

15 Toronto Street - Demolition of a Building Within the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District and Approval of a Replacement Building

Date: September 18, 2025

To: City Council

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: Toronto-Centre - Ward 13

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the proposed demolition of the existing 11-storey building located at 15 Toronto Street in the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District, and approve the design of a replacement structure, in accordance with Section 42(1) 2 and 42(1) 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act, with conditions.

The property is designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act as part of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District. The subject property is identified as 'non-contributing' in the District Plan. The District Plan allows for the demolition of buildings or structures on a non-contributing property. The proposed new 56-storey mixed-use building complies with the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District.

The subject development application also requires approval under the Planning Act. The recommendations contained within this report relate solely to approvals required under the Ontario Heritage Act.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council approve the demolition of the 'non-contributing' building and the erection of a new mixed-use building at 15 Toronto Street in the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District, in accordance with subsections 42(1) 4 and 42(1) 2 of the Ontario Heritage Act, and subject to the following conditions:

a. that the related Zoning By-law Amendment has come into full force and effect.

b. That the replacement building for 15 Toronto Street is substantially in accordance with the plans and elevations submitted by the applicant and prepared by BDP Quadrangle Architects Ltd., dated May 2025, and the Heritage Impact Assessment, prepared by GBCA Architects Ltd., dated July 30, 2022, and revised August 24, 2023, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

c. That prior to the issuance of any heritage permit for the property at 15 Toronto Street including a demolition permit, but excluding permits for interior work, repairs and maintenance and usual and minor works for the existing 'non-contributing' building as are acceptable to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, the owner provides the following to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning:

1. Final building permit drawings for the replacement building, including the design of the replacement building, is consistent with the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Conservation District Plan substantially in accordance with the plans and elevations submitted by the applicant and prepared by BDP Quadrangle Architects Ltd., dated May 2025, and the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Conservation District Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

City Planning confirms there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

On December 9 and 10, 2015, City Council adopted the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District (By-law 1328-2015) which created the HCD under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, along with the adoption of a Heritage Conservation District Plan.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2015.TE12.11>

On November 16, 2021, the St. Lawrence Heritage Conservation District was approved by the Ontario Land Tribunal and came into force. The District Plan can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/8efb-city-planning-st-lawrence-neighbourhood-hcd.pdf>

BACKGROUND

Subject Property

The development site, 15 Toronto Street, is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Toronto Street and Court Street in the City's Downtown East neighbourhood. The site is currently occupied by an 11-storey office building erected in 1961. The building was commissioned as the former main offices of Hiram Walker-Gooderham & Worts, Ltd., a distiller of alcoholic beverages based in Canada.

The subject property is designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) as part of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District. The property is identified as 'non-contributing' in the HCD Plan.

Adjacent Heritage Properties

The subject property is adjacent to 10 Toronto Street (Post Office #7), 17 and 19 Toronto Street (Consumers' Gas Company Building), and 36 Toronto Street (Excelsior Life Building); properties designated under Part IV of the OHA and 'contributing' properties in the District Plan.

The subject property is also adjacent to 10 Court Street (Courthouse Square) and 1 Toronto Street; properties designated under Part V of the OHA and identified as 'non-contributing' in the District Plan.

Development Proposal

The application proposes to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law to permit the removal of the existing office building at 15 Toronto Street and the construction of a 56-storey (plus mechanical penthouse) mixed use building. At the ground floor level, the proposed structure provides retail space along Toronto Street and the residential lobby along Court Street. A loading area is proposed for Court Square. Three basement levels are proposed to be used for underground uses, including retail, bike parking, lockers, garbage and mechanical space.

Permission is required under subsection 42(1) 4 of the OHA to demolish a building on a property within a heritage conservation district and under subsection 42(1) 2 of the OHA to erect a building or structure on a property in a heritage conservation district.

Heritage Planning Policy Framework

The City of Toronto Official Plan provides the policy framework for heritage conservation in the City. The following Official Plan policy applies to heritage conservation districts and proposed new construction:

3.1.6.33. Heritage Conservation Districts should be managed and conserved by approving only those alterations, additions, new development, demolitions, removals and public works in accordance with respective Heritage Conservation District plans. The City of Toronto Official Plan can be found here:

St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District

The property at 15 Toronto Street is located within the boundaries of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District Plan, which was adopted by City Council on December 9 and 10, 2015 and enacted by By-Law No. 1328-2015. The HCD Plan works to protect the character of the District, conserve existing heritage attributes and resources, and guide future development.

The subject property is identified as 'non-contributing', meaning that it does not support the overall cultural heritage values, character and integrity of the District. HCD Plan policy allows the demolition of non-contributing properties and guides the impact of alterations on the District. The following policies have guided the review of the subject application:

5.17.1 - Additions or alterations to a non-contributing property shall be physically and visually compatible with and shall not negatively impact the cultural heritage values and heritage attributes of the District.

5.17.2 - The demolition of buildings or structures on a non-contributing property may be permitted.

5.17.3 - If permission to demolish a building or structure located on a non-contributing property is granted, demolition activity shall not begin until plans for the replacement building(s) or structure(s) have been submitted and approved by Toronto City Council, and a heritage permit issued by Heritage Planning.

5.17.4 - New development and/or additions to a non-contributing property shall respect and reinforce the pedestrian-scaled environment of the District.

5.17.5 - New development and/or additions to a non-contributing property shall respect the context of the District and must reinforce the pedestrian-scaled environment of the District.

5.17.6 - New development and/or additions at-grade to non-contributing properties should build out to the front lot line and should build the full extent of the property frontage.

5.17.7 - New development and/or additions to noncontributing properties should respond to the vertical rhythm of the facades of contributing properties within the block frontage.

5.17.8 - New development and/or additions to noncontributing properties should respond to the horizontal rhythm of the facades of contributing properties within the block frontage.

5.17.9 - New development and/or additions to noncontributing properties shall not include blank walls facing the public realm.

5.17.10 - On a non-contributing property that occupies a corner lot, all policies for non-contributing properties in Section 5 apply to all facades of the building that face a street.

5.17.11 - The massing and composition of streetwalls on a non-contributing property that occupies a corner lot may vary to respond to the streetwall of contributing properties on both block frontages.

The HCD Plan also aims to mitigate the potential negative impact of shadows on the cultural heritage values of the District, and focuses on specific areas where shadows would have a direct negative impact on specific properties and areas:

5.18.1 - New development and/or additions to non-contributing properties shall limit net new shadow impacts on St. James Cathedral and St. James Park.

Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (the "Standards and Guidelines") is the official document guiding planning, stewardship and conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City of Toronto. The General Standards (1-9) and the Standards for Rehabilitation (10-12) apply to this project.

The Standards and Guidelines can be found here:

<http://www.historicplaces.ca/media/18072/81468-parks-s+g-eng-web2.pdf>

COMMENTS

New Construction

The proposal seeks permission under the Ontario Heritage Act to demolish the existing 'non-contributing' building within the District Plan and to construct a new 56-storey mixed-use tower (plus mechanical penthouse) with a 3-storey podium. District Plan policy states that the demolition of buildings or structures on a non-contributing property may be permitted. As non-contributing properties do not represent the cultural heritage values of the District, property alterations, including the design of the replacement building, are reviewed for their impact on the District as a whole, rather than on the specific non-contributing property, without negatively impacting those values.

Through a revised application, the design of the base building has been reduced from four storeys to three stories to reinforce the three-storey datum line established by the west elevations of the adjacent heritage property at 17 and 19 Toronto Street (Consumers' Gas Company Building). The revised design incorporates a reveal on the west, south and east elevations of level 4 that is set back approximately 2.9 metres and 3 metres to align with the adjacent heritage building's 3-storey streetwall and to

accommodate outdoor terraces. The applicant has digitally scanned the Consumers' Gas Company Building to accurately align features and the reveal.

The proposed chevron pattern in the northern bay along the Toronto Street elevation of the proposed building has been revised to a contemporary and complimentary vertical stone pattern. The new design respects the column articulation of the Consumers' Gas Company Building, as well as patterns in the District. The proposed colour palette, material selection, wall articulations, as well as window proportions and styles are subject to further refinements which may be explored before the heritage permit is issued, including additional material details that are typically selected to respond to the smaller and more delicately designed structures and maintaining the symmetrical fenestration patterns that predominate the District. Applicants are encouraged to identify further refinements to the design stage at the site plan process for a more comprehensive review by heritage planning staff.

To respect the historic context of the District as well as the fine-grained commercial character and streetwall of this area, the proposal will be built to the full extent of the property frontages (with the exception of secured ground floor setbacks) and will incorporate ground floor retail use along Toronto Street and residential lobby space along Court Street. The application has been revised to include glazing along the retail and lobby space on the ground floor, as well as along the east elevation fronting onto Court Square, consistent with the HCD Plan policy direction to avoid blank walls facing the public realm.

The OHA requires that any by-law that is passed by City Council in relation to properties located within an HCD must not conflict with the objectives of the District Plan. The drawings and HIA demonstrate the proposed new building design complies with the District Plan and therefore meets this legislative requirement; however, any potential changes to the building design will be reviewed at both Site Plan and building permit stages to ensure compliance with the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District and Council's decision on the permit application.

Shadowing

HCD Plan policy aims to mitigate the potential negative impact of shadows on the cultural heritage values of the District and focuses on specific areas where shadows would have a direct negative impact on specific properties and areas. District Plan Policy 5.5.1 states that additions and alterations shall limit net new shadow impacts on St. James Cathedral and St. James Park.

The HIA, as well as a supplementary shadow study prepared by BDP Quadrangle Architects Ltd., describes how the proposal limits net new shadow impacts on the District and heritage resources. The proposal limits shadow impact, particularly during the spring and fall equinoxes. The shadow study demonstrates that net new shadow impact on the Cathedral will occur only on the June 21st solstice, between the evening hours of approximately 3:48pm to 6:18pm. The shadow will cover no more than one-third of the Cathedral's west elevation during this period and the net new shadows is mitigated by the slender floorplate and tower orientation.

CONCLUSION

Staff are supportive of the proposed removal of the existing 11-storey building located at 15 Toronto Street in the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District and recommend approval of the replacement structure design. The scale, massing, height and materials of the proposed new building's base are compatible with that of the adjacent heritage building on Toronto Street and, overall, the application conserves the cultural heritage values of the District.

As such Heritage Planning staff are of the opinion the proposal is consistent with the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District Plan and other applicable policies and guidelines. It is therefore recommended that City Council approve the application under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jason Thorne
Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Location Map
Attachment 2 - Photographs
Attachment 3 - Selected Drawings

LOCATION MAP

15 Toronto Street

ATTACHMENT 1

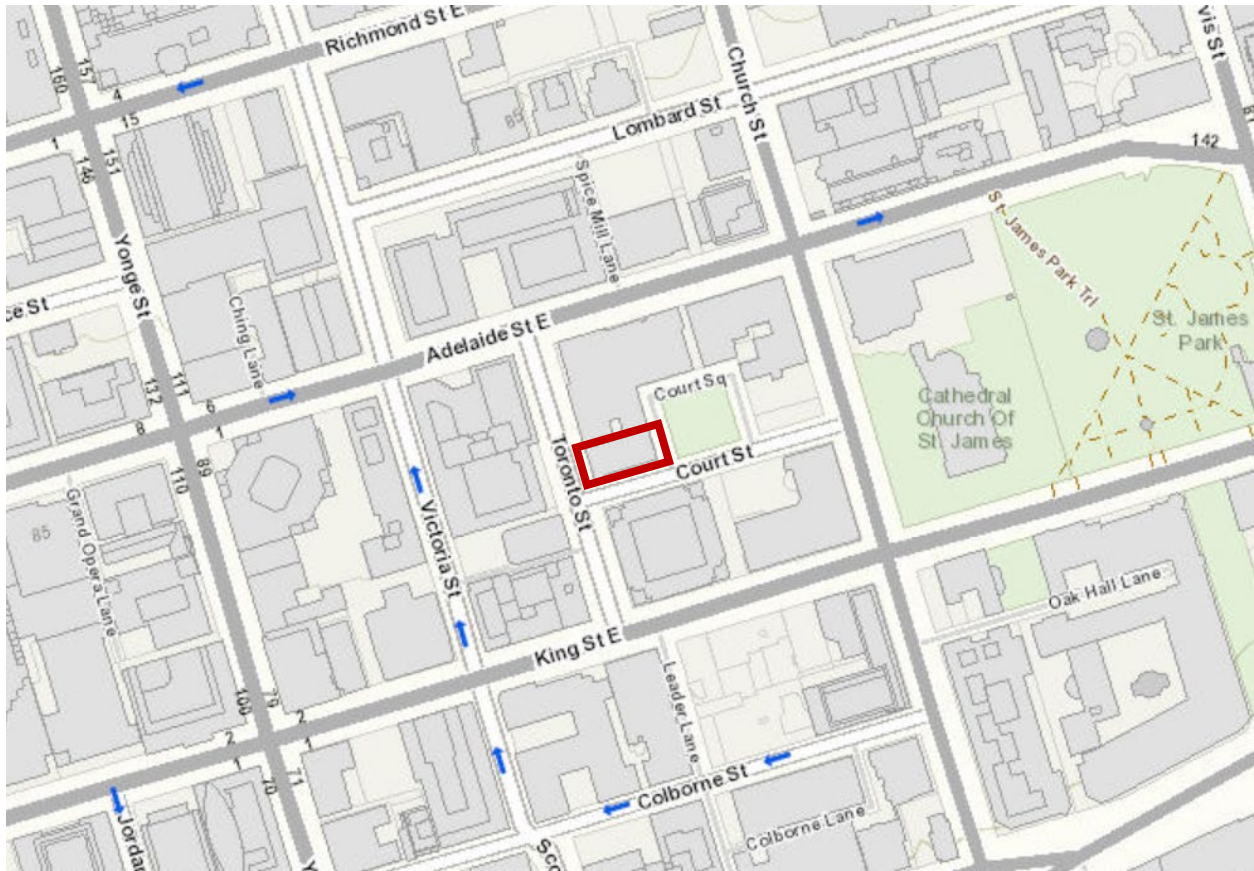


Figure 1. Location Map showing the property at 15 Toronto Street outlined in red, located on the northeast corner of Toronto Street and Court Street. This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown (City of Toronto Mapping).

PHOTOGRAPHS

ATTACHMENT 2

15 Toronto Street



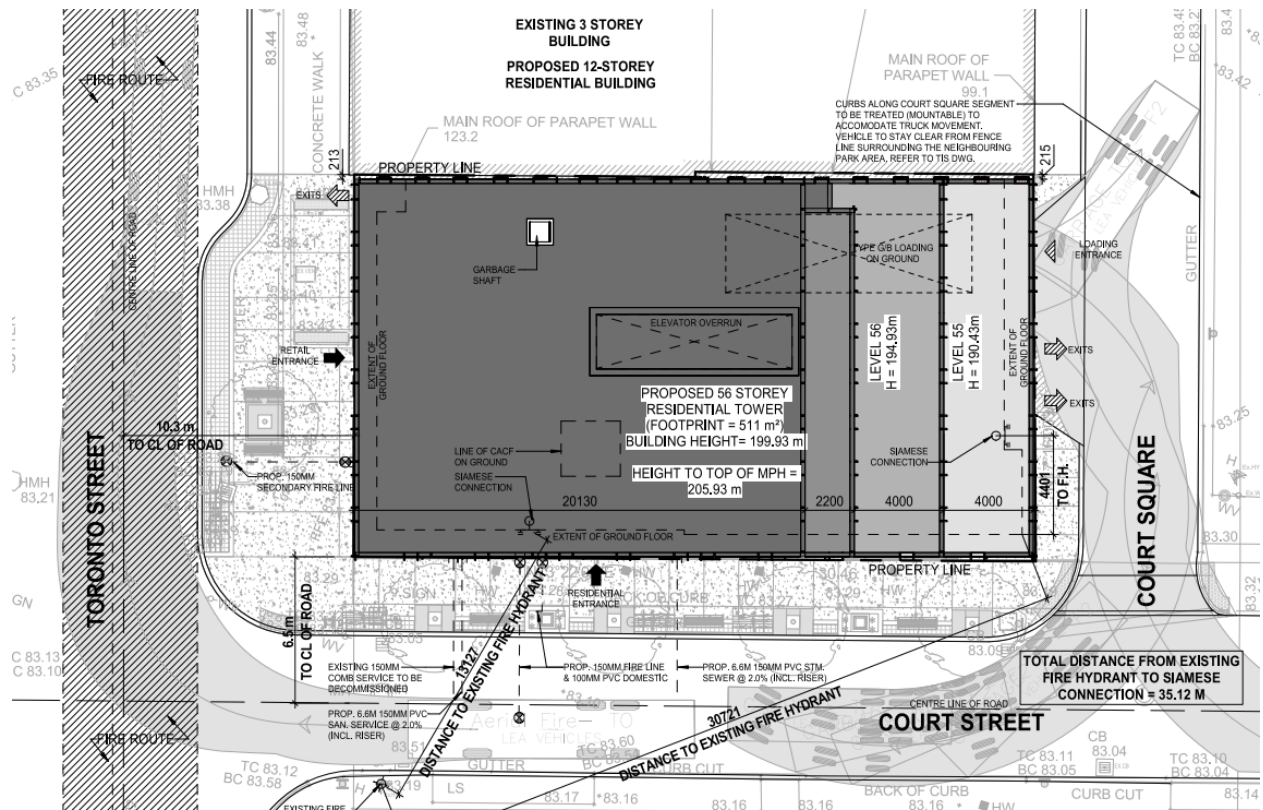
Figure 2. West (principal) and south (side) elevations of 15 Toronto Street looking northeast (GBCA Architects Ltd., 2023).



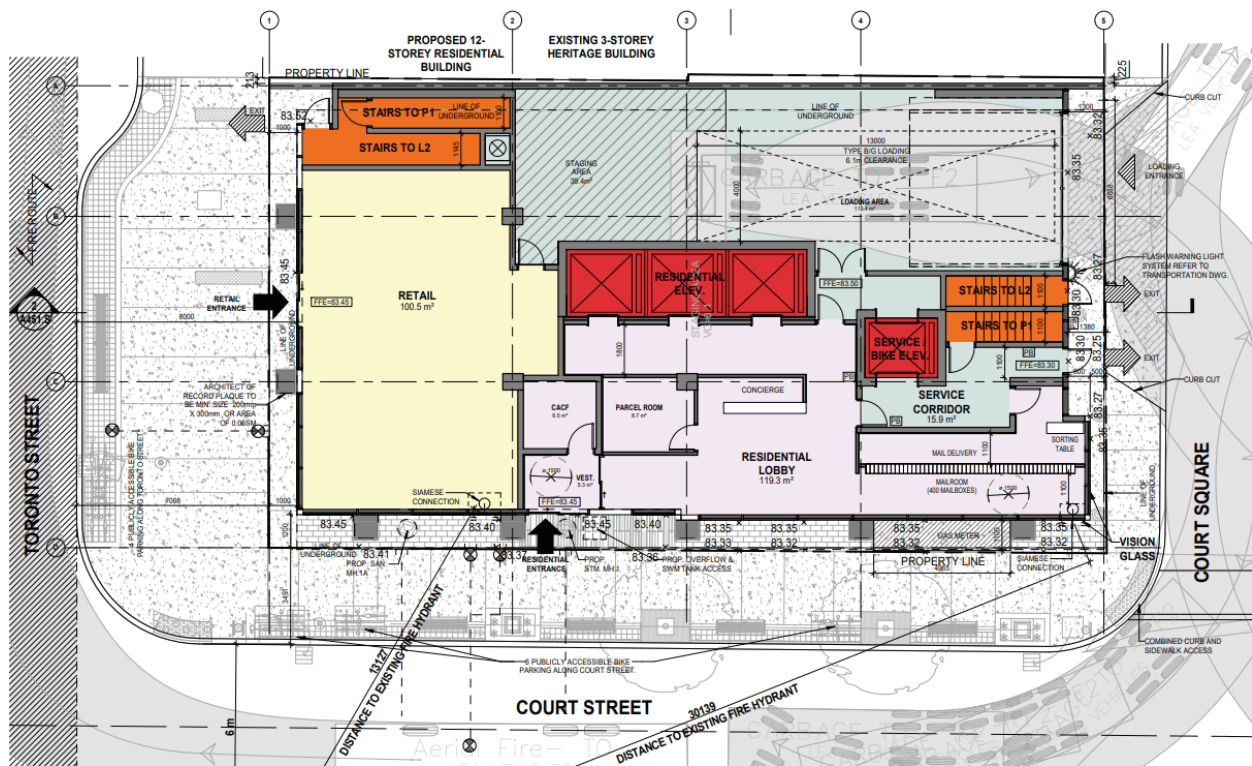
Figure 3. South (side) and East (rear) elevations of 15 Toronto Street looking west (GBCA Architects Ltd., 2023).

15 Toronto Street

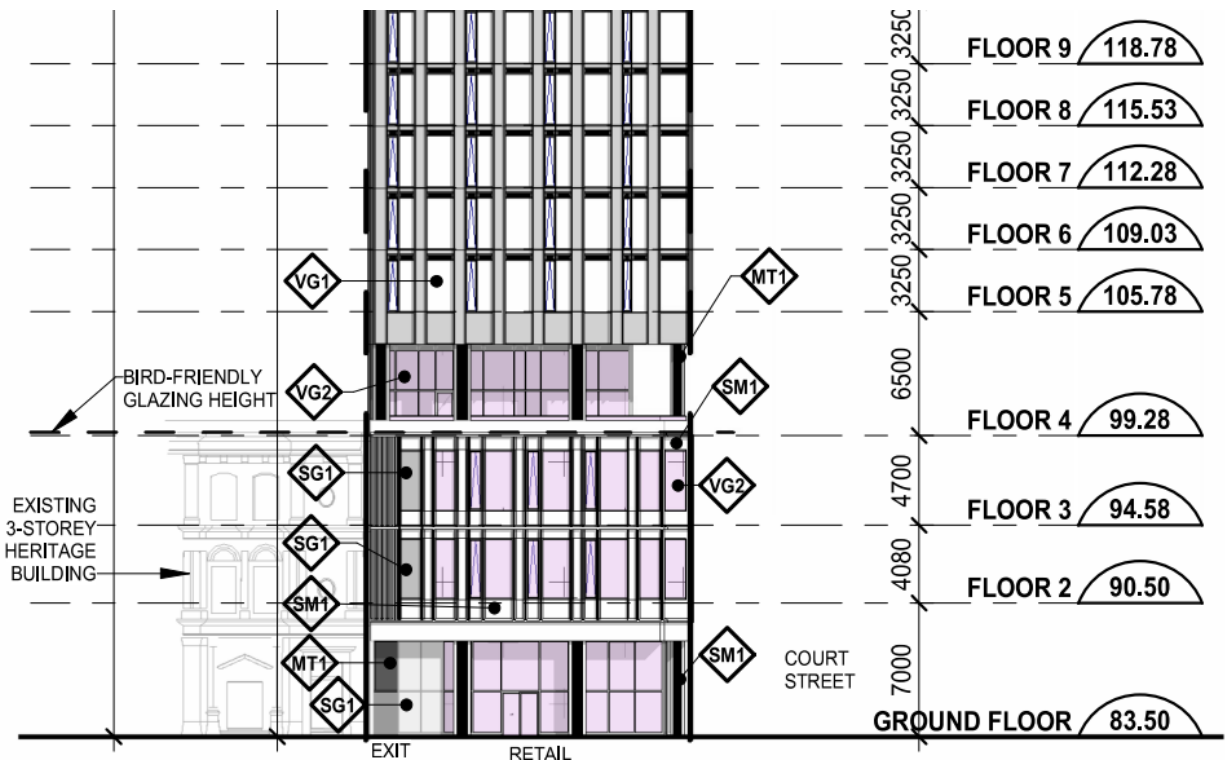
ATTACHMENT 3



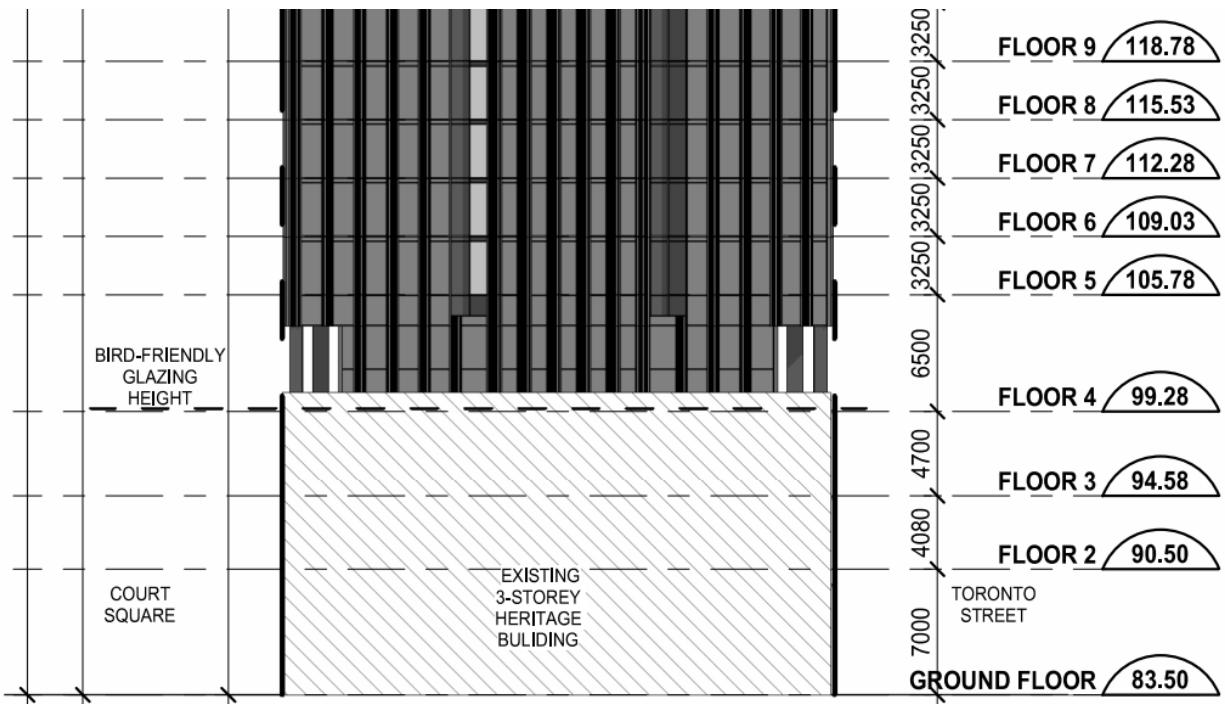
Proposed site plan for 15 Toronto Street included for illustration purposes (Quadrangle Architects Ltd., May 2025).



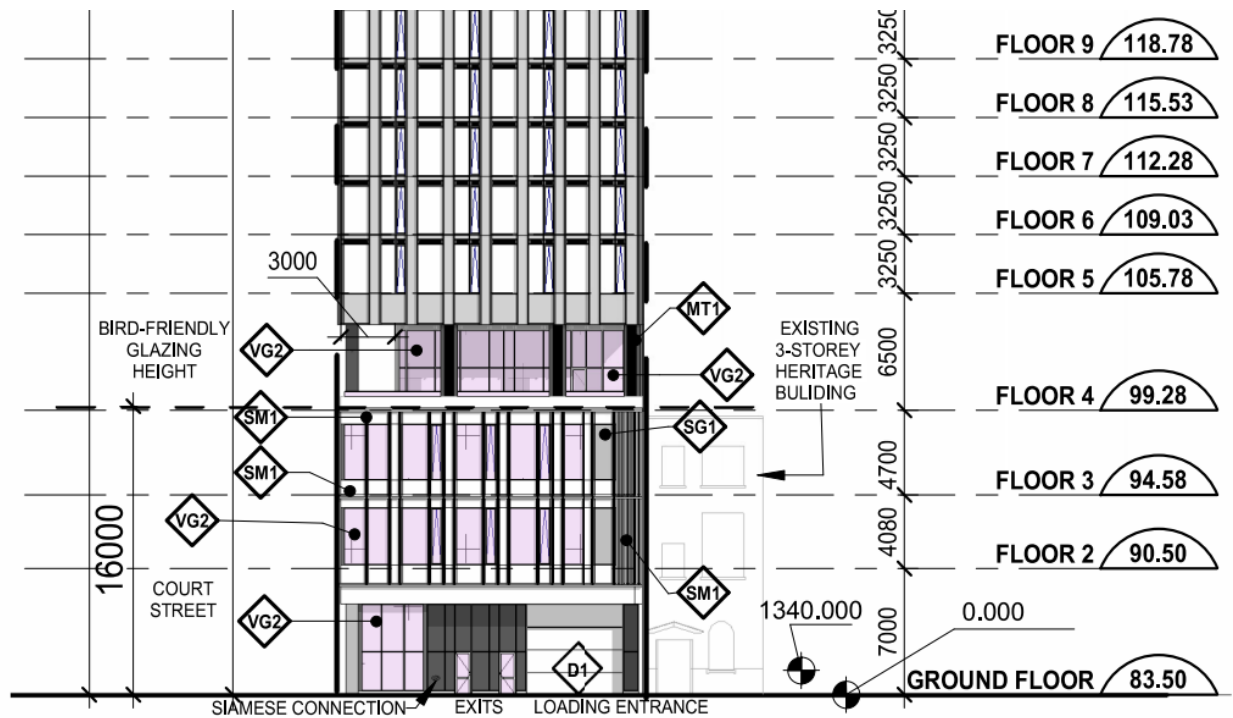
Proposed first floor plan of 15 Toronto Street included for illustration purposes (Quadrangle Architects Ltd., May 2025).



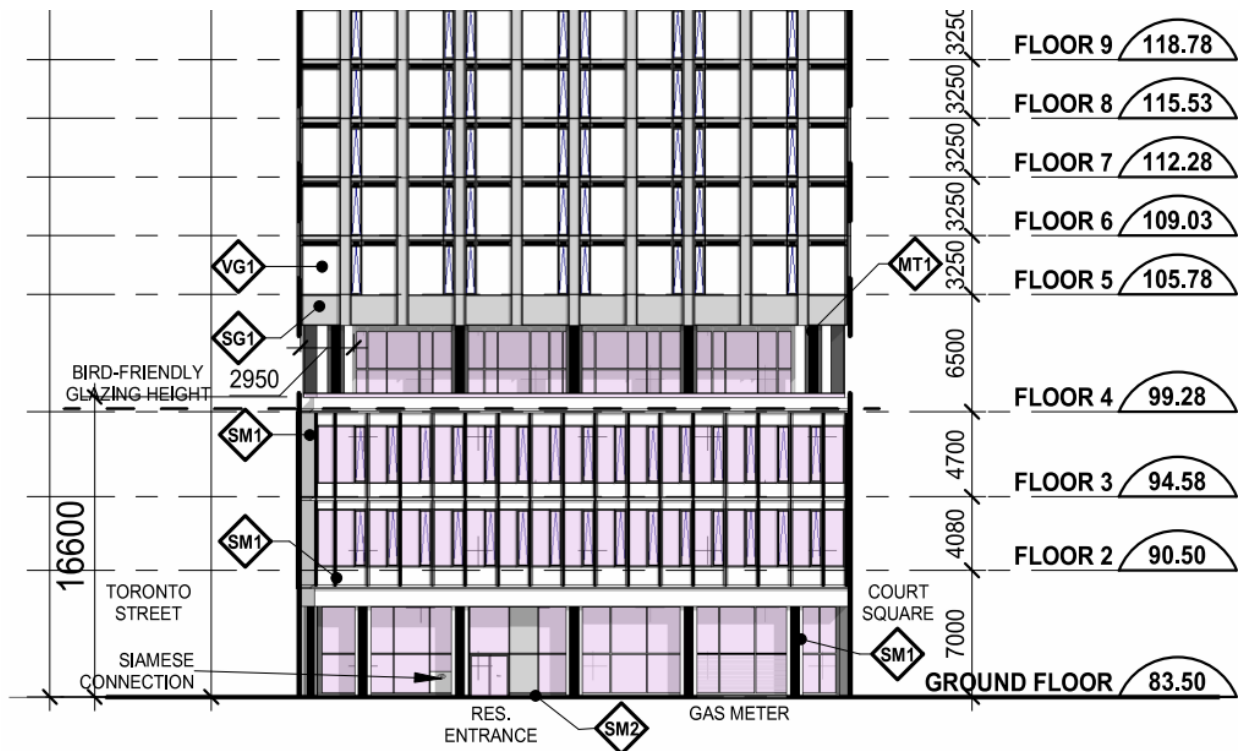
Proposed west elevation drawing for 15 Toronto Street included for illustration purposes (Quadrangle Architects Ltd., May 2025).



Proposed north elevation drawing for 15 Toronto Street included for illustration purposes (Quadrangle Architects Ltd., May 2025).



Proposed east elevation drawing for 15 Toronto Street included for illustration purposes (Quadrangle Architects Ltd., May 2025).



Proposed south elevation drawing for 15 Toronto Street included for illustration purposes (Quadrangle Architects Ltd., May 2025).



Rendering of the proposed development at 15 Toronto Street looking northeast from Toronto Street and Court Street included for illustration purposes (Quadrangle Architects Inc., May 2025).