

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: 484 YONGE STREET ATTACHMENT NO. 4 (REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)

The property at 484 Yonge 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 all three categories of design, associative and contextual values. The property was listed on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now the Heritage Register) in 1974. City Council authorized the Historic Yonge Heritage Conservation District Study Area in 2012, including the property at 484 Yonge Street.

Description

Located on the west side of Yonge Street between Grenville and Grosvenor Streets, the property at 484 Yonge Street contains the building constructed for the City of Toronto in 1871 as Fire Hall No. 3, which was expanded before being decommissioned in 1929. Beginning in the 1950s, for more than half a century the well-known St. Charles Tavern occupied the site.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property at 484 Yonge Street has cultural heritage value for the design of the clock tower from the former Yonge Street Fire Hall, which was one of two purpose-built fire stations commissioned by the City of Toronto in the early 1870s that, while providing fire fighting services to the northern neighbourhoods became a familiar symbol of community identity. The clock tower displays architectural elements typical of the late Victorian era, particularly the classical detailing from Italianate precedents and the mansard roof associated with the popular Second Empire style.

The surviving clock tower on the former fire hall at 484 Yonge Street is valued historically as a rare collaboration between architects James Grand and William Irving, who were recognized practitioners in Toronto in the mid 19th century. While Grand, an English-trained architect and his younger Scottish colleague Irving worked individually and with other architects, they never formed a formal partnership apart from collaborating on two fire halls for the City of Toronto, including the former Yonge Street Fire Hall with the surviving clock tower.

The property at 484 Yonge Street has important historical associations with the LGBTQ community of Toronto. Operating as the St. Charles Tavern, for nearly 30 years the site was particularly associated with Toronto's gay community as a popular nightclub and, beginning in the 1960s the site of annual Halloween drag shows. The latter revues, which mixed enthusiastic patrons and on-lookers with violent protesters, resulted in the alliance of LGBTQ activists, supportive politicians and local businesses in initial steps to combat homophobia. These events, which occurred beneath the clock tower at 484 Yonge, are regarded as milestones in the recognition of the diversity and contributions of LGBTQ culture in the city.

The associative value of the clock tower from the former fire hall is also linked to the historical development of Yonge Street as it evolved in the mid to late 1800s from a local shopping destination for the adjoining residential neighbourhoods to its rebranding as Toronto's "Main Street" after Robert Simpson and Timothy Eaton opened landmark department stores near the Queen Street intersection. The popularity and rapid growth of the area around Yonge and College Streets required local services, including the fire hall with the iconic clock tower that immediately became a focal point in and for the community.

Contextually, the fire hall clock tower is valued for its contribution to the character of Yonge Street, north of College Street, which is typified by the surviving buildings that began and supported the transition of Yonge Street in the late 19th century as Toronto's main commercial corridor. The highly visible clock tower from the former Yonge Street Fire Hall is an integral part of the small collection of surviving buildings from this era that includes the neighbouring Oddfellows Hall (1892) at Yonge and College Streets.

The contextual value of the property at 484 Yonge Street is also related to its historical and visual links to its surroundings on the west side of Yonge Street between Grenville and Grosvenor Streets where the clock tower from the former Yonge Street Fire Hall adjoins the commercial building at 480 Yonge Street, which dates to the mid 19th century, was updated in the early 1900s and is also recognized on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.

A familiar feature on Yonge Street since the 1870s, the distinctive clock tower from the former Yonge Street Fire Hall is a long-standing local landmark in Toronto.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Yonge Street Fire Hall Clock Tower on the property at 484 Yonge Street are:

- The placement, setback and orientation of the clock tower on the west side of Yonge Street between Grenville and Grosvenor Streets
- The materials, with the brick cladding and the brick, slate and wood detailing
- The scale, form and massing of the clock tower, which rises above the second-storey level of the neighbouring buildings
- Above the brick base with the trios of round openings, the clock tower with the bell-cast mansard roof, which supports the extensions to the tower that incorporate a clock and terminate in a hipped roof
- The detailing on the clock tower, where the four sides feature round-arched window openings with classical keystones and cornices, cross-hatched woodwork and clock faces
- The views of the clock tower from both directions on Yonge Street