

REPORT

Heritage Oakville Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: March 25, 2025

FROM: Planning and Development Department

DATE: March 11, 2025

SUBJECT: Heritage Permit Application – 210 Lakeshore Road East – Towne Square Revitalization

LOCATION: 210 Lakeshore Road East

WARD: Ward 3

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RECOMMENDATION:

1. That Heritage Permit Application HP008/25-42.20TL for the revitalization of Towne Square at 210 Lakeshore Road East, as attached in Appendix B to the report dated March 11, 2025, from Planning and Development, be approved subject to the following:
 - a. That final details on materials for seating and walkways be submitted to Heritage Planning staff for final approval; and
2. That this heritage permit expires two years from the date of final approval by Council.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The property is designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* as part of the Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District.
- The owner is proposing to remove the existing non-historic Towne Square, which is constructed on top of an underground parking garage and to replace it with a newly designed space to meet current needs.
- Staff recommends that the application be approved in accordance with the conditions in the recommendation.

BACKGROUND:

A heritage permit application has been submitted by the owner of 210 Lakeshore Road East to undertake the following alterations:

1. Demolish the existing Towne Square facilities;
2. Construct the re-designed Towne Square on top of the existing concrete slab.

The property at 210 Lakeshore Road East is owned by the Town of Oakville and is located on the south side of Lakeshore Road East at the George Street intersection. See Appendix A for the Location Map. The property contains Towne Square, which is a public space that was constructed on top of an underground parking lot approximately 35 years ago. The property is designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and is a non-contributing property within the Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District.

The complete application was submitted on February 20, 2025. See Appendix B for the application form, photos and drawings of the proposed work. In accordance with the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the 90-day deadline for Council to make a decision on the application is May 21, 2025.

A previous heritage permit application was approved by Council in 2019, following engagement with the Heritage Oakville Advisory Committee. See Appendix C for details regarding the 2019 approved design. The project was put on hold due to budget issues and the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, additional public engagement has occurred, and significant revisions have been made to the Towne Square proposal requiring a new heritage permit application.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

The Towne Square revitalization proposal includes similar elements to the existing facilities and to the 2019 approved project. To address the change in grade from Lakeshore Road East sloping down to the commercial facilities in the square, there will continue to be a sunken lawn surrounded by stairs and retaining walls that is the central feature of the site. The existing Millenium Clock will be slightly relocated along the Lakeshore Road East sidewalk.

New features of the proposal include a water feature that has been scaled down from the 2019 project to provide better pedestrian access to the lawn. Leaf shaped benches will line the west side of the space. More trees have been added to provide shade, especially near seating areas. More seating has been provided in the retaining walls that lead to the lawn and the shape of the lawn area has changed slightly.

The changes to the approved design were the result of community-driven engagement and feedback to the new proposal has been positive. The changes provide a better pedestrian experience within Towne Square while maintaining the flexibility for multiple activities on the site.

Towne Square is a non-contributing property within the Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District and does not contain heritage attributes. However, changes within the site are required to complement the cultural heritage value of the District and to not have a negative impact on the pedestrian uses of Lakeshore Road East.

The Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District Plan includes the following objectives that are applicable to the Towne Square revitalization proposal:

- *To maintain and conserve the vibrant heritage character of Lakeshore Road corridor, and adjacent George and Thomas Streets.*
- *To encourage the maintenance and protection of the public realm of the District, as well as avoiding or minimizing adverse effects of public undertakings.*
- *To encourage public realm improvements within the Lakeshore Road corridor that respect the historical attributes and associations of this early transportation route as well as promote a pedestrian friendly environment that links Downtown Oakville to adjacent residential, institutional and recreational amenity areas including the harbour area, lakeshore and Sixteen Mile Creek.*

The Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District Plan also provides commentary and high-level guidance on the landscape of the public realm. Selections below from various sections of the District Plan:

- *The public realm within the District has undergone considerable change from the earliest period of settlement. As a result, there are no substantial above-ground remains of previous landscape and street features.*
- *It is important that any alterations or additions to the streetscape ensure that there is accommodation and safety for pedestrians, as well as for a wide variety of other users and in particular cyclists, people with mobility limitations and visual challenges and the wide range of vehicles needed for supporting the commercial core such as delivery trucks, couriers and public transit.*
- *The underlying principle for additions and alterations to the sidewalks is that they should sustain accessibility and barrier free travel for pedestrians with a variety of challenges.*

- *As part of the ongoing management of the streetscape and in the absence of a streetscape management plan, alterations and additions of contemporary street furniture should aim at creating a cohesive pedestrian environment using similar materials and colours in the choice of street furniture.*
- *The placement of street furniture should not impede pedestrian movement or block the entrances or façade signage of the adjacent buildings.*
- *Public art is an increasingly popular feature of downtown revitalization and streetscape improvements. There are opportunities for the addition of appropriate public art within the District. Public art should be strategically located at the entrances to Downtown District and at Towne Square and where there are opportunities to add to encourage the sense of place of the commercial core.*

Heritage Planning staff has reviewed the District Plan as part of the assessment of this heritage permit and finds that the subject application meets the guidelines of the District Plan. The proposed materials are complementary to Lakeshore Road East and support greater pedestrian use of the area. Furniture and seating have been carefully considered to ensure it does not impede movement within the site while providing sufficient opportunities for rest and relaxation. While some new designs are incorporated into the site, existing street furniture, such as the light standards from the street have been brought into Towne Square to ensure visual continuity.

The water feature takes the place of the public art component, and it is appropriately scaled for the pedestrian experience and designed to showcase a well-known symbol of the town: the oak leaf.

Staff is satisfied that the heritage permit application for the revitalization of Towne Square conserves the vibrant heritage character of Lakeshore Road East and is complementary to the surrounding heritage conservation district.

CONCLUSIONS/NEXT STEPS:

Staff therefore recommends that this heritage permit application be approved subject to the conditions in the recommendation. The works proposed are subject to other applicable town regulations and requirements, such as site alteration permits and building permits. It is the applicant's responsibility to review these matters with applicable staff.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

There is no public engagement required for the heritage permit application. However, given the importance of this project for the Town of Oakville, the Parks and Open Space department has completed extensive public engagement as outlined in this staff report.

(B) FINANCIAL

Financial considerations are the responsibility of the Parks and Open Space department.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The Parks and Open Space department has consulted with other town departments as required.

(D) COUNCIL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

This report addresses Council's strategic priorities: Community Belonging, Environmental Sustainability, and Accountable Government.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

A Climate Emergency was declared by Council in June 2019 to strengthen Oakville's community commitment in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The approval of this heritage permit supports the town's climate initiatives through the retention and rehabilitation of the existing heritage house on the property.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Location Map

Appendix B – Heritage Permit Application

Appendix C – Details of the 2019 Heritage Permit Application

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