

**Alteration of a Heritage Property Designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act – 378 Yonge Street**

<b>Date:</b>	April 12, 2012
<b>To:</b>	Toronto Preservation Board Planning and Growth Management
<b>From:</b>	Director, Urban Design, City Planning Division
<b>Wards:</b>	Ward 27 - Toronto Centre-Rosedale
<b>Reference Number:</b>	pg12024

**SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council refuse the proposed alteration of the designated heritage property located at 378 Yonge Street (Attachment 1) which consists of new large format signage construction on the roof.

The application to erect an assembly of three large third party signs is supported by the document entitled Bright Lights – Big City: A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip (Signage Vision), which provides guidelines for large format signage design along the section of Yonge Street south of Gerrard Street to Queen Street. While roof signs are generally prohibited under Chapter 694, Signs, General, and third party signs are prohibited on all heritage properties within the city, the subject property is located within the section of Yonge Street intended for special consideration, to be guided by the Signage Vision document.

Please refer to the link below to review the Signage Vision Document:  
<http://www.toronto.ca/planning/downtownyongesignage.htm>

The proposed signage would replace an existing sign with three new sign faces that would create a volume equal in height to the ground floor of the heritage building (24 feet). The width of the Yonge Street elevation of the signage feature corresponds to the width of the building minus a minimal setback (1-1/2 feet on north and south, 1 2/3 feet on east), making it roughly 25 feet wide. The north face of the sign construction is

proposed to be approximately 23 feet wide and the southerly elevation is about 18 feet wide.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **The City Planning Division recommends that:**

1. City Council refuse the proposed signage application for the heritage property at 378 Yonge Street under Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act.
2. If the owner appeals City Council's decision to refuse the application for alteration under Section 33 of the Ontario Heritage Act, City Council authorize the City Solicitor and the necessary city staff to attend at the Conservation Review Board hearing in opposition to the appeal.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

The heritage property at 378 Yonge Street was built in 1930 from the modern classical design of John Lyle. The property was included on the first Toronto City Council Inventory of Heritage Properties on June 20, 1973. The property was designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act by City Council under By-law 85-76 on March 17, 1976.

At its meeting of April 29, 30, 2009, City Council approved the adoption, in principle, of portions of the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA)'s "Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip," which includes the guideline that third party signs are allowable on some heritage properties within the vision area as long as commitments are made to the long term conservation of the property.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-20298.pdf>

City Council on November 30, December 1, 2, 4 and 7, 2009, approved Chapter 694, Signs, General, which reflected the principles of the Signage Vision and established two special sign districts to reflect the special character and issues of the area.

New Sign Regulation and Revenue Strategy:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/pg/bgrd/backgroundfile-24387.pdf>

New Sign Regulation and Revenue Strategy: Additional Considerations:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/bgrd/backgroundfile-25449.pdf>

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

The Dominion Bank Building at 378 Yonge Street is designated on architectural grounds as a very fine example, with well preserved interiors, of the work of John M. Lyle, a Toronto architect of great importance (Bylaw No. 85-76). The building, designed in a simplified classical style, shows Lyle's distinctive detailing that is based on forms of flowers and animals native to Canada and on Canadian history and industry. The location of the building at the south end of the widened portion of Yonge Street, from College Street to Gerrard Street, gives it great importance in the streetscape. The building was renovated in 1999 and has been converted from its function as a bank to operate as a restaurant (Attachments 2, 3 and 4).

## **Planning Act and Provincial Policy Statement**

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. The PPS sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land. The key objectives include: building strong communities; wise use and management of resources; and, protecting public health and safety. City Council's planning decisions are required to be consistent with the PPS.

The *Planning Act* and associated *Provincial Policy Statement* guide development in the province and they include provincial interests regarding heritage resources as described in the Provincial Policy Statement issued under the authority of Section 3 of the *Planning Act*. The Planning Act requires that all decisions affecting land use planning matters "shall be consistent with" the Provincial Policy Statement. The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development, and promotes the provincial policy-led planning system.

Provincial Policy Statement 2.6.1 directs that "Significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved. Properties included on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties are considered to be significant in this context.

In the PPS 2005, "conserved" is defined as "the identification, protection, use and/or management of cultural heritage and archaeological resources in such a way that their heritage values, attributes and integrity are retained. This may be addressed through a conservation plan or heritage impact assessment."

The designated property at 378 Yonge Street has been identified through municipal listed and provincial designation and its heritage values and attributes are contained, described and defined by the Reasons for Designation adopted by City Council.

## **Official Plan**

Policy 3.1.5.2 of the Official Plan states that "Heritage resources on properties listed on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties will be conserved," and development adjacent to properties on the City's *Inventory of Heritage Properties*, will respect the scale, character and form of the heritage buildings and landscapes.

## **Sign By-Law and Yonge Street Signage Vision**

The location is the northernmost extent of the Signage Vision boundary along Yonge Street. The rooftop of this two storey building provides unique and extraordinary sightlines along Yonge Street and Gerrard Streets.

Roof signs are generally prohibited under Chapter 694, Signs, General, however, the subject property is located within the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District, where Chapter 694 permits the erection and display of certain roof signs. Roof signs and third party signs are prohibited on all heritage properties across the city.

The Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA) commissioned a report regarding large format signage in a section of their BIA in 2006. The report, titled "A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip, March 2009" (Signage Vision), was finalized in 2009. City Council approved the adoption, in principle, of the Signage Vision, and requested the Chief Building Official in consultation with the Chief Planner and Executive Director to develop provisions for signage in the Downtown Yonge Strip as part of what was adopted as Chapter 694, Signs, General.

The Signage Vision contains guidelines for the minimization of adverse effects for heritage buildings in the Yonge-Dundas Special Sign District. These include ensuring heritage elements or materials are not obstructed; ensuring installation is not damaging to heritage elements; differentiating between new and historic components; addressing the architectural elements of the façade and allowing a visual break between the sign and the host building (Attachments 5 and 6).

## **Proposal**

The proposed signage installation is to install a roof top volume defined by sign faces to the north, east and west measuring approximately 7 metres or 22 feet in all three dimensions (Attachments 7 and 8). This form essentially echoes the footprint of the building mass at the corner with a minimal half metre setback.

A Heritage Impact Assessment (dated March, 2011) prepared by ERA Architects was submitted in support of the proposal. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) provides a condition report, conservation plan, impact assessment, suggested signage improvements, and recommendations for heritage interpretation of the property

## **COMMENTS**

In general the proposal exceeds the indicated role of signage in organizing and articulating a more consistent street wall condition by defining a dominant three dimensional relative to both the host building and the Yonge Street Strip.

### **Design Principles**

Although open to and supporting large format signage, the central premise of additions to heritage buildings is that designs should generally be sympathetic, subordinate and compatible to the heritage building. The illustrations of acceptable signs within the Signage Vision document derive their scale from the horizontal and vertical proportions of the host buildings (referred to as "orders"). The illustrated examples representing pronounced consistently remain subordinate within the larger context of the building (Attachments 9 and 10).

In the case of 378 Yonge Street, the proposed signage is not subordinate to the host building and the expressed rationale is that the classical Yonge Street elevation allows no breakdown vertically upon which to inform alignment with the roof top form.

If the only alternative is to span the width of the primary façade, then the strategy is inappropriate based on the resultant impact. The diagram from the HIA (Attachment 8) interprets the design principles more liberally than the design vision document and adds a version of the design approach (shaded) which might easily be misinterpreted as part of the original document itself.

In addition, the Signage Vision document directs that "to accentuate the gateway treatment, signage at the corner is permitted to be taller than the allowable street wall height..." However, where gateway articulation is anticipated through additional height, a transitional component is represented which serves to break the dominance of the higher form. This transitional component is not present in the existing application (Attachment 11).

Further, the Vision document asks that gateway signage be designed as much as possible to twin with adjacent gateway signage in scale and architectural quality, without necessarily being identical. The proposal does not explore the potential of the relationship between the two sides of the street to establish a special gateway condition. This is one of only two gateway conditions identified which provide for this opportunity. These gateway locations hold the potential to mark the north and south entry points into the special character of the Signage Vision Strip.

### **Alternative Designs**

The proposed design takes full advantage of the site's unique position along Yonge Street. Unfortunately, as submitted, this sign feature overwhelms and dominates the

heritage building, it defines too strong a presence in the urban landscape and is not applicable as a viable solution as part of a gateway opportunity.

HPS staff have prepared computer modeling to determine whether a diagonal configuration could satisfy both opportunities as a gateway and as a mass distinct from that of the architecture (Attachments 12-16).

## **Proposal Renderings**

The images incorporating a photo match technique are in some cases close to 80% of the actual proposed dimension (Attachment 17).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The proposed signage forms a cube that overwhelms the mass of the heritage building and compromises its existing three dimensional character. This sign proposal, which effectively occupies the width of the principle Yonge Street façade, reads as a dominant imposition on this important Lyle building.

The specific height of the proposal alone is not the issue. The volume determined by the height of the ground floor volume and the width of the Yonge street elevation creates a massing that competes with and overwhelms the proportion of the host heritage building. The Signage Vision representations of sign features approaching this height (for this specific site) have a portrait orientation and do not occupy the full width of the east elevation. They also indicate smaller transitional signage that aligns with the horizontal datum introduced to add order to the Yonge Street street wall.

Although the Signage Vision promotes signage that does not have a billboard appearance, neither should it take on the character of an enlarged and distinct feature that dominates both the building as well as the streetscape. The signage proposal needs to be considered in relationship to its contribution in establishing a gateway feature for the intended unique strip along Yonge Street.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

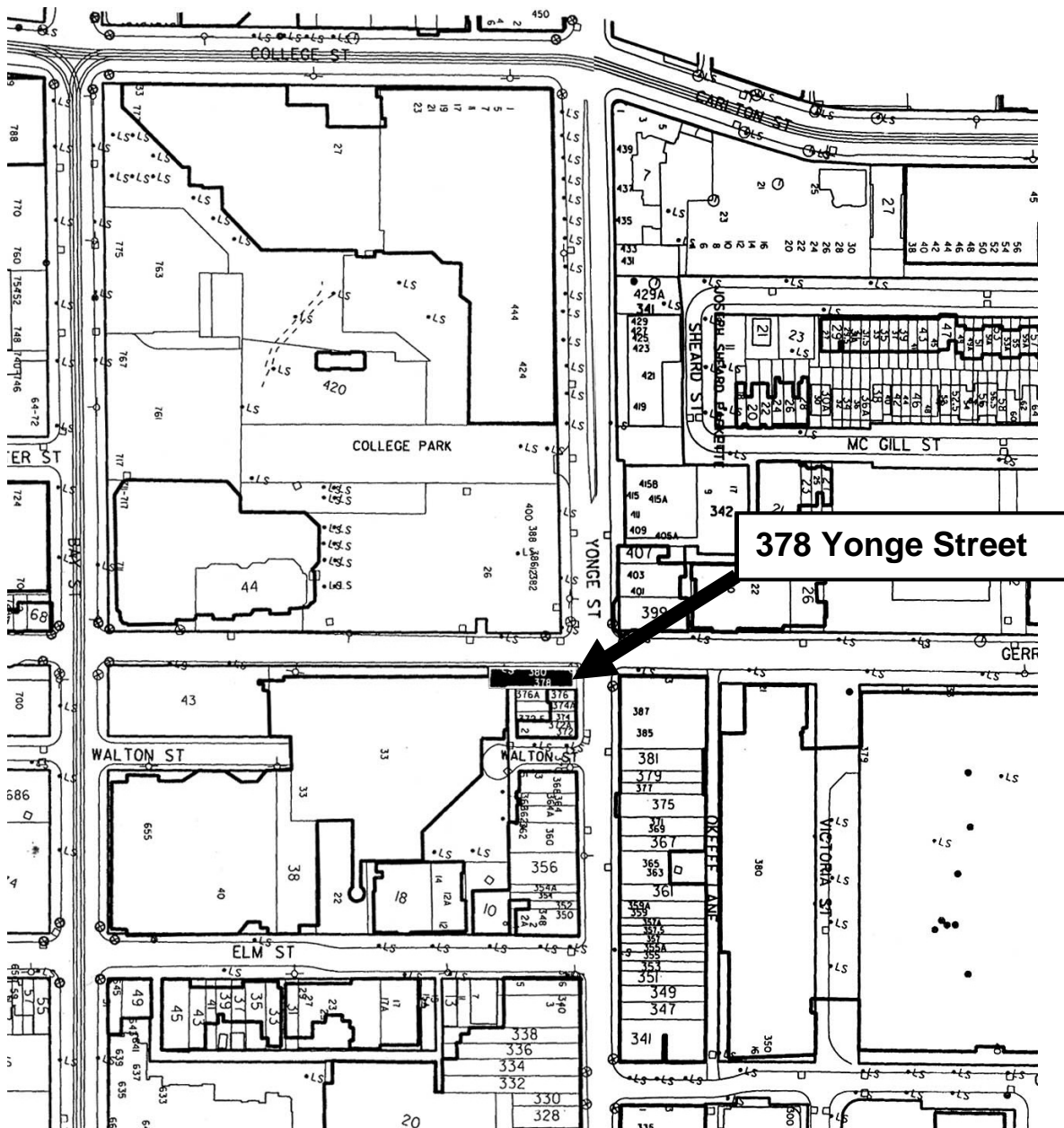
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Robert Freedman, Director Urban Design  
City Planning Division

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment No. 1 – Location Map
- Attachment No. 2 – Context Photos
- Attachment No. 3 – Context Photos
- Attachment No. 4 – Archival Image and Existing Elevations
- Attachment No. 5 – Signage Vision
- Attachment No. 6 – Signage Vision
- Attachment No. 7 – Proposal Drawings
- Attachment No. 8 – Proposal Drawings
- Attachment No. 9 – Signage Vision
- Attachment No. 10 – Signage Vision
- Attachment No. 11 – Signage Vision
- Attachment No. 12 – Computer Renderings
- Attachment No. 13 – Computer Renderings
- Attachment No. 14 – Computer Renderings
- Attachment No. 15 – Computer Renderings
- Attachment No. 16 – Computer Renderings
- Attachment No. 17 – Rendering Comparison

LOCATION MAP: 378 YONGE STREET



This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown.



CONTEXT PHOTOS: 378 YONGE STREET



View west towards Gerrard and Yonge



View west towards Gerrard and Yonge

ATTACHMENT NO. 3

CONTEXT PHOTOS: 378 YONGE STREET



View south towards Gerrard and Yonge

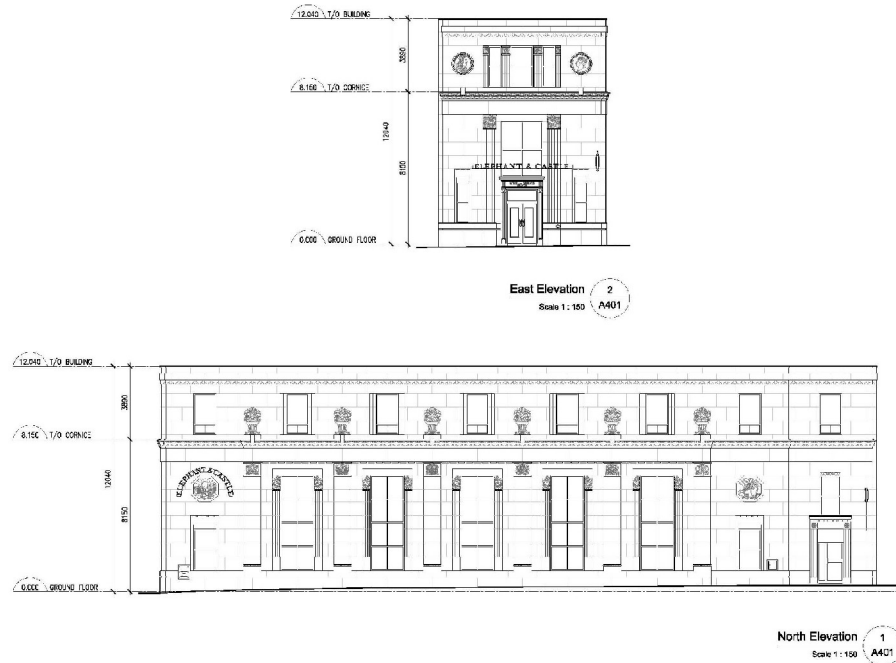


View south towards Gerrard and Yonge

ATTACHMENT NO. 4  
ARCHIVAL IMAGE AND EXISTING ELEVATIONS: 378 YONGE STREET



Archival Image (1929)



East and North Elevations  
(Shown with new building signage but without existing or proposed rooftop signage)

## SIGNAGE VISION: 378 YONGE STREET

**Key Visual Sites: Dundas Square Landmark Signage**

Landmark Signage for key visual sites are identified for Dundas Square to reinforce the primary importance of this area within the precinct (see map on page 27). Design principles include:

- *Should be located at key corners and view terminus sites*
- *Should be of the highest architectural quality and design*
- *Some of these sites are appropriate for the tallest signage structures in the strip, and consideration must be given to the context of the site.*

**Key Visual Sites: Gateway Signage**

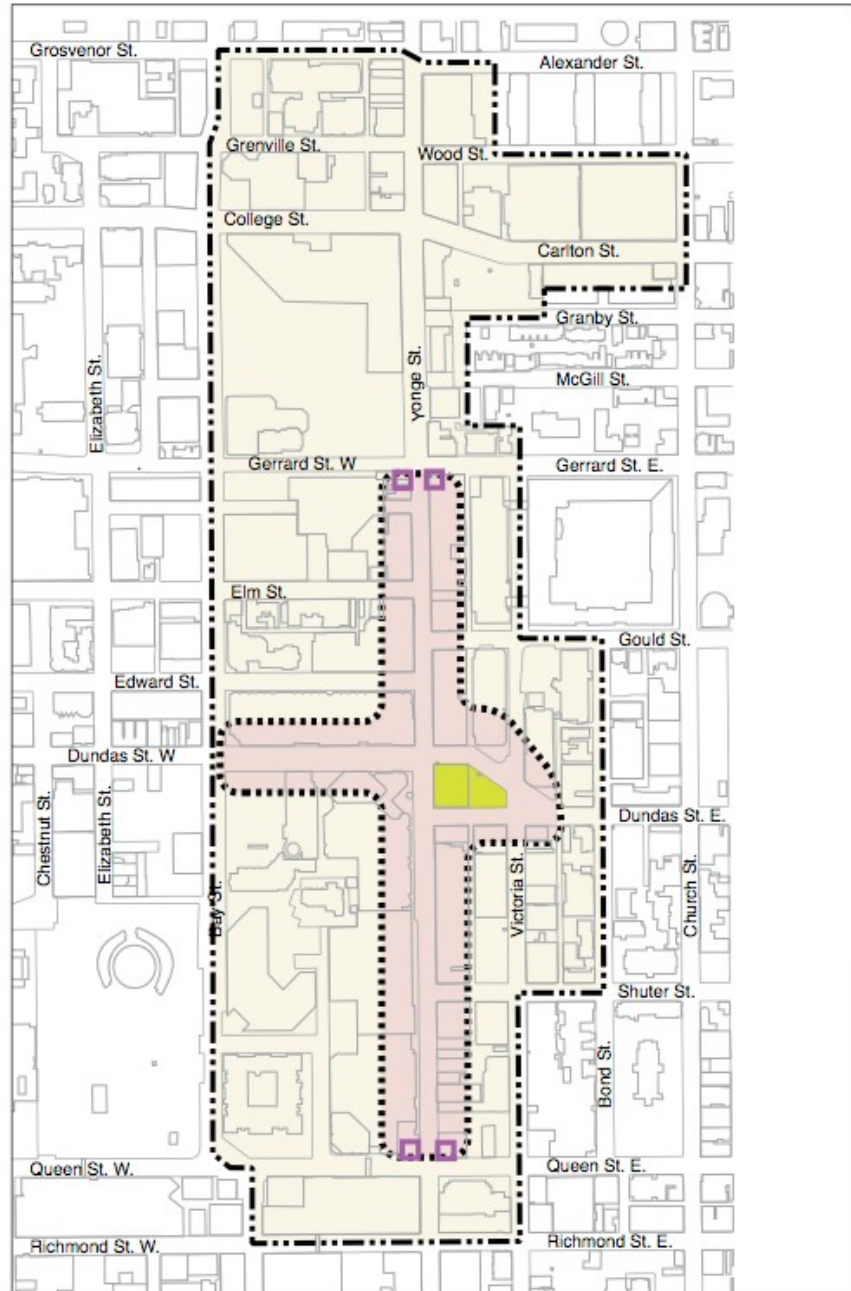
To accentuate key entry and egress points of the precinct, signage that perform as Gateway markers are permitted. Design principles include:

- *To be constrained to the corners locations of the property*
- *To accentuate the gateway treatment, signage at the corner is permitted to be taller than the allowable street wall height, but not to exceed the maximum permitted zoning height*
- *Slender architectural features excluding signage may extend beyond the permitted zoning height*
- *Should be designed as much as possible to twin with adjacent gateway signage in scale and architectural quality, without necessarily being identical*
- *These sites oblige the highest possible quality in architectural design, lighting and framing*
- *All four of the gateway sites are heritage buildings and must be considered appropriately; refer to the heritage inventory map on page 31 and the full list in Appendix A.*
- *Where signage wraps onto a cross-street to the 'Yonge Strip', signage may have no more than 15 metres of frontage from the corner.*

Significant residential development is anticipated at the north-west corner of Yonge and Gerrard Streets. The proximity of dwellings facing this gateway will constrain the amount and intensity of illumination at this location.

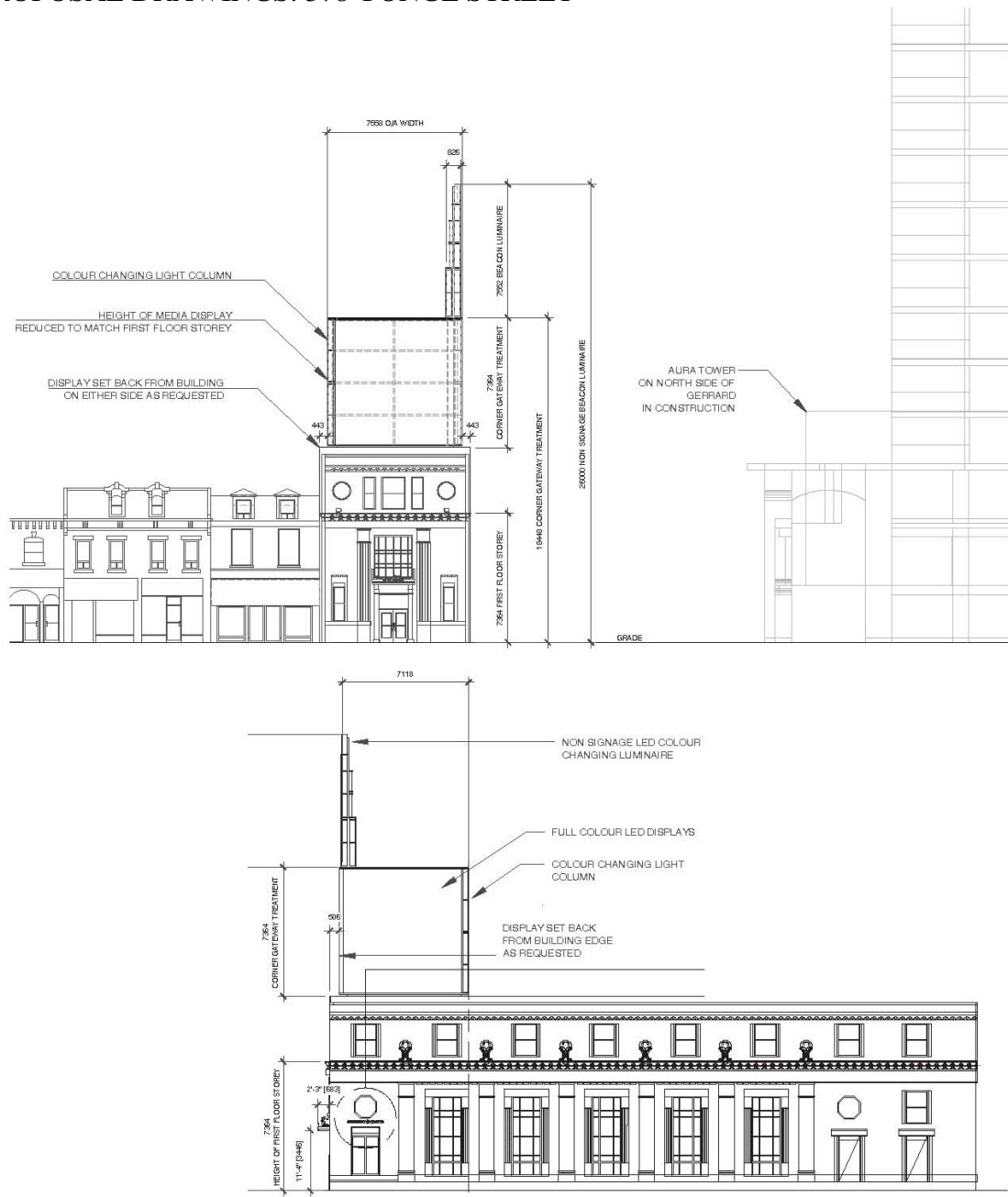


SIGNAGE VISION: 378 YONGE STREET

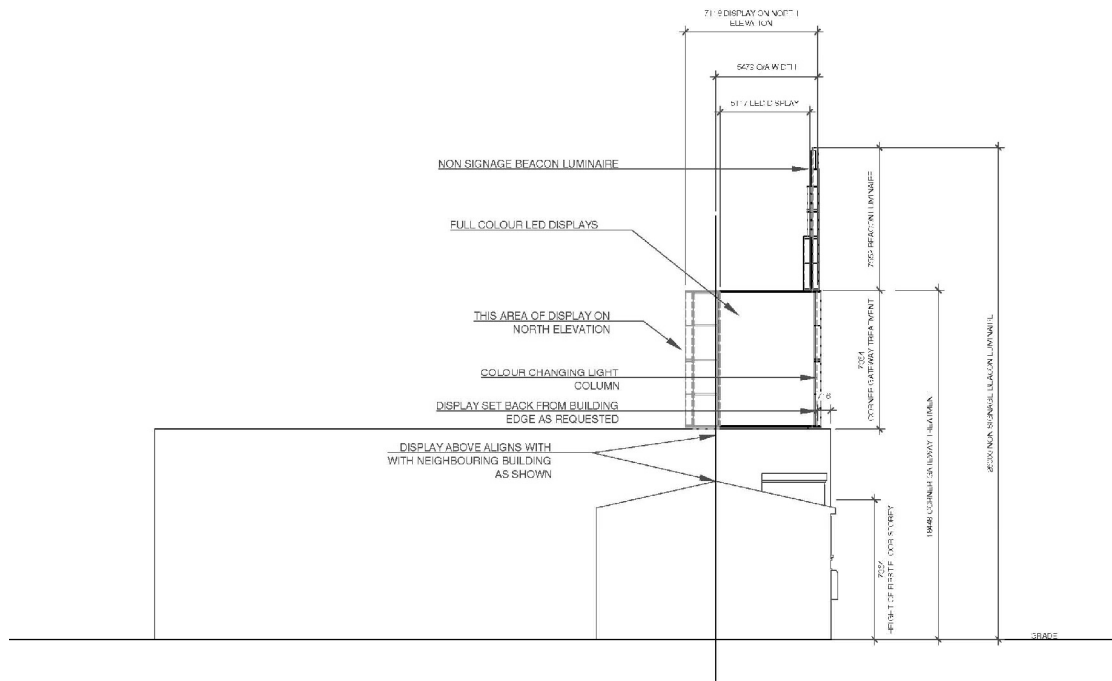
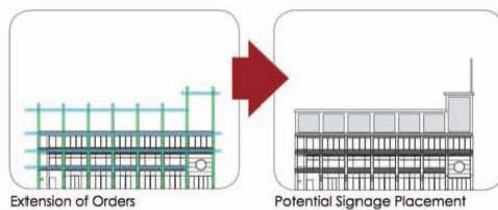
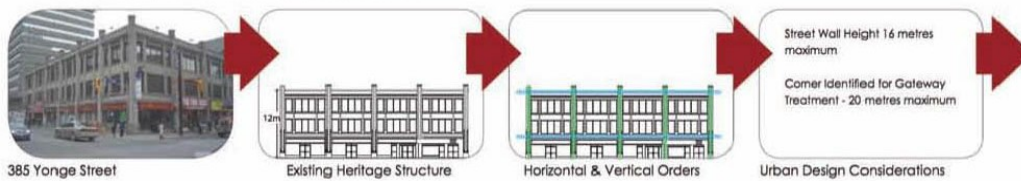


28 A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Street Strip

PROPOSAL DRAWINGS: 378 YONGE STREET



## PROPOSAL DRAWINGS: 378 YONGE STREET

Demonstration of Design Principles, in *Signage Vision*Figure 16. "Demonstration of Design Principles for Signage on Heritage Buildings" for the Intersection of Yonge and Gerrard. The *Signage Vision*, pages 34-35.Figure 17. Schematic diagram showing application of design principles described in the *Signage Vision*, pages 34-35 to proposed Gateway Signage. See appended to this report drawings prepared by Kramer Design Associates for further details of proposal. (ERA)

SIGNAGE VISION: 378 YONGE



STREET

Signage Vision Cover Page



Signage Vision Cover Page  
(modified with subject proposal for comparison)



SIGNAGE VISION: 378 YONGE STREET

*Signage Vision*



Figure 7. Rendering of signage anticipated by the *Signage Vision* at 378 Yonge Street. (*Signage Vision*, p.23)

*Proposed*

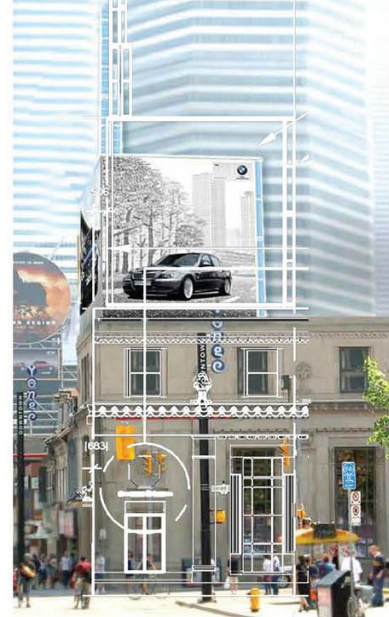


Figure 8. Rendering of proposed signage. (KDA)

*Existing*



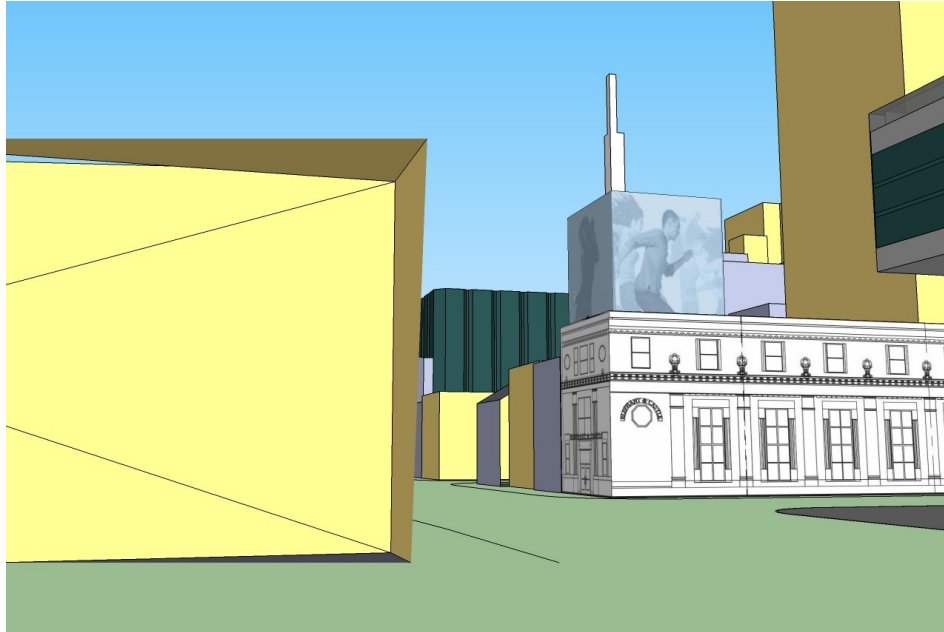
Figure 9. Current context and condition. (ERA)

*Proposed, Oblique View*

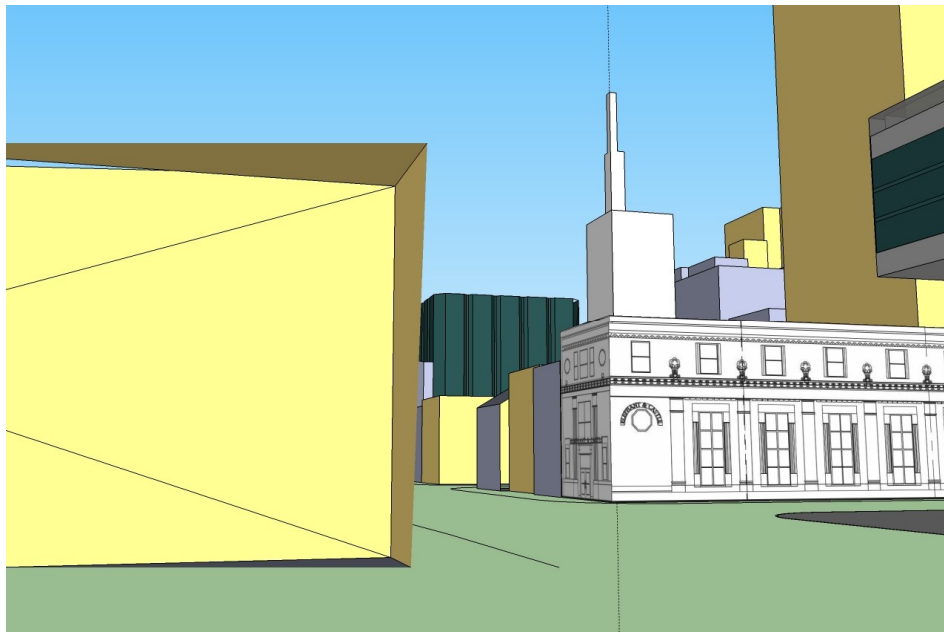


Figure 10. Rendering of the proposed building restoration and third party signage at the corner of Yonge and Gerrard streets. (KDA)

SIGNAGE VISION: 378 YONGE STREET



Computer Modeling of Proposal

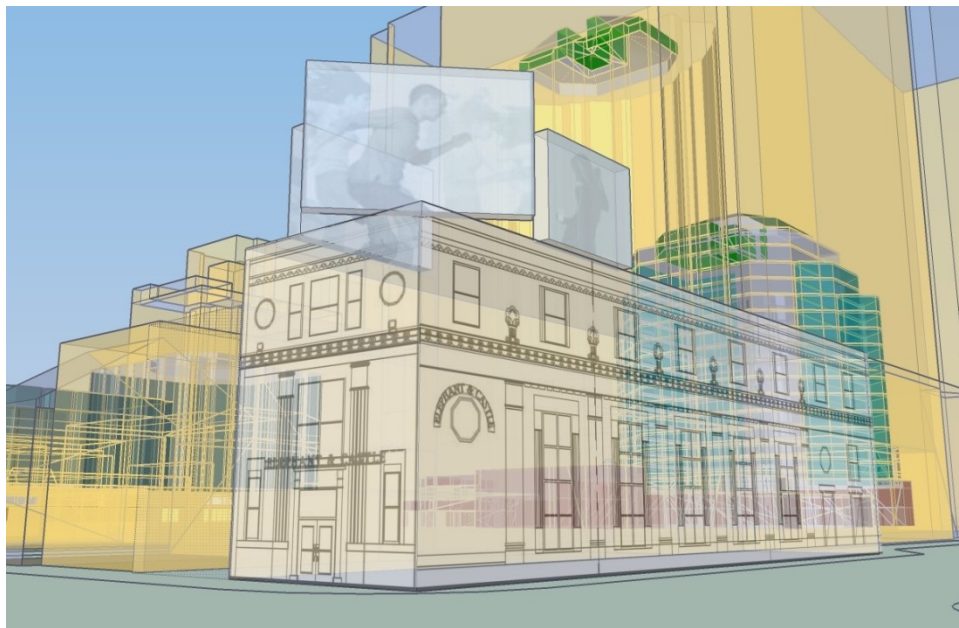


Computer Modeling Using Signage Vision Corner Feature

COMPUTER RENDERINGS: 378 YONGE STREET



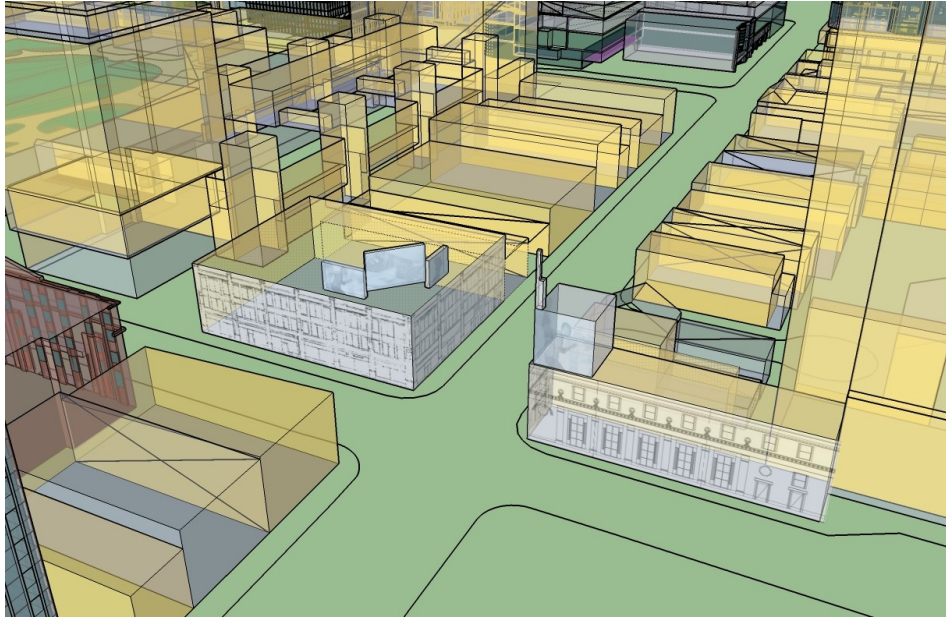
Proposal



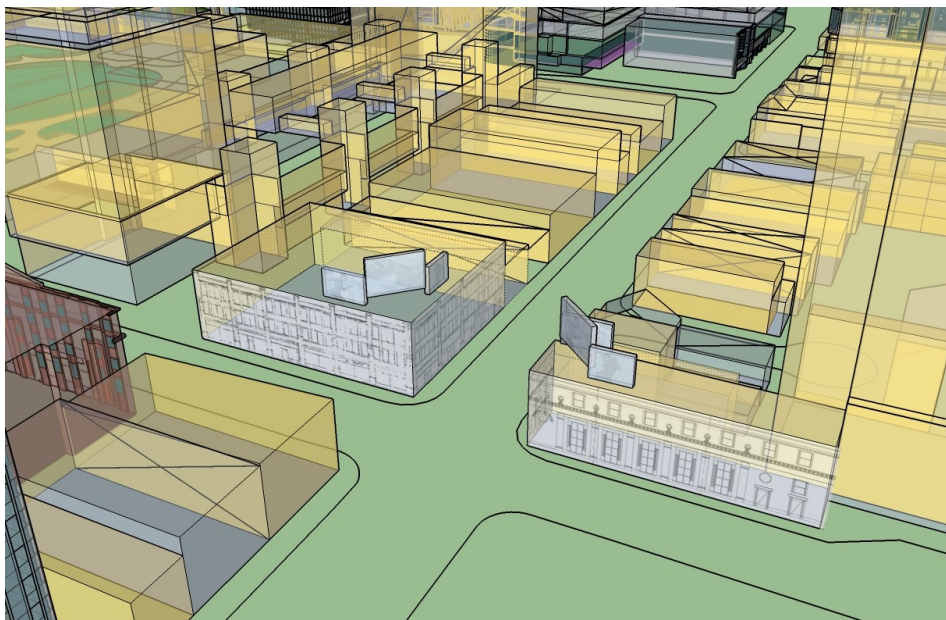
Gateway Design Alternative (HPS)



COMPUTER RENDERINGS: 378 YONGE STREET

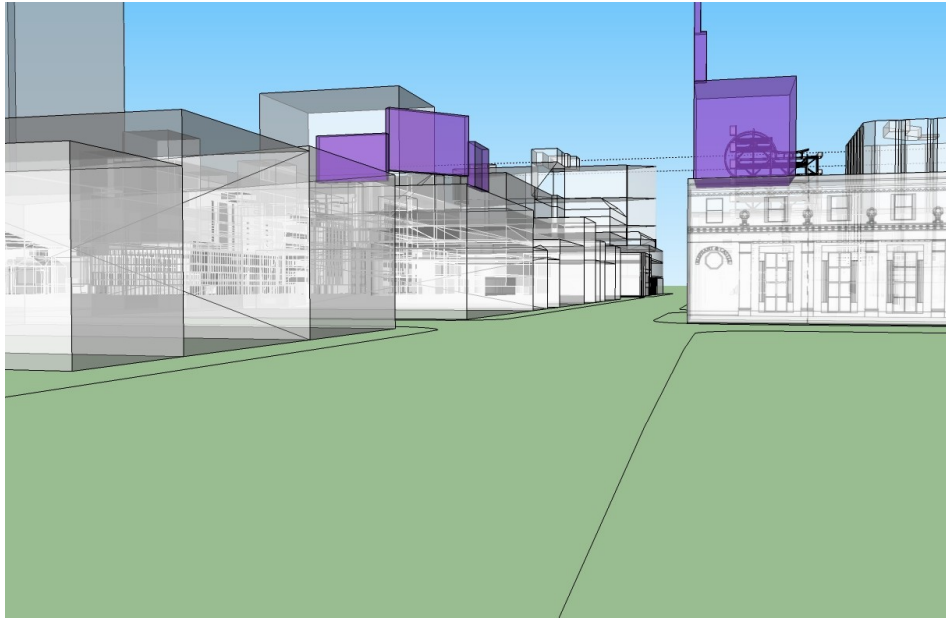


Computer Modeling of Subject Proposal seen as Bird's Eye View from North

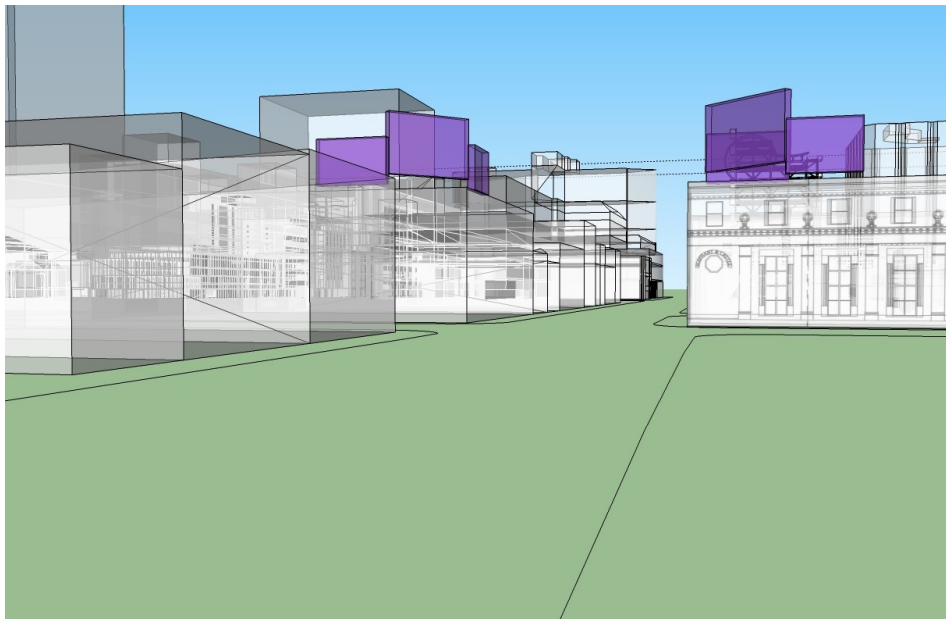


Computer Modeling of Gateway Concept seen as Bird's Eye View from North

COMPUTER RENDERINGS: 378 YONGE STREET

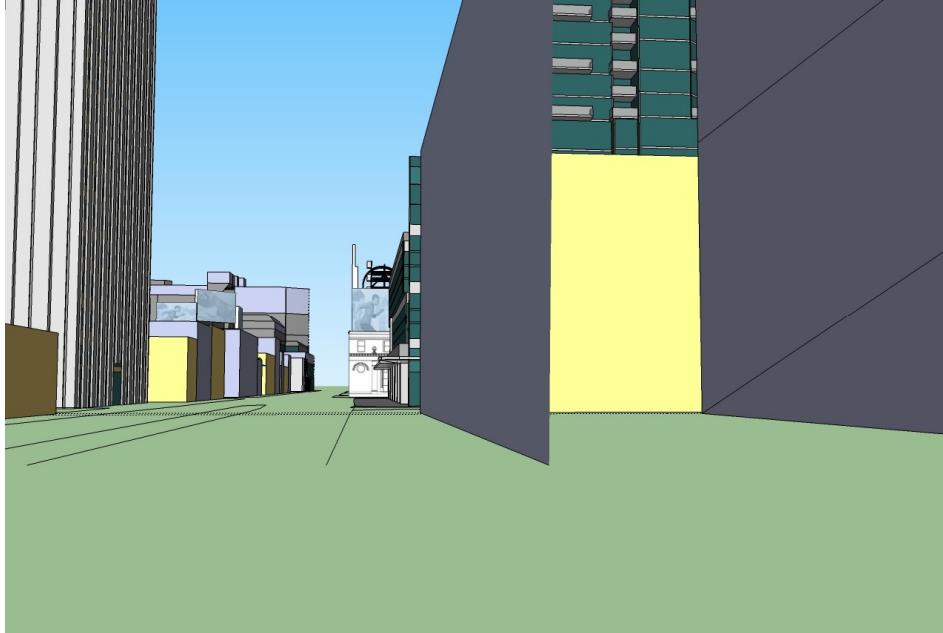


Computer Modeling of Proposal

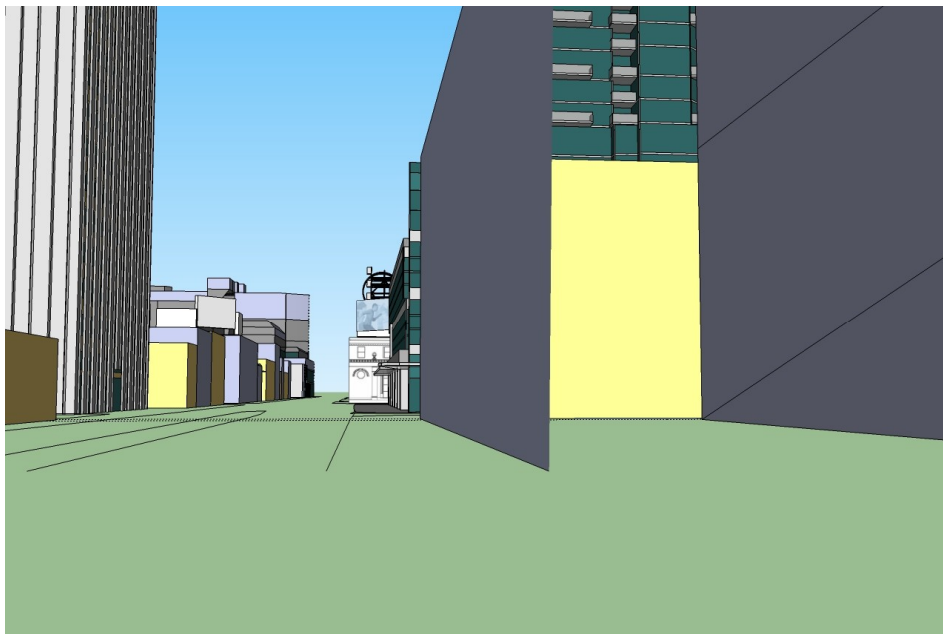


Computer Modeling of Diagonal Signage Concept

COMPUTER RENDERINGS: 378 YONGE STREET

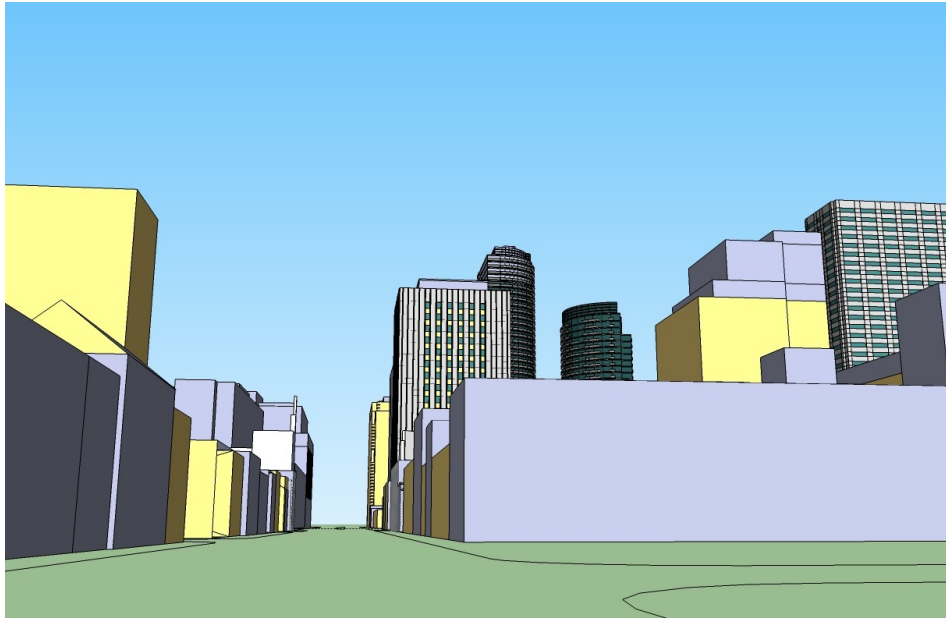


Computer Modeling of Proposal Viewed from North  
(including new Aura Development)

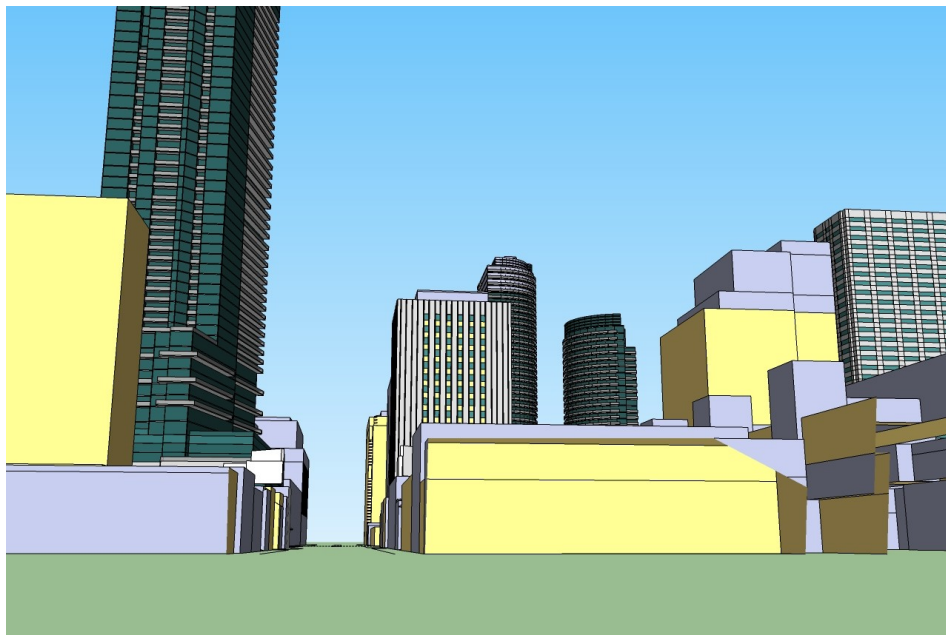


Modeling of Diagonal Concept Viewed from North  
(including new Aura Development)

COMPUTER RENDERINGS: 378 YONGE STREET



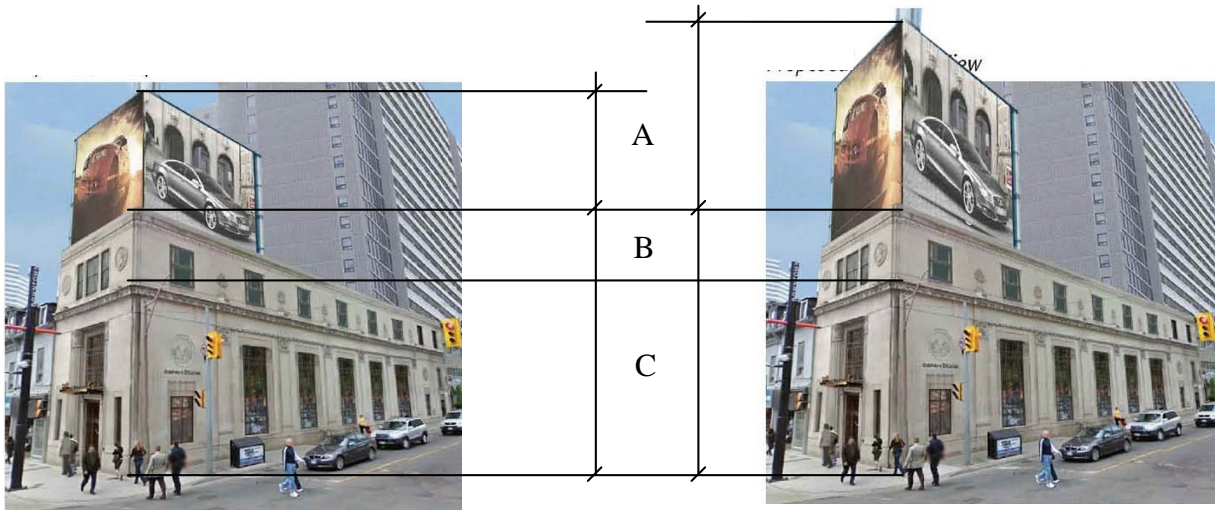
Yonge Street viewed from South (Subject Proposal)



View north on Yonge Street (Diagonal Concept)

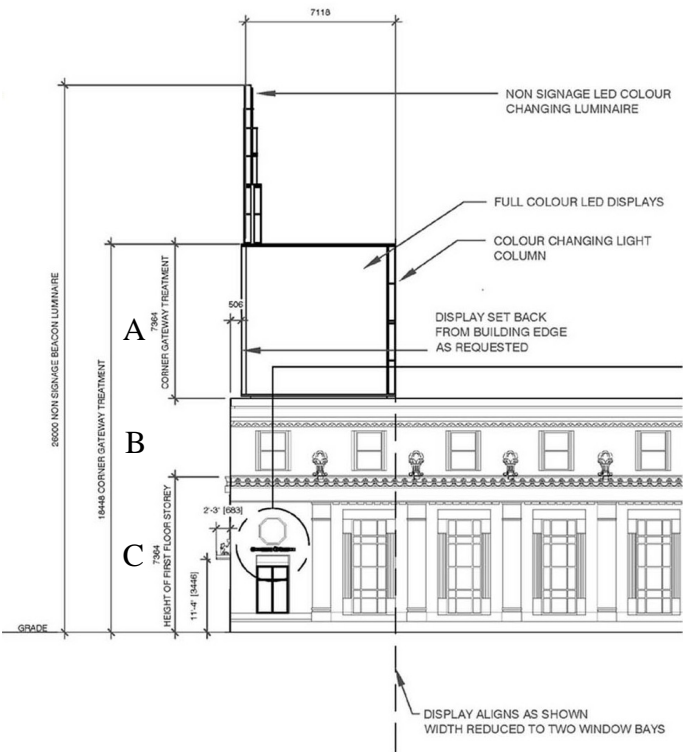


RENDERING COMPARISON: 378 YONGE STREET



HIA Report Rendering

HPS Rendering  
(using dimension  
from technical drawing)





Submitted height of Sign (equal to height of ground floor of heritage Building)