

The house at the corner of Crichton Street and Dufferin Road was built as a one-storey bungalow in 1945 with a secondary unit in the basement.

But not long after Chris Straka bought it a few years ago from the wife of the original owner, he got his hands on the original drawings, which he now plans to use as a guide to drastically transform the building by adding a second story, tearing down a rear addition and replacing it with a two-storey semi-detached unit at the back, which would front onto Dufferin.

“I saw an opportunity to finish what his father started,” said Straka, the principal of Vert Design.

The original owner’s son now lives next door and supports the project, he added.

The home is located in the New Edinburgh heritage district, meaning any proposed work needs approval from the city. Securing a green light from the committee is the first step in that process.

Planning staff endorsed Straka’s plan, which they say conserves the heritage value of the neighbourhood and will include replacing a large swath of asphalt along the west side of the property with soft landscaping.

They questioned whether the proposal to complete the 1945 design could be seen as falsifying history, but ultimately decided the proposed development is in keeping with the community.

While Heritage Ottawa was generally supportive of the plan, the New Edinburgh Community Association spoke against it.

They say the proposal virtually eliminates the existing house, which is seen as a gateway to community, and essentially creates a wall along that part of Dufferin.

They also say that despite what the original plans might have called for, what was built and has since become a part of the neighbourhood's character is a one-storey bungalow.

“There's no justification for turning it into something it is not,” said Gail McEachern.

Speaking in favour of the project, Rideau-Rockcliffe Coun. Peter Clark said he's pleased the proposal doesn't call for using modern brick, stone or glass as so many other infill project across the city currently do.

Committee member and architect Barry Padolsky added it's uncommon for someone to ask for the committee's permission to complete what was originally envisioned for a piece of land.

Straka, who said he plans to live with his family in one of the three units when the project is finished, said he hopes the project can be used as an example for other builders.

“We can do something special here,” he said.

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