

August 25, 2015

Via Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Fancher:

Further to earlier correspondence with Susan Martin and your deputation to the June 22, 2015 Toronto Public Library Board meeting, we have completed the research on the library property at 1748 St. Clair Avenue West where the St Clair /Silverthorn branch is located. To assist with the investigation, we engaged the firm Goldsmith Borgal and Company Ltd. Architects, who has extensive heritage building expertise. Following is a review of our findings.

The block between Cloverdale Road and Silverthorn Avenue was first developed in the 1920s with the construction of five commercial buildings. These two-storey frame and brick structures were located at the corner of Silverthorn Avenue (numbers 1734, 1736, 1738, 1740 and 1742). Their use was typical for the type of main-street commercial rows of the time, including a drug store, grocery, restaurant, butcher and gentlemen's clothing store.

The three separate stores on lots 56, 57 and 58 (numbers 1744, 1746 and 1748) were unified by their use of material (red, rug-brick) and by the brick parapet with a slightly rounded profile. Minimal architectural detailing consists primarily of cast-stone accents at the window surrounds and along the parapet. Brick pilasters define the division between each building. By mid-century, the two shops at 1746 and 1748 had been combined into one store – an easy and common occurrence with main-street commercial buildings.

In 1979 the Toronto Public Library Board acquired the property and following a retrofit by George Baird Architect, opened the St. Clair/Silverthorn branch in June 1981. No heritage issues were noted at this point. Alterations over time included the removal of the original separate shop front entrances and display windows. Our attention turned next to the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Ontario Heritage Act, Ontario Regulation 9/06 prescribes three criteria for determining property of cultural heritage value or interest in a municipality.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it,
 - i. is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method,
 - ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit, or
 - iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.
2. The property has historical value or associative value because it,
 - i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community,
 - ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture, or
 - ii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.
3. The property has contextual value because it,
 - i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area,
 - ii. is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surrounds, or
 - iii. is a landmark.

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Director, Branch Libraries

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Although the building may be considered as a representative example of the early 20th century commercial building type along St. Clair Avenue West, it is not rare, unique or a particularly early example of the building type. It does not display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit, nor demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement. There are other examples of this type of building in the neighbourhood that have not had any alterations. Unlike the St.Clair/Silverthorn branch which has had its original shop front reconfigured as well as experiencing a change of materials and damage to the brick as a result of resurfacing of the facade.

As stated in previous correspondence, addressing state of good repair issues and building deficiencies is an essential goal of any capital project at the library. The TPL design team has worked with our consultants to complete a thorough assessment of the building condition at St. Clair/Silverthorn and it was determined that rebuilding the branch is the only way to address structural, brick condition, heating and cooling, barrier free, life safety and various other issues while providing an improved environment for the library. Toronto Public Library's mandate is to provide healthy, pleasant, accessible and highly functional facilities, and these objectives unfortunately would not be possible with the current building given the public funds available for the project. Toronto Public Library most certainly retains and preserves heritage library buildings as is exemplified at Bloor/Gladstone, Runnymede, Dufferin/St. Clair, Yorkville and Beaches branches. All of these projects have a heritage designation.

Current City Zoning By-law – 40.10.40.10(4)(A) stipulates that new construction in this part of the city be minimum three storeys and a height of 16 m and minimum of 10.5 m. We are not proposing a building of this height as we feel the configuration that will best meet community needs is a two storey building at a height of 10.1 with an abundance of natural light, flexible configurable spaces, barrier free access, transparent views in and out of the branch and high street-visibility. With the future St. Clair/Silverthorn branch, we want to introduce a new element to the present streetscape that is currently in redevelopment that will lead the revitalization of the neighbourhood and anchor the public library as a dynamic community hub. This will result in a better building that will meet the current and future needs of the community and operate efficiently.

We continue to work on the concept and are refining the design. Please contact Susan Martin, Divisional Support Manager, Branch Capital Projects at smartin@torontopubliclibrary.ca or by telephone at 416-393-7543 if you have further comments or questions about the project.

Sincerely,



Anne Bailey
Director, Branch Libraries