

543 Yonge Street - Demolition of a Building within the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District and Approval of a Replacement Building

Date: November 4, 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 proposed demolition of the 4-storey commercial building on the site at 543 Yonge Street (543, 545 and 549 Yonge Street) and approve its replacement with a 68-storey mixed-use building with a 2-storey podium, including retail at grade and residential above, 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 Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District ("HYSCD"). The subject property is identified as 'non-contributing' in the District Plan. The District Plan allows for the demolition of buildings or structures on non-contributing properties. The proposed new 68-storey mixed-use building complies with the intent of objectives contained within the HYSCD Plan.

The development application also requires approval under the Planning Act, which is the subject of a separate report from the Director, Community Planning. Recommendations contained within this report relate solely to approvals required under the Ontario Heritage Act.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, 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 543 Yonge Street in the Historic Yonge Street 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 543 Yonge Street is substantially in accordance with the plans and elevations submitted by the applicant and prepared by Arcadis, dated September 5, 2025, and the Heritage Impact Assessment, prepared by ERA Architects Inc, dated June 2, 2025, and on file with the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning; and
- c. that prior to the issuance of any heritage permit for the property at 543 Yonge 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, consistent with the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District Plan substantially in accordance with the plans and elevations submitted by the applicant and prepared by Arcadis, dated September 5, 2025, and the Historic Yonge Street Heritage 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 March 16, 2016, City Council adopted By-law 235-2016 to designate the Yonge Street HCD and adopt the Yonge Street HCD Plan. The Historic Yonge HCD was appealed and was subsequently approved by the Ontario Land Tribunal ("OLT") on July 3, 2024. The District Plan can be found here:
https://www.toronto.ca/ext/digital_comm/pdfs/city-planning/city-planning-historic-yonge-street-hcd-plan.pdf

BACKGROUND

Subject Property

The Site at 543 Yonge Street is located on the east side of Yonge Street, between Wellesley Street East and Maitland Street. The Site contains a 4-storey commercial building constructed c. 1976. A public laneway, known as Maitland Terrace, is located to the rear of the site. The site is identified as a non-contributing property within the Historic Yonge Street Character sub-area of the HYSHCD Plan.

Adjacent Heritage Properties

The site is adjacent to ten designated Part V properties, all of which are located within the HYSHCD HCD.

1. 555 Yonge Street (non-contributing property), Abutting the site to the north: A 10-storey converted commercial building (now residential, formerly office) with ground-floor retail.
2. 556 Yonge Street (non-contributing property), Opposite side of Yonge Street, 3-storey red brick building constructed in 1879.
3. 552-554 Yonge Street (contributing property): Opposite side of Yonge Street, 3-storey Edwardian-style commercial brick building constructed in 1912.
4. 550 Yonge Street (contributing property): Opposite side of Yonge Street, A Romanesque-style, 3-storey building constructed c.1885-1886, forming part of a commercial block with #548 and #546. Included on the Heritage Register by City Council on March 15, 1974.
5. 548 Yonge Street (contributing property): Opposite side of Yonge Street, A Romanesque-style, 3-storey building constructed c.1885-1886, forming part of a commercial block with #546 and #550. Included on the Heritage Register by City Council on March 15, 1974.
6. 546 Yonge Street (contributing property): Opposite side of Yonge Street, A Romanesque-style, 3-storey building constructed c.1885-1886, forming part of a commercial block with #548 and #550. Included on the Heritage Register by City Council on March 15, 1974.
7. 544 Yonge Street (contributing property): Opposite side of Yonge Street, A 2.5-storey Second Empire-style brick building from 1873. Part of a row with #540 and #542. Included on the Heritage Register by City Council on March 15, 1974.
8. 542 Yonge Street (contributing property): Opposite side of Yonge Street, A 2.5-storey Second Empire-style brick building from 1873. Part of a row with #540 and #544. Included on the Heritage Register by City Council on March 15, 1974.

9. 540 Yonge Street (contributing property): Opposite side of Yonge Street, A 2.5-storey Second Empire-style brick building from 1873. Part of a row with #542 and #544. Included on the Heritage Register by City Council on March 15, 1974.

10. 535 Yonge Street (contributing property): Abutting the site to the south, An Italianate-style, 3-storey, brick storefront dating to 1882-1883. Included on the Heritage Register by City Council on March 15, 1974.

Development Proposal

The proposed development is a 68-storey (222 metres, excluding the mechanical penthouse) mixed-use building containing 679 dwelling units and 402 square metres of non-residential gross floor area. To accommodate new construction on the site, the existing 4-storey non-contributing commercial building will be demolished.

The base building includes a 6 metre curb-to-building setback for most of the Yonge Street frontage, other than at the southernmost portion of the site where the base building is proposed to extend to the property line and align with front setback of the adjacent contributing heritage property to the south. The 3-storey streetwall height (with mezzanine) aligns with the height of the adjacent contributing heritage building to the south and maintains the predominant low-rise historic form along Yonge Street.

Above the third storey, the base building steps back 5 metres from the Yonge Street frontage to the 11th storey, aligning with the front setback and height of the existing building to the immediate north at 555 Yonge Street.

Along Yonge Street, the massing reinforces the legibility and prominence of the low-scale streetwall and heritage character through the provision of a series of stepbacks that arrive at a 10-metre stepback above the base building to the tower. Beginning at the 17th floor of the north side of the proposed tower, the building gradually cantilevers above the existing building at 555 Yonge Street, up to a maximum depth of 3 metres at the 20th floor and then continues for the full height of the proposed tower.

An Official Plan Amendment was required when the application was originally submitted to address performance standards in the Council-adopted North Downtown Yonge Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP 382). Following submission, the Ontario Land Tribunal issued a final Order amending SASP 382. Staff have reviewed the amended policies and determined that the proposal complies with the Official Plan and an amendment is no longer necessary.

A Zoning By-law Amendment is required to permit the proposed building height, setbacks, gross floor area, amenity space, and floor space index, among other performance standards and is the subject of a report from the Director, Community Planning.

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:

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

Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District

The property at 543 Yonge Street is located within the boundaries of the Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District Plan, which was adopted by City Council on March 16, 2016 per By-law 235-2016. The Yonge HCD was subsequently appealed and approved by the Ontario Land Tribunal ("OLT") on July 3, 2024. 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:

6.1.1 New development on non-contributing properties shall be compatible with the heritage attributes and cultural heritage value of the District, while reflecting the design values of its own time.

6.2.1 The demolition of buildings or structures on a non-contributing property may be permitted. 6.2.2 If permission to demolish a building or structure

6.2.2 If permission to demolish a building or structure on a non-contributing property is granted, demolition activity shall not begin until plans for the replacement building(s) have been submitted and approved by Toronto City Council, in accordance with Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

6.4.1 New development and additions to a non-contributing property shall conserve the cultural heritage value and heritage attributes of the District.

6.4.2 New development and additions to a non-contributing property shall conserve the setback condition of character sub-area where the property is located

6.4.3 New development and additions to a non-contributing property shall be designed to be compatible with the design, form, and massing of adjacent contributing properties, maintain the legibility and prominence of the low-scale

streetwall, and conserve the three-dimensional integrity of adjacent contributing properties.

6.5.1 New development and additions on non-contributing properties shall reference the horizontal rhythm articulated in the façades of adjacent contributing properties.

6.5.2 New development and additions on non-contributing properties within the Historic Yonge Street character sub-area shall provide separated retail bays, expressed on the elevation of the new development and/or additions, that complement the existing fine-grained store frontage widths, contribute to the animated streetscape, and reinforce the pedestrian-oriented public realm.

6.5.3 New development and additions on non-contributing properties shall reference the vertical rhythm articulated in the façades of adjacent contributing properties.

6.8.1 Cladding materials used on exterior walls of new development and additions on non-contributing properties, that are visible from the public realm, shall be physically and visually compatible with the heritage attributes and cultural heritage value of the District and the character sub-area of the property.

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

The proposal seeks permission under the Ontario Heritage Act to demolish an existing non-contributing building within the HYSHCD Plan area and to construct a new 68-storey mixed-use tower (plus mechanical penthouse) with a 2-storey podium. The HYSHCD Plan policy states that the demolition of buildings or structures on a non-contributing property may be permitted. Since 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.

Discussions about this proposal began prior to the HYHCD Plan coming into full force and effect. Earlier versions of the associated Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment application were determined by staff, at a high level, to comply with and not be contrary to the objectives of the Council approved HYSHCD Plan. The current

submission has been reviewed against the in force HYSHCD Plan, which was revised at a settlement hearing to allow for adjustments to the original 10 metre setback requirements, subject to appropriate proposed mitigation measures contained within a Heritage Impact.

Within the HYSHCD, new development on non-contributing properties is guided by policies in Section 6 of the HCD Plan. Section 6.4.1 of the HYSHCD Plan states that new development and additions to a non-contributing property shall conserve the cultural heritage value and heritage attributes of the district. New development within the Historic Yonge Street character sub-area should be a minimum of 3 storeys. Existing contributing properties are generally 2-4 storeys. The proposed 2-storey podium has been designed in a manner that respects the cultural heritage value of the HYSHCD and reinforces the street wall of the contributing property to the south (535 Yonge Street). As proposed, the podium meets the intentions of the Plan policy as outlined in Section 6.4.1.

Section 6.4.2 states that new development and additions to a non-contributing property shall conserve the setback condition of the character sub-area where the property is located. Within the Historic Yonge Street character sub-area, the base building, or first 3 storeys of new development and additions, should be built to the full extent of the front lot line adjacent to a street. Base buildings should generally be built to the full extent of side lot lines, except for where the side lot line is adjacent to a street that intersects with Yonge Street.

The base building, as proposed, has been designed to conform to the existing setback conditions on Yonge Street and reinforces the street wall of the HYSHCD. The building is aligned at the property line where it abuts the heritage properties to the south (for one bay in width) and is set back 2 metres for the remainder of its street frontage. The project therefore complies and conserves the setback condition of the street.

As outlined in Section 6.4.3, new development and additions to a non-contributing property shall be designed to be compatible with the design, form, and massing of adjacent contributing properties, maintain the legibility and prominence of the low-scale street wall, and conserve the three-dimensional integrity of adjacent contributing properties. The proposed development incorporates the following design considerations to respond to the adjacent historic main street commercial character along Yonge Street:

- A contemporary material palette that is distinguishable from the red brick on the adjacent heritage properties
- Vertical structural piers to visually support the rhythm of narrow storefronts
- Horizontal datum lines at the lower podium levels that reference the heights and rhythm of the adjacent and nearby heritage buildings
- Diversity in the vertical and horizontal storefront articulation at street-level, consistent with the storefronts of adjacent heritage buildings, which exhibit slight variations in these aspects

Within the Historic Yonge Street character sub-area, any portion of new development and/or additions taller than the adjacent heritage street wall should step back generally 10 metres from any property line fronting Yonge Street, informed by a Heritage Impact Assessment.

As proposed, the podium setback does not strictly comply with the policies of the HCD Plan. However, the lower street wall podium is 2 storeys and consistent in height with adjacent heritage properties at the south. Although the step back from the top of the street wall podium is 3 metres to the upper 8-storey volume, this upper podium is consistent with the height of the non-contributing property abutting the property to the north. At the top of this upper 8-storey volume, an additional 5 metre step back results in the 11th floor of the tower completing a step back that is 10 metres from the Yonge Street property line. At the 11th floor of the tower, the tapered cantilever rises to the 20th floor from which the tower rises its full height.

Significantly, the ground level setback has decreased by .5 metres at the Yonge Street property line (relative to the earlier version) which in turn brings the upper 8-storey volume .5 metres closer to the Yonge Street frontage. This revised setback is offset by the tower rising its full extent no closer than 6.5 metres from the Yonge Street property line. The 6.5 metre step back of the tower for its full height, improves upon the previous scheme, where the tower massing contained a step back condition that approached 4.5 metres from the Yonge Street frontage.

Section 6.5.2 of the HCD Plan states that new development and additions on non-contributing properties within the Historic Yonge Street character sub-area shall provide separated retail bays, expressed on the elevation of the new development and/or additions, that complement the existing fine-grained store frontage widths, contribute to the animated streetscape, and reinforce the pedestrian-oriented public realm. The proposed base building includes a pattern of window glazing, cornice lines, width of retail bays, vertical articulation, and solid-to-void ratios that all respect the adjacent heritage property.

Contemporary materials will be used selectively, mainly brick masonry and granite, which are compatible with the heritage character of the contributing properties on the block and the heritage values of the HYSHCD.

CONCLUSION

Staff are supportive of the proposed removal of the existing building located at 543 Yonge Street in the Historic Yonge Street 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 buildings on Yonge Street and, overall, the application conserves the cultural heritage values of the HYSHCD.

As such Heritage Planning staff are of the opinion the proposal is consistent with the Historic Yonge Street 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

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Urban Design, City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

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

LOCATION MAP

543 Yonge Street

ATTACHMENT 1

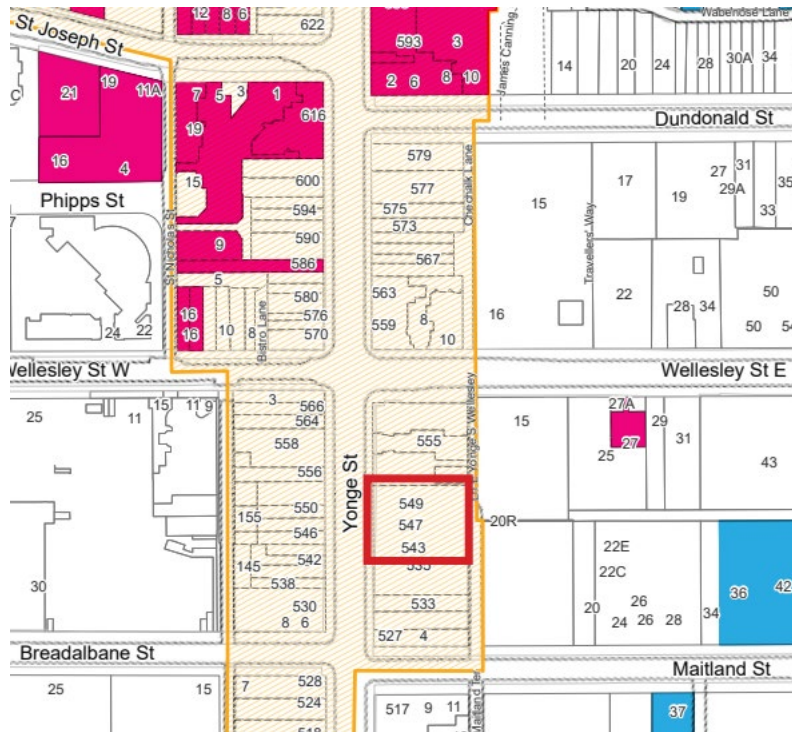


Figure 1. Location Map showing the property at 543 Yonge Street outlined in red, located on the east side of Yonge Street between Maitland Street and Wellesley Street East. This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown (ERA 2025).

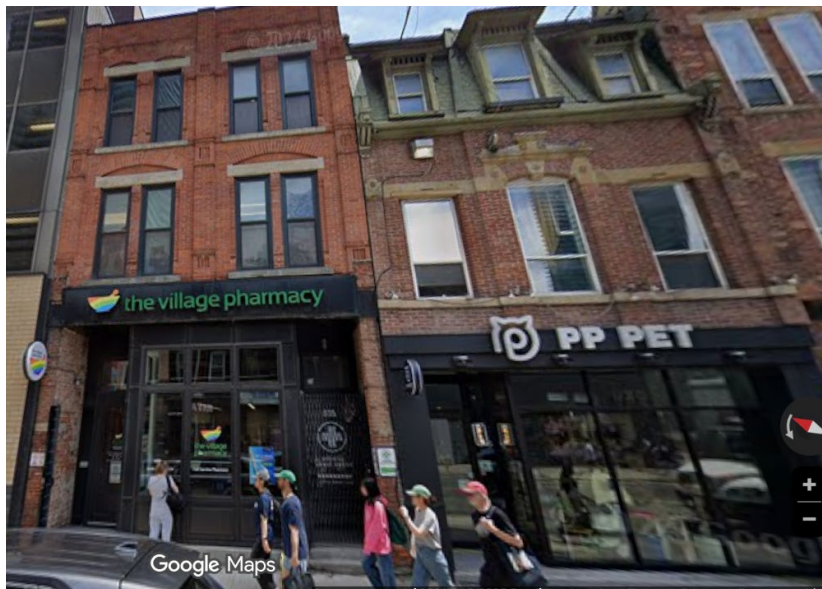
PHOTOGRAPHS

ATTACHMENT 2

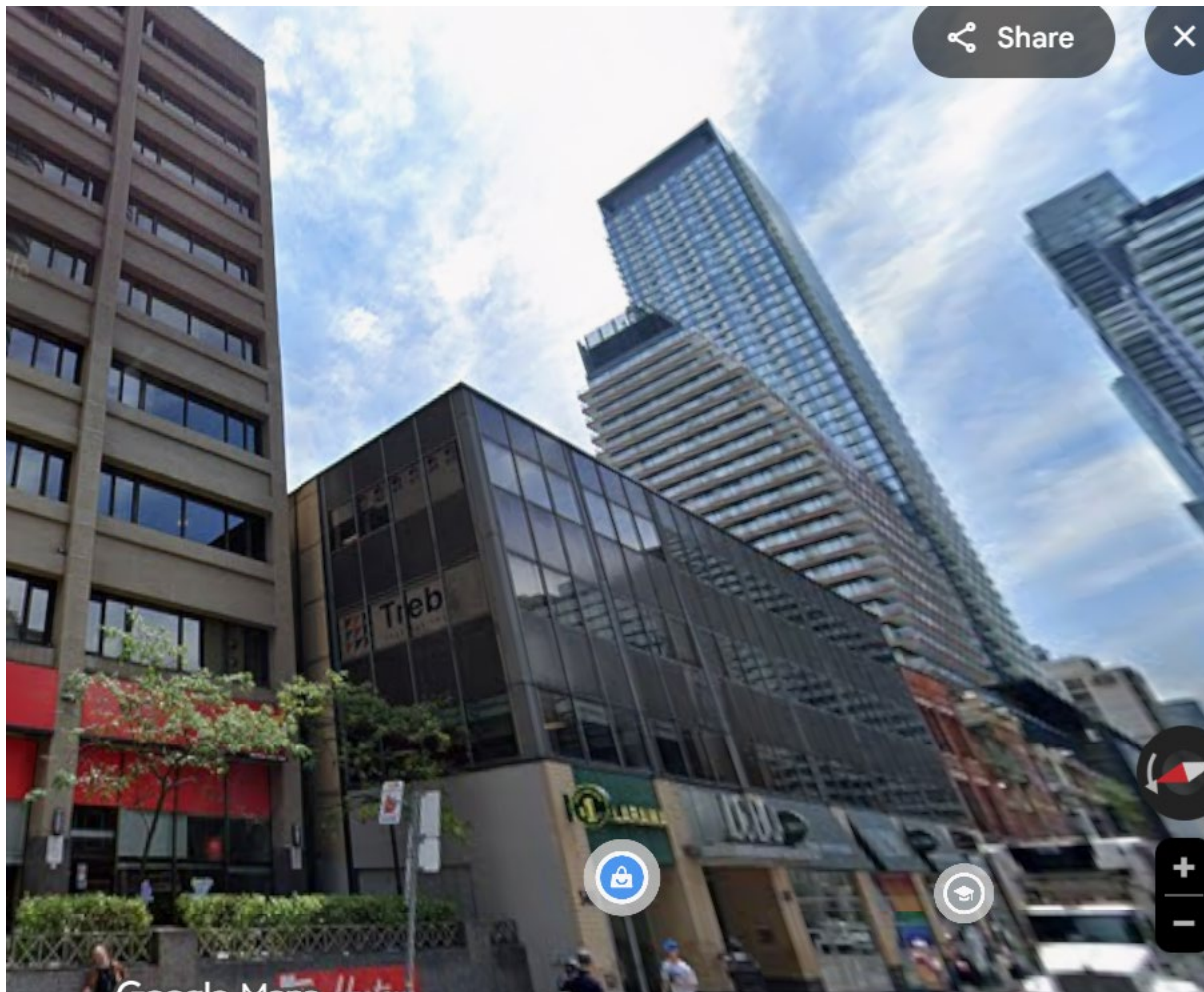
543 Yonge Street



West (principal) elevations at Yonge Street frontage of 543 Yonge Street ERA Architects)



Adjacent Heritage Properties at 535 and 533 Yonge Street (Subject Property at right of photo)

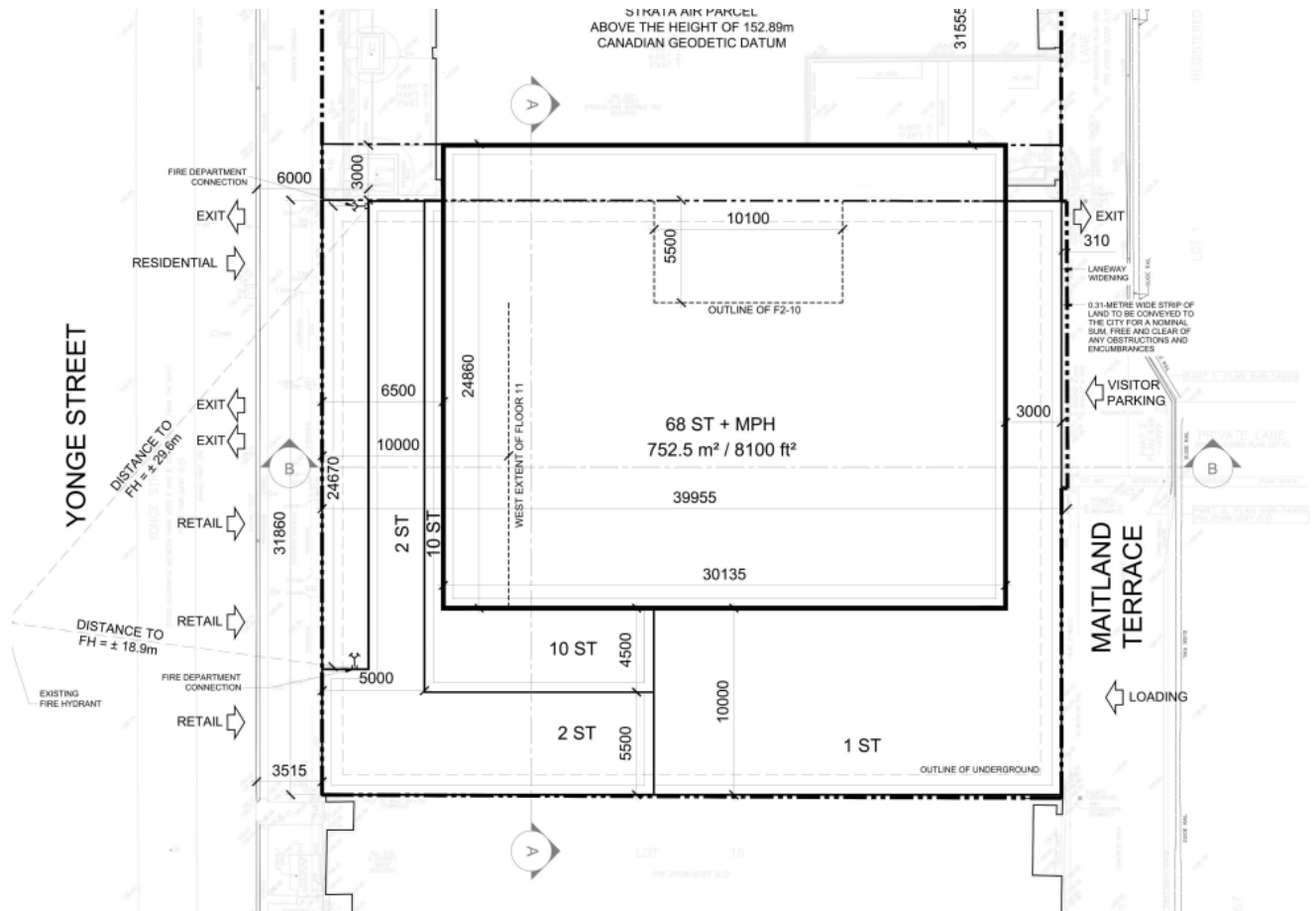


Subject Property (North Elevation and West Elevation) at 543 Yonge Street at Centre. Non-Contributing Property at Left of Photo.

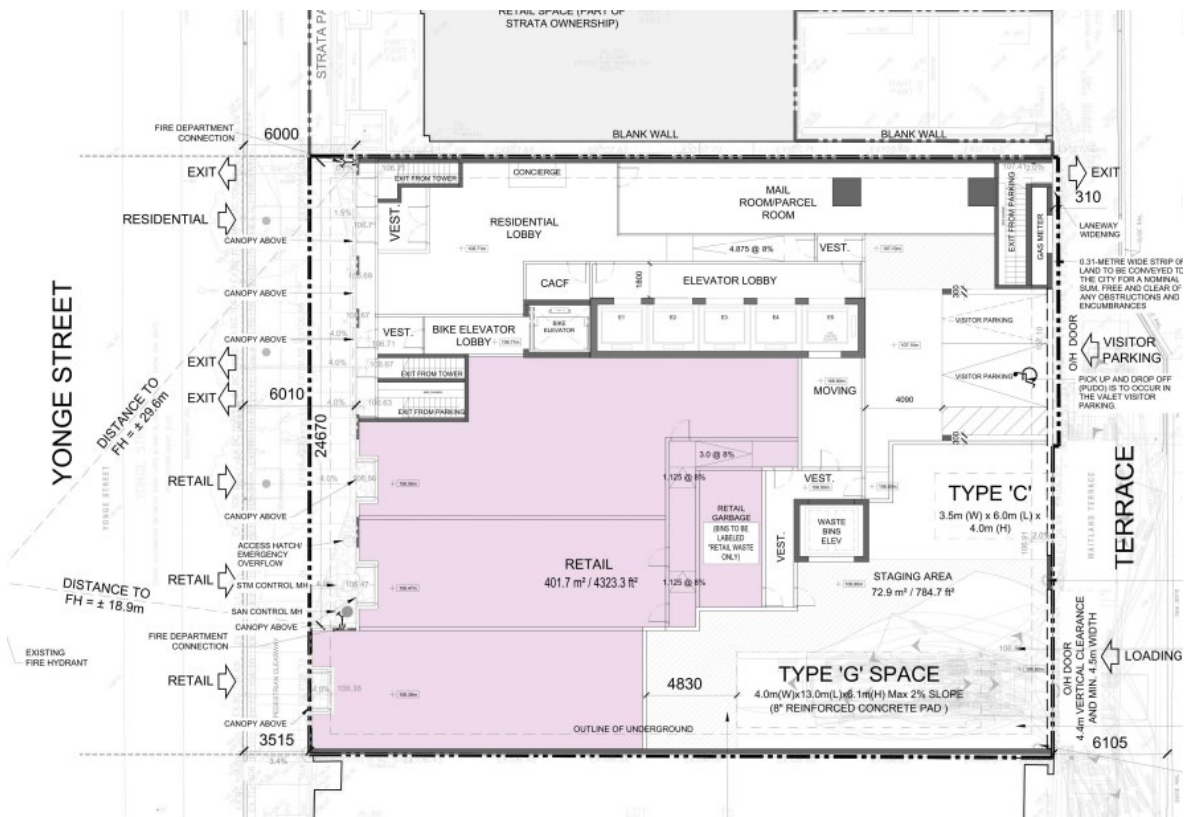
SELECTED DRAWINGS

ATTACHMENT 3

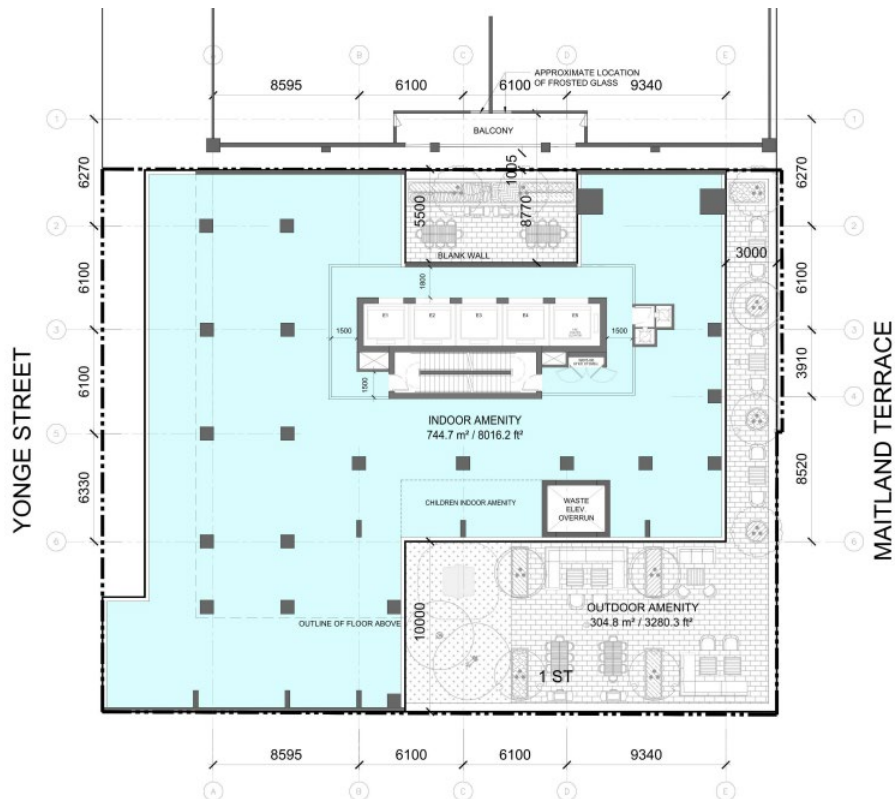
543 Yonge Street



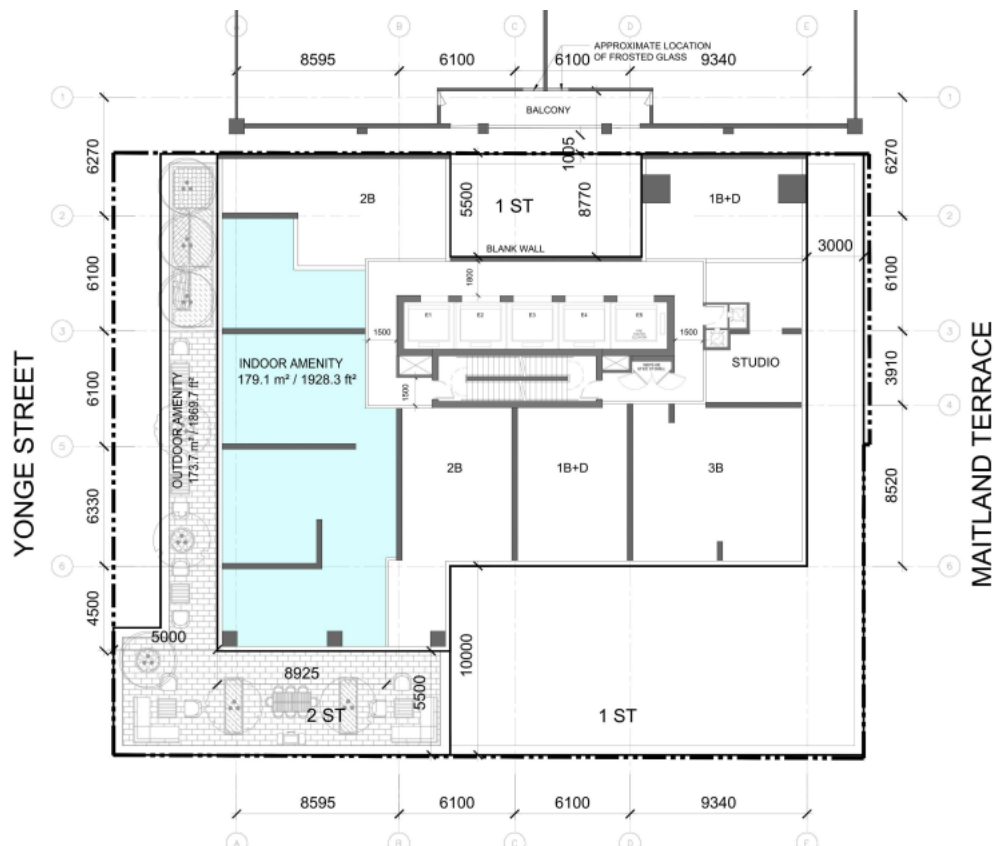
543 Yonge Street - Site Plan



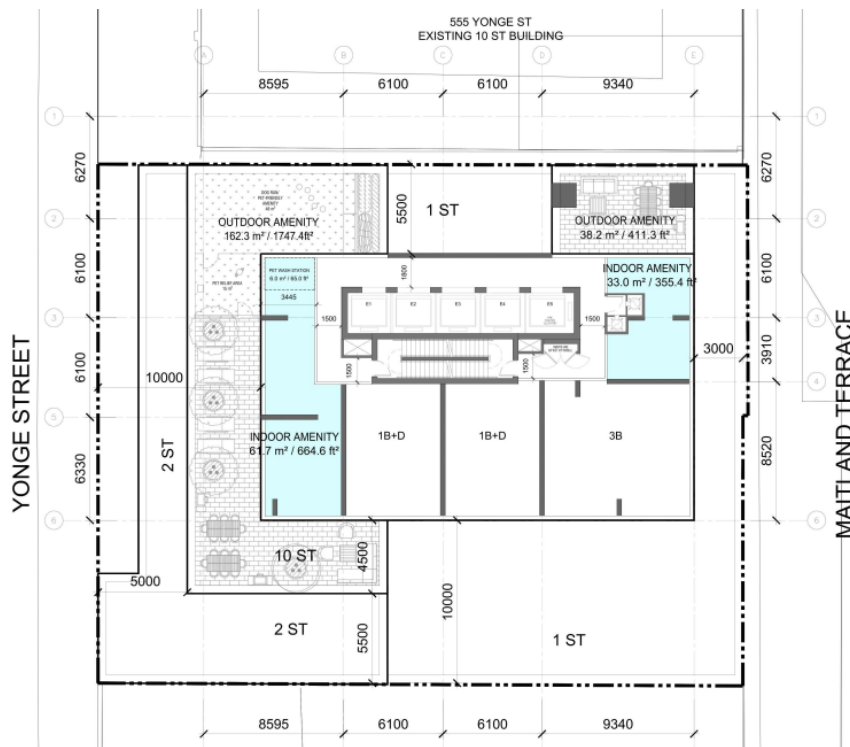
First Floor. Note retail at Yonge Street wall (south) aligns with street wall of abutting Heritage Properties to the south.



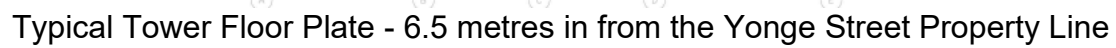
Second Floor

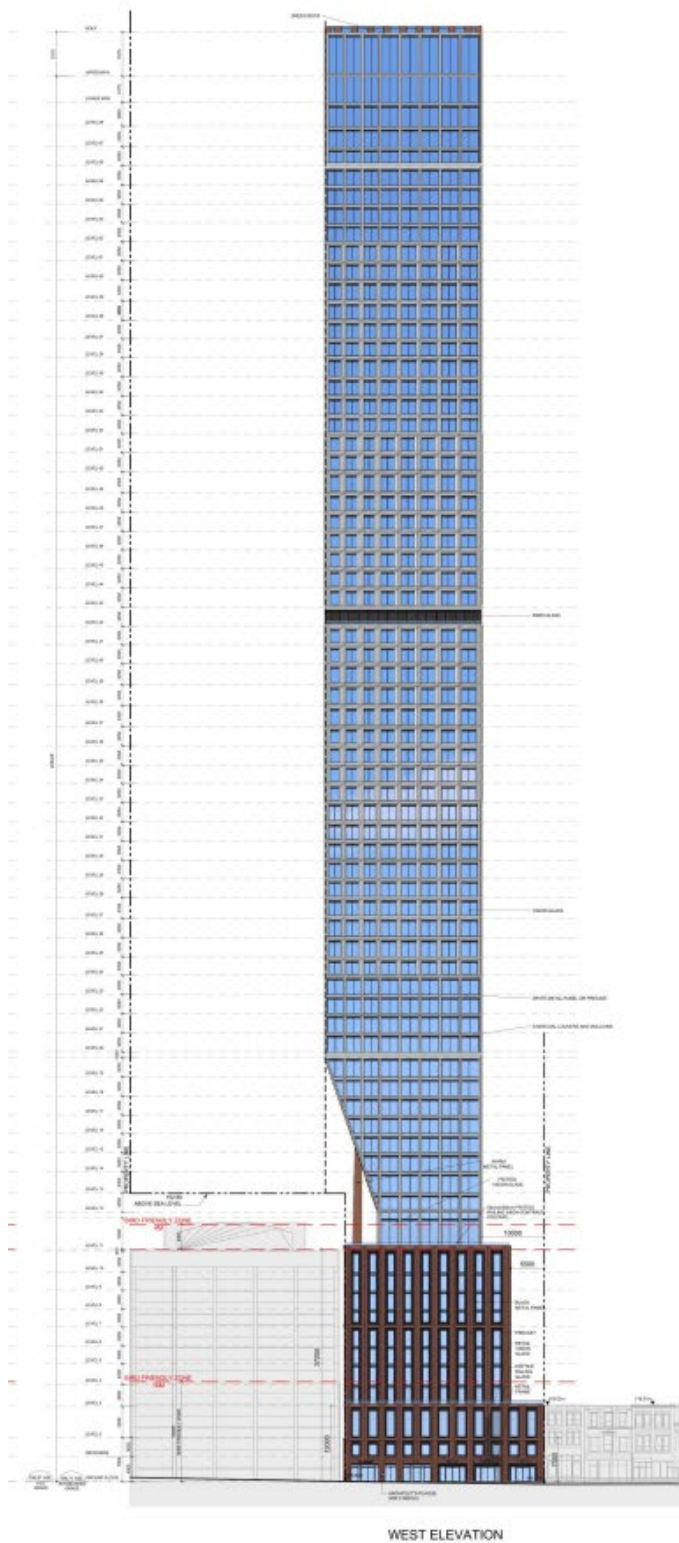


Third Floor - Note 5 metre Step Back of Upper Volume from Yonge Street Property Line



11th Floor - Note 10 metre Step Back to Tower from Yonge Street Property Line





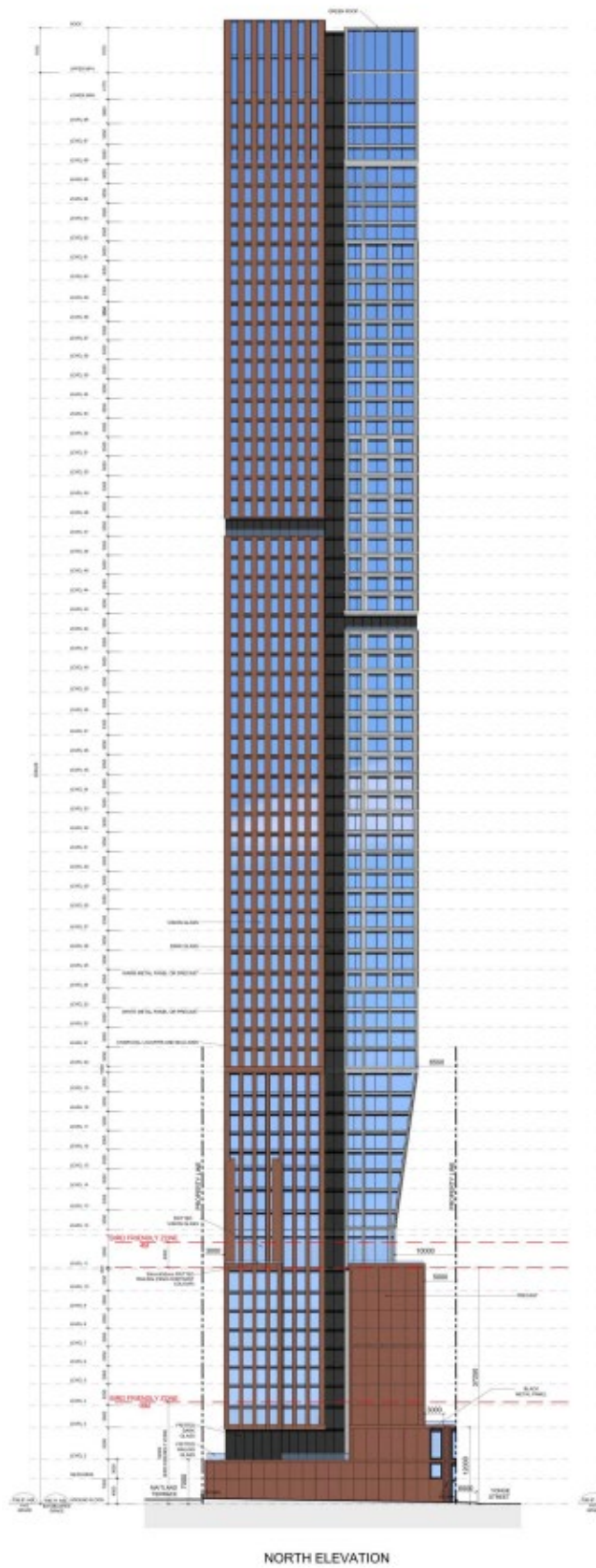
West/Yonge Street Full Elevation.



Render of Lower Street Wall Podium with Upper 8 Storey Volume and Lower Tower



Proposed Yonge Street Elevation with Detail



North Elevation showing Step Backs from Yonge Street Frontage