



ERA Architects Inc.
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Toronto ON, M4Y 2G1

PB7.4.2

Toronto Preservation Board
Heritage Preservation Services
100 Queen Street West, 17th Floor, East Tower
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

June 18, 2019

RE: Staff Report for 300 Bloor Street West and 478 Huron Street (May 31, 2019)

Members of the Toronto Preservation Board,

ERA Architects Inc. (“**ERA**”) is heritage consultant to Collecdev for its proposed development at 300 Bloor Street West and 478 Huron Street. The proposal represents the culmination of a collaborative working group process (6 meetings) that resulted in broad agreement over an appropriate form of development for the site. We thank Heritage Preservation Services (“**HPS**”) staff for their participation in the working group.

We have reviewed HPS’ May 31, 2019 report and are generally in agreement with staff’s recommendations contained therein, with the exception of HPS’ position on the design for the new narthex, which is fundamental to the project’s success for the congregation. Our client has significant concerns with HPS’ position on how the design approval for the new narthex will proceed, as expressed through recommendation 7 and 7.b(2) of the staff report that exclude the current design of the narthex. We kindly ask that you amend the recommendations in the staff report by deleting the save and except clauses and required redesign, so Council may approve the glazed entrance as part of the proposed alterations to the site, to reflect the proposal that resulted from the working group process.

We request that recommendation 7 and 7.b(2) be amended to read as follows:

7. City Council approve the alterations to the heritage properties at 300 Bloor Street West and 478 Huron Street in accordance with Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act, to allow for alterations to the heritage properties on the lands known municipally as 300 Bloor Street West and 478 Huron Street, with such alterations substantially in accordance with plans and drawings prepared by KPMB Architects, dated May 6, 2019, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services and the Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), prepared by ERA Architects Inc., dated March 6 2019, 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:

7.b(2). Provide a detailed Conservation Plan prepared by a qualified heritage consultant that is substantially in accordance with the conservation strategy set out in the Heritage Impact Assessment for 300 Bloor Street West and 478 Huron Street, prepared by ERA Architects Inc., dated March 6, 2019, to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services.

Context

In 1927, Bloor Street West was widened, which necessitated alterations to the primary entrance. The front entry stairs and the lower portion of the south wall were removed and entry doors relocated. The south narthex wall was constructed projecting south of the main wall of the church.



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Bloor Street United Church has project objectives that are intended to implement their broader mandate. A precis of the most relevant objectives as it pertains to the south narthex include:

1. Providing a welcoming and transparent street presence that eliminates visual barriers;
2. Signaling the ongoing community presence of the church, showcasing reinvestment in the building, and providing a contemporary design language for new additions and alterations; and
3. Making the primary entrance to the sanctuary universally accessible.

Process

The glazed and visually-open narthex design is an essential feature of the renewed Church facility, which has been presented throughout the extensive working group process (six meetings), and at public meetings. We note that further refinement of the glazed entrance design will be part of the site plan approval process with more detail provided at the Conservation Plan stage.

Standards and Guidelines

The proposed new narthex design is fully in keeping with the Council-endorsed *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, which state that new additions should be physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to, and distinguishable from the heritage resource, and that the design of new additions should be of their time.

Ongoing Use

Given the importance of the new entry to the Church's ongoing use, we ask the Board members acknowledge the Church's contribution to the community and endorse the current design that will help to reinforce the associative value of the congregations and amend recommendation 7 and 7.b(2). to allow the site alteration, as proposed.

Additional Concerns

In addition to the request above, ERA has identified a number of issues in the staff report that are noteworthy, listed here for your consideration:

- On Page 3, the conditions for Site Plan Approval do not include a Signage Plan, even though it is indicated elsewhere in the report (i.e. Page 17) that a Signage Plan will be required. We accept that this is a standard condition and wanted to bring this seemingly inadvertent omission to your attention.
- On Page 12 under the heading "300 Bloor Street" the second paragraph states "... *the demolition of these features will be mitigated through the in situ retention of the full west frontage...*" It appears that this is a typo, as it is the full east elevation proposed to be retained in situ, not the west.



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- Page 13 states that the detailed design of the narthex replacement façade “will be developed as part of the Conservation Plan and may include the reinstatement of the original three sets of double-doors that were removed in 1927.”

The suggestion to reinstate the original three sets of double doors that were removed in 1927 (to facilitate the Bloor Street road widening), as part of the new narthex design, is not one that ERA or our client can support. This approach confuses the historic evolution of the building, and will undermine the Church’s objective of achieving a new, transparent and welcoming main entrance. While this may seem like a minor detail, the new, contemporary narthex and entrance is a significant component of the redevelopment.

- Page 15 lists the general, preliminary scope of the proposed conservation work, and identifies “in situ retention of stained glass windows on the east and west walls of the Church, as well as the great south window.” Although the stained glass windows will ultimately be retained in the completed project, construction will necessitate some temporary removals. As the west elevation is proposed to be dismantled and reconstructed, the windows cannot be maintained in situ during construction. On the east elevation, windows will need to be removed during construction to accommodate the façade retention system. The great south window may be kept in situ during construction. The Conservation Plan will provide additional detail on the strategy for windows throughout the construction process.

- On Pages 29/30, we have concerns with some of the heritage attributes that have been identified, including:

“The setting of the building at the edge of the public sidewalk with a small enclosed landscaped courtyard...” - it is unclear why this is being included as an attribute, when the courtyard will be demolished. Although the new interior promenade on the west side of the retained and reinstated Church will continue to maintain a similar function, we request that this attribute be removed.

“The three entry arches, originally located in the south wall of the church prior to the Bloor Street widening in 1927, now located in the single story (sic) entry pavilion...” – these arches, will be demolished as part of the alterations and they may not all be incorporated into the rehabilitation, although the applicant has committed to exploring opportunities to do so. We request that this attribute be removed.

“The doors with their diagonal panels and decorative iron strapping and matching door pulls” - Only the two doors on the east elevation will be maintained, although the north door on the east elevation will be modified to suit the new lowered ground floor level. While the reinstatement of the remainder of the doors elsewhere on the retained building continues to be explored, we request that only the doors on the east elevation be identified as heritage attributes.

“The black metal lanterns with their Gothic-patterned glazed sections on the single storey entry porch” - We request that these minor light fixtures be deleted as a heritage attribute, as they will be removed as part of the demolition of the existing single-storey entry.



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“The stained and leaded glass windows including (7 separate windows/window groupings)” – We request they simply be removed from the list of heritage attributes as they are already included in the Statement of Significance. This will help avoid confusion in the future.

On Page 32, the heritage attributes for Pidgeon House include *“The doorbell adjacent to the front entry”* and *“The plaque at the front door”*. These items are chattels, and we request these be removed from the heritage attributes.

In closing, we respectfully request that staff report recommendations and heritage attributes be amended so the proposal of the south entrance as designed by internationally-renowned KPMB Architects may be approved by Council. Beyond this, we look forward to continue to work collaboratively with heritage staff on the forthcoming Conservation Plan.

ERA will be deputing at the June 20 meeting of Toronto Preservation Board to provide an overview of the project and proposed conservation strategy, and further express these concerns.

We will be happy to answer any questions that the Board may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Pruss', is written above a horizontal line.

Andrew Pruss
Principal, ERA Architects Inc.