

In the Matter of the Ontario Heritage Act

Notice of Application to Repeal Designation By-law

The Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O., 1990, Chapter 0.18 as amended, provides that an owner of property designated under the Ontario Heritage Act may apply to Municipal Council to repeal the by-law or part thereof designating the property. The Council of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent hereby gives Notice of the application to repeal the designation by-law for the following:

Description of Property:

The Chrysler Ward School is located at 9 Park Street on the north side of the confluence of Richmond Street, Park Street and Queen Street in the City of Chatham, Municipality of Chatham-Kent. The two-storey painted brick commercial building was constructed in 1871. The property is legally described as Plan 14, BLK 48, Lot 14 & PT Lots 10 to 13.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest:

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

The Chrysler Ward School represents one of the oldest known structures that was used as a school in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. It was built in 1871 and was the only school located in the Town of Chatham's Chrysler Ward, hence it's name. The school, along with four others throughout Chatham, was erected from municipal funds at the disposal of the Town along with proceeds from the sale of school lands. As the modest six-room school became overpopulated, additions were added and it became known as the Queen Street School.

Around the turn of the century the Queen Street School was surplus and the building became associated with one of the most well-known industries in Chatham. William Gray purchased the property at which point it became known as Gray & Sons Repair. The school's design lent itself well to the use as a repair shop for the Gray buggies and sleighs that were manufactured in Chatham. Following William's death in 1884, his son Robert Gray picked up where William left off and in 1915 he began manufacturing Gray-Dort automobiles. The automobile production meant that the family's industrial empire boomed, selling more than 23,000 automobiles from coast to coast. Due to this boom, buggy production slowed, resulting in the repair shop's transition to the Gray-Dort Social Club.

As the Gray-Dort Social Club the building was central to the community's social life. It acted as Chatham's unofficial community centre, a place where employees enjoyed billiards and silent movies and where many annual local events and dances were held. Robert is said to have favoured this building and retained ownership long after all other assets of the Gray-Dort Motor Company were sold following the cessation of Gray-Dort automobile production in 1924. It was not until his death that the structure took on its next incarnation, and the longest use to date, as the Masonic Temple. During this time the structure again played a prominent role in the social life of the Chatham community, hosting many local functions. The Masons sold the building in 1995 at which point it became the Gentry Manor.

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

The Chrysler Ward School is a unique example of the Classic Revival style of architecture. This style was concerned with the application of Greek plans and proportions to civic buildings, and it was common of schools of this era to be built in the Classic Revival style.

The exterior is largely original and the structure's long and diverse history is evidenced in its many additions and alterations. The Chrysler Ward School's unique design features a temple inspired, somewhat monumental scale with a two-storey porticoed colonnade and four prominent Doric columns. The fenestration varies, but the numerous long, tall windows with decorative arched brick labels are notable. Other unique features include the grand main entrance featuring a keystone, the corbelled brick work under the eaves, and the decorative brick blind arches with brick pilasters and capitals.

Contextual (OHA Reg. 9/06):

Located prominently at the confluence of three Streets: Richmond, Park and Queen, the Chrysler Ward School is a landmark in Chatham and represents a long history of the community's social activities and events as well as their contribution to the automotive industry, both locally and nationally.

Any person may, within 30 days after the date of this Notice, serve on the Municipal Clerk, a Notice of Objection in writing, setting out the reasons for the objection and all relevant facts. A Notice of Objection is then considered by Council in its deliberation on the matter. A decision of Council may be appealed by submitting a Notice of Appeal with the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) and the Municipal Clerk. More details on the appeal process can be found at <https://olt.gov.on.ca/tribunals/crb/crb-process/>.

Dated at the Municipality of Chatham-Kent this 10th day of June, 2022.