



27 August 2018

**Heritage Ottawa to Lesley Collins, Heritage Planner, Heritage and Urban Design Branch, City of Ottawa**

**Re: APPLICATION TO ALTER THE MEDICAL ARTS BUILDING, LOCATED AT 180 METCALFE STREET**

Heritage Ottawa has reviewed the proposal for redevelopment of the property located at 180 Metcalfe Street, known as the Medical Arts Building, and offers the following comments.

When a heritage structure such as the building in question — considered a rare example of Art Deco in Ottawa — is reduced to a façade, it is paramount that the heritage character of what remains of that façade be treated with sincere respect. It is Heritage Ottawa's contention that the original Art Deco elevations be preserved with as little modern intrusions as possible. Consequently, we have three concerns with the proposal: (1) lowering of the main floor and resultant reconfiguration of the main building entrance, (2) proposed canopy over the main entrance, and (3) proposed window awnings on the principal façade.

- (1) Heritage Ottawa is concerned with the approach to lowering of the entranceway on Metcalfe Street, a result of lowering the first-floor elevation to grade. The proposed lowering of the main floor level and elimination of stairs at the main entrance significantly alters the proportions of this element of the building. We encourage the proponent to consider designating the Nepean Street entrance as the barrier-free building entrance, in favour of retaining the Medical Arts Building entrance in its original configuration. In this case, interior ramps and/or lifts could be used to bridge the interior spaces.

If approved as proposed, the design of the Metcalfe Street entrance, including reconfiguration of the doors and transoms, and treatment of the stone arch surround will detract from a key heritage element of the building. Sensitive treatment is vital to successful implementation of this intervention. As suggested in the CHIS, Heritage Ottawa would recommend that a Conservation Architect be consulted on approaches to this design proposal.

- (2) Heritage Ottawa is concerned with the size, configuration and materiality of the proposed canopy roof over the principal building entrance. As shown, it appears the canopy will obscure views of the stone arch and embossed copper panel hosting the name of the building. The tall archway and continuous inset of the front façade creates a strong vertical arrangement that is integral to the building's overall design and heritage character. We are concerned that these elements and composition, which are intended to be viewed and appreciated from street level, will be obscured by the solid mass of the entrance canopy. We urge the proponent to adopt a solution that leaves these architectural features clearly visible from the public realm. The CHIS should be consulted for additional guidance.
- (3) The proposed awnings over the first storey windows are incompatible with the heritage character of the building. As noted in the CHIS, there is no historical precedent for these superfluous additions. The awnings detract from the idea of preserving the Art Deco façade by concealing important heritage features — the embossed copper panels, which are proposed to be restored and reinstalled.

Regarding the general conservation approach to Medical Arts Building, Heritage Ottawa supports the conservation strategies recommended and described in the Cultural Heritage Impact Statement (CHIS). These detailed and thoughtful strategies highlight the extra care that is required to protect the building not only during construction, but for the long-term commemoration of its history and significance.

Elsewhere, Heritage Ottawa supports the plan to retain the existing façade in a manner that allows it to read as a separate mass, distinct from yet integrated to the proposed redevelopment. The setback of the proposed tower, and separation of the new podium via a glazed curtain wall “gasket” are positive design initiatives that preserve the integrity of the Medical Arts Building principal façades. We support the massing and scale of the 5-storey podium addition, which provides a good transition between the historic building and the tower above. We also support the generous width and simplicity of design of the curtain wall “gasket” which provides a clear and neutral transition between old and new.

Finally, a few comments on secondary items. We encourage the proponent to provide more detail on the exterior lighting strategy. The type and location of light fixtures — in particular, the fixtures proposed to be installed at the cornice line — should be unobtrusive and reversible interventions that will not damage or conceal any architectural features.

The double-height Medical Arts Building lobby space appears quite vast. The intended function of this space is not described in the proposal. Again, we encourage the proponent to provide additional detail on the intended use / configuration of this space and any implications this may have for the entrance sequence and principal elevation. For example, if a commercial use is proposed, signage or other identifying features mounted on the exterior of the building could compromise the heritage character of the historic facade and should not be permitted.

To conclude, regarding removal of the building interiors, it is recommended that the principal interior spaces and typical office and other spaces be documented prior to removal. The representative interior spaces to be photographed should include the entrance hall, sample office, sample upper hall, sample washroom (if in original condition), interior finishes including flooring, trim, plaster work, typical door and window elements. This documentation should be archived with the City of Ottawa archives.

Thank you for considering our comments.



David Jeanes  
President, Heritage Ottawa

CC to: Jack Hanna (CCCA)