

## **2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue - Demolition of Designated Heritage Properties - Approval with Conditions**

**Date:** July 7, 2025

**To:** City Council

**From:** Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

**Wards:** Ward 19 - Beaches-East York

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council approve demolition of the heritage properties at 2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue (designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act) in connection with the development of the subject site, subject to the implementation of an approved Commemoration Plan.

The property at 2726 Danforth Avenue contains the Little York Hotel, which dates to the mid-19th century and is a rare surviving example of a pre-Confederation era building in the city and a unique remnant of the hotel/inn typology located near the historic intersection of Danforth and Dawes Road. The design, style and materiality exhibited at the upper-storey level of the original building typifies Georgian architecture while remnant structural members associated with construction methods that pre-date the mass production of machined lumber are still present in the basement.

The adjacent 2 storey main street commercial row building at 2734 Danforth Avenue dates to c.1886 and is representative of the mid- to late-19th century local streetscape, with brick-clad wood-frame construction and Victorian-era decorative wooden detailing.

The related Zoning By-law Amendment application proposes 8-storey and 4-storey modular mass timber buildings organized around a central courtyard. The development includes the demolition of the two Part IV designated heritage properties within the development site and proposes a contemporary reconstruction of the Little York Hotel at 2726 Danforth Avenue as a form of commemoration. The Little York Hotel is in poor to defective condition and is not a candidate for any of the three conservation treatments in the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada. The main street commercial row building at 2734 Danforth Avenue is likewise in poor condition and there is severe structural failure of the front foundation wall that has been temporarily shored, but which poses a life safety risk.

Due to these extenuating circumstances, demolition of both properties and a contemporary reconstruction of the Little York Hotel, a rare historic resource that embodies an early period of area settlement and transportation, have been proposed. Through the application process all alternatives to demolition were thoroughly explored and Heritage Planning staff are satisfied that neither building could be successfully integrated into the development due to their condition. Therefore, staff are of the opinion that the proposed demolitions are supportable as a last resort within the context of the related planning application.

As part of the conditions of approval, staff recommend that City Council secure a contemporary reconstruction plan for the Little York Hotel within a Commemoration Plan, submit full documentation of each property prior to demolition and implement a publicly accessible interpretive display that conveys the rich history of Danforth Avenue in this area, and the history of the Little York Hotel and its construction.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council approve the application to demolish heritage buildings at the designated properties at 2726 Danforth Avenue (with entrance address at 2732 Danforth Avenue) and 2736 Danforth Avenue, with conditions, under Part IV, Section 34(1)2 of the Ontario Heritage Act to allow for the construction of 8-storey and 4-storey buildings and a contemporary reconstruction of 2726 Danforth Avenue being substantially in accordance with the plans and drawings dated June 16, 2025 prepared by Batay-Csorba Architects Inc. on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning and the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by ERA Architects Inc. dated June 6, 2025 and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, all subject to and in accordance with an approved Commemoration Plan, satisfactory to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.
2. City Council direct that its consent to the application to demolish the designated properties at 2726 Danforth Avenue (with entrance address at 2732 Danforth Avenue) and 2736 Danforth Avenue under Part IV, Section 34(1)2 of the Ontario Heritage Act is also subject to the following conditions:
  - a. That the related Zoning By-law Amendment requiring the proposed demolition of the heritage properties has been enacted by City Council and has come into full force and effect.
  - b. Prior to the introduction of the Zoning By-law Amendment Bills to City Council, the owner shall:
    1. Provide a Commemoration Strategy, prepared by a qualified heritage consultant, that is consistent with the conservation strategy set out in the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by ERA Architects Inc. dated June 6, 2025 for the property at 2726 Danforth Avenue (with entrance address at 2732 Danforth Avenue), including but not limited to preliminary plans for

a contemporary reconstruction of the Little York Hotel and a publicly accessible interpretive display that conveys the rich history of Danforth Avenue in this area, and the history of the Little York Hotel and its construction, to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

c. That prior to the issuance of any permit for all or any part of the properties at 2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue, including a heritage permit or a building permit (including a demolition permit), but excluding permits for repairs and maintenance and usual and minor works for the existing heritage building as are acceptable to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, the owner shall:

1. Have obtained final approval for the necessary Zoning By-law Amendment required for the subject properties, such Amendment to have come into full force and effect.

2. Provide a Commemoration Plan that includes detailed drawings, including notes, specifications, and descriptions of materials and finishes and estimated costs associated with a contemporary reconstruction of the Little York Hotel and a comprehensive interpretive program, substantially in accordance with the approved Commemoration Strategy required in Recommendation 2.b.1 above, to be prepared by the project architect and a qualified heritage consultant to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

3. Provide full documentation of the properties at 2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue, including two (2) printed sets of archival quality 8" x 10" colour photographs with borders in a glossy or semi-gloss finish and one (1) digital set on a flash drive in tiff format and 600 dpi resolution keyed to a location map, elevations and measured drawings, and copies of all existing interior floor plans and original drawings as may be available, to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

4. Provide a Lighting Plan that describes how the exterior of the reconstructed heritage property will be sensitively illuminated to enhance its heritage character to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning and thereafter shall implement such Plan to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager Heritage Planning.

5. Provide a detailed landscape plan for the subject properties, satisfactory to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

6. Provide a Letter of Credit, including provision for upwards indexing, in a form and amount and from a bank satisfactory to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning to secure all work included in the approved Commemoration Plan.

d. That prior to the release of the Letter of Credit required in Recommendation 2.c.6 the owner shall:

1. Provide a letter of substantial completion prepared and signed by a qualified heritage consultant confirming that the required commemorative and interpretive work has been completed in accordance with the Commemoration Plan and that an appropriate standard of completion has been maintained, all to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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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**

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The properties at 2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue were identified as potential heritage properties in the Danforth Avenue Planning Study - Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue – City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment - Final Report adopted with amendments by City Council at its July 23, 2018 meeting:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.TE34.22>

The properties at 2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue were also identified as potential heritage properties in the Main Street Planning Study - City-Initiated Official Plan Amendment - Final Report adopted as amended by City Council at its December 17, 2019 meeting:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.TE11.4>

On June 18, 2020, City Council adopted a preliminary report on a Zoning By-law Amendment application that proposed a 9-storey mixed use development on the site at 2720-2734 Danforth Avenue:

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2020.TE15.17>

At its December 16, 2020 meeting, City Council adopted item TE21.22: Inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register - Danforth Avenue (Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue) and Dawes Road Properties:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.TE21.22>

City Council stated its intention to designate the properties at 2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act At its April 6 and 7, 2022 meeting:

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.PH32.14>

## **BACKGROUND**

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### **Area Context**

The subject properties are located on the north side of Danforth Avenue, east of Main Street and west of Dawes Road within the historic village of Little York known today as the East End-Danforth neighbourhood. The area is associated with an early European settlement at the corner of Danforth Avenue and Dawes Road, the village of Dawes' Corners, which later became Little York at end of the 19th century, the Town of East Toronto between 1903 and 1908, eventually being annexed to the City of Toronto.

### **Heritage Properties**

The property at 2726 Danforth Avenue is a unique surviving example in the historic Village of Little York of a pre-confederation era building. Built c.1850s-1860s, the former hotel/inn is representative of a typology which once occupied numerous properties around the Danforth Avenue and Dawes Road intersection in the mid-19th century. Georgian styling is evident in the five nearly symmetrically arranged, flat-headed window openings on the upper level with their double-hung sash wooden frames and two-over-two panes.

Of particular significance is the building's timber-frame construction which includes massive 12"x12" oak posts and beams. Significantly, these structural members and their joinery were hand-hewn – a quality and level of craftsmanship that belies a construction date preceding the advent of machined lumber. Exterior sheathing on the upper-storey timber-frame structure consists of original lath and plaster behind tongue-and-groove wood siding.

The single-storey retail storefront addition is an early 20th-century alteration to the original building and reflects the then emerging main street commercial character of Danforth Avenue.

The Little York Hotel is visually, physically and historically linked to the Danforth and Dawes intersection where this pre-confederation era building represents the only remaining built evidence of numerous 19th-century hotels/inns once standing at this location. The building is valued for single-handedly maintaining this once-defining typology in the area as a stopping point for travellers and farmers between the rural northeast and downtown Toronto.

The property at 2734 Danforth Avenue is a significant representative example of the late-19th century main street commercial row typology. Built c. 1886, the 2-storey brick clad building displays decorative original architectural detailing including a deep wooden cornice with ornate large corner bracket and upper-storey window openings framed with heavy stone lintels affixed with yoke-patterned wooden plates.

Contextually, the property at 2734 Danforth Avenue maintains and supports the late-19th century main street commercial built form and historic character of the Danforth and Dawes intersection in particular and Danforth Avenue in general. The property is visually, physically and historically linked to its surroundings as part of a surviving

collection of fine-grained, mixed-use main street commercial and residential row buildings that have developed from discreet pockets clustered around individual rural villages like Little York, defining the Danforth streetscape.

Together, both properties contribute to our understanding of the development of various historic settlements near the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) tracks at the corner of Danforth Avenue and Dawes Road from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. First the location of Dawes' Corners in 1850, followed by Smith's Corner in 1870, and Little York and Coleman's Corner from the 1880s until the annexation of Little York to the Town of East Toronto in 1903, this intersection was a popular location for local inns and stores to serve the residential and commercial needs of market-bound farmers along Dawes Road, as well as a burgeoning local population.

## **Adjacent Heritage Properties**

The development site is adjacent to the listed heritage property at 2736 Danforth Avenue. Like the subject properties, the adjacent listed property was identified through the Danforth Avenue Phase 1 Planning Study (2018), as it contributes to the Danforth Avenue (Coxwell Avenue to Victoria Park Avenue) historic context. The property contains a main street commercial row building type that was built in 1890.

## **Development Proposal**

The Zoning By-law amendment application for the site at 2720-2734 Danforth Avenue proposes the development of two new prefabricated modular residential buildings organized around a central courtyard. The Danforth Avenue frontage will feature a 4-storey light wood-frame building with an integrated 2-storey reconstruction of the Little York Hotel. An 8-storey mass timber building will be located at the rear of the site, adjacent to the laneway. The development will provide a total of 64 rental units: comprising 55% two-bedroom, 42% one-bedroom, and 3% studio apartment. A minimum of 6 affordable rental homes will be provided.

## **Heritage Planning Policy Framework**

### **The Planning Act**

The Planning Act guides development in the Province of Ontario. It states that municipalities must have regard for matters of provincial interest. Section 2(d) specifically refers to "the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest" and 2(r) "to a built form that is well designed and provides for a sense of place."

### **The Provincial Planning Statement (2024)**

The Provincial Planning Statement (2024) (the "PPS") provides policy direction province-wide on land use planning and development to promote strong communities, a strong economy, and a clean and healthy environment. It includes policies on key issues that affect communities, such as:

- the efficient use and management of land and infrastructure

- ensuring the sufficient provision of housing to meet changing needs including affordable housing
- ensuring opportunities for job creation
- ensuring the appropriate transportation, water, sewer and other infrastructure is available to accommodate current and future needs
- protecting people, property and community resources by directing development away from natural or human-made hazards, and
- conservation of cultural heritage and archaeology

The provincial policy-led planning system recognizes and addresses the complex inter-relationships among environmental, economic and social factors in land use planning. The PPS supports a comprehensive, integrated and long-term approach to planning, and recognizes linkages among policy areas.

The PPS is issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act and all decisions of Council in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter shall be consistent with the PPS. Comments, submissions or advice affecting a planning matter that are provided by Council shall also be consistent with the PPS.

Policy 4.6.1 of the PPS directs that "Protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved." "Conserved" is defined in the PPS as the identification, protection, management and use of built heritage resources in a manner that ensures their cultural heritage value or interest is retained.

Policy 4.6.2 states that "Planning authorities shall not permit development and site alteration on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential unless the significant archaeological resources have been conserved."

Provincial Plans are intended to be read in their entirety and relevant policies are to be applied to each situation.

## **Toronto Official Plan**

This application has been reviewed against the policies of the City of Toronto Official Plan. The Plan provides the policy framework for heritage conservation in the City and the proposal has been reviewed for consistency with the Heritage Conservation policies in section 3.1.6. The City of Toronto Official Plan can be found here:

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

## **Standards and Guidelines**

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (the "Standards and Guidelines") is the official document guiding planning, stewardship and the conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City of Toronto. The Standards and Guidelines can be accessed here:

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

## COMMENTS

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### Demolition

Demolition of Part IV designated heritage properties is typically inconsistent with the heritage planning policy framework, which seeks conservation. However, it is sometimes necessary to accept that in rare circumstances, as a last resort, following the thorough exploration of all possible alternatives, demolition is the only option. Through the development review process, Heritage Planning staff reviewed the proposal to demolish the Part IV designated heritage buildings for consistency with the Council-adopted Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and staff required comprehensive condition assessments to be submitted.

As the application was considered, all possible conservation treatments were explored, including preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation, with results as follows:

- The Little York Hotel and the main street commercial row building are not candidates for **preservation** as the original materials and features are not in good condition and require replacement or extensive repair.
- While **restoration** would be an ideal treatment, insufficient physical and documentary evidence exists to support this approach, and restoration would not allow for the intended use of the property for new rental housing. Restoration without sufficient historical evidence would be based on conjecture and create a false impression.
- **Rehabilitation** is the more appropriate option given the extensive alterations that have been made to both buildings over time, the poor condition of the remaining original materials and the planned future use of the property for purpose-built rental housing. This option was the original intention of the applicant for the Little York Hotel, and it was thoroughly explored by the applicant and their heritage consultant in consultation with Heritage Planning staff. It was determined that after all the unsympathetic alterations were reversed and the building was updated to meet current Ontario Building Code requirements to support its intended use, no original materials would remain

### 2726 Danforth Avenue: Condition and Integrity

The Little York Hotel has design and physical value, but the value is primarily associated with the building's scale, form and massing; placement, setback and orientation; roofline and window openings on the upper storey. The remaining original materials are in poor to defective condition and are therefore not candidates for preservation as a conservation treatment. The applicant conducted investigations and concluded that the wooden siding and lath-and-plaster walls are in defective condition with areas of wood rot, delamination, material loss, broken sections, and warping paint flaking. The wooden siding and lath-and-plaster walls are beyond the point where they could be reasonably repaired and therefore require replacement. The three masonry chimneys on the north side of the building range from fair condition to poor condition.



The heritage consultant has determined that the second floor, wood double hung, windows are in defective condition showing wood rot, open joints, defective caulking, wood delamination and missing glazing.

The building's timber-frame construction with massive 12"x12" oak posts and beams is of note; however, it is not a heritage attribute of the property and cannot be maintained while allowing for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the property. The rehabilitation conservation treatment, which the applicant initially explored, requires that the interior of the building be updated to meet contemporary requirements.

### **2734 Danforth Avenue: Condition and Integrity**

The main street commercial row building at 2734 Danforth Avenue is in very poor condition and there is severe structural failure of the front foundation wall, which has been temporarily shored and poses a life safety risk. Only the second storey of the building is intact as the ground floor has been entirely replaced. The second storey south elevation is clad in red brick that's been painted white and appears to be in poor condition showing paint flaking, delamination, and mortar loss.

In addition to the row building being in poor condition and structurally unsound, it would be complex to retain or reconstruct and incorporate it into a new mass-timber, prefabricated building due to challenges in aligning floor plates and integrating building systems.

One of the values of the commercial row building is contextual, as it maintains the low-scale historic streetwall that defines the character of the area. By introducing a new four-storey streetwall, the development maintains the main street context, mitigating the contextual impact of the proposed demolition.

### **Little York Hotel Reconstruction**

The development proposal involves the reconstruction of the Little York Hotel, which is an early and rare pre-confederation building that is significant to the local context as a sole survivor of a once prevalent form along a busy transportation artery.

Reconstructing the Little York Hotel will allow for commemoration of the demolished building and will provide an opportunity to convey its history as a stopping point for travellers and farmers between the rural northeast and downtown Toronto.

Reconstruction is a commemoration strategy that will reinstate many of the heritage attributes of the property, including its scale, form, and massing; roofline; the size and placement of window and door openings on the south elevation; the exterior material through new wood siding; and its front yard setback. A two-storey transition will link the reconstructed Little York Hotel and the new four-storey building fronting Danforth Avenue, creating a sensitive transition.

### **Site Development**

The development application proposes the development of two new prefabricated modular residential buildings organized around a central courtyard. The Danforth

Avenue frontage will feature a 4-storey light wood-frame building with an integrated 2-storey reconstruction of the Little York Hotel. An 8-storey mass timber building will be located at the rear of the site, adjacent to the laneway. The proposed development has been specifically designed to quickly deliver purpose-built rental housing to address Toronto's housing crisis.

## **Adjacency**

The demolition of the main street commercial row building at 2734 Danforth Avenue will expose the west party wall of the neighbouring building in the row at 2736 Danforth Avenue, which is listed on the City's Heritage Register. The treatment of this wall will be carefully considered to ensure the structural integrity of 2736 Danforth Avenue, and it will be sensitive and compatible in design to minimize any negative heritage impact on the adjacent heritage property.

## **Reconstruction Plan**

Should Council approve the proposed demolition, the owner should be required to submit a Reconstruction Plan for the Little York Hotel at 2726 Danforth Avenue, that is consistent with the Heritage Impact Assessment. The Reconstruction Plan should be prepared by a qualified heritage professional to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

## **Interpretation Plan**

Should Council approve the proposed demolition, prior to final Site Plan approval, the applicant should be required to submit an Interpretation Plan to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning. The Interpretation Plan should be substantial, and it should communicate the cultural heritage value of the properties, particularly their rich historical and associative values, as described in the Statements of Significance.

## **Building Documentation**

The design and physical value of the properties will be commemorated through full documentation of the existing buildings, including archival photographs, measured drawings, interior floor plans and original drawings as may be available.

## **Heritage Lighting Plan**

The Heritage Lighting Plan should provide details of how the reconstructed Little York Hotel will be lit so that its unique character is highlighted.

## **Landscape Plan**

Staff is recommending that the applicant be required to provide a final Landscape Plan that enhances the character of the reconstructed Little York Hotel to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning as a condition of Site Plan approval.

## CONCLUSION

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Although the demolition of two protected heritage properties does not meet the intent of the Planning Act, the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), and the City of Toronto's Official Plan Heritage Policies, staff are of the opinion that conservation is not an option under the existing extenuating circumstances, following the review of condition assessments in conjunction with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Therefore, staff recommend that City Council approve the applications to demolish the designated properties at 2726 and 2734 Danforth Avenue under Part IV, Section 34(1)2 of the Ontario Heritage Act, subject to conditions that the related Zoning By-law Amendment requiring the proposed demolition has been enacted by City Council and has come into full force and effect, and that the approved development include reconstruction of the Little York Hotel.

## CONTACT

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Kristen Flood, Senior Heritage Planner, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning  
416-338-2957; [kristen.flood@toronto.ca](mailto:kristen.flood@toronto.ca)

Mary L. MacDonald, Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning  
416-338-1079 [Mary.MacDonald@toronto.ca](mailto:Mary.MacDonald@toronto.ca)

## SIGNATURE

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Jason Thorne  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning

## ATTACHMENTS

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Attachment 1 - Location Map  
Attachment 2 - Aerial Photograph  
Attachment 3 - Photographs  
Attachment 4 - Selected Drawings