



Re: Item 7.2 - Notice of Intention to Designate – G.S.  
Wood House at 2487 Old Bronte Road on  
tonight's agenda - P and D Council - March 7  
2022

March 7, 2022

Ms. Vicki Tytaneck  
Clerk, Town of Oakville

Dear Ms. Tytaneck:

**Re: Potential Heritage Designation G. S. Wood house, 2487 Old Bronte Rd.**

This is a summary of comments that I presented at the Heritage Oakville meeting of February 22, 2022. Please distribute this to the members of the Planning & Development Committee regarding Item 7.2 scheduled to be discussed at their meeting this evening.

Over the past several months, our team has had conversations with Heritage and Planning staff and requested that this matter be deferred for a time (we had suggested 3 months) to allow us to come forward with a development proposal that would integrate elements of this building into the a new proposed development. We had offered that our client would undertake not to alter the building and would not make any application for demolition during this time - he has owned this property for six years without making any changes save replacing the windows some years ago because the existing units were rotted - and he is on no urgent schedule to develop.

In our opinion it would have been easier for all concerned and would likely result in a better outcome to work through the design of the proposed development and then to proceed with a potential designation of the heritage resource if appropriate. This would have happened in the context of the owner's undertaking not to do anything to jeopardize the heritage resource while these discussions were taking place so as to obviate any risk to the Town.

We thought that this request was reasonable in this context however staff has elected to proceed now. We had asked that a statement be put into the designation statement that referenced the reality that this site would be intensified and that this would require major changes to the building and presumably the conservation of only a portion of it. Staff did not do this, although following our discussions they did include a statement in the staff report that referenced the likelihood of future development.

We thank staff for the inclusion of that statement but we continue to believe that this designation is premature and that a better result for all could be accomplished by giving us the time to come forward with a proposed design.

We have reviewed the Heritage research report and the Ontario Heritage Act 9/06 analysis and offer the following comments:

-notwithstanding the thoroughness of the research and quality of the report we think it is obvious that the reasons for designation are weak

-regarding the design and physical value of the building, we have some concern regarding the reliance upon Edwardian architecture as a reason for designation. The Edwardian Age is typically considered to be the period following the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 up to the First World War, although as an architectural style the term is often used more generally and in a broader time frame. We submit that it is appropriate to describe this house as having Edwardian architectural influences but to suggest that it merits designation as exemplary of Edwardian architecture implies a design value that is likely not warranted. What this really is, is a modest, vernacular house that was very typical of its period of construction. Houses of this age and design are very common all across Ontario and continue to exist in large numbers in Oakville

-regarding the historical and associative value of the building, and the relative importance of this house to the Village of Palermo, there is a reference on page 3 of the report that "the corner store was a community hub during the peak period of Palermo's development in the early 20th century" but there is no documentation in the report to support this. I don't doubt that a general store would be an important feature in a small community but I'm not sure that the period that is in question here can be reasonably described as the "peak period of Palermo's development" or even that this is important. Also, the report reasonably assumes that the general store would be a community hub, but it fails to make the case that the home of the storekeeper could similarly be considered a community hub, or of any more importance than any other house in the village. No one has proposed any commemoration of the long-demolished general store, where it would seem that the real interest would lie. I note that this house and the former general store were not even on the same property, and indeed the general store was on the north side of Dundas St. and this building on the south, so there was clearly no functional relationship between these buildings. It also leads to the obvious question of where were the homes of the other various owners of this and the other general store in the Village located, and is there to be any importance attached to them? We also note that Mr. Wood lived in the house for a fairly short amount of time, sometime between 13 and 19 years and also that the report makes no mention of his role in any other aspects of community life. I would suggest that the ownership of this house by Mr. Wood is an anecdotal piece of history but doesn't materially add to its historical value, and the reliance of the report upon the

ownership of George Stanley Wood is a weak argument. I note that it seems that there was no research done on any of the other owners of the home.

-regarding the contextual value of the building, I think that we need to be careful to distinguish between the development of historic Oakville and of modern Oakville. The report makes the point several times that Palermo is the oldest community in modern day Oakville and it seems is trying to implicate that Palermo was important to the development of Oakville, but this is somewhat ingenuous. Palermo did not become part of Oakville until 1962 and before this time, and so during the period of Oakville's most significant development, Palermo was an outlying village and not really a factor at all. This is not to suggest that Palermo did not have its own rich and interesting history, but to suggest some role of Palermo in the development of historic Oakville is a tenuous argument.

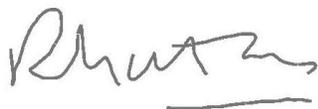
-also regarding the contextual value of the building, the report opines that the house is "visually and physically linked to it's surroundings. While the immediate context has undergone significant urbanization through the construction and expansion of Bronte Road and Dundas Street West together with the construction of new condominium buildings and plazas at Dundas Street West and Old Bronte Rd., there remains a cluster of historical dwellings in the immediate area along Old Bronte Rd". I would suggest that this statement underplays the real situation. The cluster of homes that is referred to actually numbers only 4, they are quite spread out along Old Bronte Rd., and the street is already dominated by new condo development located very close to the road and will continue to be even more so as new developments come on line. There is no intact heritage streetscape. With the exception of the Anson Buck house the homes are generally small in size and lacking in any individual significant interest. Creating heritage conservation opportunities in that context will require creative integration into the development proposals rather than traditional heritage conservation models.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses in the 9/06 analysis my client is committed to working with the Town to try to come up with a mutually agreeable design solution to integrate elements of the existing building into a development proposal but continues to feel that a Part IV designation is premature and would not be productive at this time. He repeats his offer to undertake not to alter the building or make application for demolition while this discussion is taking place. We think that there is a win-win solution possible here.

For those of you who may not be aware, my client is a long time resident and practicing lawyer in Oakville and a former Oakville Town Councillor. You can be confident that you are dealing with someone who stands by his word, understands the community context and history and recognizes the importance of appropriate development.

**We ask you again to defer consideration of the designation of this building to allow further conversations with Heritage and Planning staff regarding a suitable and sympathetic development strategy.**

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Mateljan", with a horizontal line underneath.

Rick Mateljan Lic. Tech. OAA