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Date December 7, 2020 **Report No.** 2020-565

To Chair and Members
Brantford Heritage Committee

From Patrick Vusir, CPT
Planner, Long Range Planning

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item ☐
Item For Consideration ☒

2.0 Topic **Proposed Alteration to 73 George Street (Carnegie Building), a Property Designated under the Ontario Heritage Act – Application HA-09-20 [Financial Impact – None]**

3.0 Recommendation

THAT the request to alter a designated property at 73 George Street, in accordance with the details described in Application HA-09-20, BE APPROVED subject to the following condition:

- i. Receipt of confirmation that the required Minor Variance application has received final approval.

4.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this Report is to provide the Brantford Heritage Committee with information regarding the proposed alteration to 73 George Street which is designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The proposed alteration is the installation of a ground sign.

5.0 Background

73 George Street, known as the Carnegie Building, is located on the east side of George Street, between Wellington Street to the north and Darling Street to the south. The exact location is shown on the Location Map attached as **Appendix A** and the Aerial Photo attached as **Appendix B**. Figure 1 shows the property in 2020. Formerly the City's Public Library, the Carnegie Building was the first building in Wilfrid Laurier University's downtown Brantford campus.

Figure 1: 73 George Street and the Carnegie Building. Source: Staff



The property is designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* by City of Brantford By-law 136-78 ("Designation By-law") which is attached to this Report as **Appendix C**. Section 33 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* requires that a Heritage Permit be obtained prior to alteration of the property. The Applicant is seeking approval to install a ground sign within the front yard of the site. Details of the proposal are attached to this Report as **Appendix D**. In accordance with City of Brantford By-law 148-2016, the proposed sign is considered a "Major Alteration" and therefore review by the Brantford Heritage Committee is required prior to issuance of a Heritage Permit.

Notice of Receipt for Heritage Permit Application HA-09-20 for the Carnegie Building was issued on November 13, 2020. In accordance with Section 33 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* a decision must be made on this Heritage Permit Application by February 11, 2021.

6.0 Analysis

The Applicant is proposing to remove two existing signs and install a single-sided ground sign within the front yard of 73 George Street; as viewed from George Street, the sign will be to the right of the front stairs of the Carnegie Building. The sign will feature a concrete base, designed to match existing concrete landscaping features on the property, the face of the sign will consist of transparent glass and white aluminum. The glass portion of the sign face will feature the wording “Laurier” and the maple-leaf logo of Wilfrid Laurier University. The white aluminum portion of the sign face will hold the University’s motto: “Inspiring Lives!” The Applicant is proposing that the letters, and the logo, will be made of acrylic and illuminated by internal LED lights. Each letter will have a stainless steel plate laminated to its front and painted black. The maple-leaf logo will have a purple front instead of black. Figure 2 shows the proposed design and Figure 3 shows the proposed location of the sign. Full details are included in **Appendix D**.

Figure 2: Proposed ground sign for 73 George Street. Source: Applicant.

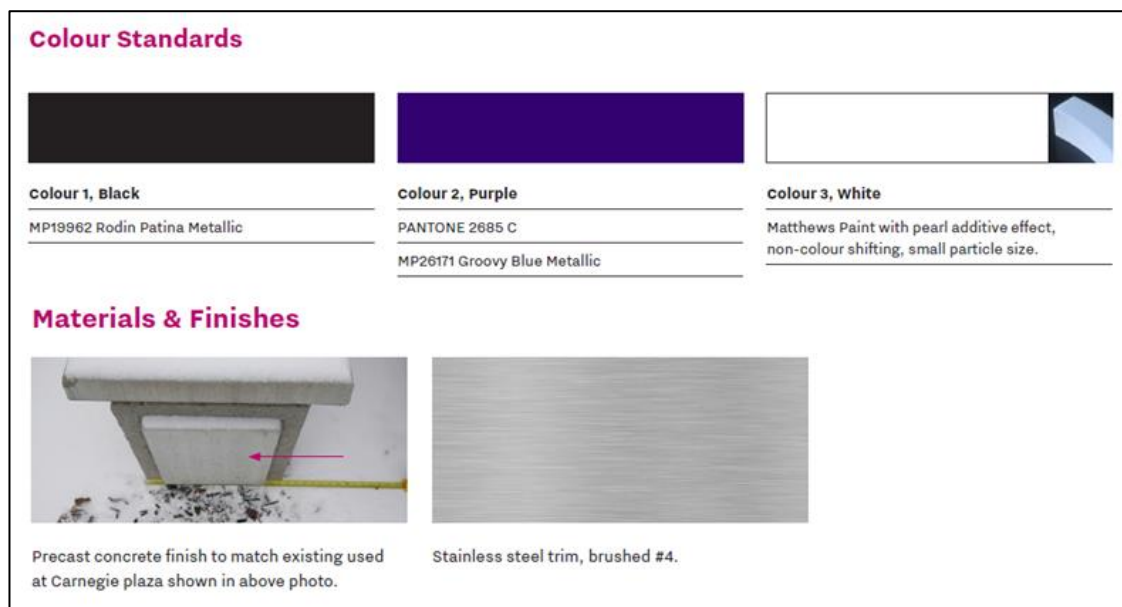


The District Study and Sign By-law both address size, location, and number of signs on a property. The District Study speaks to size and location of signage in a general sense through guiding policies, whereas the Sign By-law establishes specific size and setback regulations to ensure that signs are sympathetic in size and do not negatively affect safety (such as obstructing sightlines). The proposed sign complies with all setback requirements of the Sign By-law, and with the limitation of one sign on the property. As proposed, the signage will be larger than is encouraged by the District Study's sign guidelines, but well within the maximum size allowed by the Sign By-law. Staff is of the opinion that the use of glass will have the effect of reducing the proposed sign's apparent size, so although it will be larger than encouraged by the District Study, Staff is of the opinion that there will be no negative impacts to the District.

The District Study also encourages façade signage that relates to the building entrance, but notes that ground signs are appropriate for some contexts as well. Staff is of the opinion that a ground sign is appropriate in this case because it has the benefit of not obstructing any architectural features of the Carnegie Building (a requirement of the Sign By-law) while still having a clear relationship with the building entrance.

With respect to material and colour, most guidance is provided by the Sign By-law. The guidelines in the Sign By-law encourage wood and metal as well as other materials that maintain the heritage character of the streetscape, and the use of historical colours. The proposed palette of colours and materials is shown in Figure 4. The Applicant has proposed to use a concrete base, matched to the existing concrete finishes found in the landscaping of 73 George Street, while the face of the sign is proposed to be made of aluminum and glass. These materials are consistent with the guidelines in the Sign By-law as they are sympathetic to the heritage character and will maintain the visibility of the Carnegie Building's architecture. The aluminum of the sign face will be painted white, and sign lettering will be black, which respect historical colour palettes. The purple of the maple leaf logo accommodates the colours of the University in a restrained manner, which respects the character of the Carnegie Building and the District while still reflecting the University's identity. While there are a variety of materials and colours being used, the sign fundamentally follows the simple principle of contrast by using a light field and dark text and logo.

Figure 4: Colour palette for the proposed sign. Source: Applicant.



With respect to lighting, the Sign By-law encourages ambient, gooseneck, or low-key spotlighting but does not permit internally illuminated signs. The District Study also recommends against backlit plastic signage. In this instance, the Applicant's proposal includes internally illuminated letters, which is not in compliance with the Sign By-law or the District Study. Staff has considered the guidelines and regulations, noting that the objective of the guidelines in the Sign By-law is to encourage signage that preserves and enhances the heritage nature of a property and the surrounding streetscape. The general prohibition of internally illuminated signage addresses two concerns that are typically associated with modern internally illuminated "lightbox" style signage: *1) it does not reinforce a historic sense of place; and 2) it lacks thoughtful, high-quality design.* Contextually, 73 George Street is located in an area where the buildings originate from a range of eras but almost all have high quality architecture. The sense of place is therefore not tied to one specific era in history, and can be supported by high-quality design from a range of eras. When considering lighting as a design element specifically, Staff notes that the use of lighting is restrained – the light does not flood out of the sign face but instead only emphasizes the edges of individual letters and the maple leaf logo. This achieves a similar effect to spotlighting or gooseneck lights – the sign is highlighted but it does not become the sole focus by outshining other elements of the property or the streetscape. Accordingly, Staff is of the opinion that the Applicant's proposal is a well-designed contemporary sign that preserves and enhances the streetscape.

Figure 5: Rendering of the proposed sign at night, showing the minimal "highlighting" effect of the internal illumination. Source: Applicant.



For the foregoing reasons, Staff recommends approval of the Applicant's proposal. Staff notes that while the proposal meets the objectives of the Sign By-law and the District Study and is sympathetic to the character of 73 George Street and the District, it does not comply with the specific regulation related to internal illumination in the Sign By-law. Therefore approval of a Minor Variance by the Committee of Adjustment is required in addition to approval of the Heritage Permit application by the Brantford Heritage Committee. For that reason, Staff's recommendation includes a condition that the Heritage Permit approval is subject to final approval of the required Minor Variance. Staff anticipates that the Committee of Adjustment will review the Minor Variance application on January 14, 2021.

7.0 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to the City arising from this Report.

8.0 Conclusion

Report 2020-565 provides the Brantford Heritage Committee with an overview of the alteration proposed for 73 George Street in Heritage Permit Application HA-09-20. The Applicant is proposing to remove two existing ground signs on the property and install one new ground sign in the front yard. Staff supports the proposal on the grounds that the materials, location, and design of the sign is sympathetic but note that the proposal will require approval of Minor Variance. Accordingly, Staff recommends that the approval of the Applicant's Heritage Permit be conditional on the receipt of final approval of a Minor Variance to permit internal illumination.



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Attachments

Appendix A: Location Map

Appendix B: Aerial Photo

Appendix C: Designation By-law 136-79

Appendix D: Submission Material

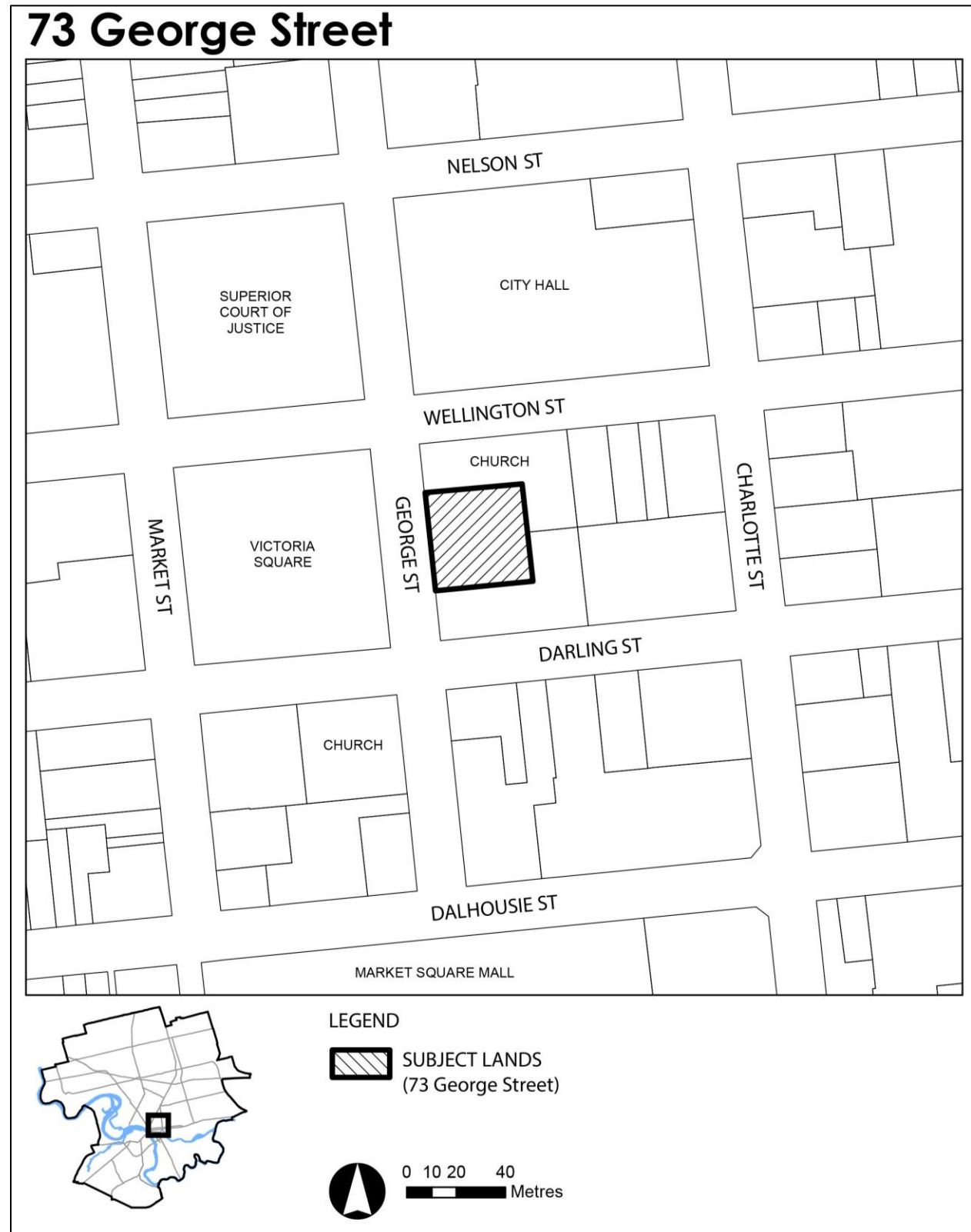
Appendix E: Sign By-law Guidelines

By-law required ☐ yes ☒ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk ☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? ☐ yes ☒ no

Appendix A: Location Map




Appendix B: Aerial Photo

73 George Street



LEGEND

 SUBJECT LANDS
(73 George Street)

AERIAL IMAGERY FROM SPRING 2017



0 10 20 40
Metres