



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

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

Date:	August 18, 2016
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	Ward 21 – St Paul's
Reference Number:	P:\2016\Cluster B\PLN\TEYCC\TE16092

SUMMARY

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

At its meeting of September 30, October 1 and 2, 2015, City Council approved alterations to the property at 41 Alcina Avenue. The applicant is now proposing additional alterations to the property that require City Council's approval.

The additional alterations proposed under this application are the removal of the south wall and construction of a rear two-storey addition, the reduction of the height of the interior master bedroom balcony, the installation of a translucent glazed panel to enclose the opening above the interior master bedroom balcony, the excavation and construction of an in-ground swimming pool in the backyard and the erection of fencing including a metal picket pool enclosure.

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 the plans and drawings dated July 14, 2016, July 27, 2016 and August 9, 2016, prepared by Angela Tsementzis Architects, date-stamped received by Heritage Preservation Services on August 10, 2016, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, and the Heritage Impact Assessment, prepared by ERA Architects Inc., date-revised August 10, 2016, date-stamped received by Heritage Preservation Services on August 10, 2016, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, all subject to the following conditions:
 - a. That prior to the issuance of any permit for all or any part of the alterations as set out in the report dated August 18, 2016 from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, including a heritage permit or a building permit, but excluding permits for repair and maintenance and usual minor works as are acceptable to the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services:
 - i. Provide full building permit drawings including a landscape plan, 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 Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services; and
 - ii. Obtain all necessary permits to injure any privately owned trees located within the Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District issued under Chapter 813, Article III of the Toronto Municipal Code.

Financial Impact

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

DECISION HISTORY

The property located at 41 Alcina Avenue is designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act with the passing of By-law No. 1997-0666 on December 8, 1997. The reasons for designating the property are set out in Schedule "B" to this by-law.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/pre1998bylaws/toronto%20-%20former%20city%20of/1997-0666.pdf>

At its meeting of September 30, October 1 and 2, 2015, City Council adopted staff's recommendations to approve alterations to the designated heritage property at 41 Alcina Avenue. The approved alterations consist of: the rehabilitation of the two-storey artist's studio into a living room above and a bedroom, bathroom, laundry room and playroom below; interior alterations to improve the connectivity of the main floor living spaces; the replacement of the existing flagstone flooring on the main floor; the restoration of the carport; the replacement of existing doors and windows on each elevation within existing openings; and the restoration of the exterior elevations of the residence through the removal of later additions on the south, east and west elevations.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.TE10.17>
<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-82950.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Development Proposal

This rehabilitation project is proposed to further adapt the house for the needs of its occupant. The existing detached house will continue to be used as a single-family dwelling. The proposal is to: construct a rear two-storey addition; reduce the master bedroom balcony to a height that approximates its original condition and provide a translucent glazed panel to enclose the increased opening; construct a new in-ground swimming pool in the backyard; and erect new fencing including a metal picket pool enclosure. The Heritage Impact Assessment indicates that the overall alterations anticipate the completion of the alterations that were approved by City Council at its meeting of September 30, October 1 and 2, 2015.

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 the provincial interest 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

The revised heritage policies in the City of Toronto Official Plan provide the policy framework for heritage conservation in the City. The following Official Plan policies apply to the proposed alterations:

3.1.5.4: "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.";

3.1.5.5: "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."; and

3.1.5.26: "New construction on, or adjacent to, a property on the Heritage Register will be designed to conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and characters of that property and to mitigate visual and physical impact on it."

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

At its meeting of March 3, 4 and 5, 2008, 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 properties on the Heritage Register. The General Standards for Preservation, Rehabilitation and Restoration as well as the Additional Standards for Rehabilitation apply to the alterations proposed under this application.

Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District

The subject property is adjacent to the Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District. The Revised Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District Plan (1994) provides a framework for the conservation of the heritage resources and character of Wychwood Park. This Plan contains guidelines to ensure the preservation of trees and natural landscape, including the following:

2. (b): "Construction of additions should take into account significant trees on the property. New construction activity and additions should not take place within the drip-line of significant trees.";

2. (c): "During construction work, special measures should be exercised to prevent damage to significant trees on the owner's property and to all trees on adjoining lands."; and

5. (b): "The park-like ambiance of Wychwood Park is established not only by the Park Reserves by importantly also by the landscaping of private lands. Historic contours, significant trees and planted areas should be preserved on private land as well as on Trustee lands. Significant trees should not be removed unless shown to have become a major hazard.

During landscaping work, special measures should be exercised to prevent damage to significant trees on the owner's property and to all trees on adjoining lands. Dead trees should be replaced."

Heritage Resource

The property at 41 Alcina Avenue (York Wilson House) is located on the north side of Alcina Avenue, between Bathurst Street and Wychwood Avenue. The property is distinguished contextually under By-law No. 1997-0666 with the following description: "With its setback from Alcina Avenue and unique appearance, the York Wilson House is a landmark on the street and in the area."

The property at 41 Alcina Avenue (York Wilson House) is designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for architectural and historical reasons. 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" in the lobby of the O'Keefe Centre (now the Hummingbird 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 design contains living space and an artist's studio in 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 heating 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. 2)

The property at 41 Alcina Avenue is adjacent to the properties at 45 Alcina Avenue and 110 Wychwood Park. These two adjacent properties are designated under Section 41,

Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act as they are located within the Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District area. The landscape and trees within the area are identified as elements supporting the designation of Wychwood Park as a Heritage Conservation District and are described in the plan as follows:

"The trees within the Park are of special importance. There are many fine specimens of large native trees, particularly red and white oaks, a number of which date from the early settlement of York or before. . . . Wychwood Park is a richly landscaped park which represents the principles of landscape design current in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The style has been influenced by both the natural landscape movement in English landscape design associated with William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll, and the American picturesque landscape manner developed by Frederick Law Olmstead and seen in a number of 'park' suburbs of the later 19th century."

COMMENTS

Heritage Preservation Services staff has reviewed the Heritage Impact Assessment date-revised August 10, 2016 and prepared by ERA Architects Inc. for the alterations proposed for the property at 41 Alcina Avenue. This Heritage Impact Assessment finds that the proposed alterations are well considered and reasonable.

Staff has considered the alterations in the context of the Planning Act, the heritage policies of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), the heritage policies of the City of Toronto Official Plan, the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and the Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District Plan. The alterations that are currently proposed have also been considered in conjunction with the alterations approved by City Council at its meeting of September 30, October 1 and 2, 2015, to assess the cumulative impact of the approved/proposed changes to the designated property.

Rear two-storey addition

The rear exterior wall and terrace are described as follows in the Reasons for Designation:

"The south (rear) exterior wall of the house rises two-stories and has two tiers of continuous window openings set in wood frames. At the east end of the lower floor, a door provides access to the terrace."

The rear exterior wall is also proposed to be removed and replaced with a new two-storey addition that will increase the amount of habitable space in the house and change the interior layout of the upper floor. While Standard 1 of the Standards and Guidelines does not support the removal of character-defining elements, staff is satisfied the alterations will retain a substantial portion of the building and the addition is sympathetic to the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of the property. This determination is based on a specific combination of characteristics defining the unique character of the heritage property and the proposed alterations to the rear of the building.

The footprint of the proposed addition will be matching the footprint of the existing single-storey glass sunroom. The removal of this sunroom is part of the alterations that were approved by City Council at its meeting of September 30, October 1 and 2, 2015. The York Wilson House has a simple three-dimensional form with a distinctive butterfly shaped roof. The exterior appearance of the house is characterized by its basic yet distinct form and its overall simplicity. The roof is identified and described in the Reasons for Designation as a structure that is covered by a butterfly or inverted gable roof with a brick chimney on the south slope. The proposed addition does not disrupt the butterfly shape of the roof. Because of its modest size and location, staff is satisfied that the proposed addition will be subordinate to the York Wilson House. The continuous alignment with the roofline and side elevations is considered to be appropriate in this case to avoid a multi-faceted form that would detract from the architectural character and simplicity of the house.

The new rear wall will be indicative of the original design of the house because it will have two tiers of window openings. The width of the new openings will match the conditions of the existing wall. Staff has worked with the applicant to revise the vertical dimensions of the proposed rear wall. The extent of masonry wall separating the roof fascia from the upper openings has been increased to match the dimension of the existing wall and the extent of masonry wall separating both tiers of window openings from each other has been increased to more closely replicate the dimension of the existing wall. The coverage of masonry as proposed will relate to the proportions of masonry of the original rear wall.

Despite its similarities, staff feels that the new addition will be visually distinguishable from the original fabric of the house. A small portion at each extremity of the existing rear wall will be maintained. This retention will be noticeable inside the house and will mark the location of the original south wall. The addition will be connected to the house with a translucent glazed panel that will run continuously along the height of the side elevation walls and across the width of the roof. This panel will create a clear demarcation that will further distinguish the heritage building from the new addition. Staff has requested that the addition be further distinguished with a material that is discernable to the naked eye. Accordingly, the applicant has noted on the drawings that the new masonry will be distinctive white glazed bricks.

Master bedroom balcony

The master bedroom balcony is identified in the Reasons for Designation and comprises the inside of the entrance door and, to the right (south), a balcony in the upper storey that allows light and visual access to the master bedroom. The balcony was raised prior to the passing of By-law No. 1997-0666 and the current proposal would bring the height of the balcony back to its original condition. Staff has looked at historic photographs and is satisfied that this alteration will re-instate the character-defining proportions of the balcony. A translucent glazed panel that would enclose the opening above the balcony is proposed for privacy and safety reasons. The glazed panel does not obscure the legibility of the original design.

In-ground swimming pool and fences

Staff has evaluated the impact that the proposed alterations would have on the adjacent heritage resources protected by the designation of the Wychwood Park Heritage Conservation District. More specifically, the proposed location and depth of the pool was examined closely to ensure that the excavation required for its construction would not have a negative impact on nearby trees. An arborist report was submitted to assess the impact that the proposed alterations would have on trees located on adjacent properties. The arborist report finds that the pool as proposed would not cause any injury to nearby trees.

Urban Forestry staff has also inspected the property at 41 Alcina Avenue and reviewed the proposed alterations and have confirmed that the proposed in-ground pool does not encroach into any Minimum Tree Protection Zones of neighbouring trees and the proposed alterations will not threaten the vitality of these trees. Staff is satisfied that the necessary precautions and appropriate mitigation measures will be guaranteed through the issuance of the necessary permits to injure privately owned trees under Chapter 813, Article III of the Toronto Municipal Code.

CONCLUSION

Staff is in agreement with the findings of the Heritage Impact Assessment as revised. The combined impact of the alterations proposed under this application with the impact of the alterations approved by City Council on September 30, October 1 and 2, 2015 are considered reasonable and meet the intent of the City of Toronto's Official Plan heritage policies and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

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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