

Advisory Committee of Council Staff Report



To Heritage Guelph
Date Monday, October 7, 2024
Subject **116 Gordon Street (Boathouse): Heritage Permit HP24-0003**

Recommendation

1. THAT Heritage Guelph provides the following comments to the General Manager of Planning and Building Services with respect to heritage permit application HP24-0003 for the proposed retaining wall rehabilitation at the Boathouse at 116 Gordon Street.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report provides information and staff comments on a heritage permit application for the proposed rehabilitation of the existing concrete retaining wall in front of the Boathouse building east of the Gordon Street bridge at 116 Gordon Street, a property protected individually by heritage designation By-law (1997)-15531 and By-law 2014)-19812 within the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District .

Background

Heritage Planning brought an information report to the June 3, 2024 meeting of Heritage Guelph which provided background information on the subject property in preparation for the consideration of what is now a heritage permit application made by the City of Guelph Engineering Services to repair/rehabilitate the existing concrete retaining wall in front of the Boathouse building east of the Gordon Street bridge at 116 Gordon Street. At that meeting, Heritage Guelph received staff's information report and passed a motion recommending that staff evaluate opportunities with legal or through the Building Code for potential exemptions to fencing for heritage features along the Boathouse property .

The Boathouse building (Attachment-1, Figures 1 and 2) is a significant built heritage resource protected under individual heritage designation By-law (1997)-15531. The heritage attributes of the property protected by the individual heritage designation are limited to the Boathouse building exterior and do not include the concrete retaining wall between the building and the river (Attachment-1, Figures 3 and 4).

Although the proposed rehabilitation project is largely about repairs and re-facing of the concrete retaining wall and the re-location of the steps down to water level - compliance with the Building Code requires a guard rail be installed along the top of the wall in front of the Boathouse building east of the Gordon Street bridge. This

proposed change to a prominent feature of the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District requires review and comment by Heritage Guelph.

According to section 33 of Part IV and section 42 of Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, the proposed alteration of an individually designated property that is also within an HCD requires the approval of a heritage permit. A heritage permit of this nature may be considered for approval by the General Manager of Planning and Building Services under delegated authority.

116 Gordon Street is located within the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District under heritage designation By-law (2014)-19812 (Attachment-1, Figure 5). The property is also within the Speed and Eramosa Riverscape identified by the Cultural Heritage Action Plan as a candidate cultural heritage landscape (CHL). The HCD Plan has identified the stone walls lining the river corridor as having cultural heritage value in their historic associations with social history in the early 20th century of Guelph. Most of the river walls in this section of the Speed River from its confluence with the Eramosa River downstream to Gow's Bridge were constructed in stone during the 1930s as civic beautification (Attachment-1, Figure 6).

The previous, 2-storey boathouse building is seen in the 1929 Fire Insurance Plan (Attachment-1, Figure 7). The individual heritage designation by-law states that the current building was built about 1930 and a 1940's air photo shows the retaining wall in front of it only partially constructed by that time (Attachment-1, Figure 8). The 1946 Fire Insurance Plan shows the building as it is today (Attachment-1, Figure 9). It is important to understand that the retaining wall in question was not fully in place during the 1940s and it was added to with additional concrete parging and a concrete coping in later years.

Figures 10-13 in Attachment-1 show current photos of the retaining wall area today. Figure 14 shows an example of metal railing installed along the Riverwalk beside the protected heritage building complex at the Metalworks on Arthur Street South.

Section 4.7.8 of the Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines states that views of the river shall remain unobstructed by buildings and structures. The type of railing design being contemplated in staff's opinion creates an acceptable amount of transparency while achieving compliance with the Building Code.

The HCD Plan also states that the stone walls lining the river corridor shall be conserved. The proposed rehabilitation of the Boathouse retaining wall would be repaired and re-faced in such a way that retains the appearance of this important part of Guelph's Brooklyn and College Hill Heritage Conservation District.

Proposed Alterations

Drawings of the proposed rehabilitation have been submitted by the City of Guelph Engineering Services as part of a complete heritage permit application (Attachment-2).

Heritage permit application HP24-0003 proposes the following repairs and alterations to the existing concrete retaining wall at 116 Gordon Street:

- based on inspections conducted in accordance with the Ontario Structural Information Manual (OSIM) - to prolong the life of the existing wall, rehabilitation, rather than replacement is being proposed
- spot repairs of the concrete and installation of a new facing, which will preserve the existing wall below
- facing of the concrete will be stamped to look similar to existing conditions
- this opportunity is also being taken to relocate and widen the stairs to the river and include hand railings to make them more accessible
- Further, to meet Ontario Building Code (OBC) requirements, new railings will be installed along the wall for public safety. The brushed metal railing design chosen is similar to the railings installed at the Riverwalk at the Metalworks Development along the Speed River adjacent to the Sprill Mill Distillery, a designated heritage building at 43 Arthur Street South.

Heritage Planning staff is of the opinion that heritage permit HP24-0003 for the proposed rehabilitation of the existing concrete retaining wall and the installation of a metal railing in front of the Boathouse building east of the Gordon Street bridge at 116 Gordon Street is in keeping with proper heritage conservation practice as it balances the need for compliance with guideline section 4.2 of the Brooklyn and College Hill HCD Plan and also the requirements of the current Ontario Building Code. The design as presented represents a reasonable change to the heritage attributes protected by heritage designation By-law (1997)-15531 and the heritage district designation By-law (2014)-19812.

Consultations

Heritage Planning has consulted Building Services and Legal Services in the preparation of this report and its recommendations.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Property location, historic images and current photos

Attachment-2 Drawings of proposed rehabilitation and alteration

Report Author

Stephen Robinson, Senior Heritage Planner