Heritage Analysis

2.6 Heritage Analysis

Heritage Value

The heritage values of the York Theatre include:

Theatre and historical values

- One of the oldest surviving theatre buildings in Vancouver and a product of the first generation of Vancouver theatre-building
- An adaptable theatre whose primary uses have included legitimate theatre, music, and cinema
- The home for 54 years of the Vancouver Little Theatre Association, the oldest community theatre in Vancouver and perhaps in Canada, and a venue that involved the broad community and provided a start for many of the city’s best acting and directing talent
- A rock concert venue that featured many important politically active punk bands of the 1980s and early 1990s
- A Vancouver venue for Bollywood films around 1980 and again in the mid-1990s
- Represents transformations in cultural activity in Vancouver for nearly a century
- The building immediately to the north has value for having contained an earlier recital hall whose success led to the construction of the Alcazar Theatre

Architectural values

- An early building (1913) by the significant Vancouver architect J.Y. McCarter
- Modified (1939-40) to become a good representative of Art Deco theatres; H.H. Simmonds, designer of the changes, has some importance in Vancouver architecture
- Representative of the manner in which public buildings are frequently altered in order to meet changing needs and tastes.
- Although the theatre has been modified many times, much of its original plan, materials, and appearance remain, as do traces of the various renovations

Contextual values

- One of the few historic public venues along Commercial Drive
- Character and scale are appropriate to this stretch of Commercial Drive
The overall approach recommended for the York Theatre is Rehabilitation – enabling an efficient and effective contemporary use while protecting the building’s heritage values.

This involves several different approaches for particular components, namely:

- Restoration and Preservation of the historic exteriors;
- Rehabilitation of the historic interiors; and
- New Construction for the proposed addition along Commercial Drive.

In general, the approach should be one that encourages a low level of intervention throughout the building with respect to architectural and engineering treatment. This approach is beneficial in two ways:

- It is good conservation practice in that it makes minimal changes to historic components of heritage value and retains a maximum amount of historic materials; and
- It is less expensive than making major interventions.

The Heritage Consultant will monitor the interventions proposed by the various consultants to ensure that the level of work remains modest in scale, while being sufficient to enable efficient use of the building for live theatre.

| Restoration and Preservation | • The entrance façade will be restored to its 1939 Art Deco appearance  
• The exterior walls of the original 1911 theatre will be preserved |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rehabilitation and Renovation | • The interior of the original theatre will be renovated to a contemporary appearance  
• Structural and architectural features will be preserved where feasible |
| New Construction              | • The 1923, 1939 & 1969 additions do not have heritage value and will be demolished  
• A new addition will be built in order to allow the restored York Theatre to function as a modern operational theatre |