

53 Strachan Avenue - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Date: January 28, 2026

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

Wards: Ward 10 – Spadina – Fort York

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 53 Strachan Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value according to the Statement of Significance which includes a description of heritage attributes found in Attachment 1.

The subject property at 53 Strachan Avenue is located at the southern edge of the West Queen West neighbourhood on the southeast corner of Wellington Street West and Strachan Avenue. The property, owned by the City since 1858, contains a large scale, brick, 3-storey factory building (Strachan House) constructed in 1888 and enlarged between 1899 and 1901, and a 2-storey brick stable (Maple Green Building) constructed in 1901. A location map and current photograph of the heritage property are found in Attachment 2.

Located in one of Toronto's most significant historic manufacturing areas of the late 19th and early 20th century, Strachan House was one of the largest planing mills in Canada in 1888 when built for John B. Smith & Sons for processing rough-cut, seasoned lumber into smooth, finished dimensional lumber and millwork. After John B. Smith and Sons closed in 1967, the City leased the former factory building in 1989 to Homes First, an organization that has provided supportive housing to Toronto's vulnerable since 1983. Converted to housing in 1996, Strachan House featured an innovative design by Levitt Goodman Architects based on an inclusive and collaborative process involving residents in its design.

Staff have determined that the property at 53 Strachan Avenue has cultural heritage value and meets 5 of the Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. A property may be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, if it meets two or more of the nine criteria.

The City-owned property at 53 Strachan Avenue was first identified as having potential heritage value as part of a heritage survey conducted through the South Niagara Planning Strategy, adopted by Council in August 2014. City Council directed staff to report back to Toronto and East York Community Council on the potential to designate the property at 53 Strachan Avenue.

The property was listed on the City's Heritage Register on December 17, 2024.

This report is being advanced at this time to support and inform CreateTO's project to deliver a mixed-income community with new affordable and purpose-built rental homes, in addition to restoring supportive housing on site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 53 Strachan Avenue under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance for 53 Strachan Avenue (Entrance addresses: 715, 801, 805, 805A, and 805B Wellington Street West) (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1, to the report, January 28, 2026, from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning.
2. If there are no objections to the designation, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in Council designating the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

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 August 25, 2014, City Council adopted the South Niagara Planning Strategy that envisioned the South Niagara Area as a mixed-use community, complementary to the existing Niagara Neighbourhood. The Strategy included securing the preservation and adaptive reuse of the area's heritage resources, in a format which respects and transitions to the existing neighbourhood and the adjacent Fort York National Historic Site and identified the property located at 53 Strachan Avenue has having heritage potential.

City Council directed staff to report back to Toronto and East York Community Council on the potential to designate the property at 53 Strachan Avenue, including entrance addresses at 715, 801 A, and 805 Wellington Street West, under the Ontario Heritage Act, RSO 1990. [Item – 2014.PG35.4](#)

On December 16, 2020, City Council passed motion MM27.33 regarding a future City initiated Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments for the site of the subject property to permit the redevelopment of a new supportive housing facility, which contemplates maintaining the existing building at 53 Strachan Avenue. The member motion supporting this request recognized the potential heritage value of the former John B. Smith and Sons building and sought the inclusion of Heritage Planning in the consideration of the development of the property. [Item – 2020.MM27.33](#)

City Council included the property at 53 Strachan Avenue on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register on December 17, 2024. [Item - 2024.TE18.11](#)

POLICY AND REGULATION CONSIDERATIONS

Provincial Plans and Policies

The conservation of cultural heritage resources is an integral component of good planning, contributing to a sense of place, economic prosperity, and healthy and equitable communities. Heritage conservation in Ontario is identified as a provincial interest under the Planning Act. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>

Further, the policies and definitions of the Provincial Planning Statement (2024) identify the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage evaluation and heritage conservation will be implemented.

[Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 \(ontario.ca\)](#)

Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The criteria are based on an evaluation of design/physical value, historical and associative value and contextual value. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

Official Plan

The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime and provides policies to guide decision making within the City. It contains a number of policies related to properties on the City's Heritage Register and properties adjacent to them, as well as the protection of areas of archaeological potential. The Official Plan should be read as a whole to understand its comprehensive and integrative intent as a policy framework for priority setting and decision making. The Official Plan can be found here:

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

COMMENTS

Evaluation Analysis

The following evaluation analysis is based on the comprehensive research conducted on the property at 53 Strachan Avenue (see Attachment 3) and provides the rationale for the recommendations found in this report.

The property at 53 Strachan Avenue meets the following 5 out of 9 criteria:

The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method

Strachan House has design and physical value as a representative example of a late-19th century factory building. The property's large scale, symmetrically organized into 21 bays along Wellington Street West and 5 bays along Strachan Avenue, heavy rectangular massing, and thick masonry walls featuring brick piers and segmental arched openings are characteristic of this typology. Constructed in 1888, it is one of the earliest examples of this typology in the area. Along with the Wellington Destructor at 677 Wellington Street West and the Part IV designated National Casket Company Factories at 89-109 Niagara Street to the east, Strachan House is one of the few remaining large scale industrial buildings that once lined the railway corridors between Bathurst Street and Dufferin Street.

The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community

Strachan House has historical value for its direct association with the development of the area between Bathurst Street and Dufferin Street along the railway corridors into one of Toronto's most significant industrial areas from the late-19th to mid-20th centuries. This is reflected in its large scale, heavy 3-storey massing, and large scale painted signage reflecting its use as the John B. Smith & Sons planing mill and offices from 1888 until 1967.

Strachan House has further value for its direct association with the Homes First (formerly Homes First Society), which has been providing supportive housing to vulnerable people in Toronto since 1983. After leasing the former John B. Smith & Sons planing mill in 1989, Homes First converted the building into Strachan House in 1996. Representing an innovative approach to the creation of supportive housing pioneered by Homes First in its earlier 'StreetCity' project, the design of Strachan House involved the collaboration and direct participation of individuals experiencing homelessness.

The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture

The property has historical value as it yields information about the land and its relationship to Fort York along the western side of Garrison Creek, a portion of the Ordinance Reserve, and the conveyance of the property to the City of Toronto in 1858.

Strachan House has historical value as it yields information about the industrial development of the surrounding area. Along with the Wellington Destructor at 677 Wellington Street West and the Part IV designated National Casket Company Factories at 89-109 Niagara Street to the east, and Liberty Village to the south, the property formed part of one of Toronto's most significant industrial areas.

The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community

Strachan House has value for its association with Levitt Goodman Architects (now LGA Architectural Partners). Founded in 1989 by Janna Levitt and Dean Goodman, LGA Architectural Partners is widely recognized for its community-minded approach to design. This is evidenced in Strachan House's design which was done in collaboration with residents, incorporating interior features such as a town square and main street. Along with the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Architecture for Strachan House (1999), the practice has also been awarded the RAIC Award of Excellence for Innovation in Architecture for 25 Leonard Avenue (2007), a social housing building; and OAA Design Excellence Awards for the Toronto Public Library Scarborough Civic Centre Branch (2016) and Eva's Phoenix (2017), which provides long-term shelter, education and skills training to youth aged 16-24.

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings

Constructed between 1888 and 1901 as a planing mill for John B. Smith & Sons alongside the rail corridor which provided access to the company's sawmill and timber rights in northern Ontario, Strachan House is physically, functionally, and historically linked to its surroundings.

See Attachments 1, 2 and 3 of this report for the Statement of Significance; Location Map and Photograph; and Research, Evaluation & Visual Resources pertaining to the property at 53 Strachan Avenue, as all of these documents are integral to the recommendations made in this staff report.

Prescribed Event Status

As of July 1, 2021, Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days of a "Prescribed Event".

A Prescribed Event is a point of time when the application for an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application has been deemed complete and the City Clerk provides notice of that complete application to the public in accordance with the Planning Act. The Prescribed Event is not the date a development application is deemed complete or when an application is made to the City. A Prescribed Event, including any prescribed exceptions, are defined under O. Reg 385/21.

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is required for all development applications that affect listed and designated properties to determine how a heritage property is proposed to be conserved. Designation enables City Council to review proposed alterations or demolitions to the property and enforce heritage property standards and maintenance.

At its meeting on December 16, 2020, City Council requested staff to consider any required amendments to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law, through a City-initiated application, as they apply to City-owned lands at 53 Strachan Avenue or in part, to permit the development of a new supportive housing facility. The member motion supporting this request recognized the potential heritage value of the former John B. Smith and Sons building (Strachan House) and sought the inclusion of Heritage Planning in the consideration of the development of the property. This report is being advanced at this time to support and inform CreateTO's project to deliver a mixed-income community with new affordable and purpose-built rental homes, in addition to restoring supportive housing on site.

CONCLUSION

Staff have determined that the property at 53 Strachan Avenue meets 5 out of 9 criteria in Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. As such, the property merits designation and staff recommend that Council support the designation of this property to conserve its cultural heritage value.

The Statement of Significance: 53 Strachan Avenue (Entrance addresses: 715, 801, 805, 805A, and 805B Wellington Street West) (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1 to this report comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Jason Thorne
Chief Planner and Executive Director
City Planning

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation)
Attachment 2 – Location Map and Current Photograph
Attachment 3 – Research, Evaluation & Visual Resources

(ENTRANCE ADDRESSES: 715, 801, 805, 805A, 805B WELLINGTON STREET WEST)

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)**

The property at 53 Strachan Avenue is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value, and meets Ontario Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria prescribed for municipal designation, under the categories of design/physical, historical/associative, and contextual value.

Description

The subject property at 53 Strachan Avenue is located at the southern edge of the West Queen West neighbourhood on the southeast corner of Wellington Street West and Strachan Avenue, directly north of the Metrolinx West Subdivision rail corridor. The property contains Strachan House, a large scale, brick, 3-storey factory building constructed in 1888 and enlarged between 1899 and 1901; the Maple Green Building, a 2-storey brick stable constructed in 1901; and the South Stanley Extension Park.

The subject property at 53 Strachan Avenue was identified as having potential heritage value as part of a heritage survey conducted through the South Niagara Planning Strategy which was adopted by Council in August 2014 and was included on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register on December 17, 2024.

Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Strachan House has design and physical value as a representative example of a late-19th century factory building. The property's large scale, organized into 21 bays along Wellington Street West and 5 bays along Strachan Avenue, heavy rectangular massing, and thick masonry walls featuring brick piers and segmental arched openings, are characteristic of this typology. Constructed in 1888, it is one of the earliest examples of this typology in the area. Along with the Wellington Destructor at 677 Wellington Street West and the Part IV designated National Casket Company Factories at 89-109 Niagara Street to the east, Strachan House is one of the few remaining large scale industrial buildings that once lined the railway corridor between Bathurst Street and Dufferin Street.

Strachan House has historical value for its direct association with the development of the area between Bathurst Street and Dufferin Street along the railway corridors into one of Toronto's most significant industrial areas from the late-19th to mid-20th centuries. This is reflected in its large scale, heavy 3-storey massing, and large scale painted signage reflecting its use as the John B. Smith & Sons planing mill and offices from 1888 until 1967.

The property has historical value as it yields information about the land and its relationship to Fort York along the western side of Garrison Creek, a portion of the Ordinance Reserve, and the conveyance of the property to the City of Toronto in 1858.

Strachan House also has historical value as it yields information about the industrial development of the surrounding area. Along with the Wellington Destructor at 677 Wellington Street West and the Part IV designated National Casket Company Factories at 89-109 Niagara Street to the east, and Liberty Village to the south, the property formed part of one of Toronto's most significant industrial areas.

Strachan House has further value for its direct association with Homes First (formerly Homes First Society), which has been providing supportive housing to vulnerable people in Toronto since 1983. After leasing the former John B. Smith & Sons planing mill in 1989, Homes First converted the building into Strachan House in 1996. Representing an innovative approach to the creation of supportive housing pioneered in its earlier StreetCity project, the design of Strachan House involved the collaboration and direct participation of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Strachan House also has value for its association with Levitt Goodman Architects (now LGA Architectural Partners). Founded in 1989 by Janna Levitt and Dean Goodman, LGA Architectural Partners is widely recognized for its community-minded approach to design. This is evidenced in Strachan House's adaptive reuse, which was designed in collaboration with residents, incorporating interior features such as a town square and main street. Along with the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Architecture for Strachan House (1999), the practice has also been awarded the RAIC Award of Excellence for Innovation in Architecture for 25 Leonard Avenue (2007), a social housing building; and the OAA Design Excellence Awards for the Toronto Public Library Scarborough Civic Centre Branch (2016) and Eva's Phoenix (2017), which provides long-term shelter, education and skills training to youth aged 16-24.

The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally and historically linked to its surroundings. Strachan House was constructed between 1888 and 1901 as a planing mill for the John B. Smith & Sons where its location alongside the rail corridor provided access to the company's sawmill and timber rights in northern Ontario.

Heritage Attributes

Design and Physical

The following heritage attributes contribute to the design and physical value of Strachan House:

- The scale, form, and massing of the structure with its rectangular plan, three-storey height and flat roof.
- The brick and beam construction featuring heavy timber floor and roof framing.
- The structure's situation at the southeast corner of Wellington Street West and Strachan Avenue.
- The principal (north and west) elevations, organized into bays featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs framed by full height brick piers terminating at a stepped brick parapet with brick corbelling.
- The projecting three-sided bay windows the first storey on the westernmost bay of the north elevation and northernmost bay of the west elevation.
- The east elevation, organized into bays featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs framed by full height brick piers.

- The north elevation's painted signs for “blinds”, “boxes”, “flooring” and other goods between the first and second storeys.
- The south elevation's painted signs, including “John B. Smith & Sons” lettering in both black and white, that extend across the entire elevation between the second and third storeys.

Historical and Associative

The following heritage attributes contribute to the historical and associative value of Strachan House:

- The scale, form, and massing of the structure with its rectangular plan, three-storey height and flat roof.
- The brick and beam construction featuring heavy timber floor and roof framing.
- The structures situation at the southeast corner of Wellington Street West and Strachan Avenue.
- The principal (north and west) elevations, organized into bays featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs framed by full height brick piers terminating at a stepped brick parapet with brick corbelling.
- The projecting three-sided bay windows the first storey on the westernmost bay of the north elevation and northernmost bay of the west elevation.
- The east elevation, organized into bays featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs framed by full height brick piers.
- The north elevation's painted signs for “blinds”, “boxes”, “flooring” and other goods between the first and second storeys.
- The south elevation's painted signs, including “John B. Smith & Sons” lettering in both black and white, that extend across the entire elevation between the second and third storeys.
- The interior 'Town Square' with its full height interior atrium with staircase, balconies and 1888 brick smokestack with iron doors.

Contextual

The following heritage attributes contribute to the contextual value of Strachan House:

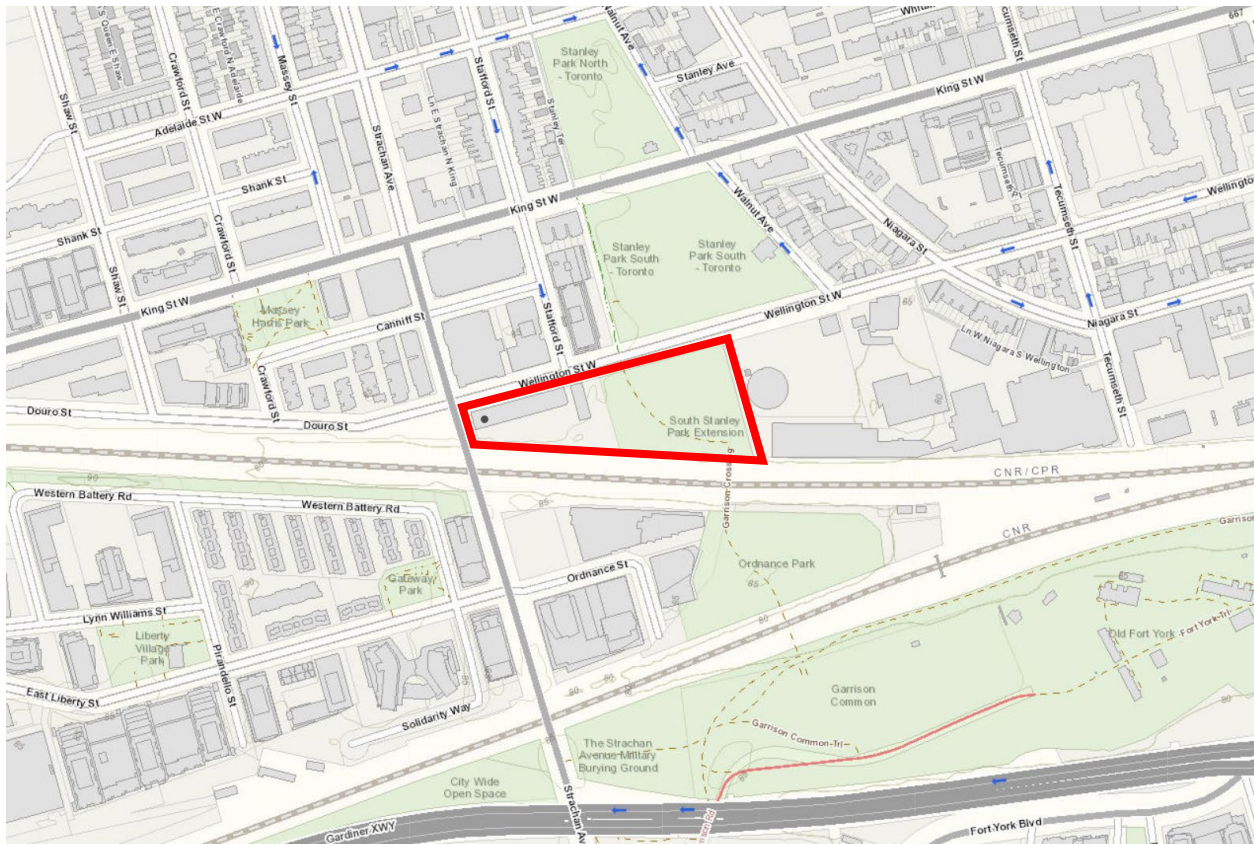
- The scale, form, and massing of the structure with its rectangular plan, three-storey height and flat roof.
- The brick and beam construction featuring heavy timber floor and roof framing.
- The structures situation at the southeast corner of Wellington Street West and Strachan Avenue.
- The principal (north and west) elevations, organized into bays featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs framed by full height brick piers terminating at a stepped brick parapet with brick corbelling.
- The projecting three-sided bay windows the first storey on the westernmost bay of the north elevation and northernmost bay of the west elevation.
- The east elevation, organized into bays featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs framed by full height brick piers.
- The north elevation's painted signs for “blinds”, “boxes”, “flooring” and other goods between the first and second storeys.

- The south elevation's painted signs, including “John B. Smith & Sons” lettering in both black and white, that extend across the entire elevation between the second and third storeys.

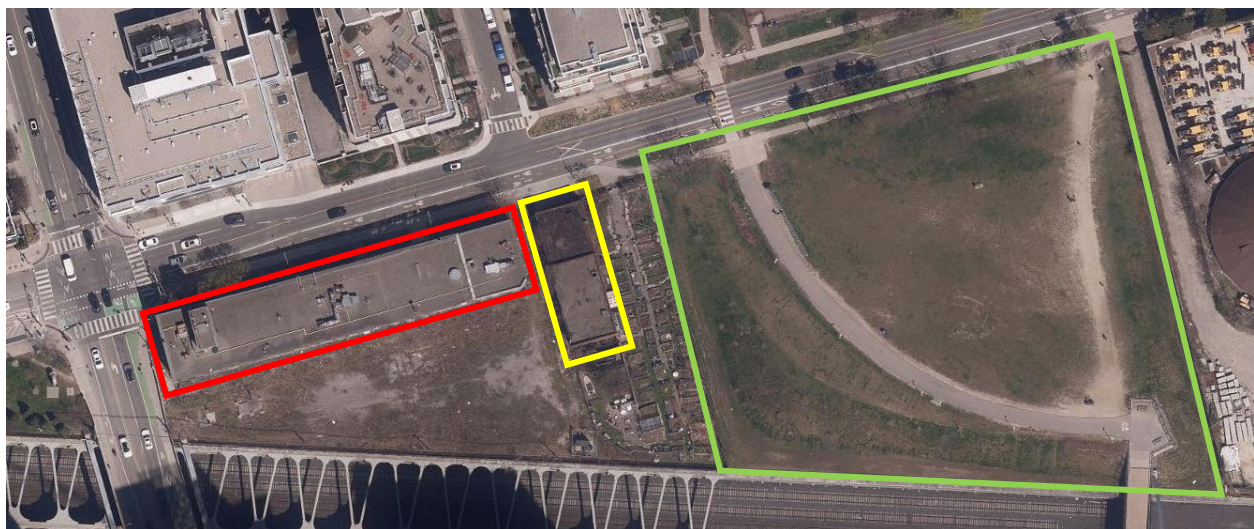
LOCATION MAP AND CURRENT PHOTOGRAPH

53 STRACHAN AVENUE

ATTACHMENT 2



This location map is for information purposes only. The exact boundaries of the property are not shown. The red outline marks the location of 53 Strachan Avenue (City of Toronto iView Mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning, 2026).



2024 aerial image of the property showing Strachan House (red), Maple Green Building (yellow), and South Stanley Park Extension (green). The exact boundaries of the property are not shown (City of Toronto iView Mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning, 2026).



Principal (north) and east elevations of Strachan House viewed from Wellington Street West (Heritage Planning, 2026).



Principal (north) elevation of Maple Green Building viewed from Wellington Street West (Heritage Planning, 2026).

**RESEARCH, EVALUATION &
VISUAL RESOURCES
53 STRACHAN AVENUE**

ATTACHMENT 3

In undertaking this research and evaluation, we recognize that the area now known as the City of Toronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit (1805), and the Williams Treaties (1923) signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.



Strachan House (Heritage Planning, 2026).

1. DESCRIPTION

53 STRACHAN AVENUE	
ADDRESS	53 Strachan Avenue (Entrance addresses: 715, 801, 805, 805A, and 805B Wellington Street West)
WARD	10 – Spadina-Fort York
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	West Queen West
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1888
ORIGINAL USE	Lumber Planing Mill
CURRENT USE* (*This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law	Vacant
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	Unknown
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 3
LISTING DATE	December 17, 2024

2. ONTARIO REGULATION 9/06 CHECKLIST:

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The following checklist identifies the prescribed criteria met by the subject property at 53 Strachan Avenue for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. There are a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act if the property meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

The evaluation table is marked "N/A" if the criterion is "not applicable" to the property or "✓" if it is applicable to the property.

53 STRACHAN AVENUE (ENTRANCE ADDRESSES: 715, 801, 805, 805A, 805B WELLINGTON STREET WEST)

1.	The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	✓
2.	The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	N/A
3.	The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	N/A
4.	The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	✓
5.	The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	✓
6.	The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	✓
7.	The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	N/A
8.	The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	✓
9.	The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	N/A

3. RESEARCH

This section of the report describes the history, architecture and context of the property. Visual resources related to the research are located in Section 4. Archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Section 5 (List of Sources).

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

For time immemorial, Toronto has been home to Indigenous peoples. Ojibway oral histories speak of Ice People, who lived at a time when ice covered the land.¹ Following the retreat of glaciers approximately 13,000 years ago, small groups of Indigenous peoples moved from place to place, hunting and gathering the food they needed according to the seasons. Over millennia, they adapted to dramatically changing environmental conditions, developing and acquiring new technologies as they did so. Waterways and the lake were vital sources of fresh water and nourishment, and shorelines and nearby areas were important sites for gathering, trading, hunting, fishing, and ceremonies. Long-distance trade moved valuable resources across the land.

After maize and squash were introduced to Southern Ontario, by approximately 500 CE, horticulture began to supplement food sources. By 1300 CE, villages focused on growing food became year-round settlements surrounded by crops. These villages were home to ancestors of the Huron-Wendat Nation, who would continue to occupy increasingly larger villages in the Toronto area and beyond. These villages were connected to well-established travel routes which were part of local and long-distance trail networks, including the Carrying Place trails on the Don, Rouge and Humber rivers that connected Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. Beads made from seashells from the eastern seaboard were found at the Alexandra site in North York, which was a community of 800-1000 people in approximately 1350.

By 1600, the Wendat had formed a confederation of individual nations, and had concentrated most of their villages away from Lake Ontario, in the Georgian Bay area. Following contact with French explorers and missionaries in Southern Ontario in the early 1600s, European diseases decimated First Nations. Competition for furs to trade with Europeans and the desire to replenish numbers through absorption of captives, among other factors², contributed to the Beaver Wars, which after 1640, saw the Haudenosaunee Confederacy expand into Southern Ontario, dispersing the Wendat. Within the boundaries of today's Toronto, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy then occupied villages on the Carrying Place trails on the Humber and Rouge Rivers from approximately the 1660s to the 1680s.

In the late 1680s, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy chose to leave their village in the Toronto area and returned to their homelands in upstate New York. As evidenced by the 1701 Great Peace of Montreal, the 1701 Nanfan Treaty, and the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, the Haudenosaunee continued to have an interest in the resources of the area.

Anishinaabe people from the Lake Superior region then moved into the Toronto area. While the Wendat and Haudenosaunee people lived in year-round villages surrounded by crops, the Anishinaabe people continued to live primarily by seasonally moving across the land to hunt, fish and gather resources that were available at a specific time, including migrating birds and maple syrup. To the west of Toronto, the Anishinaabe

¹ With thanks to Philip Cote for the reference to Benton-Banai, Edward, *The Mishomis book: The voice of the Ojibway* (Indian Country Press, 1985), p. 26.

² <https://histindigenouspeoples.pressbooks.tru.ca/chapter/chapter-5-colonial-wars-looking-east>; Gary Warrick, "The Aboriginal Population of Ontario in Late Pre-history," in Munson and Jamieson, eds., *Before Ontario: The Archaeology of a Province* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), p. 72.

people became known as the Mississaugas of the Credit. To the east, they became known as the Chippewas of Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama and the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Scugog Island.³

In 1787, as the British began to prepare for an influx of colonists into the area following the American Revolution, the British Crown negotiated the Toronto Purchase with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to obtain title to the land. The flawed and poorly documented agreement was invalidated, and Treaty 13 was negotiated in 1805 for lands now including much of the City of Toronto. In 1923, the Governments of Ontario and Canada signed the Williams Treaties for over 20,000 km², including portions of eastern Toronto, with seven First Nations of the Chippewa of Lake Simcoe (Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama) and the Mississauga of the north shore of Lake Ontario (Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Scugog Island).

The Mississaugas, Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, or the Wendat did not traditionally regard land as a commodity to be sold. Following the Toronto Purchase, the British government quickly set out to survey the land into lots which were either sold or granted into private ownership of settlers. In 2010, the Government of Canada settled the Toronto Purchase Claim with the Mississaugas of the Credit after agreeing that the Mississaugas were originally unfairly compensated. In 2018, the Williams Treaties First Nations settled litigation about land surrenders and harvesting rights with the Governments of Canada and Ontario.

The City of Toronto remains the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is also covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with seven Mississaugas and Chippewa First Nations.

i. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the properties which are the basis for determining historical or associative value of Criteria 4, 5 or 6 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

Ordnance Reserve

Bounded by Queen Street in the north, Peter Street in the east, Lake Ontario to the south, and Dufferin Street to the west, the Military Reserve (also called the Garrison or Ordnance Reserve), was an approximately 1000-acre tract of land set aside for military purposes by Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe, the first lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, following the founding of York (Toronto) in 1793. In the early 1830s, the Military Reserve lands west of Garrison Creek were sold to raise funds for the expansion of Fort York.⁴ The remaining lands were named the Ordnance Reserve. In 1845, a 50 acre parcel of land on the south side of Queen, bounded by Massey Street to the east, Adelaide Street to the south, and Abell Street to the west, was granted to

³ Mississaugas of the Credit, "The History of Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation." n.d.

⁴ Smith, 1999, p.68.

the Province of Canada for a lunatic asylum which was constructed in 1850.⁵ During the 1850s, sections of the Ordnance Reserve were set aside for the construction of three railroads.

Beginning In the late 1870s the area south of King Street West became dominated by numerous large industrial complexes including the internationally known Massey-Harris Company plant (1879) to the west of the subject property and the John Inglis Company to the south. The surrounding area would serve as one of Toronto's most significant industrial areas from the 1870s until the 1950s.

In 1858, a 22.5-acre parcel of land along the western side of Garrison Creek was conveyed to the City of Toronto with the condition that the lands along Garrison Creek be maintained as a park.⁶ The northern section of these lands was bounded by Richmond Street West to the north, Garrison Creek to the east, Wellington Street to the South, and Stanley Terrace to the West. The southern section, including the subject property, was bounded by Wellington Street to the North, Garrison Creek to the east, the Ontario, Simcoe, and Lake Huron Railway to the south, and Strachan Avenue to the west.⁷ In 1875, the Western Cattle Market opened on the eastern part of the southern section.⁸ In 1888, the John B. Smith Lumber Company opened it's planing mill on the western part of the southern section. Based on Fire Insurance Plans, by 1890 the northern section had become Stanley Park and Garrison Creek had been buried.

John B. Smith & Sons

In 1851, John B. Smith established a grocery and provisions store in Toronto.⁹ Along with William Burke he established Smith, Burke & Co. which by 1858 was operating a planing mill and lumber yard on the west side of Niagara Street between Adelaide Street West and King Street West.¹⁰ The company would serve as the building contractors for Toronto's Crystal Palace in 1858, and were the suppliers of timber for the construction of the Gooderham & Worts Distillery in 1859.¹¹ After relocating to Front Street near the foot of the company dissolved in 1866, with John B. Smith continuing to operate the planning mill at Front Street and William Burke operating a planning mill at the corner of Richmond and Sheppard Streets.¹²

In 1887, John B. Smith established John B. Smith & Sons and entered into a lease with the City of Toronto on November 1, 1887 for the western 3 acres of the southern section of the City owned lands on the west side of Garrison Creek.¹³ When it opened in 1888, the John B. Smith & Sons planing mill was described in Toronto Illustrated, 1893 as "one of the largest in Canada, occupying a three-story building 50 X 225 feet in dimensions," producing "dressed lumber, doors, sash, blinds, mouldings, boxes" which were shipped throughout North America. The property also contained offices, carpenter

5 Ibid, p.62.

6 Ibid, p.68.

7 Ibid; Dennis, 1862.

8 The Globe, July 9, 1875, 4.

9 Plummer 2011; Consolidated Illustrating Co., 1893, p149.

10 Plummer, 2011; Boulton, 1858; City of Toronto Directory, 1859.

11 Plummer, 2011.

12 Ibid; City of Toronto Directories 1866-1867.

13 Land Registry Office 80, Book 110-2.

shops, storage sheds, three dry-kilns, and a large lumber yard, and railway siding that provided access to the company's timber sources in northern Ontario.¹⁴ Taking advantage of its large size and prominent location along the rail corridor, large John B. Smith & Sons signs were painted on all four elevations of the planing mill and the south elevations of the stables and lumber sheds. Between 1899 and 1901, the factory was enlarged, with a 3-storey addition on its west elevation, incorporating the company offices, and a one storey annex on its east elevation for its machine shop. At this time a 2-storey brick stable and lumber shed was constructed to the east of the factory.¹⁵ Based on a review of Fire insurance Plans, other notable additions to the property included a large separate lumber shed to the rear of the factory building between 1903 and 1910 and a second storey addition to the factory building's east annex in the late 1920s or 1930s.

In 1967, John B. Smith & Sons ceased its operations. Over the next four decades the lumber sheds and outbuildings were demolished. The 2-storey brick stable building would house Maple Green Building Supplies from 1977 until the early 2000s, during which it became known as the Maple Green Building. In 1989, the planing mill building was leased by the Homes First Society, a non-profit supportive housing provider.¹⁶ In 1996 they converted the building into supportive housing, naming it Strachan House. The interior of the former John B. Smith and Sons planing mill was reconfigured into twelve residential suites, each with five to seven private bedrooms and shared kitchen, bathroom and living areas. At the centre of Strachan House, the Town Square, a large full height atrium incorporating the original smokestack and surrounded served as a central gathering place where the resident's' council would meet.¹⁷ The exterior masonry walls of the second and third easternmost bays of the planing mill were replaced with an Exterior Insulation Finishing System (EIFS) while a third storey was added to the east annex and its north elevation was reclad with cement board.

Homes First and Strachan House

Homes First (formerly the Homes First Society) has provided housing and support services for Toronto's vulnerable since it was founded in 1983. In 1989, it opened StreetCity, which "represented a revolutionary approach to supportive housing models, offering individuals a sense of autonomy and security they hadn't previously experienced."¹⁸ Located in an abandoned city-owned building on Front Street, StreetCity featured 6 self contained 'houses' featuring 12 or 13 rooms with a kitchen, washrooms and shower facilities, that were organized along an interior 'Main Street'.¹⁹ Originally planned as a temporary two-year project, StreetCity would operate at its Front Street for 13 years before closing in 2002.²⁰ This model, pioneered by Homes First, would later be applied to Strachan House. Today Homes First operates 9 shelters providing emergency housing for 2300 people, 400 supportive housing units, and support services.

¹⁴ Plummer, 2011.

¹⁵ Goad's Atlas of the City of Toronto, 1899 and 1903; Building Permit number 12, November 26, 1900.

¹⁶ Land Registry Office 80, Book 110-2.

¹⁷ Hume, 1997, p.K4.

¹⁸ Homes First, 2023.

¹⁹ Maloney, 1989 p.A7; p.A12.

²⁰ Monsebraaten & Rankin, 2003, p.B04.

Designed by Levitt Goodman Architects for the Homes First Society, Strachan House built on the concept of StreetCity, creating supportive housing based on a collaborative design approach with those experiencing chronic homelessness.

Through the involvement of tenants of Strachan House, an architectural and spatial concept was developed that incorporated experiences and perceptions of street life. Specifically, the design strategy was based on city streets where the homeless have been most accustomed to living. An interior street structure with transitional spaces, analogous to city streets, provides a gradation of public, semi-public and private spaces as an architectural solution to the needs of a transient group of users. These streets provide many alternatives for navigation, social interaction and provide vantage points for comfort and security.²¹

In 1999 Levitt Goodman Architects, now LGA Architectural Partners, won the Governor General's Award of Excellence for Strachan House.

LGA Architectural Partners

LGA Architectural Partners, formerly Levitt Goodman Architects, is an award-winning firm that was founded in 1989 by Janna Levitt and Dean Goodman. Dedicated to 'architecture with purpose' and "creating buildings that strengthen and foster both community and wellbeing," the firm has made a significant contribution to Toronto's built environment, designing libraries, galleries, community centres, schools, homeless shelters, and affordable housing.²² Along with the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Architecture for Strachan House (1999), other awards include: the RAIC Award of Excellence for Innovation in Architecture for 25 Leonard Avenue (2007), a social housing building; and the OAA Design Excellence Awards for the Toronto Public Library Scarborough Civic Centre Branch (2016) and Eva's Phoenix (2017), which provides long-term shelter, education and skills training to youth aged 16-24. In its awarding the firm the RAIC Architectural Firm Award in 2019, the Awards Jury noted:

LGA's diverse portfolio represents a wide range of building types that are unified in their commitment to strengthening social objectives. Their community-minded approach, combined with innovative design strategies and a sensitivity to sustainability, makes their architecture both aspirational and impressive.²³

ii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The following section provides an architectural description and analysis related to the property which will establish the basis for determining design or physical value of Criteria 1, 2 or 3 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

Strachan House

Strachan House is a representative example of a late 19th century large scale factory building. Constructed between 1887 and 1888, enlarged between 1899 and 1901, and

²¹ Klassen, 2003.

²² LGA Architectural Partners, n.d.

²³ Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, n.d.

renovated in 1996, the building is comprised of the former planing mill and east annex. The planing mill's large rectangular plan, with clearly articulated bays featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs and brick piers terminating at a stepped parapet supported by corbelling are hallmarks of this typology.

Rising three storeys from a rectangular plan, the brick clad planing mill structure is organized into 21 bays on its north and south elevations and five bays on its east and west elevations, each featuring segmental arch openings with brick voussoirs. The east elevation is obscured by the east annex. Each of the bays on north, south, and west elevations are separated by vertical brick piers. The brick piers on the principal elevations facing Wellington Street West (north) and Strachan Avenue (west) terminate at a stepped brick parapet with brick corbelling. The westernmost bay of the north elevation and the northernmost bay of the west elevation, facing the intersection of Strachan Avenue and Wellington Street West feature bay windows at the first storey. The masonry of the north and west elevations is currently coated with a pink coloured paint.

The first storey of the north elevation features several openings that have been modified from their original configuration. The north elevation's second and third easternmost bays were heavily modified as part of the 1996 renovations. The brick masonry was replaced with an Exterior Insulation Finishing System that extends from partway up the first storey to the roof and features wide rectangular steel framed windows and steel channels mounted from the exterior wall onto the adjacent brick wall. A steel channel at the first storey extends across four brick bays to the west.

The north elevation features faded painted signs for “blinds”, “boxes”, “flooring” and other goods from the time of John B. Smith & Sons between the first and second storeys that is consistent with archival photographs from the 1920s. The south elevation features large “John B. Smith & Sons” lettering in both black and white painted directly onto the brick between the second and third storeys.

The interior of the planing mill structure contains a large full height atrium that was created as part of the 1996 conversion. Designed as a 'Town Square' by Levitt and Goodman Architects it incorporates the original brick smokestack which spans the full height of the space, through the ceiling of the third floor.

The east annex is comprised of a one-storey brick annex constructed in 1901, with a second storey brick addition constructed in the late-1920s or 1930s and third storey addition featuring cement board cladding that formed part of the 1996 renovations. The first and second storeys of the principal (north) elevation are overclad in cement board to match the third storey addition. The first and second storey of the east and south elevations feature brick cladding with flat headed window and door openings at the first storey and segmental arch window openings at the second storey.

The east annex does not contain any heritage attributes.

Maple Green Building

The Stable Building is a two-storey flat roofed structure featuring a rectangular plan and red brick cladding. The principal (north) elevation is organized into 3 bays that feature large full storey rectangular openings at the first storey with short segmental arch window openings at the second storey. The bays are framed by four vertical piers that terminate at a brick parapet. The two outer piers are comprised of brick while the two inner piers appear to have been altered to accommodate larger ground floor openings and are either wood or metal at the first storey and brick at the second storey. Both the east and rear (south) elevations feature blank walls and "John B. Smith & Sons" painted signs at the top of the second storey. The west elevation was not accessible, however archival images from 2022 show several segmental arch openings towards the rear at the first and second storeys.

The Stable Building does not contain any heritage attributes.

iii. CONTEXT

The following section provides contextual information and analysis related to the property which is the basis for determining contextual value of Criteria 7, 8 or 9 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The subject property is located at the southern edge of the West Queen West neighbourhood in the South Niagara Area which is bordered by Wellington Street West, Strachan Avenue, Bathurst Street and the Metrolinx Weston Subdivision Rail Corridor.²⁴ The north side of Wellington Street, opposite the subject property, features a mix of low-rise residential and mid-rise mixed-use buildings between 4 and 11 storeys constructed between 1991 and 2007 and Stanley Park South. To the south and west of the property is the Metrolinx Weston Subdivision Rail Corridor, followed by high-rise residential structures to the south. West of the property is a municipal storage yard at 701 Wellington Street West followed by the Wellington Destructor at 677 Wellington which is included on the Heritage Register.

The City of Toronto Property Data Map attached (Attachment 2) shows the site of the property at 53 Strachan Avenue.

²⁴ City of Toronto, 2014; IBI Group, 2017.

4. VISUAL RESOURCES

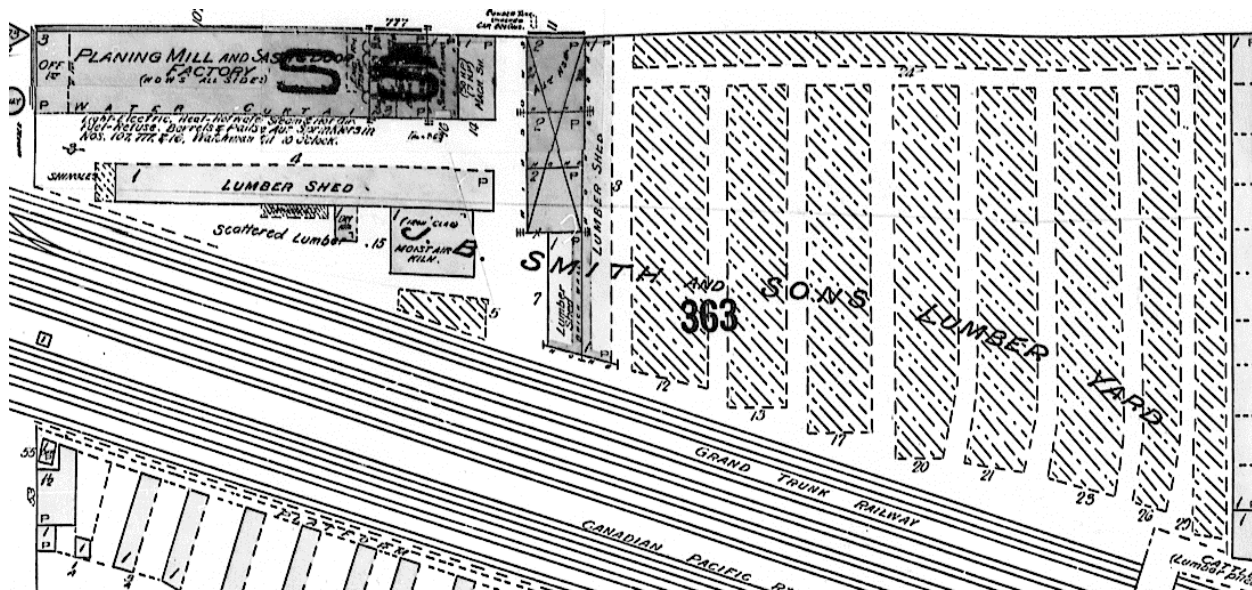


Figure 1 1918 Fire Insurance Plan showing 53 Strachan Avenue with John B. Smith & Sons planing mill, stables, lumber sheds and yard (University of Toronto).



Figure 2 1949 aerial image showing Strachan House with 2 storey east annex, Maple Green Building with lumber sheds, and other outbuildings. Note the prominent 'John B. Smith & Sons' and other painted signage (Ontario Archives).



Figure 3 1928 image of Strachan House looking southwest from Wellington Street West showing the east annex in its original 1 storey configuration. Note the large painted signage on the east and north elevations (Toronto Archives).



Figure 4 1928 image of John B. Smith & Sons lumber yard looking southeast with the Wellington Destructor in the background (Toronto Archives).



Figure 5 1926 image looking northeast towards 53 Strachan Avenue, to the right in the photograph, from the rail corridor with the former Massey-Harris Company works in the foreground (Toronto Archives).



Figure 6 1985 image looking north along Strachan Avenue with Strachan House on the left and the former Masey-Harris Company works to the north and west (Toronto Archives).



Figure 7 1913 image looking north along Strachan Avenue towards 53 Strachan Avenue. Note the level rail crossing in the distance and painted signage on Strachan House (Toronto Archives).



Figure 8 1982 image looking northeast from Strachan Avenue and the rail corridor showing the rear elevation of Strachan House with painted signage and smokestack (Toronto Archives).



Figure 9 Image looking northeast from Strachan Avenue and the rail corridor showing the rear elevation of Strachan House (Heritage Planning, 2026).



Figure 10 1996 image of Strachan House looking southwest along Wellington Street West showing east and principal (north) elevations (Toronto Archives).



Figure 11 View of Strachan House looking southwest along Wellington Street West showing principal (north) and west elevations (Heritage Planning, 2026).



Figure 12 View looking southwest showing north elevations of the Maple Green Building and Strachan House (RDH Building Science, 2025).



Figure 13 View looking north showing the south elevation of Strachan House (RDH Building Science, 2025).



Figure 14 View looking northeast showing the principal (west) and south elevations of Strachan House (RDH Building Science, 2025).



Figure 15 1996 interior photo of Strachan House's three storey atrium known as the 'Town Square' (Toronto Archives).

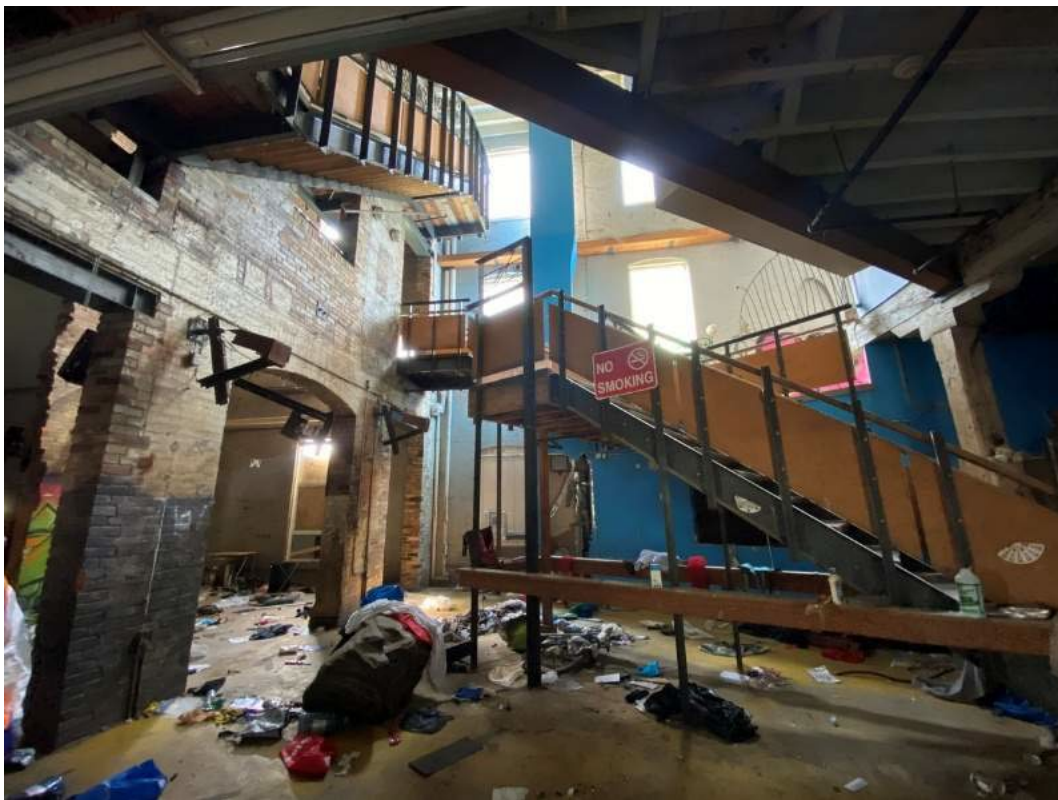


Figure 16 Current interior image of the 'Town Square' (RDH Building Science, 2025).



Figure 17 1996 interior photo of Strachan House's three storey atrium known as the 'Town Square' with smokestack (Toronto Archives).



Figure 18 Current interior photo of the 'Town Square' with smokestack (RDH Building Science, 2025).

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