

200 University Avenue - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Date: March 14, 2023

To: Toronto Preservation Board

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

Wards: 10 - Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 200 University Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value for its design, associative and contextual values.

Located on the southwest corner of Richmond Street West and University Avenue, the property at 200 University Avenue contains the Sun Life Building constructed in 1958-1961 and designed by John C. Parkin of John B. Parkin Associates, Canada's largest architectural firm at the time. The subject property is among the earliest examples of a modernist high rise building in Toronto to be entirely clad in metal and glass, with its glass and metal curtain wall set back from exposed perimeter support columns. As the first tall building to successfully challenge the by-laws governing University Avenue from its prominent position at the point at which University Avenue becomes a grand ceremonial boulevard, the property is historically linked to the post-war phase of development along University Avenue.

The property was listed on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register in 1991.

The City Clerk issued a complete application notice on August 5, 2022. The City received Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment applications related to the proposed redevelopment of the subject property. The proposal is for a 35-storey addition above the existing 16-storey building, which will be retained in situ and not demolished to accommodate the proposed development, for an overall height of 51-storeys. The proposal consists of 35,316 square metres of residential gross floor area containing 478 residential units, 204 square metres of retail space, and 13,052 square metres of office space, with 98 vehicular parking spaces and 548 bicycle spaces. (22 166819 STE 10 OZ).

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) completed by ERA Architects Inc. and dated June 2, 2022 was submitted to support the application, as was a Cultural Heritage Evaluation

Report for the subject property with the same date. An HIA is required for all development applications that affect listed and designated properties and will be considered when determining how a heritage property is to be conserved. Designation also enables City Council to review proposed alterations or demolitions to the property and enforce heritage property standards and maintenance

In June 2019, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108) received Royal Assent. Schedule 11 of this Act included amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. The Bill 108 Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act came into force on July 1, 2021, which included a shift in Part IV designations related to Planning Act applications that would trigger a Prescribed Event. Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act now restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days after the City Clerk gives notice of a complete application.

A "Prescribed Event" is a point of time when the application for an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application has been deemed complete and the City Clerk provides notice of that complete application to the public in accordance with the Planning Act.

The City Clerk issued a complete application notice on August 5, 2022. The property owner provided a waiver to extend the 90-day timeline established under Bill 108 through May 31, 2023. Council must make a decision at its May 10, 2023 meeting to provide sufficient time for City Clerk to issue a notice of intention to designate before the waiver expires.

On November 28, 2022, the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23) received Royal Assent. Schedule 6 of the More Homes Built Faster Act amended prescribed event requirements under section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act and came into effect on January 1, 2023.

As of January 1, 2023, should a property be subject to an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application that would trigger a Prescribed Event, the property must be listed in the heritage register prior to the Prescribed Event occurring to designate a property. This requirement does not apply to a Prescribed Event that has occurred prior to January 1, 2023.

The application currently under review was deemed complete prior to Bill 23 changes to the Ontario Heritage Act coming into force, however, the Part IV designation must be in compliance with the Province's amended O. Reg. 9/06 under the Ontario Heritage Act, which takes effect as of January 1, 2023. The revised regulation establishes nine provincial criteria for determining whether a property is of cultural heritage value or interest.

A property may be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, if it meets two or more of the nine criteria. The property meets four criteria relating to design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values.

Designation also enables City Council to review proposed alterations or demolitions to the property and enforce heritage property standards and maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 200 University Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance: 200 University Avenue (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 3 to the report (March 14, 2023) from the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning.
2. If there are no objections to the designation, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in Council designating the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on June 17 and 18, 1991, Toronto City Council listed the Sun Life Building at 200 University Avenue on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties.

BACKGROUND

Heritage Planning Framework

The conservation of cultural heritage resources is an integral component of good planning, contributing to a sense of place, economic prosperity, and healthy and equitable communities. Heritage conservation in Ontario is identified as a provincial interest under the Planning Act. Cultural heritage resources are considered irreplaceable and valuable assets that must be wisely protected and managed as part of planning for future growth under the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020). Heritage Conservation is enabled through the Ontario Heritage Act. The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime, the Planning Act, the Ontario Heritage Act and provides policies to guide decision making within the city.

Good planning within the provincial and municipal policy framework has at its foundation an understanding and appreciation for places of historic significance, and ensures the conservation of these resources are to be balanced with other provincial interests. Heritage resources may include buildings, structures, monuments, and geographic

areas that have cultural heritage value or interest to a community, including an Indigenous community.

The Planning Act establishes the foundation for land use planning in Ontario, describing how land can be controlled and by whom. Section 2 of the Planning Act identifies heritage conservation as a matter of provincial interest and directs that municipalities shall have regard to the conservation of features of significant architectural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest. Heritage conservation contributes to other matters of provincial interest, including the promotion of built form that is well-designed, and that encourages a sense of place.

The Planning Act requires that all decisions affecting land use planning matters shall conform to the Growth Plan and shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, both of which position heritage as a key component in supporting key provincial principles and interests.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>

The Provincial Policy Statement provides policy direction on land use planning in Ontario and is to be used by municipalities in the development of their official plans and to guide and inform decisions on planning matters, which shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. The Provincial Policy Statement articulates how and why heritage conservation is a component of good planning, explicitly requiring the conservation of cultural heritage and archaeological resources, alongside the pursuit of other provincial interests. The Provincial Policy Statement does so by linking heritage conservation to key policy directives, including building strong healthy communities, the wise use and management of resources, and protecting health and safety.

Section 1.1 Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development states that long-term economic prosperity is supported by, among other considerations, the promotion of well-designed built form and cultural planning, and the conservation of features that help define character. Section 2.6 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology subsequently directs that "significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved". Through the definition of conserved, built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscape and protected heritage property, the Provincial Policy Statement identifies the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage conservation will be implemented.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/provincial-policy-statement-2020>

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) builds on the Provincial Policy Statement to establish a land use planning framework that supports complete communities, a thriving economy, a clean and healthy environment and social equity. Section 1.2.1 Guiding Principles states that policies in the plan seek to, among other principles, "conserve and promote cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and Metis communities". Cultural heritage resources are understood as being irreplaceable, and are significant features that provide people with a sense of place. Section 4.2.7 Cultural Heritage Resources directs that cultural heritage resources will be conserved in order to foster a sense of place and benefit communities, particularly in strategic growth areas.

The Ontario Heritage Act is the key provincial legislation for the conservation of cultural heritage resources in Ontario. It regulates, among other things, how municipal councils can identify and protect heritage resources, including archaeology, within municipal boundaries. This is largely achieved through listing on the City's Heritage Register, designation of individual properties under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, or designation of districts under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act gives municipalities the authority to maintain and add to a publicly accessible heritage register. The City of Toronto's Heritage Register includes individual heritage properties that have been designated under Part IV, Section 29, properties in a heritage conservation district designated under Part V, Section 41 of the Act as well as properties that have not been designated but City Council believes to be of "cultural heritage value or interest."

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o18>

Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The criteria are based on an evaluation of design/physical value, historical and associative value and contextual value. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

The Ontario Heritage Toolkit provides guidance on designating properties of municipal significance, including direction on the purpose of designating heritage properties and information about how the Provincial Policy Statement and the Ontario Heritage Act provide a framework for the conservation of heritage properties within the land use planning system. In June 2019, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108) received Royal Assent. Schedule 11 of this Act included amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. The Bill 108 Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act came into force on July 1, 2021, which included, amongst other matters, amendments to the listing and designation processes. Guidance from the Province related to the implementation of Bill 108 Amendments is forthcoming.

http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/heritage/heritage_toolkit.shtml

On November 28, 2022, the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23) received Royal Assent. Schedule 6 of the More Homes Built Faster Act amended various sections of the Ontario Heritage Act. A majority of the key changes to the Act came into effect on January 1, 2023.

The City of Toronto's Official Plan contains a number of policies related to properties on the City's Heritage Register and properties adjacent to them, as well as the protection of areas of archaeological potential. Indicating the integral role that heritage conservation plays in successful city-building, Section 3.1.6 of the Official Plan states that, "Cultural heritage is an important component of sustainable development and place making. The preservation of our cultural heritage is essential to the character of this urban and

liveable City that can contribute to other social, cultural, economic and environmental goals of the City.”

Policy 3.1.6.4 states that heritage resources on the City's 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."

Policy 3.1.6.6 encourages the adaptive re-use of heritage properties while Policy 3.1.6.26 states that, when new construction on, or adjacent to, a property on the Heritage Register does occur, it will be designed to conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of that property and will mitigate visual and physical impacts on it.

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>

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

COMMENTS

On January 1, 2023, the Province's proposed amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act (the Act) through the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23) came into effect.

On July 1, 2021, O. Reg 385/21 under the Ontario Heritage Act came into effect which defines what constitutes a prescribed event under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The date the City Clerk provides notice to the public of the complete application is the Prescribed Event. The Prescribed Event is not the date a development application is deemed complete or when an application is made to the City.

If a new or subsequent Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application is submitted on the same property, the Prescribed Event date is reset to the new date the City Clerk issues notice to the public of the new or subsequent complete application. From the date of Prescribed Event occurring, the City has 90 days to issue a Notice of Intention to Designate that property or otherwise be prohibited from designating that property under Section 29 of the Act, subject to limited exceptions.

As of January 1, 2023, listing is a prerequisite to designation should a property be subject to a development application for a Prescribed Event.

City Council included the property located at 200 University Avenue on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register in 1991.

200 University Avenue: Sun Life Building

Research and Evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06

While the research and evaluation of the property referenced above is, in Staff's determination, sufficient to support the designation of the property at 200 University Avenue, it should be noted that new and additional relevant information on the subject property further expanding on its cultural heritage value following community input and additional access to archival records may be incorporated in the final version of a Part IV designation by-law.



Above: Current photo looking west on Richmond Street West and showing the east elevation of 200 University Avenue (Heritage Planning, 2023)

1. DESCRIPTION

200 UNIVERSITY AVENUE - SUN LIFE BUILDING	
ADDRESS	200 University Avenue
WARD	Spadina-Fort York - 10
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	PLAN 737E LOTS 3 & 4 PT TOWN LOT 11 S/S RICHMOND RP 63R4390 PART 6 & 7
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Yonge-Bay Corridor
HISTORICAL NAME	Sun Life Building
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1958-1961

ORIGINAL OWNER	Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada; Department of Trade and Commerce
ORIGINAL USE	Commercial: Office
CURRENT USE*	Commercial: Office
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	John C. Parkin of John B. Parkin Associates (architect)
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	See Section 2
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	See Section 2
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 2
CRITERIA	Design, associative and contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Listed (1991)
RECORDER	Heritage Planning: Liz McFarland
REPORT DATE	March 2023

2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation section of the report describes the history, architecture and context of the property at 200 University Avenue, and applies evaluation criteria as set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06 to determine whether it merits designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Act. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest. The application of the criteria is found in Section 3 (Evaluation Checklist). The conclusions of the research and evaluation are found in the Conclusion of the report. Maps and Photographs are located in Attachment 1. The archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Attachment 2. The Statements of Significance are contained in Attachment 3.

i. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
	The area now known as the City of Toronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit (1805), and the Williams Treaties (1923) signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.
1797	Town Lot 11 on the south side of Richmond (then Hospital) Street West, and including the future location of the Sun Life Building, is granted to Edward Jessup
1858	Historical mapping indicates two structures on the subject property (Image 2)
1880	Historical mapping indicates seven row-houses lining the Simcoe Street (east) boundary of the subject property (Image 3)
c.1905-1929	The east portion of the subject property is occupied by Crucible Steel Works, then demolished in preparation for the University Avenue extension

1931	The University Avenue By-law is passed to guide future development along the street
1956-1957	Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada acquires Part Lots 3 & 4 of Plan 737E (the subject property)
1957	John C. Parkin files initial architectural plans to permit the construction of an office building at 200 University Avenue for Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada
1961	Construction is completed on the Sun Life Building at 200 University Avenue
c.1988	Original 2-storey banking pavilion adjacent at the south end of the Sun Life Building is demolished
1991 June	Toronto City Council includes the property on the City's Heritage Register

ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the properties which are the basis for determining historical or associative value of Criteria 4, 5 or 6 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

University Avenue Precinct

The interwar period (1918-1939) represented a defining moment in the history of University Avenue, which had been the subject of significant debate within City Hall and Toronto's architectural community as the City grappled with its growing prominence and desire for a grand thoroughfare to rival those of other metropolitan cities. In the early 1890s, the city combined College Avenue and University Street - which ran parallel to each other between Queen Street West and Queen's Park - to create University Avenue, recognizing its ceremonial role as the route to the Provincial Legislative Buildings at Queen's Park, and the presence at its southern end of significant institutions including Osgoode Hall and the Armoury Building. The first two decades of the 20th century saw little change of University Avenue's primarily residential and working class character, save for the addition of the sprawling Toronto General Hospital complex at College Street.

After a number of failed attempts to re-envision University Avenue, in 1928 the provincial government enacted legislation enabling the City of Toronto to expropriate land, and City Council subsequently passed the "University Avenue Extension Act", which formalised the plan to extend University Avenue south from its terminus at Queen Street West on a diagonal connecting to Front Street West and to the new Union Station. The initial plans went further than just the extension of University Avenue, envisioning a series of circles, squares and new streets in the Financial District that would both improve the notoriously congested streets, and create a civic centre designed in accordance with City Beautiful principles. (Images 4-6) The grand plans recommended by the Advisory City Planning Commission fell victim to the crash of 1929, however, and when put to a referendum were refused by the citizens of Toronto¹.

¹ Mark Osbaldeston, *Unbuilt Toronto; a history of the city that might have been* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), 29.

The project was significantly reduced in scale and the extension of University Avenue was ultimately funded as a local improvement paid through a levy placed on area property owners.

Work on the extension began in 1931 which sought to implement at least some of the grand plans envisioned by the commission, and coincided with the passage by City Council of the University Avenue By-law (13409) on the advice of the City Planning Commission and the city architect, J.J. Woolnough. The objective of By-law 13409 was to establish University Avenue as a boulevard of distinction and dignity, and did so through architectural and land use regulations that looked to ensure a cohesive appearance and character to the street. Amongst other requirements, the by-law established street wall heights, cladding materials, corner lot treatments, and maximum set back requirements in an effort to ensure a uniform quality and some form of area planning to deter speculative development and the subdivision of lots.

Owing to the onset of the Great Depression, minimal development occurred in the pre-World War II period along University Avenue, save for the Canada Life Building (330 University Avenue, Sproatt and Rolph, 1931) which is an example of what was envisioned for the grand avenue if not for the financial crisis.

In 1955, the Bank of Canada announced their plans to construct a new building to house its Toronto offices at the corner of Queen Street West and University Avenue. Soon after, other major institutions began to acquire and plan for flagship buildings along University Avenue. This included the McClelland and Stewart Building (481 University Avenue, Marani and Morris, 1961) and the Dominion of Canada General Insurance Company (165 University Avenue, 1962).

However, it wasn't long before the regulations implemented through the By-law, which at this time was over twenty years old, were challenged, their prescriptive massing and material requirements were perceived as clashing with the architectural style and corporate space requirements of the post-war period.

The first instance came with the notable modernist architect John C. Parkin at the subject property. Below, a timeline of buildings constructed along University Avenue illuminates Parkin's precedent-setting break from a traditionalist approach with his design for the Sun Life Building, conceived and submitted to the City for building permissions as early as October 1957.² Parkin pushed back against the By-law's step back and material requirements, a bold move not seen again until five years later with the Metropolitan Toronto Court House at 361 University Avenue (1966), where Marani, Morris and Allan are noted as designing a complex that "neglects its street-affirming duties to University Avenue"³.

- Osgoode Hall, 130 Queen St W, 1829
- Hydro Electric Power Commission of Ontario Building, 610 University Avenue, 1915

2 Toronto Building Records, Permits #46878 and 47105

3 Patricia McHugh, Alex Bozickovic, *Toronto architecture: a city guide - revised edition* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2017) 101.

- Canada Life Building, 330 University Avenue, 1931
- Bank of Canada Building, 250 University Avenue, 1958
- Shell Oil Building, 505 University Avenue, 1958
- Sun Life Building, 200 University Avenue, 1961
- McClelland and Stewart Building, 481 University Avenue, 1961⁴
- Dominion of Canada General Insurance Company, 165 University Avenue, 1962
- Metropolitan Toronto Court House, 361 University Avenue, 1966
- National Life Building, 522 University Avenue, 1972

Increasingly, new buildings along University Avenue were not beholden to the grand vision of the 1920s City Planning Commission and J.J. Woolnough; those buildings that did conform, like the Bank of Canada Building, were the exception and not the rule.

Although present-day University Avenue has a diversity of building types and architectural styles, it has maintained its character as a major thoroughfare and a prominent avenue lined by significant institutions that contribute to the diversity of the downtown core's architectural character and public realm.

Site History

The Site is located on the northwestern part of Town Lot 11, including Lot 3 and part of Lot 4 of Plan 737E, on the South Side of Richmond (formerly Hospital) Street within the Plan of the Town of York. Town Lot 11 on the south side of Richmond Street West was granted to Edward Jessup in 1797.⁵

By 1858, Boulton's Map indicates that there were two buildings on the subject property, a 2-storey rough cast structure facing Simcoe Street and a shed building to the rear along the eastern edge of the site. By 1880, the structure along Simcoe Street had been replaced by seven 2.5-storey brick row-houses numbered 141 through 153 Simcoe Street according to Goad's Historical Atlas. A laneway off of Richmond Street West provided access to the rear ancillary buildings of the properties along Simcoe Street as well as the shed-style building along the eastern edge of the subject property, now known as 147 Richmond Street South. By 1889, the properties along Simcoe Street were renumbered 143 through 155, while 147 Richmond Street West was renumbered 165.

Between 1903 and 1909, 165 Richmond Street West was developed as part of the Crucible Steel Works which was demolished between 1929 and 1930 to allow for the extension of University Avenue southward from Queen Street West to Front Street. The new right-of-way resulted in two triangular properties along the west side of University Avenue between Adelaide Street West and Richmond Street West which would be registered as Lots 3 and 4 on Plan 737E in 1942. Between 1933 and 1934, the properties at 147-155 Simcoe Street had been demolished and replaced by Walsh's Service Station at 167 Richmond Street West. (Images 7-9)

⁴ It is interesting to note the traditionalist approach of Marani and Morris' McClelland and Stewart Building addition to the MacLean-Hunter Publishing Company complex (481 University Avenue, 1961), completed the same year as Parkin's Sun Life Building.

⁵ Ontario Land Registry records, Book 684.

On November 1, 1928, Gelber Investments Ltd purchased 167 Richmond Street West, followed by 143 Simcoe Street on August 15, 1929, 145 Simcoe Street on April 24, 1946, and Lot 3 of Plan 737E on February 14, 1950. On February 6, 1953, these four parcels of land were sold to Richmond-University Realities Inc., which sold them to Johan Meier on April 28, 1955. Meier sold the properties to John C. Colling on February 24, 1956, who then sold the properties to the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada on March 13, 1956. On June 28, 1957, the Sun Life Assurance Company purchased the northern section of Lot 4 of Plan 737E.⁶

200 University Avenue: Sun Life Building

Designed by John C. Parkin in the Modernist style and completed in 1961 for the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada, 200 University Avenue was a marked departure from the existing structures that lined University Avenue. In announcing its construction, the Globe and Mail stated: "The dust and draught-proof building will be one of the first all glass and metal office structures in Canada. It will be sheathed entirely in polished plate glass and anodized aluminum. A raised penthouse at its top will house much of the mechanical equipment".⁷

Its original design of 18 storeys was rejected because it did not conform to By-law No. 13409 governing University Avenue, which required "either a 'wedding cake' design under which successive stories above the 130 foot level are cut back, or a building of lesser height."⁸ While its height was reduced to 16 storeys, the design did break with other aspects of University Avenue's By-law No. 13409, as can be seen in the original architectural drawings and modelling by Parkin. (Images 10-15) Buildings were required to be built to the property line and clad in light colored brick or stone, yet 200 University Avenue was set back from University Avenue and clad in glass and anodized aluminum. The novel quality of Parkin's glass and metal curtain wall construction is contrasted by contemporary post-WWII construction along University Avenue such as Marani, Morris & Allan's addition to the McLean-Hunter complex at 481 University Avenue. Though designed and completed at the same time as the Sun Life Building (1958-1961), the less bold, 'transitional' design of the building at 481 University maintains much of the now-antiquated 1931 By-law policies with its placement at or near the property line and use of buff-coloured stone cladding. (Image 16)

As part of the original project for the Sun Life Building, a two-storey banking pavilion was constructed on the adjacent property to the south of 200 University Avenue. Based on aerial photographs, the banking pavilion was demolished between 1987 and 1989. (Images 17-28)

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The Globe and Mail (April 12, 1958).

⁸ The Globe and Mail (January 25, 1957)

John C. Parkin and John B. Parkin Associates, Architects

John Creswell Parkin (1922-1988), considered to be one of the most important post-war architects in Canada, was described by the Ontario Association of Architects as “A pioneer of the International Style in Canada”.⁹ (Image 29)

After graduating from the University of Manitoba’s School of Architecture in 1944, Parkin moved to Toronto where he briefly worked at the offices of Marani & Morris. In 1946, he moved to Boston to study at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, where he attended classes taught by Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, who are viewed as having introduced the Modernist movement to North America. When John C. Parkin returned to Toronto after graduating in 1947, he and John B. Parkin (no relation) formed John B. Parkin Associates along with John B. Parkin's brother Edmund (1913-1994) an engineer. John C. Parkin served as Chief Designer. By the end of the 1950s, John B. Parkin Associates was the largest and most influential architectural firm in Canada.

John B. Parkin Associates¹⁰ were Toronto's leading Modernist architects, described as “a highly competent professional firm that quickly became known as one of the most progressive in Canada and in the 1950s and 1960s gained international recognition.”¹¹ By the end of the 1950s, the firm was capturing a high percentage of the most important commissions of the time. These included the Sun Life Building, the Yonge Subway line, Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) Headquarters, Toronto International Airport, and Ottawa Union Station, as well as collaborating on master plans for York and Brock universities. John C. Parkin was the Chair of the advisory committee on design at Expo '67 in Montreal. The firm collaborated as the architects of record on major commissions with international architects such as Toronto City Hall (Viljo Revell) and the Toronto Dominion Centre (Mies van der Rohe). Parkin Associates also made a substantial contribution to Don Mills including Don Mills Shopping Centre (1959), Ortho Pharmaceuticals (1956), the Bata Building (1965), the Part IV Designated IBM Headquarters at 1150 Eglinton Avenue East (1967; 1970-1971), Imperial Oil (1963), Don Mills Collegiate and Junior School (1965) and their own offices (1956).

In the year that the Massey Medals were inaugurated, the firm won 5 of the 9 medals, the record for the highest number of medals awarded to a firm in a single year. Following John B. Parkin's retirement from the firm in 1969, John C. Parkin established the Parkin Partnership, winning the competition for the National Gallery of Canada in 1976 (unbuilt) as well as the commission for the extension to the Art Gallery of Ontario to house the Henri Moore collection. Other former Parkin Associates established the firm of Neish, Owen, Rowland and Roy (NORR), today comprised of 800 professional employees in offices worldwide.

In terms of honours and recognition for his contribution, in 1972 Parkin was appointed a Companion of the Order of Canada for his services to architecture, urban planning, industrial design and the arts. In 1979, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) awarded Parkin its Gold Medal. Parkin died at Toronto on November 22, 1988.

9 Ontario Association of Architects. (1988). Parkin, John Cresswell.

10 John B. Parkin Associates is the name generally cited for the firm.

11 Howarth, Thomas, p.12.

Reflecting on John C. Parkin's impact, Toronto Star columnist Christopher Hume noted in 1991: "More than just about anyone else, it was Parkin who dragged Toronto, and Canada, kicking and screaming into the modern age. It was also Parkin who brought a bigger perspective to architectural issues."¹²

Lamenting the loss of a number of John C. Parkin's most significant works, art and architecture critic John Bentley Mays described Parkin as "one of Canada's architectural pioneers, hacking out of Toronto's intricate thicket of late-Victorian Englishry a secure niche for the bold, utopian design of the international movement – and a pioneer whose rigorous (and sometimes reckless) modernist work has always been more hated than deeply understood."¹³

iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The following section provides an architectural description and analysis related to the property which will establish the basis for determining design or physical value of Criteria 1, 2 or 3 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The property contains a 16-storey modernist building constructed between 1958 and 1961 for the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. The building has 14 floors surmounted by a two-storey mechanical penthouse set back from the east and west tower elevations. The building has a six-level underground parking garage accessible from the west elevation located along Simcoe Street. Rectilinear in plan, the length of the building fronts east onto University Avenue, which includes the main entrance. Spanning the block from east to west, the opposite (west) elevation mirrors the east in both arrangement and accessibility. (Images 30-33)

A designated banking pavilion of 2-storey height was originally located adjacent to the south elevation of the office building and demolished between 1987 and 1989. The Sun Life Building site design includes a generous public realm with its wedge-shaped granite plaza, terracing, and floating entrance steps. Partially dictated by the nature of the site where University Avenue broadens into a grand, ceremonial boulevard north of Richmond Street West, this property nonetheless marks one of the earliest examples of a plaza and pavilion typology and remains a defining feature of International Style Modernism as applied to commercial towers. (Images 34-36; see also Images 15, 24 and 27 for archival photos of the pavilion)

The design of the tower itself was also influenced by International Style Modernism, which is evidenced by the strong visual emphasis on verticality, the legible rectilinear grid, the lack of ornament, and the adoption of glass and metal as preferred cladding materials. The exterior of the Sun Life Building is composed of glass, aluminum-clad columns, aluminum-clad curtain wall, and aluminum vertical mullions on all four elevations. The September 1968 volume of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal provides the following description: "The Sun Life Building is a curtain wall tower structure. The weight of the building is supported by columns within a central core, and by exposed perimeter columns clad in aluminum. The entire exterior is glass and

¹² Toronto Star (March 1, 1991)

¹³ The Globe and Mail (February 19, 1997)

aluminum and its simple, straightforward lines give the impression of lightness, yet strength. The central core, housing all services, ducts and washrooms, is entirely surrounded by office space free of supporting columns. All office space is within 30 feet of the windows, assuring excellent natural lighting throughout."

On the east and west elevations, the double-height ground and mezzanine level is set back from the tower perched seemingly weightlessly above by metal structural columns, and contains inset floor-to-ceiling glazed entrance lobby and commercial space. The structural perimeter columns scale the exterior of the building from ground to 13th floor and are clad with aluminum, as are the surrounds of the glazed main entrance doors on University Avenue and Simcoe Street. (Images 37-39)

In the interior of the building, the ground floor plan consists of commercial space at the north end and a large main lobby directly connecting the east and west entrances to each other on an unobstructed east-west axis or "shotgun" layout with the elevator lobby located at its midpoint. The main lobby and elevator core materials include granite flooring, travertine walls and stainless steel elevator doors and surrounds. Above the ground floor, the typical layout consists of the same, central elevator lobby (including materiality), surrounded by large, open-plan office configuration and floor-to-ceiling glazing. (Images 40-45)

iv. CONTEXT

The following section provides contextual information and analysis related to the property which is the basis for determining contextual value of Criteria 7, 8 or 9 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The City of Toronto Property Data Map attached as Image 1 (Attachment 1) shows the site of the property at 200 University Avenue.

The area surrounding the subject property is a mixed-use neighbourhood consisting of contemporary high-rise commercial and mixed-use residential and institutional buildings from 1832 to 2006, and early to mid-century office buildings. North of the Sun Life Building, across Richmond Street West, is the 8-storey Bank of Canada Building at 250 University Avenue which was Designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act in 2021. Constructed in 1955-1958, it was designed by the architectural firm of Marani & Morris. To the east, across University Avenue, is the 43-storey Hilton Hotel on the southeast corner of Richmond Street West and University Avenue. Constructed in 1972, it is designed in the Brutalist style. To the south, comprising the remainder of the block bounded by Richmond Street West, University Avenue, Adelaide Street West and Simcoe Street, is the Shangri-La hotel. The Shangri-La hotel was constructed between 2008 and 2012 and is comprised of a 4-storey modern glass-clad commercial structure, surmounted by a 65-storey modern glass-clad tower. The hotel also includes the Part IV Designated 3-storey masonry-clad Bishops Block (c.1830) on the northeast corner of Adelaide Street West and Simcoe Street. To the west, across Simcoe Street, is a 17-storey residential building with ground floor retail. (Images 46-51)

The subject property is adjacent to The Queen Street West Heritage Conservation District ("HCD") to the north, and the King-Spadina HCD is located to the west. The latter HCD is currently under appeal and not yet in force.

3. EVALUATION AND APPLICATION OF O.REG 9/06 CRITERIA

The following evaluation applies Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the Act: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. The criteria are prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Act, and the City of Toronto is also required to use these criteria when assessing properties for inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. There are a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

The evaluation table is marked "N/A" if the criterion is "not applicable" to the property or "✓" if it is applicable to the property, with explanatory text below.

DESIGN OR PHYSICAL VALUE

The property has design value or physical value because it	
1. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	✓
2. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N/A
3. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	N/A

Rare, representative and early example of a style and type

The Sun Life Building is a rare, representative and early example of a modernist office tower featuring a glass and metal curtain wall set back from exposed perimeter support columns. Constructed between 1958 and 1961, the property is among the earliest examples of a modernist high rise building in Toronto to be entirely clad in metal and glass and the earliest example along University Avenue. The emphasis on verticality, through the prominent treatment of the perimeter columns and use of narrow I-beam 'fins' running continuously from the third through thirteenth floors, marked a departure from the horizontal emphasis of earlier modernist or 'transitional' buildings. The property was the first tall office building constructed along University Avenue that did not adhere to the policies of University Avenue By-Law 13409 which required that structures be constructed to the property line, feature step-backs, and be clad in buff brick or stone.

The public space created by the setback from University Avenue and the adjacent banking pavilion located to the south of the building (since demolished) represented an early example of the plaza and pavilion typology that was first introduced by New York City's Seagram Building (1958), and would later be a feature of the Toronto Dominion Centre (1969).

HISTORICAL OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

The property has historical value or associative value because it	
4. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	N/A
5. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	N/A
6. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	✓

Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community

The property is valued for its association with the architectural firm of John B. Parkin Associates, one of Canada's leading Modernist and most prolific firms of the 1950s and 1960s that contributed many significant buildings to Toronto during this period. Designed and built between 1958 and 1961 by John C. Parkin, the firm's Chief Designer and described as one of Canada's most important modernist architects, the Sun Life Building exemplifies the firm's work at this time which was chiefly aligned with International Style Modernism in its rigour, expressed structure and formal clarity, typically favouring glass cladding and light coloured materials.

CONTEXTUAL VALUE

The property has contextual value because it is	
7. important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	✓
8. physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	✓
9. a landmark.	N/A

Important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area

The property is important in defining and supporting the overall character of University Avenue through its alignment with properties to the north. Constructed at the point where University Avenue transitions from the 1928-1931 extension south of Queen Street to the earlier and wider axial boulevard section north of Richmond Street West, the Sun Life Building's setback frames the point at which University Avenue becomes a grand ceremonial boulevard.

Physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings

The property is visually and historically linked to University Avenue. The creation of the granite public plaza along University Avenue was in response to the irregular shape of the property which was the result of the extension of University Avenue between 1928 and 1931. Set back from University Avenue, the building was sited to align with the earlier section of University Avenue to the north, including the Bank of Canada Building, Canada Life Building, and United States Consulate. As the first tall building to successfully challenge the policies of By-Law 13409 governing University Avenue, the property is historically linked to the post-war phase of development along University Avenue.

CONCLUSION

Staff have completed the Research and Evaluation Report for the property at 200 University Avenue and determined that the property meets 4 out of 9 criteria in Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Act. As such, the property should be designated.

Designed and built in 1958-1961 by John C. Parkin of John B. Parkin Associates, Canada's largest architectural firm at the time, the Sun Life Building is among the earliest examples of a modernist high rise building in Toronto to be entirely clad in metal and glass, with its glass and metal curtain wall set back from exposed perimeter support columns. As the first tall building to successfully challenge the by-laws governing University Avenue from its prominent position at the point at which University Avenue becomes a grand ceremonial boulevard, the property is historically linked to the post-war phase of development along University Avenue.

The Statement of Significance (Attachment 3) 200 University Avenue, comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Mary L. MacDonald, MA, CAHP
Senior Manager, Heritage Planning
Urban Design, City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Maps and Photographs
Attachment 2 – List of Research Sources
Attachment 3 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation) – 200 University Avenue

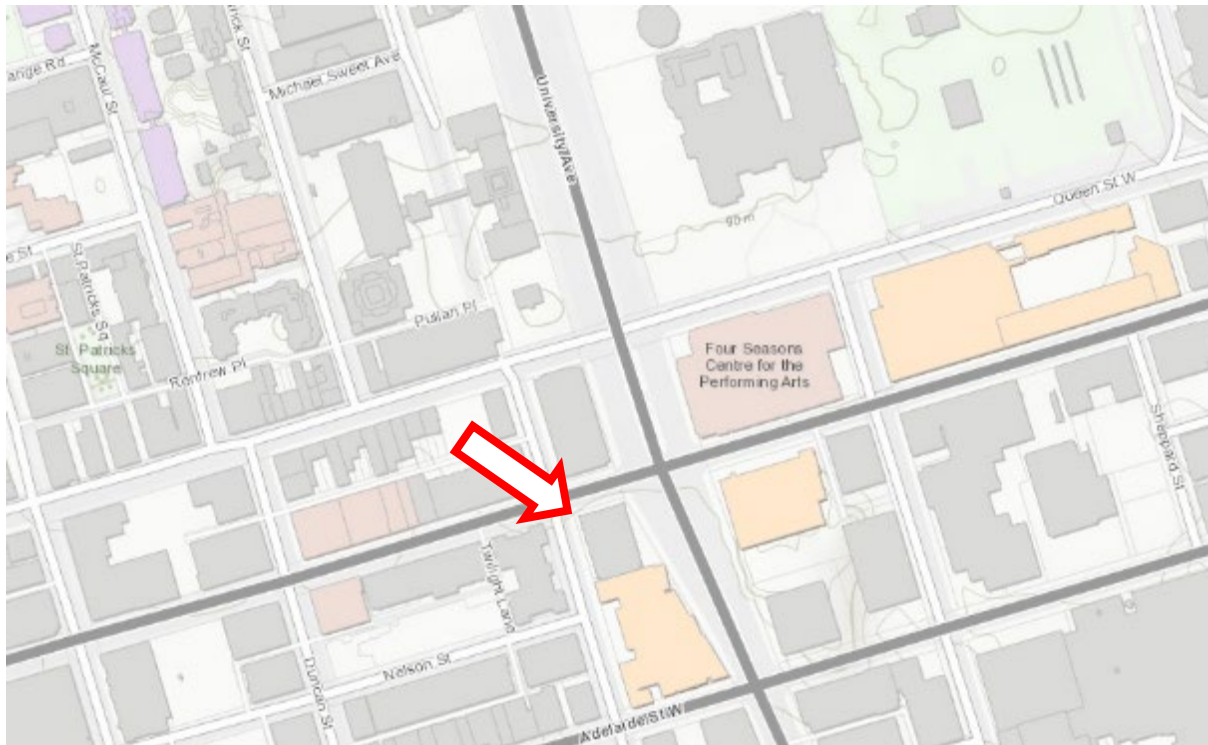


Image 1. This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property is not shown. The arrow marks the location of the property at 200 University Avenue. (City of Toronto iView mapping)

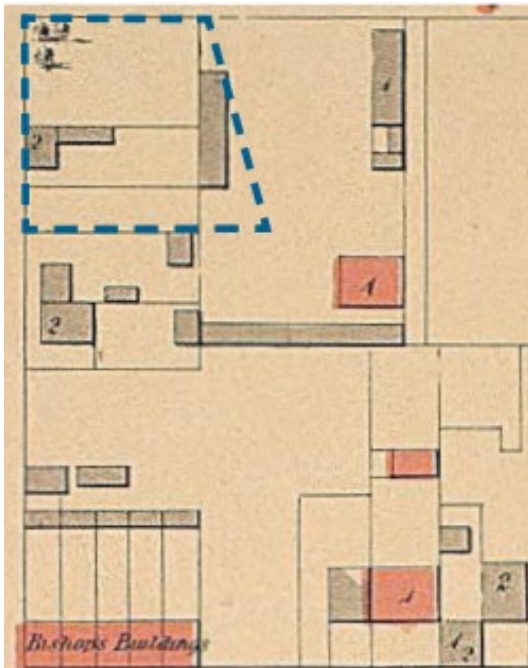


Image 2. 1858 Atlas of the City of Toronto and Vicinity by W.S. Boulton showing the property outlined in red (Ng)

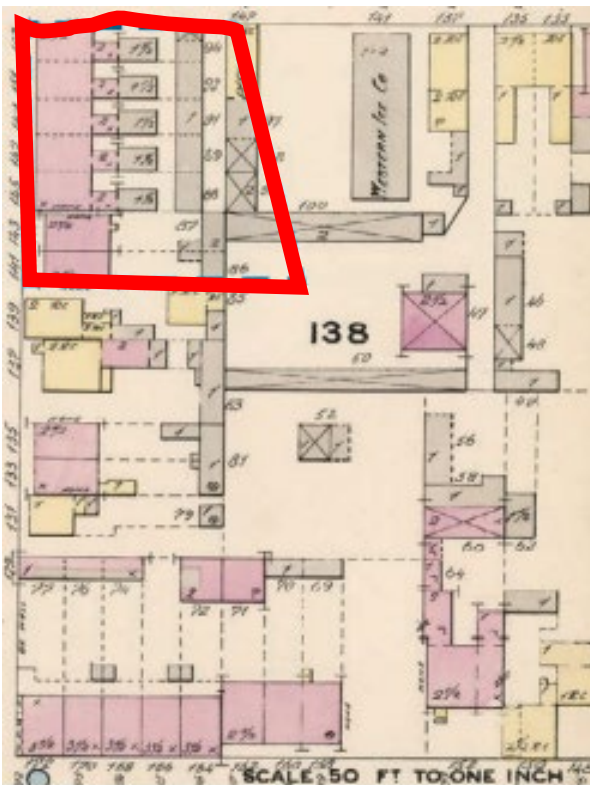


Image 3. 1880 fire insurance plan showing the property outlined in red (Ng)



Image 4: 1929 Plan of the Central Area of the City of Toronto Showing Suggested Improvements to the Street System (University of Toronto Library)

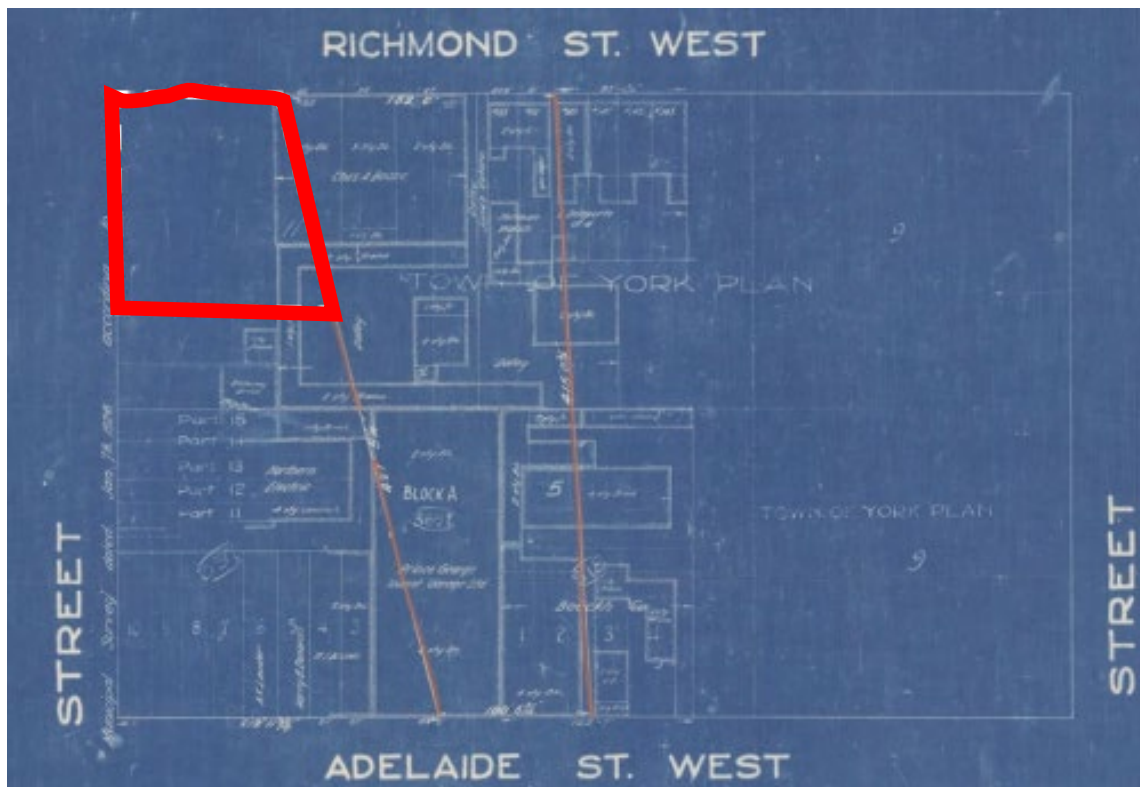


Image 5. 1929 survey by Tracy De Le May showing the planned University Avenue Extension with the site outlined in red (City of Toronto Archives).



Image 6. 1929 image looking north from south of Wellington Street showing ongoing building demolition for the University Avenue extension (City of Toronto Archives).



Image 7: 1930 Aerial view of downtown from the northwest, showing the path of demolition prior to the extension of University Avenue south of Queen Street West (City of Toronto Archives, fonds 1233, item 10092)



Image 8. 1930 image of Crucible Steel Company building at 163-165 Richmond Street West. The western edge of the building and adjacent laneway form part of the site's public plaza along University Avenue today (City of Toronto Archives).

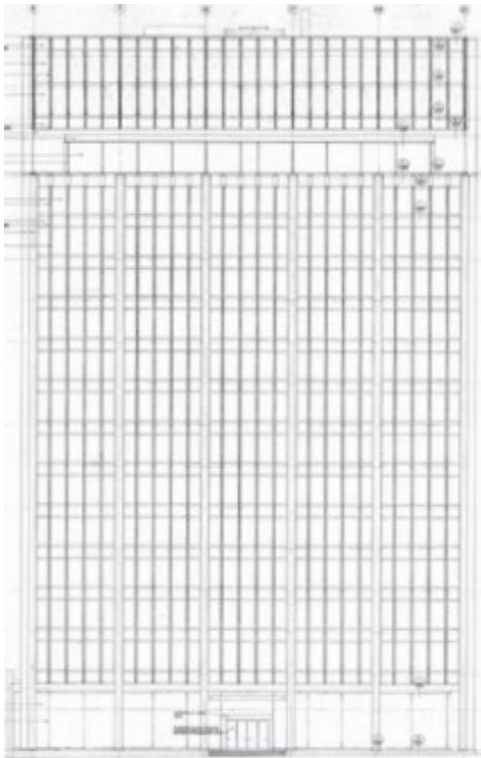


Image 10. East Elevation (John B. Parkin Associates, 1958).

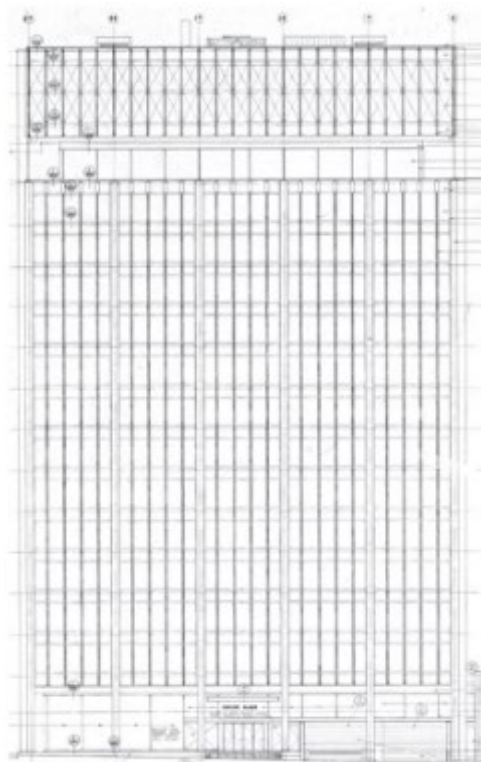


Image 11. West Elevation (John B. Parkin Associates, 1958).

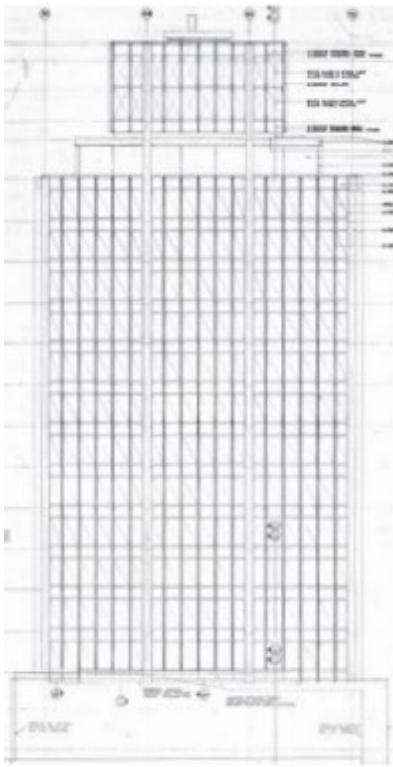


Image 12. South Elevation (John B. Parkin Associates, 1958).

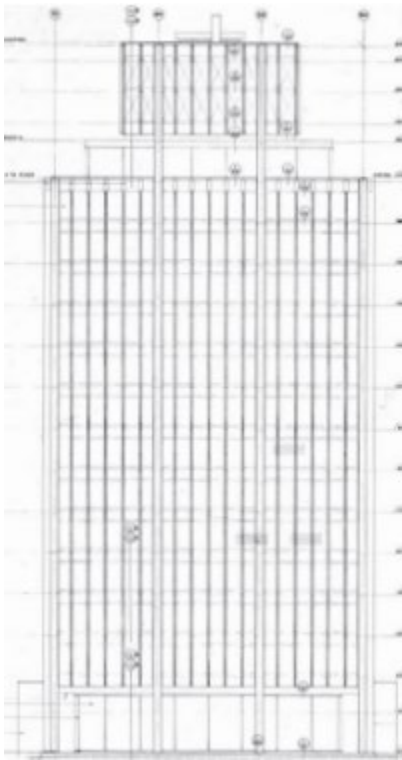


Image 13. North Elevation (John B. Parkin Associates, 1958).



Image 14. First Floor Plan (John B. Parkin Associates, 1958)



Images 15 and 16. Left: 1957 image of a scale model of 200 University Avenue with its curtain wall construction, setback creating a public plaza along University Avenue and former banking pavilion to the south (Panda Associates); Right: c.1958 perspective drawing showing the proposed new building at 481 University Avenue (Archives of Ontario, #F138-1-1-38)



Image 17. 1957 image of the property looking west from University Avenue during construction (Panda Associates).



Image 18. 1958 image of the property looking west from University Avenue during construction (Panda Associates).



Image 19. 1958 image of the property looking north towards Richmond Street West during construction (Panda Associates).



Image 20. 1958 image looking northwest from across University Avenue towards the site with 250 University Avenue visible at centre right (Panda Associates).



Image 21. 1958-1960 image of superstructure under construction (RAIC, 1961).



Image 22. 1961 image of the property looking southeast from Simcoe Street and Richmond Street West (RAIC, 1961).



Image 23. 1961 image of the subject property from University Avenue and Richmond Street West (RAIC).

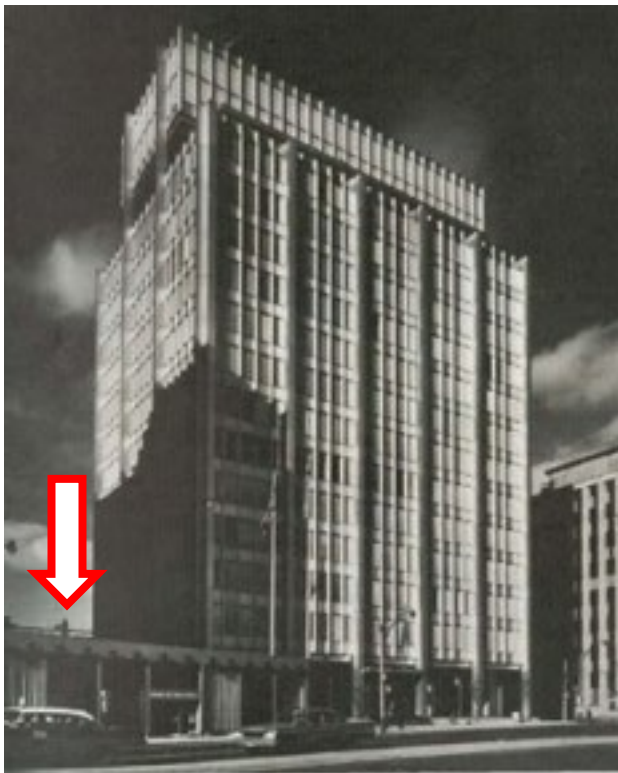


Image 24. 1961 image of the subject property, showing the former banking pavilion at left (RAIC).



Image 25. 1972 image of the northwest corner of the subject property at Simcoe Street and Richmond Street West (City of Toronto Archives).



Image 26. 1972 image of the southwest corner of the subject property at University Avenue and Richmond Street West (City of Toronto Archives).



Image 27. 1972 image looking south along University Avenue. The red arrow indicates the former one-storey banking pavilion to the south of the site, now demolished (City of Toronto Archives).



Image 28. Corner of University Ave. and Adelaide St., looking north, 1972 (City of Toronto Archives, fonds 2032, series 841, file 57, item 18)

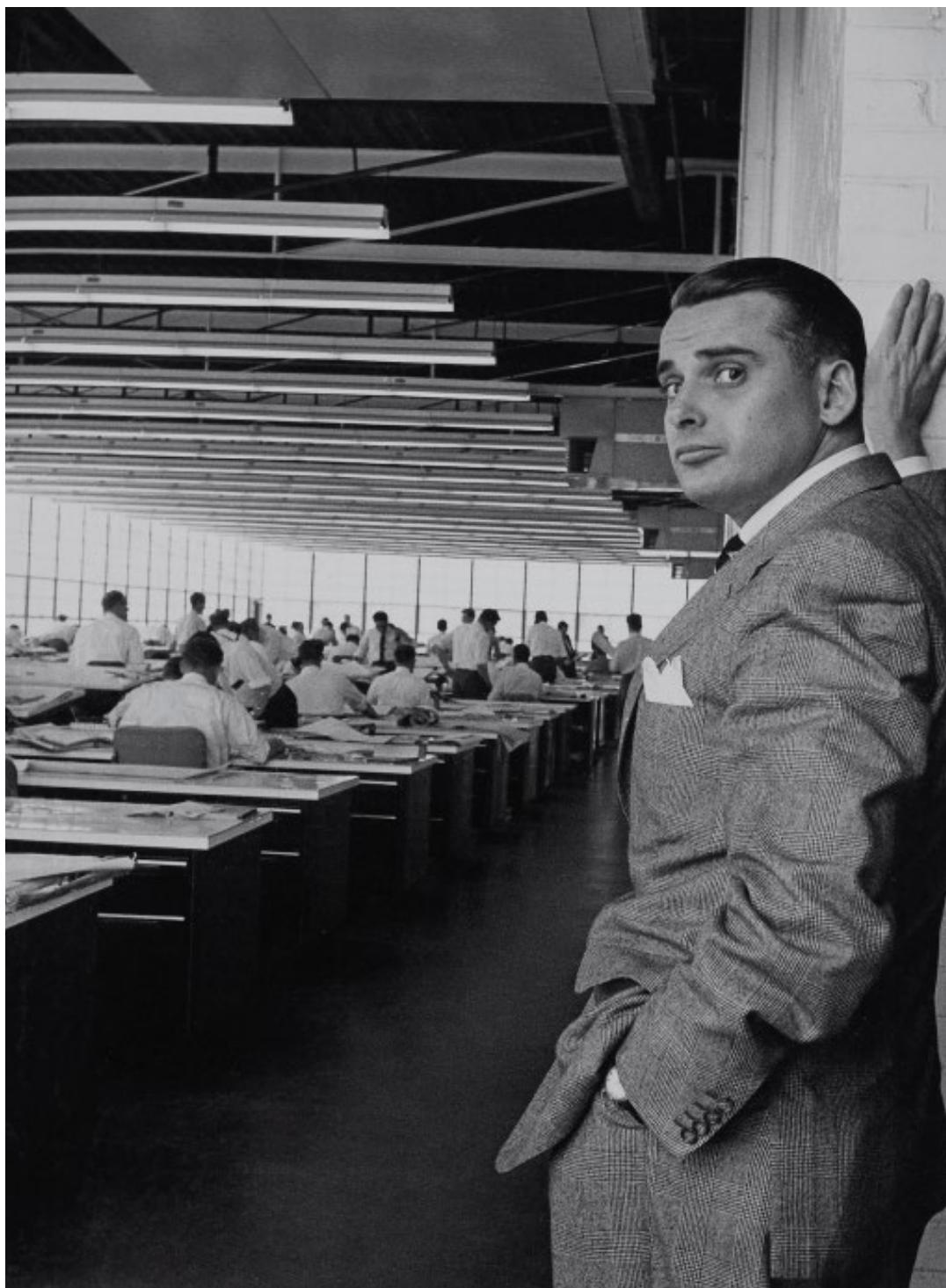


Image 29. Roloff Beny, *Drafting Room*, John C. Parkin, Toronto, 1964, gelatin silver print, 39.3 × 29.3 cm; image: 39.2 × 29.3 cm, purchased 1966, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (no. 66-5618), National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.



Image 30. Current photo of the east elevation (ERA, 2022)



Image 31. Current photo of the north elevation (ERA, 2022)



Image 32. Current photo of the west elevation (ERA, 2022)



Image 33. Current photo of the (partial) south elevation (ERA, 2022)

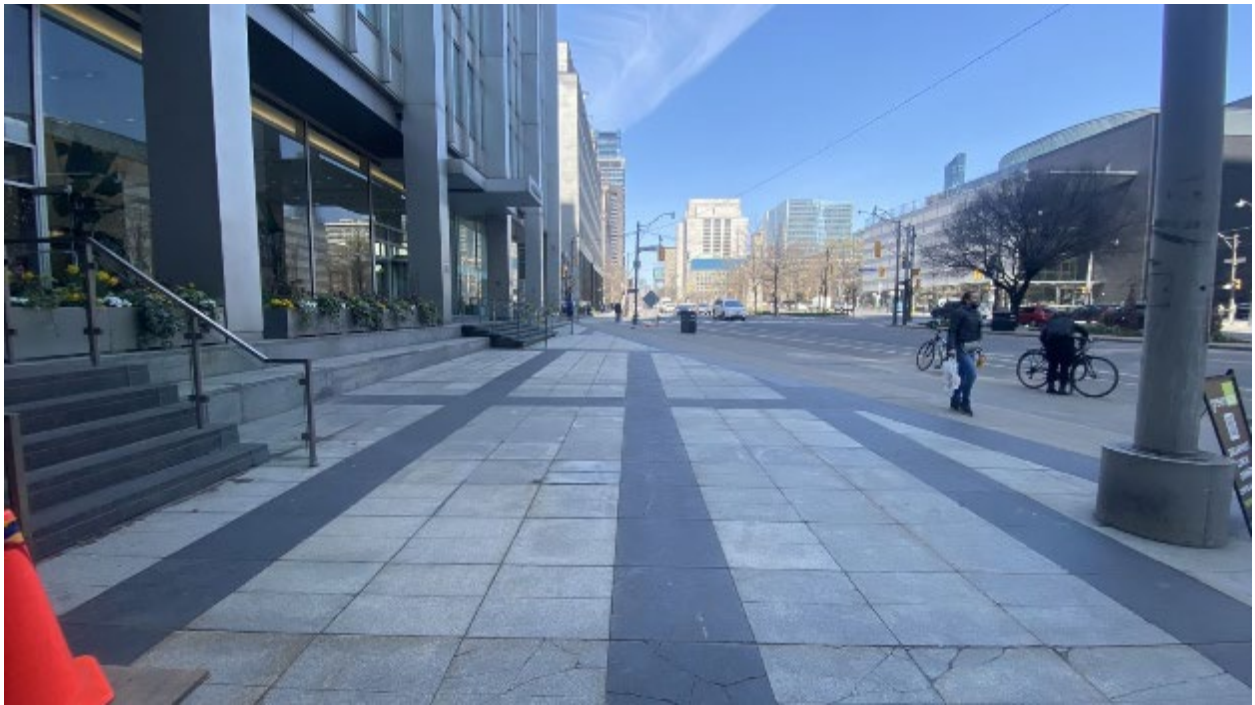


Image 34. Current photo looking north along University Avenue and showing the granite public plaza in front of the Sun Life Building (ERA, 2022)



Image 35. Current photo looking north along University Avenue and showing how the 'jog' of University Avenue at this location creates the wedge-shaped public plaza in front of the Sun Life Building, while also providing a view northward that frames the earlier Canada Life and Bank of Canada Buildings along the broader, ceremonial portion of the street from Richmond Street West to College Street. (ERA, 2022)



Image 36. Current photo looking south along University Avenue and showing the granite public plaza and main entrance with aluminum-clad canopy and floating granite steps in front of the main entrance of the Sun Life Building (ERA, 2022)



Image 37. Current photo looking up and showing the aluminum-clad "fins" (at centre) flanked by larger perimeter columns found on all four storeys of the building exterior and creating a strong sense of verticality. (ERA, 2022)



Image 38. Current photo of the east ground floor and mezzanine level set back from the perimeter columns (Heritage Planning, 2023)



Image 39. Current photo of the west ground floor and mezzanine level set back from the perimeter columns (ERA, 2022)



Image 40. Current photo looking north inside the main lobby with main entrance and University Avenue at right. (ERA, 2022)



Image 41. Current photo looking south inside the main lobby with University Avenue at left and parking elevator bank at right. (ERA, 2022)



Image 42. Current photo looking north inside the main lobby showing the double-height plate glass perimeter windows and recessed pot lighting on the ceiling. (ERA, 2022)

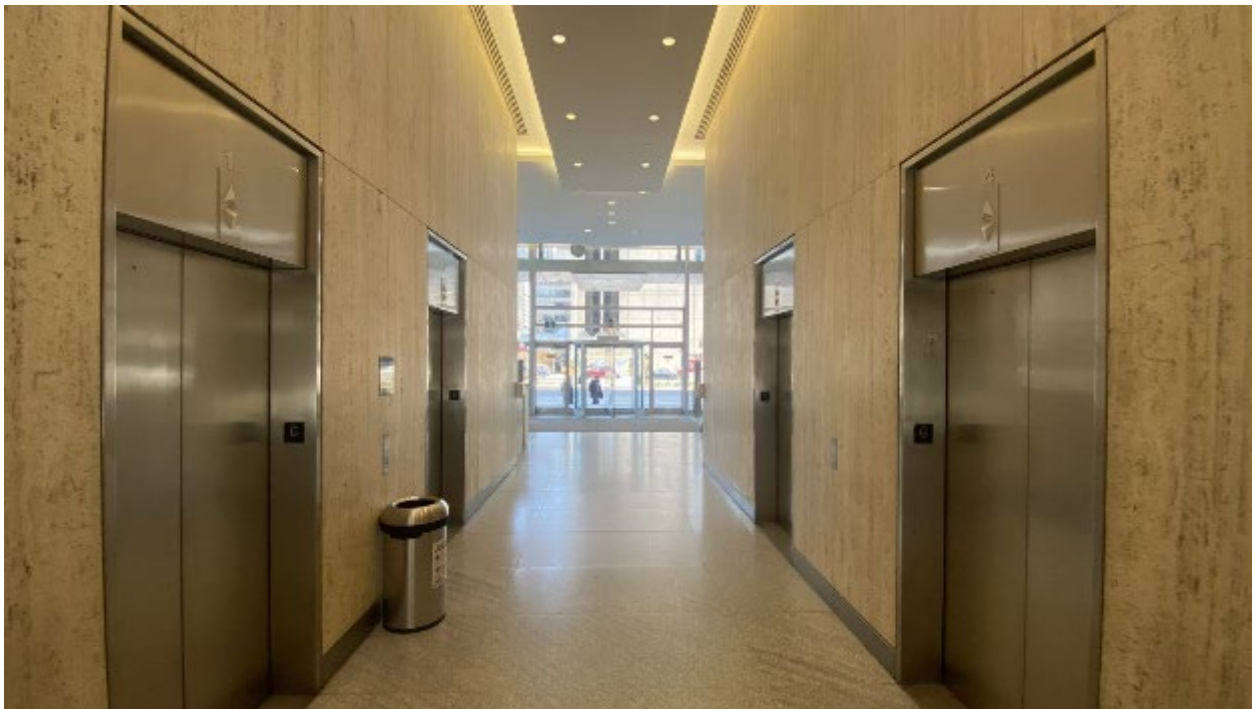


Image 43. Current photo looking east across the elevator lobby to the University Avenue entrance and showing the travertine wall panelling, granite floors, stainless steel elevator doors and surrounds, and drop ceiling panel with recessed pot lighting. (ERA, 2022)



Image 44. Current photo looking west across the elevator lobby to the Simcoe Street entrance and showing the travertine wall panelling, granite floors and stainless steel elevator doors and surrounds. (ERA, 2022)



Image 45. Current photo on the fourteenth floor, looking east from the elevator lobby with its travertine wall panelling, stainless steel elevator doors and surrounds, and drop ceiling panel with recessed pot lighting (Heritage Planning, 2023)



Image 46. Current contextual photo looking west across University Avenue to the Sun Life Building with the heritage Bank of Canada and Canada Life Buildings to the north, at right (Heritage Planning, 2023)



Image 47. Current contextual photo looking across University Avenue to the Sun Life Building at centre with the Shangri-La Hotel to the south, at left, and the Bank of Canada to the north, at right. (ERA, 2022)



Image 48. Current contextual photo looking to the east side of University Avenue and the Four Seasons for the Performing Arts Centre (ERA, 2022)



Image 49. Contextual photo looking north on Simcoe Street from Adelaide toward the Sun Life Building with the Part IV Designated Bishop's Block (c.1830) at centre right. (ERA, 2022)



Image 50. Current contextual photo from the fourteenth floor looking north along University Avenue and showing the Canada Life building, at left; the McLean-Hunter and Shell Oil buildings, at centre; and, Osgoode Hall with City Hall beyond, at right. (Heritage Planning, 2023)



Image 51. Current contextual photo from the fourteenth floor looking south and showing the masonry-clad heritage building at 100 Simcoe Street in the foreground and the CN Tower in the distance. (ERA, 2022)

Archival Sources

- Abstract Index of Deeds, Plan 737E, Lots 3 and 4
- Archival maps and atlases
- Archival Photographs, Archives of Ontario
- Archival Photographs, City of Toronto Archives
- Canadian Architectural Archives, University of Calgary
- City of Toronto Building Records
- City of Toronto Directories
- Report of the Advisory City Planning Commission with Recommendations for the Improvement of the Central Business Section of the City of Toronto. 1929. University of Toronto Library.
- Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal
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- Ng, Nathan. Historical Maps of Toronto. <http://oldtorontomaps.blogspot.ca/p/index-of-maps.html>
- Parkin, John C. Commentary on the firm's concept for professional practice since the end of World War II, Canadian Interiors, Vol. 15. No. 5, May 1978, pp 15 and 26.
- White, Richard. Planning Toronto: The Planners, The Plans, Their Legacies, 1940-1980. Toronto: UBC Press, 2016

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)**

The property at 200 University Avenue is worth of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the criteria of design and physical, historical and associative and contextual values.

Description

Located on the southwest corner of University Avenue and Richmond Street West, the property at 200 University Avenue known as the Sun Life Building contains a 14-storey office building including a 2-storey mechanical penthouse constructed between 1958 and 1961, designed in the Modernist style by John C. Parkin of Canada's largest architectural firm at the time, John B. Parkin Associates. Designed for the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada, the building is characterized by its glass and metal curtain wall set behind perimeter columns. The 2-storey glass and metal-clad mechanical penthouse is defined by its dramatic up-lighting and set back from the University Avenue and Simcoe Street building facades while remaining flush with the north and south elevations.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value**Design and Physical Value**

The Sun Life Building is a rare, representative and early example of a modernist office tower featuring a glass and metal curtain wall set back from exposed perimeter support columns. Constructed between 1958 and 1961, the property is among the earliest examples of a modernist high rise building in Toronto to be entirely clad in metal and glass and the earliest example along University Avenue. The emphasis on verticality, through the prominent treatment of the perimeter columns and use of narrow I-beam 'fins' running continuously from the third through thirteenth floors, marked a departure from the horizontal emphasis of earlier modernist or 'transitional' buildings. The property was the first tall office building constructed along University Avenue that did not adhere to the policies of University Avenue By-Law 13409 which required that structures be constructed to the property line, feature step-backs, and be clad in buff brick or stone.

The public space created by the setback from University Avenue and the adjacent banking pavilion located to the south of the building (since demolished) represented an early example of the plaza and pavilion typology that was first introduced by New York City's Seagram Building (1958), and would later be a feature of the Toronto Dominion Centre (1969).

Historical and Associative Value

The property is valued for its association with the architectural firm of John B. Parkin Associates, one of Canada's leading Modernist and most prolific firms of the 1950s and 1960s that contributed many significant buildings to Toronto during this period.

Designed and built between 1958 and 1961 by John C. Parkin, the firm's Chief Designer and described as one of Canada's most important modernist architects, the Sun Life Building exemplifies the firm's work at this time which was chiefly aligned with International Style Modernism in its rigour, expressed structure and formal clarity, typically favouring glass cladding and light coloured materials.

Contextual Value

The property is important in defining and supporting the overall character of University Avenue through its alignment with properties to the north. Constructed at the point where University Avenue transitions from the 1928-1931 extension south of Queen Street to the earlier and wider axial boulevard section north of Richmond Street West, the Sun Life Building's setback frames the point at which University Avenue becomes a grand ceremonial boulevard.

The property is visually and historically linked to University Avenue. The creation of the granite public plaza along University Avenue was in response to the irregular shape of the property which was the result of the extension of University Avenue between 1928 and 1931. Set back from University Avenue, the building was sited to align with the earlier section of University Avenue to the north, including the Bank of Canada Building, Canada Life Building, and United States Consulate. As the first tall building to successfully challenge the policies of By-Law 13409 governing University Avenue, the property is historically linked to the post-war phase of development along University Avenue.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

Attributes that contribute to the value of the property at 200 University Avenue as representative of the Modernist style include:

- The scale, form and massing of the 14-storey plus 2-storey mechanical penthouse office building, situated on the southwest corner of University Avenue and Richmond Street West
- The shared design, articulation and organization of the four elevations from the third to thirteenth floors
- The metal-clad perimeter columns extending from the first through thirteenth floors on the east and west elevations, and the first through sixteenth floors on the north and south elevations
- The recessed fourteenth floor
- The 2-storey mechanical penthouse (fifteenth and sixteenth floors) with its east and west setbacks from the tower elevations below. The north and south ends of the mechanical penthouse, which are flush with the tower elevations below, cantilever over the recessed fourteenth floor
- The glass-clad ground floor and mezzanine level set back from the perimeter columns and tower elevations
- The granite public plaza, terracing and entrance steps on the east and west elevations

Interior Attributes that contribute to the value of 200 University Avenue as representative of the Modernist style include:

- The entrance lobby, accessed through two sets of doors on the east and west elevations and aligned directly across from each other on the same east-west axis
- The metal door frames surrounding the two sets of entrance doors, including the roof canopies
- The travertine wall panelling and granite flooring throughout the entrance hall at street level
- The elevator lobby in the entrance hall and at each floor, with the travertine walls and stainless steel elevator doors and surrounds

Contextual Value

Attributes that contribute to the contextual value of 200 University Avenue as defining and supporting the character of the University Avenue precinct, and as being historically and visually linked to its surroundings include:

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building, with its primary entrance on University Avenue
- The granite, open public plaza between the primary (east) elevation of the building and University Avenue
- The unobstructed view of the east, north, and west elevations from University Avenue, Richmond Street West, and Simcoe Street