

53 Strachan Avenue - Inclusion on the Heritage Register

Date: November 13, 2024

To: Toronto Preservation Board

Toronto and East York Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 10 – Spadina – Fort York

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council include 53 Strachan Avenue (including entrance addresses 715, 801, 805 A, 805, and 805 B Wellington Street West) on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register for its cultural heritage value and interest according to the Listing Statement (Reasons for Inclusion) found in Attachment 1.

The subject property at 53 Strachan Avenue is located on the southeast corner of Strachan Avenue and Wellington Street West, immediately north of the Lakeshore West rail corridor. A location map and current photograph of the heritage property are found in Attachment 1.

The subject property contains a three-storey, late-nineteenth century, brick factory/warehouse type building that extends one full block along Wellington Street West, east of Strachan Avenue. Constructed between 1888 and 1901, the property was the site of John B. Smith and Sons, which was considered one of the largest lumber planing mills in nineteenth century Canada. The company operated at the property for almost 80 years, until 1967.

The city-owned property was identified in 2014 as having potential heritage value as part of a heritage survey conducted through the South Niagara Planning Strategy. Another nearby former industrial site, the National Casket Company Factories at 89-109 Niagara Street, is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The property recommended for inclusion on the City's Heritage Register has been researched and evaluated by staff using the criteria prescribed in Ontario Regulation 9/06 and meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest and is believed to be of cultural heritage value or interest.

On January 1, 2023, amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act (the Act) through the More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 (Bill 23) came into effect. Under the Act, as amended, a municipal heritage register may include properties that have not been designated but Council believes to be of “cultural heritage value or interest”, and that meet one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether they are of cultural heritage value or interest. The Act now also limits listing to a period of two years.

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, properties must be listed on the heritage register prior to Part IV designation and before the occurrence 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 listing of non-designated properties on the municipal heritage register under the Act also extends interim protection from demolition and provides an opportunity for City Council to determine whether the property warrants conservation through designation under the Act should a development or demolition application be submitted.

Properties on the Heritage Register will be conserved and maintained in accordance with the Official Plan Heritage Policies. Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) are required for development applications that affect listed properties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council include 53 Strachan Avenue (including entrance addresses 715, 801, 805 A, 805, 805 B Wellington Street West) on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register in accordance with the Listing Statement (Reasons for Inclusion) attached as Attachment 1 to the report, November 13, 2024, from the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning.

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

On December 16, 2020, City Council passed motion MM27.33 regarding a future City-initiated Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments for the site of the subject property to permit the redevelopment of a new supportive housing facility, which contemplates maintaining the existing building at 53 Strachan Avenue. [Agenda Item History - 2020.MM27.33 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

On August 25, 2014, City Council adopted the South Niagara Planning Strategy that envisioned the South Niagara Area as a mixed-use community, complementary to the existing Niagara Neighbourhood. The Strategy included securing the preservation and adaptive reuse of the area's heritage resources, in a format which respects and transitions to the existing neighbourhood and the adjacent Fort York National Historic Site and identified the property located at 53 Strachan Avenue as having heritage potential. City Council directed staff to report back to Toronto and East York Community Council on the potential to designate the property at 53 Strachan Avenue, including entrance addresses at 715, 801 A, and 805 Wellington Street West, under the Ontario Heritage Act, RSO 1990. [Item – 2014.PG35.4](#)

POLICY AND REGULATION CONSIDERATIONS

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 Planning Statement (2024) identify the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage evaluation and heritage conservation will be implemented. [Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 \(ontario.ca\)](#)

Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to be included in the Heritage Register under subsection 27 (1) 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 included on the Heritage Register as a non-designated property if the property meets one 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:

COMMENTS

Identifying properties of cultural heritage value or interest is an essential part of a municipality's role in heritage conservation. Including non-designated properties in the municipal register is a means to identify properties that the City believes to have cultural heritage value or interest.

The subject property contains a three-storey, late-nineteenth century, brick factory/warehouse type building that stretches a full block along Wellington Street West, east of Strachan Avenue. Constructed between 1888 and 1901, the property was the site of John B. Smith and Sons, a prominent lumber company. Considered one of the largest planing mills in nineteenth century Canada, the mill operated at the property from 1888 to 1967. Along with the Part IV designated National Casket Company Factories at 89-109 Niagara Street, the property survives from an era when industrial buildings, many since demolished, lined the railway corridor in the surrounding area.

The property at 53 Strachan Avenue has been owned by the City of Toronto since at least the late-nineteenth century. The City leased the land to John B. Smith and Sons until 1967 when the company closed the mill. The buildings remained vacant until 1996 when the site was rehabilitated as supportive housing. The site was vacated and closed in 2020 due to structural concerns.

The subject property at 53 Strachan Avenue was identified as having potential heritage value as part of a heritage survey conducted through the South Niagara Planning Strategy, adopted by Council in August 2014. Council further requested the evaluation of a number of properties, including 53 Strachan Avenue, for inclusion on the Heritage Register.

At its meeting on December 16, 2020, City Council requested staff to consider any required amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law, through a City-initiated application, as they apply to City-owned lands at 53 Strachan Avenue or in part, to permit the development of a new supportive housing facility. The member motion supporting this request recognized the potential heritage value of the former John B. Smith and Sons building and sought the inclusion of Heritage Planning in the consideration of the development of the property.

The subject property contains two buildings: a three-storey factory building at 53 Strachan Avenue (including entrance address 805A Wellington Street West), and a two-storey garage building at 805 Wellington Street West. This report is recommending the three-storey factory building at 53 Strachan Avenue for inclusion on the City's Heritage Register due to design, historical/associative, and contextual value. More detailed historical research conducted through a future evaluation for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act may determine additional cultural heritage values for the property.

Inclusion of (non-designated) properties on the City's Heritage Register

The following processes apply to any owner of property subject to the Ontario Heritage Act. As a general rule, non-designated listed properties do not have any protection under the Ontario Heritage Act, except insofar as an owner must give Council at least 60 days' notice of their intention to demolish or remove a structure on the property. Properties that are listed on the City's Heritage Register are flagged for review by Heritage Planning staff once a demolition permit has been submitted and owners must follow established Notice requirements under the Ontario Heritage Act following this action.

Although inclusion on the Heritage Register as a listed property provides interim protection from demolition, it does not preclude an owner's ability to make exterior and interior alterations in the case when demolition or a development application is not involved.

Listing does not trigger maintenance requirements over and above existing property standards and it does not restrict altering, removing or adding any features on the property. It does not allow the City to withhold a building permit for non-demolition related alterations and it does not preclude a property from undergoing renovation.

A municipality is not required to consult with property owners or the public before including non-designated properties on the municipal register under the Act. The City's current practice, developed prior to Bill 23 amendments to the Act coming into effect, notifies property owners and invites them to attend the Toronto Preservation Board meeting to discuss the recommendation of a property's inclusion on the City's Heritage Register. There is also an opportunity for owners and the public to share concerns (in person or writing) when Community Council or Planning and Housing Committee considers a heritage related matter.

Short descriptive listings are prepared using a method by which properties are identified and recommended for inclusion on the Heritage Register. This approach to listing provides sufficient information to meet the requirements of Section 27 of the Act to list a non-designated property on the Heritage Register.

Brief statements, named "Reasons for Inclusion", are prepared for all recommended properties explaining why the property is believed to have cultural heritage value and how it meets one or more of the provincial criteria under O. Reg 9/06 providing a preliminary evaluation of the cultural heritage value or interest of the property. The description may include features of the property that may warrant conservation should the property be subject to development and/or further evaluated and determined to merit designation under Part IV of the Act. Location map and photographs are included in each Reasons for Inclusion.

Through Bill 108 and Bill 23, amendments were made to the Ontario Heritage Act to establish a process whereby owners can object to a property's listing on the Heritage Register and, should they do so, a subsequent decision on the listing must be made by the municipality. Owners can object to listings at any time. Chapter 103 of the Toronto Municipal Code establishes the process for Council consideration of objections to properties included on the Heritage Register. In this circumstance, the City is the owner,

so the objection process would not be triggered for a subsequent council decision on the listing of this property.

CONCLUSION

Following research and evaluation of the property at 53 Strachan Avenue (including entrance addresses 715, 801, 805 A, 805, and 805 B Wellington Street West) according to Ontario Regulation 9/06, it has been determined that the property meets one or more provincial criteria and merits inclusion on the City's Heritage Register. The Listing Statement (Reason for Inclusion) is presented in Attachment 1.

CONTACT

Gary Miedema, CAHP, Ph.D.,
Project Manager, Heritage Planning
Urban Design, City Planning
Tel: 416-338-1091
E-mail: Gary.Miedema@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE

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

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – 53 Strachan Avenue - Listing Statement (Reasons for Inclusion)

Listing Statement (Reasons for Inclusion)

Staff have undertaken research and evaluation for the property at 53 Strachan Avenue and believe that the property has cultural heritage value or interest and meets at least one or more of the criteria prescribed in Ontario Regulation 9/06 for including a non-designated property on a municipal register under Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The subject property may meet additional criteria, which could be informed by community engagement and determined through further research and evaluation.

Listing Statement:

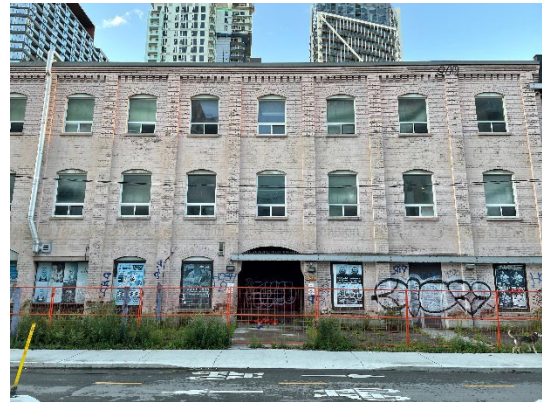
Description: Located near the southern boundary of the West Queen West neighbourhood on the southeast corner of Wellington Street West and Strachan Avenue, the property at 53 Strachan Avenue contains remaining buildings from the former John B. Smith and Sons industrial complex.

The property at 53 Strachan Avenue (including entrance addresses 715, 801, 805 A, 805, and 805 B Wellington Street West) has cultural heritage value as it meets the following criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act:

Constructed in 1888, the property's primary structure has design value as a representative example of a large-scale late-nineteenth century brick factory/warehouse type building. Its scale, form, and massing, including brick and beam construction, large window and door openings, and decorative brickwork including segmental arch voussoirs, raised piers between window bays, and decorative corbelling at the roofline, are characteristic of this typology.

The property has value for its association with the prominent lumber company of John B. Smith and Sons (1851-1967), which leased the land from the City of Toronto to develop the property as a manufacturing site beginning in 1888. Considered one of the largest planning mills in nineteenth century Canada, the company operated at the subject property from 1888 to 1967.

The property has value for defining, supporting and maintaining the former industrial character of the South Niagara Area, and is visually, physically, and historically linked to its surroundings. The industrial site was supported by the rail line directly south of the property. Anchoring the southeast corner of Wellington Street West and Strachan Avenue, the property has been a visible landmark in the South Niagara Area since the late 1880s.



West and north elevations (right) and detail of north elevation (left) of 53 Strachan Avenue (Heritage Planning, 2024).



West and south elevations of 53 Strachan Avenue (Heritage Planning, 2024).



The property parcel of 53 Strachan Avenue is outlined in red with the three-storey factory building outlined in blue. Note: This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown (City of Toronto Mapping).