

NORTH YORK COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PANEL

October 13, 2023

Matthew Green
Toronto City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
nycc@toronto.ca

Re: NY8.20 – 55 Yeomans Road - Inclusion on the Heritage Register
(North York Community Council, October 17, 2023)

Dear Members of North York Community Council:

The North York Community Preservation Panel (NYCPP) has reviewed the report and **strongly supports the recommendation of Heritage Planning staff to include the property located at 55 Yeomans Road (Beth David B'nai Israel Beth Am Synagogue) on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.**

At the Toronto Preservation Board meeting on October 10, a representative of the congregation and Councillor James Pasternak inquired about deferring the matter of listing the property on the Heritage Register. The representative stated discussions with potential developers about potential uses for their property have occurred and the congregation may vote on the future of the property within three months. **The property must be added to the Heritage Register now**, so that any redevelopment plan can account for preserving the synagogue building.

The reason the property has been brought forward for listing at this time is so that it can be added to the Heritage Register before any major changes occur to the site. Bill 23 prohibits municipalities from designating a property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act once a development application has been submitted, unless that property is already listed on the Heritage Register. Heritage Planning staff are recommending that the property be listed at this time, before a development application is filed.

The NYCPP is adamantly opposed to deferring this item or not adopting the recommendation of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning. The property has proven design, historical and contextual heritage value. Failure to adopt the staff recommendation places an important piece of North York's built heritage and Modernist architecture at risk of destruction. This is the first time a synagogue in North York has been recommended for listing on the Heritage Register, no less one designed by an influential Toronto Jewish architect. Failure to adopt the staff recommendation would be a disservice to North York's Jewish community as it would place one of the Jewish community's most important contributions to North York's built environment in jeopardy.

The synagogue is designed by influential Modernist architect Irving Grossman, a winner of the Massey Medal and other architectural awards. Grossman is noted for his significant contributions to the Flemington Park, Edgeley Village and St. Lawrence neighbourhoods. The subject property was identified in the the 1997 North York Modern Inventory of properties but is not currently listed on the Heritage Register.

Heritage Planning staff have concluded that the property meets all three categories for inclusion on the Heritage Register. The Synagogue has design value as a unique example of the Modernist style. The design combines rectangular and elliptical building elements. The pre-fabricated concrete exterior showcases abstract expressions of Jewish symbolism. It is an important work of acclaimed architect Irving Grossman, one of his earliest notable projects and a collaboration with Canadian Artist Graham Coughtry. The building has been a landmark of the Clanton Park Neighbourhood for more than 60 years.

Listing 55 Yeomans Road on the Heritage Register provides interim protection from demolition and provides the ability to designate the property, should a development application be submitted. We believe the decision of listing 55 Yeomans Road should be based on the on the proven cultural heritage value of the property.

Thanking you for your favourable consideration of our request.

Regards,

Eli Aaron

Vice-Chair,
NYCPP

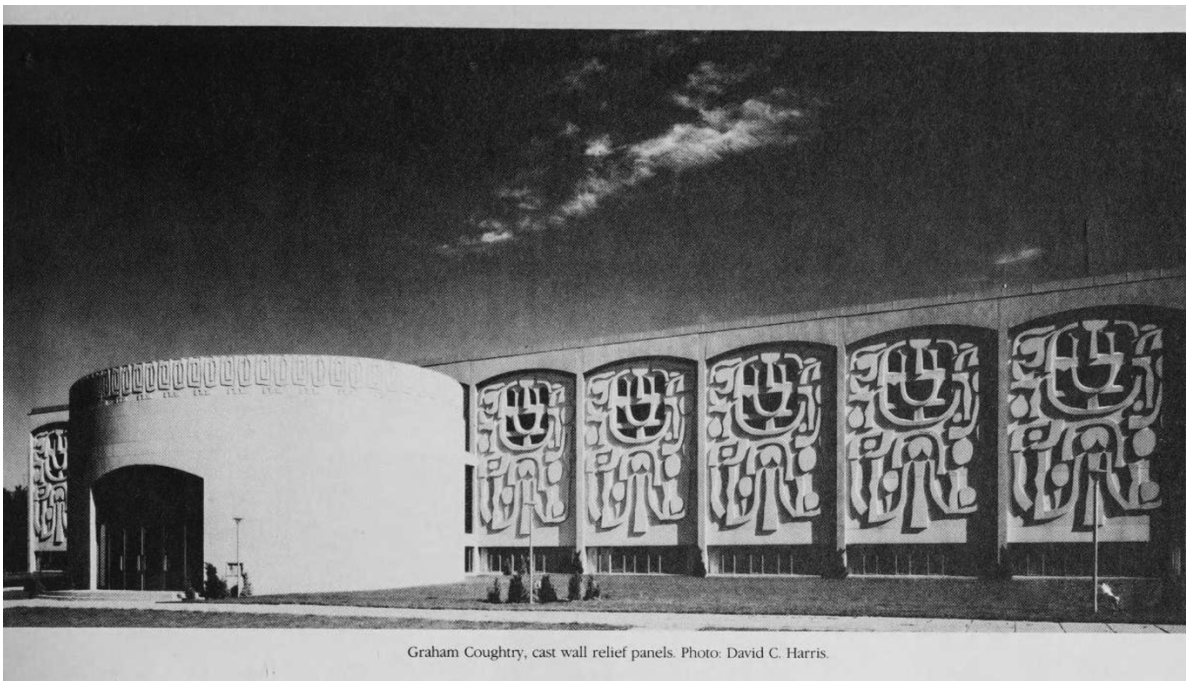
cc: Alex Grenzebach, Interim Chair – NYCPP
Gary Miedema, Project Manager – Heritage Planning
North York Councillor Planning Assistants

Appendix 1: Photos (attached)

Appendix 1



Beth David B'nai Israel Synagogue, 1959
ERA Architects



Graham Coughtry, cast wall relief panels. Photo: David C. Harris.

Beth David B'nai Israel Synagogue, n. d.
David C. Harris