

667 King Street West - Proposed Designation By-Law under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act – Consideration of Objection

Date: June 10, 2025

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: Ward 10 – Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council affirm its decision of March 26, 2025 (Item PH19.5) stating its intention to designate the property at 667 King Street West under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA). The City has received an objection to the notice of intention to designate on behalf of the property owner within the statutory timeline.

Anchoring the southwest corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street, in the West Queen West neighbourhood, the property at 667 King Street West contains the 2.5-storey landmark building known as The Wheat Sheaf Tavern. Completed in 1849, the property is a rare surviving example of a pre-Confederation era inn and tavern type building and stands today as Toronto's oldest bar, having been in operation at this location for over 150 years. With its Second Empire styling and distinctive corner roof tower, The Wheat Sheaf Tavern is an iconic local landmark that was first recognized for its cultural heritage value on the City's inaugural list of heritage properties in 1973.

City Council has until July 29, 2025, 90 days from the date of the end of the objection period, to make a decision on this objection as per the timeline under the Act.

Staff have reviewed the objections raised on behalf of the owner and remain of the opinion that despite these objections, the property meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Act under 6 of 9 criteria for its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values.

As the property has cultural heritage value or interest and meets the prescribed criteria pursuant to Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, staff are of the opinion that this property should be designated. Designation enables City Council to review proposed alterations for the property, enforce heritage property standards and maintenance, and refuse demolition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council affirm its decision to state its intention to designate the property at 667 King Street West (including entrance address at 92 Bathurst Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act as set out in City Council Decision Item PH19.5 on March 26, 2025.
2. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in City Council designating the property at 667 King Street West 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

At its March 26 and 27, 2025 meeting, City Council adopted a report from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, "667 King Street West - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act" (PH19.5) and stated its intention to designate the property at 667 King Street West under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. <https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2025.PH19.5>

BACKGROUND

City Council has stated its intention to designate the subject property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. A Notice of Intention to Designate was served on the property owners and the Ontario Heritage Trust and was published in accordance with the Ontario Heritage Act. The objection period ended on April 30, 2025.

The City Clerk received a Notice of Objection on behalf of the property owner within the required timeframe set out in the Ontario Heritage Act. The OHA requires that City Council consider and make a decision on an objection within 90 days from the end of the objection period. City Council may decide to withdraw, amend, or affirm its intention to designate.

COMMENTS

Staff have reviewed the Notice of Objection dated April 15, 2025 prepared by Goodmans LLP. A copy of the Notice of Objection is included as Attachment 1 to this report. Through this letter, the owner outlines several reasons for their objection, which primarily focus on the future redevelopment potential of the subject property. The owner does not object to the property having cultural heritage value.

The objector claims that it is in the best interest of the public that the subject property's redevelopment potential be protected, due to the property's proximity to the future King-Bathurst station of the Ontario Line and anticipated densification in the area. In their opinion, designation under the Ontario Heritage Act will increase expense and uncertainty around potential redevelopment of the property.

The OHA prescribes the process of designation of a property under Part IV of the OHA. The OHA also prescribes criteria under O. Reg 9/06 required to be evaluated to determine whether a property has cultural heritage value or interest and therefore should be recommended for designation under the OHA. Zoning By-laws and Planning Act applications do not determine the cultural heritage value or interest of a heritage property nor are they included in criteria for the evaluation or determination of cultural heritage value. Instead, Planning Act applications are to be informed by the designation by-laws and cultural heritage value or interest determined under the OHA such that a determination can be made whether the level of intervention and conservation proposed for a designated property is appropriate. To reach this understanding, it is necessary to first understand the cultural heritage value of a property prior to planning for change and considering interventions to the heritage property.

The sequential approach described above is consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Historic Places in Canada and is also consistent with the intent of the Provincial Planning Statement (2024), which clarify that determination of the cultural heritage value should be undertaken prior to the application of heritage conservation policies to a particular planning application. Likewise, recent changes to the OHA emphasize early identification and protection of heritage properties by municipalities and changes made through Bill 108 require that municipalities designate properties with cultural heritage value or interest within 90 days of the Clerk issuing a notice of complete application for the planning application, unless the timeline is extended or waived by the owner. The appropriateness of proposed interventions to a heritage property within the planning process are then determined through an alteration or demolition application under Section 33 and Section 34 of the OHA. Whether a current or future planning application will conserve a heritage property is not a consideration or a determination to be made within the context of a designation by-law under Section 29 of the OHA.

The objection letter also identifies that the property is in an "area has been designated as a Transit-Oriented Community". This is incorrect. A Transit-Oriented Community (or TOC) is designated under section 2 of the *Transit-Oriented Communities Act* by Order in Council. The only two TOCs at King-Bathurst Station are located east of Bathurst Street at the intersection of Bathurst Street and King Street West for lands municipally

known: (1) as 662 and 668 King Street West and 91 Bathurst Street (north site); and (2) as 663-665 King Street West and 69-73 Bathurst Street, 58-60 Stewart Street and 647 King Street West (south site). Both of the TOC north and south sites incorporated the existing heritage properties in a manner as determined by the Province.

The objector is also of the opinion, despite the subject property exceeding the threshold for designation under the Ontario Heritage Act, that City Council should consider exercising discretion beyond the prescribed criteria and choose not to designate the subject property on account of anticipated development in the broader context of the King and Bathurst area, in general, and redevelopment potential of the subject property, in particular. However, the objection letter also acknowledges that redevelopment can occur on a property that is designated under the OHA.

With respect to designation, the Province has prescribed O. Reg 9/06 which establishes the required criteria for determining whether a property has cultural heritage value or interest. There are no other criteria to be met. The process in the Ontario Heritage Act was followed in the process of preparing the Notice of Intention to Designate report for the subject property, and City Council exercised its authority to designate the subject property at 667 King Street West. In response to the objection, this report requests council affirm its intention to designate.

The objection letter also notes several upgrades, improvements and maintenance of the building and the property. City staff continue to encourage continued upgrades, improvements, maintenance and operation of the property to ensure the heritage property can continue to be managed in the long-term.

Staff remain of the opinion that the property at 667 King Street West meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the OHA, on the basis of its design/physical, historical/associative and contextual values.

Should Council affirm its intention to designate, the City Solicitor will introduce a designating by-law to Council under Section 29 of the OHA. Once City Council has passed a designating by-law, notice has been provided, and the by-law has been published in accordance with the OHA, an appeal may be made to the Ontario Land Tribunal in accordance with the OHA. The Ontario Land Tribunal Decision is binding.

CONCLUSION

The property at 667 King Street West meets 6 of 9 criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. As such, and despite the Notice of Objection, this property should be designated as set out in Council Decision PH19.5 on March 26, 2025.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jason Thorne
Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Letter of Objection – 667 King Street West

Attachment 2 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation) – 667 King Street West

Attachment 3 – Photograph

**(THE WHEATSHEAF TAVERN)
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)**

The Wheatsheaf Tavern at 667 King Street West (including an active entrance at 92 Bathurst Street) is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation under the categories of design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual value.

Description

Located at the southwest corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street, the property at 667 King Street West, known as the Wheatsheaf Tavern, contains a 2½-storey former inn and tavern on a rectangular plan that is fashioned in Second Empire style details. A Pre-Confederation building that was constructed in 1849, the property is a rare surviving example of an early-19th century hotel and bar that has been in operation at the same location for over 150 years.¹ The Wheatsheaf Tavern continues to be the oldest bar in Toronto and serves as a neighbourhood landmark.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property at 667 King Street West has design and physical value as a rare surviving Pre-Confederation example of the hotels that came to define the City of Toronto during the mid-19th century with Second Empire style details. The style can be seen in the mansard roof with round-headed arched dormer windows with ornamental scrollwork in their wooden surrounds, the wooden brackets at the eaves and the ornamented pediment, the truncated corner tower, the regularly spaced flat-headed window openings with sills and brick voussoirs in the second storey, and the flat-headed window openings with sills in the first storey. The style can further be seen in the primary corner entrance and in the north elevation fronting King Street West in the brick pilasters that are set below a frieze and cornice and in the chimney that appears in the elevation fronting Bathurst Street. While modern additions have been made to the property during the 20th century south along Bathurst Street, the 19th-century portion of the building that was used as an inn and tavern remains evident in the rectangular form and massing, the 2½-storey scale, and in the materials, including the red and buff brick.

The subject property has additional design and physical value as it displays a high degree of craftsmanship through its Second Empire style details that were restored in 1995/6.

The property at 677 King Street West is valued for its association with the Wheatsheaf Tavern, a business that has continued to serve the community in this location for over 150 years. Well before Confederation, the Wheatsheaf Tavern functioned as an inn and

¹ The Wheat Sheaf Tavern was closed temporarily in 1995 when it declared bankruptcy, but it was for a short time and was purchased and reopened that same year.

tavern for men in the community and served stagecoach travellers, soldiers, railway men, students, and sports fans. A beloved establishment in the community, the Wheatsheaf Tavern continues to welcome live music and sports lovers through its doors today.

Contextually, the Wheatsheaf Tavern is important in defining, maintaining, and supporting the historic character of the West Queen West neighbourhood today and is physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings. Located at and oriented with a primary entrance to face the southwest corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street, the Wheatsheaf Tavern holds a prominent position on the street and is located in an area that was largely developed by the end of the 19th century. Most of these original properties along King Street West between Bathurst and Tecumseth streets have been redeveloped, so the Wheatsheaf Tavern is a rare surviving remnant dating to that century of construction activity. The Wheatsheaf Tavern is also located immediately west of the boundary of the King-Spadina Heritage Conservation District, which is in force, and is surrounded by numerous properties east of Bathurst Street that are listed or designated on the City's Heritage Register. The subject property once sat facing the Canadian Biscuit Co. building (later Bank of Montreal) at 665 King Street West at the southeast corner and the Toronto Dominion Bank building at 668 King Street West the northeast corner, however, the latter has been demolished and the former is only being partially retained. The property at the northwest corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street was also redeveloped after 1978. The subject property at 667 King Street West is the only remaining intact historic structure at this intersection and is amongst the rare few Pre-Confederation buildings that continues in operation today.

A Pre-Confederation building in operation for over 150 years at the same location at the corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street, the Wheatsheaf Tavern continues to be the oldest bar in Toronto and serves as a neighbourhood landmark.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 667 King Street West as a rare surviving Pre-Confederation example of the of the hotels that came to define the City of Toronto during the mid-19th century with Second Empire style details and displaying a high degree of craftsmanship:

- The placement, setback, and orientation of the structure at the corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street where it has been located since 1849
- The 2½-storey scale, rectangular form, and massing
- The materials, including the red and buff brick
- The mansard roof with round-headed arched dormer windows with ornamental scrollwork in their wooden surrounds
- The wooden brackets at the eaves
- The ornamented pediment above the second storey
- The truncated corner tower with an entrance in the first storey
- The regularly spaced flat-headed window openings with sills and brick voussoirs in the second storey

- The flat-headed window openings with sills in the first storey
- The brick pilasters that are set below a frieze and cornice in the first storey
- The chimney that appears in the elevation fronting Bathurst Street.

Historical and Associative Value

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 667 King Street West as being associated with the Wheatsheaf Tavern, which has continued to serve the community in this location for over 150 years:

- The placement, setback, and orientation of the structure at the corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street where it has been located since 1849
- The 2½-storey scale, rectangular form, and massing

Contextual Value

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the Wheatsheaf Tavern as defining, maintaining, and supporting the historic character of the West Queen West neighbourhood today and being physically, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings:

- The placement, setback, and orientation of the structure at the corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street where it has been located since 1849
- The 2½-storey scale, rectangular form, and massing
- The materials, including the red and buff brick
- The mansard roof with round-headed arched dormer windows with ornamental scrollwork in their wooden surrounds
- The truncated corner tower with an entrance in the first storey
- The chimney that appears in the elevation fronting Bathurst Street

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 667 King Street West as being a neighbourhood landmark:

- The placement, setback, and orientation of the structure at the corner of King Street West and Bathurst Street where it has been located since 1849
- The 2½-storey scale, rectangular form, and massing



View of the subject property located at the southwest corner of Bathurst Street and King Street West. (Heritage Planning, 2024)