



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Alteration to a Designated Heritage Property within the
Cabbagetown South Heritage Conservation District- 311
Sumach Street**

Date:	September 1, 2016
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Wards:	Toronto Centre- Rosedale- Ward 28
Reference:	P:\2016\Cluster B\PLN\TEYCC\TE16091

SUMMARY

In accordance with the Cabbagetown South Heritage Conservation District Plan, this report recommends that City Council refuse the proposed alteration to 311 Sumach Street, a property designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. The proposed porch design is conjectural, not based on adequate historical evidence and lacks a roof, one of the key attributes of historic porches in Cabbagetown identified in the HCD Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council refuse the proposed alteration of the heritage property at 311 Sumach Street under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

If the owner appeals City Council's decision to refuse the application for an alteration under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act, Council authorize the City Solicitor and the necessary City staff to attend at the Ontario Municipal Board in opposition to the appeal.

Financial Impact

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

DECISION HISTORY

The property municipally known as 311 Sumach Street is part of the Cabbagetown South Heritage Conservation District designated by City Council under By-law No. 887-2005 on October 28, 2005 (Attachment No. 1).

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2005/law0887.pdf>

https://www1.toronto.ca/city_of_toronto/city_planning/urban_design/files/pdf/hcd_cabbagetown_south_dp_june05.pdf

ISSUE BACKGROUND

City Council has authorized the Chief Planner and Executive Director to issue heritage permits for alterations to properties designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act if the work proposed is compatible with the guidelines that apply in the heritage conservation district in which the work is proposed to be undertaken. If, in the opinion of staff, the work is not compatible with the guidelines, the Chief Planner and Executive Director is required to submit the proposal to the appropriate Community Council and to City Council for consideration.

Property

The half bay n' gable style semi-detached house occupying 311 Sumach Street was constructed in 1886. The front façade has a ground floor window bay to the right of the main entrance and shares similar features to its adjoining neighbour at 313 Sumach Street, although the subject house has board and batten cladding whereas the 313 Sumach is brick (Attachment No. 2). Outside the front door is a polygonal shaped landing extending 8 feet from the front façade, which meets the bay window at one corner. At the edge of the landing are steps down to a path running through the front yard to the sidewalk.

Cabbagetown is distinguished for the intact Victorian character of its buildings, displaying "late 19th century architectural styles and an integrity of form." Residential development generally commenced in the 1850s, and accelerated in the 1870s and 1880s, when the subject property was developed.

The subject property is located in the Cabbagetown South Heritage Conservation District. According to the Cabbagetown South Heritage Conservation District Plan (the "HCD Plan"), Sumach Street is one of the core north-south streets, which includes a large number of closely spaced houses. Attributes of the streetscape include front yards with planted areas and walkways that lead to the porches and front doors of the houses.

Proposal

The proposal seeks to enlarge the front landing by extending the outside corner of the bay window to create an elevated seating area. A railing with a baluster profile derived from nearby porches would stretch across the front (Attachment No. 3). Although not shown on the submitted plans, the applicant has committed to installing a lattice in front of the supporting piers and to using cedar rather than deck grade lumber. The design does not include a roof over the porch area.

The applicant assembled photographs of similar porches from the surrounding neighbourhood in support of the proposal. The dates of construction for most of these examples are unknown.

Early in the review process, Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) requested historical photographs or research to support the design. The applicant located several photographs taken around World War II of houses with features that the applicant considers equivalent to the proposal (Attachment No. 4).

Policy Framework

Official Plan

Section 3.1.5 of the City of Toronto Official Plan directs that heritage properties of cultural heritage value or interest, including Heritage Conservation Districts will be protected by being designated under the Ontario Heritage Act and/or included on the Heritage Register. HCD's are to be managed and conserved by approving only those alterations that are in accordance with the respective Heritage Conservation District Plan. Properties on the Heritage Register are to be conserved and maintained consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Impacts of site alterations, developments, municipal improvements or public works within or adjacent to Heritage Conservation Districts will be assessed to ensure that the integrity of the district's heritage values attributes and character are conserved. Designated Heritage Conservation Districts are to be protected with a district plan, which is to include directions for conserving the cultural heritage values and character of the Heritage Conservation District, its attributes, and the properties within it.

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

In March 3, 4 and 5, 2008, Council adopted Parks Canada's Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (the "Standards and Guidelines") as the document guiding planning, stewardship and conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City. As outlined above, policy 3.1.5 (4) of the Official Plan states that properties on the Heritage Register are to be conserved consistent with the Standards and Guidelines.

Cabbagetown South Heritage Conservation District Plan

The HCD Plan was adopted by City Council as "a guide to the care and conservation of the architectural heritage, the public and private landscape and the alteration of properties and streetscapes in the district." The plan enables the City to manage change in a way that protects the District's heritage character. A recurring theme in the HCD plan is that alterations to properties in the District be guided by research and evidence.

COMMENTS

HCD Plan Description of Porch Attributes

The absence of a roof in the proposed porch design is a critical omission. According to the HCD Plan, porches are the most distinguishing architectural feature viewed by the public. They are a “functional element as well as an essential part of the overall design of a building. They are built in two principal ways: as part of the principle structure, inset under the main roof structure; or under a separate roof that is relatively independent from the main roof.” Section 5.8 of the HCD Plan states that “porches as a separate wood design element served an important role in energy conservation and provided shelter and cooling in the summer”.

The HCD Plan identifies the book "Preserving Porches" by R. Kahn and Ellen Meagher as a resource for applicants. In the chapter entitled Porch Maintenance and Repair, the book describes the porch roof as "the first line of defence in protecting the delicate trim and porch floor." The roof of a porch is a functional as well as aesthetic feature.

HCD Plan Requirements for the Design of Replacement and New Porches

Porches are important, character-defining building features, and the HCD Plan encourages owners to base their designs on physical or documentary evidence. Restoration is a key conservation principle under section 3.2.2, which states “Encourage the restoration of the exterior of heritage buildings using pictorial or physical evidence with an understanding of period construction techniques and styles”. There is no physical or documentary evidence that 311 Sumach Street ever had a porch resembling the proposed.

The Conservation Practice Advisory Notes section of the HCD Plan under 5.8- Decorative Wooden Detailing, states that reconstructed architectural elements should be based on historic photographs. Conjectural restorations are discouraged. The plan states that a new design should represent the idiom of the period and be based on pattern books or historic photographs.

Section 6.0 of the HCD Plan - Guidelines: Alterations, Additions, and New Construction, (6.2.7- Entrances) states that the design for a new porch should be based on accurate research of an historic porch on a house built in a similar style.

The design for the new porch is not supported by adequate research and does not represent the design idiom of the period when the house was constructed. The design is conjectural and based on photographs of other neighbourhood porches that also lack roofs. The owner has not established the dates of construction for these examples. The historic photos submitted differ in significant ways from the proposal and two are not within Cabbagetown (Attachment No. 4).

Design Alternatives

Staff has suggested that the applicant consider a front yard stone patio concealed with hedges or a landscaped border as an alternative to a porch without a roof (Attachment No. 5). The front yard of the adjoining house provides a basis for this approach. The intent of the alternative is to create a sheltered front yard sitting area in keeping with the applicant's wishes. In accordance with the HCD Plan, the majority of the front yard should remain landscaped with grasses and plantings.

A second alternative is for the applicant to explore a porch design that includes a roof. Attachment 6 illustrates porch examples from the Victorian design era while Attachment No. 7 displays early twentieth century historic photographs of Cabbagetown houses in the bay n' gable style with representative porches.

A final alternative is a variation of the landing that currently exists on the house, but with a squared shape terminating at the window bay that would increase its functionality. Staff and the Cabbagetown Heritage Advisory Committee both support this alternative.

CONCLUSION

This report recommends that City Council refuse the proposed porch design in accordance with the Cabbagetown South Heritage Conservation District Plan. The HCD Plan describes the principal attributes of historic porches in Cabbagetown and requires that owners base their design for new porches on dependable documentary evidence and an understanding of period construction techniques and styles. The evidence presented does not meet the threshold of evidence or reliability that the HCD Plan requires. The applicant presented the design to the August 15, 2016 meeting of the Cabbagetown Heritage Advisory Committee. The Committee was also not supportive of the current design proposal.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1- Location Map: 311 Sumach Street

Attachment 2- Photograph: 311 Sumach Street

Attachment 3- Drawings: 311 Sumach Street

Attachment 4- Applicant's Historic Photographs

Attachment 5- Stone Patio Example

Attachment 6- Example Victorian Porch Designs

Attachment 7- Historic Photographs of Cabbagetown Porches