

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

305 King Street West



Summary of Significance

Design/Physical Value

Historical/Associative Value

Contextual Value

Social Value

Economic Value

Environmental Value

Municipal Address: 305 King Street West

Legal Description: Plan 375 Part Lot 8 & 9

Year Built: 1964

Architectural Style: International

Original Owner: Waterloo Trust Head Office

Original Use: Commercial

Condition: Good

Description of Cultural Heritage Resource

305 King Street West is a 20th century building built in the International architectural style. The building is situated on a 0.48 acre parcel of land located on the south side of King Street West between Francis

Street and Water Street in the City of Kitchener within the Region of Waterloo. The principal resource that contributes to the heritage value is the commercial building.

Heritage Value

305 King Street West is recognized for its design/physical values, historical/associative values, and contextual values.

Design/Physical Value

The design/physical values relate to the type and architectural style of the building as well as its construction which demonstrates a high degree of technical achievement.

The building is an early example of a commercial office building, described as the city's first skyscraper and once tallest building, and a representative example of the International architectural style. This style is a subtype of modernism that emphasizes geometric forms, open interiors, and an emphasis on the buildings structure. The style is characterized by clean lines, right angles, and an emphasis on utility. Materials focus on steel, glass and concrete with towers featuring steel frames and glass curtain walls. The building is in good condition with many intact original elements. The building features: a flat roof; a square plan; 12 storeys; four nearly identical elevations with little to no ornamentation; simple geometric lines created through the use of materials such as concrete, glass, and metal; and, a 2-storey podium base surrounded by a semi-public plaza with concrete planters. The roof once featured a 25-ton neon sign that read "Waterloo Trust" in four directions with letters that were almost 2 metres high.

The building demonstrates a high degree of technical achievement with its use of floor-to-ceiling "float glass" exterior walls. This exterior glass wall system was developed by the Pilkington glass company in England, a successor to plate glass, and only became available for building projects in the late 1950s. Perimeter Development Corp. acquired the building in 2013 and marketed the "loft-like" appearance the glass gives on the inside.

In 2016, Doors Open Waterloo Region described the interior renovations by Perimeter Development Corp. that preserved the travertine-finished lobby, vintage elevators, mail chute and other original fixtures and accents. Interior office renovations included exposing the ceilings to the concrete building frame and opening of floor plans to accentuate the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Historical/Associative Value

The historical/associative values relate to the direct association with a theme/organization and the direct association with, and work that reflects, a person who is an architect and who is significant to a community.

The building was completed in 1964 and marketed as "the preferred office address" in the Twin Cities, was commonly described as the "Kitchener's first skyscraper," and was once the city's tallest building. The first four floors of the building housed the head office of the Waterloo Trust and Savings Company with the slogan "tall on service." The bank was founded in 1913 as the Waterloo County Loan and Savings Company. The bank opened a Kitchener branch in 1914, opened their original head office (since demolished) at King and Ontario in 1922 and moved their head offices to 305 King Street West in 1964. The Waterloo Trust and Savings Company was purchased by TD Canada Trust and the building was used as Canada Trust's headquarters until their new building was constructed at King and Ontario in 1992.

The commercial building was built by Toronto development company Yolles & Rotenberg Ltd. (later Y&R Properties) and designed by Boris Zerafa who is quoted as having led one of Canada's most prolific architectural practices between 1951 and 2000 and credited with designing more than 200 buildings between 1961 and 1998. Boris was born in Egypt, educated in England, and immigrated to Canada in 1957. In 1958, he joined Peter Dickinson and contributed to the plans of several significant modernist landmarks. Dickinson passed in 1961 which resulted in Boris and his colleagues Peter Webb, Rene Menkes and Warwick Housden forming a new firm known initially as Webb & Menkes, Architects and later as Web Zerafa Menkes Housden, Architects (today known as WZMH Architects). The Ontario Association of Architects stated that *"Zerafa has been singularly responsible for bringing his progressive interpretation of modernism to Canadian architecture in a manner which has proved to be both meaningful and enduring."* Zerafa's work is found across Canada, North America and the world, including, but not limited to, Calgary, Halifax, Kitchener, Toronto, Vancouver, Boston USA, London England, and Jeddah Saudi Arabia. The firm has been recognized for their exemplary work with winning design projects in many countries including Canada, the United States, England, Saudi Arabia and Japan. According to the WZMH website, through the 1960s and 1970s, the firm designed iconic buildings such as the CN Tower, the Royal Bank Plaza, and multiple signature office buildings in downtown Toronto and Calgary. Between 1980 and 2000, the firms work expanded to the USA, the Middle East, and to China. The firm will celebrate its 65th anniversary in 2026.

An article in The Record that was published to mark the opening of the building indicated that *"H. Boehmer & Co. Ltd. of Kitchener poured 6,000 cubic yards or about 12,000 tons of concrete into the building."*

Contextual Value

The contextual values relate to the building's physical, functional and visual link to King Street and Downtown Kitchener. The building is located at the corner of King Street West and Water Street South. The building has been described as creating a prismatic profile on the Kitchener skyline. The front elevation is setback from King Street West and the public sidewalk in order to provide a semi-public plaza. The semi-public plaza was originally designed almost entirely with concrete, including concrete benches, stairs and planters. The plaza was demarcated by concrete benches and stairs with two square concrete planters located within the plaza. The plaza was renovated circa 2015 resulting in the removal of the demarcating concrete benches and replacement with railings. The plaza was further renovated circa 2021 resulting in the addition of wood slat benches on top of the two concrete planters.

Heritage Attributes

The heritage value of 305 King Street West resides in the following heritage attributes:

- All elements related to the construction and Modern architectural style of the building, including:
 - flat roof;
 - square plan;
 - 12 storeys;
 - four nearly identical elevations with little to no ornamentation;
 - simple geometric lines created through the use of materials such as concrete, glass, and metal; and,
 - a 2-storey podium base surrounded by a semi-public plaza, which features concrete planters.

References

- DeRuyter, R. (2002). *'Old' Canada Trust tower the new McPherson Centre*. KW Record: Kitchener, Ontario.
- Doors Open Waterloo Region. (2016). *305 King*. Retrieved on December 15, 2025 from https://www.facebook.com/DoorsOpenWR/photos/this-first-time-doors-open-site-will-get-visitors-inside-four-different-spaces-a/10153994368093163/?_rdr
- Prong Parkhill, C. (2013). *Perimeter buys downtown tower with plans to modernize*. Retrieved on December 15, 2025 from https://www.therecord.com/news/perimeter-buys-downtown-tower-with-plans-to-modernize/article_3671dab1-fc2c-50e4-85a3-64a317675191.html
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- The Record. (2014). *Flash from the Past – Last week's picture: Waterloo Trust tower was called a skyscraper*. Retrieved on December 15, 2025 from https://www.therecord.com/life/flash-from-the-past/article_c11d78d6-431f-5aeb-945e-5f745f3529dc.html
- Webb & Menkes, Architects. (1963). *Site Plan & Details Waterloo Trust Head Office Kitchener Ontario*. Webb & Menkes, Architects: Toronto, Ontario.
- WZMH Architects. (2025). *History*. Retrieved on December 15, 2025 from <https://www.wzmh.com/about/history/>
- Ontario Association of Architects. (date unknown). *Zerafa, Boris (1933-2002)*. Retrieved on December 15, 2025 from https://oaa.on.ca/Assets/Common/Shared_Documents/Awards/Honour%20Roll/ZERAFABA,%20Boris.pdf

Photographs



Front Entrance (North Façade) – 305 King Street West



Front Elevation (North Façade) – 305 King Street West



Side Elevation (West Façade) – 305 King Street West



Side Elevation (East Façade) – 305 King Street East

CULTURAL HERITAGE EVALUATION FORM

Address: 305 King Street West

Recorder: Michelle Drake _____

Description: Canada Trust Building, 1964, Modern

Date: November 14, 2025 _____

(date of construction, architectural style, etc)

Photographs Attached:

Front Facade Left Façade Right Façade Rear Facade Details Setting

Designation Criteria	Heritage Planning Staff
1. This property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	Yes
2. The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	No
3. The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement. <i>* E.g. - constructed with a unique material combination or use, incorporates challenging geometric designs etc.</i>	Yes
4. The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community. <i>* Additional archival work may be required.</i>	Yes
5. The property has historical or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture. <i>* E.g - A commercial building may provide an understanding of how the economic development of the City occurred. Additional archival work may be required.</i>	No
6. The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community. <i>* Additional archival work may be required.</i>	Yes
7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	No

* E.g. - It helps to define an entrance point to a neighbourhood or helps establish the (historic) rural character of an area.	
8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings. * Additional archival work may be required.	Yes
9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark. * within the region, city or neighborhood.	No

Notes: May have been the tallest building in downtown; Influenced by Mies Vander Rohe; Set back from streetline; Contemporary structural glass curtain wall and concrete; Indicative of 60s commercial development; Early example of the use of glazing; Very vertical and horizontal – simple lines; Concrete outdoor spaces with benches and planters; Functional seating area; Plaza; Setback; Concrete semi-private space; Landscaping

Additional Criteria	Heritage Planning Staff
Interior: Is the interior arrangement, finish, craftsmanship and/or detail noteworthy?	No
Completeness: Does this structure have other original outbuildings, notable landscaping or external features that complete the site?	Yes
Site Integrity: Does the structure occupy its original site? * If relocated, is it relocated on its original site, moved from another site, etc.	Yes
Alterations: Does this building retain most of its original materials and design features? Please refer to the list of heritage attributes within the Statement of Significance and indicate which elements are still existing and which ones have been removed.	Yes
Alterations: Are there additional elements or features that should be added to the heritage attribute list?	No
Condition: Is the building in good condition? *E.g. - Could be a good candidate for adaptive re-use if possible and contribute towards equity-building and climate change action.	Yes
Indigenous History: Could this site be of importance to Indigenous heritage and history? *E.g. - Site within 300m of water sources, near distinct topographical land, or near cemeteries might have archaeological potential and indigenous heritage potential.	Unknown
Could there be any urban Indigenous history associated with the property? * Additional archival work may be required.	Unknown

<p>Function: What is the present function of the subject property? <i>* Other may include vacant, social, institutional, etc. and important for the community from an equity building perspective.</i></p>	<p>Unknown</p>
<p>Diversity and Inclusion: Does the subject property contribute to the cultural heritage of a community of people?</p> <p>Does the subject property have intangible value to a specific community of people? <i>* E.g.- Waterloo Masjid (Muslim Society of Waterloo & Wellington Counties) was the first established Islamic Center and Masjid in the Region and contributes to the history of the Muslim community in the area.</i></p>	<p>Unknown</p>

Notes about Additional Criteria Examined:

Recommendation

Does this property meet the definition of a significant built heritage resource, and should it be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act? (Does it meet two or more of the designation criteria?)

N/A Unknown No Yes

If not, please select the appropriate action for follow-up

- Keep on the Municipal Heritage Register
- Remove from the Municipal Heritage Register
- Additional Research Required

Other: _____

General / Additional Notes:

TO BE FILLED BY HERITAGE PLANNING STAFF:

Date of Property Owner Notification: _____