

Economics Renovation Project 2003-2008

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WHY?

The building project was initiated and advanced by Michael Berkowitz during his two years as Department Chair 2001-2003. It was developed in response to inadequate space for both graduate students and faculty, stressed by the Department and by external reviewers over the years as a barrier to the Department's achieving its academic goals. In the 1990s, the Department's space needs were further increased by instructors for the growing undergraduate enrolment, the initiation of the Master of Financial Economics program, and program enhancements for Commerce students. Space problems in 2001 included:

- Some offices in the third floor of the old house in rooms that used to be the servants quarters were unsatisfactory. More than one newly hired faculty member assigned to these rooms left because of the office.
- Widely varying office sizes led to dissatisfaction by some colleagues.
- Not all full-time faculty could be housed in the Department, so some were scattered across the campus.
- There was no space for visiting professors or adjunct faculty.
- Most PhD students had no assigned space in the Department and studied in library carrels, at the Institute for Policy Analysis or at home.
- No space was dedicated to masters students in general or to students in the Master in Financial Economics program.
- There was no space for teaching assistants or adjunct faculty to hold office hours.
- There were no small meeting rooms.
- Heating and ventilation were unsatisfactory in all buildings. In winter, some rooms were always too hot, some were always too cold. In the south building a single thermostat would control the temperature in several offices, causing conflicts.

In 2001, a Project Planning Report developed by Michael Berkowitz recommended improving and expanding the space available to the Department by renovation and construction on our site at 150 St. George St.

WHAT?

The project provides new faculty offices, more offices for PhD students, a wing of carrels and group study rooms for MFE students, group work rooms for masters students, rooms for TA's to meet with students, research space for faculty and graduate students, space for visiting professors and additional support staff, and expanded computer facilities. It increases the useful floor space and the number of offices by over 50%. For the first time, all PhD students have space in the department, shared space for first year PhDs and shared offices for upper year PhDs. All faculty can now be accommodated in the building and we have space for visiting professors. A central feature of the project is a large undergraduate common room for study and relaxing. The common room has large windows looking into a courtyard to the south. This is a comfortable space for students to spend time between classes or while waiting to meet with faculty or teaching assistants. The increase in office space and the modernization of existing space has

greatly enhanced the experience of our students, both undergraduate and graduate, and it has improved the working conditions for many faculty.

The project includes a new 3-story addition attached to the north side and rear of the old Victorian house and extending to the rear of the property and then south along the bp nichol lane. The connection between the Victorian house and the 1961 south addition was replaced with a glass enclosed hallway on the first and second floors. The project was designed to preserve and restore the beauty of the formal portions of the Victorian house, built in 1889 for William Crowther, and major portions of the 1961 Georgian building. Offices in Victorian House have been renovated with central air conditioning replacing the window units. See the pictures below for a view of the buildings in 2003 prior to renovation, the demolition process, the construction process and the completed buildings in 2009 after renovation.

WHO?

The architectural firm of Hariri Pontrini was chosen for the project in the Spring of 2003. The lead architect was Siamak Hariri with Michael Boxer. The contractor was Steelcase. A Project Committee chaired by the Project Manager (Brian Szuberwood, George Phelps, Brian Szuberwood) from University Capital Projects and including representatives of the architect, the University planning office (Elizabeth Sisam, Gail Milgrom), the Arts and Science Physical Infrastructure and Technology office (Ray de Souza, Monica Contreras, Adrienne de Francesco), the contractor, the Chair of the Economics Renovation Committee (Don Dewees) and others worked on the project from 2003 to 2008. The Departmental Renovation Committee met from time to time to consider issues raised by the Project Committee.

WHEN?

Plans for the project were started by Chair Michael Berkowitz in 2001 and the financing was approved in 2003. Design work occupied 2003 through 2007. The initial plan was for a 2-stage project in which the second stage was contingent on private fund-raising. The gift from Ira Gluskin announced in January, 2006 allowed us to consolidate the plans into a single renovation and expansion project. The Department moved out of 150 St. George St. in early September, 2005 and into offices on the 4th and 5th floors of Sidney Smith Hall, recently vacated by the Mathematics Department. Building cleanup at 150 St. George began in the fall of 2005, followed by selective demolition as required by the plans and site preparation. Design drawings for the entire project were completed in November, 2006 and the construction contract was awarded in January, 2007. Construction began on March 26, 2007. The project was completed and the Department moved back in late December, 2008.

HOW?

THE GIFT: The overall cost of the project was estimated at \$15 million. Planning for the first phase was under way when Toronto investment manager Ira Gluskin and his wife, Maxine Granovsky-Gluskin, honoured Ira's father, Max, with a \$3.5-million gift to the University of Toronto which has enabled the entire project to go forward. The facility was named Max Gluskin House. Max, aged 92 at the time of the gift, graduated from U of T's commerce and finance program in 1936 and became a chartered accountant. Ira, who finished the same program in 1964, is one of Canada's leading investment managers. The Department and the University are deeply grateful to Ira Gluskin for his generosity and dedication to the University and to the

Economics Department. Professor Pekka Sinervo, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science in 2006, declared: "Max Gluskin House will allow the Department of Economics to build on its international reputation for excellence in educating future business, financial and policy leaders and in producing influential research. In doing so, the new home will enhance the department's ability to compete effectively for top students and faculty."

Artist's rendering of the building project seen from St. George St.



The Result

Economics department faculty have been enthusiastic in their praise of the new and renovated building. The offices are comfortable and functional, the building is warm and inviting, there are huge benefits from having the conference room and seminar room on the first floor. The small meeting rooms are in active use for office hours before tests, for meetings with visitors or between members of a research group and for myriad other reasons. We appreciate having PhD students in the same building with the faculty and having shared offices for PhD students writing theses. Masters students have made intensive use of the group work rooms and appreciate the carrels for quiet study. Graduate students in general have made good use of their lounge/lunch room. Undergraduates have benefited from being able to find all faculty in one building and from having the common room for relaxing or studying while waiting for a meeting. Visitors have been uniformly enthusiastic about the appearance of the building, the preservation of the old house, the quiet courtyard, and the great view of St. George Street from the faculty/staff lounge on the third floor. The renovation and expansions have been a huge success.

Additional Information and Reports

On February 3, 2009, Toronto Star columnist Christopher Hume wrote enthusiastically about the Economics project under the title “[Victorian grace finds happiness with plate steel](#).” (Toronto Star, 3 February, 2009, p. GT3.) Hume quotes architect Siamak Hariri saying that the Corten steel used as exterior cladding in the courtyard and the wood frame interior were chosen for low cost but the colours provide warmth to the look of the building. “We think it is possible to do beauty on a budget. But it takes time,” Hariri is quoted as saying. Hume says: “The refined oak-lined 19th century rooms now share space with heavy plated steel walls pitted with grind marks and other construction scars. The shock of mixing Victorian gentility and faux-industrial grittiness soon gives way to the pleasure of the unexpected.” He concludes that the building is a huge success: “The building is a minor architectural marvel, an object lesson in how to make a little go a long way.”

In September, 2009, Heritage Toronto announced that the Max Gluskin House project had been nominated for the 35th annual Heritage Toronto Awards. These awards celebrate outstanding contributions in promoting and preserving Toronto’s history and heritage landmarks.

Three students in an architecture course ARC 3052Y Professional Practice studied the renovation project and wrote a report that details the planning process, the design and contracting process, the construction process and problems that arose during these processes. The report was completed in 2009.

The March, 2003 Planning and Budget agenda item, including the 2001 Project Report is posted [on this website](#).

Demolition in Pictures – 2005-06

BEFORE



Economics building, 150 St. George Street, before renovation looking west from Rotman roof in September, 2003.



The 'first bite' from the Coach House, 30 October 2005.



Coach House roof off looking NW.

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Coach House gone, 1927 addition going, going gone, 7 November 2005.



The original house after demolition of the 1920's addition and the coach house, looking east from the bp nichol laneway.



South Addition before demolition of connection



During demolition, from Rotman roof, 30 January 2007.

FROM DEMOLITION TO CONSTRUCTION, WINTER 2007



Demolition completed, ready to start construction, February, 2007.



West Wing: Basement looking south 5 June, 2007



**Crowther House, north side
19 June 2007:
Cutting 3rd floor passage through a
chimney to new north wing.**



First floor conference rooms looking NE from bpnichol lane 9 July 2007



Conference rooms and offices looking NE from lane, 5 September 2007



From Rotman Roof, 30 August 2007



North Wing looking SE from fraternity parking lot, 8 February 2008

Front of house from St. George St., 8 April 2008.



North Wing looking SE from fraternity parking lot, 16 June 2008

Completed House, October, 2008



Ribbon Cutting ceremony October, 2008



Arthur Hosios, Chair of Economics, David Peterson, Chancellor, David Naylor, President, Ira Gluskin, donor, Max Gluskin, honouree, Maxine Granovsky-Gluskin, donor, Meric Gertler, Dean of Arts and Science, John Petch, Chair, Governing Council.