

Memo

To: Lesley Collins, Heritage Planner, City of Ottawa
From: Carl Bray, Bray Heritage
Date: Thursday, August 14, 2014
RE: 488-500 Bank Street CHIS: comments on revised application

Dear Lesley,

The client, Urban Capital Property Group, has submitted a revised development proposal for their property at the corner of Bank and Flora Streets in the Centretown Heritage Conservation District. My firm prepared a Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS) for their initial proposal. That report, dated September, 2012, needs to be updated to reflect the revised design.

The rezoning application for the original development proposal was approved by Council on February 27, 2013 and the current, revised design (July 30, 2014, Roderick Lahey, Architect) is being submitted for Site Plan review.

Heritage Aspects of Revised Design

Although there has been a change of architects, the design of the proposed building has changed little from that reviewed in my CHIS of 2012. As they affect the comments in the CHIS, the differences involve, from top to bottom:

- A less irregular treatment of the upper storeys, with a more uniform setback to reduce the apparent bulk of the building;
- A different pattern and reduced number of bays, with slightly lighter vertical and horizontal divisions between window groupings;
- More extensive use of black brick; and
- A continuous signboard and more defined division between the ground floor base and the façade above.

Consistent with the previous development proposal are the height, different glazing at the intersection on the upper floors to acknowledge the corner, a continuous street wall (with a slight setback at grade and a chamfered corner at the intersection), glazing and recessed entrances on the ground floor retail, and a recessed massing on the rear façade to provide a transition to the adjacent low density residential neighbourhood. As noted in the 2012 CHIS, these elements address the design guidelines found in the 1997 Centretown HCD Study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The new design differs little from that shown in the original development application on the exterior although the internal structural layout and floor plan are considerably simplified. However, the results from this internal reorganization include fewer pilasters on the façade and a large, recessed exit stair in the first bay,

both resulting from the reduced number of bays. The recessed bay is also a partial shelter for transit passengers, included as a revision during the rezoning approval process. The bay reduction lessens the ability of the pilasters to ground the building and the recessed bay is now the visual terminus of the view from Argyle across Bank.

The revised design generally meets the intent of the 2012 CHIS. The following recommendations could be considered during the Site Plan review process:

- As in the CHIS, photographic recording of the exterior and interior of the existing building is recommended before and during demolition. Also, salvage and re-use of existing materials, such as brick, metal cornice and ceiling, should be an option, either in the new building or applied to other buildings.
- There is an opportunity to have something of visual interest, such as public art or interpretation of local history (in addition to, or as a substitute for, any graphics provided by OC Transpo or their advertisers), installed in the recessed first bay, as a more fitting terminus to the view along Argyle.