



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Alterations to a Designated Heritage Property – 41 Alcina Avenue (York Wilson House)

Date:	August 19, 2015
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division
Wards:	Ward 21 – St Paul's
Reference Number:	P:\2015\Cluster B\PLN\TEYCC\TE15094

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the alterations to the heritage property at 41 Alcina Avenue under Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act as set out in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve the alterations to the heritage property at 41 Alcina Avenue, in accordance with Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act, substantially in accordance with plans and drawings dated August 19, 2015, prepared by Angela Tsementzis Architects, on file with the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, and the Conservation Strategy prepared by ERA Architects Inc., dated May 19, 2015, revised June 30, 2015 and on file with the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, subject to the following additional conditions:

- a. That prior to the issuance of any heritage permit for the alterations as set out in the report from the Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division, dated August 19, 2015, at 41 Alcina Avenue, including a heritage permit or building permit, but excluding permits for repairs and maintenance and usual and minor works for the existing heritage building as are acceptable to the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, the owner shall:
 - i. Provide full building permit drawings, including notes and specifications for the conservation and protective measures, including a description of materials and finishes, to be prepared by the project architect and a qualified heritage consultant to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services.

Financial Impact

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

DECISION HISTORY

City Council expressed its intention to designate the property at 41 Alcina Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act on September 22 and 23, 1997. The Designation By-law was passed December 19, 1997 (By-law 1997-0666).

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Development Proposal

The project is to adapt the house, a two-storey split-level plan with brick, wood and glass construction built in 1955 and largely unaltered, for continued use as a single-family residence. The house was originally designed to provide a solitary studio space for the artist with north light and minimal connection to the rest of the interior. The current proposal is to modify the interior to the needs of a family with children. The alterations involve: the preservation of original features; the rehabilitation of the former studio space into two levels with a living room above and a bedroom, bathroom, laundry room and playroom below; and the restoration of both the original carport and the original exterior elevations of the residence through the removal of later additions including a glass solarium on the south (rear) side and enclosed vestibules on the east and west side.

Policy Framework

Provincial Policy Statement and Planning Act

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The PPS sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. The key objectives include building strong communities, wise use and management of resources, and protecting public health and safety. City Council's planning decisions are required to be consistent with the PPS.

The Planning Act and associated Provincial Policy Statement guide development in the Province and include provincial interests regarding heritage resources as described in the

Provincial Policy Statement issued under the authority of Section 3 of the Planning Act. The Planning Act requires that all decisions affecting land use planning matters "shall be consistent with" the Provincial Policy Statement. The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development, and promotes the provincial policy-led planning system.

Provincial Policy Statement 2.6.1 reads "Significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved".

Official Plan

Amendment No. 199 to the Official Plan provides the City's policy framework for heritage conservation in the City. OPA 199, Policy 4 states that, "Properties on the Heritage Register will be *conserved* and maintained consistent with the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, as revised from time to time and as adopted by Council". OPA 199, Policy 5 states that, "Proposed *alterations*, development, and/or public works on or *adjacent* to, a property on the Heritage Register will ensure that the *integrity* of the heritage property's cultural heritage value and attributes will be retained, prior to work commencing on the property and to the satisfaction of the City".

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

In 2008 Toronto City Council adopted the *Parks Canada 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 of Toronto. The General Standards (1-9) and Standards for Rehabilitation (10-13) apply to this project.

Heritage Resource

The property known as 41 Alcina Avenue is located on the north side of Alcina Avenue between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue. The property is immediately adjacent to the Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District. With its substantial setback from Alcina Avenue and its unique modern design as compared to the late 19th and early 20th century house form buildings on neighbouring properties, the York Wilson House is a landmark on the street and in the area (Attachment No. 1).

The property at 41 Alcina Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for architectural and historical reasons (Attachment No. 2). The house was completed in 1955 according to the designs of Toronto architect John B. Layng who worked closely with his client artist R. York Wilson. The design incorporated a studio and living quarters for the artist and his family. York Wilson (1907–1984) was one of Canada's pre-eminent abstract artists, whose works were exhibited internationally and are represented in private and public collections in Canada and abroad. He is recognized as the most important Modern Canadian mural designer, executing over a

dozen murals including the "Seven Lively Arts" completed in 1960 and displayed in the lobby of the O'Keefe Centre (now the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts).

The York Wilson House is an important example of post World War II residential design in Toronto displaying elements drawn from Modernist architecture. The custom built home is a unique split-level plan covered by a butterfly or inverted gable roof. The exterior brick walls mix broad expanses of windows on the north and south elevations with smaller openings on the side walls and in the clerestory. The main entrance door placed on the west wall was designed by York Wilson. The interior is organized into an artist's studio (north) and living quarters (south) divided by a hallway. At the west end of the hall an open stairway with a balcony above leads down to the living areas. A secondary staircase, linking service areas on two levels is found at the east end of the hall. In the south part of the house, the first-floor combination living and dining room has a brick (north) wall with a fireplace and a cantilevered stone hearth. Opposite, a continuous glass wall (south) faces the garden. Flagstone floors in the hall and living-dining room contain radiant heat coils. In the north section of the building, a two-storey artist's studio has a special door on the east wall for the removal of large paintings (Attachment No. 3).

COMMENTS

Current Proposal

Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) has reviewed the Conservation Strategy prepared by ERA Architects Inc. for the alterations proposed to the residence at 41 Alcina Avenue (Attachment No. 4). While the alterations do impact character defining features of the interior of the house, the exterior is being restored to remove later additions and reverse alterations that have diminished the quality of the original design as viewed from the public realm. This includes the restoration of the carport identified as a "pergola" to the house in the architect's original drawings.

North (front) elevation

The north or street-facing elevation of the York Wilson House is almost fully glazed with continuous full-height windows. There is no change proposed to the window openings. The existing aluminum windows will be replaced with a new system of thermally broken aluminum windows with the same seven lite configuration with operating sash in the same locations.

West (entrance) elevation

The main entrance to the house is placed on the west (side) wall. The door is faced with a York Wilson mural fabricated from silicon and fibre glass. The door will be replaced with a new slab wood door and the original door displayed within the house in accordance with the instructions of a conservator as provided in the appendix to the HIA. This will protect the art work from further deterioration. A glass entrance vestibule on the west elevation that was added to the house later will be removed.

South (rear) Elevation

The south wall of the house rising two stories, has two tiers of continuous window openings set in wood frames. At the east end of the ground floor a door provides access to the terrace. The proposed alterations include new windows on the second floor to match the configuration of the original. The original three large format glass panes and door in the ground floor will be replaced with four large pane sliding doors. The rear sunroom that is a later addition will be removed.

East (side) Elevation

The original design for the house includes a special window/door measuring over two feet wide intended for the moving of large works of art into and out of the interior studio space. The reconfiguration of the interior of the house on the north side requires the relocation of the art door higher on the east elevation with a new window fixed in place within the existing frame. A new window below will provide light and ventilation to a bedroom in the proposed new lower level.

Interior Alterations

Interior alterations are proposed to provide additional living space within the existing footprint of the original house and to improve visual connectivity within the house. The existing artist's studio is proposed to be underpinned and the existing floor lowered to permit two levels of living space within the current volume of the studio. This will allow for an additional bedroom, bathroom and playroom to be constructed. The original artist studio / livingroom will retain a lofty ceiling height consistent with its original character. The north brick wall of the long hallway which runs east and west across the centre of the house separating the two-storey artist's studio in the north section from the two-storey living areas in the south, will be opened at the west end to connect the livingroom to the front entrance and the main staircase. This opening follows the logic of circulation within the house established by the original floor plan.

The dining room in the south half of the house that faces onto the rear garden is defined on the north side by a brick wall that contains a fireplace and a cantilevered stone hearth. An opening will be created in the north wall to improve the connection to and natural lighting of the kitchen. The owner has agreed to modify this opening to retain a portion of the wall across the top of the "cut-out" so the solidity and geometry of the original brick wall remains evident.

CONCLUSION

The proposed alterations to the York Wilson House have been carefully considered by the project architect (Angela Tsementzis Architects) in consultation with the heritage consulting team of ERA Architects Inc. and Heritage Preservation Services staff. A meeting on site allowed HPS staff to fully appreciate the challenges presented by the original house design. Staff is satisfied that the proposed alterations are respectful of the heritage attributes while addressing the fundamental needs of the owner for additional living space and improved connectivity within their home. Staff further acknowledge the

proposed restoration of the exterior of this designated property as a significant contribution to its conservation.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Location Map: 41 Alcina Avenue
Attachment 2 – Heritage Property Report: 41 Alcina Avenue
Attachment 3 – Photographs: 41 Alcina Avenue
Attachment 4 – Drawings: 41 Alcina Avenue