

Authorization to Study the Yorkville Village Core as a Potential Heritage Conservation District

Date: June 16, 2026

To: Toronto Preservation Board

Toronto and East York Community Council

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

Wards: Ward 11 - University Rosedale

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council authorize the study of the Yorkville Village Core area as a potential Heritage Conservation District (HCD) under Section 40(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area, indicated by the boundary in Attachment 1 of this report, was recommended for study in the Bloor-Yorkville Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (December 2025) prepared by Common Bond Collective, a heritage consultant. At their April 22, 23, 24, 2026 meeting, City Council directed the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning to undertake all necessary steps, including community consultation, to determine whether the Yorkville Village Core, or a part thereof, merits authorization for study as a potential Heritage Conservation District under Section 40(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Following review of the area as directed, staff are of the opinion that the proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area has a distinctive character that reflects its historical development from a residential area in the 19th century Village of Yorkville to an important locus of cultural expression and innovation in the mid-20th century, into a renowned, vibrant commercial, social, and cultural destination in the City of Toronto today. The proposed study area is characterized by historic house-form buildings from the late-19th-century and early-20th-century that have been adaptively re-used as commercial buildings. The historic house-form buildings are interspersed with mid-20th century developments in the form of Yorkville Complexes and infill developments which generally reinforce the historic residential neighbourhood scale of the area and contribute a network of mid-block pedestrian "laneways" that are an important feature of its village character. The area is further defined by the award-winning Village of Yorkville Park.

Following staff review and a required community consultation public meeting, it has been determined that the proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area merits authorization for study as a potential Heritage Conservation District.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council authorize that a study be undertaken of the Yorkville Village Core Area as a potential Heritage Conservation District under Section 40(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act, as indicated by the boundary in Attachment 1 of the report (June 16, 2026) from the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning.

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

At its meeting on March 5, 6 and 7, 2012, City Council adopted the document titled, "Heritage Conservation Districts in Toronto: Procedures, Policies and Terms of Reference" (January 2012). The document established a process for bringing potential HCD studies to Council for authorization, inclusive of community consultation.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2012.PG11.5>

At its meeting of April 22, 23, and 24, 2026, City Council adopted item TE31.23 - Bloor - Yorkville Cultural Heritage Resources Assessment - Final Report and directed the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning to undertake all necessary steps, including community consultation, to determine whether the Yorkville Village Core, or a part thereof, merits authorization for study as a potential Heritage Conservation District under Section 40(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act.
<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2026.TE31.23>

BACKGROUND

A Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) for the Bloor-Yorkville area, including the Yorkville Village Core, was completed in December 2025 by Common Bond Collective, a heritage consultant. The consultant's CHRA report included a

Historic Context Statement outlining the historical development of the area, including key themes and building typologies related to that development. The CHRA report also included a recommendation that a Heritage Conservation District Study be completed for the Yorkville Village Core generally bounded by the centre line of Scollard Street, the east side of Bellair Street, Cumberland Street including the Village of Yorkville Park, and the west side of Old York Lane (Attachment 1).

The recommendation for an HCD study of the Yorkville Village Core identified distinctive features of the proposed study area as worthy of specific analysis. These identified features include the converted house-form properties along Scollard Street, Yorkville Avenue and Cumberland Street that have been adaptively-re-used to accommodate commercial and retail use while maintaining their historic residential form, as well as the 'Yorkville Complex' type properties, characterized by contextually-sensitive interventions alongside the historic fabric and their enhancement of pedestrian connectivity within the area. The recommendation also pointed to consideration of the area's important historical associations, including its role as a significant music and counterculture centre in Canada from the late 1950s into the 1970s.

The development of Heritage Conservation Districts in Toronto is guided by the Council approved document, "Heritage Conservation Districts in Toronto: Procedures, Policies and Terms of Reference." HCD Policy 2 indicates that in addition to a nominator from the public, "...the City may also initiate an HCD Study by request of Council or where it is relevant to planning studies." Following the submission of the consultant-led Bloor-Yorkville CHRA final report, Heritage Planning brought the Bloor-Yorkville Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment - Final Report to the Toronto Preservation Board, Toronto and East York Community Council, and City Council for consideration of the report's recommendations.

Informed by "Heritage Conservation Districts in Toronto - Procedures, Policies and Terms of Reference", the report to Council included a recommendation that Council direct the Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning to undertake all necessary steps, including community consultation, to determine whether the Yorkville Village Core, or a part thereof, merits authorization for study as a potential Heritage Conservation District under Section 40(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act. That recommendation was adopted by Council at its meeting of April 22, 23, and 24, 2026.

COMMENTS

Proposed Study Area

The proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area is as recommended in the Bloor Yorkville Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA). Located northeast of Avenue Road and Bloor Street West, the potential study area is adjacent to and south of the Yorkville-Hazelton Heritage Conservation District. The proposed study area is generally bounded by the centre line of Scollard Street, the east side of Bellair Street, Cumberland Street including the Village of Yorkville Park, and the west side of Old York Lane (Attachment 1).

Summary History of Historic Development and Heritage Character

For time immemorial, the land which is now covered by the City of Toronto has been home to Indigenous peoples. Following the retreat of glaciers approximately 13,000 years ago, small groups of Indigenous peoples moved from place to place, hunting, fishing, and gathering food according to what was available each season. 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. Just to the north of the proposed Yorkville Village Core study area, a travel route was formed along the base of the former Lake Iroquois shoreline, connecting the Don and Humber rivers. Following the period of Wendat settlement in the Toronto area, which ended in the decades around 1600, people of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation made the area their home.

In the early period of British colonial settlement, the Indigenous travel route along the former Lake Iroquois shoreline was developed into today's Davenport Road. South of Davenport Road to today's Bloor Street, the Village of Yorkville grew to become a distinct municipality which was the first suburb amalgamated into the City of Toronto in 1883. Scollard Street, Yorkville Avenue and Cumberland Street were laid out as part of the Village of Yorkville and lined with homes by the time of annexation into the City of Toronto. Both sides of Scollard Street and Cumberland Street were characterized by semi-detached residential structures on narrow lots, while Yorkville Avenue was characterized by the occasional wood structure and generally larger lots with larger, brick-clad residential buildings.

The residential character of the proposed study area remained generally consistent until the mid-twentieth century. From the 1950s and into the 1970s, the residential streets were transformed for commercial uses that supported 1950s-1960s counterculture, as well as upscale retail and services. Existing house-form buildings, including basements, were renovated to accommodate coffee houses/music venues, galleries, restaurants and boutique shops.

Coffee houses, often presenting live music, turned Yorkville into an important incubator of Canadian music, contributing to the launch of the careers of iconic Canadian artists like Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and Gordon Lightfoot. Young people flocked to Yorkville to listen and socialize, and shaped Yorkville into one of Canada's most important centres for counter-culture in the 1960s. Following that period, the Yorkville Village Core continued to develop as a distinctive commercial centre for art and culture and upscale retail and services.

At the same time, the proposed study area was significantly transformed by new, contextually sensitive developments that introduced low-scale gentle density and pedestrian-only mid-block connections into the former residential lots. Old York Lane, designed by George Robb, was completed in 1963, and Cumberland Court at 99 Yorkville Avenue, designed by Webb Zerafa Menkes Housden, was completed in 1972. These developments, among others, contributed significantly to the unique character of

the area by retaining and integrating elements of the historic residential fabric, while adding gentle density and improving the public realm.

In the 1990s, the study area was further enhanced with the completion of the Village of Yorkville Park designed by architects Oleson Worland and landscape architects Schwartz Smith Meyer. The park replaced a parking lot that was cleared of its houses for subway construction in the 1950s and 1960s, and its design was comprised of a series of gardens reflecting both the history of the Village of Yorkville and the diversity of the Canadian landscape. The park design has received multiple recognitions including the American Society of Landscape Architects Award (1997), the International Downtown Association Award of Merit (1997) and the City of Toronto Urban Design Award of Excellence (1997). In 2012, the Village of Yorkville Park was further honoured by the American Society of Landscape Architects with an Award of Excellence in the Landmark category.

As it has continued to change, the Yorkville Village Core has remained defined by its unique conversion in the mid-twentieth century into a thriving and distinctive commercial village attracting residents and tourists alike. The area is characterized today by historic house form buildings from the late-19th and early-20th century, with most, if not all, adaptively re-used as commercial buildings. The house-form buildings are interspersed with newer interventions in the form of Yorkville Complexes, infill residential and commercial developments which generally reinforce the neighbourhood scale of the area and often integrate pedestrian networks. The evolution of the area's built form reflects the area's historical development from 19th-century residential streets into an important site of cultural expression and innovation in the mid-twentieth century, and into a vibrant commercial, social, and cultural destination in the City of Toronto today.

Existing Planning Framework and Heritage Protections

The proposed study area is regulated by the City's Official Plan (OP), City of Toronto Zoning By-law 569-2013, and former City of Toronto By-law 438-86. The area includes two (2) Part IV designated properties, and thirty (30) properties identified as having potential cultural heritage value or interest through the Bloor-Yorkville Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment, and which are subject to OP policy 3.1.6.22 and Schedule 3 of the OP, requiring a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) as part of a complete application for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Draft Plan of Subdivision applications.

The City of Toronto Official Plan shows that the proposed study area is located within the Downtown Toronto Urban Growth Centre (OP, Map 6), the Downtown Plan and Central Waterfront Secondary Plan Boundaries (OP, Map 6 A), and includes lands designated as Mixed Use Areas as well as Parks. (OP, Map 17, Land Use Plan).

The Downtown Secondary Plan applies to the proposed study area as shown in Map 35 of the Official Plan. The study area is designated as Mixed Use Area 4 – Local (Map 41-3 Mixed Use Areas) and is located within the Inclusionary Zoning Market Area 1 as shown in Map 37: Inclusionary Zoning Market Areas of the Official Plan.

The proposed study area is subject to the Bloor Yorkville/ North Midtown Area Site and Area Specific Policy (SASP 211) and includes areas of Special Identity within the Mixed-Use Areas identified as Village of Yorkville and Scollard/Hazelton Area. The proposed study area sits within the delineated Low Rise Areas on Map 2 - Built Form Height Peaks and Ridges of SASP 211. These policies speak to the overall criteria for new developments in and near to the neighbourhood to respect and reinforce the stability and the established low-rise character of the area.

SASP areas containing Projected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs) also apply to the proposed study area including SASP 599 (containing the Bay PMTSA), SASP 600 containing the Bloor Yonge PMTSA), SASP 612 (containing the Museum PMTSA). The proposed study area is also partially within SASP 598 (containing the St. George PMTSA).

Under Zoning By-law 569-2013, the majority of the study area is zoned Commercial Residential (CR) with exemptions, with the Village of Yorkville Park zoned Open Space Recreation (OR). One property is subject to the Former City of Toronto By Law 438-86 containing commercial residential, commercial and residential zoning classifications.

HCD Process and Community Engagement

The study of potential Heritage Conservation Districts is a City-led process involving the community. Study areas may be nominated by community groups, elected officials or City staff. No matter how an area comes forward for nomination, community engagement and transparency is a critical part of the HCD study process.

Following Council's direction to determine whether the Yorkville Village Core merits authorization for study as a potential Heritage Conservation District, City Planning staff hosted a community meeting on June 1, 2026 to inform and gather input from the Yorkville Village Core community and interested parties regarding a potential HCD study for the area. The community meeting provided an opportunity for City staff to present a summary of the historical research gathered to date, to explain heritage staff's conclusion that the area is a good candidate for study, and to answer general questions about HCDs, their implications and benefits. Owners and residents within the study area were notified by mail, and interested parties were notified by email.

The event was delivered in a "drop-in" format, featuring display boards and the opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback and comments directly to City staff for documentation and consideration in the preparation of an authorization report to the Toronto Preservation Board and Council. At 6:30pm, Heritage Planning staff delivered an introductory presentation of approximately 15 minutes, summarizing the information provided at the display boards. Feedback was received until June 15, 2026.

The event was well attended with a total of 123 people signing-in throughout the course of the evening. Participants provided written and verbal feedback to City staff at the meeting, and by email and phone before and after the meeting. A total of 23 written comments were received at the meeting, and approximately 190 emails were received before and after the meeting. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with most participants expressing support for an HCD study. Many called for the urgent protection

of the historic, commercially and culturally vibrant, low-rise Yorkville Village Core area in the context of encroaching high-rise development. Some property owners questioned the inclusion of their specific properties within the proposed HCD study area boundary and expressed concern that an HCD could have a negative impact on businesses due to potential restrictions on renovations and storefront and signage improvements, as well as potential impacts on property values, leasing activity, redevelopment potential, operating costs and long-term investment decisions.

In addition to the community consultation, Heritage Planning staff conducted a site visit and a review of the information in the CHRA. Following that review, staff agree with the consultant's recommendation that the proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area merits authorization for study as an HCD.

Should the area be authorized and subsequently prioritized for an HCD study, City staff will continue to undertake extensive community consultation in accordance with the City Council adopted "Heritage Conservation Districts in Toronto: Procedures, Policies and Terms of Reference."

CONCLUSION

City Staff have concluded that the proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area merits authorization for study as a potential Heritage Conservation District. The proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area has a distinctive character that reflects its historical development from 19th-century residential streets in the Village of Yorkville into an important site of cultural innovation in the mid-twentieth century, and into a renowned, vibrant commercial, social, and cultural destination in the City of Toronto today.

CONTACT

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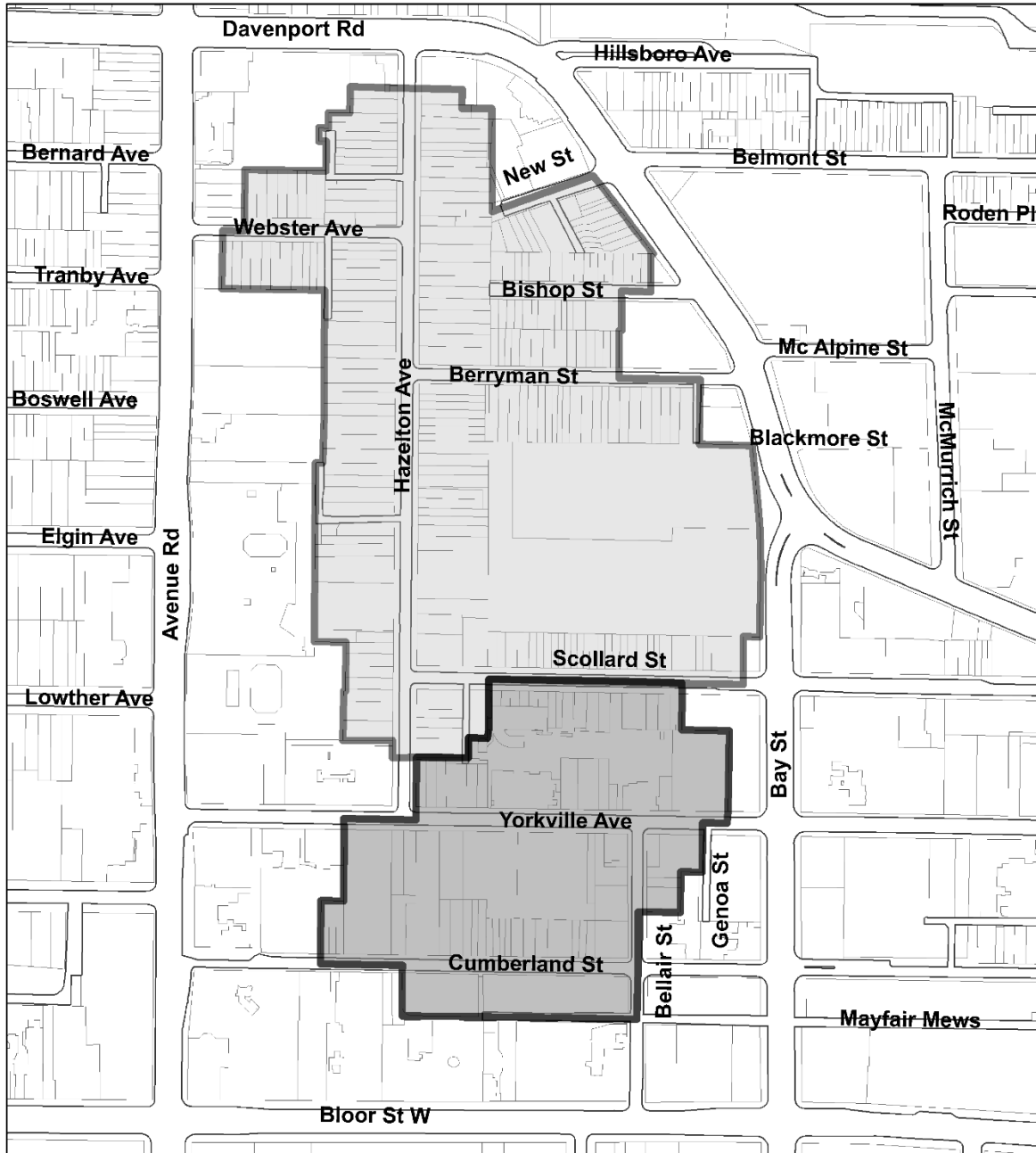
SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Proposed Yorkville Village Core Heritage Conservation District Study
Area Boundary

HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY AREA BOUNDARY



Proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area

-  Proposed Yorkville Village Core HCD Study Area
-  Yorkville-Hazelton Avenue Area HCD (Designated 2002)

