

Leaside Property Owners Association Incorporated

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2nd floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Attention: Ellen Devlin
email: teycc@toronto.ca

RE: PB 11.5 Alterations to a Heritage Property and Authority to Enter into a Heritage Easement Agreement - 150 Laird Drive

Dear Chair Sandra Shaul and Members, Toronto Preservation Board,

The Durant Motors office building on Laird Drive in Leaside (Toronto), a listed heritage building, is to be partially demolished and redeveloped as an eight storey (plus mechanical) rental retirement building, linked to a seven storey condominium next door. The two storey brick and stone building, which was originally constructed as the Administration Building for Durant Motor Company in 1928, represents the one remaining vestige of the manufacture of Durant motor cars in Canada. The factory was established in 1921 in a redundant munitions factory located across the street on a site (now redeveloped as a shopping centre). By 1929 Durant had become Canada's third largest domestic producer of automobiles.

The developer's project will retain only the front facade of the building and part of the north and south sides. The additional storeys will be set back but, as indicated in the image below will dwarf and over-power the heritage building. As well, the distinctiveness of the Durant Motors building in its setting is radically diminished by the blending of the two buildings.



The unacceptably low level of heritage conservation is part of the reason why the local residents and the Leaside Property Owners' Association, along with the City of Toronto, vigorously opposed the proposed development at the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) in 2016. Other reasons were that the development represented massive over-development of the site, poor urban design; and the proposed buildings were monolithic in the context of the existing mixed format commercial on Laird, and the single detached housing on the other side of the block.

Unlike the building's new "storeys" the Durant Motors "story" is distinct. Durant Motors of Canada was founded in 1921 as the Canadian subsidiary of the American company, Durant Motors Incorporated. Durant Motors acquired the former site of the Leaside Munitions Company on Laird Drive where it expanded the property to include 20 acres of land with 11 buildings. By 1924, the company was the third largest producer of automobiles in Canada, and an impressive office building was completed on the west side of Laird Drive, opposite the plant, in 1928. Two years later, the American parent company faced financial failure and passed control of the venture to its Canadian branch. In 1931, the Durant Motor Company was taken over by Dominion Motors Limited, a new enterprise headed by Durant's Canadian president and based in Leaside. With the impact of the Great Depression, Dominion Motors closed in 1935. The Durant Motors Office Building was subsequently acquired by the Imperial Oil Company for its Ontario sales division. In the late 1960s, the Metropolitan Separate School Board occupied the building for a long term lease, and in recent years it housed a number of small business and politicians including former MP John Godfrey, MP Rob Oliphant and former Councillor Jane Pitfield.

However, the OMB approved the development in 2016 and we must move on. We are pleased that owner will withdraw their appeal of the Intent to Designate, so the heritage building will finally be designated; and a heritage easement agreement will be entered into.

Yours truly,

Carol Burtin Fripp
Co-President

c.c. Mary MacDonald, Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services