



From: Caroline Ross, TOBuilt Coordinator  
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## **Presentation to the Toronto Preservation Board Thursday, June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

Hello, members of the Toronto Preservation Board, City Council, and members of the community. Thank you for allowing us to speak during today's meeting. My name is Loryssa Quattrociochi, and I am a D.Phil. in History student at the University of Oxford and the Heritage Conservation Assistant at Architectural Conservancy (or ACO's) Toronto branch, and this is my colleague, Caroline Ross, the TOBuilt Coordinator at ACO's Toronto branch. We are here today on behalf of ACO Toronto, and would like to specifically discuss the branch's TOBuilt Database and how we believe it could help assist the City-Wide Heritage Survey.

Many of you in this room will be familiar with the TOBuilt Database, but for those of you are that are not, it is a crowd-sourced database of images and information about buildings and structures in Toronto. It was established in 2006 by Robert Krawczyk to answer the question: "Who built that building?" and he completed the first 10,000 entries. ACO Toronto acquired the information in 2013 and relaunched the site in 2015. In its original form the database relied heavily on the research conducted by one individual. However, the increase in entries added to the database since ACO Toronto acquired it, which amounts to nearly 1,400 entries, has been a collective effort between the staff of ACO Toronto and the general public. The database is not for ACO Toronto to develop alone. Instead, it is an opportunity for the general public to share what they know about buildings and structures in Toronto with limited restrictions.

More recently, we launched a "Map View," which allows users to browse database entries by neighbourhood. Additionally, ACO Toronto has been focused on conducting outreach to architecture firms and heritage organizations throughout the city to help populate the database and learn how it can adapt to better suit the needs of the people who are using it. We have given presentations to ERA Architects, Giaimo Architects, Taylor Hazell Architects – including one there during Doors Open – the Technical Expert panel of the City-Wide Heritage Survey, and the Baby Point Heritage Foundation. We will be giving several more throughout the year, including one already scheduled for September 17<sup>th</sup> at the Arts & Letters Club.

The database now has over 6,000 users per month, and we frequently see a spike in users when particular events make it to the news. For instance, after the fire at the Peacock Hotel in the Junction last month, there were 250 unique visitors who viewed the database. A similar thing occurred after the fire at York Memorial Collegiate Institute, which drew 400 unique visitors to the database. These figures illustrate the importance of having a "one stop shop" for information on buildings and structures in Toronto.

ACO Toronto has been an advocate of the City-Wide Heritage Survey from the beginning; the branch's previous President, Catherine Nasmith, was one of the individuals who co-signed the original letter submitted to the Toronto Star encouraging the initiative. She was also a member of the steering committee and participated in the Technical Expert Panel meetings, during several of which she brought TOBuilt into the discussion where the database was well-received.

In the City-Wide Heritage Survey Feasibility Study report, one of the recommendations given by City Council is that the Chief Planner and Executive Director of City Planning, develop a comprehensive public engagement program which includes potential partnerships to support the Survey. ACO Toronto

does not see TOBuilt as a substitute for the City-Wide Heritage Survey, but rather, that it can play a critical role in support of it. More specifically, we are optimistic that the in-depth research we've conducted on Toronto schools can be used by City staff in their identification of heritage resources during the Survey. Of the 909 schools in Toronto, a mere 56 are either listed or Designated Under Part IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act. This leaves the remaining 853 schools at risk, a number which is slightly worrisome.

As it stands, our database is poised to contribute to the City-Wide Heritage Survey. For instance, the entries are categorized based on City of Toronto neighbourhoods, and we are working diligently on adding listing and designation information from the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. ACO Toronto has also developed quite the momentum with regards to engaging heritage organization, and the database is on track to expand significantly as the year progresses. As a result, we are confident that the data in TOBuilt will be useful for the City-Wide Heritage Survey, and we look forward to future discussions with City staff members on how TOBuilt can be used to identify heritage resources in the City of Toronto.

Thank you all for your time.