

Charlotte Mickie
Spadina Gardens Tenants' Association

Toronto, Canada

September 23, 2024

Dear Members of Toronto East York Community Council,

Re: TE16.10 - 41-45 Spadina Road - Alterations to Attributes of a Designated Heritage Property Under Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act and Authority to Enter into a Heritage Easement Agreement

The Spadina Gardens Tenants Association (SGTA) represents 13 out of 19 tenant occupied units at 41-45 Spadina Road.

The tenants appreciate the importance of Spadina Gardens as one of the City's six original apartment houses, and the oldest one still functioning as a residential rental building. We care deeply about it as a marvel of design, the first building really intended for women and families. And we care for it not only as our home, but as a remarkable heritage building. This is evidenced by our advocacy for the Designation of the building, taken at risk to our tenure.

In principle, the tenants support this Heritage Easement because it retains the entire building including the historic interiors, a laudable outcome. However, we have several concerns.

We note that the recommended Easement compromises several heritage attributes, as listed in the **Intention to Designate under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act - 41 Spadina Road**. Of particular concern to tenants is the erosion of the provision of light via the spacious courtyard and side yard, intentional design features from the Edwardian architect, A.R. Denison. Here is the wording from the Designation:

*The scale, form and massing of the four-storey building, on a raised basement with a flat roof, as it is planned as a pair of contiguous T-shapes, with the top of the 'Ts' providing a formal face to Spadina Road and **the legs of the 'Ts' having sufficient space on either side to allow generous provision of daylight to the rooms facing the rear of the property.***

The proposed placement of the columns will diminish the functionality of the apartments, potentially interfering with ventilation and almost certainly obscuring or eliminating direct light to most windows in a majority of the apartments. We believe that the long-standing, continuing functionality of Spadina Gardens as a residential rental building is central to its historic importance, in the spirit of the designation, and should be a continuing consideration. The Toronto Preservation Board recommended

“exploring an alternative exterior placement of the columns in the courtyard and sideyard” which the SGTA strongly supports.

Additionally, we are concerned by:

:

- The current condition of the Heritage building including but not limited to the roof, the wooden framed windows, the balconies, the masonry
- The nature of and current state of the foundation, particularly at the rear of the building, and
- The effect of vibration and other construction stress on the Heritage building, especially the foundation and the areas in need of repair.

We believe that these additional concerns could be answered via:

- A second engineering report, preferably commissioned by the City rather than by the Applicant, including (as recommended by the Toronto Preservation Board) a Vibration Impact Study and Construction Impact Study to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures be put in place to protect the heritage property from damage during and after construction and
- Conservation measures taken by the Applicant in advance of construction, in particular the repair of the roof, wooden framed windows, with details to be determined.

We also understand that the concerns covered immediately above would likely be included in the Conservation Plan created by professional heritage architects and presented to the Senior Manager of Heritage Planning. Doubt was expressed by a member of Heritage Planning Staff on whether such a strategy could be shared with the tenants, so we are asking the TEYCC today to consider directing Staff to share the Conservation Plan and/or form a working group with tenants to assist in the preparation of such a strategy. We understand that this is not a typical process, but given that the tenants' safety is also a concern during the building's conservation, we hope that the TEYCC will find such a direction appropriate.

Additionally, as touched on previously, the Toronto Preservation Board made amendments to the Staff report recommendations which the SGTA strongly supports. We hope the TEYCC will take them into consideration with their decision on September 25.

For further corroboration, we direct the TEYCC to this letter from the Toronto East York Community Panel which shares our concerns:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/pb/comm/communicationfile-182583.pdf>

Spadina Gardens is an extraordinary building. It “works” inside and out and it continues to thrive as a residential building 120 years after its construction. The very pleasing exterior elevations, the flow of the rooms, the access to light and air (again, a very deliberate decision on the part of the architect and the builder) make it an example of exceptional design from a time when apartments were novel, and tenants were actually

courted. It could be a model for future buildings. By recommending this development, Heritage Planning has taken on a grave responsibility. Heritage Planning should now ensure that no damage beyond the compromise of the courtyards takes place, and further, do its utmost to reduce the compromise of the courtyards.

In closing, we note that the SGTA members are in favour of density. We live in density. If you doubt this we point you to Maida Vale, the densest square kilometer in the UK, denser than any high-rise UK neighbourhood, composed entirely of Spadina Gardens style mansion blocks. If Toronto had encouraged more buildings like Spadina Gardens we would now have a very different City. Spadina Gardens also supports affordability. Now that the building is welcoming groups of young tenants to the unrenovated above-ground units, Spadina Gardens is becoming affordable, above grade as well as below. And our housing celebrates diversity—the building hosts a mix of ages, cultures, orientations, and income levels.

We are entrusting the City's Heritage Staff to ensure the continued viability of Spadina Gardens as a vibrant, beautifully designed model of residential rental housing. We ask them to seriously consider the holistic nature of the original Designation and indeed, to respect the outstanding work by Heritage Planning staff on the writing of that Designation, by continuing to protect the building through this challenging adventure.

Yours very truly,

Charlotte Mickie
Spadina Gardens Tenants' Association

Members:

Dandi Maestre/Rodolfo Moseres
Neil MacDonald
Barbara Dominic
Rebecca Erlich
Charlotte Mickie/Eric Norlen
Sarah Powell/Stephen Smith
Sarah Imrisek
Barbara Speck
Marcia Sherman
Robert Baines
Jill Fraser/David Young
Jennifer Franks/Tracy McGaha
Casey Rock/Jamie Paul Rock

CC: Councillor Dianne Saxe, Ward 11
Oren Tamir, Manager Community Planning, City of Toronto
Chris Pereira, Planner, Community Planning, City of Toronto
Mary MacDonald, Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, City of Toronto
Dan DiBartolo, Heritage Planner, City of Toronto

Julia Rady, Chair, Toronto Preservation Board

Adam Wynne, Chair, Community Preservation Panel, Toronto & East York

The Annex Residents Association