

Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District

DISTRICT SIGNIFICANCE | HISTORIC YONGE STREET HCD PLAN



3.1 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Description of Historic Place

Historic Yonge Street Heritage Conservation District is a distinct mixed-use neighbourhood located in downtown Toronto. It runs north-south for approximately seven city blocks around a portion of Yonge Street and serves important civic and commercial functions in the city. It includes St. Nicholas Village, a historic residential area associated with Yonge Street, and portions of a historic network of service laneways. The District contains a cohesive grouping of built *heritage resources* that provide a distinct sense of place and represent Toronto’s early and mid-century architectural vernacular.

The boundary limits run along property lines and include the full right-of-way of Yonge Street in front of any property within the boundary. The District’s northern boundary is the full right-of-way of Charles Street West on the west side of Yonge Street and the north lot line of the former Postal

Station F at Charles Street East on the east side of Yonge Street. The centre line of Grosvenor Street on the west side of Yonge Street and Maitland Street on the east side of Yonge Street mark the southern boundary. Its western and eastern boundaries generally run parallel to Yonge Street along a historic network of service laneways, except along its western edge where it includes St. Nicholas Street and parts of St. Joseph Street and Irwin Avenue – an area referred to as St. Nicholas Village. The full right-of-way of public laneways have been included within the boundary, as has the full right-of-way of St. Nicholas Street. The District has recently seen growth through the addition of mixed-use developments, including tall buildings. It is expected that HYHCD will continue to evolve and grow, while *conserving* the *cultural heritage value* of the District, including the historic *streetwall* along Yonge Street.

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Figure 12: Previous page: Excerpt from Plate 26 from the 1884 edition of the Atlas of the City of Toronto and Suburbs, published by Charles E. Goad. The approximate boundary of the Historic Yonge HCD has been shaded in purple.

Figure 13: Plan of the City and Liberties of Toronto, surveyed and drawn in 1842 by James Carle. The map shows some early subdivision of Park Lots and the sparse development in the Study Area (City of Toronto Archives). Annotation indicates the approximate location of the Historic Yonge Street HCD.

### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

The District started to develop in 1860 as a pastoral landscape of large private estates that were gradually subdivided and sold-off, laying the foundation for a densely developed urban neighbourhood. Development in the area was encouraged by Yonge Street itself, which was planned as a key transportation route by Lt. Governor John Graves Simcoe.

Yonge Street's importance as a transportation route was reinforced by successive waves of transportation investment that culminated in the construction of Canada's first subway line, which opened in 1954 and runs beneath the District. Public investment in transportation helped to ensure a constant flow of people through the neighbourhood, and the District evolved as a commercial main street that served neighbouring residential areas and commuters who passed through it.

The District is valued for its commercial main street character which is expressed, in part, by mixed-use and commercial buildings that housed the services, amenities, and employment opportunities to support daily life in neighbouring residential areas. St. Nicholas Village, and the residential buildings within

it, reflects this historic relationship and reinforces the District's sense of place.

Historical development of Yonge Street in the early 20th century added entertainment venues to its role as a commercial destination. The former His Majesty's Theatre at 780 Yonge Street, for instance, later became a dance studio and drama school for the emerging Canadian ballet and theatre scene, from the post-war period until the 1960s.

Once the subway opened in 1954, building technology and development patterns changed. This change is reflected in the scale of many modern buildings surrounding the District. Buildings that contribute to the District's *cultural heritage value* share certain characteristics in terms of their scale, height, orientation, and frontage width. They display a range of architectural styles that are appropriate to the time they were built. The historic network of laneways also contribute to the *cultural heritage value* of the District and are a valued element of its landscape. Together, these buildings, and the



Figure 14: East side of Yonge Street at Wellesley Street looking northeast, 1948 (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1303, Series 978, File 1, Item 21).

laneways that connect them, give the District the feeling of being an enclave within Toronto's downtown. Approximately 90% of its buildings were built between 1860 and 1954, a period of significance when the District's commercial main street character was established and flourished.

During this period Yonge Street also developed an important civic purpose within Toronto, coming to serve as its Main Street, a role which is evidenced by the numerous parades, demonstrations, and spontaneous celebrations and gatherings that have taken place along the strip. These events, many of which are annual and ongoing, are associated with the District for having passed through it. The civic importance of Yonge Street is recognized as an important component of the District's *cultural heritage value* but one that is primarily associative, and not material, in nature.

As the District and the area around it developed, it attracted a number of important fraternal and professional organizations, including: the Masons (601-613 Yonge Street); the Oddfellows' fraternal organization (450 Yonge Street); and, the Canadian Order of Foresters (22 College Street). A number of buildings in the District are also associated with important architects, including: Samuel G. Curry, Richard Ough, Mathers & Haldenby, Wickson & Gregg, George Gouinlock, Dick & Wickson, J. Gibbs Morton, and E.J. Lennox.



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Figure 15: 1952 photograph showing the construction of Canada's first subway line. This photo was taken east of Yonge Street, between Dundonald and Gloucester streets, looking north (City of Toronto Archives, Fonds 1128, Series 381, File 76).

### 3.2 District Heritage Attributes

The *cultural heritage value* of the District is expressed by the following *heritage attributes* that collectively derive from *contributing properties* within the District:

- The scale of the *streetwall* of *contributing properties* in the District, which typically range between 2-4 storeys
- The three-dimensional character of *contributing properties*, as articulated by their height, massing, and frontage width
- Small *setbacks*, from the front lot line, of buildings within St. Nicholas Village *character sub-area* which create small front yards that contribute to a more open residential character
- Consistent *streetwall* resulting from buildings fronting onto Yonge Street typically built to the lot line, without *setbacks*
- The fine grain of narrow property frontages, generally between 3-7 metres, at regular intervals along Yonge Street, and along some side streets intersecting with Yonge Street
- The fine-grained vertical rhythm of narrow storefronts along the consistent streetscape; frontages of larger historic buildings are divided into bays, *maintaining* the predominant rhythm of narrow storefronts
- Recessed entrance doorways, which in some cases include flanking showcase windows
- Building façades that are generally constructed with brick, stone, and wood detailing
- The façades of *contributing properties* that display a variety of *building features* including, but not limited to cornices, entablatures, pilasters, soffits, punched windows, and their surrounds
- High-quality design and craftsmanship exhibited in *contributing properties*
- The higher percentage of glazing on ground floor façades along Yonge Street, relative to upper floors, that demarcates a retail use at-grade and residential and/or commercial uses in upper floors
- The consistent percentage of glazing between ground and upper floors on the primary elevation of residential *contributing properties*, showing a consistent use and function between ground and upper floors
- Mixed-use and commercial buildings that typically have flat roofs, or roofs sloped towards the street that the building fronts onto
- House-form buildings typically have sloped roofs, which includes a combination of roofs sloped towards the street, and roofs sloped parallel to the street in the case of a dormer or central gable
- House-form buildings that display a range of architectural styles most commonly: Gothic Revival, Second Empire, and Queen Anne
- Apartment buildings within St. Nicholas Village *character sub-area* that display Art Deco and Edwardian architectural styles
- Mixed-use and commercial buildings that display a range of architectural styles, most commonly: Georgian, Italianate, Romanesque, and Second Empire
- Warehouses and commercial buildings fronting onto service laneways and side streets, such as those along St. Nicholas Street and Gloucester Lane
- Views toward prominent buildings within the District as identified in this Plan
- Narrow public laneways that support commercial operations along Yonge Street, and are used by pedestrians as a circulation network
- The *archaeological resources* in the District as identified in this Plan
- Use, function and enjoyment of Yonge Street for the purpose of parades, demonstrations, celebrations and social gatherings

### 3.3 Statement of Objectives

The overall objective of the Historic Yonge Street HCD Plan is the protection, *conservation* and management of its *heritage attributes* and *contributing properties* so that the District's *cultural heritage value* is protected in the long-term. The *cultural heritage value* of the District consists of its historic, associative, contextual, design/physical, social and community values. The *heritage attributes* of the District include its built

form, *streetscape*, function, *public realm*, and *archaeological resources*.

Specific objectives of this Plan are set out below. Although the following objectives are numbered, the numeric sequence does not establish a priority among the objectives.

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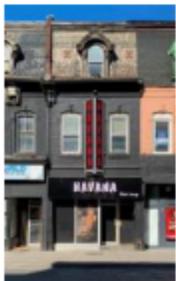
## OBJECTIVES

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*.
2. Ensure that *new development* and *additions conserve, maintain and enhance the cultural heritage value* of the District and do not detract from it.
3. *Conserve, maintain and enhance the heritage attributes* of those resources that contribute to the *cultural heritage value* of the District.
4. Prevent the *removal and demolition* of the District's *heritage attributes and contributing properties*.
5. Ensure that any *alterations*, including *adaptive reuse*, are *compatible with the District's cultural heritage value*.
6. Encourage improvements to the *public realm* that support the District's ongoing use by pedestrians as a transportation corridor so that its historic role as a commercial main street and place of congregation is reinforced.
7. *Conserve the network of public laneways* in the District.
8. *Conserve the historic main street character* of the District, including its consistent *streetwall* and scale of *contributing properties*, and support the mixed commercial, retail, or residential uses that main street character implies.
9. *Conserve the three-dimensional integrity and form* of the District's built *heritage resources*.
10. *Maintain the distinctive relationship* between the residential character of St. Nicholas Village *character sub-area* and the commercial main street character of Historic Yonge Street *character sub-area* and *conserve* their unique and distinct characters.
11. *Conserve, maintain and enhance the values* of the District in its role as a destination for civic assembly and use, such as for parades, demonstrations, and celebrations.
12. *Conserve contributing properties, and Part IV designated properties*.
13. *Conserve and protect the archaeological resources* within the District.
14. *Conserve views from the public realm* identified in this Plan.

# STATEMENTS OF CONTRIBUTION

# ATTACHMENT 7

No.	Photo	Primary Address/ Street Name (Structure / Entrance Address(es))	Architectural Style	Year Built	Statement of Contribution	Built Form	Storeys	Character Sub- Area
32.		<b>26 St Joseph Street</b> (31 Irwin Ave)	Art Deco	1940	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 6-storey building designed in an Art Deco style with buff brick. Its main entrance is framed by sidelights and flat headed windows on concrete sills. The ground storey is separated from the upper storeys by a continuous concrete stringcourse. The upper storeys are highlighted by a continuous concrete vertical frontispiece which rises to the sixth storey. It is detailed with glass block decorative brick bands and a concrete cornice, reflective of the Art Deco style.	6	St. Nicholas Village
33.		<b>145 St Luke Lane</b>	Edwardian	c.1915	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 2-storey building designed in a simple Edwardian style. It has a sloping roof with projecting firewall parapets at each end. At the second storey there are five window openings with shallow arched heads and brick voussiors. There are four window openings on the north facade. The ground level has been altered.	2	Historic Yonge Street
No.	Photo	Primary Address/ Street Name (Structure / Entrance Address(es))	Architectural Style	Year Built	Statement of Contribution	Built Form	Storeys	Character Sub- Area
57.		<b>530 Yonge Street</b> (6, 8 Breadalbane St; 534, 536 Yonge St)	Modern	1948	Contextual	This is a 2-storey commercial building designed in a Modern style. Its windows are grouped in an A-B-A pattern with a large central ribbon. It has a main recessed corner entrance.	2	Historic Yonge Street

No.	Photo	Primary Address/ Street Name (Structure / Entrance Address(es) )	Architectural Style	Year Built	Statement of Contribution	Built Form	Storeys	Character Sub- Area
60.		<b>538 Yonge Street</b>	Second Empire	1873	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 2.5-storey brick building in a Second Empire style. It is part of a row divided into pairs of units by projecting fire walls. The slate-tiled mansard roof is capped by a substantial moulded cornice and ends at a projecting cornice/gutter. There is one central dormer in each unit with 1/2 round projecting roof supported on brackets and trim that frame the 1/2 round window opening. The cornice is supported on 3 brackets joined by a banding course.	2.5	Historic Yonge Street
61.		<b>540 Yonge Street</b>	Second Empire	1873	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 2.5-storey brick building in a Second Empire style. It is part of a row divided into pairs of units by projecting fire walls. The slate-tiled mansard roof is capped by a substantial moulded cornice and ends at a projecting cornice/gutter. There is one central dormer in each unit with 1/2 round projecting roof supported on brackets and trim that frame the 1/2 round window opening. The cornice is supported on 3 brackets joined by a banding course.	2.5	Historic Yonge Street
62.		<b>542 Yonge Street</b> (542A Yonge St)	Second Empire	1873	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 2.5-storey brick building in a Second Empire style. It is part of a row divided into pairs of units by projecting fire walls. The slate-tiled mansard roof is capped by a substantial moulded cornice and ends at a projecting cornice/gutter. There is one central dormer in each unit with 1/2 round projecting roof supported on brackets and trim that frame the 1/2 round window opening. The cornice is supported on 3 brackets joined by a banding course.	2.5	Historic Yonge Street

No.	Photo	Primary Address/ Street Name (Structure / Entrance Address(es))	Architectural Style	Year Built	Statement of Contribution	Built Form	Storeys	Character Sub- Area
63.		<b>544 Yonge Street</b> (544A Yonge St)	Second Empire	1873	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 2.5-storey brick building in a Second Empire style. It is part of a row divided into pairs of units by projecting fire walls. The mansard roof is capped by a substantial moulded cornice and ends at a projecting cornice/gutter. There is one central dormer in each unit with 1/2 round projecting roof supported on brackets and trim that frame the 1/2 round window opening.	2.5	Historic Yonge Street
64.		<b>546 Yonge Street</b>	Romanesque	1889	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 3-storey building, part of a block of 3 units designed in a Romanesque style. Units are framed by projecting pilasters at the party walls with corbelled brick capitals at the 3rd floor window line. At the roof it is likely there was a projecting cornice, now missing. Below the parapet is a projecting cornice carried on bracketed keystones of the two 3rd-floor windows. Third floor windows have semi-circular arched heads springing from stone flat lintels. The panel above is a basket weave brick and below the lintel a large rectangular window opening. At the second floor there are two matching windows but with segmented arched heads and plain panels. The window sills are continuous, forming a band course.	3	Historic Yonge Street
65.		<b>548 Yonge Street</b> (548A Yonge St)	Romanesque	1889	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 3-storey building, part of a block of 3 units designed in a Romanesque style. Units are framed by projecting pilasters at the party walls with corbelled brick capitals at the 3rd floor window line. At the roof it is likely there was a projecting cornice, now missing. Below the parapet is a projecting cornice carried on bracketed keystones of the two 3rd-floor windows. Third floor windows have a semi-circular arched head, with a decorative terracotta panel below the sill. The panel above is a basket weave brick and below the lintel a large rectangular window opening. At the second floor there are two matching windows but with segmented arched heads and plain panels. The window sills are continuous, forming a band course.	3	Historic Yonge Street

No.	Photo	Primary Address/ Street Name (Structure / Entrance Address(es))	Architectural Style	Year Built	Statement of Contribution	Built Form	Storeys	Character Sub- Area
66.		550 Yonge Street	Romanesque	1889	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 3-storey building, part of a block of 3 units designed in a Romanesque style. Units are framed by projecting pilasters at the party walls with corbelled brick capitals at the 3rd floor window line. At the top of it is likely there was a projecting cornice, now missing. Below the parapet is a projecting cornice carried on bracketed keystones of the two 3rd-floor windows. Third floor windows have semi-circular arched heads springing from stone flat lintels. The panel above is a basket weave brick and below the lintel a large rectangular window opening. At the second floor there are two matching windows but with segmented arched heads and plain panels. The window sills are continuous, forming a band course.	3	Historic Yonge Street
67.		552 Yonge Street	Edwardian	1912	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 3-storey orange-brown mottled brick building in a simple, commercial Edwardian style. A roof cornice at the top of the wall is missing and covered by metal siding. The façade is divided into two bays by a brick frame around a group of 4 recessed windows at second and third floors. The frame is gridded at the top of the wall by lines extending vertically and horizontally above the third-floor windows. Each group of 4 window openings is divided vertically into two vertical groups of 2 with stepped brick on each side creating a brick pilaster between. Window openings have plain stone lintels and sills.	3	Historic Yonge Street
68.		564 Yonge Street	Georgian	1874	Design/Physical Contextual	This is a 2.5-storey building built in a Georgian style. It has a sloping roof with domers. A projecting roof eave sits on a 3-course corbelled brick fascia. At each end of the group of 3 units there is a projecting parapet firewall. Each unit is separated by chimney masses at the ridge and is separated by wall brick quoining. Second floor windows have brick drip hood mouldings with a linking horizontal band course at the drip and plain lug sills.	2.5	Historic Yonge Street