

Heritage Attributes + District Guidelines

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A. Significant Architecture and Prominent Buildings

Heritage Attributes

Contributing Buildings are usually 3-4 storeys in height and encompass many architectural styles. The diversity of architectural styles is a defining character of Queen Street West. Styles include mid-19th century Vernacular 2½ storey buildings with sloped roofs and simple detailing, late 19th century buildings of Italianate or Second Empire style with rich architectural detail, and 20th century Vernacular, Modern, Post-modern and Contemporary buildings.

- 98 of the 169 buildings on Queen St. West between University and Bathurst contribute to Queen St. West's heritage character, of which 23 are listed on the City's Inventory of Heritage Buildings.
- Certain buildings by virtue of their architectural features and location act as landmarks along the street (i.e. the former Wesley Building at the southeast corner of Queen Street West and John Street).

Guidelines

- Buildings that contribute to the heritage character should not be demolished.
- The renovation of facades of contributing buildings should respect the original architectural style.
- New and renovated buildings shall be designed to be sympathetic to the district heritage attributes, through massing, rhythm of solids and voids, significant design features, and high quality materials.

B. Street Wall

Heritage Attributes

- A “street wall” is a condition where buildings consistently line or front to the edge of a street - much of Queen St. West exhibits a continuous street wall.
- Buildings are generally attached and consistently built out to the sidewalk, forming a continuous street wall.
- Continuity of the street wall is reinforced by a consistency in the height of buildings, normally 2 to 4 storeys.
- Storefronts typically have recessed entrances creating deep display windows that enliven the street.

Other Valuable Attributes

- The pedestrian experience is relatively uninterrupted given that there are few gaps between buildings along the street wall.

Guidelines

- New and renovated buildings must maintain and enhance the continuity of the street edge by building out to the front property line, with no side yard setbacks fronting Queen Street West.
- Through the design of the facade, new buildings should respect the scale of adjacent contributing buildings.
- Recessed entries in existing contributing buildings must be retained.
- Recessed entries in new buildings are strongly encouraged.

C. Street Wall Elements

Heritage Attributes

- The street wall is characterized by an articulated rhythm of relatively narrow storefronts primarily ranging between 4.5 and 7 metres.
- Heritage building ensembles are divided into bays, giving the appearance of multiple buildings.
- Entrances to storefronts alternate with the entrances to upper floors.

Other Valuable Attributes

- The diversity of street frontages results in a changing landscape and dynamic environment for residents and pedestrians.
- The “human-scale” of buildings makes the street a pleasant place to walk.
- The variety of individual store signage tends to add a dynamic character to Queen Street. Large third party signage on the other hand, tends to detract from the individual heritage character of buildings.

Guidelines

- The original storefront widths of contributing buildings must be maintained.
- New and renovated buildings must respect the heritage character of the built form by respecting the narrow rhythm of façades. This is particularly crucial to large developments.
- The articulated bays of storefronts and above-grade façades should ideally be 4.5 metres wide, and shall be no more than 7 metres wide.
- Upper floor uses shall be accessed through doorways with primary entrances on Queen St. West, except for corner sites, which may be accessed through side streets.
- Third party signage and any signage above the ground floor must respect the heritage character of the building and streetscape, including the scale and narrow rhythm of storefronts. Signage must not cover windows.

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D. Building Heights

Heritage Attributes

- Building heights range between two to four storeys.
- Upper levels interact with the street, through windows and active uses accessible at grade.

Other Valuable Attributes

- A 16 metre height (approximately 5 floors) with a stepback at 13 metres is currently permitted by the Zoning By-law.
- Existing building heights allow sunlight to reach the north side of Queen St. West.
- The north sidewalk of Queen Street West is afforded sunlight for much of the day and during most seasons, particularly in spring, summer and fall.

Guidelines

- New buildings must be a minimum of two storeys and no more than the permitted maximum.
- Blank façades are not permitted facing Queen Street West or other streets, without exception.
- The existing Zoning By-Law (allowing a 16 metre height with a stepback at 13 metres along a 44 degree angular plane) is affirmed.
- Shadow impact of new buildings outside the Heritage District should not result in additional shadowing on Queen Street than what is permitted by this plan.

16 metre height line



E. Façade Patterns and Features

Heritage Attributes

- Uses and the height and number of floors are clearly legible from the street.
- Architectural detailing provides a 3-dimensional texture that creates a play of light and shadows on façades.
- Articulated transitions between floors provide a horizontal rhythm reducing the impact of the building mass.
- Commercial uses at grade, with floors above exhibiting a different architectural language, presence and use, have always been part of the character of Queen Street West.
- Windows and doors at the ground floor provide a high level of transparency.
- Upper levels are characterized by less transparency: between 25% to 75%, by windows that are generally vertically oriented.
- Upper façades are characterized by symmetrical openings and decorative elements.
- The floor to ceiling height of ground levels is generally greater than the floor to ceiling height in upper storeys.
- Architectural elements of visual prominence such as raised parapets and turrets are often utilized to emphasize prominent visual locations such as corners and visual termini.
- Cornices and other decorative façade elements, window and door types and their decorative surrounds contribute to the heritage character of façades.

Guidelines

- New and renovated buildings must enhance the character of the street through the use of high quality materials such as brick, stone and slate. Detailing should add visual interest and texture.
- New and renovated buildings must be characterized by one storey commercial façades. Storefronts that have an uninterrupted two-level or greater presence on the street should be avoided.
- Up to 80% glazing is appropriate at-grade; second levels and above should approximate 50% glazing, with not more than 75% glazing, and no less than 25% glazing.
- New buildings are encouraged to incorporate symmetry at upper levels of façades.
- Elements such as cornices raised parapets and turrets may be introduced at significant locations (such as corner sites and gateways) to enhance visual prominence.
- The horizontal rhythm and visual transitions between floors shall be articulated in facade designs.
- New buildings should respect the significant design features and the horizontal rhythm of adjacent contributing buildings.
- The floor to ceiling height of the ground floor shall be consistent with the predominant heights of contributing buildings and respect the scale of adjacent contributing buildings.
- Replacement windows, doors and architectural components of buildings that contribute to heritage character shall respect the original in type, proportion, vertical orientation, and size of elements. Surrounding detail should be maintained.

F. Public Realm

Valuable Attributes

- The quality of the pedestrian realm is finely grained and pedestrian-oriented.
- The street includes a variety of public spaces of a scale where pedestrians can move comfortably and where informal activities can take place.
- Laneways provide mid-block connections that offer an important link to surrounding neighbourhoods.
- The segment of widened sidewalk between Beverley Street and Spadina Avenue provides a unique environment for pedestrians and artists.

Guidelines

- Existing mid-block connections must be maintained.
- Encourage new mid-block pedestrian connections where appropriate.
- Public spaces for street vendors and artists should be protected, and new spaces encouraged, in order to reinforce a vibrant street life.

G. Circulation

Heritage Attributes

- The streetcar is a defining heritage element of the street.
- Storefronts along Queen St. West are serviced through a back street or lane, which contributes to the quality of the pedestrian environment along the street side.

Other Valuable Attributes

- Pedestrians move with ease, public transit services the entire area, and every store is accessible by car.
- On street parking plays an important role in:
 - dispersing parking throughout the corridor
 - allowing people to park directly in front of destinations, and
 - creating a physical and visual buffer between moving vehicles and sidewalks/pedestrians

Guidelines

- Service access and other non-public uses must continue to be relegated to non-visible areas (such as back lanes, side streets, and back streets).
- The streetcar route along Queen St. West shall be protected for its heritage value.
- On street parking shall be maintained, to continue to provide easy access to destinations, to continue to separate pedestrians from traffic flow, and to calm traffic.
- Safe and effective measures to support cycling, such as bike racks, should be provided.
- Parking structures fronting onto Queen St. West are not permitted.