



**STAFF REPORT  
ACTION REQUIRED**

**279-283 Yonge Street, Hard Rock Café Sign, Alterations  
to a Designated Heritage Property**

<b>Date:</b>	July 14, 2010
<b>To:</b>	Toronto Preservation Board Planning and Growth Management Committee
<b>From:</b>	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 27 - Toronto Centre - Rosedale
<b>Reference Number:</b>	pg10049

**SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council approve the proposed alterations to the heritage property at 279-283 Yonge Street subject to the applicant satisfying certain conservation related conditions as well as obtaining a site-specific amendment to Chapter 694, Signs, General, of the City of Toronto Municipal Code.

The application describes a proposal to erect large format third party signs on the roof of the building. The proposed roof sign replaces an existing roof sign, and is intended to contain five sign faces, each of various dimensions and each utilizing various methods of sign copy display, along with an architectural light column. The building itself is located at the south-easterly corner of Dundas Square and Yonge Street, framing the southern boundary of Yonge-Dundas Square.

While roof signs are generally prohibited under Chapter 694, Signs, General, and third party signs are prohibited on all heritage properties within the city, the subject property is located within the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District, where Chapter 694 permits the erection and display of certain roof signs. In addition, City Council at its meeting of April 29, 30, 2009 approved the adoption, in principle, of portions of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA)'s "Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip," which included the guideline that third party signs were allowable on some heritage properties within the vision area so long as commitments were made to the long term conservation of the property.

This report recommends that City Council approve the application with conditions for heritage conservation work and heritage interpretation of the property.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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**The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division recommends that:**

1. City Council approve the alterations to the heritage property at 279-283 Yonge Street, substantially in accordance with Drawings W1.0-1, W2.0-2a, W2.00-3a, W2.0-4a and W2.0-6a dated June 11, 2010, W2.0-1 dated August 15, 2006, W2.0-2, W2.0-3 and W2.0-4 dated September 21, 2009, all prepared by Kramer Design Associates, date stamped received by Heritage Preservation Services June 6, 2010, and on file with the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services; and the Heritage Impact Assessment, “279–283 Yonge Street, Signage Proposal Review / Heritage Impact Assessment, January 27, 2008 revised October 5 2009, June 15 2010” (HIA), prepared by ERA Architects Inc., date stamped received by Heritage Preservation Services June 6, 2010 on file with the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, subject to the following conditions:
  - a. Prior to the issuance of a sign permit for roof-top signs on the heritage property located at 279-283 Yonge Street, including a permit for the demolition/removal of existing signs and erection of new signs, the owner shall provide the following to the satisfaction of the Manger, Heritage Preservation Services:
    - i. sign permit construction drawings;
    - ii. final signage plan, heritage interpretation plan and lighting plan for the exterior of the heritage building;
    - iii. heritage conservation drawings and specifications for heritage conservation work to implement the conservation plan referenced in the Heritage Impact Assessment, to be prepared by a qualified heritage consultant;
    - iv. Letter of Credit, in a form and an amount satisfactory to the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, to secure all work included in the Heritage Impact Assessment;
  - b. Prior to the release of the Letter of Credit, the owner shall provide the following to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services:
    - i. a notice of substantial completion for the heritage conservation work, signed by the Heritage Consultant;
    - ii. implementation of the heritage interpretation plan.

2. Such approval be conditional on the necessary amendment to Chapter 694, Signs, General, of the City of Toronto Municipal Code being approved by City Council.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

The Childs Restaurant and Offices building (now Hard Rock Café), built in 1918, was placed on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1990 and designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act on November 8, 2001.

City Council at its meeting of January 30, 31 and February 1, 2001 adopted Downtown Community Council Report No. 1, Clause No. 3, and established specific signage permissions for the property at 279-283 Yonge Street. The accompanying site-specific sign by-law (No. 2001-0049 permitted a comprehensive signage program for the property at 279-283 Yonge Street to be implemented under Chapter 297, Signs, of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code.

City Council at its meeting of April 29, 30, 2009 approved the adoption, in principle, of portions of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA)'s "Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip."

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-20298.pdf>

City Council on November 30, December 1, 2, 4 and 7, 2009, approved Chapter 694, Signs, General, which reflected the principles of the Signage Vision and established two special sign districts to reflect the special character and issues of the area.

New Sign Regulation and Revenue Strategy:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-24387.pdf>

New Sign Regulation and Revenue Strategy: Additional Considerations:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-25449.pdf>

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

This report addresses an application to erect taller roof signs than currently exist on the building. The Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA) commissioned a report regarding large format signage in a section of their BIA in 2006. The report, titled "A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip, March 2009" (Signage Vision), was finalized in 2009. City Council approved the adoption, in principle, of portions of the Signage Vision, and requested the Chief Building Official in consultation with the Chief Planner and Executive Director to develop provisions for signage in the Downtown Yonge Strip as part of what was adopted as Chapter 694, Signs, General.

Roof signs are generally prohibited under Chapter 694, Signs, General, however, the subject property is located within the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District, where Chapter 694, permits the erection and display of certain roof signs. Roof signs and third party signs are prohibited on all heritage properties. Chapter 694, permits the continued reliance on the specific forms of roof top signage on 279-283 Yonge Street, previously

permitted by City Council, including the site-specific signage standards requested by the owner of the heritage property and expressly permitted by City Council under City of Toronto By-law No. 2001-0049. The applicant is of the opinion that due to developments in the area that the exceptional site-specific signage permissions granted by City Council with respect to this property are no longer consistent with the nature of the area.

As a result, the applicant is advancing the current proposal, which exceeds the signage permissions for the property granted by City Council and would require further site-specific amendments to Chapter 694. The Signage Vision contains guidelines for the minimization of adverse effects for heritage buildings in the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District. These include: ensuring heritage elements or materials are not obstructed; ensuring installation is not damaging to heritage elements; differentiating between new and historic components; addressing the architectural elements of the façade and allowing a visual break between the sign and the host building.

The proposal for 279-283 Yonge Street complies with most of the suggested guidelines, save for issues relating to the height of the proposed sign. The deviation from the height guideline may be supportable in this particular instance due to the location of the building at the southeast corner of Yonge-Dundas Square and the unique character of the Yonge/Dundas intersection area (Attachment No.3). These amendments to Chapter 694, to implement this proposal are the subject of a separate report to Planning and Growth Management.

The applicant has been working with City Planning staff to develop a proposal for taller signs that will increase their visibility and remain in-keeping with the heritage character of the designated property. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) prepared for the proposal, undertaken by ERA Architects, provides a condition report, conservation plan, impact assessment, suggested signage improvements, and recommendations for heritage interpretation of the property

## **Heritage Value**

The Childs Restaurant and Office building (now Hard Rock Café), was built as part of a New York based restaurant chain. The building was completed in two phases in 1918, according to the designs of New York architect, John Chorley Westervelt. The building housed the restaurant and offices on the ground level with facilities for billiards and bowling above. The property was placed on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties in 1990 and was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act on November 8, 2001. The property at 279-283 Yonge Street is located on the south edge of Yonge-Dundas Square on historic Toronto's "Main Street" in a busy commercial shopping area. The building faces north onto the Square and west onto Yonge Street.

Rising three storeys under a flat roof, Child's Restaurant is constructed of steel and brick and is clad with white-glazed terra cotta on the north and west façades. The north façade extends seven bays on Dundas Square and the west façade extends three bays on Yonge Street. The walls are divided by terra cotta piers and panelled decorative friezes. The building is architecturally significant for its terra cotta cladding and classical detailing. It

is contextually significant for its prominent location on the corner anchoring a row of commercial buildings to the south including the designated John Bugg Store, 275-277 Yonge Street, immediately adjacent to the south. It is also significant for its relationship to the neighbouring listed heritage properties, the Hermant Buildings at 19 and 21 Dundas Square.

## **Current Proposal**

The current proposal is to erect roof sign faces that are taller than the current height including; a taller sign on the north elevation; a higher two level curving sign wrapping around the northwest corner and extending along the west elevation; a much higher light column relocated to the southwest corner of the building; and a taller south facing sign. The current signs would be increased in height as follows:

- North Elevation, existing is 18 meters and 21 meters: proposed is 22 meters (excluding curved section)
- West Elevation, existing is 18.5 meters and 21 meters: proposed is 33.5 meters (includes curved portion)
- Light Column, existing is 25.5 meters: proposed is 42.5 meters
- South Elevation, existing is 18.5 meters: proposed is 28 meters (Attachment No. 5)

The applicant also proposes to remove existing sign panels beneath the existing Hard Rock wall signs, expose and repair the existing windows and terracotta and re-erect the signs in such a way as to protect the cladding from damage.

The applicant's proposal to provide improvements to the rear laneway such as a screened gate and improved lighting for public safety and security must be reviewed by the appropriate City Officials.

## **COMMENTS**

Under Chapter 694, some large format signs are allowed on heritage buildings within the Signage Vision Area. However, the issuance of sign permits under Chapter 694, requires that all applicable approvals from the City's Heritage Preservation Services, City Planning concerning the conservation strategy and proposed conservation work must be obtained. Prior to any sign permit being issued under a site-specific amendment to Chapter 694, the heritage character and condition of the property must be considered.

Heritage properties that are subject to site specific amendments within the Sign Vision area require a conservation plan, condition report, signage plan and heritage impact assessment. Required conservation activities and mitigation of impacts for the property will be secured through a series of conditions for approval and letters of credit.

The Heritage Impact Assessment, "279–283 Yonge Street, Signage Proposal Review / Heritage Impact Assessment, January 27, 2008 revised October 5 2009, June 15 2010" (HIA), prepared by ERA Architects Inc., includes a chart that summarizes how the heritage guidelines have been addressed by the proposed new signs (Attachment No. 6).

The façades of the heritage building will not be obscured by the new signage and the building will remain a prominent feature on the corner. The exterior will be improved by the removal of large wall panels, currently holding the Hard Rock illuminated wall signs at the northwest corner. The panels will be removed and the glazed terra cotta and windows once again revealed (Attachment No. 4). The HIA includes a condition assessment and conservation plan for the exterior. The terra cotta cladding will be repaired and cleaned and some re-pointing of the brick façades will be undertaken as well.

The HIA also addresses impacts to adjacent properties. The proposed south facing sign will be slightly higher than an existing similar roof-top sign on 275 Yonge Street but within the 28 meter height limit for the area. The adjacent buildings at 19 and 21 Dundas Square are separated from the proposed signs by a laneway and while views of the two buildings from Yonge Street will be affected, the buildings face onto Dundas Square and views from that vantage point should not be affected.

The HIA addresses the subject of a current signage plan, including the recommendation to remove the wall panels holding current wall signs and requires some clarification. A revised lighting plan for the exterior of the heritage building should be prepared by a qualified heritage lighting expert, experienced in lighting heritage buildings. A heritage interpretation plan suggests possible heritage themes, plaques and signage for the building.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Gary Wright  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map

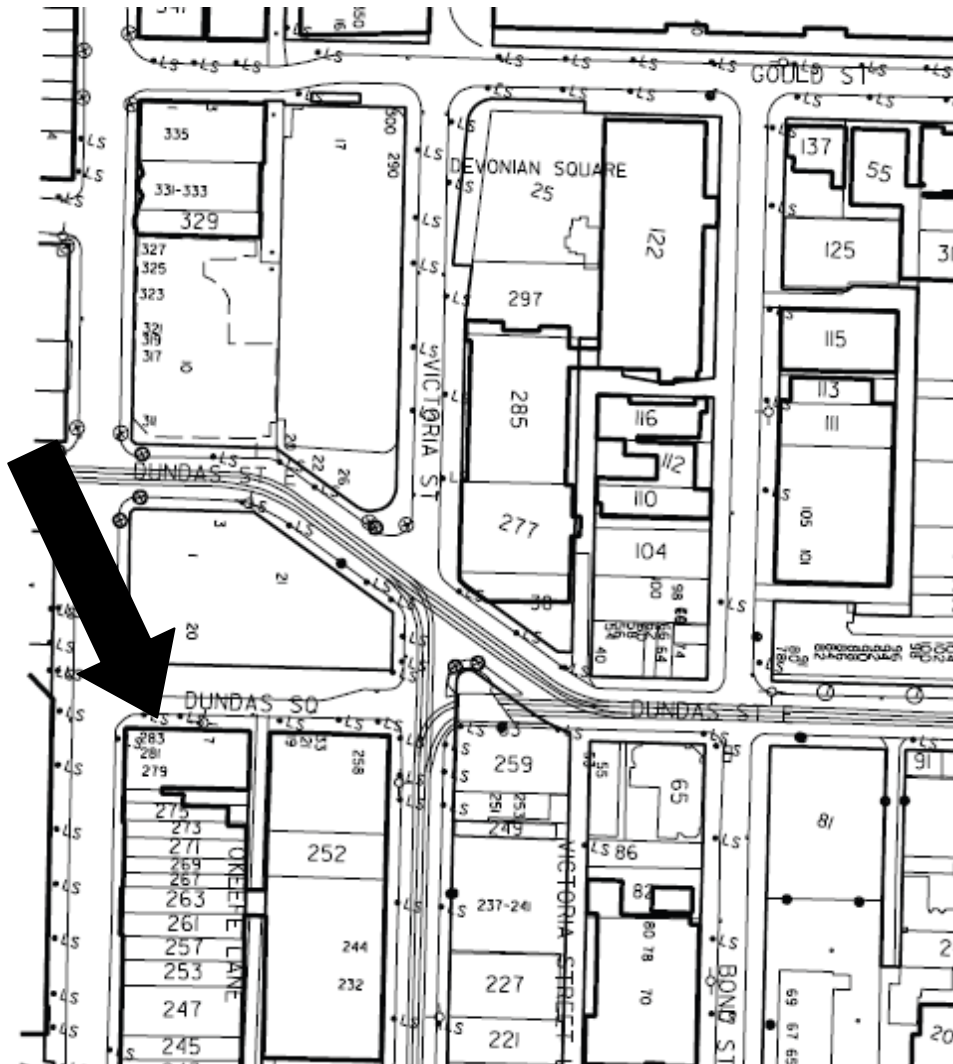
Attachment No. 2 – Signage Vision Area

Attachment No. 3 - Proposal in Context

Attachment No. 4 – Existing and Proposed Signage

Attachment No. 5 – Proposed West and North Elevations

Attachment No. 6 – Heritage Guidelines and Design Response Summary



The **arrow** marks the location of the site.

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





Signage Vision Area, within BIA area, 279 Yonge St. is marked, from ERA HIA report

PROPOSAL IN CONTEXT WITH YONGE-DUNDAS SQUARE

ATTACHMENT NO. 3





Photo: "Secret Drink's" Sign Seen in Existing Conditions  
View from Street, Perspective  
N/E



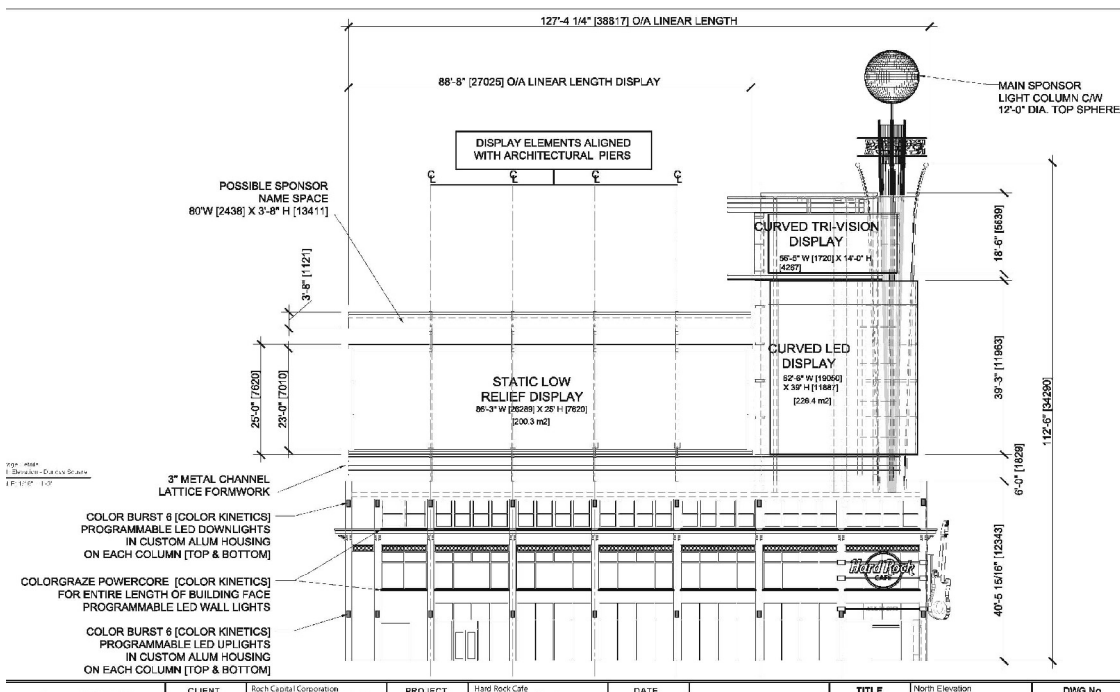
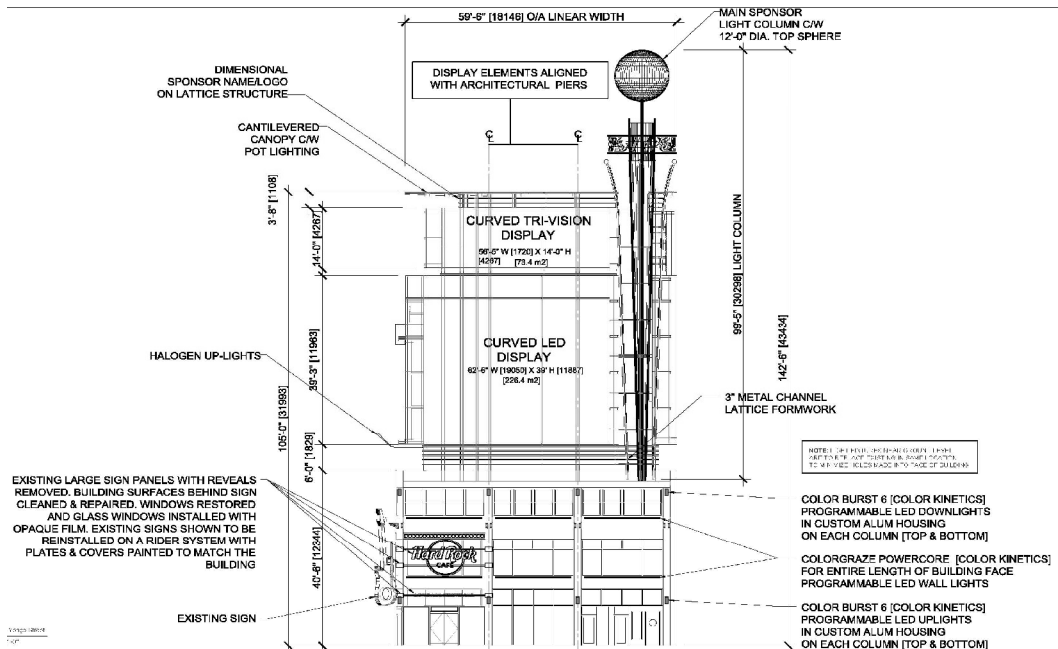
Photo: "Secret Drink's" Sign Seen in Existing Conditions  
View from Street, Perspective  
N/E



Photo: "Secret Drink's" Sign Seen in Existing Conditions  
View from Street, Perspective  
N/E

PROPOSED WEST AND NORTH ELEVATIONS

ATTACHMENT NO. 5



CLIENT	PROJECT	DATE	TITLE	DWG No
Roch Capital Corporation	Hard Rock Cafe		North Elevation	

## 7.0 HERITAGE GUIDELINES AND DESIGN RESPONSE SUMMARY

## 7.1 Suitability of the Building

'Buildings Not Appropriate for Large-Format or Third Party Signage' in *Bright Lights – Big City: A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Street Strip*, p.31

Guideline	Design Response
<p><i>Not all heritage properties are appropriate for new signage. Some structures have characteristics and significance which cannot accommodate large-format signage despite the intention of the larger signage program for the Yonge Street BIA corridor, such as rooftop, structured, and fixed signage. These structures include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Temple banks</i></li> <li>• <i>House form buildings</i></li> <li>• <i>Buildings with irregular or angled roofs that could not easily accommodate a new signage structure or where the roof is a recognized attribute</i></li> <li>• <i>Heritage buildings with pre-existing heritage signs</i></li> </ul>	<p>The building is suitable for the proposed signage according to the <i>Signage Vision</i>.</p> <p>The flat roof of the building is not visible from the street. The proposed signage will not obstruct views of the building's form or alter its roofline.</p>

## 7.2 General Standards for Signage on Heritage Buildings

'General Standards for Signage on Heritage Buildings' in *Bright Lights – Big City: A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Street Strip*, p.31

Guideline	Design Response
<p><i>General standards to be adhered to in considering large-format signage for heritage buildings (source: The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada):</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Conserve the heritage value of a historic place. Do not remove, replace or substantially alter its intact or repairable character defining elements</i></li> <li>• <i>Do not remove part of a historic place if its current location is a character defining element.</i></li> <li>• <i>Conserve heritage value by adopting an approach calling for minimal intervention.</i></li> </ul>	<p>The proposal will involve minimal intervention to the heritage fabric of the site and will not remove, replace or substantially alter defining elements.</p>



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### 7.3 Heritage Guidelines

'Guidelines for Signage on Heritage Buildings' in Bright Lights – Big City: A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Street Strip, p. 32-33

<b>Guideline</b>	<b>Design Response</b>
Visual prominence of heritage:  <i>Signage should retain the visual prominence of heritage.</i>	The sign is set above the building and does not block or obstruct heritage features of the building.
Signage as Additions to Heritage Resources:  <i>Signage and heritage buildings should be visually distinct but compatible.</i>  <i>Additions should be compatible in mass: The size and scale of signage should be limited to its relationship with the heritage building; signage should not be larger than the building itself.</i>	Visual distinctiveness: A skirting between the bottom of the sign and the top of the building will visually separate the two structures while shielding views of the supporting structural work.  In response consultations with City Staff in June 16th, 2009, the design was refined so that the signage is slightly set back from the face of the building.  Compatibility: The sign supporting frame and panels correspond to the orders of the building.  The signage will be a comparable size to the building in the context of Yonge-Dundas Square. Refer to Section 5.0 of this report for discussion of the size of the proposed signage.
Signage Framing:  <i>When installed on heritage buildings, framing should be minimized as much as possible to reduce the visual interference with the heritage building.</i>	Framing around the sign has been minimized and shielded from view by skirting below the sign panels.



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## Heritage Guidelines (continued)

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### **Guideline**

### **Design Response**

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#### Signage Material and Lighting:

*Additions to heritage buildings should generally be sympathetic, subordinate and compatible to the heritage building.*

The signage responds to the context of the signage for the corner of Yonge Street and Dundas Square, while being sympathetic, subordinate, and compatible to the heritage building.

*It is desirable to encourage signage types on heritage buildings which respect the heritage of the area while complimenting the larger signage vision.*

Lighting fixtures are at the top of the sign, away from the heritage façade.

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#### Signage as Banners:

*Banners should be compatible with the architecture of the building.*

Not applicable

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#### Tilting Signage:

*Tilting signage diminishes the impact of the facade and proportions of the building and should be eliminated to ensure the proportions of the building are protected and complimented.*

The signs will not tilt. The signs will be stand vertically .

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#### Visual Permeability of Signage:

*Signs that is not solid or does not have a solid background may be preferable as to minimize visual impacts.*

Not applicable. The sign will be set above the building.

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#### Historic Types and Grandparenting Old Signage:

*Distinctive historic signage types and forms should be protected...It is expected that signage inconstant with this vision will be removed.*

Not applicable. The existing signage is not historical.

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#### Scaffolding as Signage:

*Where scaffolding is required for construction the image of the building should be the predominate feature of the scaffolding.*

Not applicable

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