

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:
REASONS FOR INCLUSION:
655 QUEEN STREET EAST

ATTACHMENT NO. 8

The property at 655 Queen Street East, a unit in the building formerly known as the Smith Block, is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act and inclusion on the City of Toronto Heritage Register for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06 under all three categories of design, associative and contextual value.

Description

The property at 655 Queen Street East is located on the south side of Queen Street East between the East Don Roadway and Broadview Avenue. It is part of the Smith Block, built in 1889-90, and originally a three-storey, flat-roofed building, clad in red brick, sandstone and terracotta, and including a total of nine properties (eight units and one hallway) at 639-655 Queen Street East. There is a vacant lot in the middle of the block due to the 1961 fire which destroyed the central portion including the three properties at 645, 647 (hallway) and 649 Queen Street East.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The Smith Block has cultural heritage value as late 19th century, mixed-use, commercial blocks representing the Richardsonian Romanesque style popular in Toronto from the late 1880s. Combining great large arches with smaller ones, a palette of red brick, sandstone and terracotta, as well as various surfaces textures, including rough-hewn stone and intricately detailed terracotta panels, the essential elements of the style are presented. The wood, shop fronts with their well-preserved moulded cornices and pilasters further contribute to the integrity of the remaining buildings.

The Smith Block is valued for its association with the Smith family. Having arrived at York with Lieutenant Governor Simcoe in 1793, William Smith Sr., his son William and grandson John contributed to the growth of the Town of York and Riverdale as surveyors, contractors and entrepreneurs throughout the 19th century. Amongst their numerous contributions was the construction of Scadding Cabin, Castle Frank, the 1803 bridge over the Don at Queen Street as well as Toronto's first professional baseball stadium in 1886. They were associated with the development of Don Mount/Riverdale neighbourhood from its earliest days as a string of rural settlements on the Kingston Road to its annexation with the City of Toronto in 1884. The Smith Block was an important part of the transformation of Riverdale post-annexation.

The Smith Block is also valued for its association with the Mallory Brothers' architectural practice. The two brothers, John and Frank Mallory Sr, were part of a second generation of a family of architects, following their father, William Henry, and including brother, William Henry Jr. and grandson, Frank S. Mallory Jr. The Mallory Brothers' partnership designed several other Riverdale buildings including the First Avenue Baptist Church (1887-8) and the Noel G. Marshall House (1889).

Contextually, the remaining properties of the Smith Block have cultural heritage value as they maintain and support the historic character of Riverdale. Situated at the corner of Baseball Place and on axis with Carroll Street, the Smith Block was designed as a landmark building within its neighbourhood. With its richly detailed shop fronts and upper elevations, the remaining blocks continue to be important contributors to the heritage character of the area defined and currently under study as the Queen Street East Heritage Conservation District.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the property at 655 Queen Street East are:

- The placement, setback and orientation of this portion of the Smith Block building as located within its property boundary on the south side of Queen Street
- The form and massing of this portion of the block with its three storey height
- The flat roof and raised parapets
- The brick, stone and terracotta cladding and details

On the North and East Elevations of 655 Queen Street East

- The brick piers with stone bands marking the separation between the properties and on the east elevation, the piers which create bays and steps at the cornice level as well as the single storey piers at the ground level supporting the wood cornice on the east elevation
- The original store front details including
 - The entablature with its decorative bands and cornice)
- At the second floor level:
 - The stone bands
- At the third floor level:
 - The two arched window heads The brick arches with decorative profiles surrounding the window heads
 - The brick arches with decorative profiles surrounding the window heads
 - The great brick arch with the checker board brick pattern
 - The three terracotta panels below the windows
 - The two circular terracotta panels outside of the great arch
 - The rough-hewn stone sills, bands, lintel and impost blocks
 - The corbelled brick cornice on both the north and east elevations