

Elmwood Senior School Addition

261 Buena Vista Road

Heritage Permit Proposal Description

Issues / Revisions

Issued for Heritage Permit

22 November 2025

Farrow

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1. Overview

Farrow Partners has been involved with Elmwood since 2017 when we developed a strategic facilities master plan for the school. Growing out of this master plan, this proposed addition to the existing Senior School building includes:

- A new front entrance court and lobby, with lounge and improved reception
- A flexible combination Performing Arts Center/Gymnasium with a seating capacity of 240, with lower-level support spaces including green room and dressing rooms
- A ground level flexible fitness/athletics room overlooking the North playing field
- Lower level athletics office and change rooms accessible from the playing field
- Four new classrooms on the second level, overlooking the playing field
- Improvement of the arrival from Buena Vista Road by introducing a wide pavestone pathway, necessitating shifting of the parking exit lane further east and removal of 4 parking stalls

Guided by the school's Strategic Direction, this addition is a key step forward for the school's variety and quality of educational, artistic, and athletic opportunities. The new performing arts, athletics, and learning spaces are much needed by the current student body and faculty. The project's intent is not to provide additional spaces for increased enrollment.

The interior proposed program spaces are designed to integrate seamlessly into the Senior School's circulation and improve visual and circulatory connectivity throughout the school. Farrow Partners' architectural design is infused with our mandate to '*cause health*' through implementation of evidence-based neuro-wellness choices including an emphasis on daylight, transparency, and stimulating natural forms rendered in timber and other natural materials.

In keeping with the park-like character of Rockcliffe Park, the addition's surrounding landscape design has been kept minimal. Key features of the existing site including surface parking and dense trees are maintained. No change to the current playing field is proposed.

2. Heritage Pre-Application Meeting

The proposed addition has been designed to sit sensitively within the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District and pair harmoniously with the existing Tudor building to establish a new and coherent architectural character. Without attempting to falsely recreate the historic character of the existing Tudor Senior School (by timbering upper wall areas or adding gables, for example), the addition takes cues from the building's distinctive proportions, materiality, and timber ornamentation to establish a new architectural character that is coherent with the existing. Any interference with the front façade or the street frontage of the existing building has been avoided.

Where new forms and proportions are proposed around the new West-facing entrance and the Performance Center, plaster walls, prevalent timber elements, and a roof design incorporating hipped and flat roofs are abundantly incorporated to ensure cohesion. Fenestration of the North elevation of the addition deliberately references the scale and proportions of existing fenestration seen in the rest of the building. Dense planting of trees largely shields the addition from Hillcrest Road - a street characterized by sheltering elements of trees, hedges, and fences which seclude the Elmwood property.

The City Heritage staff have been largely supportive of the design approach of the proposed addition. Following a Heritage Pre-Application Meeting on 3 November 2025, several comments have been addressed in the current revision including:

- Change from stone to brick cladding at foundation level
- Darkening of the tone of the proposed mass timber structural elements to better blend with Tudor half-timbering of the existing Senior School
- Narrowing and darkening of the eave to complement the existing Senior School
- Specification of RAL-coloured hollow metal frames and avoiding use of anodized aluminum window frames

Staff requested clarification of the connection between the addition and the existing building, which have been included in plan callouts. The addition's west façade sits out front of the existing building's façade, and except for the connection line between the proposed curtain wall and the existing, allow the existing walls to remain untouched and in their current form on the building's interior, creating the sense of an enclosed terrace in the addition's new lobby. The change to the existing North elevation is more significant, with the addition completely obscuring the façade of the gymnasium. This façade is not original and is of no heritage value. The alteration of this elevation is intended to be an improvement and add greater character and sensitivity to scale to an otherwise unremarkable façade.

3. Loading

The proposed addition does not necessitate or anticipate additional loading or refuse requirements for the building. The current refuse loading area is well-located on the site's South-East corner where it is most readily accessible, and entirely shielded from view by both a wood screen enclosure greater than 2m in height and by ample plant cover. It is a concern that relocation of this refuse area would diminish the ease of refuse loading and the architectural presence of the existing Senior School, the proposed addition, or the other buildings on-site including the Junior School or Head's House.

4. Parking, Dropoff/Pickup, and Bicycles

Elmwood's current 88 parking stalls across three lots are to be largely retained. 4 stalls are to be removed from the central asphalt lot to accommodate a new pavestone entry pathway and central entrance court, reducing the school's parking to 84 stalls. This number serves the school's needs and meets the minimum zoning requirement (see site plan). This reconfiguration of the central parking lot retains the existing flow of morning drop-off and afternoon pickup.

Zoning bylaw stipulates 1 bicycle stall per 100m² of gross floor area, meaning 70 bicycles for the 6960.50m² of floor area of the expanded Senior School. However as the proposed addition is not intended to increase student enrollment, and the senior school's current 12 bicycle stalls are sufficient for student and faculty use body, this proposal includes the same number of bicycle stalls, relocated adjacent to the new pavestone entry pathway.