

**Subject: Designation of 323-327 Rideau Street under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act***

**File Number: ACS2025-PDB-RHU-0027**

**Report to Built Heritage Committee on May 13, 2025  
and May 28, 2025.**

**Submitted on May 2, 2025 by Court Curry, Manager, Right of Way, Heritage, and Urban Design Services, Planning, Development and Building Services**

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**Ward: Rideau-Vanier (12)**

**Objet : Désignation des 323-327, rue Rideau aux termes de la partie IV de la *Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario***

**Dossier : ACS2025-PDB-RHU-0027**

**Rapport au Comité du patrimoine bâti**

**le 13 mai 2025**

**et au Conseil le 28 mai 2025**

**et au Conseil le Choisir la date de la réunion du Conseil municipal.**

**Soumis le 2 mai 2025 par Court Curry, Gestionnaire, Services des emprises, du patrimoine, et du design urbain, Direction générale des services de la planification, de l'aménagement et du bâtiment**

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**Quartier : Rideau-Vanier (12)**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Built Heritage Committee recommend that Council issue a Notice of Intention to Designate 323-327 Rideau Street under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* according to the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value attached as Document 4.**

## **RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité du patrimoine bâti recommande au Conseil d'émettre un avis d'intention de désigner les 323-327, rue Rideau aux termes de la partie IV de la *Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario*, conformément à la Déclaration de la valeur de patrimoine culturel faisant l'objet du document 4 ci-joint.**

## **BACKGROUND**

This report has been prepared because designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (OHA) must be approved by City Council.

The property located at 323-327 Rideau Street contains a two-storey, purpose-built movie theatre, known as the ByTowne Cinema. The property is located on the north side of Rideau Street between King Edward Avenue and Nelson Street. The building was originally constructed as the Nelson Theatre in 1947 and re-opened as the ByTowne Cinema in 1988. The property has cultural heritage value for its design, associative, and contextual values. It meets six of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the OHA.

This property was listed on the City's Heritage Register in 2017. Changes to the OHA through Bill 23 (2023) and Bill 200 (2024) will result in the removal of this property from the City's Heritage Register if Council does not issue a Notice of Intention to Designate the property by January 1, 2027. Further, Council will not be able to relist the property for five years after this date. Heritage staff completed a review of all non-designated properties listed on the City's Heritage Register in response to Bill 23 in Spring of 2023 and identified this property as a potential candidate for designation.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Official Plan, Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), and the OHA all provide policy direction related to the designation of individual properties under Part IV of the OHA.

### **Official Plan**

The Official Plan has policies related to cultural heritage in Section 4.5, Cultural Heritage and Archaeology. Section 4.5.1(3) states: "Individual buildings, structures, and

sites shall be designated as properties of cultural heritage value under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.”

### **Provincial Planning Statement (2024)**

The Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) replaces the former Provincial Policy Statement and came into effect on October 20, 2024. Section 4.6 of the PPS includes the following policy regarding the conservation of heritage resources:

*4. Planning authorities are encouraged to develop and implement:*

*b) proactive strategies for conserving built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes*

Policies within the City’s Official Plan, as described above, direct the designation of significant properties and comply with this policy.

Should City Council designate the property outlined in this report, it would be considered “protected heritage property” for the purposes of the PPS 2024. The PPS includes the following policy related to protected heritage property:

- 1. Protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved.*

### **Ontario Heritage Act**

Part IV of the OHA provides municipalities with the authority to designate properties of cultural heritage value. Section 29 of the OHA sets out the process for the designation of individual buildings. It requires:

- that Council consult with its municipal heritage committee, and
- that the official Notice of Intention to Designate served on the owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust contain a description of the property and its heritage attributes, as well as a statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest of the property and a statement that a notice of objection may be served on the clerk within 30 days after the date of publication of the notice of intention in a newspaper.

Per by-law 2002-522, as amended, the Notice of Intention to Designate will be published online on the City’s website in both official languages. Document 4 contains the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value for this property.

### **Ontario Regulation 9/06**

Regulation 9/06 (see Document 3) establishes criteria to determine if a property is of cultural heritage value or interest. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the OHA if it meets two or more of the nine criteria set out in the regulation. Through research and evaluation, staff have determined that the property at 323-327 Rideau Street meets six of the nine criteria. Detailed research and analysis are outlined in the Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (see Document 5), and a brief analysis of each of the applicable criteria is provided below:

**The 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:**

The ByTowne Cinema is a representative example of a purpose-built post-war neighbourhood movie theatre, featuring elements of the Moderne architectural style. A neighbourhood movie house refers to a smaller-scale, local theatre situated in a residential area. Constructed in 1947, the ByTowne features typical elements of post-war neighbourhood movie houses, including a large lighted marquee, a former exterior ticket booth, as well as its two-storey massing, which was typical of the neighbourhood at the time of construction. Stylistically, post-war neighbourhood movie houses often featured the Moderne style. The Moderne style, or Art Moderne, is a subset of the Modern architectural movement that arose in the mid to late twentieth century. The style is characterized by its smooth walls, simple ornamentation, rounded corners, and curved glass. The ByTowne features elements of the Moderne style through its rounded profile, streamline stone cornice, smooth brick cladding, and metal accents.

**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:**

The ByTowne was constructed during Ottawa's post-war neighbourhood cinema boom when movie attendance and the theatre business in Canada reached new heights. In Ottawa, theatre chains and local entrepreneurs became interested in constructing neighbourhood movie houses in areas of the city with growing populations. Local proprietor Hyman Berlin opened the theatre as the Nelson Theatre in 1947, serving as the neighbourhood movie house for Lowertown and Sandy Hill residents. Berlin operated the theatre for only a few years before leasing it to Famous Players until the 1980s. On October 1, 1988, local theatre operators Bruce White and Jean Cloutier re-opened the Nelson Theatre as the ByTowne Cinema. By 1989, White and Cloutier were operating the ByTowne as their main theatre for repertory programming—screening different cult, classic, foreign, independent, and alternative films daily.

**The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture:**

The ByTowne continues to function as an independent repertory theatre and serves as a gathering space for diverse and alternative narratives, subcultures, and community events. Further research could reveal more about Ottawa's independent cinema and film community, as well as the various groups and subcultures that use the ByTowne as a community space.

**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:**

The ByTowne was designed by Toronto architectural firm Kaplan & Sprachman. Kaplan & Sprachman was a prolific firm comprised of architects Harold Solomon Kaplan (1895-1973) and Abraham Sprachman (1894-1971). The firm is notable for designing hundreds of movie theatres across Canada throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as significant buildings for the Jewish community. The firm was instrumental in introducing the Moderne style to Canadian theatre architecture. Their theatres are characterized by streamlined surfaces and lighted marquees. The ByTowne is a representative example of Kaplan & Sprachman's design of a neighbourhood movie house, and the last intact example of the firm's theatres in Ottawa.

**The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings:**

As a post-war neighbourhood movie house, the ByTowne is historically and functionally linked to its surrounding neighbourhoods and Rideau Street's commercial activity. It was likely constructed on Rideau Street to attract residents of both Lowertown and Sandy Hill. The ByTowne is functionally linked to other neighbourhood institutions and gathering places including the former Adath Jeshurun Synagogue at 375 King Edward Avenue (constructed 1904), and the Rideau Library at 377 Rideau Street (constructed in 1933).

**The property has contextual value because it is a landmark:**

The ByTowne is a landmark on Rideau Street and in Lowertown. Its prominent frontage on Rideau Street and its iconic marquee distinguishes it from surrounding contemporary buildings. At night, the ByTowne's lighted marquee makes it highly visible on Rideau Street, uniquely reinforcing its status as a historic and familiar landmark on its streetscape.

**Conclusion**

The property at 323-327 Rideau Street meets six of the nine criteria for designation outlined in Ontario Regulation 9/06 for designation under Part IV of the OHA. Staff recommend that Council issue a Notice of Intention to Designate the property under Part IV of the OHA.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations in this report.

**COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

The Ward Councillor is aware of the recommendations of this report.

**CONSULTATION**

The property owner was notified of the proposed designation by mail on April 3, 2025. The business owner was also notified via email on April 3, 2025.

**ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

The designation of these properties under the *Ontario Heritage Act* does not impact the physical fabric of the buildings. While alterations to designated properties, including renovations to remove barriers for people with disabilities, require a heritage permit, the fees for these permits are waived and staff work with property owners to allow for accessibility retrofits.

**ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no asset management implications.

**RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk implications.

**RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 Location Map

Document 2 Photos

Document 3 Ontario Regulation 9/06

Document 4 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Document 5 Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

## **DISPOSITION**

If Council does not carry the recommendation, no further steps are required. If Council proceeds with the issuance of a Notice of Intention to Designate for the property located at 323-327 Rideau Street, several actions must be taken:

- 1) Heritage Planning Branch, Planning, Development and Building Services Department, to prepare the Notice of Intention to Designate. Office of the City Clerk, Council and Committee Services to notify the property owner and the Ontario Heritage Trust (10 Adelaide Street East, 3rd Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 1J3) of Council's decision to issue a Notice of Intention to Designate the property at 323-327 Rideau Street under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- 2) Heritage Planning Branch, Planning, Development and Building Services Department to ensure publication of the Notice of Intention to Designate according to the requirements of Section 29 the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- 3) If the City Clerk receives a Notice of Objection under Section 29(5) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* within thirty days of the publication of the Notice of Intention to Designate, the Heritage Planning Branch, Planning, Development and Building Services Department is to prepare a report regarding the objection for consideration by Council within 90 days after conclusion of the objection period, according to Section 29 (6) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- 4) If the City Clerk does not receive any Notice of Objection under Section 29 (5) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* within thirty days of the publication of the Notice of Intention to Designate, or if City Council decides not to withdraw the notice of intention to designate the property after an objection has been served, the Heritage Planning Branch, Planning, Development and Building Services Department, is to prepare the designation by-law, under the authority of the approval of this report and Legal Services to submit to City Council for enactment within 120 days of the publication of the Notice of Intention to Designate as prescribed in Section 29(8) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- 5) Office of the City Clerk, Council and Committee Services to cause a copy of the by-law together with a statement explaining the cultural heritage value or interest

of the property and a description of the heritage attributes of the property, to be served on the owner of the property and on the Trust according to the requirements of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Heritage Planning Branch, Planning, Development and Building Services Department to ensure publication of the notice of the by-law in the newspaper according to the requirements Section 29(8)(4) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Document 1 – Location Map



	
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REVISION / RÉVISION - 2025 / 04 / 01	

LOCATION MAP / PLAN DE LOCALISATION



**323 - 327 rue Rideau St.**



NOT TO SCALE

Document 2 – Photos



The ByTowne Cinema south elevation. (Staff Photo, 2025)



The ByTowne's frontage on Rideau Street. (Staff Photo, 2025)

## Document 3 – Ontario Regulation 9/06

### CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

**Consolidation Period:** From January 1, 2023 to the e-Laws currency date.

Last amendment: 569/22.

***This is the English version of a bilingual regulation.***

*Criteria, s. 27 (3) (b) of the Act*

1. (1) The criteria set out in subsection (2) are prescribed for the purposes of clause 27 (3) (b) of the Act. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

(2) Property that has not been designated under Part IV of the Act may be included in the register referred to in subsection 27 (1) of the Act on and after the day subsection 3 (2) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force if the property meets one or more of the following criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest:

1. The 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.
2. The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.
3. The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.
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.
5. The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.
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.
7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.
8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.
9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

(3) For clarity, subsection (2) does not apply in respect of a property that has not been designated under Part IV but was included in the register as of the day subsection 3 (2)

of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

*Criteria, s. 29 (1) (a) of the Act*

**2.** (1) The criteria set out in subsections (2) and (3) are prescribed for the purposes of clause 29 (1) (a) of the Act. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

(2) Section 1, as it read immediately before the day subsection 3 (2) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force, continues to apply in respect of a property for which a notice of intention to designate it was given under subsection 29 (1.1) of the Act after January 24, 2006 and before the day subsection 3 (2) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

(3) In respect of a property for which a notice of intention to designate it is given under subsection 29 (1.1) of the Act on or after the day subsection 3 (2) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force, the property may be designated under section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest set out in paragraphs 1 to 9 of subsection 1 (2). O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

*Criteria, s. 41 (1) (b) of the Act*

**3.** (1) The criteria set out in subsection (2) are prescribed for the purposes of clause 41 (1) (b) of the Act. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), in the case of a by-law passed under subsection 41 (1) of the Act on or after the day subsection 5 (1) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force, a municipality or any defined area or areas of it may be designated by such a by-law as a heritage conservation district under subsection 41 (1) of the Act if the municipality or the defined area or areas of it meets the following criteria:

1. At least 25 per cent of the properties within the municipality or defined area or areas satisfy two or more of the following:
  - i. The properties have design value or physical value because they are rare, unique, representative or early examples of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.
  - ii. The properties have design value or physical value because they display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.
  - iii. The properties have design value or physical value because they demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.

- iv. The properties have historical value or associative value because they have a direct association with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.
- v. The properties have historical value or associative value because they yield, or have the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.
- vi. The properties have historical value or associative value because they demonstrate or reflect the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.
- vii. The properties have contextual value because they define, maintain or support the character of the district.
- viii. The properties have contextual value because they are physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to each other.
- ix. The properties have contextual value because they are defined by, planned around or are themselves a landmark. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

(3) Subsection (2) does not apply in respect of a by-law passed under subsection 41 (1) of the Act on or after the day subsection 5 (1) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force if a notice of a public meeting required to be held for the purposes of the by-law under subsection 41.1 (7) of the Act was given before the day subsection 5 (1) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

(4) For clarity, the requirement set out in subsection 41.1 (5.1) of the Act,

(a) does not apply in respect of a by-law under subsection 41 (1) of the Act that is passed before the day subsection 5 (1) of Schedule 6 to the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022* comes into force; and

(b) does not apply in respect of a by-law under subsection 41.1 (2) of the Act. O. Reg. 569/22, s. 1.

## **Document 4 – Statement of Cultural Heritage Value**

### **Description of Property**

The building at 323-327 Rideau Street is a two-storey, purpose-built movie theatre on the north side of Rideau Street between King Edward Avenue and Nelson Street.

### **Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest**

The ByTowne Cinema is a representative example of a purpose-built post-war neighbourhood movie theatre, featuring elements of the Moderne architectural style. A neighbourhood movie house refers to a smaller-scale, local theatre situated in a residential area. Constructed in 1947, the ByTowne features typical elements of post-war neighbourhood movie houses, including a large lighted marquee, a former exterior ticket booth, as well as its two-storey massing, which was typical of the neighbourhood at the time of construction. Stylistically, the post-war neighbourhood movie house often featured the Moderne style. The style is characterized by its horizontality, smooth walls, simple ornamentation, rounded corners, and curved glass. The ByTowne features elements of the Moderne style through its rounded profile, streamline stone cornice, smooth brick cladding, and metal accents.

The ByTowne was designed by Toronto architectural firm Kaplan & Sprachman. Kaplan & Sprachman was a prolific firm comprised of architects Harold Solomon Kaplan (1895-1973) and Abraham Sprachman (1894-1971). The firm is notable for designing hundreds of movie theatres across Canada throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as significant buildings for the Jewish community. The firm was instrumental in introducing the Moderne style to Canadian theatre architecture. Their theatres are characterized by streamlined surfaces and lighted marquees. The ByTowne is a representative example of Kaplan & Sprachman's design on a neighbourhood movie house, and the last intact example of the firm's theatres in Ottawa.

The ByTowne was constructed during Ottawa's post-war neighbourhood cinema boom when movie attendance and the theatre business in Canada reached new heights. In Ottawa, theatre chains and local entrepreneurs became interested in constructing neighbourhood movie houses in areas of the city with growing populations. Local proprietor Hyman Berlin opened the theatre as the Nelson Theatre in 1947, serving as the neighbourhood movie house for Lowertown and Sandy Hill residents. Berlin operated the theatre for only a few years before leasing it to Famous Players until the 1980s.

On October 1, 1988, local theatre operators Bruce White and Jean Cloutier re-opened the Nelson Theatre as the ByTowne Cinema. By 1989, White and Cloutier were operating the ByTowne as their main theatre for repertory programming, screening different cult, classic, foreign, independent, and alternative films daily. The ByTowne continues to function as an independent repertory theatre and serves a gathering space for diverse and alternative narratives, subcultures, and community events. Further research could reveal more about Ottawa's independent cinema and film community, as well as the various groups and subcultures that use the ByTowne as a community space.

As a post-war neighbourhood movie house, the ByTowne is historically and functionally linked its surrounding neighbourhoods and Rideau Street's commercial activity. It was likely constructed in its on Rideau Street location to attract residents of both Lowertown and Sandy Hill. The ByTowne is functionally linked to other neighbourhood institutions and gathering places including the former Adath Jeshurun Synagogue at 375 King Edward Avenue (constructed 1904), and the Rideau Library at 377 Rideau Street (constructed in 1933).

The ByTowne is a landmark on Rideau Street and in Lowertown. Its prominent frontage on Rideau Street and its iconic marquee distinguishes it from surrounding contemporary buildings. At night, the ByTowne's lighted marquee makes it highly visible on Rideau Street, uniquely reinforcing its status as a historic and familiar landmark on its streetscape.

### **Description of Heritage Attributes**

Key exterior attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the ByTowne Cinema as a representative example of a purpose-built neighbourhood movie house with elements of the Moderne style include:

- Two-storey massing
- Flat roof
- Symmetrical façade featuring two projecting bays with rounded interior edges featuring header bond bricks, forming a central recessed bay
- Presence of ground floor storefronts with a recessed entrance with curved profile and metal accents including **display** cases
- Recessed main entrance with corrugated and polished metal accents including the form and expression of the former exterior ticket booth and **display** case
- Sidewalk entrance featuring the theatre's name in terrazzo
- First storey featuring light coloured smooth aggregate paneling with dark coloured stone base
- Second storey featuring buff brick cladding, limited window openings, horizontal accents including concrete lintels, sills, and streamlined cornice
- Presence of a projecting lighted marquee in the centre of the front façade, with a vertical sign featuring the theatre's name extending the height of the building

## Document 5 – Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report



### Executive Summary

The property at 323 Rideau Street is a two-storey, purpose-built movie theatre on the north side of Rideau Street between King Edward Avenue and Nelson Street. The theatre was constructed as the Nelson Theatre in 1947, during Canada's post-war theatre boom. The theatre was re-opened as the ByTowne Cinema in 1988, which it continues to function as today. The ByTowne's design is typical of a purpose-built post-war neighbourhood movie theatre, featuring elements of the Moderne architectural style. The theatre was designed by notable Toronto architecture firm, Kaplan & Sprachman, which designed hundreds of theatres across Canada in the Moderne style. Since its construction, the theatre has served as a neighbourhood movie theatre for the residents of Lowertown and Sandy Hill. The theatre is a landmark on Rideau Street and in Lowertown.

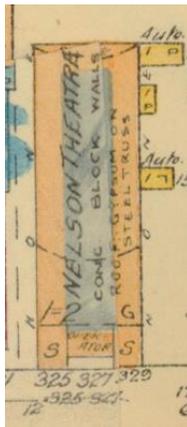
The property has cultural heritage value for its design, associative and contextual values. It meets six of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

<b>Criterion 1</b>	
The 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.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Response to Criterion</b>	
<p>The ByTowne Cinema has design value because it is a representative example of a purpose-built post-war neighbourhood movie house, featuring elements of the Moderne architectural style. Constructed in 1947, the theatre was built during the post-war neighbourhood cinema boom. Typical of post-war neighbourhood movie houses, the ByTowne features a large lighted marquee, a former exterior ticket booth, as well as its two-storey massing, which was typical of the neighbourhood at the time of construction. Stylistically, the post-war neighbourhood movie house often featured the Moderne style. The Moderne style, or Art Moderne, is part of the Modern architectural movement that arose in the mid to late twentieth century. Influenced by the development of technological and industrial design, the Moderne style often features a flat roof, smooth walls, little ornamentation, rounded corners, curved glass, and windows with a horizontal emphasis. The ByTowne features elements of the Moderne style through its rounded profile, streamline stone cornice, smooth brick cladding, and metal accents.</p>	

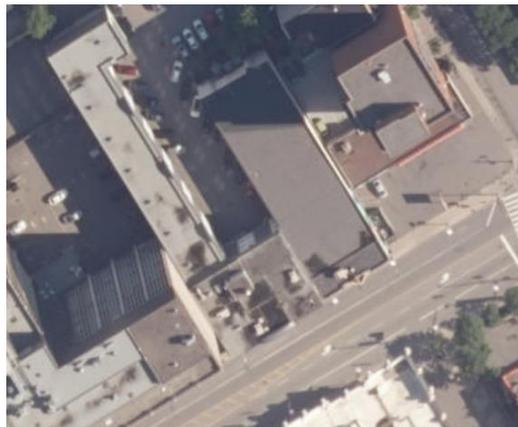
### **Supporting Details**

#### *Description of Building*

The building located at 323 Rideau Street is a two-storey, rectangular plan building constructed in 1947.<sup>1</sup> The building is a purpose-built movie theatre and opened as the Nelson Theatre on February 10, 1947.<sup>2</sup> The building was called the Nelson Theatre until 1988, when it became the ByTowne Cinema.<sup>3</sup>



1948 Fire Insurance Plan showing the Nelson Theatre footprint.



The theatre is located on the north side of Rideau Street between King Edward Avenue and Nelson Street. *GeoOttawa*, 2022.

<sup>1</sup> Alain Miguez, *A Theatre Near You: 150 Years of Going to the Show in Ottawa-Gatineau* (Canada: Penumbra Press, 2004), 274.

<sup>2</sup> "Official Opening Nelson Theatre," *The Ottawa Journal*, February 8, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> "History," *ByTowne Cinema*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.ByTowne.ca/about/history/>.

The ByTowne’s first storey is clad in smooth aggregate stone panel with a black marble base, and the second storey is clad with brown brick, and includes small rectangular window openings. The theatre’s façade is simple and symmetrical, with two projecting side bays. The interior corners of the projecting bays are rounded, creating a curved profile in the theatre’s recessed entrance. The theatre’s entrance features polished metal accents—including on its former exterior ticket booth, poster boards, and front doors. The building features horizontal accents through its concrete lintels and sills, and a subtle streamlined cornice. The building originally included two small retail spaces on either side of the entrance, which were used as a restaurant and a bookstore.<sup>4</sup> Today, the retail space east of the entrance continues to be used as a bookstore.



Front façade of the ByTowne Cinema showing its rounded profile, recessed entrance, and polished metal accents. *City of Ottawa*, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Miguelez, 280.



The second storey of the ByTowne with a stone streamlined cornice and a vertical large marquee reading “ByTowne”. *City of Ottawa, 2025.*

The ByTowne’s most notable feature is its large, lighted marquee. The vertical portion of the marquee, reading “ByTowne” in lights, extends the length of the building’s second storey. The horizontal portion of the marquee, which includes a plastic sliding letter system listing the theatre’s current feature films, is triangular and overhangs the sidewalk. The marquee is original to the building, although formerly reading “Nelson.” The sign was changed to its contemporary name after 1988—when Bruce White and Jean Cloutier purchased and renamed the theatre.<sup>5</sup> The ByTowne’s marquee is the last surviving marquee in Ottawa.<sup>6</sup>

Under the marquee, the theatre’s sidewalk entrance features terrazzo flooring inscribed with “ByTowne.” This flooring originally read “Nelson,” until the mid-1990s when White replaced the original floor.<sup>7</sup> The terrazzo flooring continues into the theatre’s lobby. Upon opening, the theatre boasted the most modern amenities, including a seating capacity of 940, air-conditioning, a candy bar in the lobby, and indirect neon lighting.<sup>8</sup> In the 1960s, to compete with the rise of television and the comfort of home living rooms,

<sup>5</sup> Miguelez, 280.

<sup>6</sup> Miguelez, 281.

<sup>7</sup> Miguelez, 281.

<sup>8</sup> “Official Opening Nelson Theatre,” *The Ottawa Journal*, February 8, 1947.

the seats in the theatre were changed to larger, plushier ones, and reduced the theatre's seating capacity to 770.<sup>9</sup> Today, the theatre has 650 seats.<sup>10</sup>



The sidewalk entrance with terrazzo flooring under the ByTowne's marquee. *City of Ottawa*, 2025.

### *Context and Architectural Style*

The ByTowne Theatre is a representative example of a post-war neighbourhood movie house, with elements of the Moderne architectural style. A neighbourhood movie house refers to smaller, local theatres, with one or a few screens, that are situated in residential areas, rather than larger movie palaces typically downtown areas with elaborate design and a larger capacity. Neighbourhood movie houses were often constructed using design and materials that are typical of its surrounding area.

Constructed in 1947, the ByTowne was built during the post-war neighbourhood cinema boom.<sup>11</sup> While the architecture of movie palaces, the predecessor to neighbourhood movie houses, was characterized by its opulence and excessive use of ornate and decorative styles, neighbourhood movie houses were simpler and modern, with the focus on the marquee.<sup>1213</sup>

The post-war neighbourhood movie house often featured a flashing marquee, vertical signs, external ticket booths, and one or two storey massing.<sup>14</sup> Stylistically, the post-war

<sup>9</sup> Miguez, 277.

<sup>10</sup> "History," *ByTowne Cinema*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.ByTowne.ca/about/history/>.

<sup>11</sup> Miguez, 274.

<sup>12</sup> Hilary Russell, "All that Glitters: A Memorial to Ottawa's Capitol Theatre and its Predecessors," *National Historic Parks and Sites Branch*, 1974. Accessed January, 2025. <http://parkscanadahistory.com/series/chs/13/chs13-1b.htm>

<sup>13</sup> Maggie Valentine, *The show starts on the sidewalk: an architectural history of the movie theatre, starring S. Charles Lee* (London: Yale University Press, 1996), 92.

<sup>14</sup> Valentine, 95.

neighbourhood movie house often featured the Moderne style, with flowing streamline, smooth, and rounded surfaces, and aero-dynamic designs.<sup>15</sup> The interior of neighbourhood movie houses featured designs that highlighted the new technology of the modern era, with indirect and subdued lighting, the latest projection and sound technologies, and amenities like comfortable seating and air conditioning.<sup>16</sup>

The Moderne style, or Art Moderne, is part of the Modern architectural movement that arose in the mid to late twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Most popular between 1930 and 1950, the Moderne style is closely related to Art Deco in its conscious break with classical building styles and forms the past.<sup>18</sup> While Art Deco favours elaborate detailing with an emphasis on verticality and geometric designs, the Moderne style is simpler, with streamlined and horizontal accents.<sup>19</sup> Influenced by the development of technological and industrial design, the Moderne style often features smooth walls, little ornamentation, rounded corners, and curved glass—creating an overall futuristic and glamourized effect.<sup>20</sup> Moderne style buildings often feature a rectangular composition, flat roof, plain concrete or stucco cladding, and windows with a horizontal emphasis.<sup>21</sup> Commonly used building materials included Vitrolite, polished metals such as stainless steel and chrome, translucent glass blocks, and neon signage.<sup>22</sup> The ByTowne features elements of the Moderne style through its rounded profile, streamline stone cornice, smooth brick cladding, metal accents, and large neon signage.

In Canada, the Moderne style was commonly used in commercial and public buildings.<sup>23</sup> In Ottawa, the Art Moderne style is uncommon locally. Some local examples of commercial buildings in Ottawa with elements of the Art Moderne architecture style include the former McCoy Service Co. Ltd. building at 318 Dalhousie Street (constructed 1946), the Wesley Building at 1235 Wellington Street West (constructed 1955), and 369 Island Park Drive (constructed 1938). The former Elmdale Theatre at 1196 Wellington Street West (constructed 1947), is another example of a neighbourhood movie house with Moderne design.

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<sup>15</sup> “Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects,” *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>16</sup> “Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects,” *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>17</sup> Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, Vol. 2, (Canada: Oxford University Press, 1994), 779.

<sup>18</sup> Kalman, 779.

<sup>19</sup> Shannon Kyles, “Art Deco (1910-1940),” *OntarioArchitecture.com*, accessed April 2025.

<http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/artdeco.htm#International%20Style%20Europe>

<sup>20</sup> “Moderne Style 1930 – 1950,” *Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/architecture/styles/moderne.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Kalman, 772.

<sup>22</sup> Shannon Kyles, “Machine Age or Art Moderne (1930 – 1950),” *OntarioArchitecture.com*, accessed March 2025, <http://www.ontarioarchitecture.com/Artmoderne.htm#Machine%20Age%20Dundas>.

<sup>23</sup> Kalman, 772.



The former McCoy Service Co. Limited building at 318 Dalhousie Street, via *Urbisite*.



1235 Wellington Street West. *City of Ottawa*, 2024.



369 Island Park Drive. *City of Ottawa*, 2018.



The Elmdale Theatre at 1196 Wellington Street in 1959. *The Kitchissippi Museum*, 2016.

The Moderne style was brought to the movie theatre industry by the Toronto architectural firm Kaplan & Sprachman.<sup>24</sup> Between 1929 and 1965, the firm designed hundreds of movie theatres across Canada, often in the Moderne style.<sup>25</sup> Kaplan & Sprachman were commissioned to design the Nelson Theatre in 1945 by the theatre's original owner.<sup>26</sup> The theatre's subtle Moderne design elements and its lighted marquee are signature features of Kaplan & Sprachman's theatre design for post-war neighbourhood movie houses.

## Criterion 2

<sup>24</sup> "Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects," *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>25</sup> "Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects," *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>26</sup> "Building Permit For Ottawa Theatre," *The Ottawa Journal*, December 14, 1945.

The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	<b>No</b>
<p><b>Response to Criterion</b> Based on research conducted by heritage staff, the property's design is typical of its type and does not display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit. The property does not meet this criterion.</p>	

<b>Criterion 3</b>	
The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	<b>No</b>
<p><b>Response to Criterion</b> Heritage staff have compared the building to others of similar age or typology, and consulted relevant secondary sources including newspaper articles and architectural history books. Staff's review concluded that this property exemplifies typical construction methods for buildings of its type. The property does not meet this criterion.</p>	

<b>Criterion 4</b>	
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.	<b>Yes</b>
<p><b>Response to Criterion</b> The ByTowne Cinema is directly associated with Ottawa's post-war theatre boom. During the post-war boom, as movie attendance and the theatre business reached new heights, theatre chains and local entrepreneurs became interested in constructing neighbourhood movie houses in areas of the city with growing populations. Local proprietor Hyman Berlin opened the theatre as the Nelson Theatre in 1947, serving as the neighbourhood movie theatre for Lowertown and Sandy Hill residents. Berlin operated the theatre for only a few years before leasing it to Famous Players until the 1980s. In 1988, in favour of opening suburban multiplex theatres, Famous Players discontinued its operation of the Nelson Theatre. On October 1, 1988, local theatre operators Bruce White and Jean Cloutier re-opened the Nelson Theatre as the ByTowne Cinema.</p> <p>White and Cloutier operated the city's first repertory theatre, the Towne Cinema in New Edinburgh from 1983 until its closure in 1989. As a repertory theatre, the Towne screened cult, classic, foreign, and independent films, and a variety of movies, rather than showing the latest mainstream releases. White and Cloutier opened the ByTowne as their second repertory theatre in Ottawa, but due to its downtown location and larger theatre size, the ByTowne eventually became their main venue for repertory programming, with different independent and alternative films playing every day. Today, the ByTowne continues to function as an independent repertory movie on Rideau Street. Its unique programming, independent operators, as well as its location between two of Ottawa's downtown neighbourhoods, have all played a crucial role in its survival.</p>	

### **Supporting Details**

The ByTowne Cinema is directly associated with Ottawa's post-war theatre boom. Post-war economic growth in Canada played a crucial role in the rise of movie theaters in the late 1940s and 1950s. Following the Second World War, Canada experienced a period of economic prosperity, driven by increased industrial production, the expansion of the middle class, population growth, and rising consumer incomes.<sup>27</sup><sup>28</sup> This newfound affluence allowed more Canadians to spend money on leisure activities, with movie-going becoming a popular and affordable form of entertainment.<sup>29</sup> Technological advancements in film and movie technology, like the introduction of colour films and improved sound systems, also attracted Canadians to movie theatres. These post-war shifts contributed to a demand for the entertainment industry and supported the growth of the theatre industry in Canada.

Prior to the end of the Second World War, neighbourhood theatres like the ByTowne were typically run by independent operators and local entrepreneurs.<sup>30</sup> During the post-war boom, as movie attendance and the theatre business reached new heights, larger, emerging theatre chains, like Famous Players and Odeon, also became interested in constructing and acquiring neighbourhood movie houses in areas with growing populations.<sup>31</sup><sup>32</sup> In Ottawa, this resulted in the construction of neighbourhood movie houses in residential neighbourhoods across the city. However, towards the end of the 1960s and 1970s, most of these theatres began to close due to the rise and accessibility of television, and suburban expansion.<sup>33</sup> The ByTowne is a rare example of a post-war neighbourhood movie house that still functions today in Ottawa.

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<sup>27</sup> Tim Cook, "After Victory: The Legacy of the Necessary War," *Canada's History*, August 24, 2024. Accessed February 2025, <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/military-war/after-victory-the-legacy-of-the-necessary-war>.

<sup>28</sup> John Douglas Belshaw, *Canadian History: Post-Confederation* (BCcampus Open Education, 2016), accessed March 2025, <https://opentextbc.ca/postconfederation/chapter/8-11-fashioning-a-post-war-economy/>.

<sup>29</sup> Belshaw, accessed March 2025, <https://opentextbc.ca/postconfederation/chapter/8-11-fashioning-a-post-war-economy/>.

<sup>30</sup> Miguez, 259.

<sup>31</sup> Valentine, 6.

<sup>32</sup> Miguez, 259.

<sup>33</sup> Miguez, 20.

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Orchestra	50c	25c
Mezzanine	40c	20c
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ADULTS AND CHILDREN UNDER 12 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.

**FOR OUR OPENING OFFERING WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT**

**FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OTTAWA**

*Laughter in their hearts  
The tears in their blood!*

**THEY'RE NOTHING BUT MEN AND WOMEN AS THEY ARE!**



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"The French Connection is a masterpiece of the genre... it is a film that is both a thriller and a social commentary... it is a film that is both a thriller and a social commentary... it is a film that is both a thriller and a social commentary..."

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A full-page ad announcing the opening of the Nelson Theatre on February 10, 1947. *The Ottawa Journal*, February 8, 1947.

The ByTowne opened as the Nelson Theatre in 1947, serving as the neighbourhood movie theatre for Lowertown and Sandy Hill residents.<sup>34</sup> The theatre was opened by Hyman Berlin, whose son, Morris Berlin, had previously opened the Somerset Theatre at 386 Somerset Street (opened 1937, closed 2000).<sup>35</sup> Hyman Berlin operated the Nelson Theatre for only a few years before leasing it to Famous Players. During their decades-long lease, Famous Players retrofitted the theatre with new seats, projection equipment, sound systems, screens, and advertised its air conditioning to attract customers.<sup>36</sup> By 1972, movie palaces like Capitol Theatre (90 Bank Street, opened 1920, demolished 1970) and Regent Theatre (intersection of Bank and Sparks Streets, opened 1916, closed 1972) had closed and Famous Players no longer possessed a primary theatre showing blockbuster movies in Ottawa's downtown.<sup>37</sup> As such, Famous Players turned to the Nelson Theatre to show hit movies in downtown Ottawa like *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Hair* (1979), and *Dune* (1984). In 1988, in favour of opening suburban multiplex theatres, Famous Players discontinued its operation of the Nelson Theatre.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> "Official Opening Nelson Theatre," *The Ottawa Journal*, February 8, 1947.

<sup>35</sup> Miguelez, 238.

<sup>36</sup> Miguelez, 277.

<sup>37</sup> Miguelez, 278.

<sup>38</sup> Miguelez, 278.



The Nelson Theatre, c. 1947. *City of Ottawa Archives*, CA026143-W.

On October 1, 1988, local theatre operators Bruce White and Jean Cloutier had purchased and re-opened the Nelson Theatre as the ByTowne Cinema.<sup>3940</sup> Due to the theatre's dated and unusual lease agreement, White and Cloutier avoided a non-complete clause and were able to continue operating a theatre in this location. They also inherited the updated equipment and features Famous Players had made to the theatre.<sup>41</sup> White and Cloutier were familiar with the operation of a neighbourhood cinema—they had operated the city's first repertory theatre, the Towne Cinema in New Edinburgh from 1983 until its closure in 1989.<sup>4243</sup> As a repertory theatre, the Towne screened cult, classic, foreign, and independent films, and a variety of movies, rather than showing the latest mainstream releases. White and Cloutier opened the ByTowne as their second repertory theatre in Ottawa, but the two theatres only overlapped for about nine months. Due to its downtown location and larger theatre size, the ByTowne became the main venue for repertory programming, with different independent and alterative films playing every day.<sup>44</sup>

In 2020, the ByTowne Cinema announced its closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of streaming services.<sup>45</sup> The theatre was closed until September 2021,

<sup>39</sup> "History," *ByTowne Cinema*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.ByTowne.ca/about/history/>.

<sup>40</sup> "New cinema takes over from Nelson," *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 1, 1988.

<sup>41</sup> Miguez, 280.

<sup>42</sup> Miguez, 270.

<sup>43</sup> "History," *ByTowne Cinema*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.ByTowne.ca/about/history/>.

<sup>44</sup> Miguez, 272.

<sup>45</sup> "ByTowne Cinema announces permanent closure: 'I wish things could be different'," *Ottawa Citizen*, December 4, 2020, accessed March 2025, <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/ByTowne-cinema-announces-permanent-closure-i-wish-things-could-be-different>.

when it re-opened under new ownership.<sup>46</sup> The ByTowne continues to function as an independent repertory movie on Rideau Street. Its unique programming, independent operators, as well as location in one of Ottawa's downtown neighbourhoods, have all played a crucial role in its survival.



The ByTowne with its current signage, 1991. *City of Ottawa Archives*, CA054845-W.

<b>Criterion 5</b>	
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.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Response to Criterion</b>	
The Bytown Cinema has associative value for its potential to yield information about Ottawa's independent cinema and film community. Independent cinemas have long served as gathering spaces for marginalized groups and subcultures. These spaces often foster inclusivity and offer alternatives to mainstream narratives. As a repertory theatre since 1988, the ByTowne has created a space for diverse stories, subcultures, and community events. Further research could reveal more about Ottawa's independent cinema and film community, as well as the various groups and subcultures that use the ByTowne as a community space.	
<b>Supporting Details</b>	

<sup>46</sup> "History," *ByTowne Cinema*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.ByTowne.ca/about/history/>.

The ByTowne Cinema has associative value because it has the potential to yield information about Ottawa’s independent cinema and film community. Independent cinemas have long served as gathering spaces for marginalized groups and subcultures, and have acted as venues for community building, cultural expression, representation, and resistance.<sup>47</sup>

As a repertory theatre since 1988, the ByTowne has created a space for diverse stories and subcultures—often showcasing “obscure and foreign films and non-mainstream productions, or cult movies.”<sup>48</sup> ByTowne’s inaugural showing was a private screening of *Stop Making Sense*—the 1984 concert film of the post-punk, new wave band Talking Heads.<sup>49</sup> The ByTowne has screened a wide variety of foreign cinema including French, German, Italian, and Japanese films.<sup>50</sup> The theatre frequently ran showings of the iconic queer cult film, *Rocky Horror Picture Show*.<sup>51</sup> The ByTowne also serves as a cultural gathering space for film festivals and community events, including the Ottawa Canadian Film Festival, the Cannes International Festival of Creativity, and the International Film Festival of Ottawa.<sup>52</sup> These kinds of events and showings have made the ByTowne into a space that fosters inclusivity for diverse communities and offer alternatives to mainstream narratives.<sup>53</sup>

Further research could reveal more about Ottawa’s independent cinema and film community, as well as the various groups and subcultures that use the ByTowne as a community space.

<b>Criterion 6</b>	
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.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Response to Criterion</b>	
The ByTowne Cinema was designed by Toronto architectural firm Kaplan & Sprachman. Kaplan & Sprachman was a prolific firm comprised of architects Harold Solomon Kaplan (1895-1973) and Abraham Sprachman (1894-1971). The firm is notable for designing hundreds of movie theatres across Canada throughout the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, as well as significant buildings for the Jewish community. The firm was instrumental in introducing the Moderne style to Canadian theater architecture during the “Golden Age” of cinema. Their theatres are characterized by streamlined surfaces and lighted marquees. The ByTowne is a representative example of Kaplan & Sprachman’s design on a neighbourhood movie house, and the last intact example of the firm’s theatres in Ottawa.	

<sup>47</sup> “How Arthouse Cinemas Shape Culture,” *Forest City Film Festival*, December 15, 2023, accessed March 2025. <https://fcff.ca/2023/12/15/how-arthouse-cinemas-shape-culture/>

<sup>48</sup> Miguez, 281.

<sup>49</sup> “New cinema takes over from Nelson,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 1, 1988.

<sup>50</sup> “Foreign and independent films appeal to more sophisticated audiences,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 10, 1992.

“Bye-Bye, ByTowne: Iconic indie theatre screen darkens after 32 years,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 30, 2020.

<sup>51</sup> “MacGregor: Cinéma vérité – or how the ByTowne changed my life,” *Ottawa Citizen*, December 9, 2020.

<sup>52</sup> “Ottawa film festival sheds spotlight on local filmmakers at ByTowne Cinema,” *Ottawa Business Journal*, November 3, 2023. <https://obj.ca/ottawa-film-festival-local-filmmakers-at-ByTowne-cinema/>

<sup>53</sup> Michael Z. Newman, “Indie Culture: In Pursuit of the Authentic Autonomous Alternative,” *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 3 (2009), 16.

## Supporting Details

The ByTowne Cinema was designed by Toronto based architectural firm, Kaplan & Sprachman.<sup>54</sup> Kaplan & Sprachman was a prolific firm comprised of architects Harold Solomon Kaplan (1895-1973) and Abraham Sprachman (1894-1971). Sprachman, born in Poland in 1894, immigrated to Toronto in the early 1900s.<sup>55</sup> Kaplan, born in Romania, came to Toronto in 1902 after living in London, England.<sup>56</sup> Kaplan and Sprachman met while studying architecture and building construction at the Toronto Technical High School in 1915, and formed a partnership in 1922.<sup>57</sup> Kaplan & Sprachman became a prominent Canadian architectural firm, active from 1922 to 1965, renowned for designing numerous movie theaters across Canada.<sup>58</sup> Beyond theaters, the firm also designed significant buildings for the Jewish community, such as synagogues and community centers.<sup>59</sup>

Kaplan & Sprachman designed hundreds of theaters across Canada between the late 1920s and 1960s, serving both major cinema chains and independent operators.<sup>60</sup> The firm was instrumental in introducing the Moderne style to Canadian theater architecture during the “Golden Age” of cinema.<sup>61</sup> Their theatres are characterized by streamlined surfaces and lighted marquees. Notable designs include the Eglinton Theatre in Toronto and the Vogue Theatre in Vancouver, both designated as a National Historic Site of Canada.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> “Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects,” *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>55</sup> “Sprachman, Abraham (1894-1971),” *Ontario Association of Architects*, accessed February 2025, <https://oaa.on.ca>.

<sup>56</sup> “Harold S. Kaplan fonds,” *Ontario Jewish Archives*, accessed February 2025, <https://ontariojewisharchives.andornot.net/Permalink/descriptions273814>

<sup>57</sup> “Harold S. Kaplan fonds,” *Ontario Jewish Archives*, accessed February 2025, <https://ontariojewisharchives.andornot.net/Permalink/descriptions273814>.

<sup>58</sup> “Harold S. Kaplan fonds,” *Ontario Jewish Archives*, accessed February 2025, <https://ontariojewisharchives.andornot.net/Permalink/descriptions273814>.

“Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects,” *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>59</sup> “Toronto’s First Synagogues,” *Ontario Jewish Archives*, accessed March 2025, <https://ontariojewisharchives.org/exhibits/synagogues/synagogues/Minsk/images/Architecture/02.html>.

<sup>60</sup> Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects,” *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Kaplan & Sprachman, Architects,” *Parks Canada*, accessed January 2025, <https://www.canada.ca/en/parks-canada/news/2016/11/kaplan-sprachman-architects.html>.

<sup>62</sup> “Eglinton Theatre National Historic Site of Canada,” *Parks Canada*, accessed March 2025, [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=803](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=803).

“Vogue Theatre National Historic Site of Canada,” *Parks Canada*, accessed March 2025, [https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page\\_nhs\\_eng.aspx?id=799&i=51352](https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/dfhd/page_nhs_eng.aspx?id=799&i=51352).



The Eglinton Theatre at 400 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto. *Parks Canada*, 1992. Accessed 2025.

In Ottawa, Kaplan & Sprachman designed multiple movie theatres, including the Elgin Theatre at 216 Elgin Street (constructed 1937, closed 1994), the Somerset Theatre at 386 Somerset Street West (constructed 1937, closed 2000), the Elmdale Theatre at 1196 Wellington Street (constructed 1947, closed 1994), and The Towne (formerly Linden) Theatre at 5 Beechwood Avenue (constructed 1947, closed 1989). The ByTowne is one of the last intact examples of a post-war neighbourhood movie houses in Ottawa.



Elgin Theatre, Ottawa [photograph], ca. 1948, Theatre photographs, RG 56-11-0-177, Archives of Ontario/Copyright Crown



The Somerset Theatre, n.d. Via *Urbsite*, accessed 2025.

<b>Criterion 7</b>	
The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	<b>No</b>
<b>Response to Criterion</b>	
<p>The property does not meet this criterion. The property is located in Lowertown on Rideau Street, one block east of King Edward Avenue. West of King Edward Avenue, Rideau Street has functioned as a commercial main street since the nineteenth century. Historically, Rideau Street east of King Edward was characterized as an early residential area—providing easy access to the electric streetcar, the ByWard Market, and Parliament Hill. Today, the eastern portion of Rideau Street has been redeveloped, and is characterized by a mix of mid- to high-rise office, commercial, and residential buildings of various styles and types.<sup>63</sup> As a post-war theatre, the subject property does not define, support, or maintain a specific character of the area.</p>	

<b>Criterion 8</b>	
The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Response to Criterion</b>	
<p>The ByTowne Cinema has contextual value because it is functionally and historically linked to Rideau Street, and the Lowertown and Sandy Hill neighbourhoods. Located in Lowertown East on Rideau Street, the theatre sits on the border of the Lowertown and Sandy Hill neighbourhoods. Rideau Street served as the traditional main street for</p>	

<sup>63</sup> "Uptown Rideau Street Community Design Plan," *City of Ottawa, Planning and Growth Management*, December 9, 2015, 27.

both areas, providing a mix of local residential, commercial, and institutional services and amenities. As a common post-war neighbourhood commercial amenity, the ByTowne theatre is functionally linked to Rideau Street's commercial activity. The theatre is historically linked to the neighbourhoods of Lowertown and Sandy Hill as it was constructed in this location to attract residents from both areas. Further, the ByTowne is functionally linked to other neighbourhood institutions and gathering places in Lowertown including the former Adath Jeshurun Synagogue at 375 King Edward Avenue (constructed 1904), and the Rideau Library at 377 Rideau Street (constructed in 1933).

### **Supporting Details**

The ByTowne Cinema has contextual value because it is historically and functionally linked to Rideau Street, and the Lowertown and Sandy Hill neighbourhoods. It is located in Lowertown East, on the north side of Rideau Street near Nelson Street, one block east of King Edward Avenue. The theatre sits on the border of the Lowertown and Sandy Hill neighbourhoods. Lowertown is an urban neighbourhood in Ottawa's downtown core. It is bordered by the Rideau Canal and Sussex Drive to the west, the Rideau River to the east, the Ottawa River to the north, and Rideau Street to the south.<sup>64</sup> Rideau Street is also the northern border of Sandy Hill, the residential neighbourhood directly south of Lowertown. Rideau Street served as the traditional main street for both areas, providing a mix of local residential, commercial, and institutional services and amenities. As a common post-war neighbourhood commercial amenity, the ByTowne theatre is functionally linked to Rideau Street's commercial activity. The theatre is historically linked to the neighbourhoods of Lowertown and Sandy Hill as it was constructed in this location to attract residents from both areas.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Marc Aubin and Nancy Chenier, "Lowertown East Our Disappearing Heritage," *The Lowertown Community Association and the Bruyere Street Task Force*, April 2011, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Miguelez, 275.

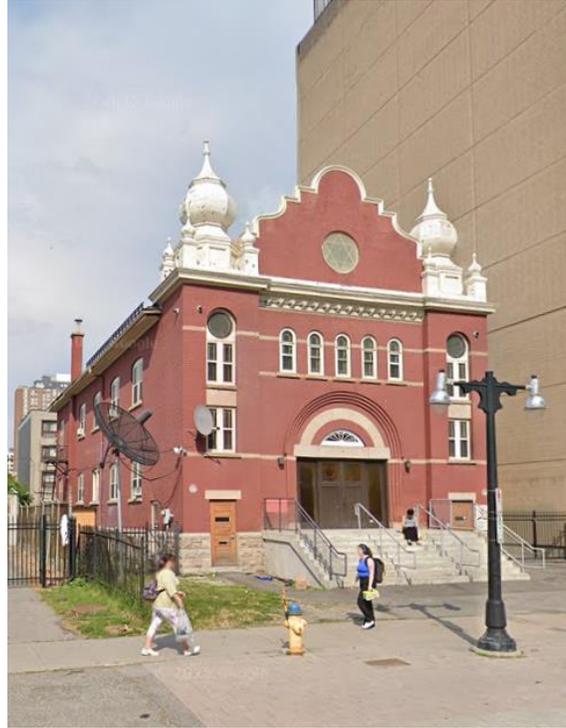


The ByTowne's frontage on Rideau Street. *City of Ottawa*, 2025.

Rideau Street has functioned as a commercial main street in Ottawa's Lowertown since the 19th century. At the time of the ByTowne's construction in 1947, Rideau Street functioned as Lowertown's primary commercial street. However, east of King Edward Avenue, Rideau Street was largely mixed use—with a combination of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings.<sup>66</sup> As a common post-war neighbourhood commercial amenity, the ByTowne theatre is functionally linked to Rideau Street's commercial activity. Further, the ByTowne is functionally linked to other neighbourhood institutions in Lowertown including the former Adath Jeshurun Synagogue at 375 King Edward Avenue (constructed 1904), and the Rideau Library at 377 Rideau Street (constructed in 1933).

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<sup>66</sup> Aubin and Chenier, 10.



375 King Edward Avenue, *Google Maps*, 2024.



377 Rideau Street, *Google Maps*, 2023.

**Criterion 9**

The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	<b>Yes</b>
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**Response to Criterion**

The ByTowne Cinema is a landmark on Rideau Street and in Lowertown. Its prominent frontage on Rideau Street and its iconic marquee distinguishes it from surrounding contemporary buildings. At night, the ByTowne's lighted marquee makes it highly visible on Rideau Street, uniquely reinforcing its status as a historic and familiar landmark on its streetscape.

**Supporting Details**

The ByTowne has contextual value as a landmark on Rideau Street and in Lowertown. The theatre's prominent frontage on Rideau Street, as well as its iconic marquee makes it stand out on the streetscape. Its large, illuminated signage is a familiar and historic visual landmark in Lowertown. Today, the theatre is surrounded by contemporary mid- to high-rise buildings. The juxtaposition between the subject building's lighted marquee and the surrounding contemporary buildings allows the theatre to be distinguished in its setting on Rideau Street. At night, the ByTowne's lighted marquee makes it highly visible on Rideau Street, uniquely reinforcing its status as a landmark on its streetscape.



The ByTowne's marquee and sidewalk overhang. *City of Ottawa*, 2025.



The ByTowne's marquee at night. *Downtown Rideau Business Improvement Area*, accessed 2025.



The ByTowne among the contemporary buildings on Rideau Street. *City of Ottawa*, 2025.

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