

## **Hard Rock Café Sign, Alterations to a Designated Heritage Property 279-283 Yonge Street**

**Date:** November 24, 2016

**To:** Toronto Preservation Board  
Toronto and East York Community Council

**From:** Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division

**Wards:** Ward 27 - Toronto Centre - Rosedale

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council approve the proposed alterations to the heritage property at 279-283 Yonge Street subject to the applicant satisfying certain conservation related conditions as well as obtaining compliance with Chapter 694, Signs, General, of the City of Toronto Municipal Code.

The application proposes to erect large format third party signs on the roof of the building. The existing roof signs will be replaced with four digital LED sign faces atop the north, west and portion of the south elevation of the existing building. The building itself is located at the south-easterly corner of Dundas Square and Yonge Street, framing the southern boundary of Yonge-Dundas Square. The subject property is located within the boundaries of the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District and the partially Council endorsed "Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip."

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve the alterations to the heritage property at 279-283 Yonge Street, in accordance with Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act, to allow for construction of roof signs on the lands known municipally in the year 2016 as 279-283 Yonge Street, with such alterations substantially in accordance with plans and drawings dated November 10, 2016, prepared by Enseicom Inc., date-stamped received by the City Planning Division November 14, 2016, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services; and the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), prepared by ERA Architects Inc., dated January 27, 2008 revised November 14, 2016, date-stamped received by the City Planning Division on November 15, 2016, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, all subject to and in accordance with a Conservation Plan satisfactory to the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services and subject to the following additional conditions:

a. That prior to the issuance of any permit for all or any part of the property at 279-283 Yonge Street, including a heritage permit or a building permit, but excluding permits for repairs and maintenance and usual and minor works for the existing heritage building as are acceptable to the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services the owner shall:

1. Provide full sign permit drawings, including notes and specifications for the conservation and protective measures keyed to the approved Conservation Plan provided in the HIA from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division, including a description of materials and finishes, to be prepared by the applicant and a qualified heritage consultant to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;

2. Provide a Letter of Credit, including provision for upwards indexing, in a form and amount and from a bank satisfactory to the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services to secure all work included in the approved Conservation Plan;

3. Provide an Interpretation Plan for the subject property, to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services and thereafter shall implement such Plan to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;

4. Provide a Lighting Plan that describes how the heritage property will be sensitively illuminated to enhance its heritage character to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services and thereafter shall implement such Plan to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager Heritage Preservation Services.

b. That prior to the release of the Letter of Credit required in recommendation 1.a.2. in the report (November 15, 2016) from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division the owner shall:

1. Provide a letter of substantial completion prepared and signed by a qualified heritage consultant confirming that the required conservation work has been completed in accordance with the Conservation Plan, Lighting Plan and Interpretation Plan and that an appropriate standard of conservation has been maintained, all to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services;

2. Such approval be conditional on the owner obtaining the necessary compliance with Chapter 694, Signs, General, of the City of Toronto Municipal Code.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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The Childs Restaurant and Offices building (now Hard Rock Café), built in 1918, was placed on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties (now the Heritage Register) in 1990 and designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act on November 8, 2001.

City Council at its meeting of January 30, 31 and February 1, 2001 adopted Downtown Community Council Report No. 1, Clause No. 3, and established specific signage permissions for the property at 279-283 Yonge Street. The accompanying site-specific sign by-law (No. 2001-0049 permitted a comprehensive signage program for the property at 279-283 Yonge Street to be implemented under Chapter 297, Signs, of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code.

City Council at its meeting of April 29, 30, 2009 approved the adoption, in principle, of portions of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA)'s "Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip."

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-20298.pdf>

City Council on November 30, December 1, 2, 4 and 7, 2009, approved Chapter 694, Signs, General, which reflected the principles of the Signage Vision and established two special sign districts to reflect the special character and issues of the area.

New Sign Regulation and Revenue Strategy:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-24387.pdf>

New Sign Regulation and Revenue Strategy: Additional Considerations:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-25449.pdf>

City Council at its meeting of August 25, 26 and 27, 2010 adopted Alterations to a Designated Heritage Property at 279-283 Yonge Street, to replace the existing rooftop signs with new rooftop signs:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2010/pg/bqrd/backgroundfile-32743.pdf>

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

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This report addresses a revised application to erect taller roof signs than the existing rooftop signs on the Childs Restaurant and Offices building. The Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA) commissioned a report regarding large format signage in a section of their BIA in 2006. The report, titled "A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip, March 2009" (Signage Vision), was finalized in 2009. City Council approved the adoption, in principle, of portions of the Signage Vision, and requested the Chief Building Official in consultation with the Chief Planner and Executive Director to develop provisions for signage in the Downtown Yonge Strip as part of what was adopted as Chapter 694, Signs, General.

Roof signs are generally prohibited under Chapter 694, Signs, General, however, the subject property is located within the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District, where Chapter 694, permits the erection and display of certain roof signs. Roof signs and third party signs are prohibited on all heritage properties. Chapter 694, permits the continued reliance on the specific forms of roof top signage on 279-283 Yonge Street, previously permitted by City Council, including the site-specific signage standards requested by the owner of the heritage property and expressly permitted by City Council under City of Toronto By-law No. 2001-0049.

The Signage Vision contains guidelines for the minimization of adverse effects for heritage buildings in the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District. These include: ensuring heritage elements or materials are not obstructed; ensuring installation is not damaging to heritage elements; differentiating between new and historic components; addressing the architectural elements of the façade and allowing a visual break between the sign and the host building.

At its meeting of August 25, 26 and 27, 2010, City Council approved a proposal for new rooftop third party signs on this property that exceeded the signage permissions for the property and site-specific amendments to Chapter 694. The proposal would have replaced the existing roof signs with five new sign faces, each of various dimensions and each utilizing various methods of sign copy display, along with an architectural light column. As part of the proposal, existing sign panels on the second floor at the northwest corner of the building were to be removed so that the building's terracotta could be repaired and the hidden window openings revealed. The 2010 Council approved proposal was never implemented and this current proposal is a revision to the previously approved proposal.

### **Heritage Value**

The Childs Restaurant and Office building (now Hard Rock Café), was built as part of a New York based restaurant chain. The building was completed in two phases in 1918,

according to the designs of New York architect, John Chorley Westervelt. The building housed the restaurant and offices on the ground level with facilities for billiards and bowling above. The property was placed on the City’s Inventory of Heritage Properties (now the Heritage Register) in 1990 and was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act on November 8, 2001. The property at 279-283 Yonge Street is located on the south edge of Yonge-Dundas Square on historic Toronto’s “Main Street” in a busy commercial shopping area. The building faces north onto the Square and west onto Yonge Street.

Rising three storeys under a flat roof, Child’s Restaurant is constructed of steel and brick and is clad with white-glazed terra cotta on the north and west façades. The north façade extends seven bays on Dundas Square and the west façade extends three bays on Yonge Street. The walls are divided by terra cotta piers and panelled decorative friezes. The building is architecturally significant for its terra cotta cladding and classical detailing. It is contextually significant for its prominent location on the corner anchoring a row of commercial buildings to the south including the designated John Bugg Store, 275-277 Yonge Street, immediately adjacent to the south. It is also significant for its relationship to the neighbouring designated heritage properties to the east, the Hermant Buildings at 19 and 21 Dundas Square.

### Current Proposal

The current proposal is similar to the 2010 Council approved proposal. It would see four sign faces erected atop the north, west and portion of the south elevation of the building. Each sign face is separated by metal posts that form part of the signage framing and each post aligns with the vertical orders of the building. A 1m separation is introduced between the bottom of the signs and top of the existing building. A curving sign wraps around the northwest corner and extends along the north elevation. The height of the proposed signs are as follows:

	Zoning By-Law	Existing	2010 Council Approved	Proposed
North Elevation	30m	18m and 21m	22m (excludes curved portion)	21.5m
West Elevation	28m	18.5m and 21m	33.5m (includes curved portion)	21.5m
South Elevation	28m*	18.5m	28m	21.5m

\*30m if setback within a 60 degree plane over 28m

The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) prepared for the proposal, undertaken by ERA Architects, provides a conservation plan with an updated condition report, signage strategy, reversibility strategy, lighting strategy, and recommendations for heritage interpretation for the property. All strategies and conservation plan remains unchanged from the 2010 approved proposal.

## COMMENTS

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Heritage Preservation Services (HPS) has reviewed the HIA prepared by ERA Architects Inc. for alterations to the heritage property at 279-283 Yonge Street. The HIA finds that the proposed alterations will have minimal impact on the described heritage attributes of the property and will in part be mitigated through the proposed Conservation Plan. While in most instances third party signs are not appropriate for heritage properties, HPS staff feel that the proposed application improves upon the 2010 Council approved proposal and better meets the intent of the Council endorsed Signage Vision guidelines pertaining to heritage properties.

The overall design is simplified so that only metal posts that form part of the sign frame extends below the sign panels. The posts are placed so that it aligns with the columns of the heritage building which is recommended in the Signage Vision. The proposed roof signs are reduced in height from the approved design and are now within the height restrictions for the street wall as prescribed in the Zoning By-Law. The metal lattice in the previous proposal is eliminated to provide a 1m separation between the bottom of roof signs and top of the existing building for greater visual separation between the two structures.

The façades of the heritage building will not be obscured by the new signage and the building will remain a prominent feature on the corner. The exterior will be improved by the removal of large second floor wall panels, currently holding the Hard Rock illuminated wall signs at the northwest corner. The panels will be removed and the glazed terra cotta and windows once again revealed. The HIA includes a conservation plan and an updated condition assessment for the exterior. As a condition of approval, staff are recommending the completion and implementation of a conservation plan, interpretation plan, and heritage lighting plan. Required conservation work includes repairs and cleaning of the terra cotta cladding, as well some brick repointing.

The HIA also addresses impacts to adjacent properties. The proposed south facing sign will be slightly higher than an existing similar roof-top sign on 275 Yonge Street but within the 28 meter height limit for the area. The adjacent buildings at 19 and 21 Dundas Square are separated from the proposed signs by a laneway and while views of the two buildings from Yonge Street will be affected, the buildings face onto Dundas Square and views from that vantage point should not be affected.

## **CONCLUSION**

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HPS staff have reviewed the proposed alterations and related conservation work identified in the HIA for the heritage property at 279-283 Yonge Street. Staff feel that the revised design improves upon the previous Council approved proposal and is appropriate within the context of the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District area.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jennifer Keesmaat, MES, MCIP, RPP  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment No. 1 – Location Map  
Attachment No. 2 – Signage Vision Area  
Attachment No. 3 – Existing Signage  
Attachment No. 4 – 2010 Council Approved Proposal  
Attachment No. 5 – Current Proposal  
Attachment No. 6 – 2010 City Council Approved West and North Elevations  
Attachment No. 7 – Proposed West and North Elevations



The **arrow** marks the location of the site.

This location map is for information purposes only;  
the exact boundaries of the property are not shown.



Signage Vision Area, within BIA area, 279 Yonge St. is marked, from ERA HIA report



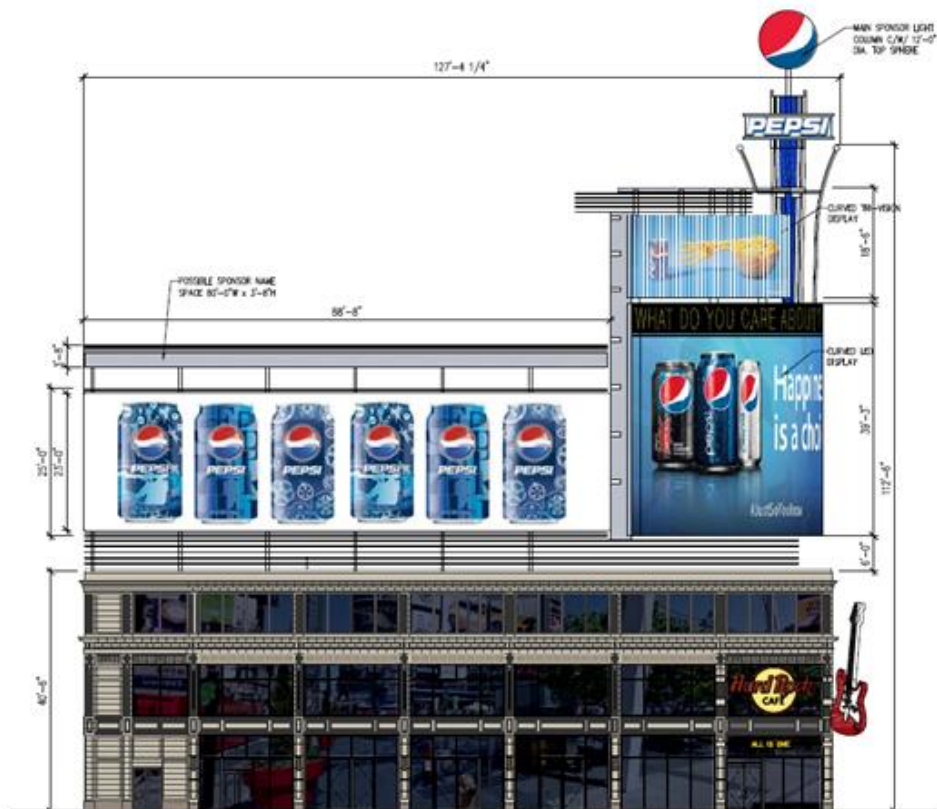
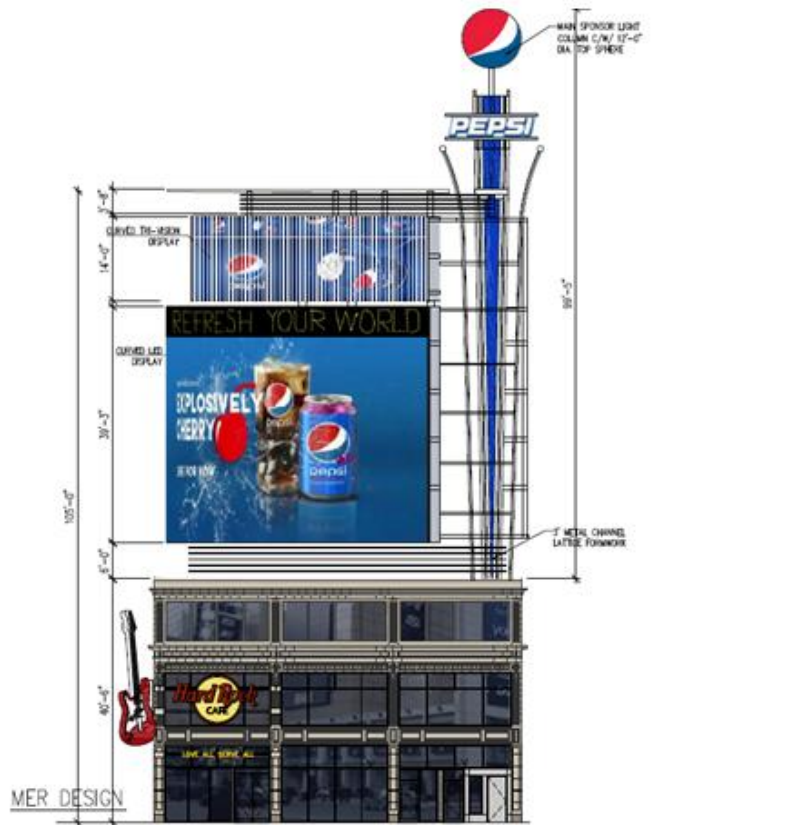


EXISTING CONDITIONS



PROPOSED UPDATES  
WITH WORK OF HERITAGE BUILDING  
NOW FEASIBLE





PROPOSED WEST AND NORTH ELEVATIONS – 279-283 YONGE ST.

ATTACHMENT NO.7

