

Proposed Amendments to Agreements between Ryerson University and the City of Toronto – Sam the Record Man Signage

Date:	August 12, 2013
To:	Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Acting Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division
Wards:	Ward 27 – Toronto Centre-Rosedale
Reference Number:	P:\2013\Cluster B\PLN\HPS\TEYCC\September 10 2013\teHPS24

SUMMARY

This report recommends approval, with conditions, of an amendment to Agreements between Ryerson University (“Ryerson”) and the City of Toronto (the “City”) for the properties located at 347 and 349 Yonge Street, the former location of the Sam the Record Man flagship store between 1961 and 2007.

Ryerson proposes to delete from title the Easement Agreements dated August 15, 2008 and to revise their existing Site Plan Agreement with the City for the Student Learning Centre at 341, 347 and 349 Yonge Street in order to secure the recognition and commemoration of the original Sam the Record Man flagship store and associated neon signage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve a Commemoration Plan for the property at 347 and 349 Yonge Street, as set out in this report, in lieu of the sign preservation easements secured under the Easement Agreements registered as Instrument Nos. AT1868230, AT1868231 and AT1868232, subject to the following conditions:
 - a. Ryerson University ("Ryerson") to submit a Commemoration Plan outlining all commemorative actions to be undertaken, including on-site commemoration

- substantially in accordance with plans and drawings prepared by Zeidler Partnership/Snohetta dated July 3, 2013, on-line recognition of Sam the Record Man on Yonge Street and full documentation of the salvaged neon signs, to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;
- b. Provide a Letter of Credit in a form and amount satisfactory to the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services to secure the approved Commemoration Plan;
 - c. Prior to the release of the Letter of Credit, Ryerson shall provide a certificate of completion prepared by a qualified heritage consultant confirming that the Commemoration Plan has been executed in accordance with the approved document and to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;
 - d. Ryerson will continue to store the salvaged neon signs for a period of no less than two years while other preservation opportunities are explored, after which time Ryerson shall notify the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services within 60 days of any plans to remove the signage from storage.
2. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to release the Easement Agreements from title to the Ryerson University property once the Commemoration Plan has been financially secured in an Amending Site Plan Agreement registered on title to 341-349 Yonge Street to the satisfaction of the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning in consultation with the City Solicitor and the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services.

Financial Impact

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting held on June 19, 20 and 22, 2007, City Council adopted Motion M76, whereby City Council stated its intention to designate the property at 347 and 349 Yonge Street (Sam the Record Man Sign) under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The owner of the property objected to the designation but prior to a hearing at the Conservation Review Board a settlement was reached.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2008.MM22.13>

Ryerson University entered into an Easement Agreement with the City on August 15, 2008, in order to permit the removal of the neon signs from the site and to begin work on the Ryerson Student Learning Centre. As part of the Easement Agreement, Ryerson committed to the storage, restoration and re-installation of the signage on either the Ryerson Yonge Street Lands or Ryerson Library Lands. As a result, the City withdrew the Notice of Intention to Designate and Ryerson withdrew the Notice of Objection.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Sam Sniderman began selling records in his family's radio store in 1937. Following years of growing success, Sniderman re-named the business Sam the Record Man and moved the retail operation to Yonge Street. Sam the Record Man was famous for its Boxing Day sales and discounts, knowledgeable staff and selection, and for its iconic neon signage. The Yonge Street location was in operation until June 30, 2007 but closed due to growing competition and advancing technology in the music industry.

With the imminent closure of the site there was concern over the loss of the store's distinct signage which included a backlit sign over each entry with a white background labelled "SAM" in red letters flanked by "YES THIS IS" and "THE RECORD MAN" in black lettering; an oversized neon sign in the shape of a disc that when illuminated appears to spin like a vinyl record and, along the flat roof over each unit, raised red letters spelling "SAM".

Ryerson University purchased the property in 2008 in order to construct a Student Learning Centre. Prior to the demolition of the buildings, Ryerson removed the neon signs from the Ryerson Yonge Street Lands and has stored them while design alternatives were considered.

Ryerson consulted with custom signage experts Gregory Signs & Engraving Ltd. to evaluate the feasibility of the restoration and re-installation of the signs on the new Student Learning centre building, designed by Snohetta and Zeidler Partnership Architects (Zeidler). Identified concerns included risk of mercury spillage in the event of a fire or breakage, a decrease in the number of qualified neon signage professionals, an increase in maintenance costs, structural risk related to mounting requirements and the amount of energy needed to operate the signage.

Zeidler also evaluated the re-installation of the signage and concluded that there was no suitable location on the new Student Learning Centre building. Zeidler cited resource and energy concerns, conflict with the design of the new building and the distraction within the interior of the building caused by the signs' flashing lights. Zeidler also determined that the secondary signage site contemplated in the Easement Agreement, the Ryerson Library lands, was too remote from the original Sam the Record Man location to have value, and that mounting the signs could damage the building façade.

Commemoration Strategy

Due to the variety of concerns and constraints related to the re-installation of the neon signage, Ryerson has proposed a commemorative strategy in lieu of installing the Sam the Record Man signage at either the Ryerson Yonge Street Lands or the Ryerson Library Lands locations.

A draft Commemoration Strategy prepared by E.R.A. Architects Inc. was provided to the City in November 2012. The proposed strategy involves three elements. First, a commemorative insert will be installed in the Yonge Street sidewalk where the store once stood. It will include an image of the storefront signage with commemorative text and

inserts that will represent the sign's lettering and discs. The insert will be lined up with the former location of the storefront and will be accompanied by an interpretive plaque. The strategy also proposes providing full documentation of the signage and launching an online recognition and tribute to "Music on Yonge – celebrating 70 years of Sam's." <http://news.library.ryerson.ca/musiconyonge>.

The insert design, including options for materials and text was further refined in a document prepared by Zeidler Partnership/Snohetta dated July 3, 2013 which was presented to Heritage Preservation Services, Community Planning, City Legal and Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam.

COMMENTS

Since Ryerson University entered into legal agreements relating to the salvage, storage, restoration and re-installation of the Sam the Record Man signage, City Planning staff has worked to ensure that these agreements would be satisfied within the development of the Ryerson Student Learning Centre. Alternative proposals to re-installation were reviewed but, since none involved the use of the original signs on or near the original property, all were objected to by staff.

In November 2012 Ryerson outlined in a more fulsome way the inherent difficulty of satisfying the agreements as written (largely due to technology, design and safety) and they indicated their intention to formally request the city to release them from the existing obligation. Ryerson proposed a Commemorative Strategy to mitigate the loss of the heritage resource and celebrate the site's cultural history.

While heritage staff are disappointed that Ryerson has been unable to find a feasible way to restore the original iconic signs to their historic context, we are now satisfied that the University has given serious consideration to the matter, obtained expert advice and has developed a Commemorative Strategy that will include a vibrant reinterpretation of the iconic frontage in its original location. Ryerson has indicated its willingness to work with the City on finding an alternative home for the stored signage.

CONTACT

Mary L. MacDonald, Acting Manager
Heritage Preservation Services
Tel: 416-338-1079; Fax: 416-392-1973
E-mail: mmacdon7@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

James Parakh, Acting Director, Urban Design
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 – Photographs: Sam the Record Man
Attachment No. 2 – Renderings: Sam the Record Man Signage Commemorative Strategy



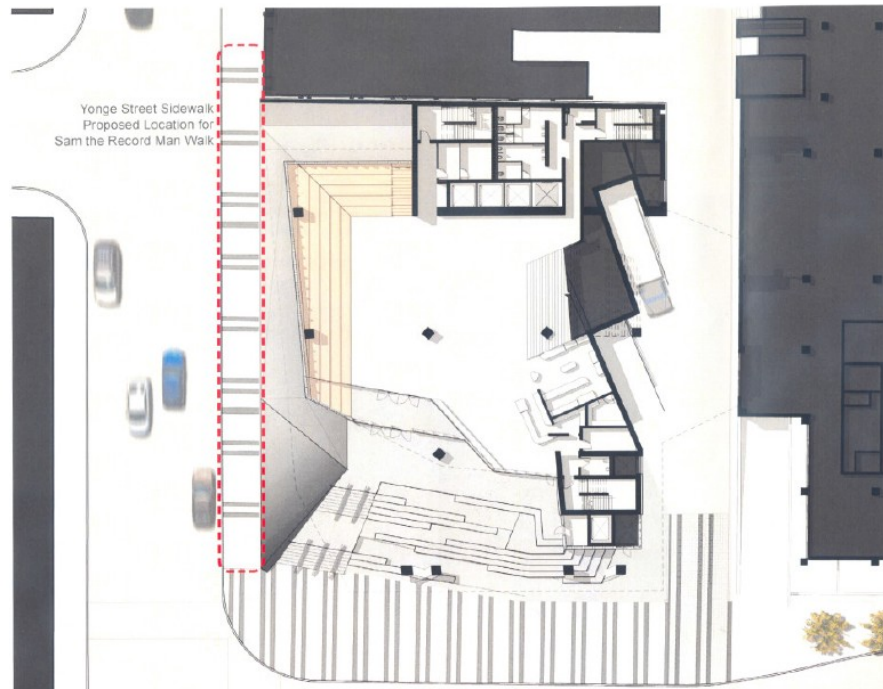
Sam the Record Man, June 2007



Original Sam the Record Man Signage - Day



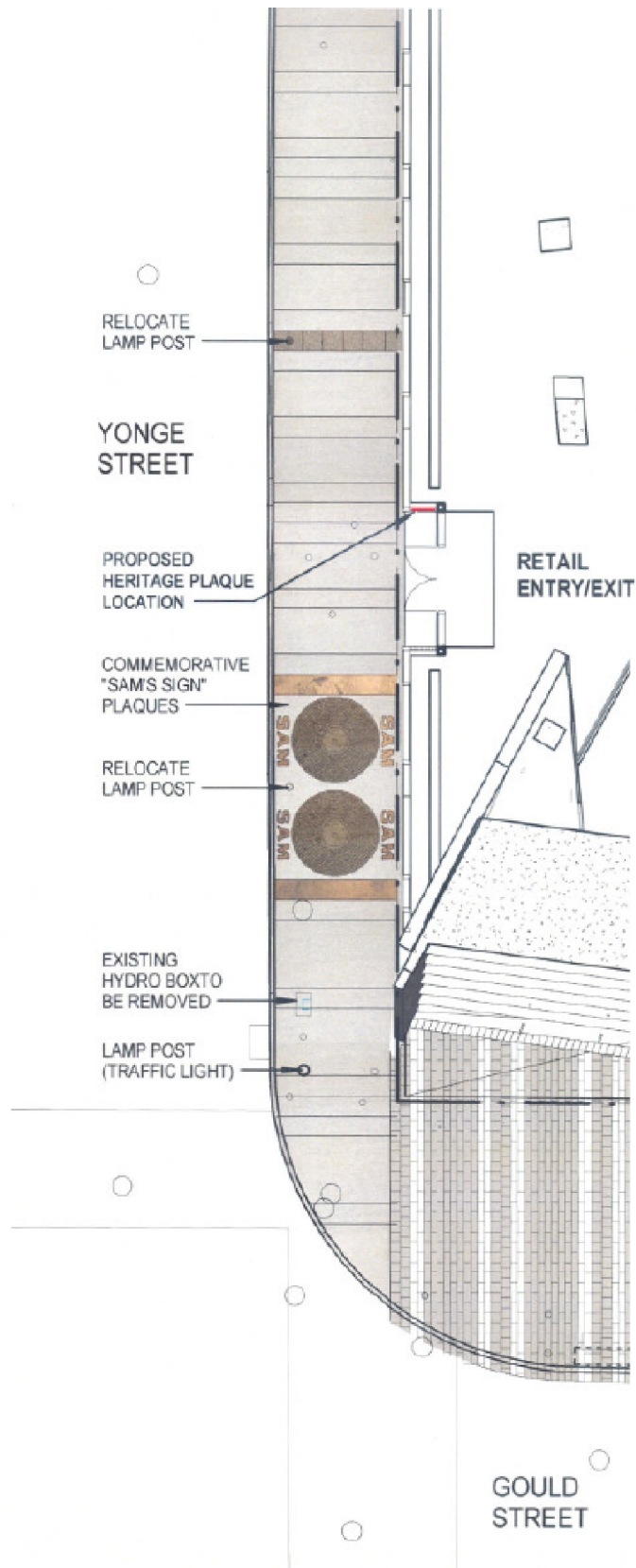
Original Sam the Record Man Signage - Night



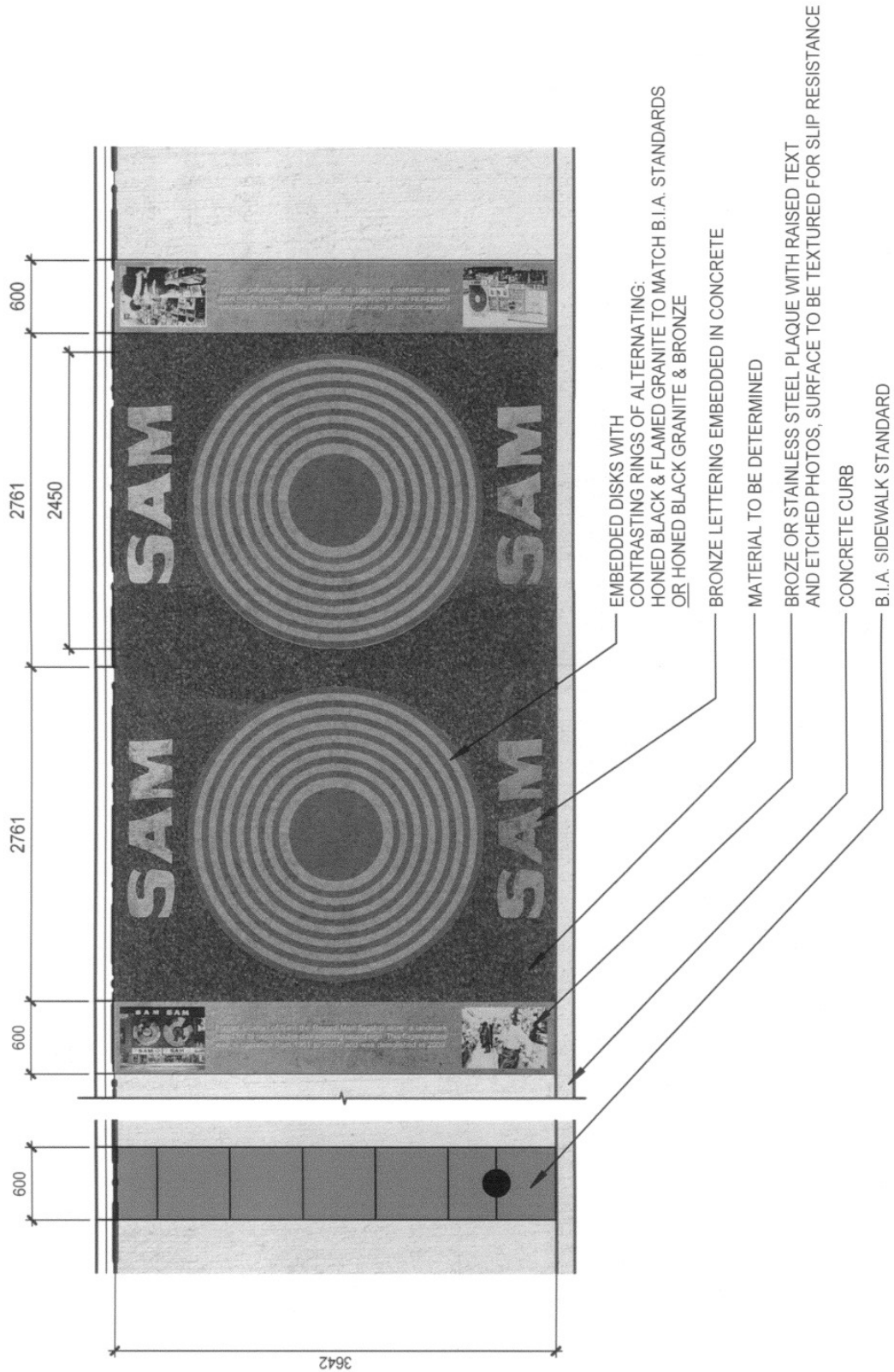
Yonge St Sidewalk – Proposed Location for Sam the Record Man Walk



Commemorative Strategy – Axonometric View



Commemorative Strategy – Sidewalk Plan



Commemorative Strategy - Detail Plan