



REPORT FOR ACTION

Status Update: Electronic Circulation Process for Potential Heritage Properties Under Review

Date: August 10, 2017

To: Planning and Growth Management

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division and Acting Chief Building Official and Executive Director, Toronto Building

Wards: All Wards

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to respond to the direction from Planning and Growth Management Committee to create business process improvements between City Planning and Toronto Building to identify buildings with potential heritage significance which may be under threat by way of demolition. This report highlights the inter-divisional implementation of a new electronic circulation process within the existing electronic building permit system. The new process is intended to identify and facilitate critical time sensitive information sharing between the two divisions. As a result of the changes, Toronto Building automatically notifies Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) when a demolition permit is being sought for a property which has been identified by Heritage Preservation Services as having potential heritage value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, and the Chief Building Official and Executive Director (A), Toronto Building recommend that:

1. The Planning and Growth Management Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On January 31, 2017, as part of the Additional Staffing Resources for Development Application Review item, City Council directed the Deputy City Manager, Cluster B, the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer and the Interim City Solicitor to conduct an end to end development process review and report to the Planning and Growth Management Committee by September 7, 2017 on the results, such report to include:

1. Business process improvements with Toronto Building staff to develop systems that identify buildings which may be under threat by way of demolition where there is potential heritage significance

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.PG17.4>

COMMENTS

On December 16, 2016 the owner of a bank at 2444 Yonge Street applied for a permit to demolish the structure. The property was not on the City's Heritage Register and Toronto Building was statutorily obligated under the Ontario Building Code to issue a demolition permit. The permit to demolish was issued on January 18, 2017 and the owner demolished the building on January 21.

The property had been identified by City Planning as having potential heritage value within the Midtown in Focus planning study. Community members were in the process of preparing a nomination form to support its inclusion on the City's Heritage Register. Prior to the demolition, City Planning was engaged in discussion with the owner about a potential redevelopment on the site and Heritage Planning staff had recommended that the heritage value of the property be confirmed and that the building be retained. However, since the property was neither listed nor designated at the time the demolition permit application was made, the demolition permit could not be legally withheld or denied.

At its January 31, 2017 meeting, the Planning and Growth Management Committee discussed the loss of the building and public concern that followed. City Planning and Toronto Building were directed to implement business process improvements that would identify potential heritage properties at risk of demolition that were not yet listed or designated. The demolition of the bank at 2444 Yonge Street highlighted the need for immediate improvements to the communication and business practices between Toronto Building, the division responsible for issuing the demolition permit and City Planning, the division responsible for evaluating and registering properties with cultural heritage value.

In response to this incident, and with (January 31, 2017) direction from the Planning and Growth Management Committee an inter-divisional solution was developed for the electronic business system (IBMS).

Individual Properties with Heritage Potential

The City maintains a register of properties with cultural heritage value in accordance with the Official Plan and the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA). Individual properties are evaluated under Provincially regulated criteria adopted as Ontario Regulation 9/06 that consider design, associative/historic and contextual values. The register currently contains approximately 12,000 properties and includes properties designated under both Part IV and V of the OHA and those properties that are on the register for their heritage value but are not yet designated (so-called "listed" properties). All register properties have an electronic folder within IBMS and most permit submissions to Toronto Building will trigger an automatic notification and approval process for HPS staff.

Individual properties to be evaluated (i.e. properties with potential heritage value that are not on the heritage register) come from a variety of sources, including requests from ward councillors, nominations from members of the public/preservation panels, through development review, the identification of significant properties within HCD study areas, surveys and planning studies. Two Heritage Planning staff members are responsible for researching and evaluating properties for listing and designation across the city.

All requests are logged in a database and the heritage management team prioritizes listing and designation reports on a monthly basis. First priority is given to properties undergoing active redevelopment and/or properties at risk of demolition. At present, over 1300 properties have been identified as having potential heritage value and all should be subject to further evaluation. This number will continue to grow exponentially as on-going studies and surveys are completed and community nominations are received. All properties that have been identified as having potential heritage value to date, and on an on-going basis, will have HP (Heritage Potential) folders created for them in IBMS.

Electronic Notification Process for Properties with Heritage Potential

Effective April 5, 2017, a notification process was launched for Demolition Permit applications related to any building identified to date as having potential heritage significance (i.e. any property with an HP folder). Accompanying the automatic notification process was a protocol for verbal communication and a series of automatic notifications.

In the fall, additional programming will be undertaken by City Planning which will allow HP folders to be better used by heritage staff for other purposes, including project tracking, batch listing and statistical reporting. In addition, Read Access will be granted to all City Planning staff. This will facilitate early identification of potential heritage planning issues within planning applications.

CONCLUSION

The process and protocols that have been implemented have enhanced inter-divisional communication and provide staff with an opportunity to prepare the necessary research, evaluation and reports should a significant unlisted property be at risk. It also allows an opportunity for dialogue with a property owner, community members and the local councillor. While the system that has been implemented cannot guarantee that a potential heritage property won't be demolished, these actions are part of ongoing efforts to create a more robust City response to threatened heritage properties.

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