

625 Yonge Street - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Date: July 14, 2022

To: Toronto Preservation Board

From: Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning

Wards: Toronto Centre - Ward 13

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 625 Yonge Street (including active entrances at 621, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, and 637 Yonge Street, and 1, 3, and 5 Isabella Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value.

The property at 625 Yonge Street comprises two adjoining buildings with respective entrance addresses of 625-629 Yonge Street and 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street. City Council included the subject property on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register in 2016. It is also a contributing property within the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District (HCD), which was enacted by City Council in 2016 and is currently under appeal.

Architecturally and historically interrelated, the two buildings at 625 Yonge Street constitute a representative example of Edwardian Classicist-style commercial main street buildings. Part of Yonge Street's historic commercial streetscape since the early 20th century, the property maintained a long association with the automotive industry, beginning with its original use for Thomas Crow's carriage business. It then housed the Dominion Automobile Company's showroom, the second store location of Canadian Tire, and other automobile companies. From the late 1970s through the late 1990s, the property housed a series of clubs that served the LGBTQ2S+ community, notably including the Domino Club and Komrads.

Staff have completed the Research and Evaluation Report for the property at 625 Yonge Street and determined that the property meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, on the basis of its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. As such, the property is a significant built heritage resource.

In November 2021, the City received an application for an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment to facilitate the redevelopment of the site for a 57-storey mixed-use

building. The proposed development would include the demolition of the subject property at 625 Yonge Street.

In June 2019, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108) received Royal Assent. Schedule 11 of this Act included amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act. The Bill 108 Amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act came into force on July 1, 2021, which included a shift in Part IV designations related to certain Planning Act applications. Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act now restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days after the City Clerk gives notice of a complete application.

The City Clerk issued a complete application notice for the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment on December 14, 2021. The property owner provided a waiver with a deadline of September 30, 2022 to extend the 90-day timeline so that this Notice of Intention to Designate report must be considered by City Council before that date.

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is required for all development applications that affect listed and designated properties and will be considered when determining how a heritage property is to be conserved. An HIA for 619-637 Yonge Street and 7-9 Isabella Street, including the subject property at 625 Yonge Street, was prepared by Archaeological Research Associates Ltd. and submitted to the City in November 2021.

Designation also enables City Council to review proposed alterations or demolitions to the property and enforce heritage property standards and maintenance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 625 Yonge Street (including active entrances at 621, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, and 637 Yonge Street, and 1, 3, and 5 Isabella Street) under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance: 625 Yonge Street (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 3 to the report (July 14, 2022) from the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning.
2. If there are no objections to the designation, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in Council designating the properties under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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

DECISION HISTORY

On March 10, 2016, City Council adopted item TE14.4: Designation of the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. The property at 625 Yonge Street was identified as a contributing property within the Historic Yonge Street HCD. The HCD is currently under appeal. As part of this decision, City Council included the property at 625 Yonge Street (including 625, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, 637 Yonge Street and 1, 3, 5 Isabella Street) on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.TE14.4>

On February 16, 2022, Toronto and East York Community Council (TEYCC) adopted item TE31.49, a preliminary report on an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment Application for the properties at 619-637 Yonge Street and 1-9 Isabella Street. As part of this decision, TEYCC directed that a working group be created with local community associations and "other local 2SLGBTQ+ community stakeholders and the Ward Councillor as part of the Development Application review process to preserve culturally significant commercial and community space."

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2022/te/bgrrd/backgroundfile-198830.pdf>

BACKGROUND

Heritage Planning Framework

The conservation of cultural heritage resources is an integral component of good planning, contributing to a sense of place, economic prosperity, and healthy and equitable communities. Heritage conservation in Ontario is identified as a provincial interest under the Planning Act. Cultural heritage resources are considered irreplaceable and valuable assets that must be wisely protected and managed as part of planning for future growth under the Provincial Policy Statement (2020) and A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020). Heritage Conservation is enabled through the Ontario Heritage Act. The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime, the Planning Act, the Ontario Heritage Act and provides policies to guide decision making within the city.

Good planning within the provincial and municipal policy framework has at its foundation an understanding and appreciation for places of historic significance, and ensures the conservation of these resources are to be balanced with other provincial interests. Heritage resources may include buildings, structures, monuments, and geographic areas that have cultural heritage value or interest to a community, including an Indigenous community.

The Planning Act establishes the foundation for land use planning in Ontario, describing how land can be controlled and by whom. Section 2 of the Planning Act identifies heritage conservation as a matter of provincial interest and directs that municipalities shall have regard to the conservation of features of significant architectural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest. Heritage conservation contributes to other matters

of provincial interest, including the promotion of built form that is well-designed, and that encourages a sense of place.

The Planning Act requires that all decisions affecting land use planning matters shall conform to the Growth Plan and shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, both of which position heritage as a key component in supporting key provincial principles and interests.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>

The Provincial Policy Statement provides policy direction on land use planning in Ontario and is to be used by municipalities in the development of their official plans and to guide and inform decisions on planning matters, which shall be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement. The Provincial Policy Statement articulates how and why heritage conservation is a component of good planning, explicitly requiring the conservation of cultural heritage and archaeological resources, alongside the pursuit of other provincial interests. The Provincial Policy Statement does so by linking heritage conservation to key policy directives, including building strong healthy communities, the wise use and management of resources, and protecting health and safety.

Section 1.1 Managing and Directing Land Use to Achieve Efficient and Resilient Development states that long-term economic prosperity is supported by, among other considerations, the promotion of well-designed built form and cultural planning, and the conservation of features that help define character. Section 2.6 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology subsequently directs that "significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved". Through the definition of conserved, built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscape and protected heritage property, the Provincial Policy Statement identifies the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage conservation will be implemented.

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/provincial-policy-statement-2020>

A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (2020) builds on the Provincial Policy Statement to establish a land use planning framework that supports complete communities, a thriving economy, a clean and healthy environment and social equity. Section 1.2.1 Guiding Principles states that policies in the plan seek to, among other principles, "conserve and promote cultural heritage resources to support the social, economic, and cultural well-being of all communities, including First Nations and Metis communities". Cultural heritage resources are understood as being irreplaceable, and are significant features that provide people with a sense of place. Section 4.2.7 Cultural Heritage Resources directs that cultural heritage resources will be conserved in order to foster a sense of place and benefit communities, particularly in strategic growth areas.

<https://www.ontario.ca/document/place-grow-growth-plan-greater-golden-horseshoe>

The Ontario Heritage Act is the key provincial legislation for the conservation of cultural heritage resources in Ontario. It regulates, among other things, how municipal councils can identify and protect heritage resources, including archaeology, within municipal boundaries. This is largely achieved through listing on the City's Heritage Register, designation of individual properties under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, or designation of districts under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act gives municipalities the authority to maintain and add to a publicly accessible heritage register. The City of Toronto's Heritage Register includes individual heritage properties that have been designated under Part IV, Section 29, properties in a heritage conservation district designated under Part V, Section 41 of the Act as well as properties that have not been designated but City Council believes to be of "cultural heritage value or interest."

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o18>

Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The criteria are based on an evaluation of design/physical value, historical and associative value and contextual value. A property may be designated under section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

The Ontario Heritage Toolkit provides guidance on designating properties of municipal significance, including direction on the purpose of designating heritage properties and information about how the Provincial Policy Statement and the Ontario Heritage Act provide a framework for the conservation of heritage properties within the land use planning system. In June 2019, the More Homes, More Choice Act, 2019 (Bill 108) received Royal Assent. Schedule 11 of this Act included amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA). The Bill 108 Amendments to the OHA came into force on July 1, 2021, which included, amongst other matters, amendments to the listing and designation processes. Guidance from the Province related to the implementation of Bill 108 Amendments is forthcoming.

[Ontario Heritage Tool Kit \(gov.on.ca\)](https://www.ontario.ca/gov/ontario-heritage-toolkit)

The City of Toronto's Official Plan contains a number of policies related to properties on the City's Heritage Register and properties adjacent to them, as well as the protection of areas of archaeological potential. Indicating the integral role that heritage conservation plays in successful city-building, Section 3.1.5 of the Official Plan states that, "Cultural heritage is an important component of sustainable development and place making. The preservation of our cultural heritage is essential to the character of this urban and liveable City that can contribute to other social, cultural, economic and environmental goals of the City."

Policy 3.1.5.4 states that heritage resources on the City's Heritage Register "will be conserved and maintained consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, as revised from time to time and adopted by Council."

Policy 3.1.5.6 encourages the adaptive re-use of heritage properties while Policy 3.1.5.26 states that, when new construction on, or adjacent to, a property on the Heritage Register does occur, it will be designed to conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of that property and will mitigate visual and physical impacts on it.

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>

COMMENTS

In November 2021, the City received an application for an Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment to facilitate the redevelopment of the site for a 57-storey mixed-use building. The proposed development would include the demolition of the subject property at 625 Yonge Street.

The site for the application also includes the property at 619 Yonge Street, which is also included on the Heritage Register and has been identified as a contributing property within the Historic Yonge Street HCD. However, while the property at 619 Yonge Street is consistent with Yonge Street's historic commercial streetscape and is of historical interest for its associations with the early automotive industry, staff have concluded that the property has insufficient design/physical value, historical/associative value, or contextual value to merit individual designation under Part IV Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

City Council included the subject property at 625 Yonge Street on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register in 2016. It is also a contributing property within the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District (HCD), which was enacted by City Council in 2016 and is currently under appeal.

The subject property was nominated by a community member in May 2022 for designation under Part IV of the OHA.

625 Yonge Street

Research and Evaluation according to Ontario Regulation 9/06

While the research and evaluation of the property referenced above is, in staff's determination, sufficient to support the designation of the property at 625 Yonge Street, it should be noted that access to the City of Toronto Archives and the ArQuives remained restricted during the preparation of this report due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. New and additional relevant information on the subject property, further expanding on its heritage value, may be forthcoming following public access to these archival records and may provide further information to be incorporated in the final version of a Part IV designation by-law.



Figure 1: 625 Yonge Street, 2022 (Heritage Planning).

1. DESCRIPTION

625 Yonge Street	
ADDRESS	625 Yonge Street (including active entrances at 621, 627, 629, 631, 633, 635, and 637 Yonge Street, and 1, 3, and 5 Isabella Street)
WARD	Toronto Centre - Ward 13
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	PLAN D35 PT LOTS A & B
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Historic Yonge Street
HISTORICAL NAME	N/A
CONSTRUCTION DATE	c.1905-1907 (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street); c.1913-1921 (625-629 Yonge Street)
ORIGINAL OWNER	Thomas A. Crow; Dominion Automobile Company
ORIGINAL USE	Carriage manufacturer; automobile manufacturer and showroom
CURRENT USE	Vacant
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	James Wilson Gray (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street); Chapman & McGiffin and Chadwick (625-629 Yonge Street)
DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION/MATERIALS	Brick
ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	Edwardian Classicism

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	Original windows replaced; original ground-level storefronts replaced; exterior brick painted white
CRITERIA	Design/physical, historical/associative, contextual
HERITAGE STATUS	Included on the Heritage Register
RECORDER	Heritage Planning: Tatum Taylor Chaubal
REPORT DATE	July 2022

2. BACKGROUND

This research and evaluation section of the report describes the history, architecture, and context of the property at 625 Yonge Street, and applies evaluation criteria as set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06 under the headings of historical/associative, design/physical, and contextual value to determine whether they merit designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest. The application of the criteria is found in Section 3 (Evaluation Checklist). The results of the research and evaluation are found in the Conclusion of the report. Maps and Photographs are located in Attachment 1. The archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Attachment 2. The Statement of Significance is contained in Attachment 3.

i. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

Key Date	Historical Event
	The area now known as the City of Toronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit (1805), and the Williams Treaties (1923) signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.
1793	John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, established the Town of York as Upper Canada's capital.
1904	Plans for a factory building for Thomas A. Crow by architect J. Wilson Gray, at the location of 631-637 Yonge Street and 1-5 Isabella Street, are dated to November 1904.
1908	T.A. Crow was identified in the municipal directory for 1908 at 627-629 Yonge Street, suggesting an approximate construction date for 631-637 Yonge Street and 1-5 Isabella Street of c.1905-1907.
1912	Plans for a new garage for T.A. Crow & Co. by a draughtsman at Chapman & McGiffin, at the location of 625-629 Yonge Street, are dated to 1912. The plans are similar to the design of the extant building at 625-629 Yonge Street, but show two storeys rather than three.

1921	The Dominion Automobile Company service plant and showroom opened at the subject property, occupying both 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street and 625-629 Yonge Street.
1931	The Canadian Tire Corporation opened their second store location at the subject property, directly across the street from their first store location.
1937	Century Motor Sales Ltd. took over the subject property and remained through the early 1950s.
1970s	The property housed discos including Mrs. Nights and Cheetah Club.
c.1980	The property became home to the influential Domino Klub.
1985	Komrads, an important nightclub and gathering space for the LGBTQ2S+ community, opened at the subject property. It closed in 1991.

ii. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the properties, which are the basis for determining "Historical and Associative Value" according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The subject property consists of two adjoining buildings that are related historically and architecturally: a northern building at 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street, and a southern building at 625-629 Yonge Street. Together, they are known municipally as 625 Yonge Street.

While most of Yonge Street south of Davenport Road and the surrounding area had been built up with brick residential and mixed-use/commercial buildings by the end of the 1880s, the 1903 Goad's Atlas shows that the corner site of the subject property remained undeveloped. Blueprints depicting the northern portion of the subject property, the three-storey building at 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street, are dated to November 1904. These drawings were prepared by J. Wilson Gray for Thomas Crow. Gray was an architect from Scotland who worked in Toronto from 1885 to 1922. He designed a number of notable residential, commercial, and institutional works, such as St. Andrew's College in Rosedale and Winnipeg's Confederation Life Building.

Thomas Alexander Crow, a blacksmith, had joined his father's business building wagons and carriages. Previously located in Leslieville, the company moved to Yonge and Isabella streets in 1880. Crow's address was listed in the municipal directory as 619 Yonge Street in the 1890s through 1907, and was identified in the 1908 directory as 627-629 Yonge Street. The latter address appears to refer to the existing building at 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street, suggesting the building's approximate construction date between 1905 and 1907.

In 1902, *The Globe* identified Crow as a "well-known carriage manufacturer," whose vehicles for well-to-do members of Toronto society constituted a "noticeable carriage exhibit" at the Canadian National Exhibition. Gray's plans indicate how Crow used his building: they illustrate a show room, a shoeing forge room, and a carriage blacksmith shop on the ground storey, a show room and wood shop on the second storey, and a

store room and print shop above. Beginning with the 1914 municipal directory, "Crow & Murray, horse dealers" were also listed at this location. Both Crow's blacksmithing business and his horse breeding business, Crow & Murray, remained at this location through the 1920 directory. His obituary in 1956 recalled that, "In addition to showing horses at the CNE with a record of classes won not exceeded by anyone, Mr. Crow and his partner James Murray, competed at nearly all the larger horse shows in North America."

The 1913 Goad's Atlas indicates that the future location of 625-629 Yonge Street – the lot immediately south of the corner building – was not yet developed. Available at City of Toronto Building Records, plans dated to 1912 illustrate a "new garage for T.A. Crow and Co., 625 Yonge Street." An included block plan shows the intended site of the new garage immediately south of 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street, at the current location of 625-629 Yonge Street. The plans are signed by an architect with an illegible name located at 295 Dupont Street, who based on the 1913 municipal directory appears to be Ernest R. Crown, a draughtsman at Chapman & McGiffin. Alfred H. Chapman and Robert B. McGiffin founded their architectural partnership in Toronto in 1907, and practiced together until Chapman left in 1919 to form Chapman & Oxley. Chapman & McGiffin designed a number of residential, institutional, and commercial works, notably including the Toronto Harbour Commissioners Building and Knox College.

Notably, the 1912 plans by Crown of Chapman & McGiffin show a design that is distinctly similar to the existing building's most recognizable features: a three-bay composition with brick pilasters on either end of the main elevation, banding below the roofline and a stepped brick parapet with stone coping. However, while the drawing shows a one-storey building with an entrance at the southern bay and plate glass at the others, the extant building is three storeys tall. It is unclear why this infill building was constructed at a larger height than originally designed, instead matching the scale of the adjoining building. These plans and the 1913 Goad's Atlas suggest that the building at 625-629 was constructed for Thomas A. Crow at some point after 1913.

Nevertheless, the first documentation of the building that is currently available dates from 26 February 1921, when *The Globe* announced the opening of the Dominion Automobile Company service plant and showroom. The announcement shows the full corner property, including both buildings at 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street, and at 625-629 Yonge Street, as housing Dominion Automobile. *The Globe* identified the architect for the "show salon," designed "after the latest Parisian style," as Chadwick, which may refer to architects and brothers Colonel William Craven Vaux Chadwick and/or Bryan Damer Seymour Chadwick. This reference appears to relate to the showroom at the building's interior; it does not explicitly identify Chadwick as the architect of the full building, which as mentioned appears to have originated with plans by Ernest R. Crown of Chapman & McGiffin.

Previously located at Bay and Temperance streets, Dominion Automobile was incorporated in 1905 and quickly became known for its motor car exhibitions in the early days of Canada's automotive industry. According to *The Globe* upon Dominion Automobile's relocation to 625 Yonge Street, "The new plant is by far the largest on the Yonge Street automobile row." Later that year, on August 27, 1921, *The Globe* advertised an exhibition at Dominion Automobile's new location: "The new premises of

the Dominion Automobile Company, Limited, local distributors of Hudson, Essex and Peerless automobiles, located at 625 to 629 Yonge street, at the corner of Isabella, is well worth a visit, whether you are an automobile owner or not." The newspaper's exhibition notice describes that the salesroom and accessories department were on the first floor, and the repair and service departments were on the two upper floors, with a gasoline and oil service station on the Isabella Street side of the property. The Dominion Automobile continued to occupy the subject property through the 1930 directory.

By c.1931, the property had been taken over by Canadian Tire. Established in 1922 when brothers J.W. and A.J. Billes purchased the Hamilton Tire and Garage Ltd. in Toronto, the Canadian Tire Corporation opened its first new store at the northeast corner of Yonge and Isabella streets in 1924. The company expanded to open its second location immediately across the street, at the subject property. Canadian Tire primarily repaired and distributed tires and other auto parts at this location and remained through the 1936 municipal directory. Today, Canadian Tire is a significant Canadian business and it continues to have a corporate presence on Yonge Street at its store location at 839 Yonge Street near Davenport Road. Canadian Tire is celebrating its centenary in 2022.

Following Canadian Tire, the property was occupied by Hudson Motors of Canada Ltd. and Century Motor Sales Ltd., the latter remaining until the early 1950s. From construction until this point, the property maintained its association with the automotive industry, including its original use for Thomas Crow's carriage business, reflecting the industry's origins. While Bay Street south of Bloor was better known as Toronto's "Automobile Row" during this period, Yonge Street also had a stretch of automotive businesses, and the subject property contributed to this context. In the mid-/late 1950s and 1960s, the subject property's occupants diversified and expanded to include distributing, printing and lithographing, and furniture companies.

In the meantime, the mid-century years of the 1960s saw a rising concentration of spaces for LGBTQ2S+ people along Yonge Street. Establishments such as the St. Charles Tavern and the Parkside Tavern gave queer people space to meet, mingle, and host events with dancing and drag at a time when homosexual activity was still criminalized. However, the establishments also created a setting for the stigmatization of the queer community, including abuse from derisive bar proprietors, and spying and raids by police. Yonge Street in the 1960s and 1970s had gained a reputation as Toronto's red-light district or "Sin Strip," where the sex industry catered particularly to heterosexual men. In 1977, the murder of Emanuel Jaques, a 12-year-old Yonge Street shoeshine boy, by four men was sensationalized in the media as a "homosexual murder," and prompted the City to take action to clean up and restore a sense of supposed morality to the strip. These efforts produced an immediate backlash against LGBTQ2S+ people. The police focused heightened attention on the community, most notably by raiding the offices of the *Body Politic*, a counterculture newspaper for queer Torontonians, in December 1977. Another key turning point occurred four years later, in 1981, when police raided four gay bathhouses in downtown Toronto, the culmination of decades of tension between police and the queer community. The following day over 3,000 people participated in a protest against police brutality and homophobia. These events fueled the movement for civil rights for LGBTQ2S+ people in Toronto.

The area surrounding the intersections of Church and Wellesley streets began to emerge in the mid-1970s as a queer enclave. In 1976, a year after the City purchased the building north of Church and Wellesley streets that would become the 519 Church Street Community Centre, the 519's Board of Directors approved a request for Huntley Youth Services to hold weekly meetings there for gay youth. This group was the first of many to use the 519 as a gathering place. Queer activists and organizations such as the Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) recognized Church and Wellesley as an LGBTQ2S+ neighbourhood by the late 1970s, and worked to establish safe spaces for queer people, including alternatives to bars and bathhouses.

Fallout from the Jaques murder, the *Body Politic* raid, and the bathhouse raids hastened the shift from Yonge Street to Church Street as the centre of LGBTQ2S+ life and placemaking. Queer bars and businesses opened along Church Street during the 1980s. A set of steps to the entry of a coffee shop on the southwest corner of Church and Wellesley streets, known in the community as "The Steps," became a central gathering place from 1984 to 2004. By 1984, Toronto's Pride events, which had taken place in various public spaces since 1972, had moved to the Church and Wellesley Village.

Against this backdrop of the LGBTQ2S+ community's shift from Yonge Street to the Village, the subject property – located on Yonge, but on the east side and near the heart of the Village – served for an important period of time as a queer meeting place. While it continued to house retail tenants as well, the property became the location of a series of queer gathering spaces and nightclubs, accessed from Isabella Street. According to community historian Denise Benson, "The upper level at 1 Isabella was a known hub. In the 1970s, it had housed discos including Mrs. Nights and Cheetah Club. Come the early '80s, it was the original home of influential alternative spot Domino Klub."¹ The Domino Klub began as a restaurant and disco club, but it soon became "host to new sounds and scenes, with an emphasis on dancing."² Benson recalls,

"Domino was Toronto's original post-punk and new-wave dance club... Not only did its dining room attract a crowd looking for cheap, decent food, it also provided a quieter space for people to talk, and friendships to develop. Further down the hallway was the large main room, ideal for dancers and voyeurs alike. The sizable dancefloor—much of it stainless steel—was slightly sunken, overlooked by a long bar and a variety of seated and standing areas."³

The Domino Klub was followed by "gay-and-straight dance club Oz, which boasted entrance hallways designed to look like yellow brick roads." In 1985, Oz was replaced by Komrads, which featured "not only state-of-the-art sound, but also the largest dancefloor of any Toronto gay club at the time."⁴ As Toronto's LGBTQ2S+ community continued to organize and advocate for their civil rights in the 1980s, Komrads was an

¹ Denise Benson, "Then & Now: Komrads," Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History, 25 Sept. 2014 (<http://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/09/then-now-komrads/#more-1015>).

² Denise Benson, "Then & Now: Domino Klub," Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History, 21 Nov. 2014 (<http://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/11/then-now-domino-klub/>).

³ Benson, "Then & Now: Domino Klub."

⁴ Benson, "Then & Now: Komrads."

important locus for gathering and celebration: "The dancefloor served as rallying point as much as it did a place to party. For a number of years, Komrads set the pace with its size and unequivocally gay programming."⁵ Following the closure of Komrads in 1991, a club called Bar 1 opened in this location, followed by other nightlife establishments including Generations, Radius, and Spin Cats.

At the same time, from the 1970s through the present, the property also housed restaurants, retail stores, an arcade, studios for dance, photography, and fitness, and an art school. Its last confirmed LGBTQ2S+ establishment appears to have left in the late 1990s. The property currently houses a restaurant, a fitness club, and retail businesses.

iii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The following section provides an architectural description and analysis related to the property, which will establish the basis for determining "Design and Physical Value" according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The subject property at 625 Yonge Street consists of two adjoining buildings that constitute a representative example of Edwardian Classicist-style commercial main street buildings. Located on the southeast corner of Yonge Street and Isabella Street, the buildings are three storeys with a flat roof. Although the northern building predates the southern, they share their brick construction and the datum lines of their common floor levels and banding details, and read as an integrated whole.

The northern building (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street) is oriented towards Yonge Street, with street frontages on both Yonge and Isabella streets. The west and north elevations can be viewed together from the intersection. The corner bay projects slightly on both elevations, emphasizing the building's siting at the intersection. Plans and archival photographs show that both corner bays featured quoins at the third storey and exaggerated voussoir details above round-arched window openings. These Edwardian architectural features appeared in stone with a colour that contrasted the originally red brick; though now whitewashed, these features remain extant. Additional details include segmentally arched lintels at the third storey, and stone banding above the second and third storeys, with the latter giving the appearance of a simple cornice.

To the south, the adjoining building (625-629 Yonge Street) addresses Yonge Street. The primary elevation has a symmetrical composition divided into three bays by four brick pilasters. Each bay has a large window opening at both the second and third storey. At the third storey, the window sills continue the line formed by the stone band on the building to the north. Banding below the roofline similarly continues the line of banding on the adjoining building. Above is a brick parapet with a curving, stepped design.

Over time, the buildings have undergone shared alterations: the brick exteriors have been painted, and ground-level storefronts have been modified on both the Yonge and

⁵ Benson, "Then & Now: Komrads."

Isabella street elevations. Although the windows have been replaced, archival photographs confirm that the buildings retain their original fenestration patterns.

iv. CONTEXT

The following section provides contextual information and analysis related to the property which is the basis for determining 'Contextual Value' according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The subject property is located within a historic commercial main street along Yonge Street. It is a contributing property within the Historic Yonge Street HCD, which was enacted by City Council in 2016 and is currently under appeal. Identified within the Historic Yonge Street Character Area of the HCD, the property forms part of the low-scale continuous streetwall condition along this portion of Yonge Street. With the delineated bays along its front elevation, the property is consistent with the rhythm produced by fine-grained storefronts along the streetscape. The buildings' Edwardian style is one of several architectural styles that predominate in the area.

In addition, the property is located one block west of the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood (also known as The Village). For over four decades, Church and Wellesley has been the geographical heart of Toronto's LGBTQ2S+ community, with a concentration of queer community spaces, clubs, bars, restaurants. From the late 1970s through the late 1990s, 625 Yonge Street was the location of a number of queer bars and clubs. The property's location reflected the prevalence of LGBTQ2S+ establishments along Yonge Street and retained a connection to the community after it shifted eastward to the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood.

3. EVALUATION AND APPLICATION OF O.REG 9/06 CRITERIA

The following evaluation applies Ontario Regulation 9/06 made under the Ontario Heritage Act: Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. The criteria are prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, and the City of Toronto also uses these criteria when assessing properties for inclusion on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register. There are three categories for a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets one or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

The evaluation table is marked "N/A" if the criterion is "not applicable" to the property or "✓" if it is applicable to the property, with explanatory text below.

DESIGN OR PHYSICAL VALUE

Design or Physical Value	
i. rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	✓
ii. displays high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	N/A
iii. demonstrates high degree of scientific or technical achievement	N/A

Rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method

The property consists of two adjoining buildings that constitute a representative example of Edwardian Classicist-style commercial main street buildings. Although the northern building predates the southern, they share their brick construction and the datum lines of their common floor levels and banding details, and read as an integrated whole. Designed by J. Wilson Gray, the northern building (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street) retains quoins and exaggerated voussoir details above round-arched window openings on the upper storey of each elevation's corner bay. Both elevations also feature segmentally arched lintels at the third storey, and stone banding above the second and third storeys, with the latter giving the appearance of a simple cornice. The southern building (625-629 Yonge Street), likely designed by Chapman & McGiffin, has a symmetrical composition divided by brick pilasters, large window openings at both the second and third storey, stone sills and banding that continue the lines of the northern building, and a brick parapet with a curving, stepped design. Despite the removal of the original windows, both buildings' original fenestration patterns remain intact.

HISTORICAL OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE

Historical or Associative Value	
i. direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	✓
ii. yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	✓
iii. demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community	N/A

Direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community

The property is directly associated with the theme of early-twentieth-century commercial development along Yonge Street. Specifically, from construction in c.1905-1907 (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street) and c.1913-1921 (625-629 Yonge Street) until the early 1950s, the property maintained its association with the automotive industry. This significant association included the property's original use for Thomas Crow's carriage business, representing the automotive industry's origins. The property continued to reflect the industry's evolution as it housed the Dominion Automobile Company's showroom, the second location of Canadian Tire, and other automobile companies.

Additionally, the property holds associations with a series of clubs that served the LGBTQ2S+ community, notably including the Domino Club and Komrads in the 1980s.

Yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture

As a longstanding venue that reflected the prevalence of LGBTQ2S+ establishments along Yonge Street and remained connected to the community after it shifted eastward

to the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood, the building has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of Toronto's LGBTQ2S+ history.

CONTEXTUAL VALUE

Contextual Value	
i. important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area	✓
ii. physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings	✓
iii. landmark	N/A

Important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area

The property is important in maintaining and supporting the historic commercial main street along this portion of Yonge Street, which is characterized by a low-scale continuous streetwall condition. With the delineated bays along its front elevation, the property is consistent with the rhythm produced by fine-grained storefronts along the streetscape. The buildings' Edwardian style is one of several architectural styles that predominate in the area.

Physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings

As part of Yonge Street's historic commercial streetscape since the early 20th century, with connections to concentrations of automotive companies and later LGBTQ2S+ establishments, the property is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings.

CONCLUSION

Staff have completed the Research and Evaluation Report for the property at 625 Yonge Street and determined that the property meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage, on the basis of its design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual values. As such, the property is a significant built heritage resource.

The Statement of Significance (Attachment 3) for 625 Yonge Street comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Maps and Photographs
Attachment 2 – List of Research Sources
Attachment 3 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation)

MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS:
625 YONGE STREET

ATTACHMENT 1



Figure 2: Location 625 Yonge Street, indicated by the arrow. Note: This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown. North is located at the top of the map. (City of Toronto mapping.)



Figure 3: 1858 Boulton Atlas of the City of Toronto; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.

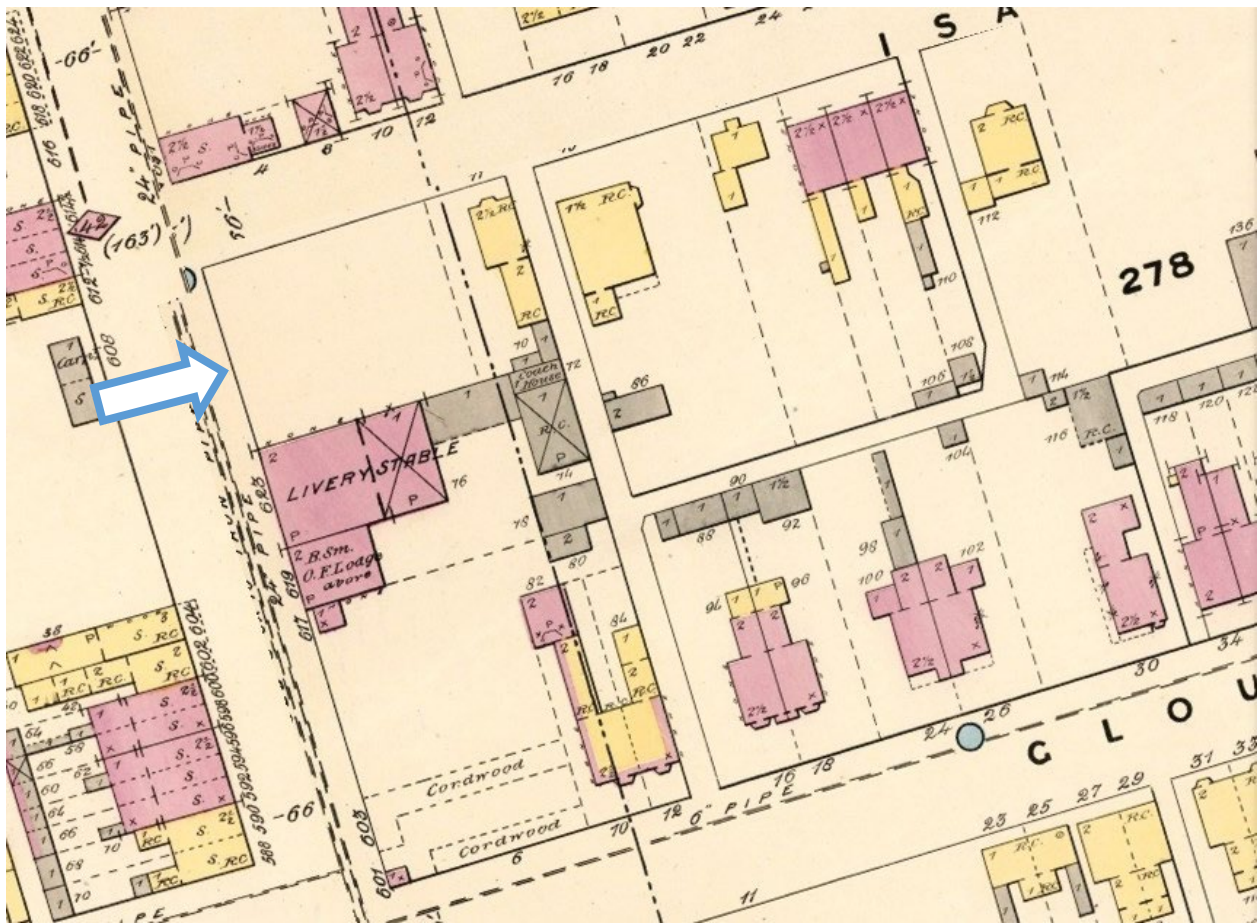


Figure 4: 1880 Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.



Figure 5: 1889 Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.



Figure 6: 1903 Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.

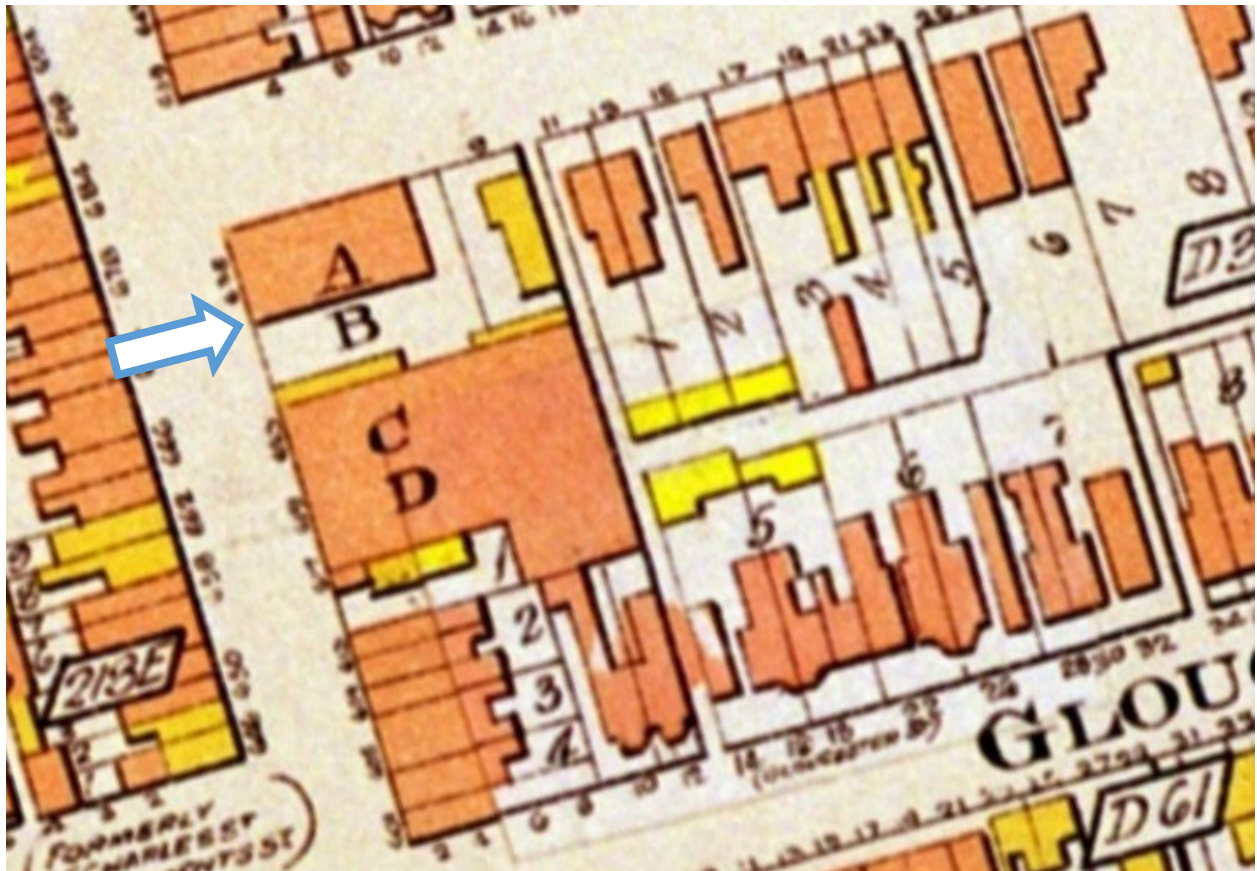


Figure 7: 1913 Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.

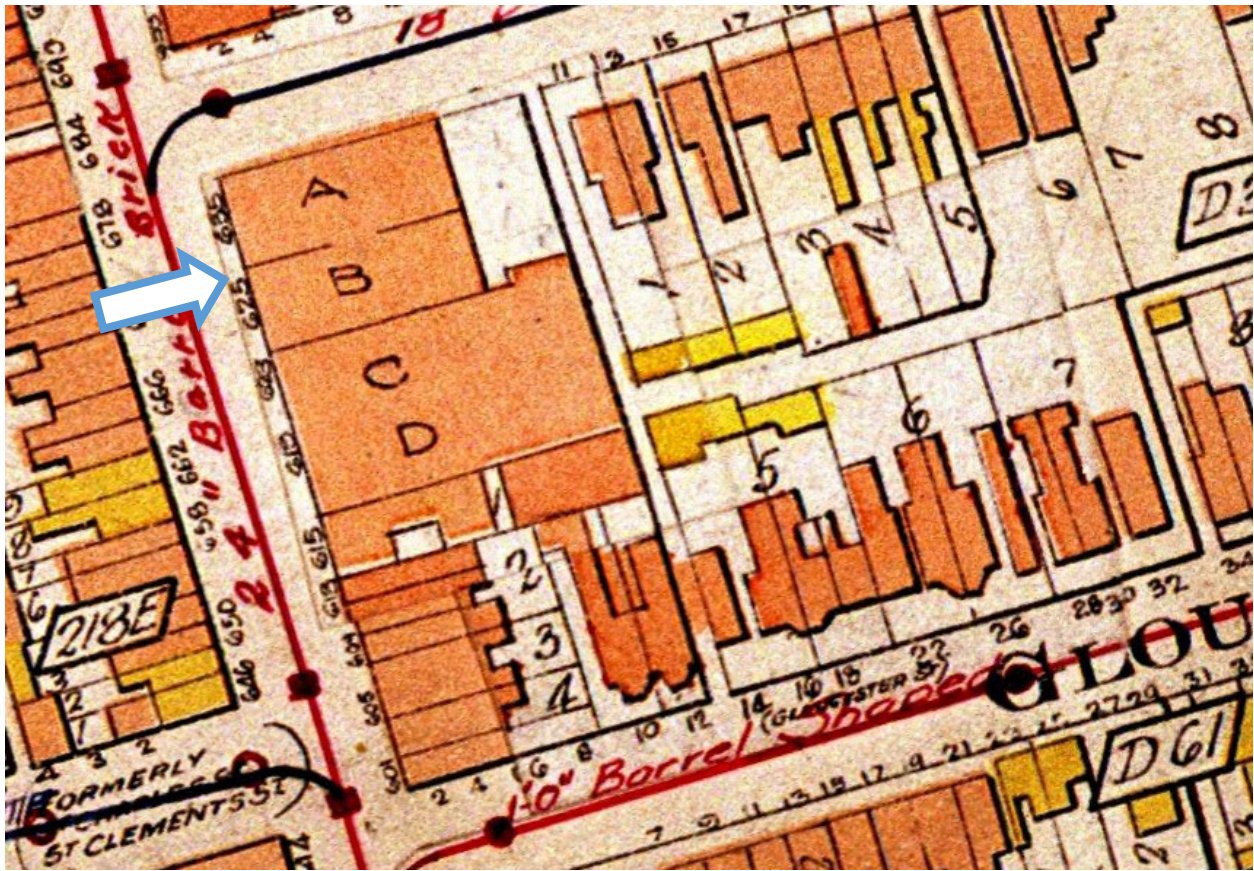


Figure 8: 1924 aerial photograph; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.



Figure 9: 1965 aerial photograph; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.



Figure 10: 1978 aerial photograph; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.

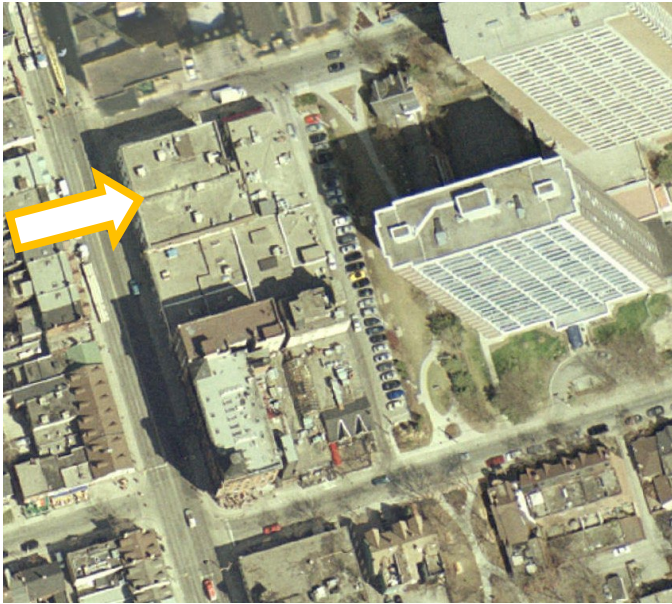


Figure 11: 2005 aerial photograph; location of 625 Yonge Street indicated by the arrow.



Figure 12: West elevation of 625 Yonge Street, facing Yonge; northern building (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street) at left, and southern building (625-629 Yonge Street) at right (Heritage Planning, 2022).



Figure 13: View of the northwest corner of 625 Yonge Street, at the intersection of Yonge Street (right) and Isabella Street (left) (Heritage Planning, 2022).



Figure 14: West elevation of 625 Yonge Street within the historic commercial streetscape of Yonge Street (Heritage Planning, 2022).



Figure 15: Detail of the west elevation of the southern building (625-629 Yonge Street), showing the brick parapet (Heritage Planning, 2022).



Figure 16: North elevation of 625 Yonge Street, viewed from Isabella Street; comparable to the historic view shown in Figure 20 (Heritage Planning, 2022).

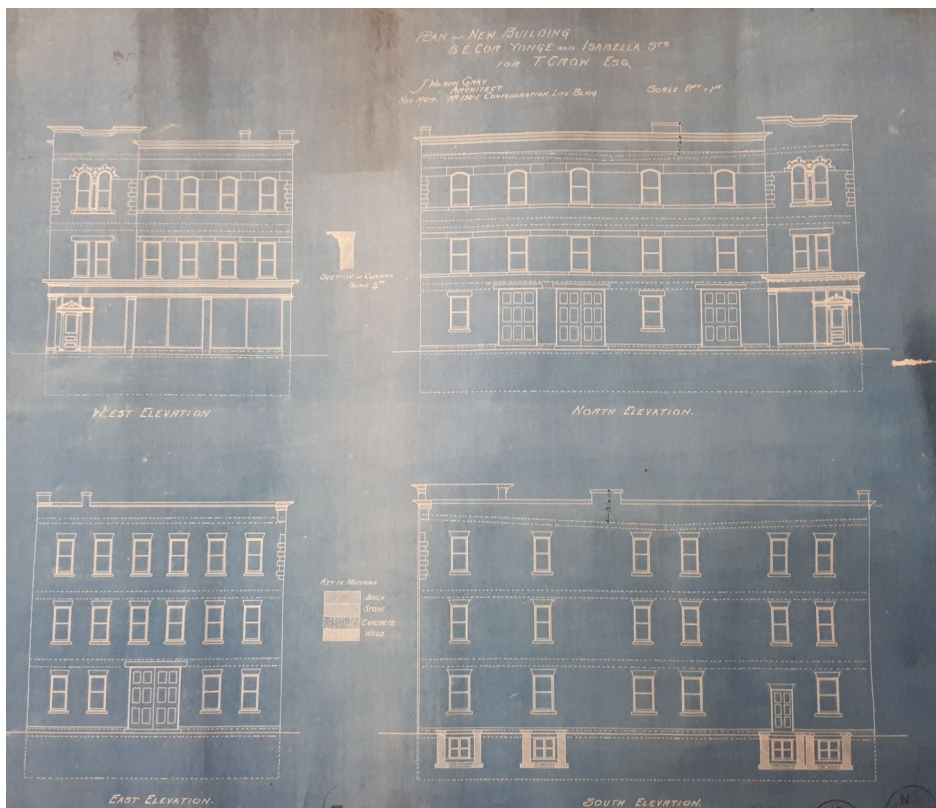
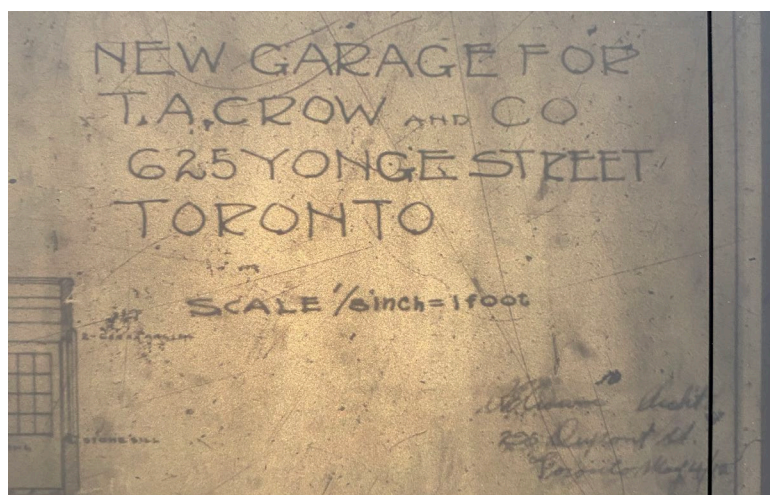


Figure 17: Blueprints for the northern building (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street), completed for Thomas Crow by J. Wilson Grey, 1905 (City of Toronto Archives).



Figures 18 and 19: Details from drawings of a new garage for Thomas Crow, dated to 1912 and signed by Ernest R. Crown; note similarity to existing southern building (625-629 Yonge Street) (City of Toronto Building Records).



City of Toronto Archives, Series 372, s0372_ss0058_it0465

Figure 20: North elevation of 625 Yonge Street, viewed from Isabella Street, May 28, 1915; comparable to the current view shown in Figure 16 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 372, Subseries 58, Item 465).



Figure 21: Opening of the Dominion Automobile Company at 625 Yonge Street, 1921 ("Dominion Automobile Company Opens Handsome New Home," *The Globe*, 26 Feb. 1921: P. 11).



Figure 22: Canadian Tire Corporation, shortly after opening at 625 Yonge Street, c.1931 (<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-tire-corporation-limited>).



Figure 23: Photograph showing the Isabella (left) and Yonge (right) street frontages of the Canadian Tire location at the subject property (Jeremy F. Hopkin Collection).



Figure 24: 1931 Road Map showing Canadian Tire location at the subject property (Jeremy F. Hopkin Collection).



City of Toronto Archives, Series 1465, File 610, Item 5
 Figure 25: 625 Yonge Street, c. between 1977 and 1985 (dating to 1990s according to community members) (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 1465, File 610, Item 5).



Figure 26: Advertisement for Domino Klub at 1 Isabella, 1980s (Image provided by Roy Paul to Then & Now, <http://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/11/then-now-domino-klub/>).



Figure 27: Dancefloor of Komrads at 1 Isabella Street, 1980s (Photograph provided by Shawn Riker to Then & Now, <http://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/09/then-now-komrads/#more-1015>).

Archival Sources

- Aerial photographs, City of Toronto mapping, 1939, 1954, 1965, 1978, 2005, 2015, 2020
- Boulton Atlas of the City of Toronto and Vicinity, 1858.
- City of Toronto Building Records, Building Permits for 625 Church Street.
- "Factory," City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 200, Series 410, File 1693.
- Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto, 1880, 1889, 1903, 1913, 1924.
- Toronto City Directories, 1850-1969 (<https://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/history-genealogy/lh-digital-city-directories.jsp>).

Secondary Sources

- Adam Wynne, "Dominion Automobile Company Showroom," TOBuilt, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (<https://www.acotoronto.ca/building.php?ID=10670>).
- "A Noticeable Carriage Exhibit," *The Globe*, 8 Sept. 1902: P. 8.
- "Canadian Tire," The Canadian Encyclopedia (<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canadian-tire-corporation-limited>).
- Catherine Jean Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray, "Recovering the Gay Village: A Comparative Historical Geography of Urban Change and Planning in Toronto and Sydney," *Historical Geography*, Volume 43, 2015 (<https://d2cu82y6eo7f22.cloudfront.net/2020/01/09214101/07HG43-Nash.pdf>).
- "Chapman, Alfred Hirschfelder," Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada (<http://www.dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1608>).
- Denise Benson, "Then & Now: Domino Klub," Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History, 21 Nov. 2014 (<http://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/11/then-now-domino-klub/>).
- Denise Benson, "Then & Now: Komrads," Then & Now: Toronto Nightlife History, 25 Sept. 2014 (<http://thenandnowtoronto.com/2014/09/then-now-komrads/#more-1015>).
- "Dominion Automobile Company Opens Handsome New Home," *The Globe*, 26 Feb. 1921: P. 11.
- "Exhibition Notices: A Noticeable Carriage Exhibit," *The Globe*, 8 Sept. 1902, p.8.
- "Extend Invitation to Exhibition Visitors," *The Globe*, 27 Aug. 1921: P. 10.
- "Gray, James Wilson," Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada (<http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1598>).
- "Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District Plan," prepared by DIALOG in association with Philip Goldsmith, Carl Bray, and Archaeological Services Inc. for the City of Toronto, January 2016 (<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2016/te/bgrd/backgroundfile-88803.pdf>).
- Stephanie Chambers et al., *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer*, Coach House Books, 2017.
- "World Horseman Often a Winner; Built Carriages," *The Globe and Mail*, 15 Nov. 1956: P. 4.

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)
625 YONGE STREET**

ATTACHMENT 3

The property at 625 Yonge Street is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation, under the categories of design/physical value, historical/associative value, and contextual value.

Description

The subject property consists of two adjoining buildings that are related historically and architecturally: a northern building at 631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street, and a southern building at 625-629 Yonge Street. Together, they are known municipally as 625 Yonge Street. Located on the southeast corner of Yonge Street and Isabella Street, the brick buildings are three storeys with a flat roof. The west and north elevations can be viewed together from the intersection. With the delineated bays along its front elevation, the property is consistent with the rhythm produced by fine-grained building frontages along the surrounding historic commercial streetscape. The buildings' Edwardian Classicist style is one of several architectural styles that predominate in the area.

It was included on the City's Heritage Register in 2016. The property is identified as a contributing property in the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District, adopted by City Council in 2016 and currently under appeal.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The property consists of two adjoining buildings that constitute a representative example of Edwardian Classicist-style commercial main street buildings. Although the northern building predates the southern, they share their brick construction and the datum lines of their common floor levels and banding details, and read as an integrated whole. Designed by J. Wilson Gray, the northern building (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street) retains quoins and exaggerated voussoir details above round-arched window openings on the upper storey of each elevation's corner bay. Both elevations also feature segmentally arched lintels at the third storey, and stone banding above the second and third storeys, with the latter giving the appearance of a simple cornice. The southern building (625-629 Yonge Street), likely designed by Chapman & McGiffin, has a symmetrical composition divided by brick pilasters, large window openings at both the second and third storey, stone sills and banding that continue the lines of the northern building, and a brick parapet with a curving, stepped design. Despite the removal of the original windows, both buildings' original fenestration patterns remain intact.

The property is directly associated with the theme of early-twentieth-century commercial development along Yonge Street. Specifically, from construction in c.1905-1907 (631-637 Yonge Street/1-5 Isabella Street) and c.1913-1921 (625-629 Yonge Street) until the early 1950s, the property maintained its association with the automotive industry. This significant association included the property's original use for Thomas Crow's carriage

business, representing the automotive industry's origins. The property continued to reflect the industry's evolution as it housed the Dominion Automobile Company's showroom, the second store location of Canadian Tire in the 1930s, and other automobile companies until the early 1950s.

Additionally, the property holds associations with a series of clubs that served the LGBTQ2S+ community, notably including the Domino Club and Komrads in the 1980s. As a longstanding venue that reflected the prevalence of LGBTQ2S+ establishments along Yonge Street and remained connected to the community after it shifted eastward to the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood, the building has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of Toronto's LGBTQ2S+ history.

The property is important in maintaining and supporting the historic commercial main street along this portion of Yonge Street, which is characterized by a low-scale continuous streetwall condition. With the delineated bays along its front elevation, the property is consistent with the rhythm produced by fine-grained storefronts along the streetscape. The buildings' Edwardian Classicist style is one of several architectural styles that predominate in the area. As part of Yonge Street's historic commercial streetscape since the early 20th century, with connections to concentrations of automotive companies and later LGBTQ2S+ establishments, the property is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to its surroundings.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 625 Yonge Street as a pair of Edwardian Classicist-style commercial main street buildings:

- The scale, form, and massing of the property as a three-storey pair of adjoining flat-roofed commercial buildings
- The property's material palette, consisting of brick with stone detailing
- The consistent datum lines of the two buildings' common floor levels and the stone banding details that continue across both buildings, allowing them to be read as an integrated whole
- The northern building's asymmetrical composition with elevations on both Yonge and Isabella streets, including a projecting bay on both elevations that emphasizes the building's corner siting
- The southern building's symmetrical composition with three bays defined by four brick pilasters
- On the northern building, quoins and exaggerated voussoir details above round-arched window openings on the upper storey of each elevation's corner bay
- On the southern building, the brick parapet with a curving, stepped design
- Original fenestration patterns on both buildings, including segmentally arched openings at the third level of the northern building, and large window openings at the second and third storeys of the southern building

Historic and Associative Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 625 Yonge Street as reflective of the early automotive industry along Yonge Street, and as the former location of a number of venues important to the LGBTQ2S+ community:

- The property's siting and orientation on the east side of Yonge Street and Isabella streets, facing Yonge Street with a strong secondary frontage on Isabella Street
- The property's long elevation along Isabella Street, which was the location of the entrances to the LGBTQ2S+ venues and allows the property to architecturally gesture towards the Church and Wellesley Village to the east
- The scale, form, and massing of the property as a three-storey pair of adjoining commercial buildings, providing it with relatively large floorplates that allowed its historic use as a carriage manufacturer, automobile showroom, and LGBTQ2S+ club space

Contextual Value

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 625 Yonge Street as part of Yonge Street's historic commercial streetscape:

- The property's siting and orientation on the east side of Yonge Street and Isabella streets, facing Yonge Street with a strong secondary frontage on Isabella Street
- The scale, form, and massing of the property as a three-storey pair of adjoining commercial buildings
- The property's material palette, consisting of brick with stone detailing
- Delineated bays along the property's front elevation, consistent with the rhythm produced by fine-grained building frontages along the surrounding historic commercial streetscape