

Alterations to a Designated Heritage Property - 330 University Avenue

Date: January 4, 2022

To: Toronto Preservation Board

Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning

Wards: Ward 10 - Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the alterations proposed for the heritage property located at 330 University Avenue (designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act). The proposal is for replacement of three matching "Canada Life" illuminated fascia signs on the north, west, and south elevations of the tower of the Canada Life Building at 330 University Avenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council approve alterations to the heritage property at 330 University Avenue in accordance with Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act, to allow for the replacement of three "Canada Life" signs on the lands known municipally as 330 University Avenue, in accordance with the plans and drawings prepared by Pattison Sign Group, dated November 2, 2020 and October 29, 2020 and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning and subject to the following conditions:

- a. That prior to the issuance of any permit for all or any part of the property at 330 University Avenue, 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 Planning, the owner shall:

1. Provide building permit drawings substantially in accordance with the plans and drawings prepared by Pattison Sign Group, dated November 2, 2020 and October 29, 2020 and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, including notes and specifications for the approved conservation and protective measures and a description of materials and finishes to be prepared by the project architect and a qualified heritage consultant to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

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 Planning to secure all conservation and repair work included in the specifications provided by Clifford Restoration, date-stamped received by Heritage Planning on December 22, 2021, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

b. That prior to the release of the Letter of Credit required in Recommendation 1.a.2, the owner shall:

1. Provide a letter of substantial completion prepared and signed by a qualified heritage consultant confirming that the approved conservation work has been completed in accordance with the approved scope and specifications and that an appropriate standard of conservation has been maintained, all to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

DECISION HISTORY

The property at 330 University Avenue containing the Canada Life Building was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage following the enactment of by-law 1997-0069 by City Council on February 27, 1997.

City Council at its meeting of April 16, 17 and 18, 2002, City Council adopted the recommendations contained in the staff report, dated February 19, 2002 from Community Planning granting minor variances from the University Avenue By-law and Chapter 297, Signs, of the former City of Toronto Municipal Code to replace three "CANADA LIFE" signs with the signs that are currently installed.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2002/agendas/committees/to/to020402/it021.pdf>

BACKGROUND

Heritage Property

The property at 330 University Avenue is located on the west side of University Avenue north of Queen Street West. The property contains the Canada Life Building, completed in 1931 and designed by the Toronto architectural firm of Sproatt and Rolph. The property was designated under Part IV of Ontario Heritage Act on February 27, 1997.

The building is a significant example of a second generation skyscraper, distinguished by its monumental tiered plan, Classical detailing, and a trademark weather beacon that was added in 1951. The Canada Life Building is clad with Indiana limestone above a granite base and features a 12-storey centre block, 8-storey wings, and a 6-storey tower. It is the only surviving building on University Avenue completed as part of an improvement scheme to create a ceremonial boulevard in the Beaux Arts tradition, linking the Ontario Legislative Building at Queen's Park with Union Station on Front Street. Located next to Campbell House and across from Osgoode Hall, the Canada Life Building is a prominent landmark in the central area of Toronto.

Letters spelling "Canada Life" are placed on the north, west and south faces of the upper tower of the building.

City of Toronto Official Plan

This application has been reviewed against the policies of the City of Toronto Official Plan. The Plan provides the policy framework for heritage conservation in the City. Relevant policies include the following:

3.1.5.3 Heritage properties of cultural heritage value or interest, including Heritage Conservation Districts and archaeological sites that are publicly known will be protected by being designated under the Ontario Heritage Act and/or included on the Heritage Register.

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 as 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. Where a Heritage Impact Assessment is required in Schedule 3 of the Official Plan, it will describe and assess the potential impacts and mitigation strategies for the proposed alteration, development or public work.

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.

Parks Canada Standards and Guidelines for 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/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx>

COMMENTS

Heritage Planning has reviewed the proposal contained in the signage plan provided by Pattison Sign Group, dated November 2, 2020 and October 29, 2020, and the proposed repair work contained in specifications provided by Clifford Restoration Group, date stamped received by Heritage Planning on December 22, 2021. The proposal is to replace three existing illuminated fascia signs on the north, west, and south elevations of the upper tower of the Canada Life Building at 330 University Avenue with three new signs, in keeping with the recently redesigned "Canada Life" logo.

Following a period of review, discussion and revision, staff are of the opinion that the currently proposed sign installations retain the integrity of the cultural heritage value, attributes and character of this significant heritage resource, for the following reasons.

Firstly, the existing signage is not original. Within the heritage designation by-law for the property at 330 University Avenue (by-law 1997-0069), the Architectural Description notes existing "CANADA LIFE" signage on the north, west and south base of the tower at the time of the by-law in 1997. Historical photographs however suggest that the signs mentioned in the by-law do not date to the time of the building's construction, and in April 2002, minor variances were granted to replace these signs with the versions that exist on the building today.

Secondly, the size of the three existing, illuminated fascia signs are approximately 12 metres wide, while the new sign will be approximately 10 metres wide. While the height of the new sign varies, the 'Canada' lettering measuring smaller than the existing version, while the boxed-portion, spelling 'Life' will be taller than the existing signs and will extend above the height of the stone plinth base to which it is attached, thereby slightly impacting the shape of part of the upper tower. However, the applicant has reduced the dimensions of the red box as much as possible while still retaining the proportions of the preceding letters and the size differential consistent with the company's new global corporate branding.

The proposed signs will feature illuminated letters in white, while the red box portion will be non-illuminated. The illumination of the sign is not considered to detract from or exceed an intensity greater than the weather beacon component located at the top of the tower of the Canada Life Building. The signs will comply in all respects with the Sign By-law provisions respecting illumination, as contained at §694-18 specifically, 5000 daytime nits and 300 nits at dusk/dawn and at night-time. The installation of the new signage hardware and anchors will be limited to the masonry joints and will not be fastened directly into the stone.

Conservation and Repair Work

The proposed sign replacement project will include conservation work to restore areas of damaged limestone including the repair and patching of approx. 40 previous anchor holes on each of the north, west, and south elevations of the tower, as per a quote provided and on file, from heritage contractor Clifford Restoration, dated June 28, 2021. The conservation/repair work is valued at approx. \$49,800.00. Heritage Staff will secure the conservation work through a Letter of Credit as a condition of approval.

CONCLUSION

Heritage Planning staff have reviewed the proposed alterations to the Part IV designated heritage property at 330 University Avenue and are satisfied that the proposal meets the intent of the City of Toronto's Official Plan heritage policies and is in keeping with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada. Overall, Staff supports the proposed conservation strategy as the cultural heritage value of the property will be conserved and the heritage impacts of the proposal are minor and appropriately mitigated.

CONTACT

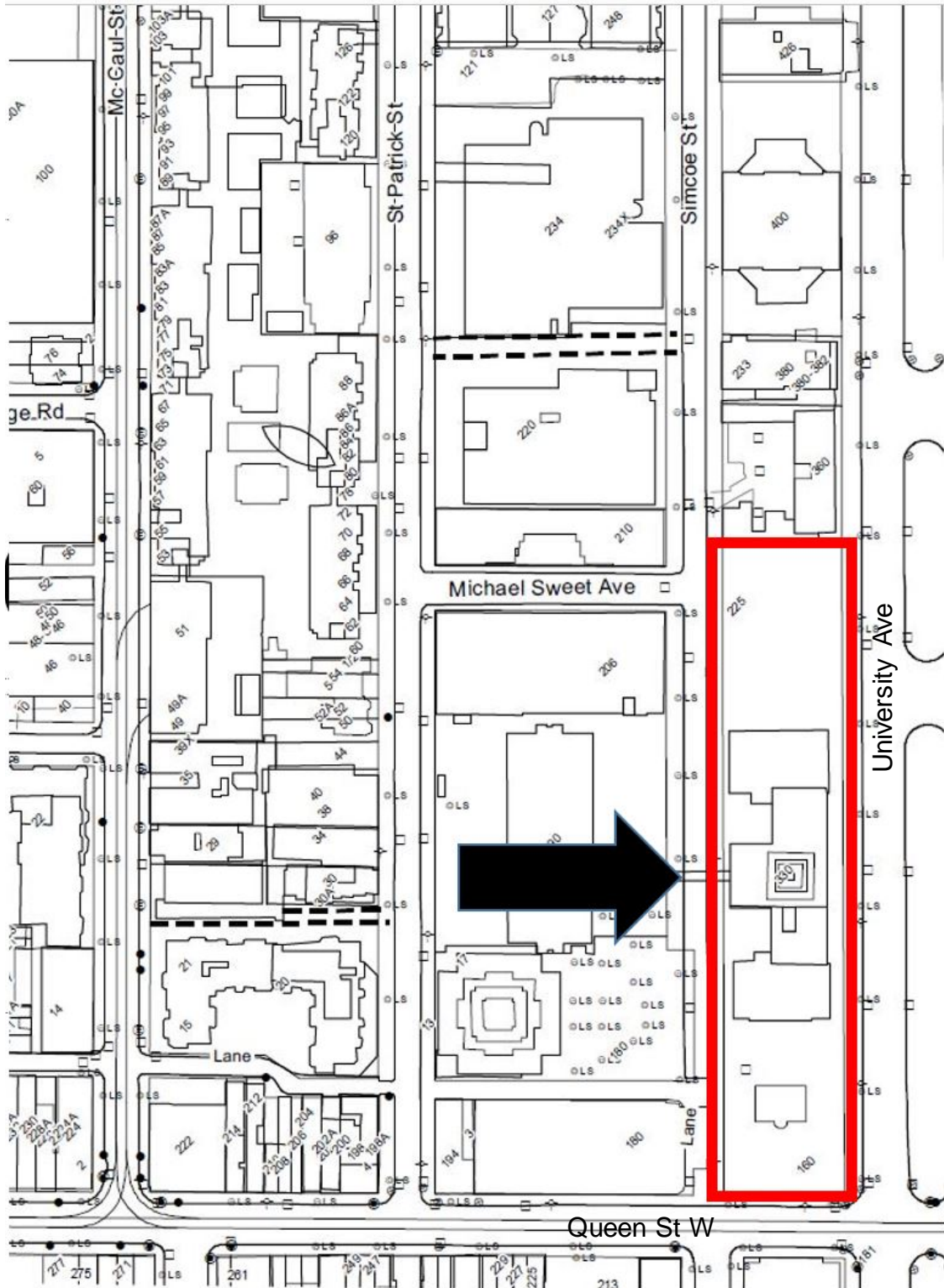
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SIGNATURE

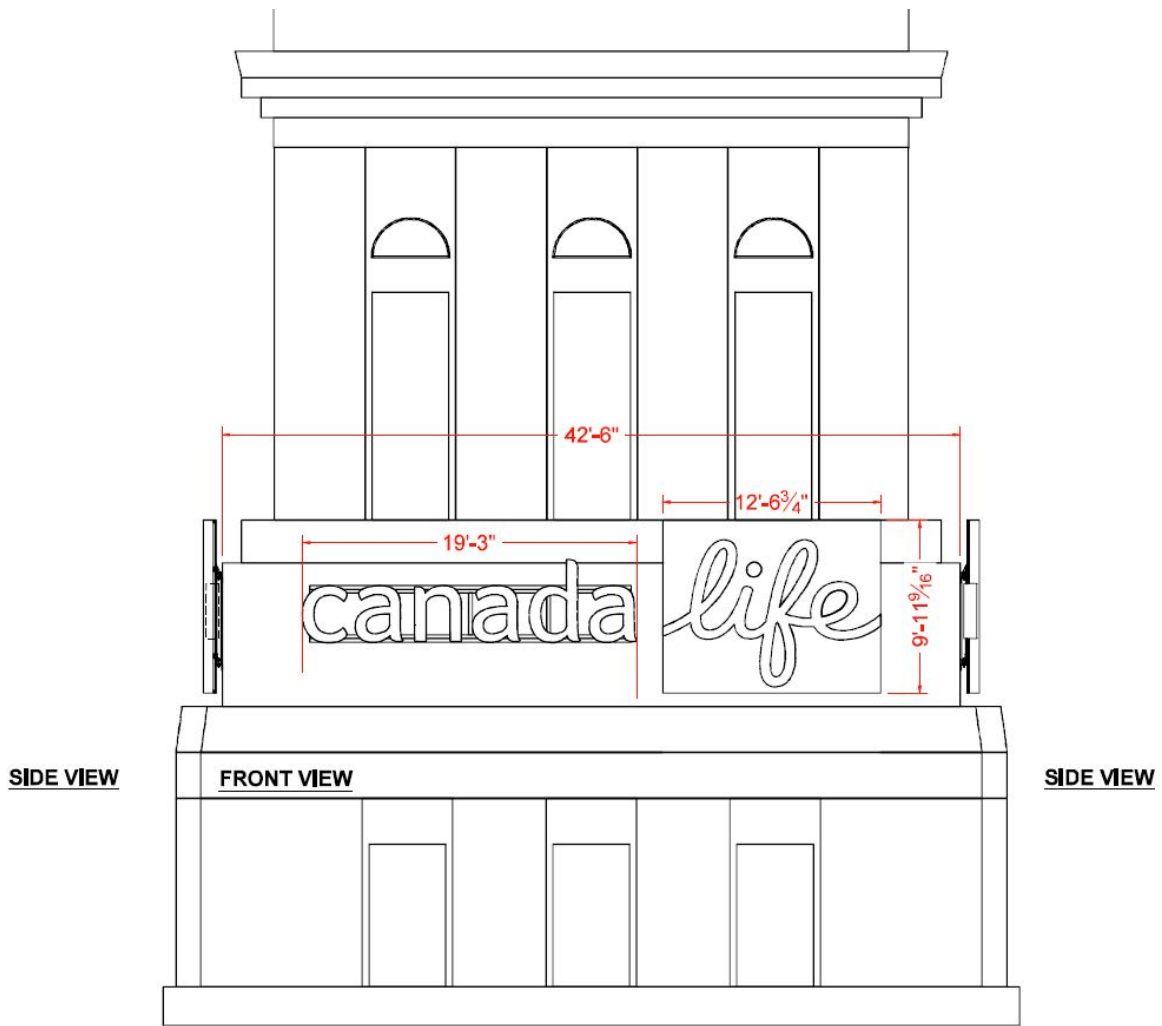
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ATTACHMENTS

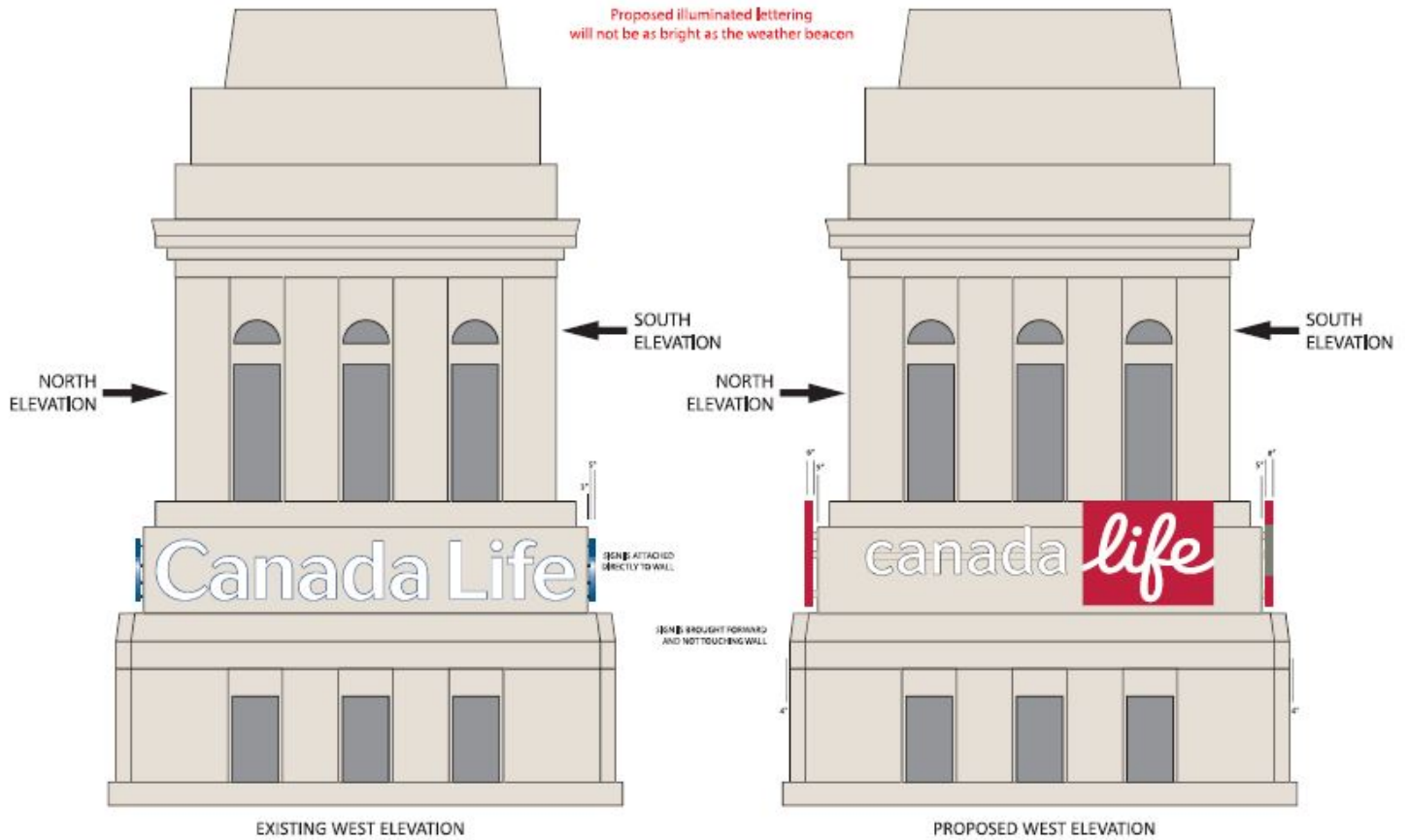
- Attachment 1 - Location Map
- Attachment 2 - Drawings
- Attachment 3 - Drawings
- Attachment 4 - Photographs/Rendering
- Attachment 5 - Historical Photograph



Location Map, showing the property on the west side of University Avenue, north of Queen St W. The arrow indicates the Canada Life Building at 330 University Avenue



Drawing of the west elevation tower of the Canada Life Building showing the dimensions of the proposed signage. Only the letters of the "life" portion will be illuminated.



Drawings of the west elevation tower of the Canada Life Building, showing existing signage (left image) alongside proposed signage (right image).



TYPICAL ELEVATION - CLOSE-UP VIEW - EXISTING



TYPICAL ELEVATION - CLOSE-UP VIEW - PROPOSED



TYPICAL ELEVATION - DISTANT VIEW - EXISTING



TYPICAL ELEVATION - DISTANT VIEW - PROPOSED

Photographs of Canada Life Building at 330 University Avenue, showing the existing signage alongside rendered version of proposed signage
Alterations to Designated Heritage Property - 330 University Ave



The Canada Life Assurance Company Building looking northwest, shortly after its completion. Source: City of Toronto Archives (Fonds 1244 Item 3172)