



ERA Architects Inc.
#600-625 Church St
Toronto ON, M4Y 2G1

Date: January 24, 2022

Sent by: EMAIL

To: The Chair & Members of the Toronto Preservation Board

Subject: **294-298 Sherbourne Street | Heritage Letter**

This letter responds to the January 4, 2022, Staff Report by the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning (the “Staff Report”) regarding the proposed development at 294-298 Sherbourne Street (the “Site”). The purpose of this letter is to summarize ERA’s opinion regarding the proposal and its conformity with the Garden District Heritage Conservation District (“HCD” or the “District”).

The Site

The Site is comprised of three vacant lots, which are “non-contributing” properties designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, as part of the District. As noted in the Staff Report, the Site is located at the eastern edge of the District, where the residential streetscape includes, alongside house-form buildings dating to mid-to-late 19th century, larger-scale 1970s multi-unit residential buildings and apartment towers, and vacant lots which create “missing teeth” in the street frontage.

Adjacent Properties and Design Considerations

As noted in the Staff Report, the Site is adjacent to the following “contributing” properties within the HCD:

- 292 Sherbourne Street;
- 300 Sherbourne Street (also listed on the City’s Heritage Register);
- 283-285 Sherbourne Street (also listed on the City’s Heritage Register); and
- 291-295 Sherbourne Street (also listed on the City’s Heritage Register).

Contrary to the assumption in the Staff Report that the proposal has “not been designed to be compatible with” these properties, and with the District character overall, the architects extensively studied the context of the Site and adjacent buildings to inform the building’s design (see attached Heritage Design Strategy Package by Superkül).

The following considerations were developed by Superkül, alongside recommendations from ERA, through an iterative design process to ensure that the proposal for the Site would be visually and physically compatible with the District and adjacent properties:

- **Reinstate a consistent streetwall:** introduce a 3-storey podium, with appropriate tower setback to create a strong streetwall condition.
- **Reference adjacent house-form buildings:** using datum lines, solid-to-void ratio, mansard roof form, and brick materiality from adjacent buildings to inform design.

- **Minimize the impacts of added height:** Contextually-informed use of a “diamond” shaped tower, set back above the podium.

The applicant engaged in this iterative design process, even though the HCD Plan was under appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal (OLT) – and therefore not in force – when the proposal was being designed. The outcome, in our opinion, conforms to the objectives of the HCD Plan (see attached our analysis of the proposal’s conformity with the HCD Objectives).

Heritage Planning Process and HIA Conclusions

In May 2021, ERA prepared an HIA evaluating the proposal. The HIA was submitted in June 2021, prior to approval of the HCD Plan by the OLT on October 18, 2021. The HIA was re-submitted in September 2021 at the request of Heritage Planning staff to include additional analysis regarding the conformity of the proposal with the HCD Plan. In the September 2021 HIA, ERA concluded that the proposal:

- Conserves, maintains and enhances the cultural heritage value of the District by providing a contextually sensitive design;
- Conserves the predominant scale and built form rhythm by “filling in the blank” on the vacant lot with a 3-storey podium base, while allowing for sensitive change in the District, through the addition of a tower set back at the centre of the Site;
- Contributes to the public realm, with street trees within a landscaped set back and built form that addresses the street frontage; and
- Represents high quality architectural design that is compatible with the District’s cultural heritage value.

In doing so, the proposal achieves consistency with the objectives of the HCD Plan. Furthermore, in our view the design of the proposal, including its height and massing, the materiality of its podium, the set back of additional tower massing, architectural expression, its discreet and minimal parking scheme and its relationship to Sherbourne Street, are both appropriate for the Site’s immediate context and otherwise consistent with the intent of the HCD Plan.

Staff Report Conclusions

The Staff Report indicates that Heritage Planning does not agree with ERA’s conclusions. Specifically, the Staff Report remarks on the tower placement, side and front yard setbacks, front landscaping, and podium design, in terms of its proportions and articulation. It concludes that “the proposed development is inconsistent with the objectives and policies within the Garden District Heritage Conservation District Plan and has not been designed to conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of the adjacent heritage properties and the Garden District Heritage Conservation District” (Staff Report, p. 13).

Respectfully, we disagree, and maintain that the design considerations implemented by Superkül have resulted in a sympathetic building that appropriately conserves the cultural heritage value and attributes of the District and is

consistent with the objectives of the HCD Plan. The following paragraphs summarize and respond to Staff's specific commentary on the proposal.

Regarding the **scale of the proposal**, the Staff Report acknowledges that the HCD Plan does not govern height. In our view, the proposal's podium and tower element conserve the low-rise scale, height, massing and form of the Sherbourne Character Sub-area and its adjacent contributing properties through the proposed tower setbacks, mansard roof podium building and details and articulation that successfully soften the tower, making it compatible with adjacent buildings (refer to pages 15 and 16 of Appendix I- Heritage Design Strategy Package).

Regarding the proposed **front and side yard setbacks and landscaping**, in our view the proposal complements the District's cultural heritage value, introducing a distinguishably contemporary building. The front yard setback is compatible with, though not identical to, the adjacent contributing properties and consistent with the range of setbacks along the Street. The proposed side yard setbacks do not impact the adjacent contributing heritage properties to the north and the south (refer to pages 13 and 14 of Appendix I- Heritage Design Strategy Package).

Regarding the **articulation of the podium building**, in our view, the design thoughtfully references, without mimicking, the adjacent 19th century house-form buildings. Taken together, the height, roof form, bay distribution, solid-to-void ratio and materiality of the proposed base building achieve the objectives of the HCD Plan and are largely consistent with the relevant HCD Plan policies (refer to pages 9, 10, 13, 17, 18 and 20 of Appendix I- Heritage Design Strategy Package).

We feel the proposal is a contextually appropriate building that meets the objectives of the HCD Plan and thereby conserves the cultural heritage value and attributes of the District and adjacent properties. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Philip Evans', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Philip Evans

Principal, ERA

APPENDIX I: HERITAGE DESIGN STRATEGY (APPENDIX A FROM HIA)

hoem2 on sherbourne

23 MARCH 2021 // HIA DIAGRAMS DRAFT // MPI GROUP

superkool

PRECEDENTS

• • precedents



Central European University, O'Donnell Tuomey Architects
Budapest, Hungary

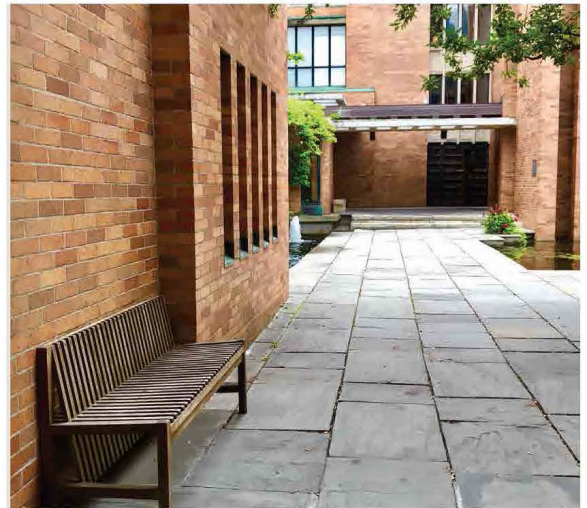


Kaufhaus Tyrol, David Chipperfield Architects
Innsbruck, Austria

• • precedents



Massey College, University of Toronto, Ron Thom Architect



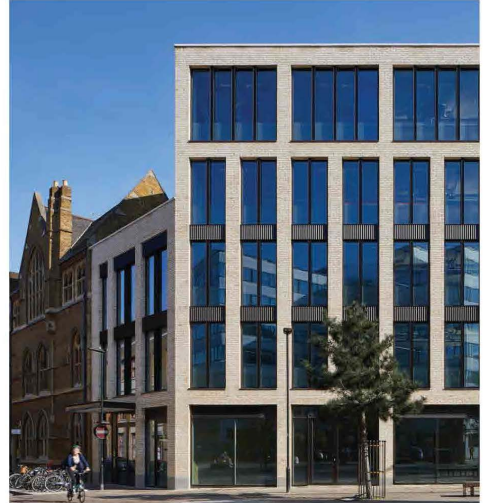
• • precedents



Goodenough College, London UK
Herbert Baker Architect



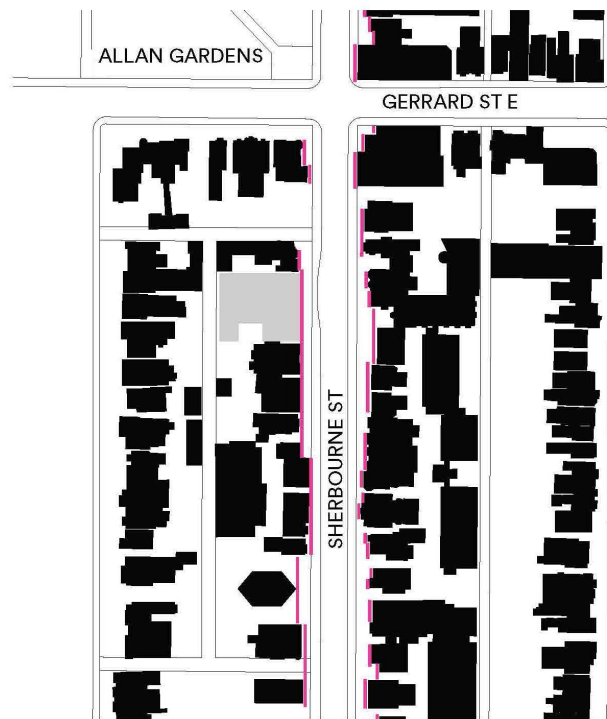
KTH Sustainability House, AIX Arkitekter
Stockholm, Sweden



Stiff + Trevillion Architects,
London, UK

CONTEXT

•• context



street patens

•• sherbourne st



• • sherbourne st



arched opening



round opening



rectangular opening
precast & lintel contrast



arched opening



bay windows



mansard roof
dormer window detail

•• context features



arched windows

bay windows

ganged windows

mansard roof

dormer window

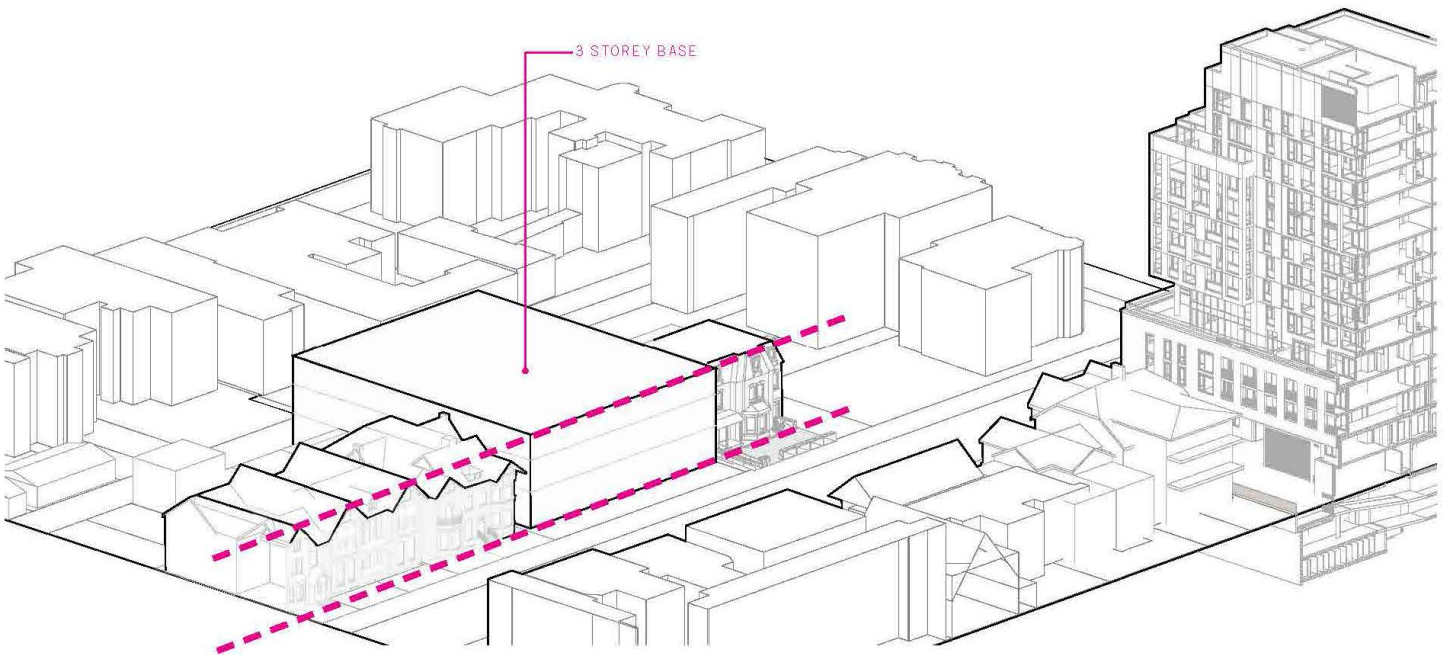
rectangular window

• • context

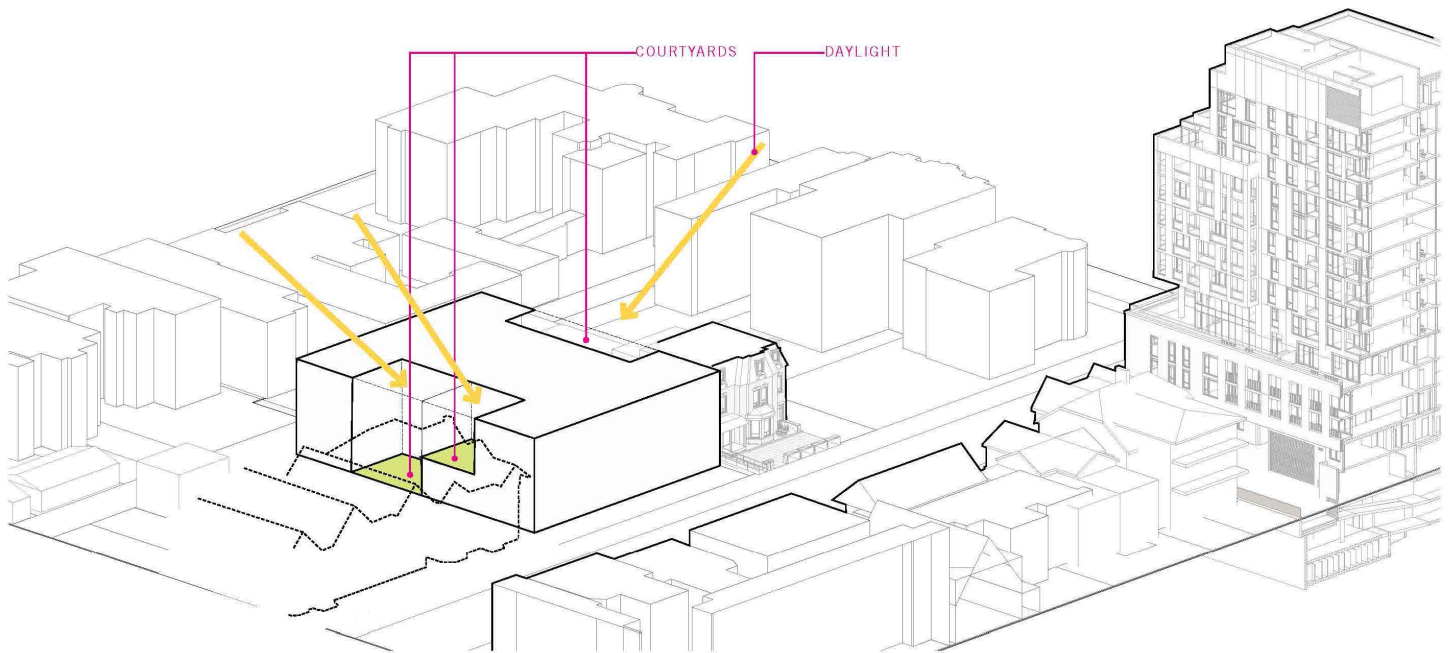


MASSING

• • podium

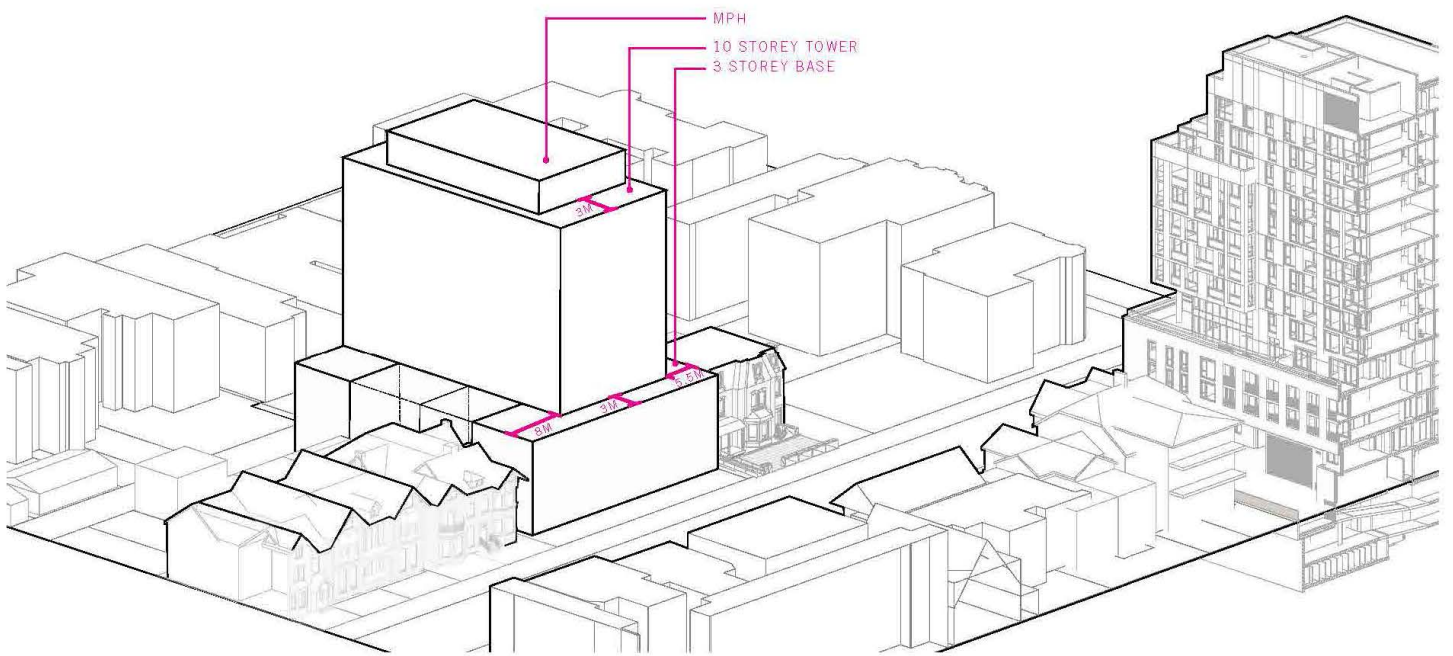


•• podium openings

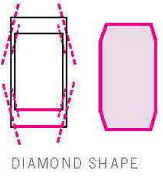


openings bring light into deep floorplate

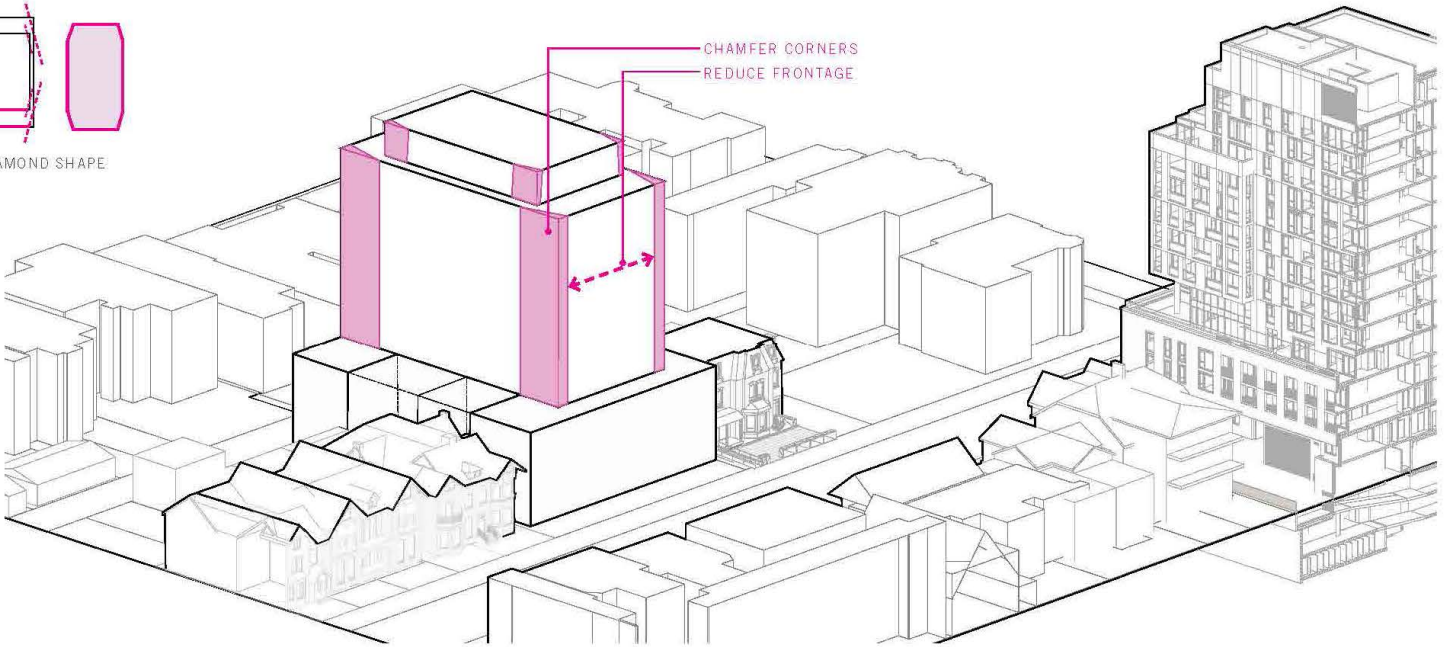
• • setbacks



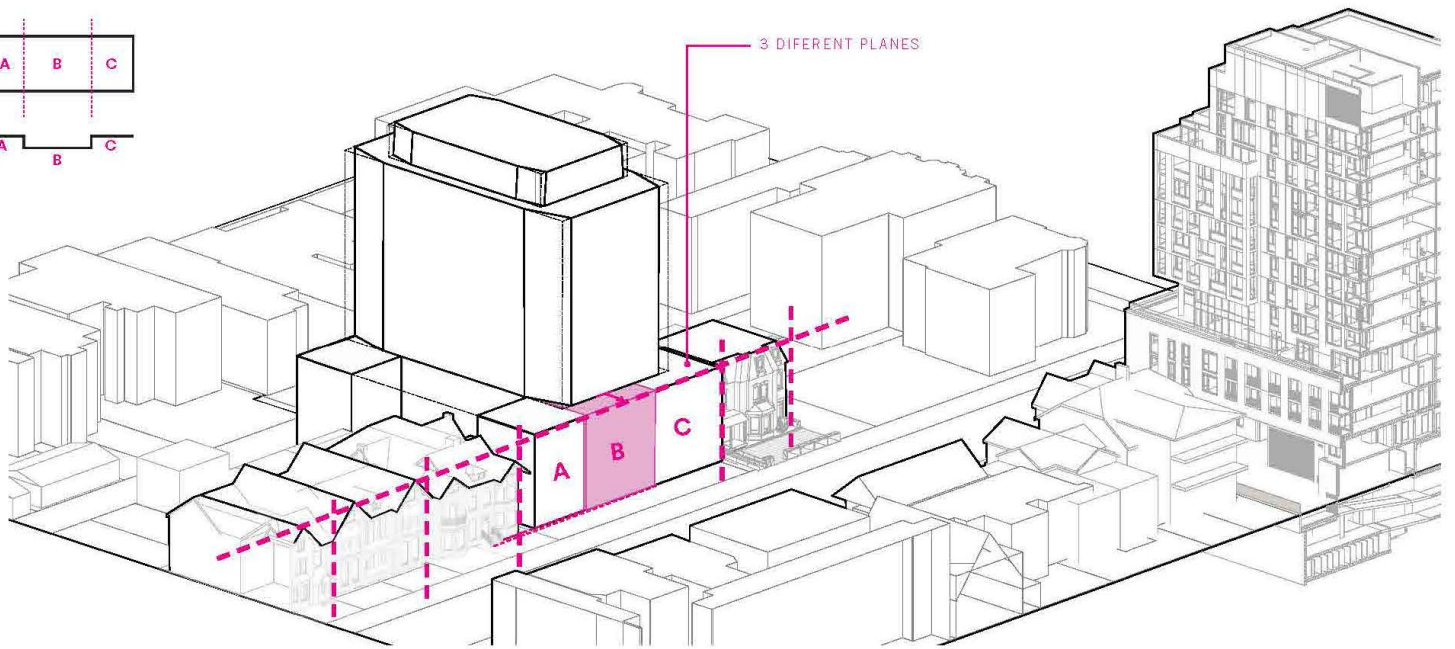
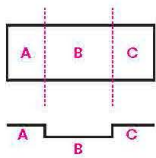
• • tower



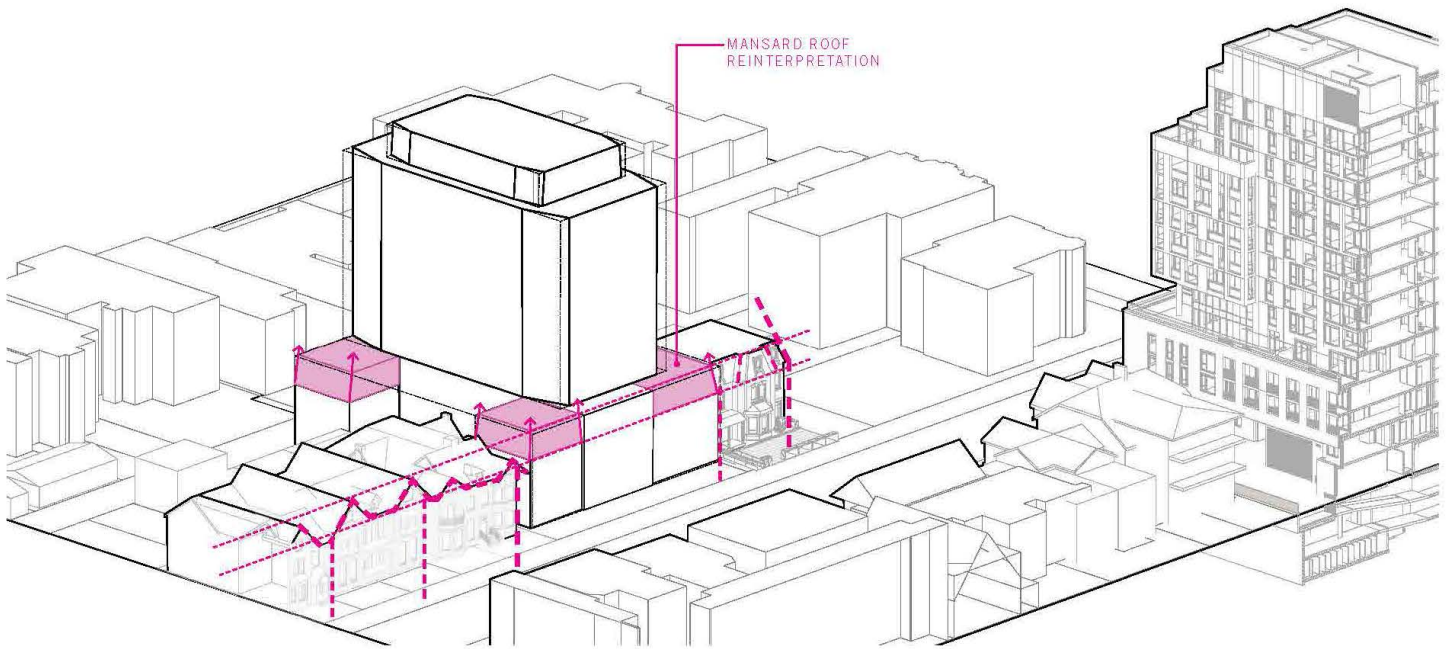
CHAMFER CORNERS
REDUCE FRONTAGE



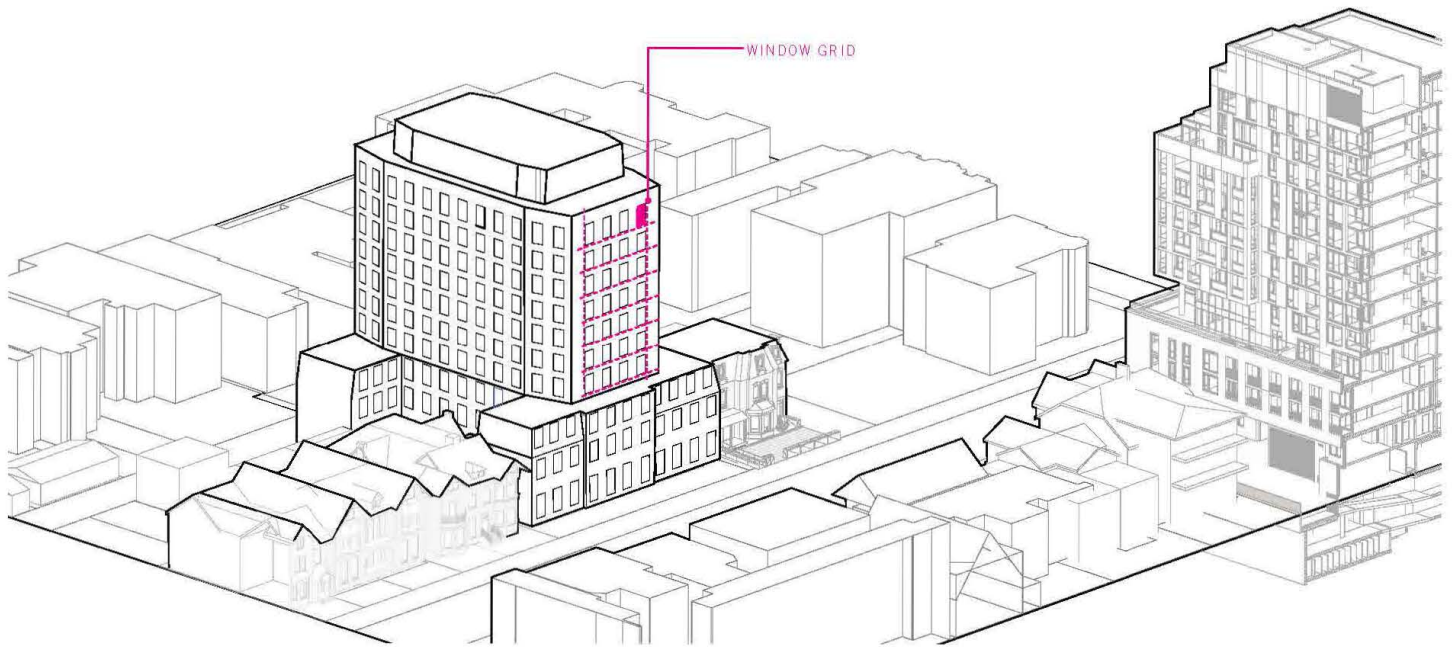
•• podium planes



• • podium angles

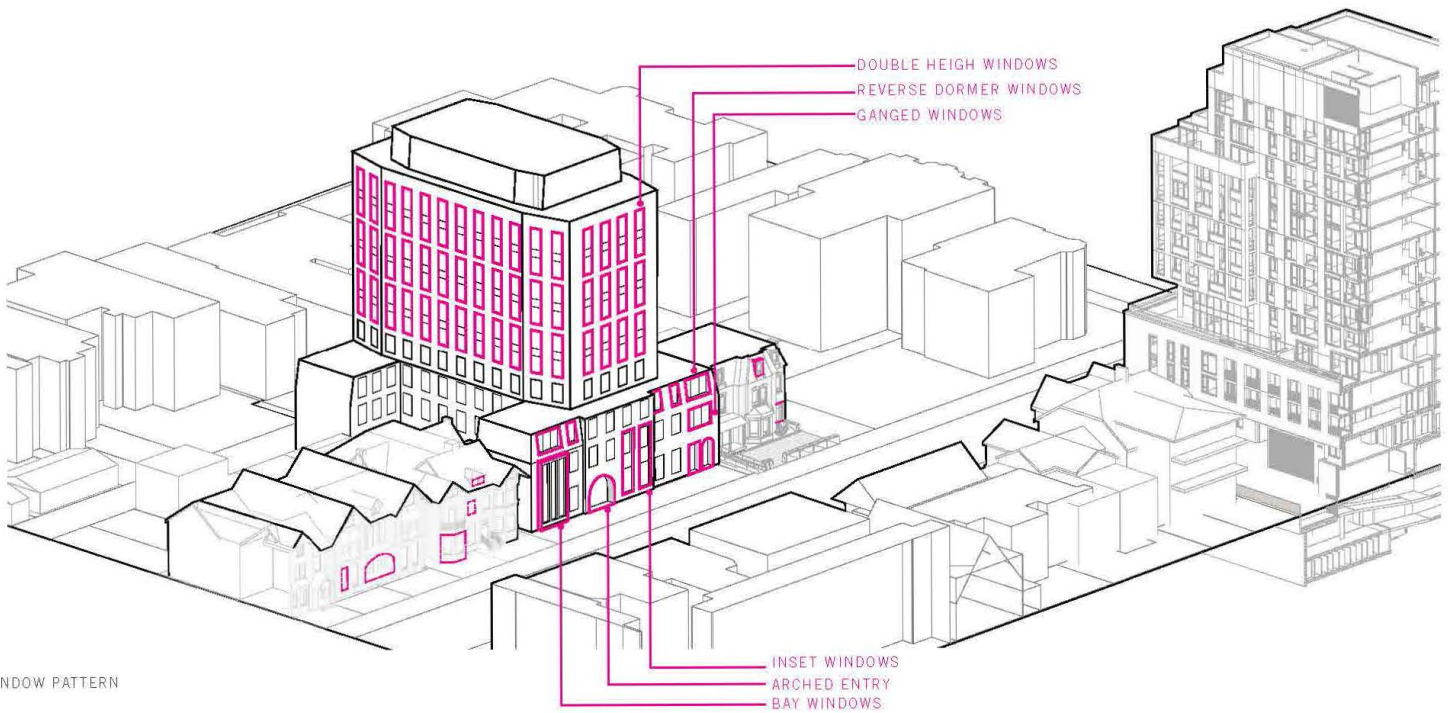


• • window openings



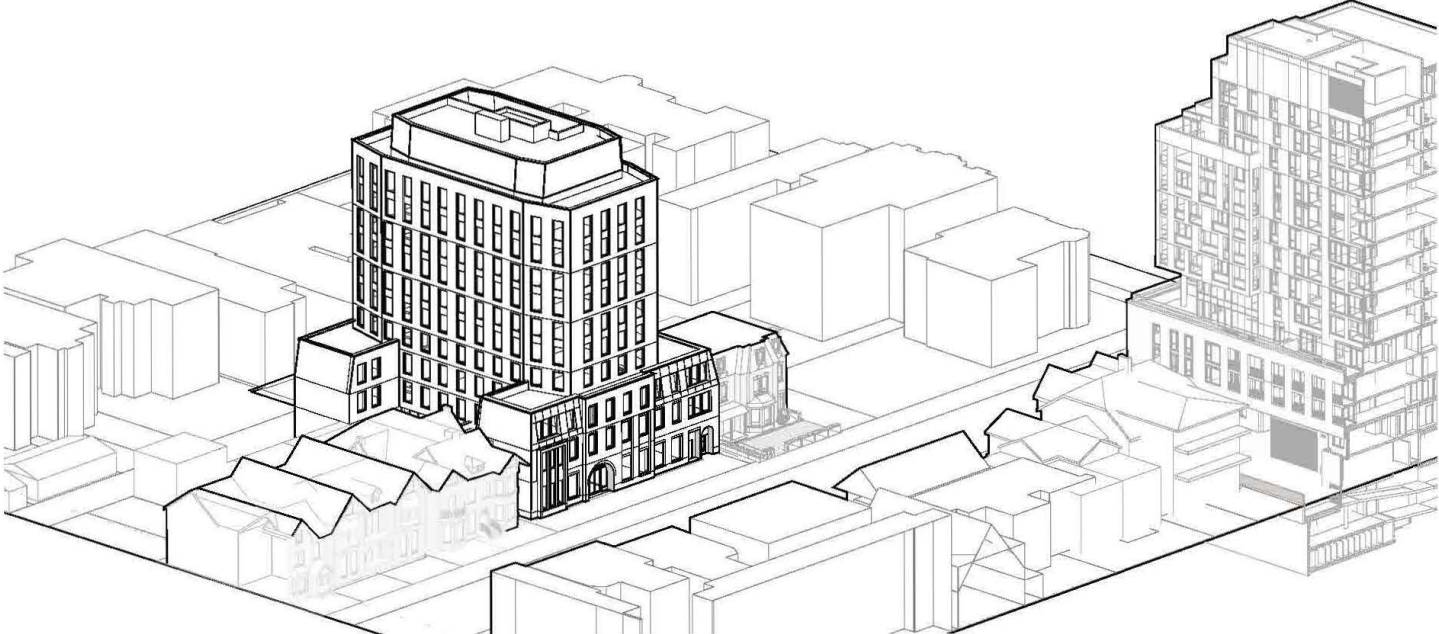
WINDOW GRID

• • window openings



WINDOW PATTERN

• • massing



PROPOSED MASSING

• • sherbourne st south facing



• • sherbourne st



APPENDIX II: ANALYSIS OF CONFORMITY TO HCD OBJECTIVES (EXCERPT FROM APPENDIX C OF HIA)

C. Analysis of the 2021 Garden District HCD (ERA, 2021).

The OLT approved the Garden District HCD Plan by oral decision on June 22, 2021. At this time, the OLT has not provided a written decision or release an approved HCD Plan. The following analysis refers to the HCD Plan, dated June 25, 2021, which has been provided by City Staff.

Objectives : Garden District HCD Plan* (2021)	Proposal consistent with?
<i>1. Conserve, maintain, and enhance the cultural heritage value of the District as expressed through its heritage attributes, contributing properties, character sub-areas, public realm, and archaeological resources</i>	Yes. The proposal conserves the character of of the Sherbourne Street Character Sub-Area.
<i>2. Conserve, maintain and enhance the overall soft landscaped, residential streetscape character of the George, Pembroke, Sherbourne, Gerrard and Shuter Street character sub-areas with generous front yard setbacks and a collection of 2-3 storey house-form buildings displaying a range of architectural styles.</i>	Yes. Street trees are proposed along Sherbourne Streed within a hard-scaped forecourt. The base of the building follows the prevailing 2-3 storey residential streetwall height. Refer to the diagrams on pages 30 and 31 of this Report.
<i>3. Conserve, maintain and enhance Allan Gardens as a cultural heritage landscape in the City, a designed landscape anchor to the residential neighbourhood to the south, which has historic and physical connections to Moss Park as its southern landscaped terminus.</i>	N/A. No new net shadows on either park are created.
<i>4. Conserve, maintain and enhance Pembroke Street as a green connection and central access between Allan Gardens and Moss Park.</i>	N/A.
<i>5. Conserve the legibility of the District’s period of significance, between 1850 to 1930, as expressed through the District’s heritage attributes.</i>	N/A. The proposal does not impact the district’s period of significance. The proposal does not involve obscuring or removing heritage attributes on contributing properties.
<i>6. Conserve the physical form, scale and architectural features of the range of residential architectural styles of contributing properties found in the District, including (but not limited to) Second Empire, Bay and Gable, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Romanesque, Edwardian Classicism, and vernacular.</i>	Yes. The proposal “fills in the blank” and introduces a building base with a durable masonry material palette, a compatible solid-to-void ratio, vertical articulation of bays, and interpretation of architectural motifs found on adjacent properties. The tower is set back towards the centre of the Site and features a tapered and streamlined design to reduce visual impacts on the streetscape.
<i>7. Conserve and enhance contributing properties, Part IV designated properties and listed properties.</i>	N/A. The Site is non-contributing and poses no negative impacts to adjacent contributing listed properties.

Objectives : Garden District HCD Plan* (2021)	Proposal consistent with?
8. <i>Conserve the predominant scale and built form pattern in each character sub-area, while allowing for growth and changes as permitted in the City’s Official Plan.</i>	Yes. The proposed building base responds to the house form character of Sherbourne Street, while introducing density, in the form of a tower set back within the centre of the vacant site.
9. <i>Ensure alterations to contributing properties within the District are compatible.</i>	N/A. The Site is non-contributing.
10. <i>Ensure that new development and additions conserve and enhance the cultural heritage value of the District in general, as well as the character sub-area in which it is located, particularly with respect to scale, public realm and the general pattern of the built form as set out in the policies and guidelines.</i>	<p>Yes. The proposal “fills in the blank” and introduces a building base with a durable masonry material palette, a compatible solid-to-void ratio, vertical articulation of bays, and interpretation of architectural motifs found on adjacent properties. The tower is set back towards the centre of the Site and features a tapered and streamlined design to reduce visual impacts on the streetscape.</p> <p>The proposed development is generally consistent with the policies and guidelines for new development on non-contributing properties (including those within the Sherbourne Street Character Sub-Area), with the exception of Policy 7.6.6 regarding requirements and setbacks for new construction above 3-storeys. Refer to the following table for a full, analysis of conformity to Section 7 Policies & Guidelines.</p>
11. <i>Ensure that archaeological resources are protected.</i>	N/A. The City’s mapping does not show any archaeological potential on the Site.
12. <i>Encourage high quality architecture in the design of new development, additions and alterations that is compatible with the District’s cultural heritage value.</i>	Yes. The scale and design motifs of the 3-storey building base, the proposed street tree canopy and general massing of the tower responds to and conserve the unique characteristics of the Sherbourne Street Character Sub-Area. It has been thoughtfully designed to conserve the heritage attributes of the District.

Objectives : Garden District HCD Plan* (2021)	Proposal consistent with?
13. Conserve and enhance views from the public realm identified in this Plan that contribute to an understanding of the District's cultural heritage value.	N/A. Views from the Site are not identified in the plan.
14. Conserve, support and enhance the social, cultural and community values of the District as a socially inclusive neighbourhood with a history of innovative community and social services.	Yes. The proposal provides housing geared towards students.
15. Ensure development and alterations adjacent to the District conserve the District's cultural heritage value.	N/A- Site is within the District.
16. Honour and commemorate the area's Indigenous heritage.	This important district-wide goal will be given added consideration at the detailed design stage.

**The OLT has yet to provide a written decision or release an approved HCD Plan. This document refers to the HCD Plan, dated June 25, 2021, which has been provided by City Staff.*