

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Heritage Kitchener

DATE OF MEETING: March 3, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Garrett Stevenson, Director of Development and Housing Approvals,
519-783-8922

PREPARED BY: Michelle Drake, Senior Heritage Planner, 519-783-8909

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 9

DATE OF REPORT: February 9, 2026

REPORT NO.: DSD-2026-085

SUBJECT: Notice of Intention to Designate 53-61 King Street East
Under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act

RECOMMENDATION:

That pursuant to Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, the Clerk be directed to publish a Notice of Intention to Designate the property municipally addressed as 53-61 King Street East as being of cultural heritage value or interest.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to request that Council publish a Notice of Intention to Designate 53-61 King Street East under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- An updated Statement of Significance describing the cultural heritage value or interest of 53-61 King Street East has been drafted by Heritage Planning staff.
- The key finding of this report is that 53-61 King Street East meets four (4) of nine (9) criteria for designation under *Ontario Heritage Act Regulation 9/06* (amended by *Ontario Regulation 569/22*) and has been confirmed to be a significant cultural heritage resource recognized for its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values.
- There are no financial implications.
- Community engagement included informing residents by posting this report with the agenda in advance of the Heritage Kitchener Committee meeting, providing written correspondence to the property owner, and consulting with Heritage Kitchener at their January 6, 2026 committee meeting. Should Council choose to give Notice of Intention to Designate, such notice shall be served on the property owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust.
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

BACKGROUND:

53-61 King Street East is a 20th century commercial building with an Art Deco-inspired front façade. The building is situated on a 0.4 acre parcel of land located on the south side of King Street East between Queen Street South and Benton Street in the Downtown Cultural Heritage Landscape in the City of Kitchener within the Region of Waterloo. The principal resource that contributes to the heritage value is the Art Deco-inspired front façade.



Figure 1.0: Location Map of Subject Property (53-61 King Street East)

A full assessment of 53-61 King Street East has been completed, including: field evaluation and archival research. The findings conclude that the subject property meets four (4) of nine (9) criteria for designation under *Ontario Heritage Act Regulation 9/06* (amended by *Ontario Regulation 569/22*). An updated Statement of Significance describing the property's cultural heritage value or interest was presented to the Heritage Kitchener Committee on January 6, 2025. The Committee recommended that pursuant to Section 29 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the cultural heritage value or interest of 53-61 King Street East should be confirmed by pursuing designation of the subject property under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. This work was undertaken as part of the City's Municipal Heritage Register (MHR) Review, initiated in February of 2023. The MHR Review is the City's response to amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act* introduced in January of 2023 through Bill 23, the *More Homes Built Faster Act*. Bill 200, the *Homeowner Protect Act, 2024*, extended the time municipalities have, to designate properties listed on their municipal heritage registers until January 1, 2027. The City contacted all owners of listed properties through an initial letter dated May 23, 2023 and an update letter dated February 27, 2025, to inform them of this undertaking. Owners of properties recommended for designation were contacted via a third letter. The property

owner for 53-61 King Street East was contacted via third letter sent by mail dated January 9, 2026. This letter was accompanied by the updated Statement of Significance and a “*Guide to Heritage Designation for Property Owners*” prepared in June 2023. The letter invited property owners to contact the City’s Senior Heritage Planner with any comments, questions, or concerns.

Per standard procedure, should Council support the Notice of Intention to Designate (NOID), the property owner will be contacted a fourth time through a letter advising of the City’s NOID. An ad for the NOID will be published in a newspaper. Once the letter is served on the property owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust, and the newspaper ad is posted, there will be a 30-day appeal period in which the property owner may object to the designation.



Figure 2.0: Front Elevation of 53-61 King Street East

REPORT:

Identifying and protecting cultural heritage resources within the City of Kitchener is an important part of planning for the future, and helping to guide change while conserving the buildings, structures, and landscapes that give the City its unique identity. The City plays a critical role in the conservation of cultural heritage resources. The designation of property under the *Ontario Heritage Act* is the main tool to provide long-term conservation of cultural heritage resources for future generations. Designation recognizes the importance of a property to the local community; protects the property’s cultural heritage value or interest; encourages good stewardship and conservation; and, promotes knowledge and understanding about the property. Designation not only publicly recognizes and promotes awareness, but it also provides a process for ensuring that changes to a property are appropriately managed and that these changes respect the property’s cultural heritage value or interest.

53-61 King Street East is recognized for its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. It satisfies four (4) of nine (9) criteria for designation under the *Ontario*

Heritage Act Regulation 9/06 (amended by *Ontario Regulation 569/22*). A summary of the criteria that is or is not met is provided in Table 1 below.

Criteria	Criteria Met (Yes/No)
1. The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, 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 or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	No
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.	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.	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.	Unknown
7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	Yes
8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings.	Yes
9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	No

Table 1: Criteria for Designation under *Ontario Regulation 9/06* (Amended by *Ontario Regulation 569/22*)

Design/Physical Value

The property municipally addressed as 53-61 King Street East demonstrates design/physical value as a rare example of mid-20th century commercial building with an Art Deco-inspired front façade. The building is in good condition with many intact heritage attributes above the first storey.

The Art Deco inspired front façade was constructed circa 1941 on a two-storey commercial building, which was constructed with brick, steel tile, and concrete block. The building to the north, which was destroyed by fire in December 1959, was added to the building in 1966 to create a uniform Art Deco-inspired façade from 53-61 King Street East.

The building features: a rectangular plan; four bays across the front elevation; parapet roofline; cut-stone construction; large store front windows; two rectangular pillars with aluminum canopy; 2nd story casement windows with mullions in the form of a “T” (two narrow panes with a transom light above); intermittent string course at sill level; incised circles between the windows; panels above the windows with vertical fluting; and, incised horizontal banding across the top of the building.

Front Elevation (South Façade) – King Street East

The front of the building faces King Street East, it is six bays wide and is built with cut stone. The original Art Deco-inspired front façade was three bays wide. This façade generally aligns with the front property line and the second-storey features: flat roof; parapet roofline with copper flashing; cut stone; one window opening in the first and third bay; a ribbon (three) of casement windows in the second bay; flat headed casement windows with mullions in the form of a “T” with stone sills; geometrical horizontal motifs incised in the stone above the windows in the first and third bay; circular motifs incised in the stone beside the windows in the first and third bay; vertical motifs above the ribbon of windows in the second bay; and, projecting steel canopy with rectangular sign box above. The fourth bay was constructed circa 1966 following a fire that destroyed the adjacent Zellers department store. The extension of this façade is three bays wide. This façade is setback approximately one metre from the front property line and the second-storey features: flat roof; parapet roofline with copper flashing; cut stone; a ribbon of three casement windows in the second bay; flat headed casement windows with mullions in the form of a “T” with stone sills; geometrical horizontal motifs incised in the stone above the circular motifs in the first and third bay; circular motifs incised in the stone beside the ribbon of windows; vertical motifs above the ribbon of windows in the second bay; and, projecting steel canopy with rectangular sign box above.

Historical/Associative

The property municipally addressed as 53-61 King Street East has historical/associative value because it has direct associations with the theme of economic development, early dollar (“five and dime”) stores (S.H. Knox Co, & F.W. Woolworth Co.), various bargain stores, and Walter P. Zeller founder of Zeller’s Limited.

The property yields information that contributes to the understanding of economic development. The chain store concept was developed in the United States and one of its pioneers was Frank Winfield Woolworth. In 1878 he was working as a senior clerk where he helped introduce a five-cent counter. He saw the broader commercial potential of this concept and adapted it by displaying goods so that customers could make their own choices without the need for skilled clerks. This resulted in an important long-term cost advantage in a commercial retail business with very low profit margins.

F.W. Woolworth opened his first “five-cent store” in Utica, New York in 1879. He was able to expand his business with the help of various partners who joined together to form a group of “five and ten stores.” Merchandise was sold at half the cost of other competitors. By 1900, the stores were designed to provide a uniform appearance. These stores were incorporated as F.W. Woolworth & Co. in 1905 with other partners joining the merger in 1912. After the merger, F.W. Woolworth created a Canadian subsidiary known as F.W. Woolworth Co. Limited. The company was one of the largest retail chains in North America during the 20th century but declined in the 1980s with its eventual closure in 1997.

In Berlin (now Kitchener), F.W. Woolworth Co. operated in various locations in the King Street East block between Queen and Benton/Frederick between 1913 and 1994. The store at 53-61 King Street East closed in 1994 and reopened as The Bargain Shop (1994–2015). The Bargain Shop was a chain launched by Woolworth’s circa 1992 when it assumed the leases of 38 Bargain Harold’s. At present, the building is occupied by Dollarama (circa 2016 - present).

Walter P. Zeller (b. 1890; d. 1957) was born on a farm in Waterloo County (now Waterloo Region) and moved to Berlin in his teenage years where he attended high school. Walter tried various vocations and in early 1912 he started working in the stockroom at F.W. Woolworth Co. in Berlin. Later that year, he moved to the Chatham Woolworth's store and rose rapidly in the company. By 1931, Walter had incorporated Zeller's Limited by Letters Patent issued under the Company Act of Canada on July 13, 1931. In less than one year, Walter had purchased and opened 11 stores. Walter was eager to open a store in his hometown of Kitchener, which opened on September 30, 1932. Walter was among the first inductees into the Waterloo Country Hall of Fame for his contributions to the community, including: providing funds to develop Doon Pioneer Village; volunteering as a member with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the Kiwanis Club, the Canadian Osteopathic Aid Society, the Shawbridge Boys' Farm and Training School, and the YMCA; and, he served as Executive Assistant to the Minister of National War Services and Chairman of the National War Savings Campaign.

Contextual Value

The property municipally addressed as 53-61 King Street East has contextual value because it defines, maintains and supports the commercial character of the surrounding area, as well as its physical, functional, visual, and historic link to its surroundings. The subject property is in the Downtown Cultural Heritage Landscape, which is at the city's core and thus a focal point for development in the city and region. The area supports a range of uses, with banks, hotels, and other commercial businesses being the original anchors of the city's core. The subject property's location and proximity to adjacent commercial buildings and the orientation, massing, and setback of the building help to define and maintain the consistent street edge (e.g., similar building setbacks) on the south side of King Street East. In addition, the orientation, massing, setback, design, and materials contribute to the continuity and character of the King Street East streetscape and the Downtown Cultural Heritage Landscape. The building is in its original location providing a physical, visual, and historic link to its surroundings (e.g., King Street East and the Downtown Cultural Heritage Landscape).

Heritage Attributes

The heritage value of 53-61 King Street East resides in the following heritage attributes:

- Location and orientation of the building facing King Street East;
- All elements related to the construction and Art Moderne architectural style of the building, including:
 - rectangular plan;
 - four bays across the front elevation;
 - parapet roofline;
 - cut-stone construction;
 - large store front windows;
 - two rectangular pillars with aluminum canopy;
 - 2nd story casement windows with mullions in the form of a "T" (two narrow panes with a transom light above);
 - intermittent string course at sill level;
 - incised circles between the windows;
 - panels above the windows with vertical fluting; and,

- incised horizontal banding across the top of the building.
- Front Elevation (South Façade)
 - original Art Deco-inspired front façade:
 - three bays wide;
 - façade aligns with the front property line;
 - second story features:
 - flat roof and parapet roofline with copper flashing;
 - cut stone;
 - one window opening in the first and third bay;
 - a ribbon (three) of casement windows in the second bay;
 - flat headed casement windows with mullions in the form of a “T” with stone sills;
 - geometrical horizontal motifs incised in the stone above the windows in the first and third bay;
 - circular motifs incised in the stone beside the windows in the first and third bay;
 - vertical motifs above the ribbon of windows in the second bay; and,
 - projecting steel canopy with rectangular sign box above.
 - Addition to Art-Deco inspired façade:
 - three bays wide;
 - façade is setback approximately one metre from the front property line;
 - the second-storey features:
 - flat roof;
 - flat roof and parapet roofline with copper flashing;
 - cut stone;
 - a ribbon of three casement windows in the second bay;
 - flat headed casement windows with mullions in the form of a “T” with stone sills;
 - geometrical horizontal motifs incised in the stone above the circular motifs in the first and third bay;
 - circular motifs incised in the stone beside the ribbon of windows;
 - vertical motifs above the ribbon of windows in the second bay; and,
 - projecting steel canopy with rectangular sign box above.
- All elements related to the contextual value, including:
 - original location on King Street East in the city core;
 - location and proximity to adjacent commercial buildings and the Downtown Cultural Heritage Landscape;
 - orientation, massing, and setback of the building on King Street East;
 - design and materials of the King Street East façade; and,
 - physical, visual, and historic links to its surroundings.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the Heritage Kitchener committee meeting.

CONSULT– Heritage Planning staff have consulted with the Heritage Kitchener committee regarding designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Property owners were invited to consult via three separate letters dated May 23, 2023, February 27, 2025 and January 12, 2026.

Section 29(2) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* requires Council to consult with the Municipal Heritage Committee (Heritage Kitchener) before giving *Notice of Intention to Designate* (NOID) a property. Heritage Kitchener will be consulted via circulation and consideration of this report (see INFORM above). Members of the community will be informed via circulation of this report to Heritage Kitchener and via formal consideration by Council. Should Council choose to proceed with a NOID, such notice will be served on the property owner, the Ontario Heritage Trust, and published in the local newspaper (The Record). Once notice has been served, the property owner has the right to object to the NOID and appeal the Designating By-law. Should Council decide not to proceed with a NOID then the building will remain on the City’s Municipal Heritage Register (MHR) until January 1, 2027, after which it will be removed in accordance with the legislative changes enacted by Bill 200. Once removed from the MHR, it cannot be re-listed on the MHR for five (5) years (i.e., January 1, 2032).

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- *Ontario Heritage Act*
- [Heritage Kitchener Committee Work Plan 2022-2024 – DSD-2023-053](#)
- [Bill 23 – Municipal Heritage Register Review – DSD-2023-225](#)
- [Kitchener Municipal Heritage Register Review – August Update 2023– DSD-2023-309](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – January 2024 Update – DSD-2024-022](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – March 2024 Update – DSD-2024-093](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – April 2024 Update – DSD-2024-131](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – May 2024 Update – DSD-2024-194](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – June 2024 Update – DSD-2024-250](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – August 2024 Update – DSD-2024-333](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – September 2024 Update – DSD-2024-361](#)

- [Municipal Heritage Register – October 2024 Update – DSD-2024-426](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register- November 2024 Update – DSD-2024-444](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – March 2025 Update – DSD-2025-031](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – April 2025 Update – DSD-2025-108](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – August 2025 Update – DSD-2025-317](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – October 2025 Update – DSD-2025-357](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – December 2025 Update – DSD-2025-467](#)
- [Municipal Heritage Register Review – January 2026 Update – DSD-2025-467](#)
- Municipal Heritage Register Review – February 2026 Update – DSD-2026-044

REVIEWED BY: Sandro Bassanese, Manager of Site Plan

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services Department

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Statement of Significance for 53-61 King Street East