2013-11-05

Chair Robert Saunders and Members
Toronto Preservation Board

Re: TPB Agenda Item 26.6 Inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties - 33 Avenue Road (Ward 27)

The Toronto Architectural Conservancy has been keeping a watching brief on this proposed addition to the Inventory ever since myself, and Ms. Linda Lewis met with staff and presented a research folder that included publications of the project from journals all around the world. The project was a first for Toronto but also in world architecture. It was a pioneer project in heritage preservation, at a time before there were any preservation laws in Ontario.

We are writing to offer our wholehearted and most enthusiastic support for the addition of this property to the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties. We hope it will be moved forward for designation in the very near future.

York Square is in some ways the quintessential Toronto project of that most important reform era in Toronto politics and urban planning from the late 1960's and 70's. As has been noted in the report before you, it set new ground for Toronto and in so doing broke new ground around the world. It is a vanguard project which, during a time of “urban renewal” which might more properly be called “urban removal”, instead combined new and old buildings to make a completely new urban form. This was a revolutionary idea at the time, and not just in Toronto but in the world. It achieved a ten page spread in the American architectural journal Progressive Architecture, editorial space given to only the most important projects.

This project, along with the writings of Jane Jacobs, changed urban design. For the generation who came of age in this period, this project represents the dawning of a new age in City building where great cities combined new and old. It set the tone for so much development of its type in Toronto and in the rest of the world. The architectural firm of Diamond and Myers was the place to work, because they were defining how to build a city in a layered way. Projects that followed in a similar vein included Dundas Sherbourne, The Hydro Block on St. George, and Innis College. The red brick palette pioneered by this firm, in recognition of its ubiquitous nature as a Toronto building material, soon became the signature material for the soon to be developed St. Lawrence Neighbourhood.

Yours sincerely

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