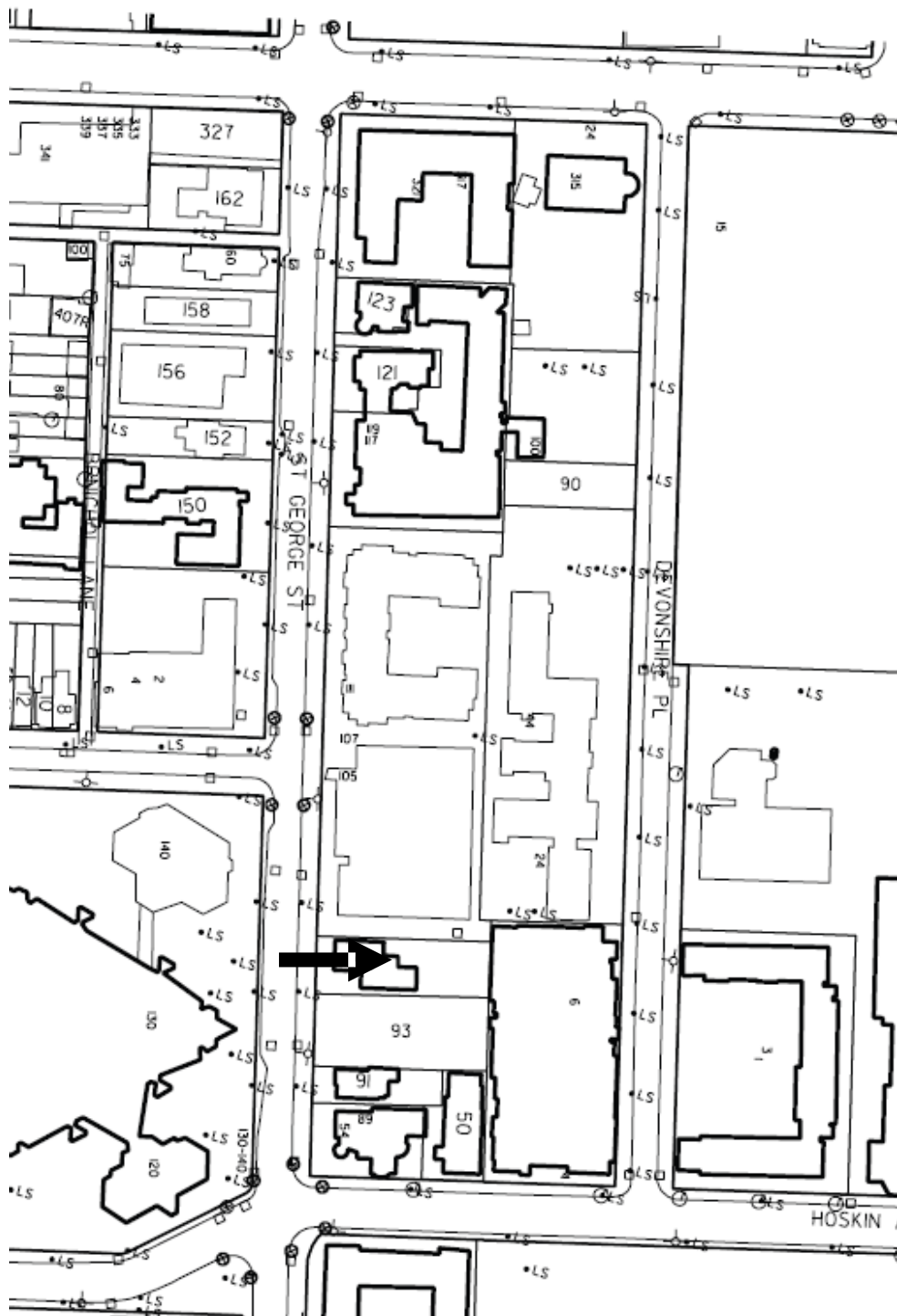
SIGNATURE

Barbara Leonhardt
Director, Policy and Research
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map
Attachment No. 2 – Photographs
Attachment No. 3 – Reasons for Designation (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.



West façade (left) and south elevation & east wing (right)



John Downey House

Description

The property at 97 St. George Street 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 three categories of design, associative and contextual value. Located on the east side of St. George Street, north of Hoskin Avenue, the John Downey House (1890) is a 2½-storey house form building that remained in residential use until 1929 when the Canadian School of Missions acquired the site and added a southeast wing. Included on the inaugural City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1973, the property is now part of the University of Toronto's St. George Campus.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Design Value

The John Downey House is a representative and well-crafted example of the Queen Anne Revival style, which was popular for residential architecture at the close of the 19th century. The style is identified by the varied silhouette, the mixture and texture of the materials, the selection of window styles, and the ornamental detailing. The Queen Anne Revival styling of the John Downey House is exemplified by the oversized west gable with its terra cotta cladding, bargeboard, brackets, and projecting eaves with a dentiled cornice and modillion blocks. The smoothness of the red brick surfaces is contrasted by the rough sandstone detailing. Its design combines various window shapes that range from flat-headed and segmental-arched to round-arched, the latter highlighted with hood moulds. The three-sided bay window on the west façade, the oversized oriel window on the south elevation, and round-arched stairhall window on the north wall are highlights of the design.

Attached to the John Downey House, the two-storey southeast wing was designed in the Neo-Gothic style to distinguish the addition from the original house and to reflect the religious affiliation of the Canadian School of Missions, which commissioned it. Neo-Gothic designs were popular for ecclesiastical and educational buildings during the interwar period. The features of the style that are applied to the southeast wing are the monumental chimney on the gabled south elevation, the pointed-arch opening with leaded glass on the south wall, and the lancet windows with stone surrounds on the west façade where the elevated west entrance incorporates a pointed-arch door surround. The original use of the wing is revealed in the stone name band on the enclosed porch reading "Canadian School of Missions".

Associative Value

The John Downey House is associated with a person of significance to the commercial history of Toronto. The dwelling was in place by September 1890 when it was owned and occupied by Downey, a well-known Toronto solicitor whose law partners included Sir Oliver Mowat, a Father of Confederation and Premier of Ontario who was Downey's neighbour on St. George Street. Following Downey's death in April 1894, his family first rented then sold 97 St. George Street to Albert Nordheimer (1854-1938). During his occupancy of the property for over two decades, Nordheimer assumed the presidency of the Nordheimer Piano and Music Company, which had been founded by his father and uncle in the 1840s. The firm became the largest publisher of sheet music in Canada while manufacturing a range of pianos at its West Toronto factory. Beyond its business supremacy, the Nordheimer Company was noted for its promotion of both local and international musicians. A trained musician and composer, Albert Nordheimer served as the Consul-General for the Netherlands after his retirement. The property was retained by members of the Nordheimer family until 1929.

The property at 97 St. George Street is also linked to an institution of importance to the community. In 1929, the property was acquired by the Canadian School of Missions, a forerunner to today's Canadian Churches' Forum for Global Ministries. The school was founded in the World War I era by representatives of various Christian denominations to train prospective candidates for overseas missions and provide a centre for returning missionaries. After occupying temporary quarters, the Canadian School of Missions purchased the property at 97 St. George with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. Architect A. Mackenzie Brydon prepared the plans for interior alterations to the house and the addition of the southeast wing, where the second-floor chapel was marked by the large pointed-arch window on the south elevation. The presence of the school on St. George Street was followed by other Christian training institutions, particularly the Chinese Inland Mission at #150 and the Presbyterian Deaconess and Missionary Training Home at #156. The Canadian School of Missions retained the property until 1969, when it was acquired by the University of Toronto.

Contextual Value

The John Downey House is historically linked to its surroundings as a surviving house form building typical of those erected along St. George Street in the late 19th century when the tree-lined boulevard was an exclusive residential neighbourhood adjoining the University of Toronto's campus (south) and Queen's Park (east). While most of the house form buildings on St. George Street were in place before 1900, by the 1920s many had been acquired or replaced by institutional edifices. Standing in its original location, the John Downey House shares its setback and height with other former residential buildings on St. George Street, including the neighbouring W. D. Matthews House (1890) at #89 that anchors the northeast corner of Hoskin Avenue where it is designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the John Downey House related to its design and contextual value as a representative and well-crafted late 19th century residential building that was expanded for institutional use and is linked to the historical character of St. George Street are:

- The scale, form and massing
- The 2½-storey house form building, with the two-storey southeast wing
- The materials, with red brick cladding and brick, sandstone, limestone, slate, clay, terra cotta, wood and glass detailing
- On the house form building, the steeply-pitched gable roof, the roof detailing that includes wood-trimmed gabled dormers, and the pattern and placement of the fenestration
- On the southeast wing, the pattern and placement of the fenestration on the west façade, the enclosed porch containing the west entrance, and the portion of the south wall under the gable with the chimney and the pointed-arch window opening
- The placement of the building on the east side of St. George Street, where its principal (west) façade follows the setback of the adjoining former residential buildings along the street