

309-311 and 349 George Street - Alterations to Designated Heritage Properties under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Date: March 17, 2025

To: Toronto Preservation Board

Toronto and East York Community Council

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

Wards: Toronto Centre - Ward 13

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the conservation strategy for the heritage properties located at 309-311 and 349 George Street (together, the Site"), situated within the Garden District Heritage Conservation District (GDHCD), in connection with proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment applications.

The properties at 309-311 George Street contain a pair of three-storey semi-detached houses known as the Robert Armstrong Houses. The property at 349 George Street contains the Allan School which has close historical ties to the important Toronto Boys' Home (now demolished) and a historical association with the Garden District neighbourhood. All properties subject of this report are owned by the City of Toronto.

In 2017, City Council approved a heritage permit application to alter the Part IV designated properties on the Site, including the properties at 305, 301-303, 297 and 295 George Street. Subsequently, the Ontario Land Tribunal (the "Tribunal") approved the GDHCD. Under the Ontario Heritage Act (the "OHA"), the GDHCD prevails over Part IV of the OHA and permission pursuant to section 42 of the OHA is required to erect, alter and/or demolish any building or structure within its boundaries in a manner consistent with the approved GDHCD Plan. The current proposal is made in connection with a Phase 1 development application which is anticipated to be followed by a Phase 2 affordable housing feasibility assessment for the site to the south which includes the remaining five city-owned heritage properties.

The current application proposes to replace the existing Seaton House complex at 339 George Street with a new 10-storey institutional building containing 80 emergency shelter beds, 100 transitional shelter beds, 124 long-term care beds, 70 supportive housing units, and a 2,269 square metre community hub. The heritage properties at

309-311 and 349 George Street are proposed to be conserved and integrated into the new development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council consent to the application to alter the heritage properties at 309-311 and 349 George Street in accordance with Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act to allow for the construction of a new 10-storey institutional building with the alterations to the designated heritage properties being substantially in accordance with the plans and drawings dated February 25, 2025 prepared by B+H Architects on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning and the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by ERA Architects Inc. dated February 14, 2025 on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning, all subject to and in accordance with a Conservation Plan satisfactory to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning.

2. City Council direct that its consent to the application to alter the designated properties at 309-311 and 349 George Street under Part V, Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage is also subject to the following conditions:

a. that the related Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment requiring the proposed alterations has come into full force and effect; and

b. that prior to the issuance of any permit for all or any part of the properties at 309-311 and 349 George Street, including a heritage permit or a building permit, but excluding permits for repairs and maintenance and usual and minor works for the existing heritage building as are acceptable to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning, the owner shall:

1. provide a detailed Conservation Plan, prepared by a qualified heritage consultant, that is consistent with the conservation strategy set out in the Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by ERA Architects Inc. dated February 14, 2025, to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning;

2. provide an Interpretation Plan for the subject properties, to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning and thereafter shall implement such plan to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning;

3. provide a detailed Landscape Plan for the subject properties, demonstrating how it will support the cultural heritage value of the subject properties and the Garden District Heritage Conservation District,

satisfactory to the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning; and

4. provide building permit drawings, including notes and specifications for the conservation and protective measures keyed to the approved Conservation 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 October 4, 2012, City Council enacted By-law No. 1243-2012 designating the properties at 309-311 George Street under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2012/law1243.pdf>

On July 16, 17, 18 and 19 2013, City Council adopted recommendations on the redevelopment of Seaton House and the Revitalization of George Street.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2013.EX33.17>

On January 31, 2017, City Council adopted Designation of the Garden District Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act by By-law 232-2017.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.TE21.12>

On October 4, 2017, City Council enacted By-law No. 1024-2017 designating the property at 349 George Street under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2017/law1024.pdf>

On November 7, 8 and 9, 2017, City Council adopted recommendations to alter the heritage properties at 349 George Street, 309 and 311 George Street, 305 George Street, 297 George Street and 295 George Street and to demolish the semi-detached building at 301-303 George Street.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2017.TE27.22>

On October 18, 2021, the Tribunal approved the Garden District Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act and the GDHCD Plan, as modified, and directed the City to amend By-law 232-2017 to reflect the approved GDHCD. By-law 1027-2021(LPAT) amends By-law 232-2017 in accordance with the Tribunal's Decision.

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2021/law1027.pdf>

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<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/96fb-CityPlanning-Garden-District-HCD-Revised-Plan.pdf>

On February 6 & 7, 2024, City Council adopted Item EX11.9 which, in part, recommended that the relevant departments explore a City-delivered procurement model

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-242228.pdf>

BACKGROUND

Heritage Properties

309-311 George St - Robert Armstrong Houses

The properties at 309 and 311 George Street are located on the east side of George Street between Dundas Street East and Gerrard Street East. The properties contain a pair of three-storey semi-detached house form buildings (1887) constructed for Robert Armstrong known as the Robert Armstrong Houses. The buildings have design value as well-crafted examples of late-19th century residential structures which are designed in the Second Empire style. The houses are typical of the style of architecture popular in the Sherbourne Street neighbourhood as it developed in the late-1800s, and they exhibit characteristic mansard roofs and decorative detailing.

Contextually, the properties at 309 and 311 George Street are historically linked to their surroundings in the neighbourhood adjoining Sherbourne Street where the former Park Lot acquired by the prominent Allan family was subdivided for residential development beginning in the mid-1800s. The semi-detached houses form part of a streetscape of extant late-19th and early-20th century residential buildings.

349 George St - Allan School

Located on the east side of George Street, south of Gerrard Street East, the property at 349 George Street contains the Allan School, which was completed in 1910 for the Toronto Board of Education. The school was built beside the Toronto Boys' Home (1864) for destitute youth, whose education was provided by teachers from the public-school board, first inside the institution and afterward at the Allan School. The building remained an educational facility for most of the 20th-century, including the period after World War II when it served as the Board's Teaching Aids Centre to produce educational materials. Acquired by the City of Toronto in 1977, the Allan School was more recently known as the School House Shelter for men, adjoining Seaton House. It continues to operate as a shelter today.

The Allan School has design value as a rare and well-crafted example of a school building that blends stylistic details from the Boys' Home (1864-1958) at 295 George Street that once adjoined it with architectural elements identified with contemporary schools in early 20th-century Toronto. The unique composition combines the plan, roof detailing, frontispiece and two-tone pattern brickwork from the Boys' Home, with the

oversized window openings and distinctive bay window that became standard features in schools built by the Toronto Board of Education during this era.

The Allan School is linked historically to architect C. H. Bishop through his role as Superintendent of Buildings for the Board of Education during the period when the school was designed and constructed. Bishop is credited with dozens of elementary and secondary schools in Toronto during his thirty-year career and he developed standardized plans for the Board of Education to address the demand for new and larger schools in the early-20th century. However, as part of his portfolio, Bishop continued to design smaller edifices for special requirements and settings, including the Allan School, beside the Toronto Boys' Home.

The associative value of the Allan School is drawn from its close historical ties to the Boys' Home, which was an institution of importance in Toronto for nearly a century. Founded by a group of benevolent Protestant women to provide housing and education for destitute boys temporarily removed from their families, the Boys' Home on George Street contained its own school within the Home itself, until the Board of Education opened the purpose-built Allan School to educate the Boys' Home residents.

The Allan School is also valued for its historical association with the neighbourhood now known as the Garden District, for its location adjoining Allan Gardens, for which the school was named. In the mid-19th century, the subdivision of the original Park Lots for upscale housing was followed by schools, places of worship and other institutions serving the community, including the Boys' Home on George Street. The Allan School on George Street is an important surviving reminder of the evolution of the community in the 20th century.

Garden District Heritage Conservation District (GDHCD)

The Garden District was authorized and prioritized for study as a potential Heritage Conservation District by City Council on October 2, 2012, after the Downtown East Planning Study, initiated in October 2011, identified heritage conservation as a key component of the revitalization strategy for the area. The GDHCD Study was completed in the summer of 2014 and the development of the GDHCD Plan was initiated the following autumn. A number of community consultation meetings were held during the HCD study and plan phases. City Council passed By-law No. 232-2017 in 2017 designating the GDHCD and adopting the Plan which was subsequently appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal. (LPAT). On October 18, 2021 the LPAT issued an order approving the GDHCD and related HCD Plan, as modified and reflected in Amending By-law No. 1027-2021(LPAT)..

2017 Proposal Background

In July 2013, City Council adopted Item EX33.17 in a report from the City Manager and the Chief Financial Officer recommending approval, in principle, of the revitalization of George Street by replacing the existing Seaton House men's shelter with a long-term care home, shelter services, affordable housing and a community service hub and to develop detailed plans, including but not limited to a heritage study. City Council also approved delivering the project through an alternative financing and procurement model

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with Infrastructure Ontario and Lands Corporation (known as Infrastructure Ontario, "IO") acting as procurement lead.

At that time, the George Street Revitalization (GSR) site included all the heritage properties at 295, 297, 301-303, 305, 309-311 and 349 George Street. Heritage Planning staff worked extensively with the relevant City departments and IO in an effort to design the new development in a way that mitigated the impact of the proposed massing on the lower scale heritage buildings. The result was the integration of all the heritage properties into the new development with the exception of the buildings at 301-303 George Street which were recommended for demolition due to their extremely poor condition following an earlier fire.

In November 2017 City Council adopted Item TE27.22, recommending approval of the alterations to 349 George Street, 309-311 George Street, 305 George Street, 297 George Street and 295 George Street and demolition of the semi-detached building at 301-303 George Street under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Current (2025) Proposal Background

On February 6 & 7, 2024, City Council adopted Item EX11.9 which, in part, recommended that the relevant departments explore a City-delivered model for achieving the development.

Heritage Planning staff have had continued involvement in discussions with the relevant City departments to ensure the heritage resources and the Garden District HCD will be conserved in the new development model.

An application made by the City's Corporate Real Estate Management division (CREM) to alter the properties at 309-311 and 349 George Street under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act was submitted on February 19, 2025 in conjunction with applications to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law as part of a Phase 1 proposal. Reports from the Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services and the Director of Development Review, Toronto and East York District, will both be considered by City Council in conjunction with this report on the application under the Ontario Heritage Act. A feasibility assessment for the site to the south which includes the remaining five city-owned heritage properties is anticipated as part of a Phase 2 strategy.

Building Condition

With the exception of 349 George Street, which continues to operate as a men's emergency shelter, the remaining heritage buildings on the development site are vacant. At the time of their acquisition by the City, all of these buildings were in deteriorating physical condition and nearly all had been damaged by fire. The fire damage to 295 and 301 George Street was so extensive that their roofs and third floors had been largely destroyed. After acquisition, the City engaged the services of a heritage consultant to undertake a condition assessment and to prepare a specification to stabilize the buildings. The stabilization measures undertaken since that time have been extensive and have ranged from installing exterior perimeter security fences and lighting to building temporary roofs for 295 and 301 George Street. A more recent re-

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assessment was undertaken in 2024 with recommendations to mitigate further deterioration.

The Phase 1 heritage buildings will continue to be stabilized until work commences and they are conserved and incorporated into the new development. An assessment of the heritage properties at 295, 297, 301-303 and 305 George Street for a potential affordable housing development opportunity is expected as part of Phase 2.

Development Proposal

Initially approved by City Council in 2017, the George Street Revitalization project has been revised to be undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 is represented in the current application under the Ontario Heritage Act, in conjunction with applications to amend the Official Plan and Zoning By-law and comprises the contributing GDHCD heritage properties at 309-311 and 349 George Street, which are also all designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. Phase 2 is anticipated to be a future application that will include the heritage properties at 295, 297, 301-303 and 305 George Street.

The (current) Phase 1 proposal is subject to applications to amend the Official Plan and the Zoning By-law to permit a 10-storey institutional building, containing 80 emergency shelter beds, 100 transitional shelter beds, 124 long-term care beds, 70 supportive housing units, and a 2,269 square metre community hub. The new development would replace the existing Seaton House complex at 339 George Street, conserve the heritage building at 349 George Street in its entirety in situ, and retain the primary elevation of the heritage buildings at 309-311 George Street in situ with the retention of the side return walls to a depth of approximately 2.8 metres.

Heritage Planning Policy Framework

The Planning Act

The Planning Act guides development in the Province of Ontario. It states that municipalities must have regard for matters of provincial interest. Section 2(d) specifically refers to “the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest” and 2(r) “to a built form that is well designed and provides for a sense of place.”

The Provincial Planning Statement (2024)

The Provincial Planning Statement (2024) (the "PPS") provides policy direction province-wide on land use planning and development to promote strong communities, a strong economy, and a clean and healthy environment. It includes policies on key issues that affect communities, such as:

- the efficient use and management of land and infrastructure
- ensuring the sufficient provision of housing to meet changing needs including affordable housing
- ensuring opportunities for job creation

- ensuring the appropriate transportation, water, sewer and other infrastructure is available to accommodate current and future needs
- protecting people, property and community resources by directing development away from natural or human-made hazards, and
- conservation of cultural heritage and archaeology

The provincial policy-led planning system recognizes and addresses the complex inter-relationships among environmental, economic and social factors in land use planning. The PPS supports a comprehensive, integrated and long-term approach to planning, and recognizes linkages among policy areas.

The PPS is issued under Section 3 of the Planning Act and all decisions of Council in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter shall be consistent with the PPS. Comments, submissions or advice affecting a planning matter that are provided by Council shall also be consistent with the PPS.

Policy 4.6.1 of the PPS directs that "Protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved." "Conserved" is defined in the PPS as the identification, protection, management and use of built heritage resources in a manner that ensures their cultural heritage value or interest is retained.

Policy 4.6.2 states that "Planning authorities shall not permit development and site alteration on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential unless the significant archaeological resources have been conserved."

All decisions of Council in respect of the exercise of any authority that affects a planning matter shall be consistent with the PPS and shall conform with Provincial Plans. All comments, submissions or advice affecting a planning matter that are provided by Council shall also be consistent with the PPS and conform with Provincial Plans.

Provincial Plans are intended to be read in their entirety and relevant policies are to be applied to each situation.

Toronto Official Plan

This application has been reviewed against the policies of the City of Toronto Official Plan. The Plan provides the policy framework for heritage conservation in the City. The following Official Plan policies apply to the proposed alterations:

3.1.6.4: "Properties on the 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."

3.1.6.32: "Impacts of site alterations, developments, municipal improvements, and/or public works within or adjacent to Heritage Conservation Districts will be assessed to ensure that the integrity of the districts' heritage values, attributes, and character are conserved. This assessment will be achieved through a Heritage Impact Assessment, consistent with Schedule 3 of the Official Plan, to the satisfaction of the City.

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

Standards and Guidelines

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (the "Standards and Guidelines") is the official document guiding planning, stewardship and the conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City of Toronto. The General Standards (1-9) the Standards for Rehabilitation (10-12), and the Standards for Restoration (13-14) apply to this project.

The Standards and Guidelines can be accessed here: <http://www.historicplaces.ca/media/18072/81468-parks-s+g-eng-web2.pdf>

Garden District Heritage Conservation District Plan

The Garden District Heritage Conservation District Plan contains policies and guidelines which are intended to guide change while achieving heritage conservation objectives. The GDHCD Plan can be found here: <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/96fb-CityPlanning-Garden-District-HCD-Revised-Plan.pdf>

COMMENTS

Heritage Planning staff have reviewed the Heritage Impact Assessment submitted in support of the proposal prepared by ERA Architects, for conformity with the Planning Act, the Provincial Planning Statement, the City's Official Plan heritage policies, the Garden District Heritage Conservation District Plan and the Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Conservation Strategy

The conservation strategy for the heritage properties within the Phase 1 proposal is generally consistent with both the 2017 City Council-approved scheme for those properties and the Garden District HCD Plan. The existing Seaton House complex will be removed and replaced with a new ten-storey institutional building containing transitional and emergency shelters, community space, social and institutional services and long-term care.

The site is considered to be a "combined property" as defined in the GDHCD Plan which includes both contributing and non-contributing properties. The proposed new massing incorporates step backs above the eighth storey along the west, north and east elevations in an effort to minimize visual impact on the HCD as well as potential shadow impact on the Allan Garden observatory to the north.

The introduction of a new 10-storey building on the combined property would conserve the entire building at 349 George Street in situ with the restoration of heritage attributes and minor modifications undertaken to allow the heritage building to connect to the new development. The new two-storey addition to the east of the Allan School is an improvement over the 2017 proposal as it has been designed to fall behind and conserve the existing roof profile of the building at 349 George Street thereby minimizing its visual impact. According to the HIA, "the existing side-yard setback is generally conserved through the incorporation of a three-storey relief at the northwest corner of the new building and a minimum separation distance of 3.6 metres between the retained roof and the north elevation of new construction. These measures also maintain the three-dimensional legibility of the conserved building from George Street. While a new single-storey connection will partially obstruct the original primary (south) elevation, the existing gable frontispiece will remain visible from George Street with other features to be conserved and enclosed within the interior space. Further, while modifications to the interior of 349 George Street are anticipated, the existing openings at the west and north elevations will be conserved." The building will be rehabilitated for use as a community hub and will provide barrier-free access to and from the new building.

The primary (west) elevation of the building at 309-311 George Street is also proposed to be conserved in situ and incorporated into the new development in a manner consistent with the previously approved conservation strategy. The portion of new construction on this property is set back to the rear of the existing firebreaks to ensure the retained primary façade is slightly proud of the new building above it. A 2.9 metre step back at Level 3 above the mansard roof will provide a visual relief from the massing with an additional 9.4 metre step back at Level 4, along with the reconstruction of a portion of the side walls, will conserve the three-dimensional legibility of 309-311 George Street. While the massing of the new building above is not stepped back as far as in the 2017 proposal, the base portion of the new building directly north of 311 George Street is set back further, allowing the heritage building to be more prominent.

Details on the heritage building conservation as well as the new building design and materiality will be required in a Conservation Plan and reviewed in the site plan application for compliance with the approved Conservation Plan, to the satisfaction of the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning.

Staff are of the opinion that the development proposal and conservation strategy for Phase 1 has been designed to be consistent with the strategy approved by City Council in 2017 and with the Garden District HCD Plan which came into force subsequent to Council's initial approval - all while ensuring appropriate and compatible uses are accommodated on the site. Additions and alterations to the contributing properties at 309-311 and 349 George Street are generally concentrated at the rear of the existing buildings in an effort to conserve their three-dimensional integrity and identified heritage attributes, per policies 6.10.1, 6.10.6 and 6.10.8 of the Garden District HCD Plan. Further, new construction has been sited to maintain and continue the existing front and side yard setback conditions of the contributing properties, per Policies 6.10.4 and 6.10.5 of the Plan.

In addition, a detailed and comprehensive Conservation Plan will be developed for the buildings at 349 and 309-311 George Street to conserve significant heritage attributes, and to rehabilitate the buildings for contemporary institutional use, per the Policies for contributing properties contained in Section 6 of the GDHCD Plan and will also be implemented through Site Plan process.

Finally, the Phase 1 proposal will significantly enhance the critical community supports and social services in this neighbourhood. This area has played an historic role in providing community and social services in the City and it continues to do so. This legacy is a valuable and fundamental contributing factor to its cultural heritage value.

Conclusion

Phase 1 of the revised George Street Revitalization project will see the conservation of 309-311 and 349 George Street while delivering much-needed essential services in a new, modern facility. The interdivisional staff team has worked extensively on the heritage planning aspects of the proposal to design a new facility and community hub in a way that mitigates the impact of the proposed massing on the lower scale heritage buildings, while also being generally consistent with the strategy approved by City Council in 2017 and the approved GDHCD.

Heritage staff are of the opinion that the proposal satisfies the objectives of the Garden District Heritage Conservation District Plan and complies with the policies of the City's Official Plan and the Provincial Planning Statement. Given the above, staff are supportive of the proposal and will continue to work collaboratively with all City partners to deliver this important new facility.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Location Map & Aerial View

Attachment 2 - Photographs

Attachment 3 - Renderings of 2017 Approved Proposal

Attachment 4 - Selected Drawings

LOCATION MAP & AERIAL VIEW

ATTACHMENT 1

309-311 and 349 George Street



Location map



Aerial view

PHOTOGRAPHS

ATTACHMENT 2

309-311 and 349 George Street



309-311 George St - west elevation (Google Maps 2023)



309-311 George St - east elevation (ERA)

309-311 and 349 George Street -Alterations to Heritage Properties



East elevation of 349 George Street (ERA)



North elevation of 349 George Street (ERA)



West elevation of 349 George Street (ERA)



South elevation of 349 George Street (ERA)

RENDERINGS OF 2017 APPROVED PROPOSAL
309-311 and 349 George Street

ATTACHMENT 3



Mid-block rendering of the 2017 proposal showing 309-311 George St

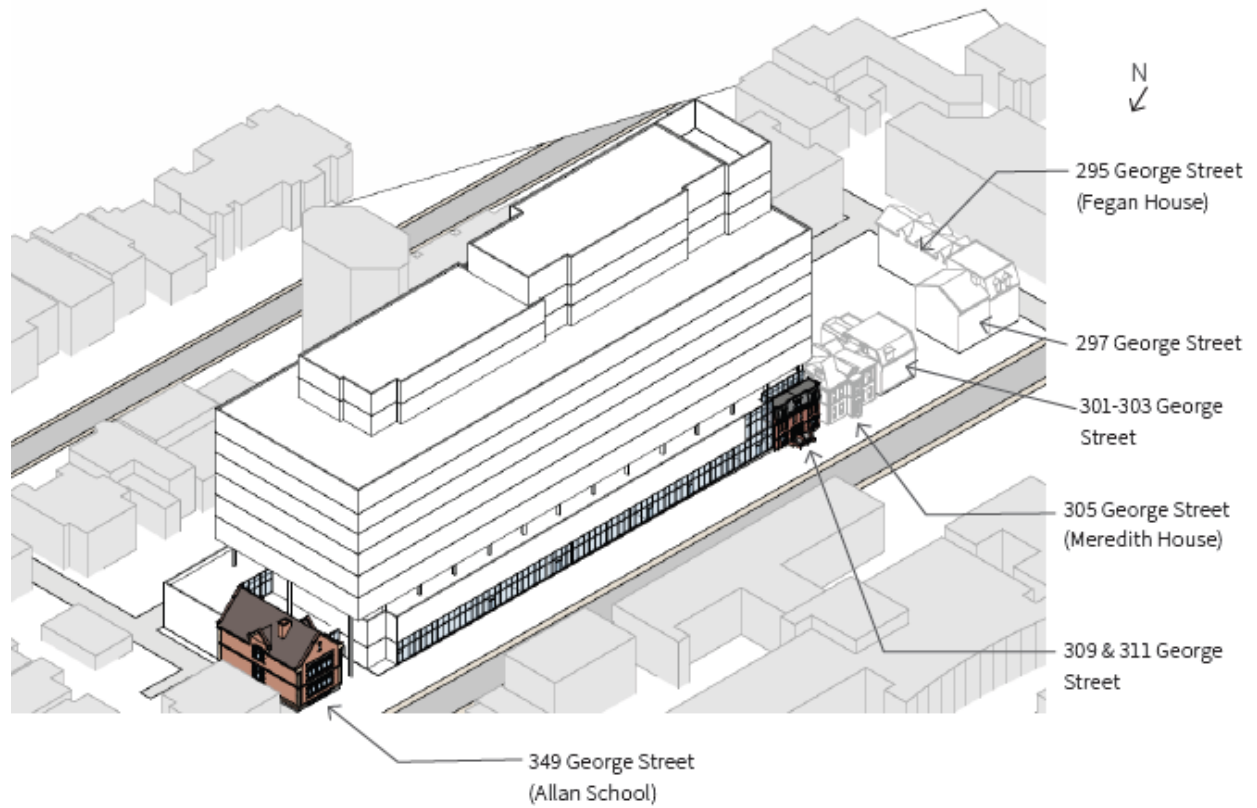


Rendering looking northwest showing 2017 proposal for 349 George St

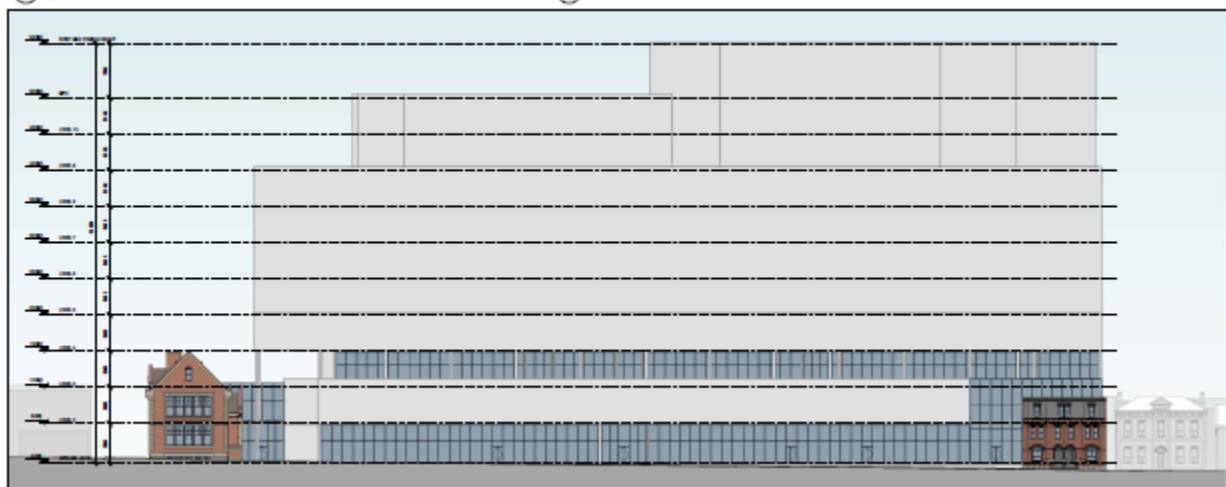
SELECTED DRAWINGS

ATTACHMENT 4

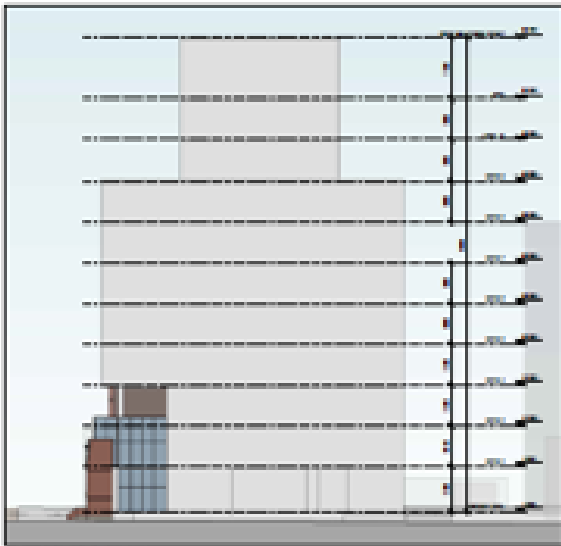
309-311 and 349 George Street



Massing diagram of proposed envelope (source: B+H Architects, annotated by ERA Architects)



West elevation



South elevation



North elevation



View of 349 George St from south



View of 309-311 George St from north