

Alterations to a Designated Heritage Property - 421 Roncesvalles Avenue

Date: December 1, 2017

To: Toronto Preservation Board

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

Wards: Ward 14 – Parkdale-High Park

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council refuse the proposed alterations to the designated heritage property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue (including the address at 61 Howard Park Avenue). The applicant proposes the construction of a 26.1 metre tall (30 metres including mechanical penthouse) seven storey commercial and office building. The building will incorporate and alter the two storey designated heritage building in a manner that would not conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of the property. City Council's consent is required for the alterations to the designated heritage property under Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council refuse the alterations to the designated heritage property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue in accordance with Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act, for the construction of a 26.1 metre tall (30 metres including mechanical penthouse) seven storey commercial and office building which will incorporate the two storey designated heritage building in accordance with the plans and drawings prepared by Superkul inc architect dated November 14, 2016 and date stamped received December 16, 2016, and the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by ERA Architects Inc. issued March 14, 2017, all on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services.
2. Should City Council refuse the alterations to the designated heritage property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue in accordance with Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act, City Council authorize the City Solicitor and appropriate staff to attend any hearing held by the Conservation Review Board in support of Council's decision.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

THERE ARE NO FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS RESULTING FROM THE ADOPTION OF THIS REPORT.

DECISION HISTORY

On January 31, 2017, City Council stated its intention to designate the property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The property was subsequently designated by By-law No. 716-2017, enacted by City Council on August 23, 2017. The property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue is designated under all three categories of cultural heritage value: design, associative and contextual.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2017/pb/bgrd/backgroundfile-100515.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Development Proposal

The development site is located at the south-east corner of Roncesvalles Avenue and Howard Park Avenue and includes the two story commercial property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue. The property is valued as a well crafted early 20th century bank branch designed with classical Edwardian Classical styling according to Beaux Arts principles, contributing to the character of Roncesvalles Avenue where it anchors the corner.

An application to amend the Zoning By-law for 421 Roncesvalles Avenue to permit the project on the property was submitted to the City on December 16, 2016. Until the submission of the rezoning application, HPS staff had been involved, along with other City Planning staff, in discussions with the applicant regarding the development as the property was identified as a potential property of heritage interest.

While the applicant did not appeal the designation of the property to the Conservation Review Board, the rezoning application was subsequently appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board on August 9, 2017 due to Council's failure to make a decision within the timeline prescribed by the Planning Act.

The proposal involves the retention of the existing designated building including its interiors as part of the development. The building contains generous floor to ceiling heights and measures a total of 9.7 metres tall, reading as a three storey building from the street. The conservation strategy provides for rehabilitation of both street facing facades. The east elevation would be altered for integration with the new construction. The proposed new building would contain office and retail uses and would fill in the remainder of the site. An addition is proposed to be constructed over the existing designated building, for a total height of seven storeys or 26.1 metres (30.1 metres including the mechanical penthouse).

At the Roncesvalles Avenue frontage, the existing elevation would be retained in situ. At the roof of the heritage structure, a 2.37 metre step back is proposed. At the fifth floor roofline, approximately 18.4 metres above grade, an additional 2.9 metres step back is proposed to the full 26.1 building height (excluding the roof top penthouse) for a step back that would be approximately 5.3 metres from the Roncesvalles front elevation.

At the Howard Park Avenue frontage, the existing elevation would remain in situ. Above the roof of the heritage structure, the step back varies from .325 to .85 metres at the western portion of the building closest to Roncesvalles Avenue.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue has design value as a well-crafted example of an early-20th century bank building with Edwardian Classical detailing inspired by Beau-Arts principles that is part of a collection of surviving branch banks by Toronto architect, John M. Lyle. The custom design is distinguished by the classical detailing, including the main (west) entrance, as well as the extended cornice inscribed “The Dominion Bank” on the west and north elevations facing Roncesvalles and Howard Park avenues.

The association of the Dominion Bank Branch with the famed Toronto architect, John M. Lyle reflects the historical value of the property. The training that Lyle received at the École des Beaux Arts in France and in New York City influenced his subsequent portfolio in Toronto, including the Royal Alexandra Theatre (his first project in the city) and Union Station (in collaboration with other architects). Lyle was noted in particular for his work for major Canadian banks, where his firm designed nearly two dozen branches in Toronto for the Dominion Bank, including the subject building at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue.

Contextually, the property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue supports and maintains the character of the street, which extends from Queen to Dundas streets and developed in the pre-World War I era as a major thoroughfare that marked the boundary between the formerly independent Town of Parkdale (east) and the established residential neighbourhood adjoining High Park (west). Highlighted with local landmarks, including the Revue Theatre (1912) and the Church of St. Vincent de Paul (1915-25) that are recognized on the City of Toronto’s Heritage Register, Roncesvalles Avenue is characterized by the blocks of residential properties along the west side of the street, opposite the mainly commercial buildings on the east side. The Dominion Bank Branch contributes to the character of the Roncesvalles Avenue with its corner location, positioned near the north end of the street, adjoining an important intersection and anchoring a block of commercial buildings that share its vintage, setback and scale.

The Dominion Bank Branch at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue is also visually and historically linked to its setting where it anchors the southeast corner of Howard Park Avenue, an important local street that provides a direct connection from Dundas Street West to High Park.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Dominion Bank Branch at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue are:

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building on the southeast corner of Roncesvalles Avenue and Howard Park Avenue
- The scale, form and massing of the building that rises two stories above the stone base
- The materials, with the red brick cladding and the brick and stone detailing
- The flat roofline, with the stone coping
- On the west elevation on Roncesvalles Avenue, the symmetrical organization with the central entrance, which is placed in the incised stone surround with the bracketed entablature and the sculpted frieze
- On the west and north elevations, the stone cornice dividing the first and second stories, the flat-headed window openings with the large single openings in the first floor, the small paired openings in the second floor, and the brick flat arches with the stone corner blocks
- The secondary entrance on the north elevation on Howard Park Avenue, with the flat-headed surround and the brick and stone detailing
- The classical detailing, with the stone quoins and, extending across the west and north elevations, the large stone cornice inscribed "The Dominion Bank"

Policy Framework

Provincial Policy Statement and Planning Act

The Planning Act and the associated Provincial Policy Statement guide development in the Province. The Act states that municipalities must have regard for matters of provincial interest. Section 2(d) specifically refers to "the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest."

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.

The Planning Act and associated Provincial Policy Statement guide development in the Province and they include provincial interests 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 including City Council's planning decisions, "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".

Growth Plan

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2017) (Growth Plan) provides a strategic framework for managing growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region including:

Policy 4.2.7(1) of the Growth Plan states that cultural heritage resources, which includes built heritage resources, will be conserved in order to foster a sense of place and benefit communities. Both the PPS and the Growth Plan outline that built heritage resources are generally located on a property that has been designated under Parts IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act, or included on local, provincial and/or federal registers.

Official Plan

The heritage policies contained in Section 3.1.5 of the City of Toronto's 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 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."

3.1.5.6: "The adaptive re-use of properties on the Heritage Register is encouraged for new uses permitted in the applicable Official Plan land use designation, consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada."

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 character of that property and to mitigate visual and physical impact on it."

3.1.5.27: "Where it is supported by the cultural heritage values and attributes of a property on the Heritage Register, the conservation of whole or substantial portions of buildings, structures and landscapes on those properties is desirable and encouraged. The retention of facades alone is discouraged."

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

The Parks Canada Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Standards and Guidelines) is the official document guiding planning, stewardship and conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City of Toronto. The General Standards (1-9) and the Standards for Rehabilitation (10-12) apply to this project.

<http://www.historicplaces.ca/media/18072/81468-parks-s+g-eng-web2.pdf>

COMMENTS

Assessment of Heritage Impacts

Heritage staff has reviewed the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted in support of the proposal prepared by ERA Architects Inc. for conformity with the Planning Act, the Provincial Policy Statement, the Places to Grow Growth Plan, the City's Official Plan heritage policies and the Standard and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Significant Impact to Character-Defining Attributes

Importantly, the heritage attributes of the property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue include the scale, form and massing of the tall two storey building and its flat roof. Currently as seen from the public realm, three elevations (excluding the south side elevation which is visually contiguous with the adjacent property on Roncesvalles Avenue) and the flat roof of the property are exposed and contribute to its three-dimensional exterior form. It is an intact and fully expressed semi-detached commercial building which anchors the corner of Roncesvalles Avenue and Howard Park Avenue. The proposed step backs and massing impacts associated with the new addition overwhelm and subordinate the designated property visually when viewed from surrounding streets.

Proposed Step Backs

At the Roncesvalles Avenue frontage, the existing elevation would be retained in situ. At the roof of the heritage structure, a 2.37 metre step back is proposed. At the fifth floor roofline, approximately 18.4 metres above grade, an additional 2.9 metres step back is proposed to the full 26.1 building height (excluding the roof top penthouse) for a step back that would be approximately 5.3 metres from the Roncesvalles (front) elevation.

At the Howard Park Avenue frontage, the existing elevation would remain in situ. Above the roof of the heritage structure, the step back varies from .325 to .85 metres at the western portion of the building closest to Roncesvalles Avenue.

Policy 3.1.5.4 of the City of Toronto Official Plan states that, "properties on the heritage register shall be conserved and maintained consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada. Standard 11 specifically states, "Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to an historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to, and distinguishable from the historic place."

The additional massing of the project atop the designated heritage building with insufficient step backs along the two primary elevations would irrevocably alter its character-defining scale, form, massing and flat roof. The new addition is not visually compatible with the heritage property and clearly subsumes and subordinates the designated heritage property as seen from the public realm.

CONCLUSION

The proposed addition does not satisfy the City's Official Plan heritage policies. The current proposal would greatly impact the heritage character of the property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue and result in the loss of a number of its identified attributes. The additional massing above (more than double the height of the existing property), without adequate step back transition from the facades, will greatly impact perception of the scale and massing of the building's form as seen from the public realm. The addition will not conserve the property's cultural heritage values or attributes as it will subsume the building form and subordinate the property visually as perceived from the street frontages.

As the project does not adequately conserve significant built heritage resources as required by the Growth Plan or Provincial Policy Statement, the project is not compliant with provincial policies guiding the matter. The proposed alterations represent a level of impact to the designated heritage property that would irreversibly affect the attributes and integrity of the cultural heritage resource and staff recommend the alterations be refused under Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

CONTACT

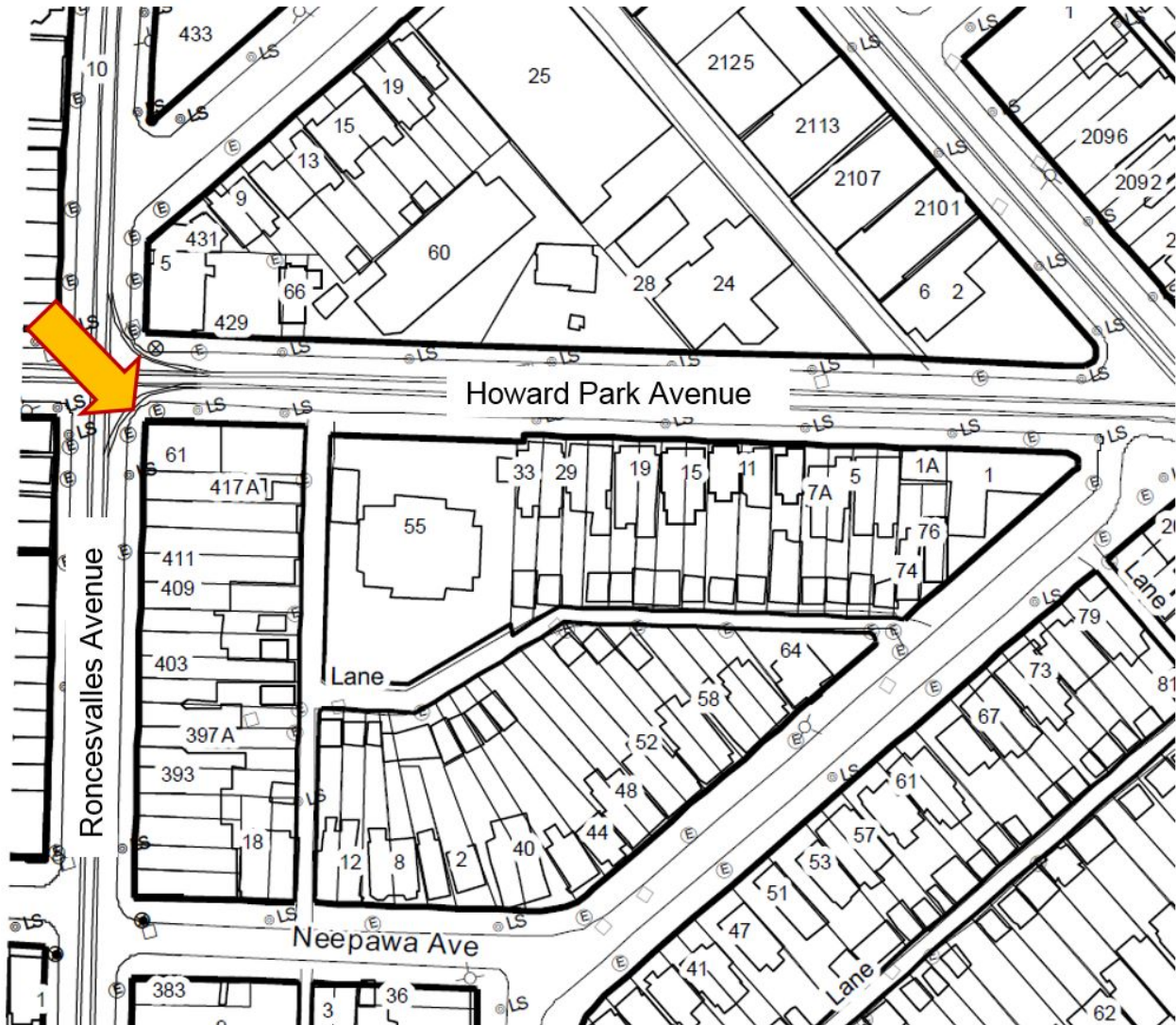
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SIGNATURE

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City Planning Division

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Location Map
Attachment 2 - Photographs: west and south elevations
Attachment 3 - Proposal Drawings



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

The arrow marks the location of the site at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue (including the address at 61 Howard Park Avenue).

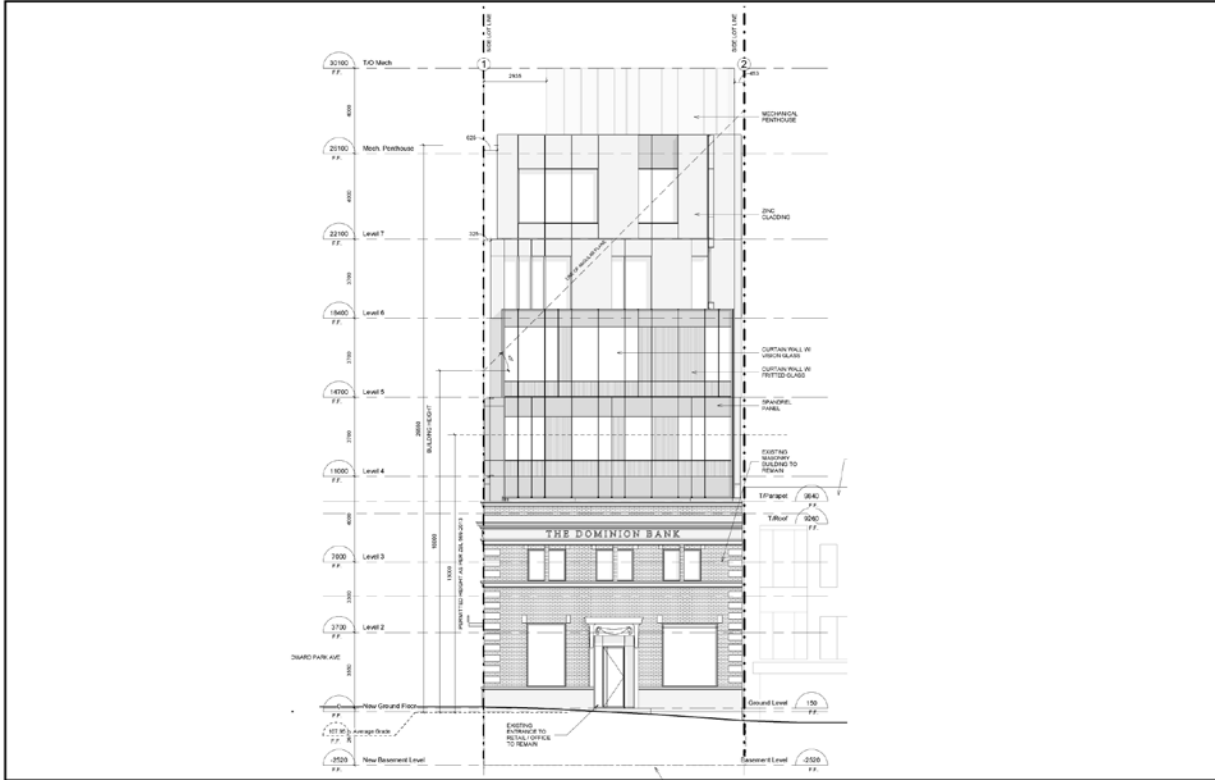


Current photographs of the property at 421 Roncesvalles Avenue showing its context on the southeast corner of Howard Park Avenue (above) and the principal (west) elevation of the Dominion Bank Branch (below)



RENDERING LOOKING SOUTHEAST

PROPOSAL DRAWINGS
421 RONCESVALLES AVENUE



West Elevation
Applicant's Submitted Drawing
Not to Scale
01/10/2017

421 Roncesvalles Avenue

File # 16 264775

WEST (RONCESVALLES AVE) ELEVATION

PROPOSAL DRAWINGS
421 RONCESVALLES AVENUE



North Elevation
Applicant's Submitted Drawing
Not to Scale
01/10/2017

421 Roncesvalles Avenue

File # 16 264775

NORTH ELEVATION