

Heritage Designation Brief



394 George Street North

Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee

2025

Heritage Designation Status Sheet

Street Address: 394 George Street North

Roll Number: 040100069000000

Short Legal Description: LT C PL 100 TOWN OF
PETERBOROUGH S/T INTEREST IN
R543801; PETERBOROUGH CITY

PACAC Application Review Date:

Heritage Type: Built Structure

Designation Type: Ontario Heritage Act – Part IV

Designation Brief Completed Date: July 2025

Designation Brief Completed by: Emily Hamilton

Comments:

STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The subject property has been researched and evaluated to determine its cultural heritage significance under Ontario Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act R.S.O. 1990 (the Act). A property is eligible for designation if it has physical, historical, associative or contextual value and meets **any two** of the nine criteria set out under Regulation 9/06 of the Act. Staff have determined that 394 George Street North meets criteria and has cultural heritage value or interest and merits designation under the Act.

1. The property has design value or physical value because it:

i. is a rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method:

394 George Street North is an excellent example of the Italianate style of architecture with its brick, three-storey construction that is consistent with the wider landscape of the commercial core. It also features rare and unique components, including decorative wooden hoods above the windows on the second and third stories.

ii. displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit:

The building displays a high degree of craftsmanship in sash windows and wooden hood moulds. The front elevation is a well-executed Victorian storefront in brick, including elements such as the extended cornice and decorative brickwork.

iii. demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement:

There are no specific technical or scientific achievements associated with this property.

2. The property has historical value or associative value because it:

i. has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization, or institution that is significant to a community:

394 George Street North has cultural heritage value through its direct associations with significant persons and communities. The building's construction was financed by William Cluxton, a prominent businessperson and politician in Victorian era Peterborough society. In addition, it also has a direct association with the Hum family, prominent

members of Peterborough's Chinese Canadian community, and reflect the wider impact of the Chinese Immigration Act of 1923.

ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:

This property has the potential to yield information regarding the commercial development of mid-nineteenth and twentieth century Peterborough. It also yields information on the growth of Peterborough's Chinese community and their role in the development of local downtown businesses.

iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer, or theorist who is significant to the community:

The architect of this building is not known.

3. The property has contextual value because it:

i. is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of the area:

This property is important in maintaining and supporting the character of George Street North in the downtown core. Being in a continuous row of Italianate-style commercial buildings, it contributes to the historic landscape of George Street North.

ii. is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings:

394 George Street North is visually, functionally and historically linked to its surroundings. As a building consisting of a store front it is functionally and historically linked to its surroundings as a commercial building. It is visually linked to its surroundings as a historic commercial building that is surrounded by similar historic commercial buildings on the east side of George Street.

iii. is a landmark:

This property is a landmark in the downtown core. The building's decorative elements make it a well-known building and elements such as the window hoods are striking features in the downtown core.

Design and Physical Value

394 George Street North has design and physical value as a historic three-storey brick commercial building with ground floor storefront. It was likely constructed in the aftermath of a fire in 1861 which ripped through George Street. Its construction was funded by William Cluxton, a prominent businessperson and politician in Peterborough. It is of the Italianate style which was a popular choice for commercial buildings in this period. It displays several characteristics of this style including decorative elements and a strong cornice with brackets.

The Italianate Style was one of several historicist architectural styles which emerged in the early eighteenth century in the United Kingdom that drew on sixteenth century Italian Renaissance architecture. The style was originally inspired by the design of Tuscan country villas and details like the campanili – square, hip roofed towers that often-overlooked Italian village squares or piazzas. Architect Charles Barry popularized the style in the 1830s using the Italianate design vocabulary in the design of a variety of public buildings. The Italianate style came to North America in the late 1840s where architects like Alexander Jackson Davis produced pattern books of Italianate and Gothic Revival designs for domestic architecture. The style first appeared in Ontario in the 1860s. It arrived in more remote urban centres in the 1870s and continued to be popular until the 1890s. It became widely popular for a choice of domestic architecture at the beginning of the 1860s partly because of its adaptability. The catalogue of design elements could be incorporated into buildings of all sizes and types. In addition, with no rigid historical antecedents to follow, as the Georgian and Neoclassical styles required, architects were afforded more creativity and adaptability. By the end of its popularity at the close of the nineteenth century, a 'pure' Italianate design would be an unusual building in most urban centres.

A main aspect of the Italianate style is that while it is not ornate, it is highly decorated. One defining feature that became ubiquitous are paired eave brackets. Other common features include tall, narrow windows, arched windows, paired windows, quoins, overhanging eaves, and cupolas. 394 George Street North demonstrates several of the Italianate style's key features such as the decorative brickwork, cornice and wooden window hoods.

Historical and Associative Value

394 George Street North has historical and associative value as a commercial building in the historic downtown of Peterborough. It has further association with the business community, particularly William Cluxton, and the Chinese Canadian community, particularly the Hum family.

Like its neighbour at 390-392 George Street North, 394 George Street North was likely constructed in the mid-late 1860s, in the aftermath of a fire which destroyed a large portion of downtown Peterborough on August 11, 1861. The town's thriving lumber industry allowed the core to rebuild quickly, and many of the landmark commercial buildings in the downtown date from this period. The construction of this building was financed by William Cluxton.

Born in Ireland in 1819 and orphaned at a young age, Cluxton came to Canada with an aunt and uncle. He worked in a variety of stores along George Street before opening his own general store in 1842. In 1872, he sold his business to two of his sons and a valued employee. After leaving the retail business he became manager of the Peterborough branch of the Commercial Bank of Canada. Outside of his business interests, he championed the advancement of Peterborough's industries. He was president of the Midland Railway Company, Marmora Mining Company and the Peterborough and Monaghan Gravel Road Company. He also served as president of the Little Lake Cemetery Company, Water Company and the Peterborough Lock Manufacturing Company, among others. He was member of parliament for Peterborough West from 1872-1874 and served on town council. He died on February 16, 1901. His funeral at St. John's Anglican Church was widely attended.

In 1922, the Home Lunch Restaurant was opened at this address by the Hum family. Several members of the Hum family, from Willie Hum, Lee Hum and Sam Hum, were listed in the city directories as managing the Home Lunch Restaurant from its opening in 1922 until 1940 when it ultimately closed. Due to pervasive racist attitudes and federal restrictions on Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Chinese labour in small cities such as Peterborough was primarily centred on the development of small, local businesses, including laundries, restaurants, and grocery stores. Particularly in these smaller centres, Chinese immigrants were often shut out of the labour market due to the racist attitudes of this period; the establishment of their own businesses was a route to employment in predominantly white communities. Not only did the development of these businesses provide new Chinese immigrants with opportunities to work within Canada's growing merchant class, they also provided assistance to family members immigrating to the country by creating job opportunities for them when they arrived, with many immigrants bringing their families to Canada to work at their new businesses.

Shortly after the Hums began operating Home Lunch Restaurant, the federal government passed the Chinese Immigration Act, 1923. This Act put massive restraints on Chinese Canadians. Within a year of becoming law, all people of Chinese heritage, even those born in Canada, had to register with the government and carry identification. According to *The Peterborough Examiner*, all Chinese Canadians in Peterborough had to register at the post office. If they failed to register by the deadline, they risked fines,

imprisonment, and deportation. Sam Hum, also known as Hum Chong San, registered in Peterborough on April 2, 1924. His immigration paperwork states that he had a wife in China at the time of his registration. One of the main consequences of the act was that it prohibited sponsoring relatives to come to Canada regardless of whether they were Canadian-born or naturalized. This halted the growth of the Chinese community in Canada and forced family separation. As another consequence of the act, all Chinese Canadians lost the right to vote, hold public office and to own property, which limited housing and employment opportunities. The act was officially repealed on May 14, 1947, yet some restrictions on Chinese immigration to Canada were not removed until 1967.

One member of the family, Harvey Hum, lived on the floors above the restaurant and in 1939, died from his injuries after jumping from the third floor to escape a fire which began in the kitchen. After the fire, Sam Hum renovated the restaurant and reopened it as the Kawartha Grill. It was closed by the end of 1940.

The Hum family's Home Lunch Restaurant/Kawartha Grill was one of many Chinese restaurants operated by immigrant families in Peterborough in the early twentieth century. With few options of employment due to racist attitudes and government restrictions, the Tan family, anglicized as Hum (no apparent relation) and Tom, operated the Dominion Café, later the Deluxe Café, which operated at 328 George Street from 1906-1973; and the Paris Café, later Hi-Tops, located at 415 George Street North from 1918-2013.

Contextual Value

394 George Street North has contextual value as a continuation of the three-storey commercial row of buildings that characterizes Peterborough's downtown core. This property is visually, functionally and historically linked to its surroundings as an Italianate-style commercial building. It forms an important part of the 1860s reconstruction of George Street after the 1861 fire that destroyed a considerable section of the city's commercial core.

In 1861, a significant portion of George Street was destroyed by fire, leading to the reconstruction of large sections of the city's commercial downtown. This reconstruction corresponded with a period of rebuilding along many commercial main streets in Canada where frame structures were replaced with brick ones. Many of these new downtown streetscapes featured three- or four-storey buildings constructed to the lot line in the Italianate style with heavy, decorative cornices and ornate window surrounds. As in the case of George Street in Peterborough, these rows of commercial buildings developed as continuous blocks of distinctive structures which nevertheless maintained continuity through their consistent style, scale, massing, and window rhythm that created a uniform architectural vocabulary along a compact commercial frontage. 394

George Street North is an integral element of this nineteenth-century streetscape in Peterborough as part of unified commercial frontage defined by architecturally-unique structures constructed with a similar style, massing, and scale.

It forms an important part of the landscape of three and four storey brick commercial buildings on the east side of George Street, creating a seamless, uninterrupted line of historic buildings. Nearby buildings which contribute to this landscape include the Hi-Tops Building at 415 George Street North, another historic home of an early Chinese restaurant. Taken together, these buildings form part of a Victorian commercial landscape that defines the character of downtown Peterborough.

"The short statement of reasons for designation, including a description of the heritage attributes along with all other components of the Heritage Designation Brief constitute the "Reasons for the Designation" required under the Ontario Heritage Act. The Heritage Designation Brief is available for viewing in the City Clerk's office during regular business hours."

SHORT STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

394 George Street North has cultural heritage value as a historic Italianate commercial building in Peterborough's downtown core. It yields historic value through its associations with William Cluxton, a prominent businessperson who funded the building's construction. In addition to his business interests, Cluxton was member of parliament for Peterborough West from 1872-1874. 394 George Street North also has direct associations with Peterborough's Chinese Canadian community. The Hum family, one of the first Chinese families to move to Peterborough, operated a restaurant at this address in the 1920s.

394 George Street North also has important contextual value as a continuation of the three-storey row of commercial buildings that characterizes Peterborough's downtown core. It shares decorative elements with its neighbour, 392 George Street North, connecting it physically, historically and functionally to its surroundings.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE ATTRIBUTES TO BE DESIGNATED

The Reasons for Designation include the following heritage attributes and apply to all elevations and the roof, including all facades, entrances, windows, chimneys, and trim. Together with the construction materials of brick and their related building techniques.

Exterior Elements:

- Three-story brick construction
- Flat roof
- Cornice
- Brackets
- Pilasters
- Window hoods
- Fenestration
- Ground floor storefronts
- Continuation of a commercial row