

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST AND DESCRIPTION OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES

Description of Property

The 0.05-hectare property municipally addressed as 54 King Street East, Hamilton, known as the former Bank of Nova Scotia Building, is comprised of a three-storey high, stone-faced building constructed in 1914 of brick, steel, and concrete. It is located on the south side of King Street East, near the intersection of Hughson Street South and King Street East, across from Gore Park, in the Beasley Neighbourhood of Downtown Hamilton, in the City of Hamilton.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The property at 54 King Street East has physical value as a representative example of an early-twentieth century Beaux-Arts Classicism commercial building. Completed in 1914, the three-storey high building was constructed with brick, steel, and concrete, and features a symmetrical, and imposing façade faced with Ohio Canyon cut stone, massive pilasters with Doric capitals, and large multi-pane windows, among other notable features. The property also displays a high degree of artistic merit in its grand, symmetrical, and detailed design of the façade, including its balustrade, entablature, stone-lined columns with Doric capitals, the presence of tall metal-framed windows with decorative grillwork, and the recessed central entrance with stone surround.

The property has historical and associative value due to its direct connections with the banking institutions and Hamilton's 2SLGBTQ+ communities and reflects the work and ideas of the nationally prominent firm Bond & Smith Architects. Originally built for the Bank of Nova Scotia (now Scotiabank), the building is centrally located in what was the city's growing financial center surrounding Gore Park. By the 1950s, trends in urban renewal began to change the face of Gore Park and, by the mid-1970s, the property transitioned into a restaurant, and eventually a nightclub by 1983. In 1993, a new nightclub called The Embassy opened its doors as one of very few openly 2SLGBTQ+ friendly spaces and would go on to become a cornerstone of the 2SLGBTQ+ landscape in Hamilton until its closure in 2018. As a high-profile 2SLGBTQ+ place, The Embassy was home to many important community events, including both positive celebratory events and homophobic attacks. The property's involvement in important 2SLGBTQ+ events, and as a major 2SLGBTQ+ landmark in Hamilton's downtown core, is a continued tangible reminder of Hamilton's 2SLGBTQ+ urban heritage.

The former Bank of Nova Scotia building is considered to be an important landmark for 2SLGBTQ+ people, has been widely used in film and visual media, and is important in defining the character of the area around Gore Park in downtown Hamilton. The property is visually, physically, and historically linked to its surroundings as part of the King Street East streetscape adjacent to Gore Park, which includes other architecturally significant buildings.

Description of Heritage Attributes:

The key attributes that embody the physical value of the property as a representative example of a commercial bank building designed in the Beaux-Arts Classicism architectural style displaying a high degree of artistic merit, and the historical value of the property for its associations with early-nineteenth century banking institutions, late-twentieth century 2SLGBTQ+ communities and events, and Bond & Smith architects, include the:

- Front (north) elevation and roofline of the three-storey high building, including its:
 - Symmetrical façade clad with Ohio Canyon cut stone with an even-course finish and decorative details, including its:
 - Stone balustrade;
 - Entablature with a dentilated course, plain frieze, and moulded cornice; and,
 - Four large stone-lined pilasters with Doric capitals and moulded plinths;
 - Flat-headed window openings with:
 - Moulded stone surrounds and trim; and,
 - The presence of multi-pane metal windows with decorative metal Roman lattice window grillwork;
 - Recessed central entrance with:
 - Stone surround with flanking columns with moulded panels and Doric capitals and entablature; and,
 - The presence of a double-leaf door.

The key attributes that embody the contextual value of the property as a landmark and as a defining feature of Gore Park, include its:

- Location fronting onto King Street East.