



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties – 27 Front Street East (St. Lawrence Centre)

Date:	December 20, 2012
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division
Wards:	Toronto Centre-Rosedale – Ward 28
Reference Number:	P:\2013\Cluster B\PLN\HPS\TEYCC\February 26 2013\teHPS05

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council include the property at 27 Front Street East on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Located on the southeast corner of Front Street East and Scott Street, St. Lawrence Centre (1969) is a purpose-built cultural complex owned and operated by the City of Toronto.

In 2005 the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Focused Area (SLNFA) Urban Design Guidelines recommended that the property be researched and evaluated to determine its heritage value. With the proposed renovations to St. Lawrence Centre, staff were requested by city stakeholders to complete this assessment. Following research and evaluation, staff have determined that the property at 27 Front Street East meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation that is also used by the City when assessing properties for inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council include the property at 27 Front Street East (St. Lawrence Centre) on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties.

Financial Impact

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

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The property at 27 Front Street East contains the St. Lawrence Centre, a cultural complex which was commissioned by the City of Toronto and completed in 1969. While altered over time, the property was identified in the 2005 SLNFA Urban Design Guidelines as requiring research and evaluation to determine its cultural heritage value. In 2012 the City engaged Diamond Schmidt Architects Inc. to propose further changes to the site that would enable it to meet the contemporary needs of the resident Canadian Stage Company. To assist in the review of the proposed renovations to St. Lawrence Centre, staff were requested by city stakeholders to complete this assessment.

COMMENTS

A location map and photograph are included (Attachment No. 1). Staff have completed the attached Research and Evaluation Summary (Attachment No. 4) for the property at 27 Front Street East. As a result of this assessment, staff have determined that the property meets Ontario Regulation No. 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the Ontario Heritage Act that is also applied by the City when evaluating sites for the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties. The Reasons for Listing are appended (Attachment No. 3).

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

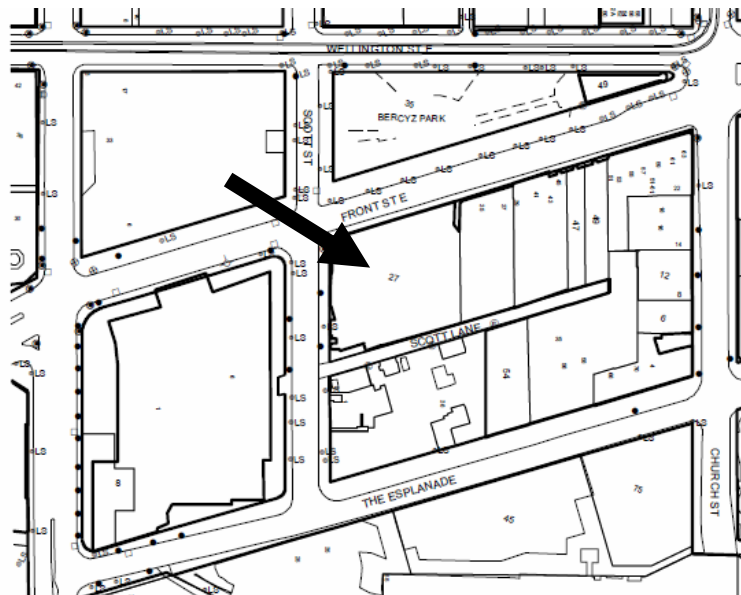
Robert Freedman
Director, Urban Design
City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map and Photograph
Attachment No. 2 – Reasons for Listing (Statement of Significance)
Attachment No. 3 – Research and Evaluation Summary

LOCATION MAP & PHOTOGRAPH:
27 FRONT STREET EAST

ATTACHMENT NO. 1



This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown. The **arrow** marks the location of the site.



Archival photograph of St. Lawrence Centre, with Front Street East on the left
(City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1175, Item 2)

St. Lawrence Centre

Description

The property at 27 Front Street East merits inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties for its cultural heritage value. Anchoring the southeast corner of Front Street East and Scott Street, the St. Lawrence Centre (1969) is a cultural complex incorporating two theatres.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

St. Lawrence Centre is an important example in Toronto of Brutalist architecture, the style that originated in post-World War II England as a reaction to the International Movement in architecture. The St. Lawrence Centre showcases the naturally textured "béton brut" concrete, monochromatic surfaces, heavy visual quality, and limited and randomly placed openings that are the predominant features of the style. In its colouring and asymmetrical form, it complements the neighbouring O'Keefe Centre for the Performing Arts (now known as the Sony Centre) that predates it.

Historically, the St. Lawrence Centre is an important cultural venue in Toronto. With two theatre spaces on the interior, the smaller Jane Mallet Theatre (originally known as the Town Hall) was specifically designed as the forum for the complex's long-standing series of political, social and cultural debates and lectures and evolved to include musical and theatrical performances. The larger Bluma Appel Theatre, named in honour of the dedicated Toronto arts supporter, opened as a showcase for classical and contemporary theatre and continued as the permanent base for the venerable Canadian Stage Company. Both stages have welcomed celebrated Canadian and internationally renowned performers. Hosting fund raising galas and ceremonies, the St. Lawrence Centre was the original venue for the annual Dora Mavor Moore Awards that celebrate achievements in Toronto theatre.

The St. Lawrence Centre was designed by the Toronto architectural firm of Gordon S. Adamson and Associates. Founded as Adamson and Morgan in 1934 and renamed 12 years later, the practice was perhaps best known for the buildings it contributed to the original York University campus, including the Ross Social Sciences and Humanities Building, dating to the same period as the St. Lawrence Centre. In 1982, the complex was altered under the direction of Ron Thom, an important Canadian architect who achieved recognition as the designer of Modern houses in British Columbia and Ontario, as well as Massey College and Peterborough's Trent University.

Contextually, with its placement at the southeast corner of Front Street East and Scott Street, one block east of Yonge Street, the St. Lawrence Centre is visually and functionally linked to the neighbouring O'Keefe Centre at 1 Front Street East that

predated it as another significant performing arts venue in Toronto. The pair of buildings anchors the west end of Front Street East, which is a prominent corridor in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood where the St. Lawrence Market (housing the Market Gallery arts facility) at 91 Front, the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People at 165 Front, and the Canadian Opera Company's Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre at 227 Front are other important cultural destinations.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 27 Front Street East are:

- The cultural complex known as the St. Lawrence Centre
- The scale, form and massing on an irregularly-shaped plan
- The roof profile, encompassing the rooflines of the two theatres with a fly tower at the southeast corner
- The materials, with concrete, glass and wood
- On the principal (north) façade on Front Street East, the location of the main entrance that is flanked by glazing with window openings above (the wall has been altered)
- The fenestration and door openings on the west elevation on Scott Street
- On the interior, the entrance lobby off Front Street East, the lobbies serving the two theatres, and the theatres known as the Jane Mallet Theatre and the Bluma Appel Theatre
- The location of the complex on the southeast corner of Front Street East and Scott Street

RESEARCH & EVALUATION SUMMARY: 27 FRONT STREET EAST



Photograph: Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

Key Date	Historical Event
1962	Proposal for a new theatre complex is approved by the Toronto Planning Board
1963	St. Lawrence Centre Foundation is formed
1965	The original proposal is revised from a multi-building complex to include two buildings with a theatre & concert hall
1967	St. Lawrence Centre is named the City of Toronto's Centennial project ¹ & fund raising for the venture is coordinated by the newly formed Toronto Arts Foundation
1968	Funding is approved for a modified version of St. Lawrence Centre, with plans for a single facility by Gordon S. Adamson & Associates
1968 June	Ground-breaking ceremony is held
1969 Dec	Opening ceremony in the Town Hall (the smaller of the two theatres)
1970 Feb	Official opening of the Town Hall with a "Spadina Expressway" debate
1970	The Theatre (the larger of the two venues) is inaugurated with the production of "Man, Inc."
1982	Exterior and interior alterations are made according to plans by Canadian architect Ron Thom
1983 Mar	The Theatre reopens as the Bluma Appel Theatre
1984	The Town Hall is renamed the Jane Mallet Theatre
2006-2007	According to the designs of Third UNCLE, new exterior canopies & signs are added, and the interior lobbies & public areas refurbished

¹ Along with upgrades to Massey Hall and the Art Gallery of Ontario

EVALUATION: Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed by the Province of Ontario for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Design or Physical Value	
i. rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	X
ii. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N/A
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	N/A

Historical or Associative Value	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	X
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	N/A
iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	X

Contextual Value	
i. important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	N/A
ii. physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	X
iii. landmark	N/A

St. Lawrence Centre at 27 Front Street East meets the criteria for inclusion on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties and for designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its design, associative and contextual values.

St. Lawrence Centre is an important example in Toronto of Brutalist architecture, the style that originated in post-World War II England as a reaction to the International Movement in architecture. The complex showcases the naturally textured "béton brut" concrete, monochromatic surfaces, heavy visual quality, and limited and randomly placed openings that are the predominant features of the style. In its colouring and asymmetrical form, the St. Lawrence Centre complements the neighbouring O'Keefe Centre for the Performing Arts (renamed the Sony Centre) that predates it.

Historically, the St. Lawrence Centre is an important cultural venue in Toronto. With two theatre spaces on the interior, the smaller Jane Mallet Theatre (known as the "Town Hall" until 1984²) was specifically designed as the forum for the Centre's long-standing series of political, social and cultural debates and lectures. Its more intimate space also hosts musical and theatrical performances. The larger "Theatre", now known as the Bluma Appel Theatre in honour of the dedicated Toronto arts supporter, opened as a showcase for classical and contemporary theatre and remains a permanent home for the

² It was renamed for the Toronto actress who was instrumental in the founding of the Actors' Fund of Canada

venerable Canadian Stage Company. Both stages have welcomed celebrated Canadian and internationally renowned performers. Hosting fund raising galas and ceremonies, the Centre was also the original venue for the annual Dora Mavor Moore Awards that celebrate achievements in Toronto theatre.

The St. Lawrence Centre was designed by the Toronto architectural firm of Gordon S. Adamson and Associates. Founded as Adamson and Morgan in 1934 and renamed 12 years later, the practice was perhaps best known for the buildings it contributed to the original York University campus, including the Ross Social Sciences and Humanities Building, dating to the same period as the St. Lawrence Centre. In 1982, the complex was altered under the direction of architect Ron Thom. Prior to relocating to Toronto, Thom received his architectural training with the Vancouver firm of Thompson, Berwick and Pratt where he became a partner and the award-winning designer of Modern houses. He established R. J. Thom and Associates in Toronto in 1963 as the forerunner to the Thom Partnership and became famous as the architect for Massey College and Peterborough's Trent University.

Contextually, with its placement at the southeast corner of Front Street East and Scott Street, one block east of Yonge Street, the St. Lawrence Centre is visually and functionally linked to the neighbouring O'Keefe Centre at 1 Front Street East that opened as another significant performing arts venue in Toronto. The pair of buildings anchors the west end of Front Street East, which is a prominent corridor in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood where the St. Lawrence Market (housing the Market Gallery arts facility) at 91 Front, the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People at 165 Front, and the Canadian Opera Company's Joey and Toby Tanenbaum Opera Centre at 227 Front are other important cultural destinations.

SUMMARY

The property at 27 Front Street East has design, associative and contextual values as the site of the St. Lawrence Centre, which continues as one of Toronto's foremost cultural venues since its opening more than 40 years ago. As an important representative example of Brutalist design in the city, the Centre is also visually and functionally linked to the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood with its position near the west end of Front Street East.

The St. Lawrence Centre has undergone alterations that include changes to the glazing on the principal (north) façade and, on the interior entrance and lobbies, the replacement of some of the original materials and the reconfiguration or addition of staircases. The interior spaces of the two theatres remain intact, but the larger Bluma Appel Theatre has been completely rebuilt with the replacement of the stage and the original stadium seating, and the introduction of a balcony and suspended box seats.³ The smaller Jane

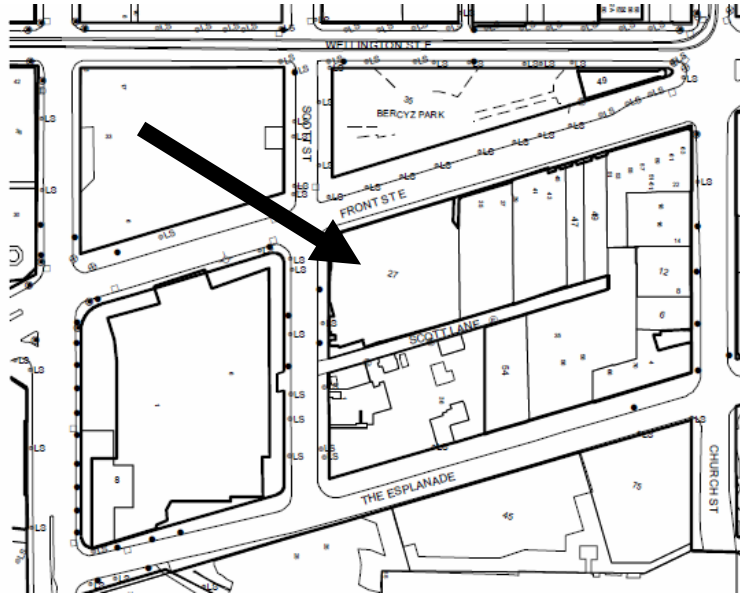
³ The original stage was considered "a bold experiment to provide a multiple configuration stage" that functioned in three ways: as a proscenium stage with or without adjustable apron extensions and as a thrust stage similar to the one at the Stratford Festival, which required a wider than usual auditorium and impacted on the number of theatre seats (St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts: 40 years, 2010, 94)

Mallet Theatre has been less impacted visually with new seats and improved lighting and sound systems.

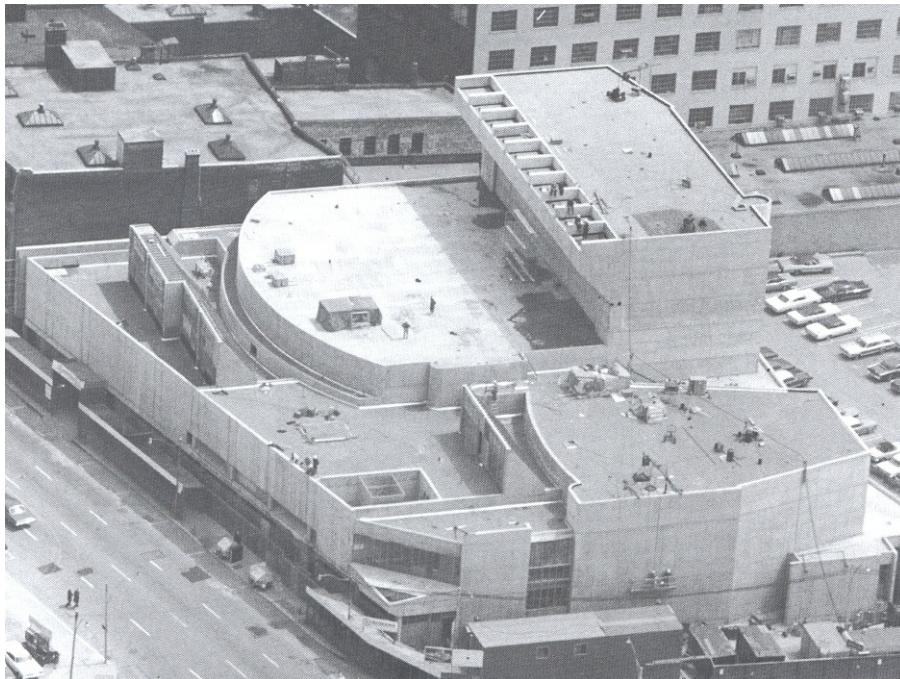
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IMAGES



1. City of Toronto Property Data Map: showing the location of the property at 27 Front Street East



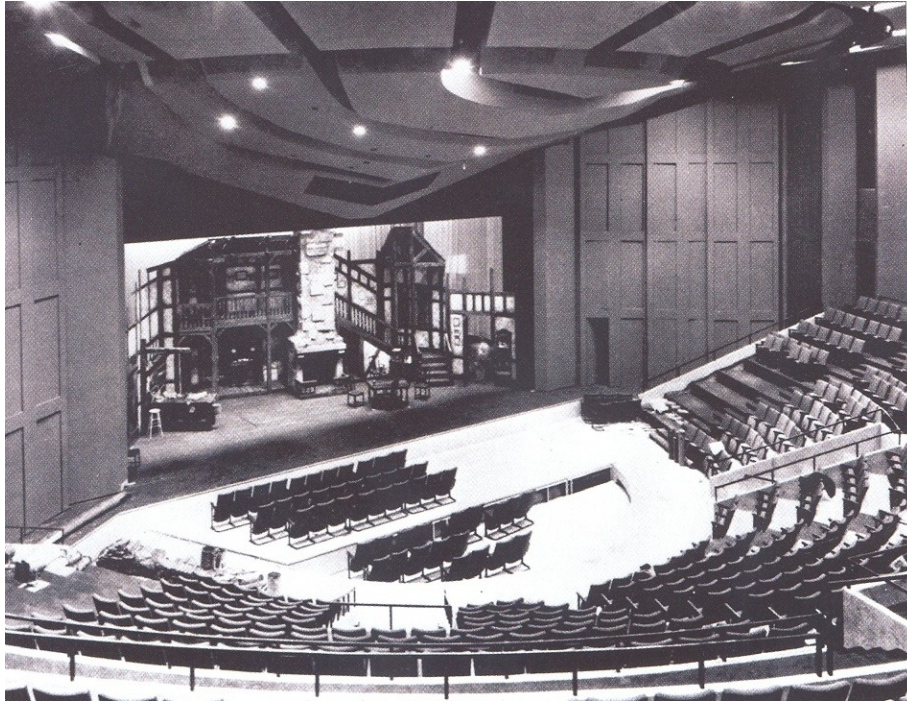
2. Archival Photograph, St. Lawrence Centre: showing the principal (north) façade on Front Street East (left) with the fly tower of the present-day Bluma Appel theatre on the upper right (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1175, Item 2)



3. Photograph, Interior, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts: showing the entrance lobby off Front Street East (Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012)



4. Photograph, Interior, Jane Mallet Theatre: showing the stage and seating (Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012)



5. Archival Photograph, Interior, Bluma Appel Theatre: showing the original stage and seating (St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts: 40 years, 2010)



6. Photograph, Interior, Bluma Appel Theatre: showing the new stage, seating and lighting with the balcony and box seats (Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012)



7. Photograph, Interior, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts: showing the lower lobby for the Bluma Appel Theatre with Front Street East on the left (Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012)



8. Photograph, Interior, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts: showing the upper lobby for the Bluma Appel Theatre (Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012)



9. Photograph, Interior, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts: showing the lower lobby for the Jane Mallet Theatre (Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012)



10. Photograph, Interior, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts: showing the upper lobby for the Jane Mallet Theatre with its view west along Front Street East (Heritage Preservation Services, February 2012)