TORONTO

REPORT FOR ACTION

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

Date: October 28, 2026
To: City Council
From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning
Wards: Ward 11 - University-Rosedale

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council amend its decision of July 29-30, 2026 (PH32.15), stating its intention to designate the property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address 650 Bay Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA). The City has received an objection on behalf of the property owner to the Notice of Intention to Designate within the statutory timeline. Staff are recommending amendments described in this report in response to this objection that will clarify the Statement of Significance adopted by Council.

Anchoring the southwest corner of Bay and Elm streets, the subject property contains a three-storey commercial building completed in 1891 for the Canadian Temperance League in the city's historic St. John's Ward ("The Ward") neighbourhood. The subject property is valued as part of a broader collection of more than 20 heritage buildings located along three contiguous blocks of Elm Street that comprises the most intact, surviving grouping of Ward-era built fabric in a range of typologies and historic uses that provide an understanding of the city's first immigrant neighbourhood, including housing, local institutions and charitable organizations that supported its working class residents.

City Council has until December 2, 2026, which is 90 days from the date of the end of the objection period, to decide on this objection in accordance with the OHA. Due to the 2026 Council election break, this matter must be considered at the first meeting of the new term of Council on November 18-19, 2026; otherwise, the Notice of Intention to Designate the property will be deemed withdrawn under the OHA.

Staff have reviewed the objections raised by the owner and staff are recommending that the proposed designation by-law be amended to address specific matters identified by the owner in their objection letter, where appropriate, and as described below in this report. The owner does not object to the property's identified cultural heritage value.

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, this property should be designated. Designation enables 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 enact a by-law designating the property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act substantially in accordance with the Revised Statement of Significance: 55 Elm Street (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 3 to the report October 28, 2026 from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning in consideration of the objection received by the City Clerk.

2. City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in City Council designating the property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

City Planning confirms there are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of 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 meeting of July 29-30, 2026, City Council stated its intention to designate the property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.
https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.PH32.15

BACKGROUND

Council has stated its intention to designate the property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the OHA. Notice of Council's Intention to Designate was served on the property owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust and was published in accordance with the OHA. The objection period ended on August 27, 2026.

A Notice of Objection was received by the City Clerk on behalf of the owner of the property on August 26, 2026, within the required timeframe set out in the OHA. The OHA requires that Council consider and make a decision on an objection within 90 days from the end of the objection period, subject to any permitted exceptions under the OHA. Council may decide to withdraw, amend, or affirm its intention to designate. Council has until December 2, 2026 to make a decision on the objection.

COMMENTS

Staff have reviewed the Notice of Objection dated August 26, 2026, prepared by Goodmans LLP on behalf of the property owner. The Notice of Objection is included as Attachment 1 to this report. Through this letter, the owner outlines two reasons for their objection, both related to mention in the Statement of Significance to the row of abutting properties at 57-71 Elm Street (which are not part of the property subject to the proposed designation by-law). For these reasons, the owner "requests that City Council amend the statement of significance to provide clarity before passing a designation by-law for the Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act."

Upon review of information provided by Goodmans LLP on behalf of the property owner, staff recommend that Council amend the Statement of Significance to make a minor grammatical edit to the first paragraph in the Description section; and to remove the second clause of the last heritage attribute related to contextual value. A response to both concerns is described below.

The Notice of Objection expresses concern about how the property is described in the Description section of the Statement of Significance. The objector opines that mention in the first paragraph of the abutting row of house-form properties at 57-65 Elm Street - meant only to provide an understanding of the subject property's location and context - creates confusion, as written, about whether or not they are included in the designation. Upon further review, including collaborative discussion with the owner's heritage consultants, a comma has been added between the words "building" and "constructed" to provide clarity that only the property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay Street) is subject to the Notice of Intention to Designate.

The Notice of Objection also expresses concern about mention of the abutting row of house-form properties at 57-71 Elm Street in the final heritage attribute related to the contextual value of the subject property. Upon further review, the second clause of the subject attribute which reads, "and abutting the historically associated, Ward-era house-form buildings at 57-71 Elm Street" has been removed so that the attribute now reads, "the setback, placement and orientation of the building on its lot at the southwest corner of Bay and Elm Streets". In order to provide clarity on how the revised attribute "contributes to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as being visually and historically linked to its surroundings", staff have added the following descriptive text: "containing additional surviving properties associated with the historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood".

Having reviewed the issues raised in the Notice of Objection, staff remain of the opinion that the property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay Street) continues to meet Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the OHA, based on its design/physical, historical/associative and contextual values, and also recommend that the Statement of Significance be amended as outlined above. In addition, staff have taken the opportunity of a revised statement to make two minor technical revisions. These revisions include insertion of the standard Statement of Significance paragraph stating that, following evaluation under Ontario Regulation 9/06, the property is worthy of designation under the Ontario Heritage Act, and correcting the property's primary street address in the first sentence of the Description section to read 55 "Elm" Street, rather than 55 "Bay" Street.

CONCLUSION

The property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay Street) meets 5 of the 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.

Staff have reviewed the owner's Notice of Objection to Council's Notice of Intention to Designate and recommend revisions to clarify the Statement of Significance. These revisions are to make a minor grammatical edit to the first paragraph in the Description section; and to remove the second clause of the last heritage attribute related to contextual value

Should Council adopt the revised Statement of Significance, the City Solicitor will introduce a designating by-law to Council under Section 29 of the OHA. Once 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.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jason Thorne
Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Notice of Objection – 55 Elm Street
Attachment 2 – Original Statement of Significance – 55 Elm Street
Attachment 3 – Revised Statement of Significance – 55 Elm Street
Attachment 4 – Photograph - 55 Elm Street

55 ELM STREET **ATTACHMENT 1**

LETTER OF OBJECTION

(Provided separately)

55 ELM STREET **ATTACHMENT 2**

(ENTRANCE ADDRESS AT 650 BAY STREET)

ORIGINAL STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

Description

Located at the southwest corner of Bay and Elm Streets in the historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood, the property at 55 Bay Street (entrance address at 650 Bay Street) contains a 3-storey commercial building constructed in 1891 along with the abutting row of house-form buildings at 57-65 Elm Street.

In 2015, Heritage Toronto recognized the property with a historical plaque commemorating the notable public health dentist, Dr. John G. C. Adams, whose public health dental clinic was located there in the late 19th - early 20th century. The plaque stands in the public right-of-way directly across from the building's main entrance at the southwest corner of Bay and Elm streets.

The subject property was listed on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register in March 2021.

Design and Physical Value

The subject property is valued as a representative example of Renaissance Revival architecture, which was a popular Victorian-era style derived from 16th-century Italy and favoured for commercial architecture in late-19th century Toronto. Features typical of the astylar version of the style and found in the design of 55 Elm Street include the Florentine-esque preference to forego columns and ornate applied decoration; the hierarchical arrangement of the flat-headed and arched window openings at the second and third storeys, respectively, with their stepped, brick drip moulds and continuous string-coursing; the flat roof with parapet and finials (the latter element has been removed); and, the defining tripartite Palladian windows at the first-floor level.

Historical and Associative Value

The property at 55 Elm Street is also valued for its ability to yield information about the historic St. John's Ward community bounded by Yonge Street, Queen Street West, University Avenue and Bloor Street West. Also known as 'The Ward' and Toronto's first immigrant neighbourhood, the area's historic character was defined as a low-scale, predominantly residential area interspersed with social and cultural institutions and charitable organizations serving the local working-class residents from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. Today, the largest contiguous collection of The Ward-era heritage properties is located along three blocks of Elm Street between Yonge Street and University Avenue where it continues to provide an understanding of the building types and uses associated with this significant historic community. Among that collection stands the three-storey heritage property at 55 Elm Street, located along the historic

spine of The Ward at the corner of Bay (then Teraulay Street) and tenanted over the course of that time by institutions significant to The Ward community.

Throughout its history, The Ward attracted various social reformers who sought to influence the neighbourhood's working-class population and the property at 55 Elm Street is valued for its direct historical association with the rich social history of institutions and organizations in The Ward. Firstly, the property is valued for its direct association with the Canadian Temperance League and its associated Temperance League Coffee House Company commissioned and initially tenanted the subject property was designed to address the perceived social ills of alcohol in working-class communities. Secondly, the property is valued for its direct association with the notable dentist, Dr. John Gennings Curtis Adams, whose Dental Institute was located here from 1897-1913. Dr. Adams is considered the father of public health dentistry in Canada, devoting his practice to providing free dental care to families in poverty, particularly children. Also noted as the first dentist of record employed at Sick Kids hospital in 1883, Dr. Adams' significant efforts helped establish the model for public health dentistry in local public schools beginning in 1911.

Contextual Value

The property at 55 Elm Street, along with more than twenty other Ward-era heritage properties located along Elm Street between Yonge Street and Chestnut Street, is valued for maintaining the historic St. John's Ward character defined by social and cultural institutions and organizations interspersed among house-form buildings, and exhibiting an eclectic array of Victorian-era styles with an overall 2-4 storey scale, brick and/or stone materiality and little to no setbacks.

Anchoring the southwest corner of Bay and Elm streets, the property at 55 Elm Street is visually and historically linked to its surroundings where it knits together the city's largest contiguous collection of surviving properties associated with the historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood. Stretching along three contiguous blocks of Elm Street between Yonge and Chestnut streets, this significant collection includes the heritage properties on both sides of Elm Street, east of Bay with those west of Bay including the abutting row of house-form buildings at 57-71 Elm Street and the former House of Industry at 87 Elm Street, west of Elizabeth Street.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as being representative of a late-19th century commercial building designed in the Renaissance Revival style:

- The flat roof (currently missing its brick parapet)
- The arrangement and type of window openings with their stone sills on the two principal (east and north) elevations, including Palladian, round-arched and flat-headed

- The round-arched main entrance at the base of the northeast chamfer corner fronting onto the intersection of Bay and Elm Streets
- The red brick detailing, including voussoirs, stepped drip moulds and continuous string-courses

Contextual Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as maintaining the character of the historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood:

- The scale, form and massing of the 3-storey commercial building on a rectangular plan with two principal (east and north) elevations and chamfered northeast corner
- The materials with the red brick cladding and brick and stone detailing

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as being visually and historically linked to its surroundings:

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building on its lot at the southwest corner of Bay and Elm streets, and abutting the historically associated, Ward-era house-form buildings at 57-71 Elm Street

55 ELM STREET **ATTACHMENT 3**

(ENTRANCE ADDRESS AT 650 BAY STREET)

REVISED STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

The property at 55 Elm Street (including entrance address at 650 Bay 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.

Description

Located at the southwest corner of Bay and Elm Streets in the historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood, the property at 55 Elm Street (entrance address at 650 Bay Street) contains a 3-storey commercial building**,** constructed in 1891 along with the abutting row of house-form buildings at 57-65 Elm Street.

In 2015, Heritage Toronto recognized the property with a historical plaque commemorating the notable public health dentist, Dr. John G. C. Adams, whose public health dental clinic was located there in the late 19th - early 20th century. The plaque stands in the public right-of-way directly across from the building's main entrance at the southwest corner of Bay and Elm streets.

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Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

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charitable organizations serving the local working-class residents from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century. Today, the largest contiguous collection of The Ward-era heritage properties is located along three blocks of Elm Street between Yonge Street and University Avenue where it continues to provide an understanding of the building types and uses associated with this significant historic community. Among that collection stands the three-storey heritage property at 55 Elm Street, located along the historic spine of The Ward at the corner of Bay (then Teraulay Street) and tenanted over the course of that time by institutions significant to The Ward community.

Throughout its history, The Ward attracted various social reformers who sought to influence the neighbourhood's working-class population and the property at 55 Elm Street is valued for its direct historical association with the rich social history of institutions and organizations in The Ward. Firstly, the property is valued for its direct association with the Canadian Temperance League and its associated Temperance League Coffee House Company, which commissioned and initially tenanted the subject property designed to address the perceived social ills of alcohol in working-class communities. Secondly, the property is valued for its direct association with the notable dentist, Dr. John Gennings Curtis Adams, whose Dental Institute was located here from 1897-1913. Dr. Adams is considered the father of public health dentistry in Canada, devoting his practice to providing free dental care to families in poverty, particularly children. Also noted as the first dentist of record employed at Sick Kids hospital in 1883, Dr. Adams' significant efforts helped establish the model for public health dentistry in local public schools beginning in 1911.

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Contextual Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as maintaining the character of the historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood:

- The scale, form and massing of the 3-storey commercial building on a rectangular plan with two principal (east and north) elevations and chamfered northeast corner
- The materials with the red brick cladding and brick and stone detailing

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as being visually and historically linked to its surroundings**, which contain additional surviving properties associated with the historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood:**

- The setback, placement and orientation of the building on its lot at the southwest corner of Bay and Elm streets

PHOTOGRAPH **ATTACHMENT 4**

55 ELM STREET



View of the north and east elevations of 55 Elm Street, looking southwest from the intersection of Bay and Elm streets (Heritage Planning, February 2026)