

1631 - 1641 Queen Street East

Design Brief

Oct 20, 2025

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1.0 Background and Context

1.1 Introduction

Purpose

The Design Brief will be used to provide direction in preparing the architectural and landscape architectural drawing at the Site Plan Application stage of this project.

Toronto Builds Policy Framework

On May 2025, City Council approved the Toronto Builds Policy Framework, which formally identified 1631 Queen Street East as a 'Toronto Builds Project'. The Toronto Builds Policy Framework establishes policies to guide the development of new housing on City land. This new policy framework is part of the City's HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan and aims to implement Council's direction bringing a range of housing programs under a consistent policy framework to ensure City-owned lands are utilized to maximize affordable housing and City-building objectives.

1631 and 1641 Queen Street East

The Site comprises multiple parcels, including 1631 and 1641 Queen Street East, 1090 Eastern Avenue, and a portion of 1080 Eastern Avenue. The proposed development is mixed-use, including activation of the Queen Street East frontage and non-residential uses.

The existing closed right-of-way to the east of the Site, known as Kishigo Lane, is included as part of this Design Brief. Named in 2018 to honour an Anishinaabe family who lived in the area in the late 18th century, Kishigo Lane is proposed to be reimagined as a publicly accessible open space celebrating Indigenous cultures and histories.

Working with Indigenous communities the design of the building will respond to the needs of the Indigenous communities who will be using Kishigo Lane for gathering.



Figure 1: Site Context

1.2 Site Context

1631 - 1641 Queen Street East is located in the Upper Beaches Neighbourhood of Toronto. The Site is currently home to the Beaches Employment & Social Services. The Coxwell Early Learning and Child Care Centre also operates out of the existing building.

The Site is in close proximity to a number of recreational facilities including Woodbine Park to the immediate south and Woodbine Beach on the water. Low-rise residential fabric extends north of the Site. The neighbourhood is marked by a number of public amenities scattered throughout the neighbourhood. Queen Street East is a major commercial main street that also carries the TTC 501 street car. Access to higher order transit is via the TTC 55 bus route north to Coxwell Subway Station on Line 2.

The site has frontage along Queen Street East to the north, a closed right-of-way to the east, and Eastern Avenue to the south. On the western boundary of the Site is an existing Toronto Community Housing Corporation rental building, located at 1080 Eastern Avenue. Vehicular access to the site is currently provided through the closed right-of-way between Queen Street East and Eastern Avenue.

There are a number of existing utilities beneath the right-of-way which restrict development in the areas above the utilities. This area will instead be reimagined as a publicly accessible open space known as Kishigo Lane.

Figure 2: Transit, Parks, and Open Space

Figure 3: Surrounding Context



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1.3 Queen Street East Frontage

Queen Street East is defined by existing low-rise mixed-use development, predominantly two storeys in height and typically clad in masonry. There are two new developments that have recently been completed on the north side of Queen Street East. Both developments are six storeys in height.

Figure 4: Existing Queen Street Frontage

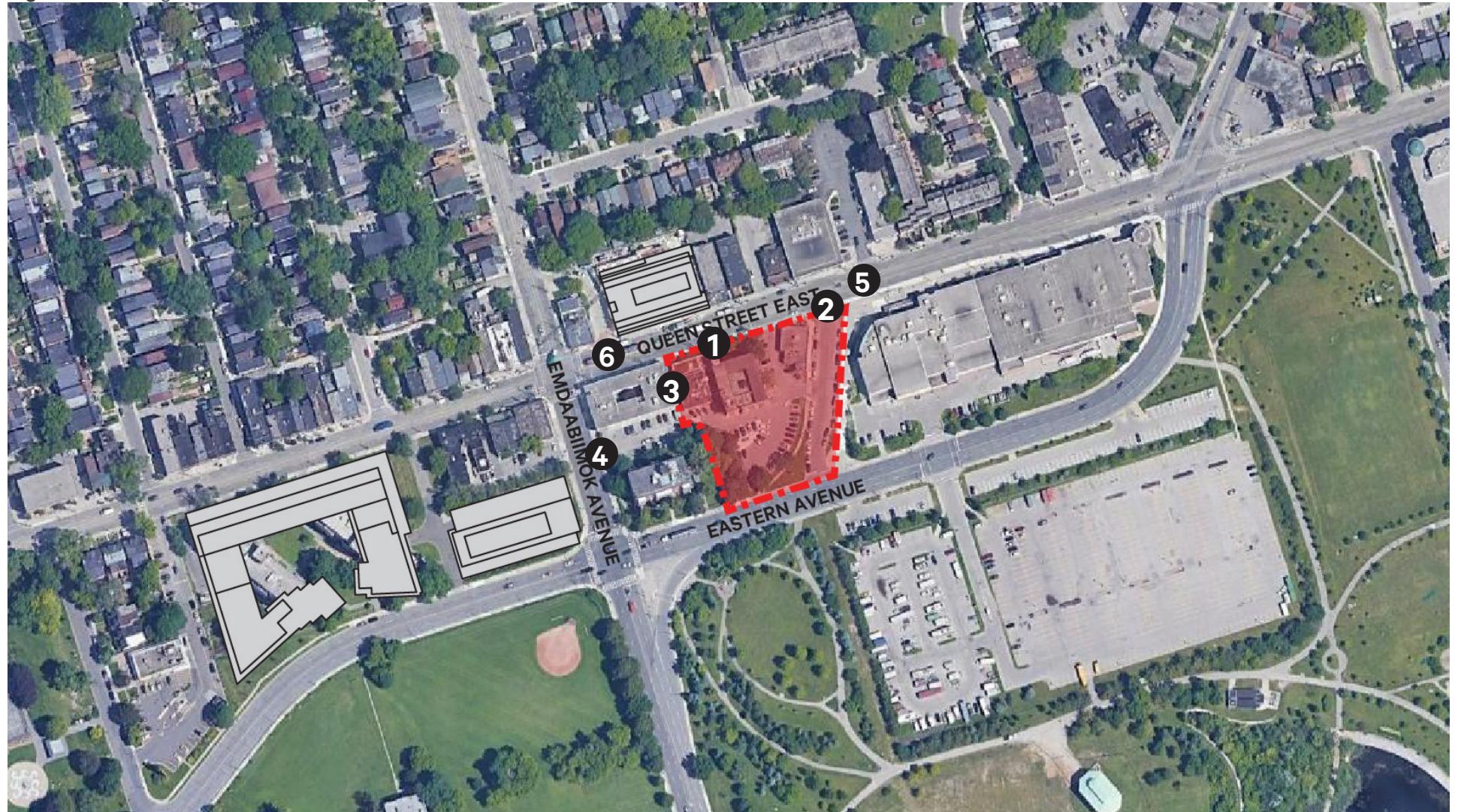
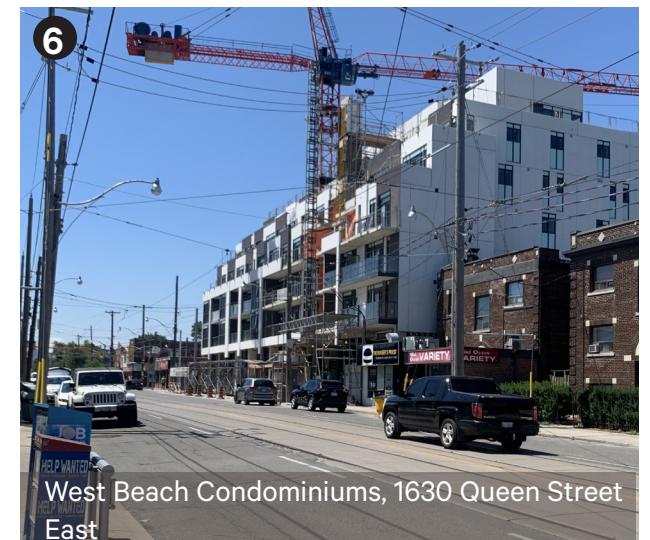
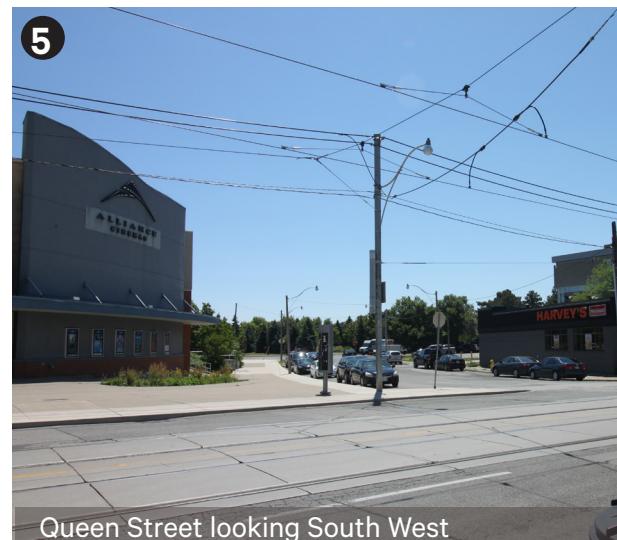


Figure 5: Existing Queen Street Frontages



1.4 Eastern Avenue Frontage

Eastern Avenue has historically been characterized as the back end of buildings, and the streetscape on Eastern Avenue is planned to be reconstructed. The future Don Summerville development at 1555 and 1575 Queen Street East will all have active frontages on Eastern Avenue. These developments along with 1631 - 1641 Queen Street East will help transform Eastern Avenue into a more pedestrian focused street.

Figure 6: Existing Eastern Avenue Frontage

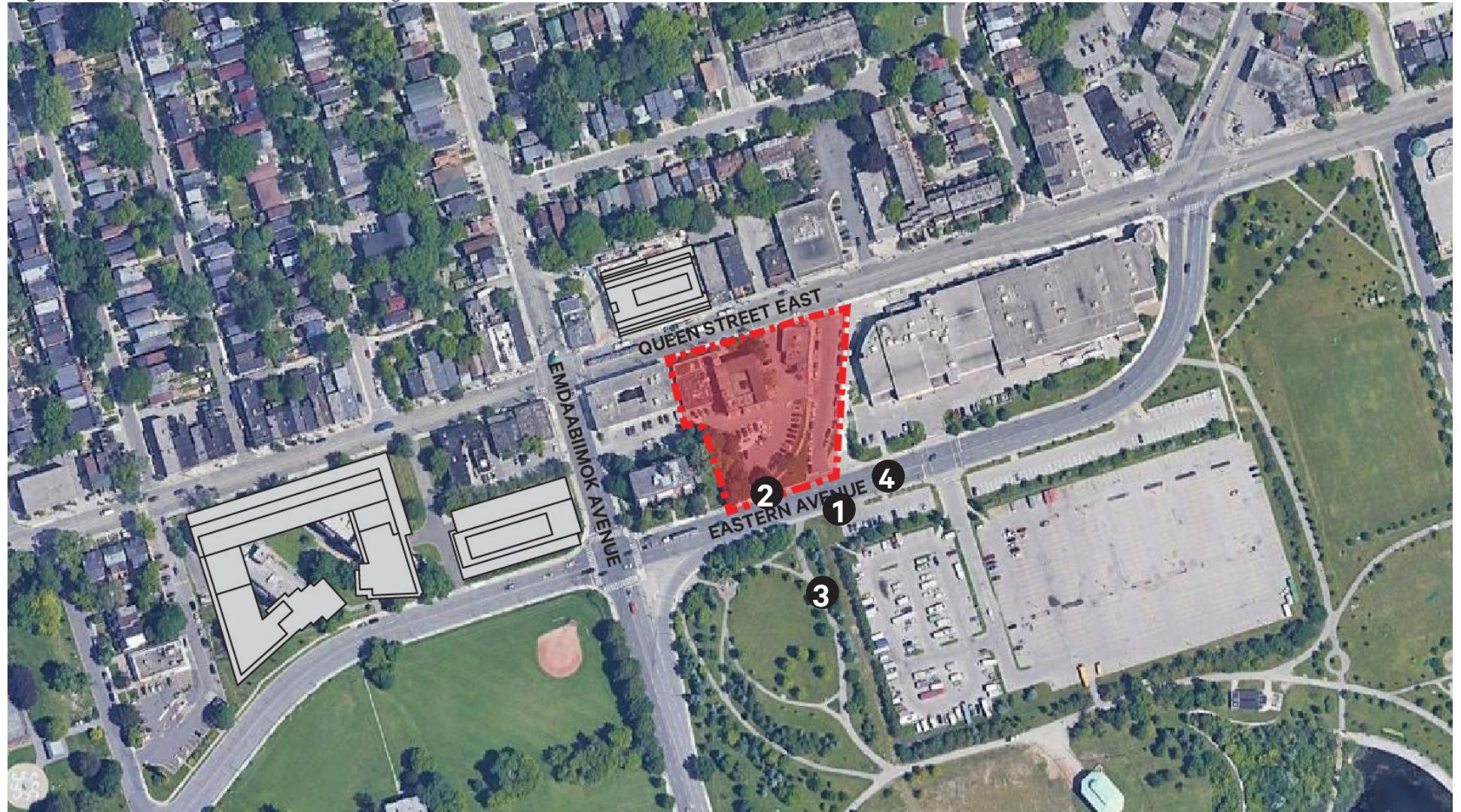


Figure 7: Existing Eastern Avenue Frontages



2.0 Public Realm

2.1 Animation

Several Indigenous placekeeping and urban design strategies are proposed to support continued reconciliation and respond to the City's Reconciliation Action Plan, while drawing people into the Site and strengthening connections to the neighbourhood's pedestrian and open-space network. The Site is uniquely designated as an opportunity to celebrate and share Indigenous culture within the city. Acknowledging its Indigenous history will be a key principle in shaping the public realm.

The design of the building should support future tenants that contribute to active ground floor frontages and to animate Kishigo Lane and Queen Street, such as food and beverage or other pedestrian uses.

Proposed Mid-block Connections

- An east-west mid-block connection through the Site is proposed that connects the existing east-west public laneway to the newly publicly accessible public space, Kishigo Lane.
- The new north-south drive-way off Eastern Avenue is proposed to have shared street principles such as distinctive paving treatment and rolled curbs, to promote pedestrian and cyclist usage

Celebrate Historical Waterways On-site (“Lost Rivers”)

- Celebrate and insinuate the flow of water through measures like sinuous design forms, paving design (e.g. dips and channels) and planting (e.g. rain gardens)

Pedestrianize the Urban Edges

- Animate the retail frontage on Queen Street East with a substantial seating and planting area in the setback area from the property line. The aim is to have less blank walls, and more activated public frontage.
- Pedestrianize Eastern Avenue by using planting and seating elements to scale down proportions to a more human scale
- Transform Kishigo Lane, the closed right-of-way to the east of the Site, into a publicly accessible open space that celebrates Indigenous culture through its design, materiality and programming. This space will be accessible to pedestrians and cyclists only.
- Commercial activity should animate both the Queen Street and Kishigo Lane frontages, drawing foot traffic to the site.

Create a Series of Green Spaces

- Propose trees and planters where possible, in combination with seating elements
- The landscape plan should enhance biodiversity by creating habitats; include pollinator friendly plants; and ensure planting offers year round interest, with a progression of bloom, striking foliage, fall colour, branching habit and bark texture, as well as evergreen elements.
- Planting on site is to serve multiple purposes: be ornamental, promote storm water infiltration, provide agricultural and/or medicinal uses



Figure 8: Rendered Landscape Plan



2.2 Queen Street East

The Queen Street East streetscape shall have a 2.1 metres wide sidewalk offset from the road with a new two-row paver band. There are two existing watermains in the right-of-way. Due to Toronto Water's restrictions with regard to planting near watermains, street trees are not currently proposed within the City right-of-way.

Instead, street trees are proposed to be planted within the Site's property limits, in a series of minimum 2.5 metres wide planters with understorey perennial planting. Street trees are to meet minimum soil volume per City of Toronto which is 30 cubic metres per tree. The siting of the street trees should correspond to the rhythm of the Queen Street East building facades' windows. The Low Impact Development (LID) design of these planters and the potential to capture stormwater runoff from the sidewalk should be explored at the Site Plan Application stage.

Figure 10: Queen Street Precedent



Figure 11: Queen Street East Perspective

These street planters shall be designed as social spaces as well. Sections of seating are proposed on the edges to facilitate people to linger and converse. Bicycle racks are proposed to bookend the series of planters, providing short-term bicycle parking next to the retail and residential spaces' entrances/exits. A minimum 1.6m wide pedestrian clearway is proposed adjacent to the building face.



2.3 Eastern Avenue

The streetscape design for Eastern Avenue references the Port Lands and South of Eastern Transportation and Servicing Master Plan EA, with key modifications to adjust for utilities in the right-of-way.

The building is set back 3.0m along Eastern Avenue. A minimum 1.6m walkway runs adjacent to the face of the building. Street furniture such as bike racks and seating can be located next to the walkway, positioned to not clutter up circulation routes and to maximize the expanse of planting bed.

To avoid underground utility conflicts in the right-of-way, street trees and ornamental trees are proposed within the property limits in an at-grade planting bed. This will be a deviation from the Port Lands and South of Eastern Transportation and Servicing Master Plan EA. Street trees are to meet minimum soil volume per City of Toronto which is 30m³ per tree. The planting bed extends south to meet the sidewalk.

The design will seek a balance between paved areas for pedestrians and landscape beds. The ornamental trees and understory planting palette along the Eastern Avenue frontage should be consistent with the planting species proposed for Kishigo Lane.

Figure 12: Streetscape design - Port Lands and South of Eastern Transportation and Servicing Master Plan EA

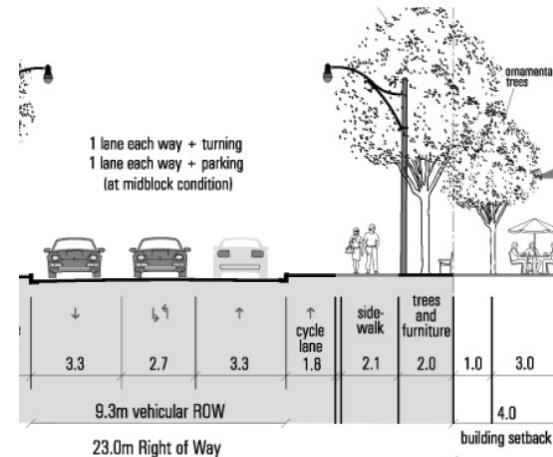


Figure 13: Eastern Avenue Perspective

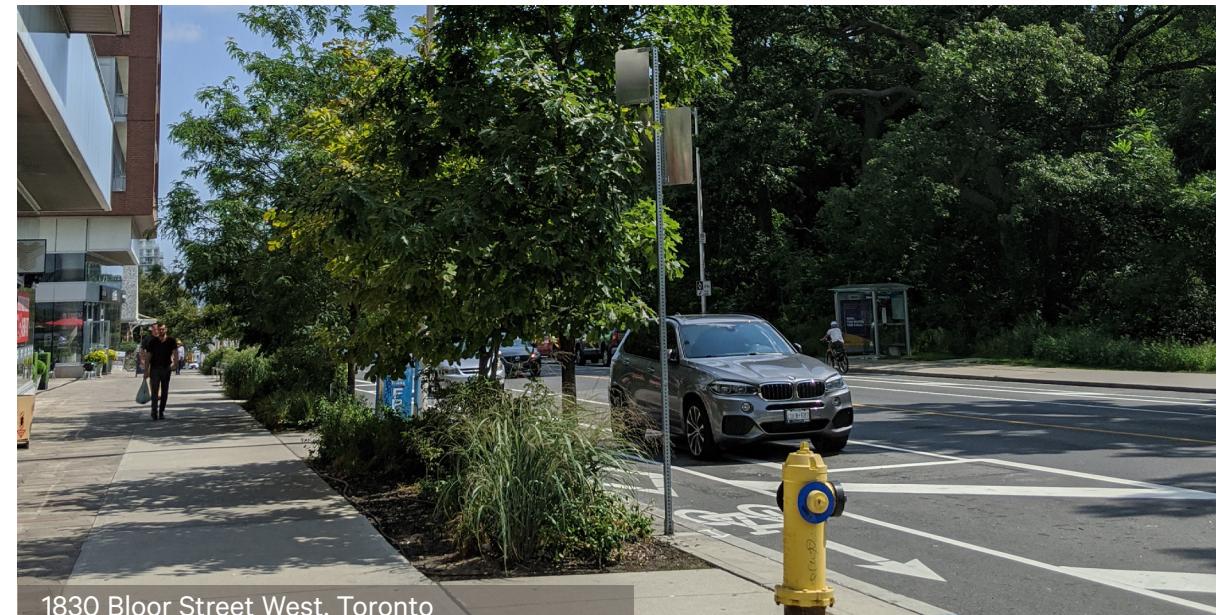


Figure 14: Eastern Avenue Perspective



2.4 East West Mid-block Connection

Between the tower and the mid-rise is an at-grade pedestrian clearway that functions as a mid-block connection. This provides a connection from the existing public laneway from Emdaabiimok Avenue extending to Kishigo Lane.

Paving of the mid-block connection should match the paving in Kishigo Lane to signify the connectivity of these two distinctive public spaces.

Opportunities for active or publicly engaging uses along the mid-block connection are encouraged at the detailed design stage, including exploring the relocation and/or reorientation of indoor long-term bike parking spaces.

The area in the mid-block connection is pedestrian-only. Lighting options should be explored through the Site Plan Application stage such as in-ground lights and/or lights integrated with the seating elements.

Childcare facilities outdoor play space is located along the mid-block connection, directly connected to the indoor childcare facility on Queen Street East. The north side of the mid-block connection is designated for this outdoor space.

This site organization activates the mid-block connection during daytime hours, providing a valuable community amenity for both residents and the surrounding neighbourhood. Additionally, its location benefits from natural shading provided by the adjacent tower.

Figure 15: Daycare Precedents



Wind mitigation for the outdoor childcare space will be required and can take the form of screens, a canopy, and/or fencing. There should be good visibility through the fencing.

If screens are used inside the outdoor daycare space, they should be positioned to relate to the demising requirements for the different age groups.

Shade-tolerant species are recommended for planting in the mid-block connection. This will be further explored during the Site Plan Application stage. The possibility of making these planters into rain gardens, by capturing and channeling run-off from the roof, could also be explored at the Site Plan Application stage. Similarly, the outdoor childcare space could celebrate the flow of water through incorporating runnels and channels into play elements.

The south side of the mid-block connection should maximize planting while maintaining access to the bike room.

The mid-block connection should maintain a minimum pedestrian clearway of 4 metres wide. Where feasible, the mid-block connection could be animated through active frontages at grade – including the south building.

Figure 16: Daycare Precedents



2.5 Addressing Wind Issues

A pedestrian wind assessment test has been prepared by Rowan Williams Davies & Irwin Inc. (RWDI) to assess pedestrian wind levels at the Site.

The assessment of the current design revealed that the east-west public laneway channels easterly and westerly winds, particularly in the winter. To make the space comfortable for walking, wind screens are necessary.

The northeast corner of the outdoor childcare space is exposed to winds that make the space comfortable for strolling but not sitting or standing. It is recommended to install mitigation measures such as wind screens or planting at this corner to achieve lower wind speeds.

At the Site Plan Application Stage, a wind tunnel test is required to determine acceptable mitigation that does not negatively impact and clutter the public realm. Visibility to and through the lane should be maintained where feasible – including with the use of wind screens – with consideration given to CPTED principles.

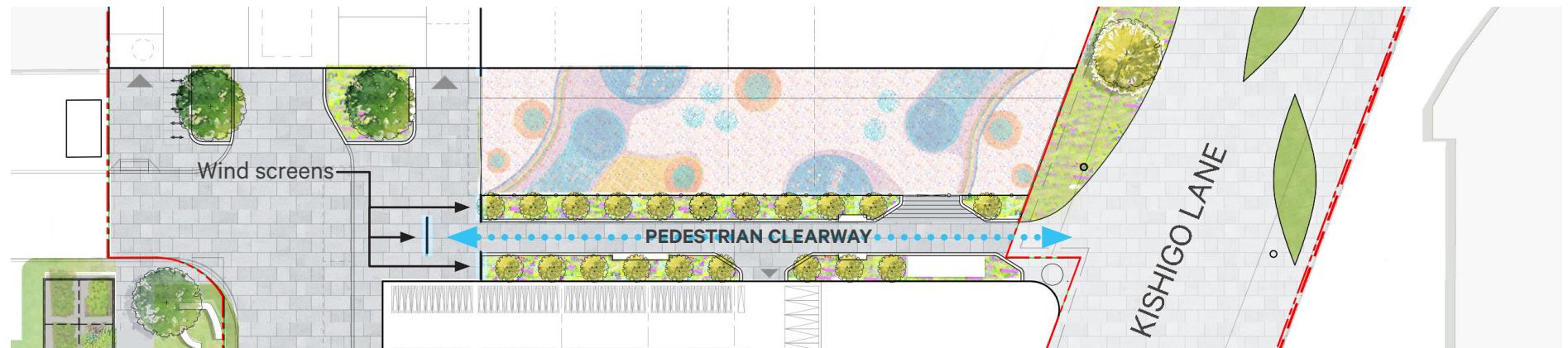
The conditions should aim to be comfortable for sitting during three seasons along sidewalks, entrances, amenity areas, passageways and child care areas; and they should be comfortable for walking during the winter season. Because the development is anticipating a large number of children residents and child care users, conditions should be carefully considered. (Wind report is based on adult bodies).

The design of the building should aim to minimize off-site wind impacts and incorporate mitigation strategies as needed.



Figure 17: Wind Mitigation Precedent

Figure 18: Wind Mitigation Areas on Site



2.6 Kishigo Lane

Kishigo Lane is named after an Anishinaabe family that lived in the neighbourhood in the late 1800s. The design of Kishigo Lane has been guided through Indigenous engagement, including a series of Indigenous Sharing Circles with Indigenous communities and conversations with representatives of the Treaty Rights Holders.

The proposed Indigenous placekeeping and public realm improvements along Kishigo Lane will be designed and constructed at the Site Plan Application stage of the project.

The design will use pavers from the City of Toronto's standard palette of street pavers that will feature modular, moveable planters, and small spaces created for gathering while protecting for the long-term maintenance of the public utility infrastructure located below the right-of-way.

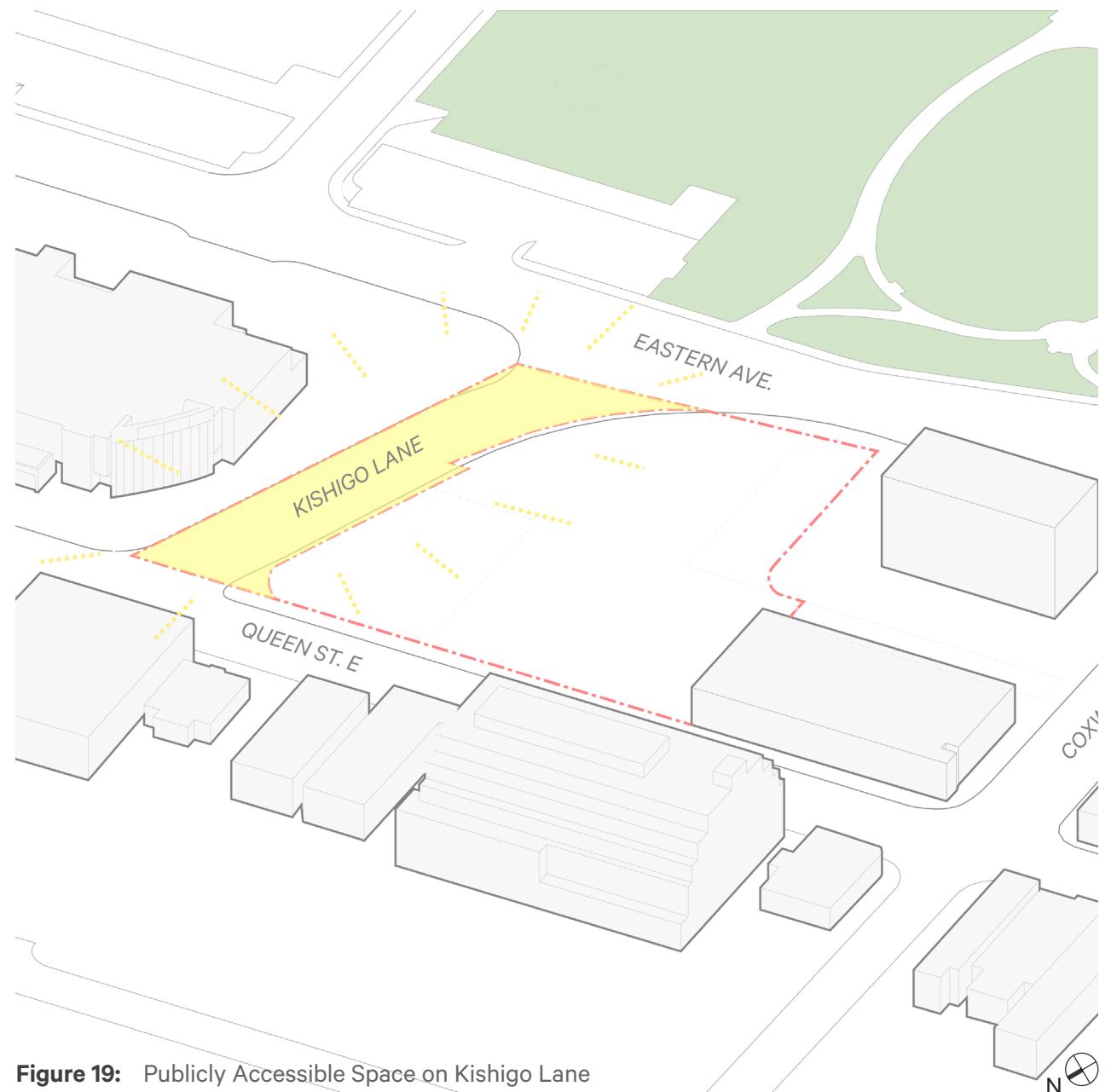


Figure 19: Publicly Accessible Space on Kishigo Lane

3.0 Site Organization

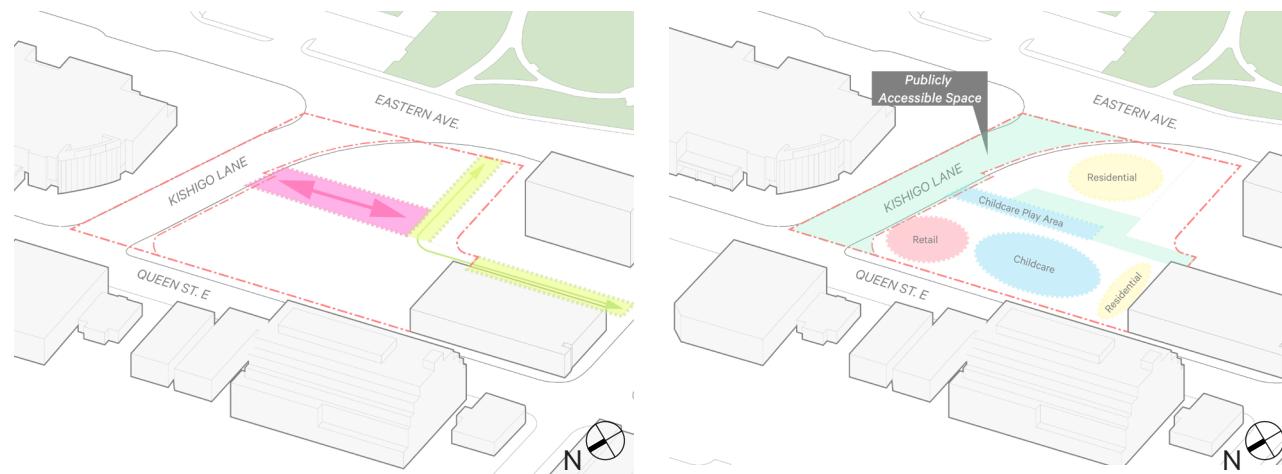
3.1 Access and Circulation

Pedestrian access is primarily from Queen Street East, with an additional connection from Eastern Avenue. A new laneway through the site also provides pedestrian access from Kishigo Lane and Emdaabiimok Avenue. Vehicular access is provided via the existing east-west public laneway from Emdaabiimok Avenue, connecting to the new north south driveway to Eastern Avenue.

The below grade parking garage is accessed from the new north-south driveway, off Eastern Avenue. Access to the Type G Loading space and Moving Room is located at the west elevation off the north-south driveway. The site servicing is strategically located to minimize impacts to the childcare space which is at the centre of the Site.

Retail and Childcare Spaces

The retail space is located at the northeast corner of the Site, fronting Queen Street East and adjacent to Kishigo Lane. The childcare facility is located adjacent to the retail space, on the ground floor of the mid-rise building. The frontage along Queen Street will be animated by the ground floor programming in the mid-rise building.



Pedestrian & Vehicular Connection Through Existing Public Laneway

Layby spaces are provided adjacent to the north-south portion of the driveway, providing pick-up and drop-off for the childcare facility and residential building.

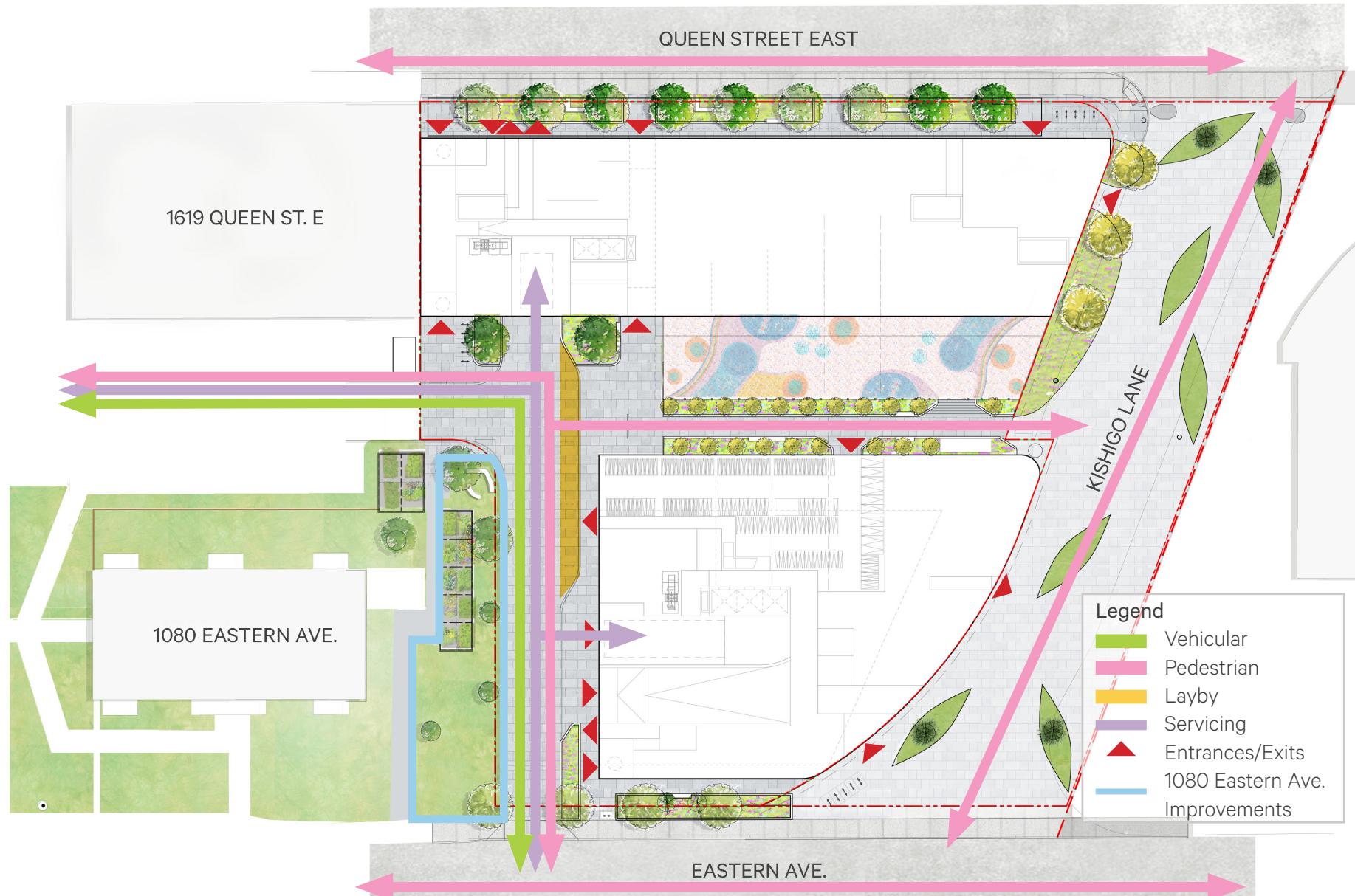
Pedestrian access is provided across the full east west extents of the Site with a direct connection between Kishigo Lane, the existing public laneway and the new north-south driveway. The mid-block connection also provides a pedestrian focused area with proposed seating and planting.

Childcare and Residential Access

The childcare facility is located at the base of the mid-rise building. The main entrance to the daycare facility is on Queen Street East, and a secondary entrance is located next to the vehicular layby.



Figure 20: Access and Circulation Diagram



4.0 Proposed Development

4.1 Stepbacks, Set Back, Massing, and Built Form

The built form of the development considers the City of Toronto Mid-rise and Tall Building Design Guidelines. The proposal also meets the intent of the policies of the Toronto Urban Design Guidelines, Queen Street East 2012 (Coxwell Avenue to Nursewood Road). The development amends site and area-specific policy (SASP) 466 through an OPA as part of the planning approvals process for this site.

Architectural expression will respond to the established main street character, prioritizing the use of solid materials to ensure the building integrates with the surrounding context. The exploration of low-carbon construction approaches is encouraged at the detailed design stage.

Street Frontage and Setback

The Queen Street massing is proposed to be a 6 storey midrise block facing Queen Street East including a partial 7th storey for indoor amenity space. The Queen Street East massing is set back 3 metres from the property line while the ground floor is set back by 4 metres. The building has a 1.5 meter setback at the 5th floor fronting Queen Street.

An 18 storey tower is proposed fronting Eastern Avenue. The tower rests on a 7 storey podium and is setback 1.5 meters from the podium along Eastern Avenue.

The location of the tower has been placed to the south of the site to limit the impact of shadows on the north sidewalk along Queen Street East.



Figure 21: Street Frontage, Setbacks and Angular plane

Figure 22: North South Building Section

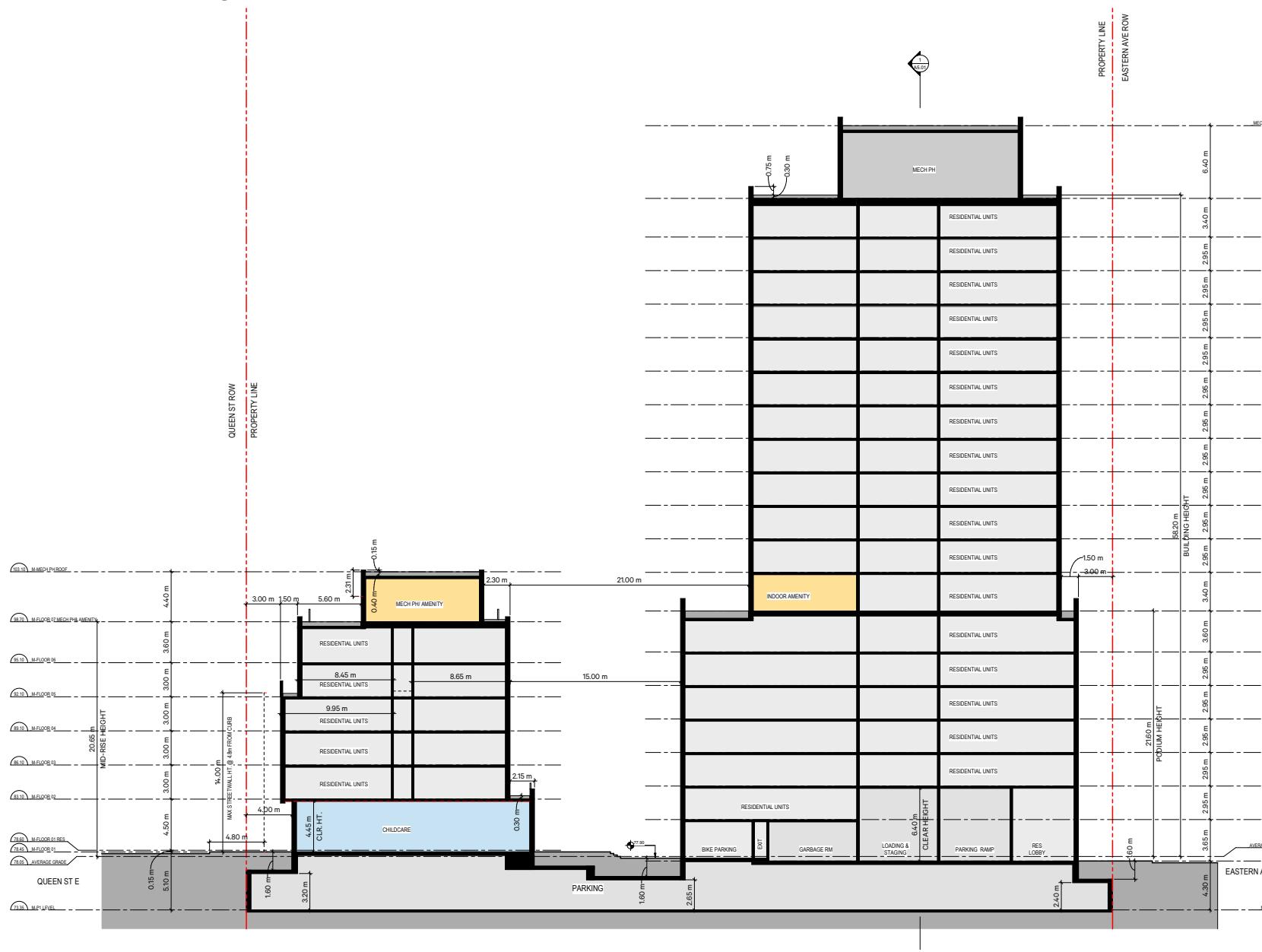


Figure 23: Mid-block Looking East



Figure 24: Mid-block Looking West



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Figure 25: North-East Corner



Figure 26: South-East Corner



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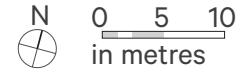
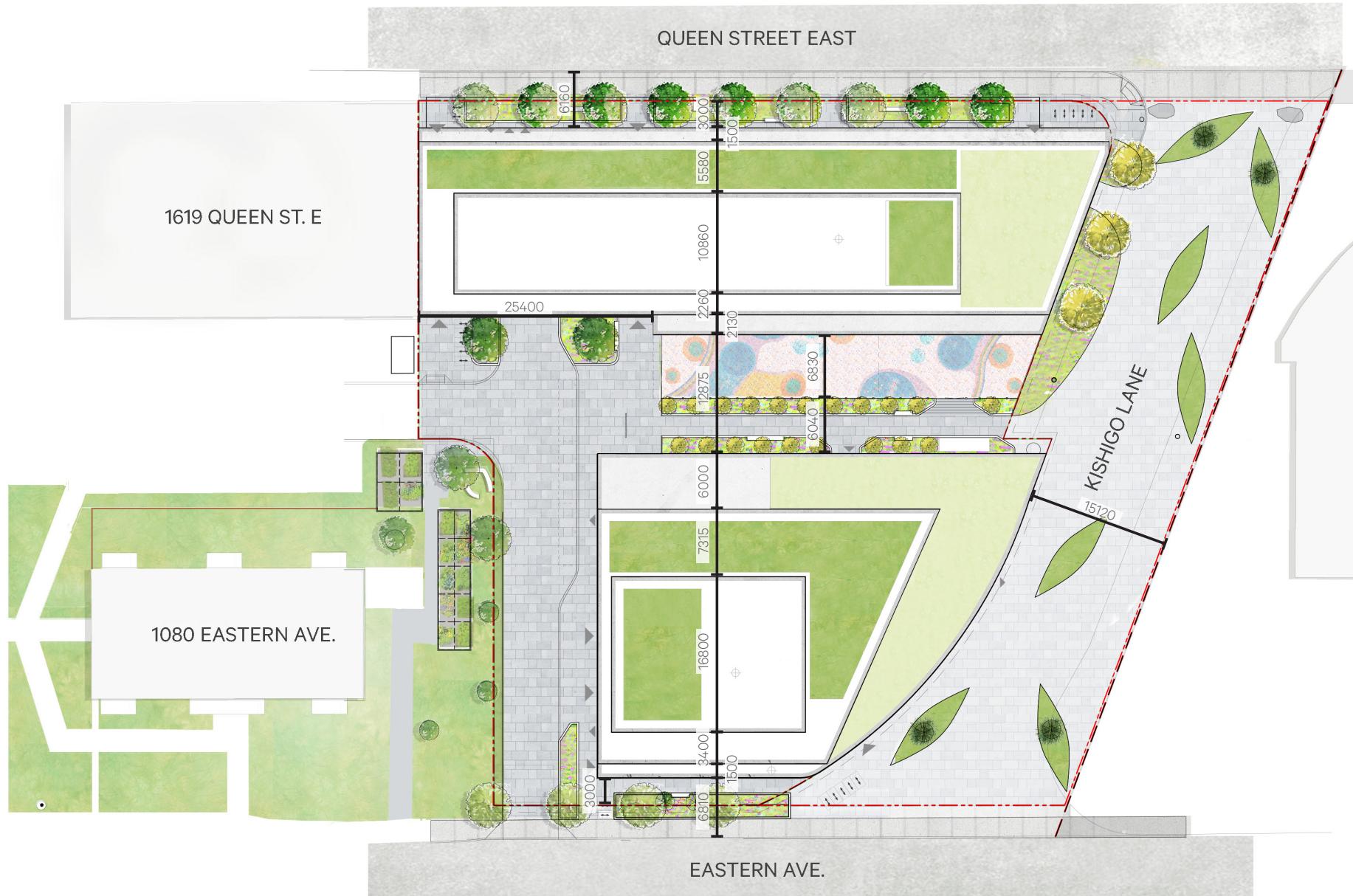


Figure 27: Stepbacks, Massings, and Built Form Diagram



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