

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

Date: May 21, 2024

To: Toronto Preservation Board

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

Wards: Ward 11 - University-Rosedale

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 522 University Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value according to the Statement of Significance, including a description of Heritage Attributes, found in Attachment 1.

Located on the southwest corner of University Avenue and Elm Street, the property at 522 University Avenue contains a 15-storey office building constructed between 1971 and 1974. Designed by the prominent architect John C. Parkin for the National Life Assurance Company of Canada, the Modernist building is characterized by the uniform treatment of its tower façades in precast concrete, and a double-height, wedge-shaped colonnade at three sides which extend the public space along University Avenue, Elm Street and Simcoe Street. The building contributes to the monumental streetscape of University Avenue as developed in the post-WWII era and the site at 522 University Avenue represents the location of Toronto-based National Life Assurance Company of Canada's offices for nearly 95 years.

Staff have determined that the property at 522 University Avenue has cultural heritage value, meeting a total of 5 of 9 of the Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. 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.

As of July 1, 2021, Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days of a "Prescribed Event".

The property at 522 University Avenue is subject to a Prescribed Event. On August 30, 2022, the City received Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan applications related to the proposed redevelopment of the subject property (22 192156 STE 11 OZ and

22 192155 STE 11 SA). A Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) authored by ERA Architects and dated January 10, 2024 was submitted in support of the application and concludes that the property at 522 University Avenue meets 4 of the 9 criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV.

The City Clerk sent a Notice of Complete Application on September 23, 2022. The owner provided a waiver to extend the time period for Council to make a decision which expires on July 31, 2024. In order to meet prescribed timelines under the Ontario Heritage Act, Council must make a decision at its June 26-28, 2024 meeting to provide sufficient time for the City Clerk to issue a notice of intention to designate before the waiver expires.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 522 University Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance for 522 University Avenue (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1 to the report, May 21, 2024, from the Acting 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

City Planning confirms there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

There are no reports to committee and/or council pertaining to this file at the time of writing this report.

POLICY AND REGULATION CONSIDERATIONS

Provincial Plans and Policies

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

Further, the policies and definitions of the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) identify the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage evaluation and heritage conservation will be implemented.

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

<https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-place-to-grow-office-consolidation-en-2020-08-28.pdf>

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>

Official Plan

The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime and provides policies to guide decision making within the City. It 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. The Official Plan should be read as a whole to understand its comprehensive and integrative intent as a policy framework for priority setting and decision making. The Official Plan can be found here:

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

COMMENTS

Evaluation Analysis

The following evaluation analysis is based on the comprehensive research conducted on the property at 522 University Avenue (see Attachment 3) and provides the rationale for the recommendation(s) found in this report.

The property at 522 University Avenue meets the following 5 out of 9 criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06 - Criteria to Determine the Cultural Heritage Value or Interest:

The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.

The National Life Building is valued as a fine example of Monumental Modernist architecture utilizing precast concrete cladding in Toronto. Constructed in 1971-1974, the building's late Modernist character is evidenced by its uniform grid of punched windows and open ground floor plane. The building's distinct Monumental Modernist features include the double-height colonnade and the heavy massing of the wedge-shaped perimeter columns at three sides which extend the public space along University Avenue, Elm Street and Simcoe Street. The building is characterized by the regular rhythm and identical treatment of the east (primary), north, west and south façades with a grid of identical prefabricated precast concrete panels.

The building is also distinguished by the high quality precast concrete mix employed, with fine limestone aggregate and smooth finish which resembles stone. The individual T-shaped precast concrete panels were formed as a single, sculptural, modular unit, designed to clad the structure and create the deep returns around the punched windows. This distinctive and complex design is characteristic of the versatility of precast concrete as a building material, and of the range of buildings associated with this material and construction method during the Modern period in Toronto.

The National Life Building further demonstrates design/physical value through its unique construction method. Original drawings indicate that the prefabricated precast panels were temporarily supported (in sections), while the building's concrete superstructure was cast in place and permanent anchors were installed. This unorthodox construction method resulted in a very high-quality building envelope.

The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.

The building was purpose-built for the National Life Assurance Company of Canada (NLACC) to replace their Beaux-Arts style building that occupied the same site at the southwest corner of University Avenue and Elm Street since 1930. The NLACC is a Toronto-based company founded in 1899 and whose first offices stood at the corner of Toronto Street and Adelaide Street East until the company relocated to the prestigious University Avenue Precinct in 1930 prior to the Canada Life Building (1931) located at 330 University Avenue and the City of Toronto's University Avenue By-law (1931). The NLACC, established in Toronto in 1899 and a subsidiary of Industrial Alliance Insurance and Financial Services Inc. since 1988, has owned and occupied the subject property at a key location of University Avenue for nearly 95 years.

The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.

The National Life Building demonstrates the work of Toronto architect John C. Parkin, who has been described as one of Canada's most important modernist architects. Having begun his career 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 that period, the property at 522 University Avenue represents a fine example of John C. Parkin's portfolio as an executive architect following the elder Parkin's departure. While the subject property was under construction in 1972, John C. 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 him its Gold Medal.

The subject property also demonstrates the work of notable Toronto-based concrete manufacturer, Beer Precast. Their well-known projects include Toronto City Hall with Parkin Associates and Viljo Revell at 100 Queen Street West (1959-1964) and the Medical Sciences Buildings at 1 King's College Circle (1969).

The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.

Contextually, the National Life Building is valued for its role in defining, maintaining and supporting the character of the University Avenue Precinct, one of Toronto's major streets and a significant ceremonial avenue that is home to a collection of significant buildings associated with important corporate institutions in Toronto's history and constructed during the twentieth century following the adoption of the University Avenue By-law (1931) that established guidelines directing the scale, materials and appearance of commercial and institutional buildings along the ceremonial boulevard leading to Queen's Park. The by-law regulations with respect to setbacks, design and appearance are reflected in both the design of - and the views framed by - the monumental colonnade.

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.

The subject property is physically, historically and visually linked with its surroundings where it contributes to the group of custom-designed buildings characterizing University Avenue, including the Canada Life Building (1931), 330 University Avenue, the Bank of Canada Building (1958), 250 University Avenue, the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961), 481 University Avenue, the Sun Life Assurance Company Building also designed by John C. Parkin (1961), 200 University Avenue, and the Metro Toronto Court House (1966), 361 University Avenue, which are all recognized heritage properties in the city.

Prescribed Event Status

As of July 1, 2021, Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days of a "Prescribed Event".

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 Prescribed Event is not the date a development application is deemed complete or when an application is made to the City. A Prescribed Event, including any prescribed exceptions, are defined under O. Reg 385/21. 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.

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 under Section 29(1.2)1 of the Ontario Heritage Act. This requirement does not apply to a Prescribed Event that has occurred prior to January 1, 2023.

CONCLUSION

Staff have determined that the property at 522 University Avenue meets 5 out of 9 criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. As such, the property merits designation and staff recommend that Council support the designation of this property to conserve its cultural heritage value.

The Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation) for 522 University Avenue attached as Attachment 1 to this report comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

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SIGNATURE

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Acting Senior Manager, Heritage Planning
Urban Design, City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation) - 522 University Avenue
Attachment 2 – Location Map and Current Photograph
Attachment 3 – Research, Evaluation & Visual Resources

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

The property at 522 University Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural value and meets Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the categories of design/physical, historical/ associative and contextual value.

Description

Located on the west side of University Avenue directly south of Elm Street, the property at 522 University Avenue comprises a 15-storey office building for the National Life Assurance Company of Canada designed and completed in 1971-1974 by John C. Parkin, whose firm at the time was known as Parkin, Searle, Wilbee & Rowland.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The National Life Building is valued as a fine example of Monumental Modernist architecture utilizing precast concrete cladding in Toronto. Constructed in 1971-1974, the building's late Modernist character is evidenced by its uniform grid of punched windows and open ground floor plane. The building's distinct Monumental Modernist features include the double-height colonnade and the heavy massing of the wedge-shaped perimeter columns at three sides which extend the public space along University Avenue, Elm Street and Simcoe Street. The building is characterized by the regular rhythm and identical treatment of the east (primary), north, west, and south façades with a grid of identical prefabricated precast concrete panels.

The building is also distinguished by the high quality precast concrete mix employed, with fine limestone aggregate, and smooth finish which resembles stone. The individual T-shaped precast concrete panels were formed as a single, sculptural, modular unit, which was designed to clad the structure and create the deep returns around the punched windows.

The National Life Building further demonstrates design/physical value through its unique construction method. Original drawings indicate that the prefabricated precast panels were temporarily supported (in sections), while the building's concrete superstructure was cast in place and permanent anchors were installed. This unorthodox construction method has resulted in a very high-quality building envelope. This distinctive and complex design is characteristic of the versatility of precast concrete as a building material, and of the range of buildings associated with this material and construction method during the Modern period in Toronto.

The building was purpose-built for the National Life Assurance Company of Canada (NLACC) to replace their Beaux-Arts style building that occupied the same site since 1930. The NLACC is a Toronto-based company founded in 1899 and whose first offices stood at the corner of Toronto Street and Adelaide Street East until the company relocated to the prestigious University Avenue Precinct in 1930, as would numerous

other significant corporate institutions like Canada Life at 330 University Avenue, the Bank of Canada at 250 University Avenue and Sun Life at 200 University Avenue, the latter company's headquarters also designed by John C. Parkin. The NLACC, established in Toronto in 1899 and a subsidiary of Industrial Alliance Insurance and Financial Services Inc. since 1988, has occupied the subject property at the southwest corner of University Avenue and Elm Street for nearly 95 years.

The National Life Building demonstrates the work of Toronto architect John C. Parkin, who has been described as one of Canada's most important modernist architects. Having begun his career 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 that period, the property at 522 University Avenue represents a fine example of John C. Parkin's portfolio as an executive architect following the elder Parkin's departure. While the subject property was under construction in 1972, John C. 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 him its Gold Medal.

The subject property also demonstrates the work of notable Toronto-based concrete manufacturer, Beer Precast. Their well-known projects include Toronto City Hall with Parkin Associates and Viljo Revell at 100 Queen Street West (1959-1964) and the Medical Sciences Buildings at 1 King's College Circle (1969).

Contextually, the National Life Building is valued for its role in defining, maintaining and supporting the character of the University Avenue Precinct, one of Toronto's major streets and a significant ceremonial avenue that is home to a collection of significant buildings associated with important corporate institutions in Toronto's history and constructed during the twentieth century following the adoption of the University Avenue By-law (1931) that established guidelines directing the scale, materials and appearance of commercial and institutional buildings along the ceremonial boulevard leading to Queen's Park. The by-law regulations with respect to setbacks, design and appearance are reflected in both the design of - and the views framed by - the monumental colonnade.

The subject property is physically, historically and visually linked with its surroundings where it contributes to the group of custom-designed buildings characterizing University Avenue, including the Canada Life Building (1931), 330 University Avenue, the Bank of Canada Building (1958), 250 University Avenue, the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961), 481 University Avenue, the Sun Life Assurance Company Building also designed by John C. Parkin (1961), 200 University Avenue, and the Metro Toronto Court House (1966), 361 University Avenue, which are all recognized heritage properties in the city.

Heritage Attributes

Design or Physical Value

Attributes that contribute to the value of the property at 522 University Avenue as a fine example of Monumental Modernism include:

- The scale, form and massing of the fifteen-storey office building situated on the southwest corner of University Avenue and Elm Street
- The rectilinear massing of the building with its symmetrical window openings on all four elevations
- The materiality of the external wall and colonnade cladding with the high quality precast concrete mix employed, with fine limestone aggregate, and smooth finish which resembles stone
- The uniform arrangement and design of individual precast concrete panels from the third to fifteenth storeys on each elevation
- The scale and proportions of the tower window openings on all four elevations
- The tapered, precast concrete-clad perimeter columns extending from the first through second storeys
- The recessed position, and use of transparent glass at the ground and second storeys, with the second storey cantilevered over the ground storey at the east, north, and west elevations
- At the ground storey of the north elevation fronting onto Elm Street, the centred section of granite wall cladding
- The coffered/waffle concrete ceiling under the second storey of the exterior podium and its continuation into the entrance lobby creating a blurring or fluidity of interior and exterior space
- The continuous open ground floor plane extending from the exterior terrace into the interior entrance lobby
- The entrance lobby interior, with its double-height volume facing the east elevation and its mirrored walls and creating an extended perception of the depth of space

Contextual Value

Attributes that contribute to the contextual value of the property at 522 University Avenue as helping to define, maintain and support the character of the University Avenue Precinct:

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building in relation to University Avenue, Elm Street and Simcoe Street

N.B. the one-storey podium with a second-storey addition at the south end of the property is not considered a heritage attribute.

LOCATION MAP AND CURRENT PHOTOGRAPH

522 UNIVERSITY AVENUE

ATTACHMENT 2



This location map is for information purposes only. The exact boundaries of the property are not shown. The red arrow marks the location of the property containing the National Life Building at 522 University Avenue (City of Toronto iView Mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning, 2024).



National Life Building, 522 University Avenue (Heritage Planning, 2024)

RESEARCH, EVALUATION & VISUAL RESOURCES

ATTACHMENT 3

522 UNIVERSITY AVENUE

In undertaking this research and evaluation, we recognize that 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.



522 University Avenue (Heritage Planning, 2024)

1. DESCRIPTION

522 UNIVERSITY AVENUE	
ADDRESS	522 University Avenue
WARD	11 - University-Rosedale
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Yonge-Bay Corridor
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1971-1974
ORIGINAL USE	Commercial: Office
CURRENT USE* (*This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law	Commercial: Office *This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	John C. Parkin (Parkin, Searle, Wilbee & Rowland)
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 3

2. ONTARIO REGULATION 9/06 CHECKLIST:

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The following checklist identifies the five prescribed criteria met by the subject property at 522 University Avenue for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. There are a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act if the property 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.

522 UNIVERSITY AVENUE

1.	The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	✓
2.	The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	N/A
3.	The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	N/A
4.	The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	✓
5.	The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	N/A
6.	The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	✓
7.	The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	✓
8.	The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	✓
9.	The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	N/A

3. RESEARCH

This section of the report describes the history, architecture and context of the property. Visual resources related to the research are located in Section 4. Archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Section 5 (List of Sources).

i. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the property 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. 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. 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

¹ Osbaldeston, 29.

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 the designs of Marani & Morris 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 Maclean-Hunter Building (481 University Avenue, Marani and Morris, 1961) and the Dominion of Canada General Insurance Company (165 University Avenue, Marani & Morris, 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 200 University Avenue. 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
- National Life Building, 522 University Avenue, 1930 (demolished in 1971)
- Canada Life Building, 330 University Avenue, 1931
- Bank of Canada Building, 250 University Avenue, 1958
- Dominion of Canada General Insurance Building, 165 University Avenue, 1958
- Shell Oil Building, 505 University Avenue, 1958; 1966
- Sun Life Building, 200 University Avenue, 1961
- Maclean-Hunter Building, 481 University Avenue, 1961
- Dominion of Canada General Insurance Company, 165 University Avenue, 1962
- Metropolitan Toronto Court House, 361 University Avenue, 1966
- National Life Building, 522 University Avenue, 1971-1974

² Toronto Building Records, Permits #46878 and 47105

³ McHugh and Bozikovic, 101.

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

Whereas Montreal had been the country's economic heart during the first half of the 20th century, Toronto's rise since 1960 as the unchallenged metropolis of Canada led to hundreds of corporate head offices relocating there.⁴ The grand ceremonial boulevard of University Avenue, and its proximity to the Toronto's Financial District, provided a prestigious location for major banks, corporations and institutions.

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 contributes to the downtown core's architectural character and public realm.

Site History and 522 University Avenue

Redevelopment of the Ward slowly began in the early 1900s and intensified during University Avenue's Beaux-Arts period. Grange Park developed south of the Caer Howell Racket Court and Bowling Green. College Avenue informally served as the western boundary of the Ward. A few rowhouses and a reformed episcopal church were built on the subject property in the 1860s/1870s. The church on the subject property was called Christ Church, later Beth Tabernacle. By 1888, the street was renamed University Avenue and was released from the University of Toronto to become a public street. Soon afterwards, University Avenue became one of the principal north-south arteries of the city. (Image 1)

Beginning in the 1890s, a series of important institutional structures were built or expanded along the Avenue. With the completion of the Provincial Legislature in 1892, the Avenue became a boulevard for public procession to the governmental buildings including Toronto Hospital, Armouries, and Osgoode Hall extension. In 1913, the street was redesigned to divide north and south traffic and provide a more formal setting for these institutional uses. By the turn of the 20th century, University Avenue functioned as a ceremonial boulevard for public procession. (Images 2-4)

To the north and northeast of the subject property, land was expropriated for a cluster of healthcare facilities that is now known as Hospital Row. In 1923, a bronze and granite monument designed by Charles Adamson honouring the Sons of England was installed on the island in the middle of University Avenue, east of the subject property⁵. The National Life Assurance Company of Canada (NLACC) relocated their offices to the subject property in 1930. The Toronto-based company was founded in 1899 and their offices were previously located at the southeast corner of Toronto Street and Adelaide Street East.⁶ Their new office, which preceded the existing building, was built in accordance with the Beaux-Arts design guidelines. This building remained on the subject property until it was removed in 1971. Also during the post-WWII period, a grand

4 Linteau, Paul-Andre

5 Sons of England Memorial (cdli.ca)

6 Toronto Daily Star (1900-1971); Apr 22, 1905; ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

landscape plan by Dunington-Grubb & Stensson and facilitated by the University Avenue subway line redesigned University Avenue with modern design motifs in addition to a wide variety of sculptures and existing war monuments. (Images 5-8)

NLACC demolished their earlier office building in 1971. Construction of the existing building began soon after and was completed by 1974. The existing building was designed by Parkin, Searle, Wilbee & Rowland. Beer Precast Concrete Ltd. manufactured the existing building's precast concrete cladding. (Images 9-14)

John C. Parkin, Architect

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".⁷

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 Associates⁸ 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."⁹ 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 Architects Planners two years later. This firm would undergo a number

7 Ontario Association of Architects. (1988). Parkin, John Creswell.

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

9 Howarth, Thomas, p.12.

of name changes before a merger with Smith Carter Searle, becoming Parkin, Searle Wilbee & Rowland from the 1970s to the mid-1980s. By 1986, the firm was known as NORR Architects and is still operating under the same name today.

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. 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."¹⁰

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."¹¹

Beer Precast Concrete

A review of available archival sources indicates the precast concrete cladding was manufactured by the Toronto company Beer Precast. The 2002 publication, *The Beers: Canada's First Family in Precast Concrete* by Elizabeth Hulse describes the history of the family and their business. A brief summary description of Beer Precast written by Elizabeth Hulse was also included in the 2007 publication *Concrete Toronto: A Guide to Concrete Architecture from the Fifties to the Seventies* by Michael McClelland and Graeme Stewart. When the first Fred Beer had begun as a pattern maker for precast concrete in Toronto in 1904, it was for the Roman Stone Company. Ambivalence about concrete for visual building details is reflected in this and other names such as 'art stone' or 'cast stone' in the firms he worked for or founded. Not until after World War II did concrete come into its own as an architectural material, and a Beer company advertisement could boast, 'Precast concrete is like sculptor's clay in an architect's hand.' By 1968, the Beer family had accumulated three generations' experience of concrete manufacturing in Toronto and the company, now run by Fred A. and Doug Beer, was widely recognized as a leader in the field of precast architectural concrete in Canada.

The Beers collaborated on wide array of projects of varying complexity and detail, and are responsible for a number of renowned projects in Toronto and across Canada. Through the 1950s and early 1960s the firm worked on several modernist buildings with Toronto architect Peter Dickinson, including the Queen Elizabeth Building (1956) at the CNE, the Prudential Insurance Building (1960), and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce tower (1961) in Montreal. Further, the Beers were responsible for all the precast elements in New City Hall (1965, designed by Viljo Revell) and the Medical

¹⁰ Toronto Star (March 1, 1991)

¹¹ The Globe and Mail (February 19, 1997)

Sciences Building at the University of Toronto (1969, in collaboration with Robert Downing and Ted Bieler). The Subject Property was one of Beer Precast's final projects before the company was sold. Their hands-on experience and innovativeness, ability to collaborate with architects and designers, and exceptional workforce ensured the Beers remained leaders in the industry until the business was sold in 1976.¹²

ii. 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.

Brutalism and Monumental Modernism

The subject property represents a departure from International Style Modernism, which was widely popular for office towers through the mid-century. In the postwar area, critical themes in architecture arose as a reaction to the dematerialized nature of International Style Modernism. Architectural discourse led by the hugely influential Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) focused on how to reintroduce memorable imagery, monumental character, public space, and sensory experience into architecture through modern materials and expression.

During the 1950s-1960s the corridor of University Avenue through to Queen's Park became populated by numerous limestone modernist office towers which exemplify these themes, such as; Marani & Morris's Bank of Canada Building (1958), Shell Oil Building (1958), Maclean Hunter Building (1961), The Metropolitan Courthouse by F.H. Marani (1966), and the MacDonald Block Complex (900 Bay St) by a consortium 'The Associated Architects' including Gordon S. Adamson & Associates, Allward & Gouinlock, Mathers & Haldenby, and Shore and Moffat & Partners (1965-1969). The subject property at 522 University Avenue demonstrates a very similar architectural expression to the limestone modernist structures in the surrounding area using precast concrete in place of stone. The precast concrete was designed with a smooth face and fine aggregate to mimic the appearance of stone. (Image 15)

During this time, Brutalism emerged as a branch of postwar modernism which sought to express monumentality through the widespread use of (exterior) concrete, which provided unique opportunities to express monumentality through sculptural forms and heavy massing. While the subject property does not demonstrate an expression the raw texture of concrete like many Brutalist structures, the sculptural quality of the T-shaped precast concrete panels, the deep window returns, massive perimeter columns, and expansive colonnade are used to generate clear, memorable imagery.¹³

National Life Building, 522 University Avenue

"National Life was designed as a modern addition to the monumental streetscape of University Avenue. Using its precast panels as a nod to context, its warm light limestone aggregate echoes its neighbouring masonry structures. Sculptural piers lift the building's

¹² This information gleaned from ERA, HIA, 75.

¹³ Excerpt from ERA, HIA, 66.

heavy bulk, under which hangs the cantilevered second storey. Its generous free-plan lobby provides access from the ordered grandeur of University Avenue to the quiet streets of Baldwin Village to the west."

- McClelland & Stewart, Concrete Toronto

The subject property is located at the southwest corner of University Avenue and Elm Street, and contains a Modernist, 15-storey commercial office building designed in 1971 and completed in 1974. The building addresses the public realm on University Avenue from its primary (east) elevation, where the main entrance is located. The building also addresses the public realm on Elm Street from its north elevation and Simcoe Street from its west elevation, where an additional entrance aligns with the University Avenue one as a through lobby. The south elevation faces the north elevation of 500 University Avenue, a 10-storey commercial office building. The entrance to underground parking is located on the west elevation of the building.

The tower elevations are characterized by a regular grid of identical prefabricated precast concrete panels which are anchored to concrete edge beams at each floor slab. The individual inverted T-shaped precast concrete panels are arranged to frame punched windows (and louvers at the penthouse level). Large rectangular panels frame the top and base of the tower elevations. (Images 16-19)

The first and second storeys above grade are characterized by a double-height colonnade at the west, north and east elevations, where a glazed curtain wall assembly is setback from the sculptural, wedge-shaped perimeter columns. The tapered perimeter columns are clad with wedge-shaped precast concrete panels which create the distinct shape. A single egress door at grade on the north elevation is clad with granite to conceal its appearance. The colonnade contains two soffit conditions. The higher soffit below the third-floor slab is a coffered or waffle design with integrated lighting and mechanical grilles, and a black mosaic tile border. The lower soffit beneath the overhanging second floor plate is clad with glass mosaic tiles. The original glass square mosaic tiles are currently painted.

The building is set on a raised platform which forms the base of the ground floor colonnade. The hardscape features granite paving, granite stairs, and granite-clad raised planter boxes. The original hardscape has been modified with the 1998 addition of an accessible ramp at the northeast corner and metal railings and guards around the perimeter of the building. (Images 20-23)

A 2-storey podium extending south from the tower base creates an interstitial space between the subject building and the adjacent 10-storey office building at 500 University Avenue. This two-storey podium is clad with a glazed curtain wall with opaque metal spandrel panel across the slab edge and parapet. Archival information on the original design indicates that the south podium was originally only one storey in height. (see Image 14) The design of the south podium has been modified through the addition of an additional (second) storey in 2000.

On the building interior, the ground floor lobby features a central double-height space which faces the east elevation. The interior lobby contains many original features, such as the continuation of the coffered ceiling design from the upper exterior soffit, mirrored

walls at the second floor of the double-height space, which reflect the coffered ceiling so that it appears to be continuous, the continuation of the (currently painted) mosaic tile ceiling from the lower exterior soffit, the integrated mechanical grilles at the perimeter curtain wall base, and the storefront glazing/door assemblies to the separate tenant spaces. The original granite floor tiles and wall cladding at the elevator core appear to be the same granite used at the exterior. Minor interior renovations have been made to the interior including a light-stained wood wall cladding, and modified ceiling and mezzanine design at the elevator lobby. (Images 24-30)

iii. 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 Location Map (Attachment 2) shows the site of the property at 522 University Avenue on the southwest corner of University Avenue and Elm Street. Immediately north on the west side of University Avenue is Mount Sinai Hospital and across the grand, landscaped boulevard along University Avenue stands the Shell Oil Building at 505 University Avenue (1958; 1966) and the Maclean-Hunter Building (1961), which is a post-WWII addition to the Maclean-Hunter complex. (Images 31-34)

The Location Map (Attachment 3) shows the site of the property at 522 University Avenue.

4. VISUAL RESOURCES

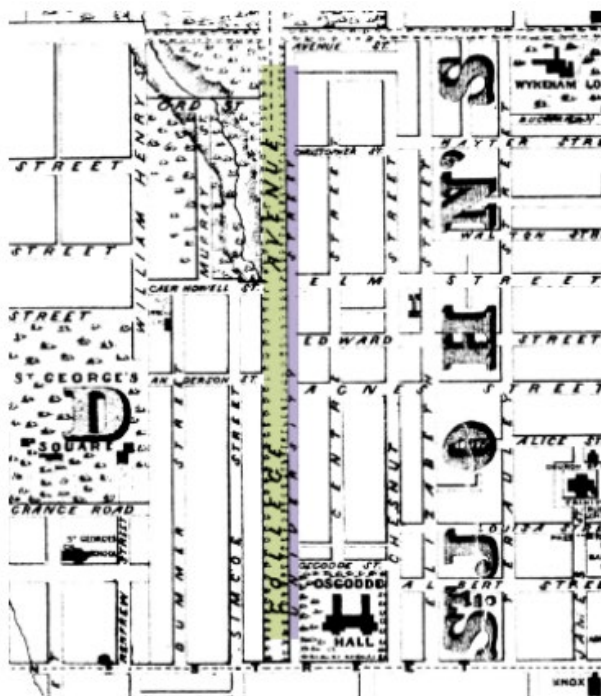


Image 1: 1871 map of the City of Toronto. College Avenue is highlighted in green, University Street, also called Park Lane, is highlighted in purple (York University; annotated by ERA)

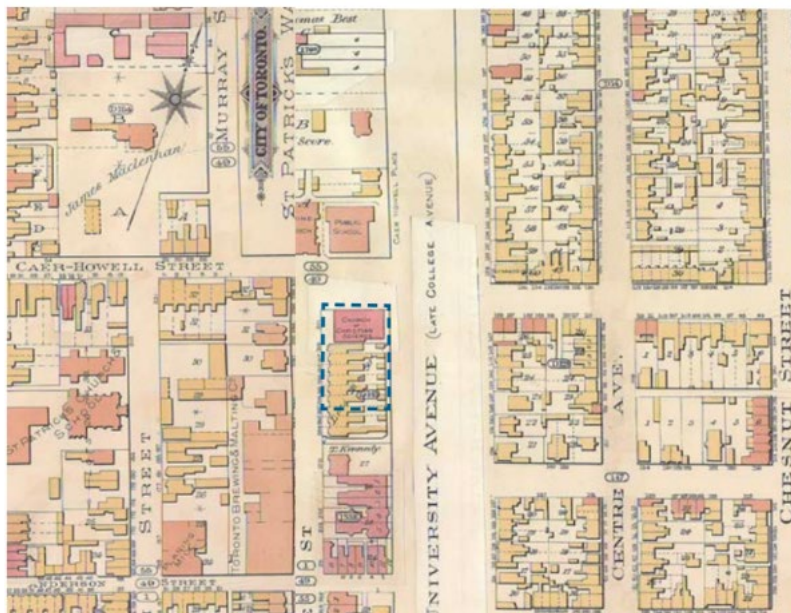


Image 2: 1899 Goad's Historical Atlas Map showing College Avenue, University Street, and Park Lane have been amalgamated to form University Avenue. Elm street was then known as Caer-Howell Street. The subject property outlined in blue contains a church, later Beth Tabernacle and wood-framed buildings (Ng; annotated by ERA)



Image 3: 1924 Goad's Historical Atlas Map showing Caer-Howell Street has been renamed Elm Street and Anderson Street has been renamed into Dundas Street West. (Ng; annotated by ERA)

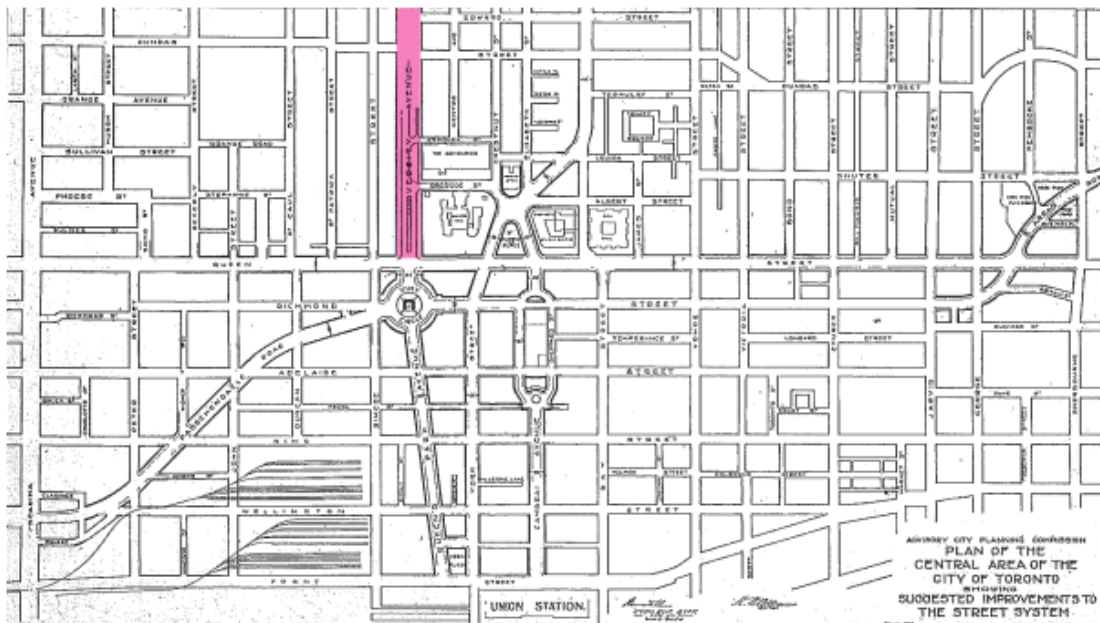


Image 4: 1929 proposed plan of the Central Area of the City of Toronto with University Avenue highlighted in pink. (City of Toronto Archives; annotated by ERA)



Image 5: 1948 photograph looking southwest at the Sons of England Memorial with the south end of the 1930 National Life Building just visible at right. (City of Toronto Archives)



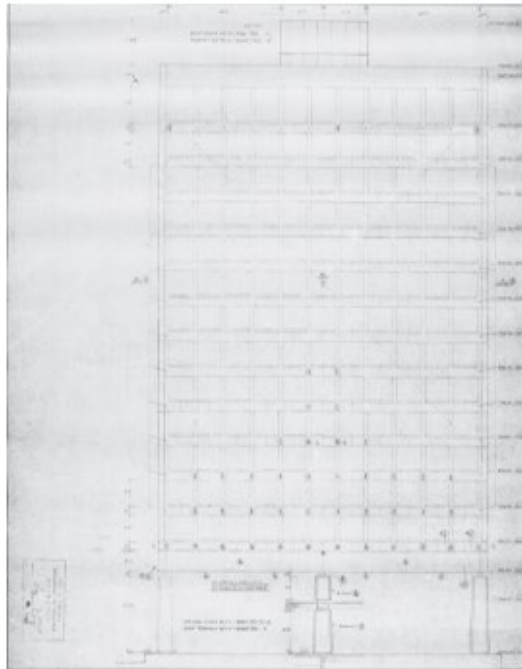
Image 6: c.1960 archival photograph looking northwest at University Avenue and Elm Street. Note NLACC's Beaux-Arts inspired 1930 office highlighted in pink on the subject property (Gil Meslin; annotated by ERA)



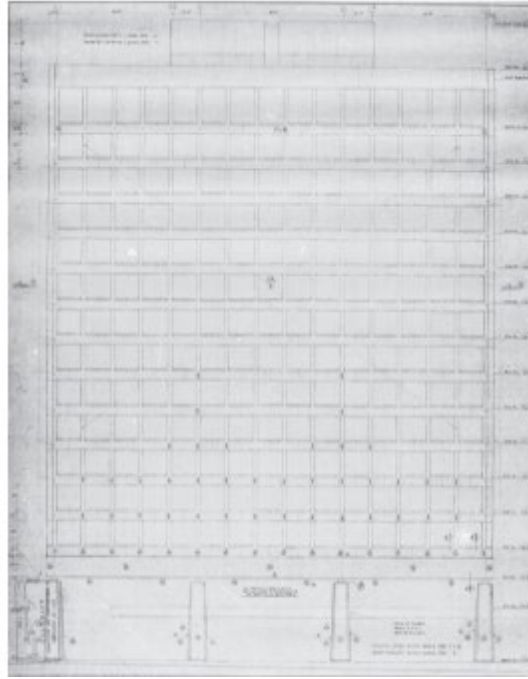
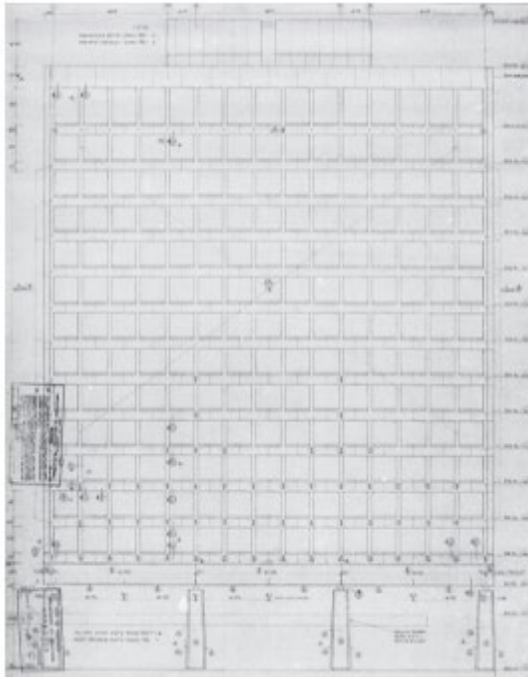
Image 7: 1949 Dunington-Grubb and Stensson layout sketch proposal for University Avenue. (City of Toronto Archives)



Image 8: 1963 archival photograph looking south along the Dunington-Grubb and Stensson landscaped ceremonial boulevard of University Avenue from north of Dundas Street West with part of the 1930 National Life Building at right. (City of Toronto Archives)



Images 9 and 10: 1971 archival drawings of the north and south elevations (Building Records)



Images 11 and 12: 1971 archival drawings of the west and east elevations (Building Records)

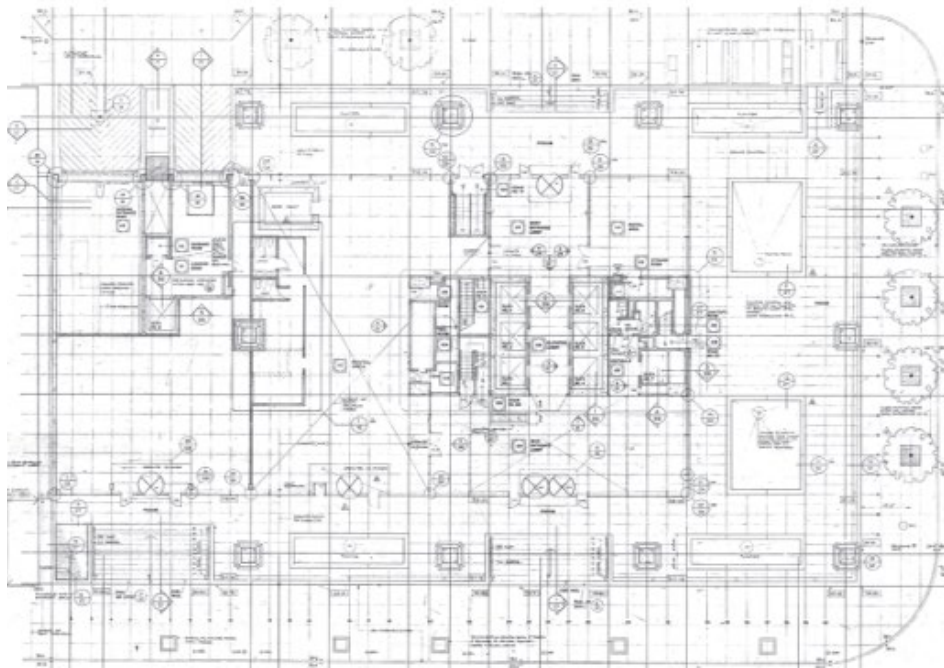


Image 13: 1971 archival drawing of the ground floor plan, including the exterior granite terracing and planters (Building Records)



Image 14: 1974 archival image of the newly completed National Life Building at 522 University Avenue. Note the single-storey height of the south podium adjacent to 500 University Avenue. (NORR)



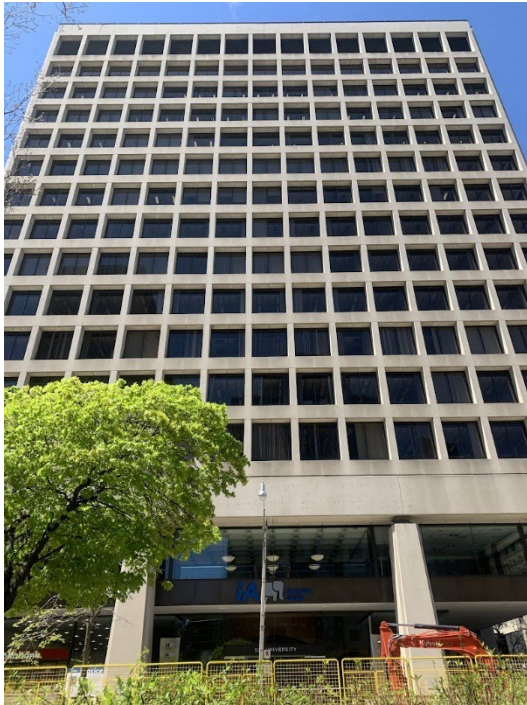
Image 15: Examples of Monumental Modernism on University Avenue:

(Top) Metropolitan Courthouse designed by F.H. Marani in 1966 (ACO TOBuilt) (ERA, 2024)

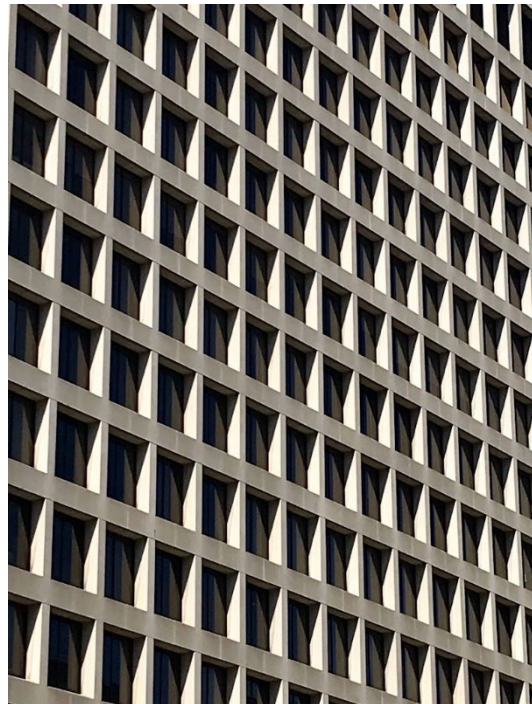
(Bottom left) Shell Oil Building designed by Marani & Morris in 1958 (ACO TOBuilt)

(Middle right) Maclean Hunter Building designed by Marani & Morris in 1961 (ACO TOBuilt)

(Bottom right) Bank of Canada Building designed by Marani & Morris in 1958 (ACO TOBuilt)



Images 16 and 17: Current photographs of the east elevation fronting University Avenue (Heritage Planning, 2024)



Images 18 and 19: Current photograph of the south and west elevations from Simcoe Street (left); detail of the precast concrete panels and deeply recessed, punched window openings (right). (Heritage Planning, 2024)



Images 20-22: Current photographs showing details of the coffered or waffle ceiling and original granite terrace. (Heritage Planning, 2024)



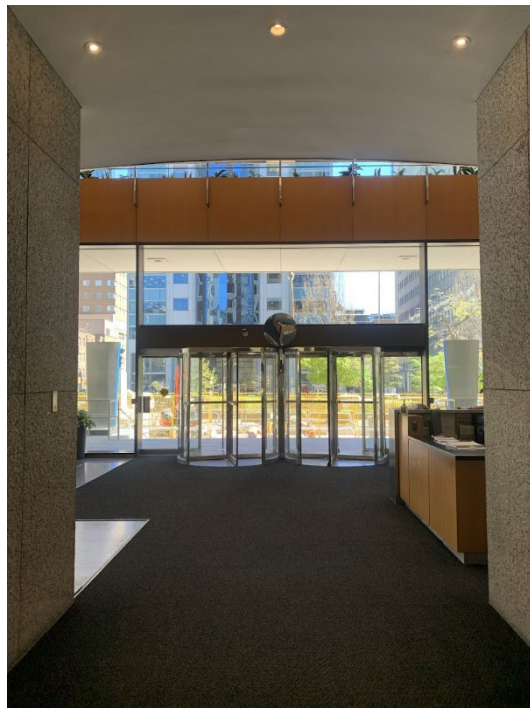
Image 23: Current photograph of the primary (east) entrance with granite stairs. (Heritage Planning, 2024)



Image 24: 1974 archival image of the lobby interior, looking southwest. Note the indoor/outdoor design intent, the mirrored walls, interior greenery and coffered or waffle ceiling. (NORR)



Images 25-28: Current interior photographs showing the open-plan ground floor and mezzanine levels with mirrored walls and extension of the coffered ceiling from the exterior to the interior. (Heritage Planning, 2024)



Images 29 and 30: Current photographs of the interior looking toward the lobby elevator bank and west entrance (left) and primary (east) entrance at right. (Heritage Planning, 2024)



Images 31 and 32: Current contextual photographs: View of the Shell Oil Building at 505 University Avenue as framed by the wedge-shaped colonnade at the National Life Building (left); view of the partial south and west elevations of the National Life Building from Simcoe Street (right). (Heritage Planning, 2024)



Images 33 and 34: Current contextual photographs looking south (top) and north (bottom) along the boulevard of University Avenue with the subject property indicated by the red arrow. (Heritage Planning, 2024)

5. LIST OF SOURCES

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

- City of Toronto Archives Photographic Collection
- City of Toronto Building Records
- City of Toronto Public Library, City Directories
- Land Registry Office Records
- Toronto Public Library. Globe and Mail historical newspaper archive
<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail.jsp?R=EDB0057>
- Toronto Public Library. Toronto Star historical newspaper archive
<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/detail?R=EDB0111>

SECONDARY SOURCES

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