Alteration of a Designated Heritage Property – 72 Wells Hill Avenue

Date: March 12, 2013

To: Toronto Preservation Board
    Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division

Wards: Trinity-St. Paul's – Ward 21

Reference Number: P:\2013\Cluster B\PLN\HPS\ITEYCC\April 9 2013\teHPS14

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the proposed alteration to the designated heritage property located at 72 Wells Hill Avenue, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve the proposed alterations to the heritage property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue, in accordance with the drawings prepared by Audaxarchitecture dated February 25, 2013, subject to the following conditions:

   a. Prior to May 31, 2013 the owner shall withdraw the appeal to the Conservation Review Board with respect to the City’s Intention to Designate the property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue, to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services and the City Solicitor.

   b. Prior to the issuance of any heritage permit for the proposal, including a heritage permit related to demolition, shoring, excavation and rebuilding of any building or structure on the subject property, the owner shall provide the following to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services:
i. a revised east elevation drawing that retains the main (east) entrance, where a paneled wood door is set in a segmental-arched surround protected by the open hip-roofed porch with brackets, and adjusts the design of the garage to make it distinct from and subordinate to the entrance;

ii. building permit drawings substantially in accordance with the approved plans, including specifications for heritage conservation work, prepared by the project architect and a qualified heritage consultant;

iii. a licensed Engineer’s letter detailing how the retained portions of the heritage elements will be protected and made structurally sound throughout the construction process;

iv. protection and conservation specifications for heritage elements including windows (to be replaced in kind and style), wood work, metal work, roofing, front porch, porch canopy and masonry, prepared by a qualified heritage consultant;

v. a landscape plan that maintains mature trees and the existing stone wall along the east perimeter; and

vi. documentation of the portions of the house that are proposed to be demolished, including plans, sections, elevations drawings and photographs.

c. The owner shall complete the heritage conservation work to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services and upon completion of the project provide a Letter of Substantial Completion signed by the project architect and a qualified heritage consultant, accompanied by post construction photo-documentation.

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

DECISION HISTORY
At its meeting of September 11, 2012, the Toronto and East York Community Council passed TE18.115 and “directed Heritage Preservation Services to investigate the potential of including 72 Wells Hill Avenue on the inventory of heritage properties and report back to the Community Council as soon as possible and no later than January 2013.”

The Toronto and East York Community Council, at its meeting of October 10, 2012, adopted TE19.12 approving a residential demolition application for the property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue with certain conditions that included the preservation of significant natural features.
Following research and evaluation, staff determined that the property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue met the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation that the City of Toronto also uses in evaluating properties for inclusion on the City's heritage inventory.

To prevent the demolition of the house form building and to preserve its cultural heritage values and attributes, Council stated its intention to designate the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act on City Council on November 27, 28 and 29, 2012.


As a result of Council's stating its intention to designate the property, the demolition permit was voided. The owner has appealed the designation to the Conservation Review Board.

ISSUE BACKGROUND
Staff researched and evaluated the property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue and determined that it meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the Ontario Heritage Act. The site contains a detached house form building (1910) that contributes to the Casa Loma neighbourhood, an area that City Council approved for study as a potential heritage conservation district in 2005 (Attachments 1 and 2). As a designated property, the alterations proposed require Council approval under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Since Council stated its Intention to Designate the property, the prospective new owner and her architects have been working with staff on a proposal that would expand the living space through the introduction of a substantial but subordinate addition to the rear of the property. The owner has also sought advice from ERA Architects Inc. on the building's current condition and received recommendations for the execution of conservation work. ERA also provided an opinion about the overall suitability of the proposal.

COMMENTS
Background
The property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the three categories of design, associative and contextual values. Located on the west side of Wells Hill Avenue north of Nina Street, the Frank Denison House (1910) is a fine representative example of a residential building designed in the Period Revival style influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement by the notable Toronto architectural firm of Wickson and Gregg. Contextually, the house is linked to its surroundings on Wells Hill Avenue, which retains its integrity as an early 20th century residential street, and contributes to the historical character of the Casa Loma neighbourhood (Attachment 3).
Condition Assessment
On March 5, 2013, ERA Architects Inc. conducted a review of the exterior of 72 Wells Hill Avenue and found that the front half of the building remains intact and relatively unchanged from its original appearance but is in need of conservation. They observed that the roof rafters appear to be in good condition; however, the shingles and copper trim and gutters show significant signs of wear. The second story corbeled stucco façade was found to be in poor condition, heavily cracked, and in some places completely missing and the Arts and Crafts inspired brickwork appears to have the original red tinted mortar retained over the majority of the façade. It was also observed that the wood casement windows show signs of deferred maintenance, including some decay at the base of the windows. The masonry and railing of the stoop at the front (east) elevation were found to be in a state of advanced deterioration and are not likely part of the original design and the original wood-bracketed canopy and paneled wood front door were found to be in good condition.

Proposal
The drawings prepared by AUDAXarchitecture dated February 25, 2013, A-01-A12 (Attachment 4) illustrate that the rear portion of the building is to be removed and replaced by compatible, modern addition, while the front of the building will be retained and restored. The proposal indicates that ground floor to the north of the front entrance will be altered to accommodate a new integrated garage.

The roof cladding is proposed to be replaced with cedar shingles, and the copper flashing, rain gutters, and downspout replaced with zinc. The wood dormer and exposed rafter tails are proposed to be conserved and repaired. The second story stucco is damaged and is proposed to be removed and replaced with new stucco to match the original. The multicoloured clinker brick masonry is conserved, with alterations at the north end to incorporate a new garage as shown, incorporating salvaged brick from the building to match the existing masonry. The whole of the remaining building will be repointed to match the original mortar as required. The single pane wood casement windows are shown to be replaced with new double glazed windows to match the originals in appearance and material.

The porch, including the original wood-bracketed canopy and paneled wood front door are proposed to be removed and a porch of new design constructed. The chimneys are to be retained and repaired as required. A garage at the rear of the property will be demolished. The garage is not mentioned in the reasons for designation.

Staff Comments
In 2008, Toronto City Council adopted the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada as the official document guiding planning, stewardship and conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City. A product of an ongoing collaboration between the Federal Government, Provinces, and Territories, this document has been adopted as a national benchmark by jurisdictions across the country. Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) has reviewed the
proposed alterations within the context of the *Standards and Guidelines* and have concluded that the proposed development is well designed and generally in keeping with the *Standards and Guidelines*, with the exception of the removal of the original bracketed canopy with bell-cast roof on the primary elevation.

While greatly expanding the living space of the house, the proposed new addition at the rear is sensitive to the historic place. It will be both subordinate to and distinct from the existing house as it will start behind the visible portions of the existing roof and chimney, and the additional roof line created by the addition is compatibly designed and provides a complementary backdrop to the existing complex hipped roof design.

The proposed zinc materials of the new addition and the zinc elements that will replace existing, worn copper finishes will be compatible with the original materials (stucco and brick), yet distinguishable as modern, new construction. In an effort to minimize the negative impact on the east (front) elevation the house, no existing window openings will be modified and window replacements shall be "in kind" and style. New cedar shingles and stucco conservation will also maintain the building's original appearance.

The existing porch, which includes a masonry stoop, iron railings and the original wood-bracketed canopy with bell-cast roof above, will require some intervention as the masonry stoop and railings (likely not original to the building) are in a state of advanced deterioration. However, the canopy over the porch is in good repair and is an architectural heritage attribute, along with the front wood door which has a clear finish and appears to be original. During pre-application discussions, staff indicated a lack of support for the redesign of the porch due to original elements not being conserved.

The design of the proposed porch and garage will need to be refined in order to bring it into conformity with the *Standards and Guidelines*. Specifically, while staff have agreed to support the introduction of an appropriately designed integrated garage at the front of the house, and in so doing anticipate that a limited portion of existing fabric on the primary elevation (including an asymmetrical original window) will be removed to accommodate it, the introduction of the garage addition must not compromise existing character-defining attributes and should be subordinate to the main house. For this reason HPS staff recommend that a revised design be submitted that incorporates the original wood-bracketed bell-cast canopy and adjusts the design of the garage to make it distinct from and subordinate to the entrance. HPS will review the detailed plans for this intervention prior to issuing a Heritage Permit for the work.

Prior to the building/heritage permit submission and review, the owner has been asked to supply HPS with an Engineer’s letter detailing how the retained heritage elements will be protected and made structurally sound throughout the construction process. In addition the owner will supply HPS with protection and conservation specifications for heritage elements including windows, wood work, metal work, roofing, and masonry.
As the property's setting is also an important heritage consideration, prior to heritage permit approval, the applicant will also be required to submit a landscape plan to the satisfaction of the Manager Heritage Preservation Services.

CONTACT
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SIGNATURE

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Robert Freedman
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 – Location Map
Attachment No. 2 – Photograph of Existing Building
Attachment No. 3 – Reasons for Designation
Attachment No. 4 – Proposal
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.
Photograph of the principal (east) façade of the Frank Denison House at 72 Wells Hill Avenue (Heritage Preservation Services, October 2012)
REASONS FOR DESIGNATION: 72 WELLS HILL AVENUE ATTACHMENT NO. 3
(STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE)

Frank Denison House

Description

The property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets the criteria for municipal designation prescribed by the Province of Ontario under the three categories of design, associative and contextual values. Located on the west side of Wells Hill Avenue north of Nina Street, the Frank Denison House (1910) is a 2½-storey detached house form building.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Frank Denison House is a fine representative example of an early 20th century house form building that displays the hallmarks of the Period Revival style influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement. It stands as the earliest interpretation of the style on Wells Hill Avenue.

The important Toronto architectural firm of Wickson and Gregg designed the Frank Denison House. Noted for their residential projects in Toronto’s exclusive neighbourhoods, the pair executed this commission during the early stage of their lengthy partnership that produced city-wide landmarks including the former Central Reference Library (now the Kauffler Student Service Centre at the University of Toronto) and Timothy Eaton Memorial Church in Forest Hill.

Contextually, the Frank Denison House assists in defining, maintaining and supporting the character of the Casa Loma neighbourhood where Wells Hill Avenue is an important street with an intact group of early 20th century house form buildings that contributes to the quality of the area. The Frank Denison House is also visually and historically linked to its surroundings on Wells Hill Avenue where its shares its setback on a tree-lined street and complements the other period residential buildings.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 72 Wells Hill Avenue are:

- The scale, form and massing of the 2½-storey detached house form building
- The complex hip roof with extended eaves, exposed purlins, dormers and brick chimneys (the south chimney has corbelled brickwork)
- The materials, with brick and stucco cladding and brick and wood trim
- On the principal (east) façade, the asymmetrical organization of the door and window openings
- The main (east) entrance, where a paneled wood door is set in a segmental-arched surround and protected by an open hip-roofed porch with brackets
- The fenestration on the east, north and south elevations, which combines segmental-arched and flat-headed openings, many of which contain multi-paned windows
- The setback and placement of the building in a landscaped setting with mature trees and a stone wall along the east perimeter