

Authority: Planning and Housing Committee Item
PH28.13, as adopted by City of Toronto Council on
March 25 and 26, 2026
City Council voted in favour of this by-law on May 21,
2026
Written approval of this by-law was given by Mayoral
Decision 10-2026 dated May 21, 2026

CITY OF TORONTO

BY-LAW 523-2026

To designate the property at 150 College Street (University College – 15 King’s College Circle) as being of cultural heritage value or interest.

Whereas the Ontario Heritage Act authorizes the Council of a municipality to enact By-laws to designate real property, including all buildings and structures thereon, to be of cultural heritage value or interest; and

Whereas authority was granted by Council to designate the property at 150 College Street (University College - 15 King's College Circle) as being of cultural heritage value or interest; and

Whereas the Council of the City of Toronto has caused to be served upon the owners of the lands and premises known as 150 College Street (University College - 15 King's College Circle) and upon the Ontario Heritage Trust, Notice of Intention to designate the property, and has caused the Notice of Intention to be posted on the City's website for a period of 30 days in accordance with Municipal Code Chapter 162, Notice, Public, Article II, § 162-4.1. Notice requirements under the Ontario Heritage Act; and

Whereas no notice of objection was served upon the Clerk of the municipality within the prescribed time under the Ontario Heritage Act; and

Whereas the reasons for designation are set out in Schedule A to this By-law;

The Council of the City of Toronto enacts:

1. The property at 150 College Street (University College - 15 King's College Circle), more particularly described in Schedule B attached to this By-law, is designated as being of cultural heritage value or interest.
2. The City Solicitor is authorized to cause a copy of this By-law to be registered against the property described in Schedule B to this By-law in the proper Land Registry Office.
3. The City Clerk is authorized to cause a copy of this By-law to be served upon the owners of the property 150 College Street (University College - 15 King's College Circle) at and upon the Ontario Heritage Trust and to cause notice of this By-law to be posted on the City's website for a period of 30 days in accordance with Municipal Code Chapter 162, Notice, Public, Article II, § 162-4.1. Notice requirements under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Enacted and passed on May 21, 2026.

Frances Nunziata,
Speaker

John D. Elvidge,
City Clerk

(Seal of the City)

SCHEDULE A

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE REASONS FOR DESIGNATION

150 College Street (University College - 15 King's College Circle)

Reasons for Designation

The subject property is defined to include the "University College" building, a 3-storey structure based on the "Oxbridge" model of collegiate campus planning containing classrooms, lecture halls, a library, and offices arranged around a landscaped quadrangle. Prominently situated on an elevated site at the head (north end) of King's College Circle, University College serves as the physical and symbolic centre of UofT's St. George Campus and is the University of Toronto's oldest college complex. The subject property is located at 150 College Street and is identified by its convenience address of 15 King's College Circle.

The subject property was designed through a partnership between Frederic W. Cumberland and William G. Storm and was constructed between 1856 and 1859. In its original form, University College consisted of three conjoined wings, designed predominantly in the Norman Romanesque Revival style and arranged in a U-shaped layout comprising a pavilion massing: a centre block with museum and library, a west wing with student accommodations and dining hall, and an east wing with classroom and assembly spaces. Modelled in part on medieval colleges and monasteries, the subject property consists of distinct programmatic elements expressed through a balanced asymmetry of massing and architectural features and was originally designed with a formally landscaped quadrangle and cloister at its centre.

A fire severely damaged the interior of the east wing and centre block in 1890, destroying both the college library and museum. The western portion of the centre block, the Croft Chapter House, and the entire west wing were spared due to wind direction that evening and to the museum's thick western wall and drop of the roofline which acted as a firebreak. Much of the original masonry detailing and woodwork was recreated in its faithful reconstruction, which was overseen by architect David B. Dick and completed in 1892. The Laidlaw Wing (Mathers & Haldenby) was added in 1964, enclosing the northern side of the quadrangle, which itself was redesigned in the same year by landscape architect Michael Hough to create a series of landscaped terraces unifying the constituent wings of the structure.

Interior modifications were undertaken in the early 1970s. Designed in part by Eric Arthur, professor emeritus of architecture at the University, these modifications addressed structural, mechanical, egress, and programmatic organization within the building.

In 2018, University College underwent a significant restoration led by Kohn Shnier Architects and ERA Architects. The restoration improved universal accessibility through the introduction of interior ramps and an exterior elevator shaft located in the quadrangle. The library, destroyed in the fire of 1890, was reinstated in its original location, with the layout of its stacks and mezzanine directly referencing the original design.

University College has long been recognized for its cultural heritage value, having been designated as a National Historic Site in 1968 and included on Toronto's inaugural Inventory of Heritage Properties adopted by City Council on June 20th, 1973.

Design and Physical Value

Founded in 1853, University College is valued as the earliest example of Progressive Eclecticism in Canada, a movement that drew from contemporary architectural styles and combined them with an array of elements from other historical styles, particularly Gothic, Italianate, and Norman. Arguably the most important work of architects Frederic W. Cumberland and William G. Storm, the avant-garde design of the complex resulted from the eclectic combination and balanced asymmetry of various historic architectural features and programmatic forms in new ways, offering an architectural response to the High Victorian interest in both history and progress. Heavily influenced by the work of the Irish firm of Deane and Woodward, University College was notable for its sophisticated plan and program. It provided a comprehensive set of instructional, administrative and residential spaces that combined the features of a traditional residential college (residences, library, and halls) with modern facilities, such as a convocation hall, museum, laboratory, and classrooms.

Architecturally, the aesthetic of the original, 3-storey U-shaped building is predominantly Norman Romanesque Revival, representing an early use of this style in Toronto. Originally developed by the Normans in England and parts of France and Italy during the 11th and 12th centuries, Norman Romanesque architecture reappeared as a period revival style during the Victorian era. The style is characterized by massive proportions, thick masonry walls, sturdy pillars, large towers (often square in plan), round arches and decorative elements such as chevrons and other zigzag patterns, all of which are present in the design of University College. Typologically, the University College complex is also valued as an early example in Toronto of monumental public architecture with exemplary architectural detailing in stone, wood, iron and glass.

The 1964 Laidlaw Wing that enclosed the north perimeter of the quadrangle continues the Norman Romanesque Revival style, as interpreted through a Modernist lens. The blending of historic and contemporary styling is evident in the former library wing's cloister-like arcade fronting onto the quadrangle and the ornamented round-arched windows defining the second-floor reading room contrasted by a modern, minimalist approach to the overall stone cladding, which is smooth in finish rather than the rough-hewn character typical of the historic style.

University College demonstrates outstanding craftsmanship and artistic merit on both the exterior and interior of the complex through its extensive and skillful integration of sculptural expression in the form of highly detailed stone and wood carvings often depicting grotesques or flora and fauna native to Canada. Built at a time when Toronto had a population of fewer than 40,000 people and little in the way of major infrastructure or amenities, the monumental scale, craftsmanship, and architectural complexity of University College was remarkable. The building's elaborate stone carvings were executed by skilled German craftsmen, while its interior featured encaustic tiles by the Shropshire firm of Maw and Co., with stained glass windows by McCausland & Bullock, and intricate woodwork by Jacques and Hay, the latter two firms being locally-based companies. Following the fire of 1890, the quality of craftsmanship was largely maintained in the faithful reconstruction of its east wing and portions of the centre block.

Historical and Associative Value

As the first constituent college of the University of Toronto and established following the secularization of King's College, University College is associated with the rise of non-

denominational institutions of higher education supported by Reformist governments during the mid-19th century. It is also associated with the establishment of a model of federated colleges at the University of Toronto, which was widely emulated in the Commonwealth during that time.

Since its founding, University College is also valued for its direct association with numerous significant Canadians, including among its alumni: Prime Ministers William Lyon Mackenzie King and Arthur Meighan; Supreme Court justices Bora Laskin and Rosalie Abella; and leading members of the arts community, including Michael Ondaatje and Farley Mowat.

Having established a model in Canada for non-sectarian education as early as 1853, University College has built upon its foundational principles to continue a legacy of inclusivity that yields information about its student body and social justice issues over time. Among these accolades are the 1854 founding of the country's first student government, the University College Literary and Athletic Society; by 1884, the admittance of women to study at the college with the first cohort of women graduates in 1885; the convention of the University of Toronto Homophile Association (UTHA) at University College in November 1969 to advocate for equality and freedom of gay men and lesbians, influencing the formation of like-minded groups on university campuses and in communities across the country; and, in 1998, establishing Canada's first program in sexual diversity studies.

The property is also valued for its association with several significant Toronto architects over time. University College was initially designed by Frederic W. Cumberland and William G. Storm, who both individually and as a partnership produced some of Toronto's most notable buildings, including St. James Cathedral (Cumberland, 1853), St. Andrew's Church (Storm, 1876), and Victoria College (Storm, 1892). Following the fire in 1890, University College was faithfully restored by David B. Dick, who also designed the adjacent University Library at 9 King's College Circle (1892). In the university's post-WWII era of expansion, the northern Laidlaw Wing at University College was completed by the firm of Mathers and Haldenby, sensitively enclosing the quadrangle which was itself extensively remodeled by renowned landscape architect Michael Hough in the same year to unify the constituent wings of the complex through a series of landscaped terraces. In the 1970s, a substantial restoration of the property was undertaken by Eric Arthur, who was then Professor Emeritus of Architecture at the University and a leading voice in the nascent heritage preservation movement in Toronto.

The property is valued for its direct association with the multigenerational Toronto-based business of the McCausland family, designers and fabricators of stained glass. Established by Joseph McCausland in 1856 in partnership with William Bullock, and jointly led by Joseph's son Robert from 1881, the firm is credited with the earliest and most numerous examples of Canadian stained glass and the longest record for glasswork in North America. As Robert McCausland Limited, the firm has been recognized as a National Historic Event since 1991. At University College, the surviving 1858 window featuring symbols and colours of University College, the stained glass installed throughout the building as part of the post-fire reconstruction, and the 1909 tripartite stained-glass windows on the east wall of the library by Robert McCausland, represent part of the extensive legacy of stained glass produced by the McCausland family and their employees for buildings throughout the country since the mid-nineteenth century.

University College is further valued for its direct association with Maw & Co., one of Britain's most iconic tile manufacturers, whose encaustic tiles in polychromatic, geometric patterns, adorn

the entrance hall and atrium floors. Established in 1850 in Worcester, England, the firm grew to become the largest tile factory in the world by the end of the 19th century, producing over 20 million tiles per year. Favoured by architect Frederick W. Cumberland, two different patterns of encaustic floor tiles for his contemporary projects at both Osgoode Hall and University College were ordered together and laid by the same worker from Maw & Co's English factory during the same trip to Toronto in 1859.

Finally, the property is valued for its direct association with the Toronto-based Jacques & Hay Furniture Manufacturers firm, who dominated the cabinetmaking trade in British North America between 1835 and 1885. At its height, Jacques & Hay was the largest and best recognized furniture manufacturer in Canada. Founded by craftsmen-turned-entrepreneurs, John Jacques and Robert Hay, the company's growth and success were the result of the industrialization of manufacturing in Canada. The company's products ranged from inexpensive everyday furniture for the average Canadian to custom-made pieces for the province's elite. In collaboration with architects Cumberland and Storm, Jacques & Hay helped produce some of Canada's most distinctive interiors including at Osgoode Hall, St. James Cathedral and University College.

Contextual Value

Contextually, University College is valued for its role in defining the collegiate character and landscape of King's College Circle. The subject property further supports this character as the earliest site of teaching, research, and student community at the University of Toronto. Overall, the prominent location, distinctive architectural style, and monumentality clearly establish University College as the physical and symbolic centre of the larger institutional setting of the St. George Campus.

As the first institutional structure of the University of Toronto, University College initiated the development of the St. George Campus and is visually and historically linked to its surroundings situated at the head of King's College Circle where it established a built-form relationship to that landscape that future university structures would both follow and defer to. The property also provides the earliest contribution to the gallery of significant architectural styles represented on King's College Circle, which range from the predominantly Norman Romanesque Revival at University College through Neo-Classicism and Beaux-Arts, to Modernism and which, together, represent the historical and institutional development of the University of Toronto.

The subject property provides a significant visual presence on the St. George Campus and terminates the northern view along King's College Road. Given its prominent location and remarkable architectural detailing, the building is one of the most recognized structures in Toronto. Additionally, University College is frequently identified as both a local and national landmark in early written accounts and illustrations of Toronto. As such, University College is valued as a physical and cultural landmark on the St. George Campus, within the city of Toronto, and beyond.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as being an early example of Progressive Eclecticism with predominantly Norman Romanesque Revival styling and outstanding artistic merit and craftsmanship:

Exterior:

- The pavilion form of the complex enclosing a quadrangle through its original U-shaped floor plan and subsequent addition of a north wing in 1964
- The enclosed quadrangle with terraced landscaping that unifies the constituent wings of the complex
- The balanced asymmetry of the complex, and the varied elevations and irregular massing that correspond to the distinct programmatic elements of the original composition, reflecting the self-contained nature of collegiate architecture in the mid-19th century
- The plan and program of the centre block, which contains the grouping of the most prominent spaces, notably the main entrance hall, and the original museum and library spaces
- A hierarchy of multiple points of entry, including a prominent entrance tower and elaborately carved tympanum and portico to mark the principal entrance on the south elevation, a cloister-like secondary entrance on the south elevation with stone colonnaded walkway known as the chemistry department entrance and located directly east of the Croft Chapter House, and a prominent secondary entrance on the east elevation
- The use of Norman Romanesque forms and features (including the Croft Chapter House roundhouse, and the splayed main entrance portico on the south elevation) and the Modernist interpretation of Norman Romanesque at the 1964 Laidlaw (north) Wing, which have all been synthesized into a unified composition
- The stone and brick construction, and the rough surface texture and rugged treatment of the masonry on the south, west, and east elevations that is characteristic of the Romanesque Revival style
- The sculptural ornament and patterning on the building exterior, which includes Norman Romanesque motifs, grotesques, and Canadian flora and fauna, and their integration within the wall surfaces
- The tiers of deep-set, round-headed door and window openings, in a range of sizes, many grouped in pairs or triplets, and ornamented with colonnettes and carved elements
- The polychromatic slate roof, punctuated by chimneys, towers, and turrets, and crowned with iron cresting
- The wooden cloister fronting the quadrangle along the east elevation of the west wing and the brick and masonry colonnade on the south elevation of the 1964 Laidlaw Wing

Interior:

- The expression of the historic pedagogical and ceremonial functions of University College as exemplified by the principal interior spaces, including the first-floor entrance hall and atrium,

the East Hall, the West Hall, the Junior Students' Common Room, and the circular volume of the Croft Chapter House

- The material palette of the interior, which includes buff brick, stone, and unpainted woodwork, and the introduction of colour through the use of stained-glass windows and encaustic floor tiles
- The grand, stone double staircase within the main (south) entrance hall
- The carved stone fireplace surrounds
- The embellished masonry components and stone carvings incorporating grotesques, Canadian flora and fauna, and other decorative elements
- The decorative ironwork used for both structural and ornamental purposes
- The stained-glass windows, executed in a variety of designs and patterns
- The millwork and wood carving, including:
 - The ornamental treatment of the exposed wooden structural members of the interior and the decorative wood carvings and millwork arranged in a hierarchy of species and ornamentation to denote primary and secondary common spaces
 - The wooden spiral staircase in the southeast tower of the east wing
 - The carved newel post depicting a dragon at the ground floor of the east wing stairwell

Historical and Associative Value

Exterior:

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of University College as being directly associated with the establishment of non-denominational educational institutions in Canada and the broader Commonwealth:

- The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada plaque designating University College as a National Historic Site (1968), which is located directly west of the main entrance on the south elevation
- The sculptural heraldry, including the carved stone University College and University of Toronto coats-of-arms located above the main (south) entrance, the college coat-of-arms above the reading room entrance on the south elevation of the centre block and above the main (east) entrance to the 1964 Laidlaw Wing

Interior:

Attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as being demonstrative of the work of Maw and Co. and Robert McCausland Ltd:

- The multi-coloured, intricately patterned encaustic tile floor in the centre block entrance and atrium by tile manufacturer, Maw and Co.
- The stained-glass windows by stained-glass artists, Joseph and Robert McCausland:
- The stained-glass window in the west stairwell, which was produced by Joseph McCausland in 1858 and is the only stained-glass window to have survived the 1890 fire
- The memorial stained-glass window on the east elevation of the east hall, produced by Robert McCausland in 1909

Contextual Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the subject property as defining, supporting and maintaining the character of the King's College Circle; as being visually and historically linked to its surroundings; and, as being a landmark:

- The central location of the University College complex within the St. George Campus, situated on a prominent and elevated site at the top (north end) of King's College Circle
- The placement and orientation of University College relative to the other architecturally significant heritage buildings surrounding King's College Circle, which together create a gallery of architectural styles representing the institutional growth and ongoing evolution of the University of Toronto
- The axial view of University College from King's College Road at College Street, the principal gateway to the St. George Campus

SCHEDULE B
LEGAL DESCRIPTION

PART OF PIN 21198-0050 (LT)

PART OF PARK LOT 13 CONCESSION 1, FROM THE BAY, GEOGRAPHIC TOWNSHIP
OF YORK

City of Toronto and Province of Ontario

Land Titles Division of the Toronto Registry Office (No. 66)