

Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Community Development

Planning Services

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Anthony Jas
Planner I, Planning Services

Date: June 22, 2020

Subject: Ontario Heritage Act - Intention to Designate
201-203 King Street West, Community of Chatham (City)

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The Intention to Designate the property known as 201-203 King Street West, described as Part of Lots 1 and 2, Plan Old Survey, Block C, in the Community of Chatham (City), under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* for its cultural heritage value or interest, be approved.

Background

Our inheritance of architecture and cultural landscapes is an irreplaceable asset and resource. In Ontario, the task of conserving these important assets is primarily a municipal responsibility. The *Ontario Heritage Act* (the 'Act') provides a framework within which municipalities can act to identify and conserve properties of historical and/or architectural significance. Council has established the Municipal Heritage Committee to advise Council on heritage matters.

At its February 19, 2020 meeting, the Municipal Heritage Committee passed a motion recommending that the property known as The Boyd Block, located at 201-203 King Street West, in the Community of Chatham (City), be designated under Part IV of the Act for its cultural heritage value or interest. Pictures of the property are attached as Appendix A for reference.

The owner of this property supports designation of their property under the Act.

The Boyd Block

The Boyd Block is an integral part of the commercial streetscape of King Street West and contributes to a stylistically consistent design theme with adjacent structures, that were either built or renovated in the Art Deco style, c. 1935. The Boyd Block itself was developed in the late 1860s or early 1870s, with a three story brick commercial bloc building. It housed commercial businesses on the ground floor, and like many urban blocks from that period, had public assembly space on the second floor (for meetings, drills, etc.). The third floor may also have been used for public assembly or it may have served as a residence.

In the 1930s, there was a fire that destroyed the third floor of the Boyd Block building. The structure was reduced to two floors and the street façade was given a stylish facelift. New decorative polychrome brick was added to the front along with some additional architectural elements to create an Art Deco façade. Despite this, the essential structure of the original two floors remains intact with most original window and door openings have been retained. The original store front, while modernized, is still basically intact. As well, the original brickwork on the east, west, and north exposures of the building still remain.

More recently, the owner of the Boyd Block has undertaken extensive renovations to improve the building while maintaining its heritage value. This includes new doors and windows, brick restoration, and full renovation of the ground floor for commercial units and the second floor for two residential apartments down to the brick walls. In sum, the Boyd Block property continues to be a good example of Art Deco style of urban architecture that preserves the essence of a very historically important building.

In terms of its historical/associative value, the Boyd Block was originally developed by Mr. Grandison Boyd who operated a grain and produce business from the ground floor of the building until the late 1870s. Mr. Boyd, who was born into slavery in 1818 and escaped in 1833, was not only a prominent and prosperous merchant, but also a community leader and political activist. Mr. Boyd had a fascinating history and is a key associative figure in Chatham's development as the "Black Mecca" for refugees of slavery. A more detailed perspective on the life of Mr. Boyd and his historical contributions to Chatham-Kent is provided in the Designation Report attached as Appendix B.

Comments

The Designation Report contains a statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest of the property, as defined by one or more of the Criteria under *Ontario Regulation 9/06*, and a description of the heritage attributes of the property.

Council has two options regarding the designation process, which are as follows:

- 1) Proceed with the designation - Notice of Intention to Designate is then served. If there are no objection(s), the final request to designate comes back to Council. Should there be an objection(s), there is an appeal process to the Conservation Review Board before the final request comes back to Council for final decision.
- 2) Not to proceed with the designation - the property is not designated.

Areas of Strategic Focus and Critical Success Factors

The recommendation in this report supports the following areas of strategic focus:

- ☐ Economic Prosperity:
Chatham-Kent is an innovative and thriving community with a diversified economy
- ☐ A Healthy and Safe Community:
Chatham-Kent is a healthy and safe community with sustainable population growth
- ☒ People and Culture:
Chatham-Kent is recognized as a culturally vibrant, dynamic, and creative community
- ☐ Environmental Sustainability:
Chatham-Kent is a community that is environmentally sustainable and promotes stewardship of our natural resources

The recommendation in this report supports the following critical success factors:

- ☐ Financial Sustainability:
The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is financially sustainable
- ☐ Open, Transparent and Effective Governance:
The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is open, transparent and effectively governed with efficient and bold, visionary leadership
- ☐ Has the potential to support all areas of strategic focus & critical success factors
- ☐ Neutral issues (does not support negatively or positively)

Consultation

The Municipal Heritage Committee was consulted in accordance with Section 29(2) of the Act. The property owner was consulted as part of the Committee's evaluation process and supports the recommended heritage designation.

Financial Implications

Designation under the Act is an eligibility requirement of the Heritage Property Tax Relief Program. If the property owner meets all of the eligibility requirements of the program, they may be entitled to a prescribed level of tax relief starting with the 2020 tax year.

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Attachments: Appendix A – Photographs of The Boyd Block
Appendix B – Designation Report: 201 – 203 King Street West,
Community of Chatham (City)

c Municipal Heritage Committee

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Act - Intention to Designate Report.docx

Appendix A: Photographs of The Boyd Block



View of the Boyd Block building from King Street West.



View of the Boyd Block building from King Street West.

Designation Report

The Boyd Block 201 – 203 King Street West Chatham

Preamble:

The Boyd Block has gone through its share of changes over the years. Likely constructed in the late 1860s or early 1870s, this building was originally three stories high. It housed commercial businesses on the ground floor, and like many urban blocks from that period, had public assembly space on the second floor (for meetings, drills, etc.). The third floor may also have been used for public assembly or it may have served as a residence.

In the 1930s, there was a fire that destroyed the third floor of the building. The structure was reduced to two floors and the street façade was given a stylish “facelift”. New decorative polychrome brick was added to the front along with some additional architectural elements to create an Art Deco façade. Despite this, the essential structure of the original two floors remains intact with most original window and door openings retained. The windows have been modernized and would originally have been wooden six over six pane wooden sash. The original store front, while modernized, is still basically intact. As well, the original brickwork on the east, west, and north exposures of the building still remain.

The architecture of many, if not most buildings, is evolutionary and the changes that a building undergoes become part of that building’s history. The current owner of the property has taken great pains to carefully remove paint from the brick exterior and to re-point and repair the masonry to preserve the appearance of the building as it would have been in the 1930s. As well, a sympathetic renovation of the interior of the building has retained as many original features as possible. In some instances, previously concealed interior brick walls, early floor joists, and flooring have been exposed and incorporated as design features.

Hence, while the building looks very different than it did when originally built, it is now a good example of the later, and often under-appreciated, Art Deco style of urban architecture while still preserving the essence of a very historically important building (see designation report).

Designation Report

The Boyd Block 201 – 203 King Street West Chatham

Description of Property

The Boyd Block property is located at 201 - 203 King Street West, Chatham, legally described as Part of Lots 1 and 2, Block C, Plan Old Survey.

The property consists of a two storey brick commercial building c. 1870 with a re-modelled Art Deco façade.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Historical/Associative (OHA Reg. 9/06):

In the late 1860s or early 1870s, a three story brick commercial block building was constructed along the Thames River at 155 King Street West (now 201-203 King Street West) in Chatham. The building was built by Mr. Grandison Boyd who operated his grain and produce business from the ground floor of the building until the late 1870s.

Grandison Boyd had a fascinating history and is a key associative figure in Chatham's development as the "Black Mecca" for refugees of slavery. Many free blacks also relocated to Chatham following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in the United States in 1850.

Mr. Boyd was born into slavery in 1818 but managed to escape in 1833. He made his way to Toronto, married, and acquired property. By the late 1840s, he reputedly had two grocery stores, one in Toronto, and one in Rochester, New York. The passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 however, made him vulnerable to apprehension in New York and even threatened his freedom in Toronto (slave catchers were known to come into Canada and illegally remove black citizens). Boyd, consequently, moved to England and, from there, on to Australia where he capitalized on the Great Australian Gold Rush that began in 1851. Whether he participated as a prospector or as a merchant supplying the surge of new inhabitants, he, apparently, did very well financially as indicated by this article in *The Free Democrat* on February 7, 1855:

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, Runaway slave named Grandison Boyd, fearing he might be caught for by the man who assumed ownership over him deemed it prudent to leave the country. We are unable to say how long he has been absent, but long enough at any rate to accumulate a handsome fortune in the Australian gold mines. When he left he was indebted to Wm. S. Thompson, Esq. Crockery merchant of this city, who had no very great hopes that the debt would ever be cancelled. But a few weeks since he received a letter from Boyd stating that he had just arrived in Liverpool from Australia,

where he had made \$8,000 and desired to know whether Mr. T. would accept 40 lbs for xxxx. he would like to return but fears that he would be arrested as a fugitive and says he will not pay \$1000 to get a title to himself. Mr. Thomson signified his acceptance of the xxxx and a few days since he received a draft for that amount. (1)

Boyd ended up settling in the thriving Black settlement of Chatham where he established the City Flour Mill in partnership with Mr. Stanton Hunton. Boyd also had the three storey building at 155 King West constructed where he carried on his business in “grain and produce” as identified in the 1876 *Planet Directory*. In the same directory, an advertisement for his business states:

“G. Boyd, produce and commission merchant, 155 King Street West, also storage and forwarding. Highest price paid for farm produce.”

It is interesting and significant to note that, while there was no official segregation of businesses in Chatham, most Black entrepreneurs operated east of William Street. Boyd, however, built his block along the predominantly white section of King Street West.

Boyd rented out half of the ground floor to *The Chatham Banner*, identified in the Chatham Directory as a “liberal” newspaper. The Chatham Banner remained in this location until the early 1900s and the building is sometimes referred to as “The Banner Block”.

Boyd was not only a prominent and prosperous merchant, but he was also a community leader and political activist. In 1874, the annual Emancipation Day parade in Chatham was cancelled and replaced by a major protest to promote Black rights. The Chairman of the protest was none other than Grandison Boyd. Boyd died in 1878 and is buried in Toronto.

In the early 20th century, the ground floor of the building was home to the Chatham Banner and Nelson Stringer whose business included the purchase and sale of grain, produce, and furs. The building became known as the Stringer Block. By mid-century, the building became known as the Kemsley Block, home to Sid Kemsley Florists for six decades.

The second floor was a large meeting hall and had a significant history in its own right as it served, at various times, as a drill hall for the 4th Company of the 24th Kent Battalion (where a soldier was accidentally killed in a fencing match) and as a meeting hall for the International Order of Foresters, Independent Order of Odd Fellows and other fraternal associations. According to historian John Rhodes, the meeting hall was also the site of a preliminary hearing for accused hammer murderer Clayton Croft:

The Foresters’ lodge room was the site of a unique legal event that was staged here on June 6, 1922. The proceedings were an inquest into the hammer murder of a Harwich farmer named Gus Noel. The accused murderer was a young Charing Cross farm hand named Clayton Croft.

Hundreds of people wanted to attend the inquest as Chatham had not experienced an event such as this since the 1893 murder of Chatham town constable Robert Rankin. The inquest proceedings, which could only be described as circus-like, had to be staged at a

venue that could accommodate several hundred people and be thusly available on short notice. The Foresters Hall met both requirements and was one of the few buildings in the city capable of being thus employed.

Clayton Croft was later convicted of the murder and served 18 years in jail. He was released from prison at the outset of the Second World War and died at Ridgetown in the early 1980s.(2)

Design/Physical (OHA Reg. 9/06):

The Boyd Block Property contains a good surviving example of a c. 1875 commercial block with a remodelled façade in the Art Deco style.

Contextual (OHA Reg. 9/06):

The Boyd Block is an integral part of the commercial streetscape of King Street West and contributes to a stylistically consistent design theme with adjacent structures that were either built or renovated in the Art Deco style, c. 1935 along this section of the street.

Description of Heritage Attributes/Character Defining Elements:

Exterior

- Footprint
- Roof line
- Window & door placements
- Window sills
- Door placement
- Chimneys
- Red brick stretcher bond construction, east, west & north facades
- Colourful grazed brick stretcher bond construction, south (street) façade
- Decorative inset yellow brick rectangle and flanking diamonds, south façade
- Terrazzo entrance floor

Interior

- Exposed floor joists and flooring, second floor ceiling
- Exposed floor joists and flooring, basement

Contextual:

Key elements of the Boyd Block that support its contextual significance are:

- Location and massing along the main commercial street in Chatham (King Street))
- Location in proximity to other stylistically similar buildings on either side and on the south side of the street creating a “cluster” of Art Deco inspired architecture.

Footnotes:

(1) *New York Daily Times*, February 5, 1855.

(2) **Rhodes, John**, *Forester Block Had A Wide Variety Of Tenants Over Its Many Years Of Service*. Chatham This Week, June 19, 2015

Sources:

Lauriston, V. (1952), *Romantic Kent, The Story of a County 1620-1952*. Chatham: Publisher Unknown.
New York Daily Times, February 5, 1855.

Rhodes, John, *Forester Block Had A Wide Variety Of Tenants Over Its Many Years Of Service*. Chatham This Week, June 19, 2015

Rhodes, John, *Former Slave Led An Incredible Life*. Chatham This Week, January 29, 2019
Chatham Directories, 1875 – 1985 (Chatham Public Library Collection)

A runaway slave named **GRANDISON BOYD**, who had taken refuge some years since in Rochester, left the country, as many others did, at the time of the passage of the Fugitive Slave law, from fear his owner might reclaim him. He went to Australia and commenced work in the gold mines. When he left he was indebted \$200 to a crockery merchant in this city, who had no very strong hopes the debt would ever be cancelled. A few weeks since, however, he received a letter from **BOYD**, stating that he had just arrived at Liverpool from Australia, where he had made \$8,000, and enclosing a draft for £40, (\$200,) the amount of the debt.

[*Rochester Democrat.*]
