The property at 46 Spadina Avenue (including the addresses at 40, 44 and 50 Spadina Avenue) is worthy of inclusion on the City of Toronto’s Heritage Register for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation, which the City also applies for inclusion on the Heritage Register.

Description

The property at 46 Spadina Avenue is located on the west side of the street between Wellington Street West (south) and King Street West (north) and contains the Systems Building, a four-storey factory building that was constructed in 1907 according to the designs of the Toronto architectural firm of Horwood and Burke. Commissioned by Business Systems Limited, which occupied the premises for over half a century, the company manufactured business stationery and operated a business training school. In the late 20th century, the Systems Building was among the King-Spadina properties identified with the clothing manufacturing industry in Toronto’s Fashion District.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property at 46 Spadina Avenue has design value as a well-crafted example of an early 20th century factory in the King-Spadina neighbourhood, which was designed with features of Edwardian Classicism, the most popular style for all building types during this era. The Systems Building is particularly distinguished by its elaborate classical detailing that includes the frontispieces with quoins and the twin entrances on the principal (east) elevation.

The Systems Building is valued for its contributions to the development and evolution of the King-Spadina neighbourhood in the early 20th century when the area changed from an institutional enclave adjoined by residential subdivisions to Toronto's new manufacturing district after the Great Fire of 1904. The property at 46 Spadina Avenue is especially linked to the historical transition of King-Spadina, as Business Systems Limited established its company in one of the former high-end residences that marked the initial development along the street before replacing it with the large-scale warehouse, a building typology that was indicative of the industrial character of the community after 1900.

The historical value of the property at 46 Spadina Avenue is also through its connection with the architectural practice of Burke and Horwood. As the successor to the firm founded by his uncle, Henry Langley, Edmund Burke formed a partnership with John Horwood in 1894, and the pair received immediate recognition as the designers of the Robert Simpson Store as the first Chicago-style building in Toronto. Although Horwood and White designed innumerable residential, institutional and industrial buildings in the city, they accepted few documented commissions in King-Spadina, including the Systems Building and the neighbouring Samuel, Benjamin and Company Building on the southwest corner of King and Spadina, which is included on the City of Toronto’s Heritage Register.
Contextually, the value of the property at 46 Spadina Avenue is through its support for the historical character of the King-Spadina neighbourhood where it is part of an important collection of former factories and warehouses that changed the area from its origins as an institutional and residential district to Toronto's manufacturing centre after the Great Fire of 1904. The Systems Building is historically and visually linked to its setting on Spadina Avenue, south of King Street West, where other large-scale warehouses on Spadina, King and Wellington streets are among the neighbouring properties that are included on the City's Heritage Register.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Systems Building on the property at 46 Spadina Avenue are:

- The placement, setback and orientation of the building on the west side of Spadina Avenue between Wellington Street West (south) and King Street West (north)
- The scale, form and massing of the four-storey warehouse above the raised base with window openings
- The flat roofline, which is extended at the south end by a penthouse and has brick chimneys on the west end and southwest corner
- The materials, with the brick cladding and the brick, stone and wood detailing, including the brick banding and quoin, and the brick corbelling above the first (ground) storey
- The symmetrical organization of the principal (east) elevation into 11 bays, with the frontispieces in the centre and outer bays
- The two entrances at the north and south ends of the principal (east) elevation, which are set in Gibbs surrounds with stone quoin, and the name plate reading "Systems Building" above the north entrance
- The fenestration on the principal (east) elevation, with the flat-headed openings in the base and upper stories, and the round-arched openings in the first (ground) storey, including the oversized opening in the third bay from the north end and the diminutive round-arched opening in the north frontispiece
- On the principal (east) elevation, the window detailing with the voussoirs and keystones, and the quoins on the diminutive openings in the centre and north frontispieces
- The north (side) elevation, which continues the decorative brick quoins, banding and quoin from the principal (east) elevation, and has segmental-arched and flat-headed window openings with brick and stone trim
- The south (side) elevation, with the flat-headed openings
- On the rear (west) wall, the brick quoins and the segmental-arched and flat-headed openings with the brick and stone trim