

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

53-61 King Street East



Summary of Significance

- Design/Physical Value
- Historical/Associative Value
- Contextual Value

- Social Value
- Economic Value
- Environmental Value

Municipal Address: 53-61 King Street East

Legal Description: Plan 364 Part Lots 1 & 3 Plan 394 Part Lots 1 & 32

Year Built: 1908 (S. H. Knox & Co., Demolished); circa 1941 (F.W. Woolworth Co.); and, 1966 (renovation of F. W. Woolworth Co.)

Architectural Style: Art Moderne

Original Owner: S.H. Knox & Co (1908)

Original Use: Commercial

Condition: Good

Description of Cultural Heritage Resource

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.

Heritage Value

53-61 King Street East is recognized for its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values.

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)

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 Value

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 highschool. 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.

References

Cunningham, C. (1981). Zeller family empire began in K-W. K-W Record: Kitchener, ON.

Koch, H. (1983). A store’s inglorious finale after 50 years. KW Record: Kitchener, ON.

KW Record. (1966). Woolworth’s Shows \$400,000 Renovation. KW Record: Kitchener, ON.

KW Record. (1957). W. P. Zeller, Native of County, Dies. KW Record: Kitchener, ON

Ronnenber, R. (1975). He’s in the Hall of Fame: Zeller a leading merchant. KW Record: Kitchener, ON.

Zeller’s Forum. (1972). Zeller’s 40th anniversary. 40(3): 1972.

Photographs



Front Elevation (North Façade) – 53-61 King Street East



Front Elevation (North Façade) – 53-61 King Street East



Front Elevation (North Façade) – 53-61 King Street East



CULTURAL HERITAGE EVALUATION FORM

Address: 53-61 King Street East Recorder: Michelle Drake
Description: c. 1912 Art Moderne Date: October 22, 2024

(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>	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. <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>	Unknown
7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area. <i>* E.g. - It helps to define an entrance point to a neighbourhood or helps establish the (historic) rural character of an area.</i>	Yes

8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings. <i>* Additional archival work may be required.</i>	Yes
9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark. <i>*within the region, city or neighborhood.</i>	No

Notes

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?	No
Site Integrity: Does the structure occupy its original site? <i>* If relocated, is it relocated on its original site, moved from another site, etc.</i>	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? <i>*E.g. - Could be a good candidate for adaptive re-use if possible and contribute towards equity-building and climate change action.</i>	Yes
Indigenous History: Could this site be of importance to Indigenous heritage and history? <i>*E.g. - Site within 300m of water sources, near distinct topographical land, or near cemeteries might have archaeological potential and indigenous heritage potential.</i> Could there be any urban Indigenous history associated with the property? <i>* Additional archival work may be required.</i>	Unknown
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>	Commercial
Diversity and Inclusion: Does the subject property contribute to the cultural heritage of a community of people? Does the subject property have intangible value to a specific community of people?	No



** 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.*

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: _____