



DOWNTOWN AURORA COMMUNITY PLANNING PERMIT SYSTEM

Downtown Urban Design Study

Draft Final Report

SEPT 2025



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Town of Aurora has initiated a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) for its historic Downtown with the goal of encouraging and guiding residential intensification. More residential and mixed-use development will broaden the range of housing options for existing and future Aurora residents, and more people living Downtown will reinforce it as the town's civic heart and create the vitality needed to sustain a variety of businesses.

A CPPS for Downtown will be implemented through a Community Planning Permit By-law, which will replace current zoning regulations. The Town initiated an Urban Design Study to review and update current land use and built form regulations. Within a proposed network of enhanced pedestrian connections and laneways, the study considered how future buildings could be massed to optimize potential development sites while respecting the valued character of Downtown and the surrounding neighbourhoods. This report documents the study process and findings and recommends regulations for the CPP By-law based on an illustrated massing concept that varies from what is permitted today.

The Downtown Urban Design Study commenced in the fall of 2024 and followed a highly consultative process. Regular meetings were held with Town staff and CIMA+, the consultant retained for the ongoing Aurora Promenade Streetscape Project, to discuss opportunities and review work in progress. A public open house was held on June 19, 2025, to share study findings and invite feedback on a proposed massing concept for Downtown. Feedback from staff and the public have informed refinements to the Alternative Development Concept in Section 5 of this report and the Recommendations in Section 6.

What is a Community Planning Permit System?

A Community Planning Permit System, or CPPS, is a land use planning tool that combines Zoning By-law Amendments, Minor Variances, and Site Plan applications into a single application and approval process. This tool helps make the application and approval process more efficient, allowing housing to reach the market more quickly. It also can be used to deliver other elements fundamental to a healthy, thriving community, such as affordable housing and diverse housing types, public facilities, parks and open spaces, and infrastructure improvements needed to support growth. Benefits such as these may be secured by permitting variances to regulations within a Community Planning Permit By-law. Like the traditional zoning by-law it replaces, a CPP By-law contains a list of permitted uses and development standards, such as minimum and maximum heights and setbacks. The CPP By-law can also include urban design requirements, such as the preservation of mature trees, conservation of heritage properties, and compatibility with the historic character of Downtown.

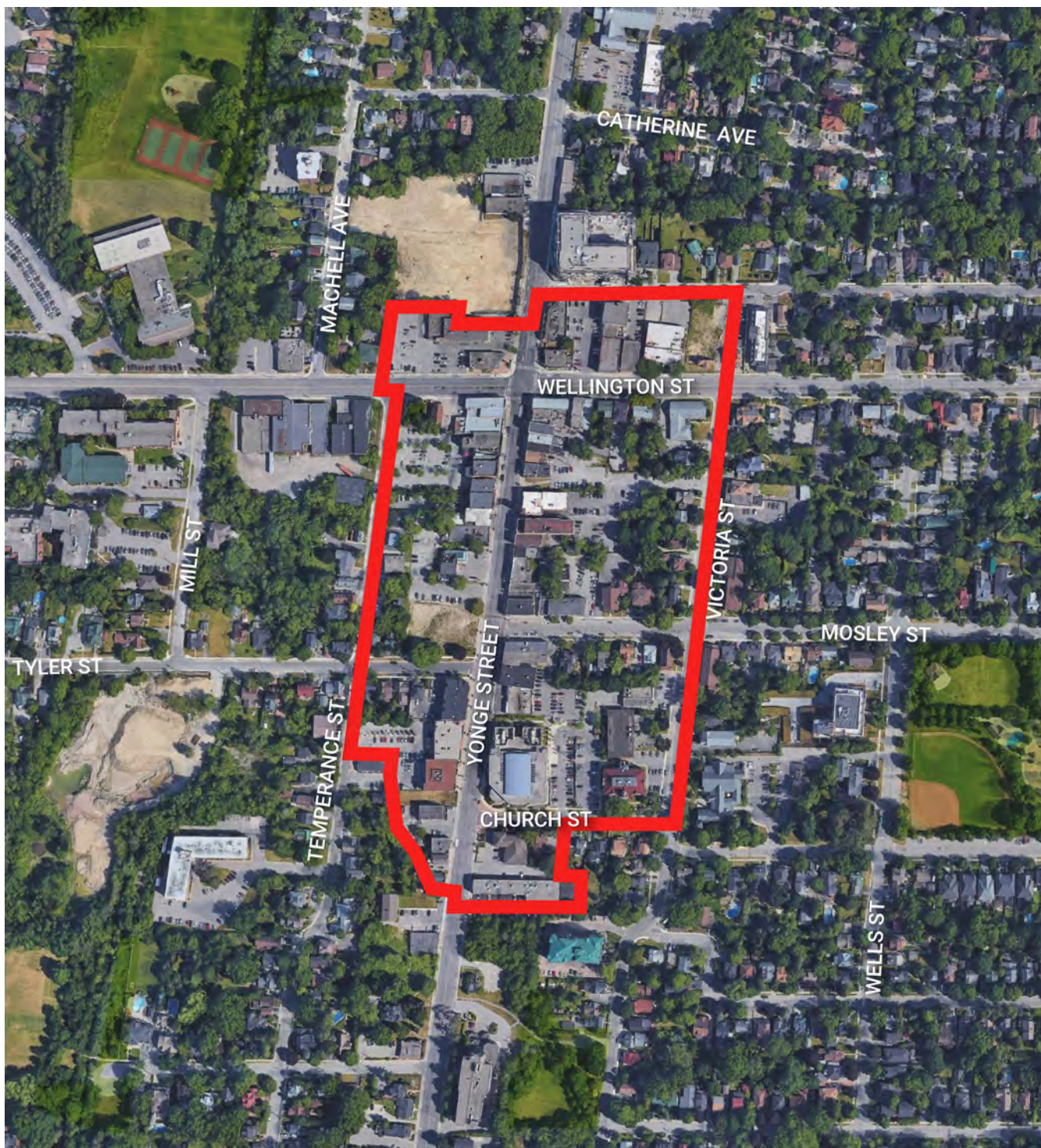


Figure 1: Downtown Study Area.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Yonge Street has been the heart of Aurora since merchant Richard Machell opened a business at the corner of Wellington Street in 1804. Through the 19th century, the main street and surrounding neighbourhoods steadily grew. As the Town continued to grow outward, particularly in the last 50 years, new shopping centres have challenged Yonge Street's economic role. Nevertheless, Downtown is home to many successful businesses and remains the Town's civic heart, anchored by the Central Library and the new Aurora Cultural Centre, Museum and Town Square.

Downtown's many assets make it a desirable place to both visit and live, as demonstrated by the Aurora United Church and Amica Retirement Home nearing completion. The potential for additional residential intensification is significant and is supported by the studies, policies and zoning regulations summarized below. The principles and objectives of these documents provide a foundation for the Urban Design Study and have informed its recommendations.



Figure 2: Historic Map of Downtown.



Figure 3: Downtown Aurora 1940.

» Aurora Promenade Concept Plan and Urban Design Strategy

The Promenade Concept Plan and Urban Design Strategy, completed in 2010, was based on a comprehensive study of Downtown and the larger Promenade extending north, south and east. The plan and strategy are based on a vision with eight pillars:

- Distinct Heritage and Culture
- Vibrant Places
- Beautiful Spaces
- Lifelong and Complete Community
- Liveable and Stable Neighbourhoods
- Balanced Modes of Movement
- Great Design and Architecture
- Towards a Sustainable Town

The plan and strategy include an Urban Design Framework that acknowledges the valued character Downtown's main street, historic residential streets, and civic or special streets. It also identifies opportunities for mid-block pedestrian connections and encourages rear service lanes to achieve a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Regarding land use and built form, the plan and strategy outline the following objectives for Downtown:

- Protect and reinforce heritage 'main street' character and identity
- Infill and redevelopment sensitive to heritage resources and adjacent neighbourhoods
- Strengthening of the vibrant pedestrian-oriented retail environment with a focus on specialty shops and restaurants
- Encouraging entertainment and cultural venues to reinforce the area's attraction for residents and visitors
- Enhancement of the public realm with a focus on creating an inviting pedestrian environment
- Introduction of more residential uses
- Introduction of rear lanes where possible
- Improving parking capacity through consolidated rear surface parking areas and/or in an integrated public parking facility

The plan and strategy identify retail, office, residential, institutional, and open space as appropriate uses in the Downtown with the stipulation that retail should be required on the ground floor of buildings on Yonge Street and Wellington Street. Retail uses should be restricted to a maximum of 2,400 square metres, and storefronts should be no wider than 15 metres.

The plan and strategy recommended a maximum height of five storeys (six storeys north in Upper Downtown north of Wellington Street) and minimum three-metre step-backs above the third storey.

The design guidelines in the Promenade Concept Plan and Urban Design Strategy cover a range of considerations, including building expression, heritage integration, grade level design, storefronts, parking, and sustainable design.

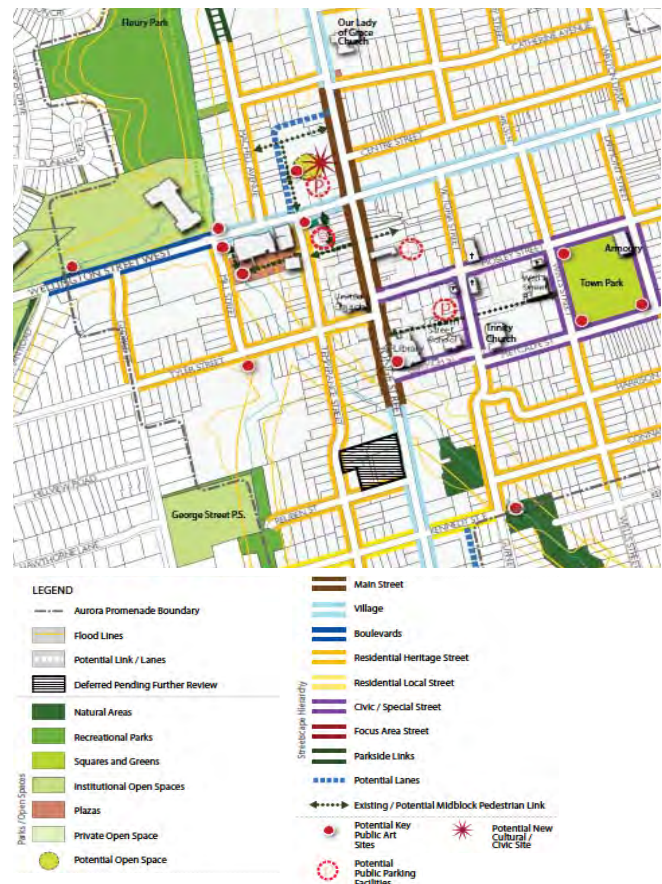
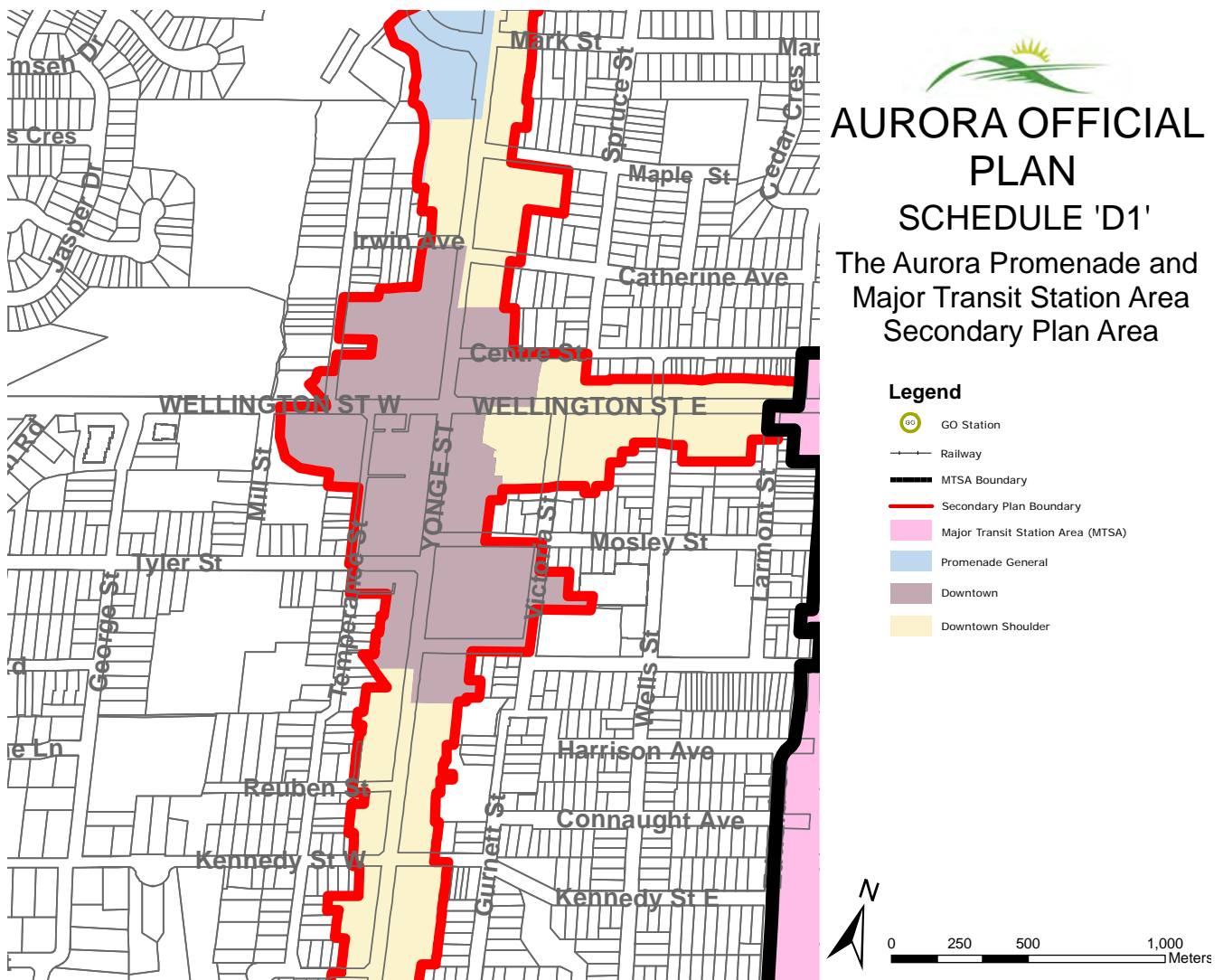


Figure 4: Aurora Promenade Public Realm Framework (Excerpt).

» Town of Aurora Official Plan

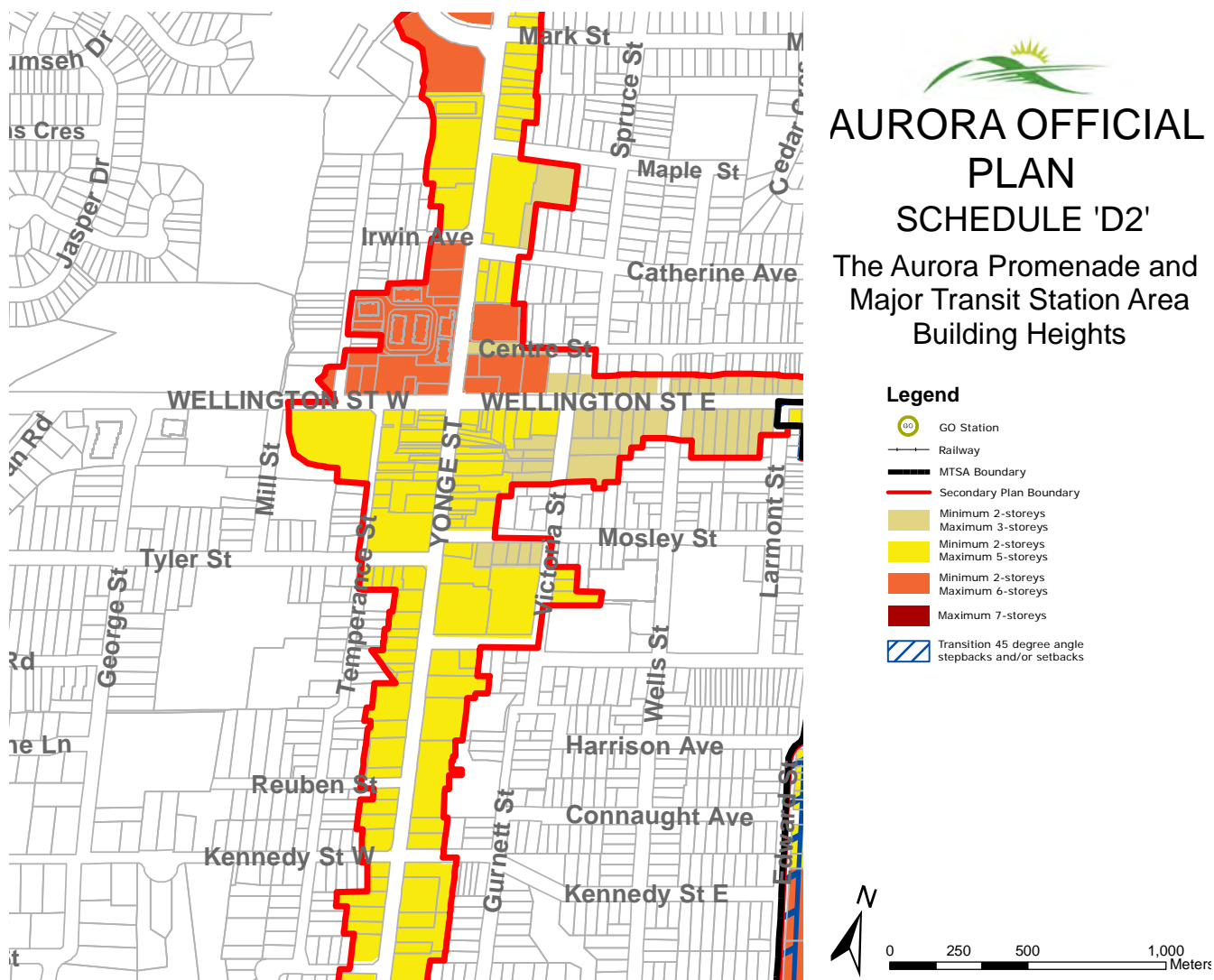
The Town's current Official Plan was adopted by Council in January 2024 and approved by York Region in May 2024. Section 9 of the plan embeds much of the Aurora Promenade Concept Plan and Urban Design Strategy in policy. Policy 9.2(c) states that all development within the Aurora Promenade shall be consistent with the Concept Plan and Urban Design Strategy.

Under the Downtown Designation delineated on Schedule 'D1', a wide range of commercial and institutional uses are permitted Downtown, and residential uses are also permitted but generally must be located above the first floor (a limited number of ancillary at-grade units may be permitted at the rear of sites). The ground floors of buildings along Yonge Street are intended for active uses that help enliven the adjacent street, such as retail and restaurants. Retail stores cannot have a frontage greater than 15 metres.



Schedule 'D2' establishes a minimum height of two storeys and a maximum height of five storeys within the Downtown Designation south of Wellington Street, with the maximum increasing to six storeys north of Wellington Street. Buildings taller than three storeys are subject to a step-back at the third storey. The bulk of buildings are to be built zero to one metre from front and exterior side lot lines on lots with less than 40 metres of frontage; build-to lines increase to one to three metres on lots of 40 metres or wider. Policies 9.3.2(d)-(f) set out design policies focused on the conservation and integration of heritage resources and respect for the character of existing buildings in the design of new ones.

The maximum height across much of Downtown is five storeys, with six storeys permitted north of Wellington Street. The fourth and fifth storeys of buildings must be stepped back a minimum of three metres from the front wall. The Official Plan requires height transitions to adjacent low-rise neighbourhoods, but how this is to be achieved is not regulated in the Zoning By-law. The Official Plan also calls for laneways at the rear of properties on Yonge Street, where possible, to accommodate utilities and access to loading and parking.



» Comprehensive Zoning By-Law

The land use and built form regulations for Downtown in the Town's Zoning By-Law are consistent with the policies of the Official Plan.

Most of Downtown is zoned Promenade Downtown (PD1), which permits a broad range of commercial and institutional uses as well as dwelling units above the first floor (see Table 1). Multiplexes and townhouses are not permitted. The maximum height is 18.5 metres provided the fourth and fifth storeys are set back a minimum of three metres from the front and exterior side walls of the building. Other zone requirements are contained in Table 2.

Several properties zoned PD1 are subject to exceptions from the general provisions of the By-law. Notably, a maximum height of 22 metres is permitted on the site of the Amica Retirement Home, and a series of site-specific building step-backs at the front and rear are prescribed.

Properties on the south side of Mosley Street are zoning Promenade Downtown – Special Mixed Density Residential (PD2), which permits a range of low-rise residential uses and a limited number of commercial uses. North of Mosley Street and west of Victoria Street, several properties are zoned R7, which permits detached, semi-detached, duplex and triplex dwellings. Other properties on the east side of Downtown, fronting Wellington Street and Victoria Street are zoned Promenade Downtown Shoulder – Central Commercial (PDS1), which permits a full range of commercial, institutional and residential uses and has the same zone requirements as those generally applicable in the PD1 zone.

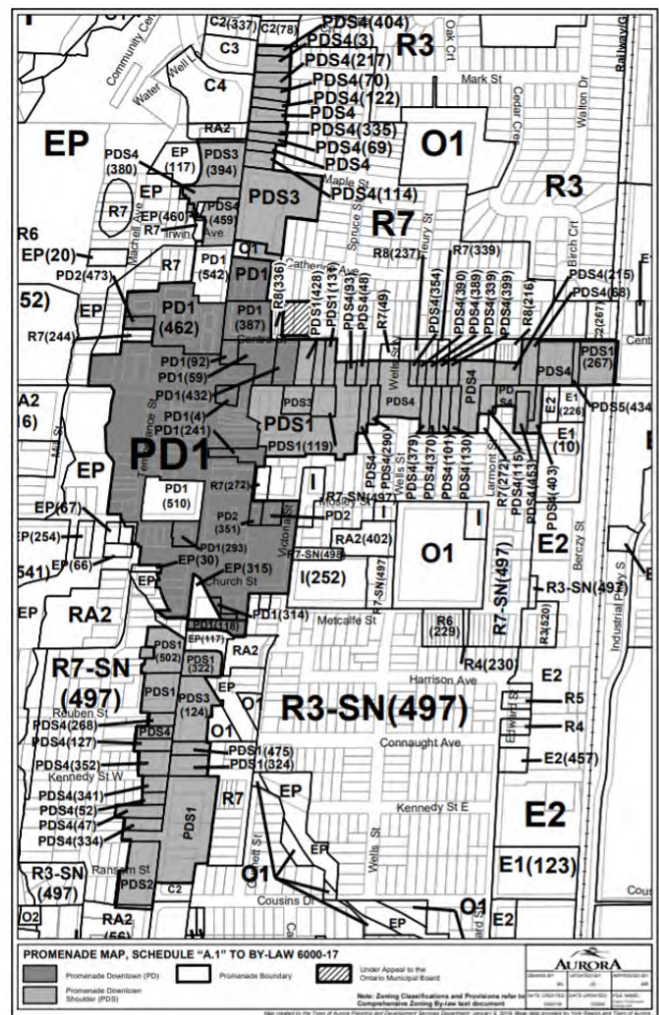


Figure 7: Promenade Zoning Map.

Promenade Permitted Uses	PD1 Promenade Downtown	PD2 Promenade Downtown- Special Mixed Density Residential	PDS1 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Central Commercial	PDS2 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Service Commercial	PDS3 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Institutional	PDS4 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Special Mixed Density Residential
Animal Hospital				X		
Art Gallery	X	X	X	X	X	X
Bed and Breakfast	X	X	X		X	X
Clinic	X		X	X	X	
Commercial Schools	X		X	X		
Day Care Centres			X	X	X	X
Dry Cleaning Establishment	X		X			
Dry Cleaning Distribution Station and Depot	X		X	X		
Dwelling Units above the First Storey	X		X			X
Dwelling, Boarding or Rooming House		X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling, Converted		X ₍₁₎	X ₍₁₎	X ₍₁₎	X ₍₁₎	X ₍₁₎
Dwelling, Detached		X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling, Double Duplex or Fourplex		X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling, Duplex		X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling, Quadriplex		X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling, Second Suite		X ₍₅₎	X ₍₅₎	X ₍₅₎	X ₍₅₎	X ₍₅₎
Dwelling, Semi-Detached		X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling, Townhouse		X	X	X	X	X
Dwelling, Triplex		X	X	X	X	X

Table 1: Promenade Permitted Uses.

Promenade Minimum Requirements	PD1 Promenade Downtown	PD2 Promenade Downtown- Special Mixed Density Residential	PDS1 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Central Commercial	PDS2 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Service Commercial	PDS3 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Institutional	PDS4 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Special Mixed Density Residential
Lot Area	230 m ²	460 m ²	230 m ²	1,400 m ²	460m ²	460 m ²
Lot Frontage	10 m	15 m	10 m	30 m	30 m	15 m
Front Yard	0.0 m	6 m	0.0 m	10 m	10 m	6 m
Rear Yard	7.5 m ₍₂₎	7.5 m ₍₂₎	7.5 m ₍₂₎	7.5 m ₍₂₎ 10 m ₍₂₎₍₃₎	15 m ₍₂₎	7.5 m ₍₂₎
Interior Side Yard	0.0 m	1.2 m ₍₅₎ 1.5 m ₍₆₎	0.0 m	3.0 m 10 m ₍₃₎	4.5 m	1.2 m ₍₅₎ 1.5 m ₍₆₎
Exterior Side Yard	0.0 m	6.0 m	0.0 m	10m	10 m	6.0 m
Height (maximum)	10 m ₍₁₎	10 m	10 m ₍₁₎	10 m	15 m	10 m
Lot Coverage (maximum)	N/A	35%	N/A	35%	35%	35%

Table 2: Zone Requirements.

Promenade Permitted Uses	PD1 Promenade Downtown	PD2 Promenade Downtown- Special Mixed Density Residential	PDS1 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Central Commercial	PDS2 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Service Commercial	PDS3 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Institutional	PDS4 Promenade Downtown Shoulder- Special Mixed Density Residential
Financial Institutions	X		X	X		
Fitness Centre	X		X	X		
Funeral Parlours	X		X			
Garden Centre	X		X	X		
Hospitals	X		X	X	X	
Hotel	X		X	X		
Institutional Uses as permitted in Section 11.1 of this By-law	X ₍₄₎		X ₍₄₎	X ₍₄₎	X ₍₄₎	
Laundromat	X		X	X		
Museum	X		X	X	X	
Offices	X	X	X	X	X	X
Personal Service Shops	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pet Services	X		X	X		
Place of Entertainment	X		X			
Club	X		X			
Private Parks	X	X	X	X	X	X
Recreation Centre				X	X	
Restaurants	X		X	X		
Retail Stores	X ₍₂₎	X ₍₃₎	X ₍₃₎	X ₍₃₎	X ₍₃₎	X ₍₃₎
Service Shops	X		X	X		
Studios	X		X			
Veterinarian Clinic	X		X	X		

- (1) In accordance with Section 7.5.5 of this By-law
- (2) Retail Stores shall be no larger than 1,800 m² of GFA per premises, unless otherwise specified in this By-law
- (3) Retail Stores shall be no larger than 50 m² of GFA per premises, unless otherwise specified in this By-law
- (4) Accessory Detached Dwellings and Cemeteries are not permitted
- (5) In accordance with Section 7.5.4 of this By-law

- (1) A maximum height of 18.5 m is permitted provided the 4th and 5th Storeys are Setback a minimum of 3 m from the main and exterior side walls of the 3rd Storey
- (2) All Parking Areas shall be located in the Rear Yard of the Lot
- (3) Abutting Residential Zones only
- (4) Per Dwelling Unit
- (5) Interior Side Yards for One Storey buildings
- (6) Interior Side Yards for Two Storey buildings
- (7) Along a Common Lot Line
- (8) In no case shall the garage extend beyond the front wall of the main building or porch face. On a corner lot, in no case shall the garage extend beyond the face of the main building or porch face into the front yard or exterior side yard.
- (9) For lands containing a Multi-Unit Development that fronts onto a private road, the following provisions shall apply:
 - A minimum width of 6.0 metres for a Private Road
 - A minimum setback of 1.8 metres for any wall of a residential use building to a Private Road
 - A minimum setback of 5.3 metres for any garage or carport entrance from a Private Road
 - A minimum distance separation of 1.2 metres between buildings

» Aurora Promenade Streetscape Project

In parallel with the Community Planning Permit System initiative for Downtown, the Town is also planning to enhance the Aurora Promenade streetscape on Yonge Street (between Wellington Street and Church Street). The design will include sidewalks, crosswalks, entry features, and signage. Improvements currently being studied include accessibility, light pole upgrades, street furniture, trees and other landscaping. Improvements to parking and traffic flow are also being considered. Upgrades to the public realm will be implemented in conjunction with the rehabilitation and replacement of critical utility infrastructure.

The planned improvements to the streetscape of Yonge Street will support businesses and further encourage residential development Downtown. There may be opportunities for future development to optimize the improvements with ground-floor setbacks that widen the space available for walking, restaurant patios and retail displays.



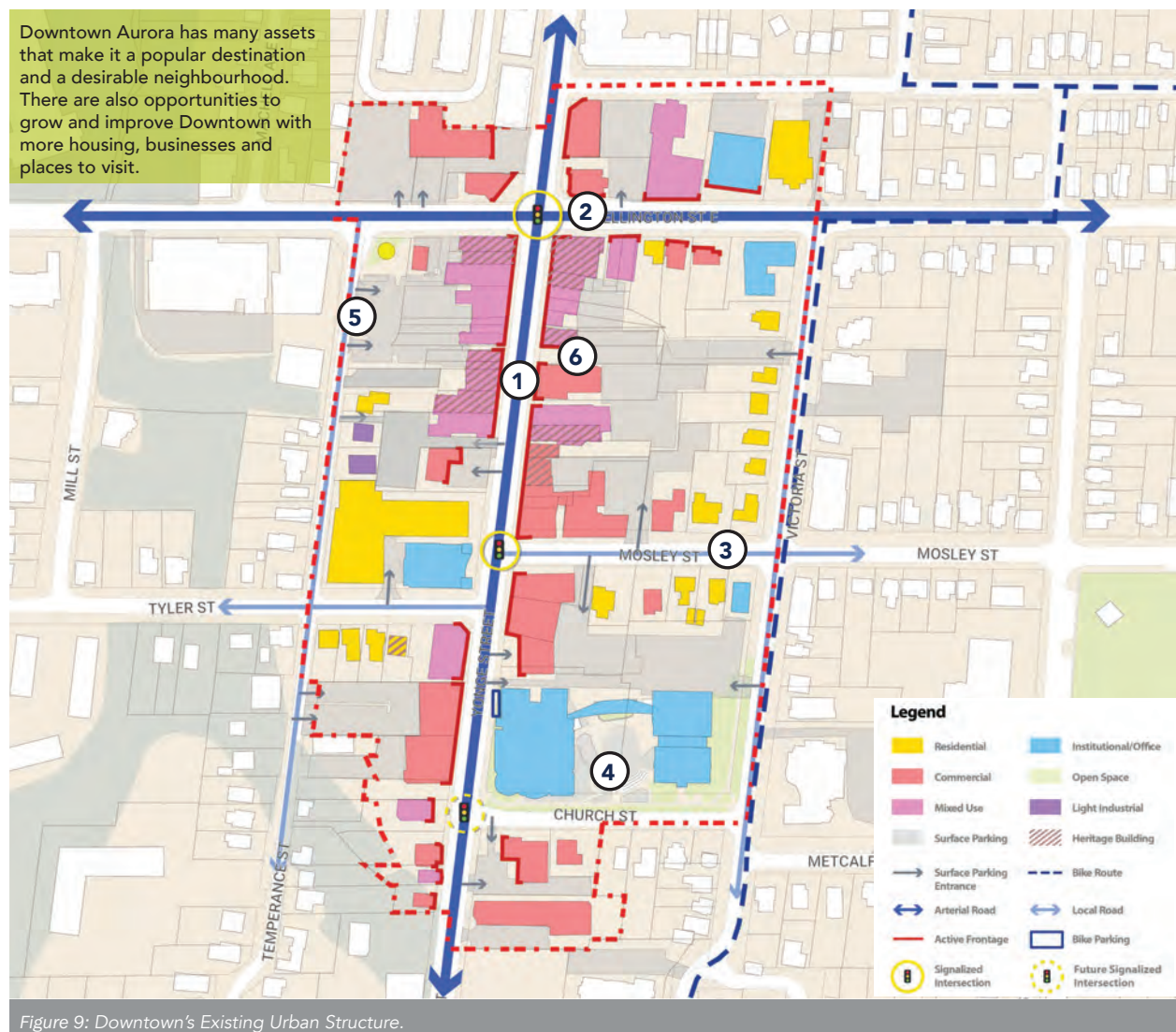
Figure 8: Aurora Promenade Streetscape.

3.0 DOWNTOWN TODAY: ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

To identify sites Downtown appropriate for new development and determine suitable approaches to the massing of new buildings, the Urban Design Study first looked at the key assets of Downtown—uses, buildings and spaces—that need to be maintained, respected and reinforced. The analysis of existing conditions revealed underutilized land between and behind assets, much of it used for parking but with the potential to accommodate significant residential intensification. The analysis also identified

opportunities to enhance the public realm for pedestrians with new connections, gathering spaces, and laneways.

Below is a summary of key features and characteristics of Downtown, including the assets that make it a popular destination and desirable neighbourhood. The opportunities to reinforce assets and improve Downtown with new residential and mixed-use development are highlighted.

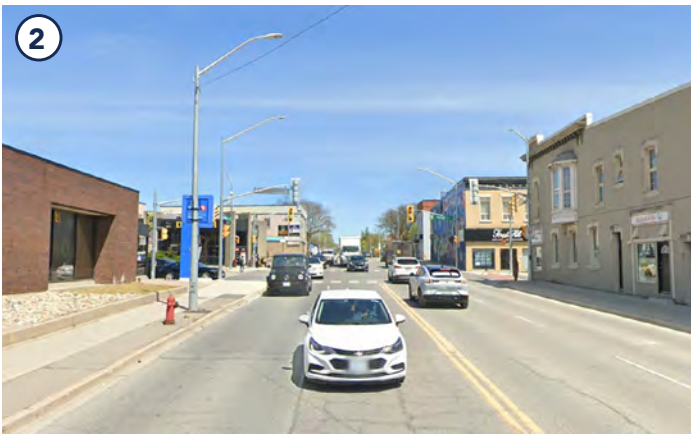


Assets and Opportunities



Source: <https://engageaurora.ca/>

Much of the historic main street remains intact, giving Downtown a valued character and making it a unique commercial destination within the town. Buildings are mostly 2-3 storeys. Maintaining and extending a streetwall up to 3 storeys, with storeys above this height pushed well back from the front wall, will preserve Yonge Street's small-town feel. At the same time, allowing new buildings on properties without significant heritage to have a modest setback from the right-of-way would effectively widen the public realm for pedestrians.



Source: Google Earth

The lack of traditional storefronts and street trees, and the presence of parking lots, contribute to a pedestrian-unfriendly streetscape on Wellington Street. And neither buildings nor the public realm have been designed to highlight the important intersection of Yonge Street and Wellington. Redevelopment on both sides of the street that establishes a consistent streetwall, contains active uses on the ground floor, and includes streetscape improvements would extend the retail environment of Yonge Street. Buildings of 5-6 storeys would also add a significant amount of new housing Downtown.



Source: <https://engageaurora.ca/>

Away from Yonge Street, on Mosley Street and Victoria Street, former churches and detached houses, some containing non-residential uses (day care, professional offices) contribute to the charm of Downtown. While some "gentle" intensification in this pocket of Downtown would be appropriate, historically significant buildings should be conserved, and the area's residential character should be maintained.



Source: Google Earth

The new Town Square and Cultural Centre, joining the library, have significantly enhanced Downtown as a destination and gathering place. Mixed-use development on commercial sites to the west and south would bring more daily life to the Town Square, and redevelopment of the Town-owned property north of the library could bring more office workers and/or residents to Downtown.



Source: <https://engageaurora.ca/>

Parking lots for commercial and institutional uses occupy a significant amount of land behind buildings. New development will bring opportunities to accommodate parking for residents, businesses and the public underground, at grade in the base of buildings, or in parking structures tucked behind residential and mixed-use buildings.



Source: Google Earth

It's easy to walk around Downtown, but heavy traffic on Yonge Street and Wellington Street can contribute to an uncomfortable pedestrian experience. More mid-block connections and intimate open spaces, like Macell's Alley, would provide opportunities to get away from traffic noise and could accommodate restaurant patios. They would also help to define future development sites, providing secondary frontages.

4.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

The Town's Official Plan policies for Downtown and the analysis of existing conditions summarized in the previous sections informed the principles below, which were used to guide the massing study described in the next section. The principles also build on previous studies of Downtown and reflect fundamental principles of good urban design commonly applied to environments where a positive pedestrian experience and compatibility with existing development are paramount.

» Guiding Principles

1. Enhance Downtown as a shopping, dining and entertainment destination by ensuring Yonge Street and Wellington Street are lined with commercial and institutional uses and creating new public space to gather and linger.
2. Grow Downtown as a neighbourhood with a range of housing choices in a variety of building types and forms.
3. Maintain and reinforce the historic character of Yonge Street by conserving heritage properties and limiting the height of new buildings to three storeys near the street.
4. Establish over time a continuous streetwall of three to four storeys on Wellington Street with mixed-use buildings to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment and extend the Downtown shopping and dining experience.
5. Concentrate the mass of new development in the interior of blocks with greater height flexibility and gradual built form transitions to the surrounding streets and neighbourhoods.
6. Break up the massing of long buildings to create varied, interesting streetscapes and accommodate mid-block connections.
7. Integrate residential and commercial parking within developments and minimize surface parking.
8. Minimize the impact of driveways and service areas on the pedestrian realm by establishing rear laneways where possible and promoting shared driveways.

» Framework for Change

The Framework for Change illustrated in Figure 10 was also developed to guide the massing study. Recognizing Downtown's valued assets and opportunities for growth, the Framework identifies areas with significant potential for intensification based on the size of individual properties and the likelihood that small properties will continue to be assembled into large sites to optimize their development potential.

The Framework also highlights opportunities for mid-block connections to enhance the pedestrian network,

provide intimate gathering spaces off Yonge Street and Wellington Street, and help define development sites. Over time, the two proposed east-west connections would improve access to parks and trails outside Downtown.

The depth of assembled sites west of Yonge Street and proposed laneways through properties east of Yonge Street support the assumption that future development will be accessed by drivers from side streets. Laneways will help ensure access to parking and servicing areas does not diminish the pedestrian realm.

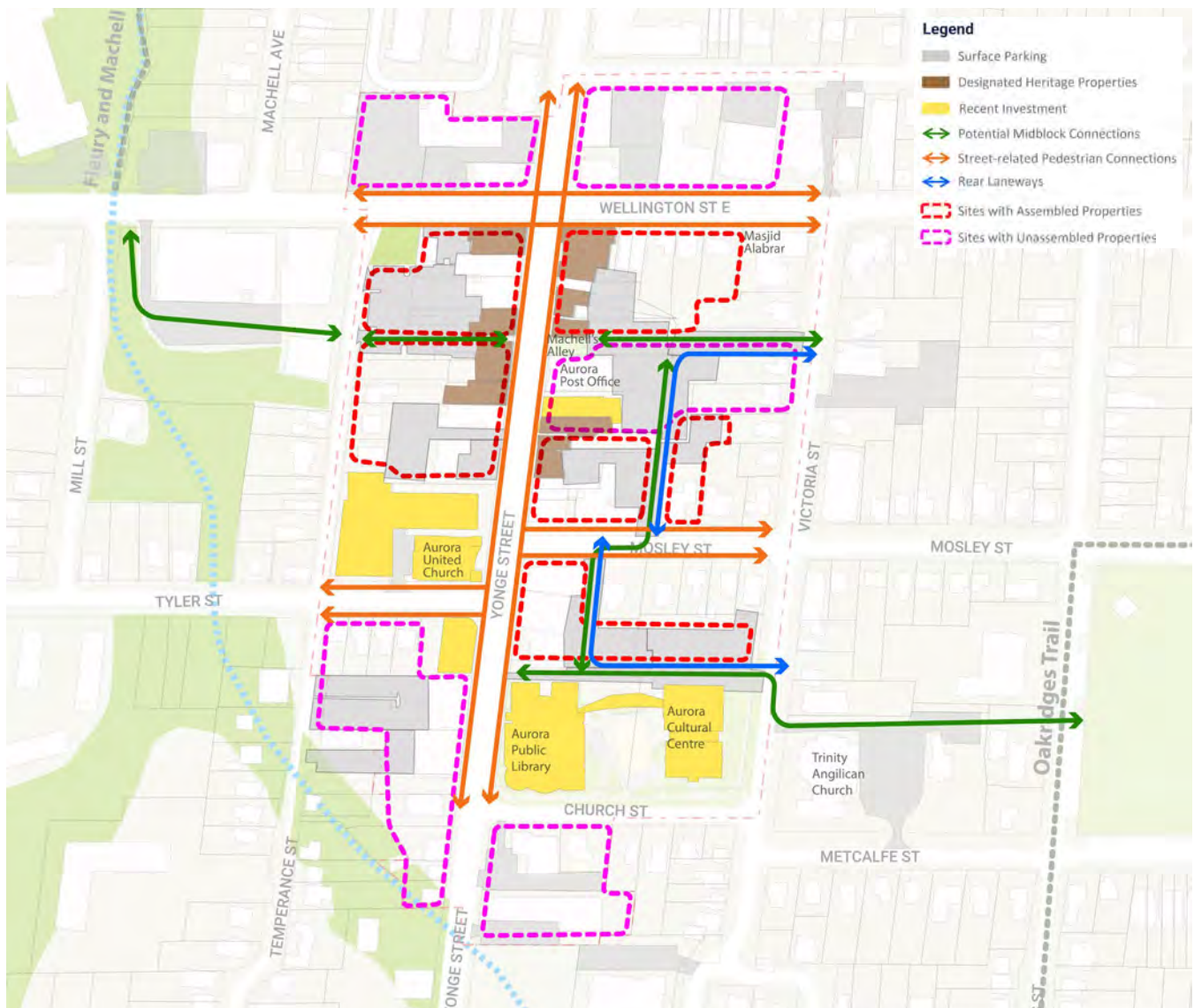


Figure 10: Emerging Framework for Change.

5.0 MASSING STUDY

A Community Planning Permit System for Downtown is intended to encourage the development of much-needed housing by streamlining the planning approvals process. Providing greater flexibility with respect to the built form of residential and mixed-use development can also encourage landowners to pursue intensification of their properties. With this goal in mind, the Urban Design Study team explored an alternative approach to massing future buildings that would result in a greater population density than is possible under current policies and zoning while respecting the historic character of Downtown.

Guided by the principles and framework in Section 4, the massing study began with the 3D modeling of conceptual buildings that respect the current five-storey height limit across much of Downtown, six storeys on the north side of Wellington Street. The study focused on the assembled properties identified in the Framework for Change since they have the most capacity to efficiently accommodate new development. This “As-of-Right” Development Concept provided a base case for comparing an alternative concept, in terms of overall density and the visual experience of Downtown.

Both the As-of-Right Development Concept and Alternative Development Concept are consistent

in terms of land use. The ground floors of buildings on Yonge Street and Wellington Street contain commercial space, and the remaining portion of all new buildings have been massed to accommodate residential units (apartments and townhouses). Neither of the concepts would require the demolition of designated heritage buildings.

Both concepts replace much of the off-street surface parking Downtown and assume future parking for residents, businesses and the public will be integrated with new development, mostly underground. Both concepts also assume parking, loading and service areas would be accessed directly from Temperance Street or, for buildings east of Yonge Street, from new rear laneways.

The massing of buildings in the development concepts was informed by observations and mapping of existing surface and above-grade conditions across Downtown. Potential technical constraints to future development, such as environmental features, geotechnical and soil conditions, underground servicing infrastructure, and utility easements, were not considered. Prior to the preparation and approval of future development applications, site-specific technical studies will be required to confirm any constraints to redevelopment on individual sites.



The Community Planning Permit System for Downtown will combine rezoning, minor variance and site plan applications into a single streamlined approvals process.

» As-of-Right Development Concept

The bird's-eye views in Figures 12 and 13 conceptually illustrate what a series of five-storey and six-storey buildings constructed over time could look like, and Table 3 provides key statistics for the concept, including the estimated number of new housing units that could be accommodated. In addition to respecting the current height limits Downtown, the buildings also comply with the requirement for the portion of buildings above the third storey to be stepped back a minimum of three metres from the front and exterior side walls. Buildings along Yonge Street, south of Wellington Street, have no setback from the right-of-way.

Plan View

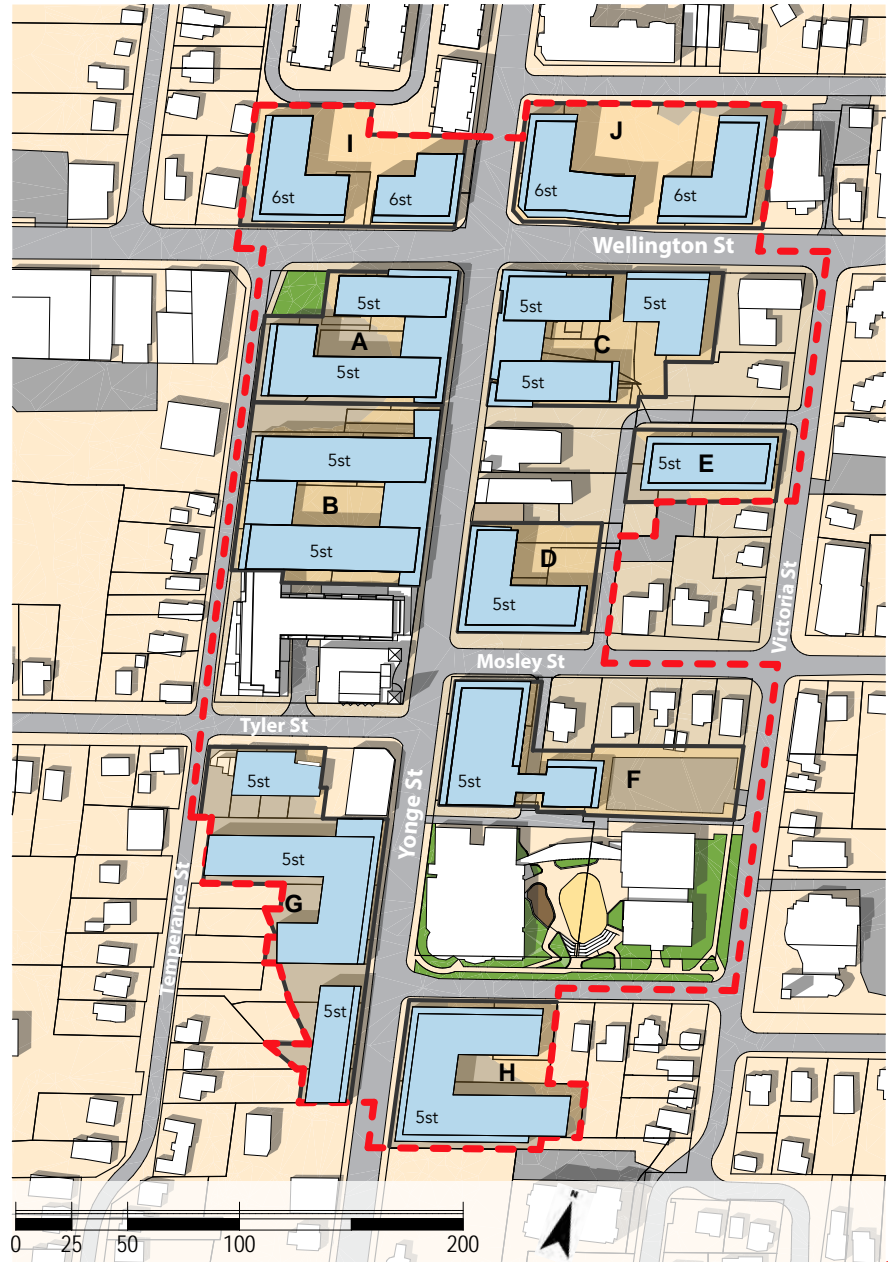


Figure 11: The As-of-Right Development Concept assumes the assembly of smaller properties into larger ones will continue and ultimately result in a series of new 5-storey mixed-use and residential buildings across Downtown.

Key Statistics of the As-of-Right Development Concept

Gross Floor Area of New Development	120,000 sqm
Estimated Number of New Residential Units	1100
Estimated Total Commercial Floor Area	10,000
Average Density of New Development	1.9-2.9 FSI
Maximum Height (new buildings)	5 Storeys (6 Storeys North of Wellington Street)
Setback from Yonge Street	0 metres
Upper Floor Step-back from Yonge Street	3.0 metres above 3rd floor

Table 3: Key statistics for the concept.

Aerial 3D views of the As-of-Right Development Concept



Figure 12: View looking northwest over Downtown. In the long-term, parking for both commercial and residential uses would be accommodated within future developments, either underground or in the base of buildings, behind other uses.



Figure 13: View looking southeast over Downtown.

Street-level Renderings of the As-of-Right Development Concept

The street-level renderings in Figures 14 and 15 illustrate how a series of five-storey buildings would affect the character of Yonge Street and the pedestrian experience. Figure 16 is a rendered view looking south on Temperance Street.

The views from Yonge Street show that even with the fourth and fifth storeys stepped back three metres from the lower floors of new buildings, the additional massing would significantly alter the built form character of the street, considering most of the existing historic buildings are two storeys.



Figure 14: View looking down Yonge Street from Wellington Street. Conserving heritage properties on Yonge Street will be critical to maintaining its historic character.



Figure 15: View looking north on Yonge Street. Five-storey buildings, even with minimum 3-metre step-backs above the third storey, will change the experience of the street over time.



Figure 16: View looking south on Temperance Street. Street trees and landscaped yards will help to maintain the character of streets surrounding Downtown.

» Alternative Development Concept

The Alternative Development Concept responds to the depth of the blocks along Yonge Street and concentrates the massing of new buildings in the interior of sites, allowing for a more gradual transition in heights from Yonge Street, as illustrated in Figures 19 and 20. Stepbacks above the third storey along Yonge are increased from three metres to ten metres, where heights increase to five storeys. Above the fifth storey, the massing steps back another ten metres before increasing further to maximum heights of nine storeys west of Yonge Street and eight storeys east of Yonge Street where such heights would have minimal impact on adjacent properties. Further south, where the surrounding low-rise neighbourhoods extend into Downtown, the maximum heights are five and six storeys.

Note, the maximum heights of buildings west of Yonge Street are measured from Temperance Street, which slopes down from both Wellington Street and Yonge Street. Measured from either of these streets, the heights would be one storey less.

The Alternative Development Concept also differs from the As-of-Right Concept in that the new buildings on Yonge Street, except where an existing historic façade has been retained, are set back two metres from the right-of-way to provide more space for pedestrians and restaurant patios.

The Alternative Concept increases the achievable density on some sites by up to 50% and yields approximately 155 more residential units and approximately 15% more density overall than the As-of-Right Concept.

Plan View

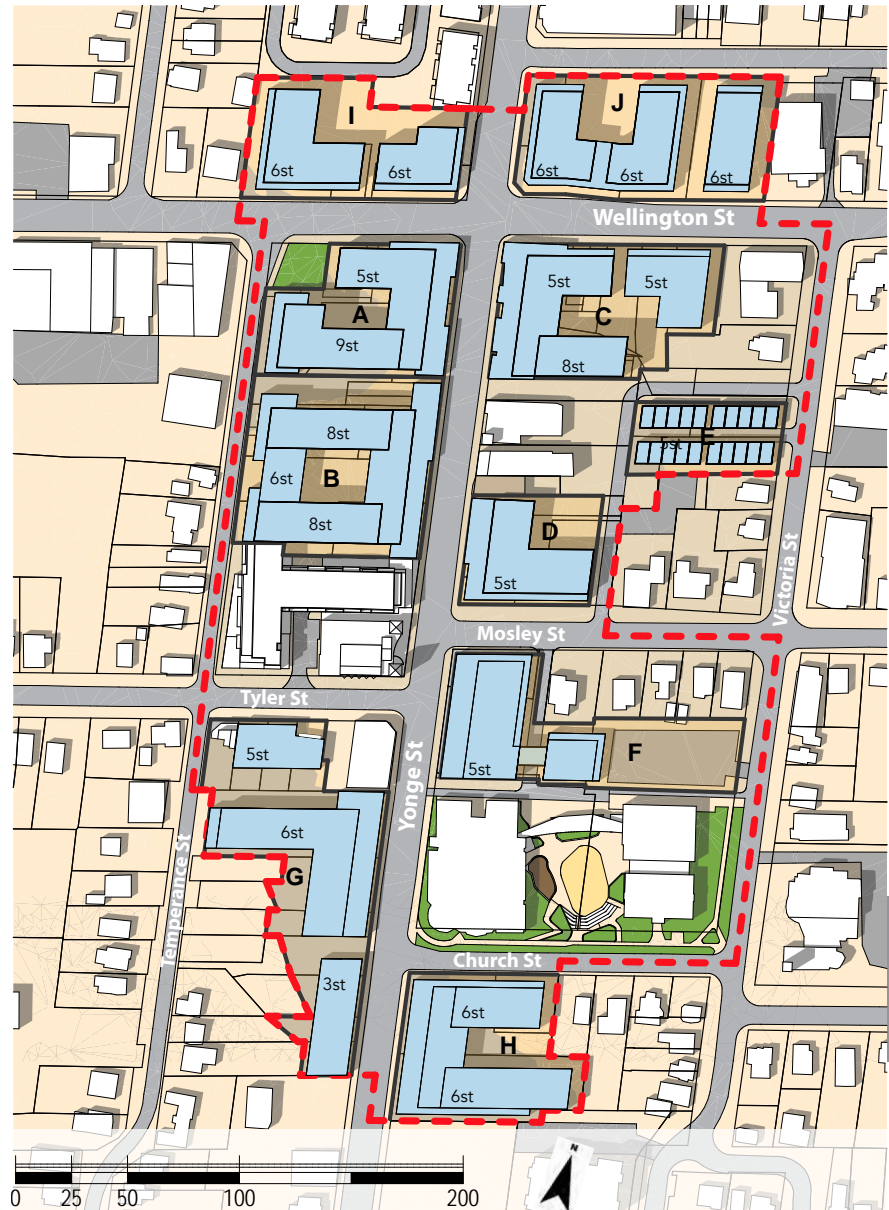


Figure 17: As also shown in the As-of-Right Concept, mid-block pedestrian connections and laneways provide a framework for future development and would enhance the public realm.

Key Statistics of the Alternative Development Concept

Gross Floor Area of New Development	134,300 sqm
Estimated Number of New Residential Units	1260
Estimated Increase in Commercial Floor Area	8,600
Average Density of New Development	1.4-4.1 FSI
Maximum Height (new buildings)	9 Storeys (6 Storeys North of Wellington Street)
Setback from Yonge Street	2 metres
Upper Floor Step-back from Yonge Street	10.0 metres above 3rd floor

Table 4: Key statistics for the concept.

Aerial 3D view of the Alternative Development Concept

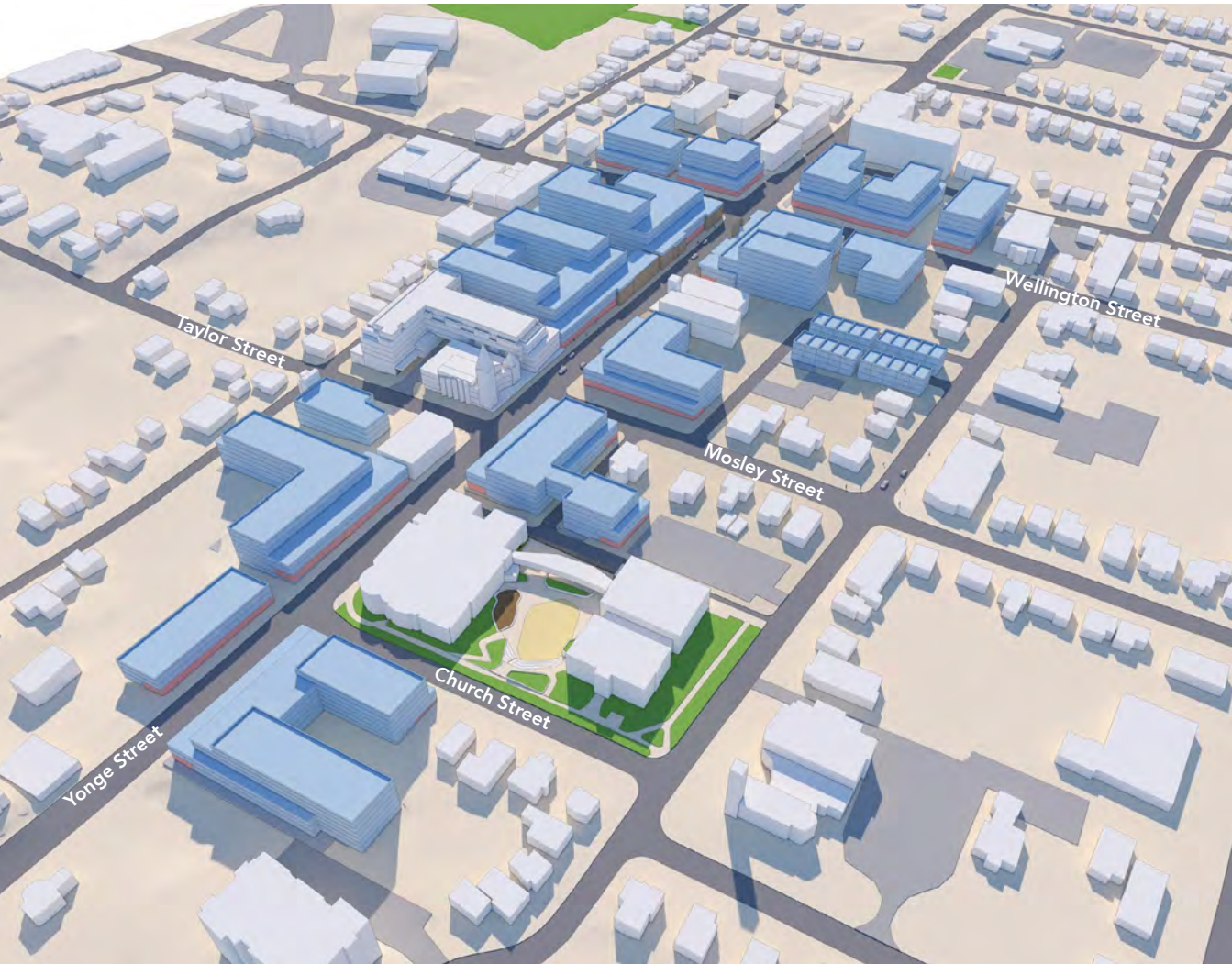


Figure 19: View looking northwest over Downtown. Varying the maximum building height Downtown should result in a greater variety of housing types.

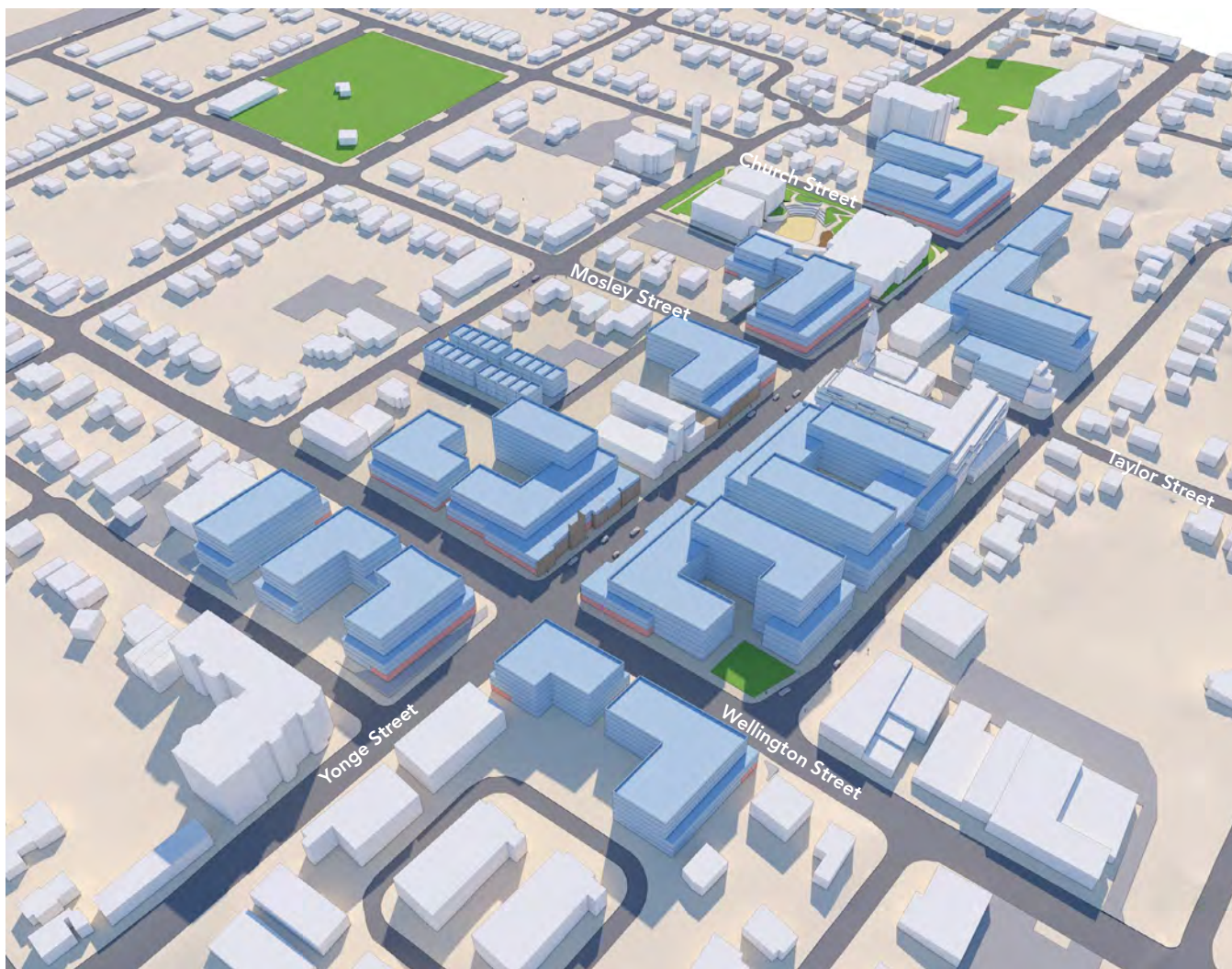


Figure 20: View looking southeast over Downtown.

Street-level Renderings of the Alternative Development Concept

As the street-level renderings in Figures 21 and 22 illustrate, the alternative massing approach moderates the visual impact of buildings over three storeys. The step-back of upper floors allows the three-storey facades to dominate the built form character of Yonge Street, and the portions of buildings above the fifth storey have a negligible impact on pedestrian views. In addition, Figure 22 shows how increased setbacks at street level allow restaurants and shops to bring more life to Yonge Street.

Considering the west side of Temperance Street, north of Tyler Street, is half lined with industrial and commercial properties, taller buildings on the east side would have minimal impacts on the street's character. Minimum three-metre step-backs above the fourth storey and landscaped front yards, as illustrated in Figure 23, will help ensure the pedestrian environment is inviting and comfortable.



Figure 21: View looking down Yonge Street from Wellington Street. Requiring the upper floors of new buildings along Yonge Street to be stepped back at least 10 metres would help preserve the street's historic scale and character.



Figure 22: View looking north on Yonge Street. This view shows that buildings up to 9 storeys in the interior of blocks would barely be visible from Yonge Street. Setbacks of 2 metres from front property lines will effectively widen the sidewalk and provide space for restaurant patios and retail displays.

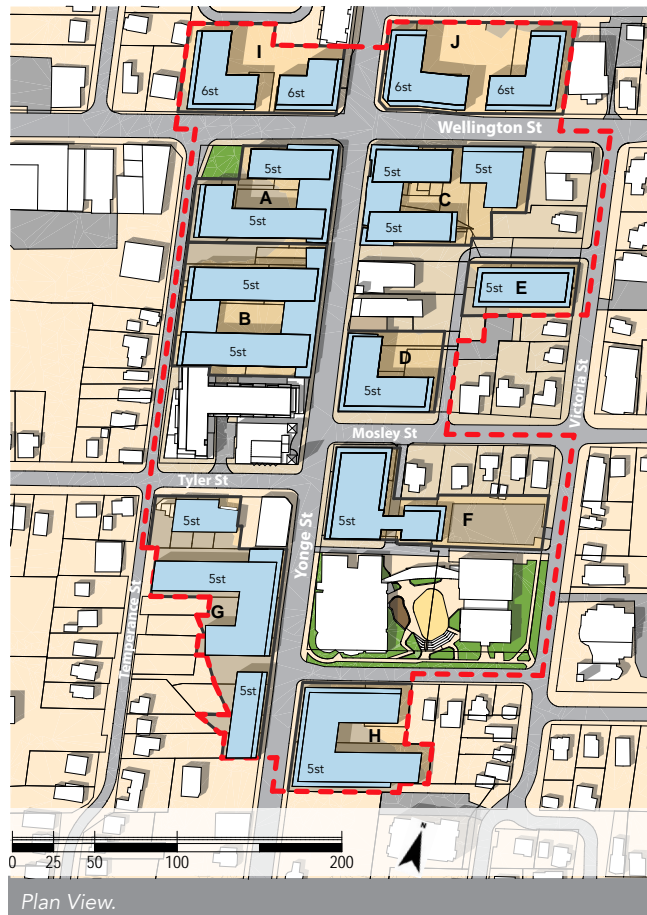


Figure 23: View looking south on Temperance Street. Buildings up to 9 storeys along Temperance Street, including townhouses, would enhance the streetscape.

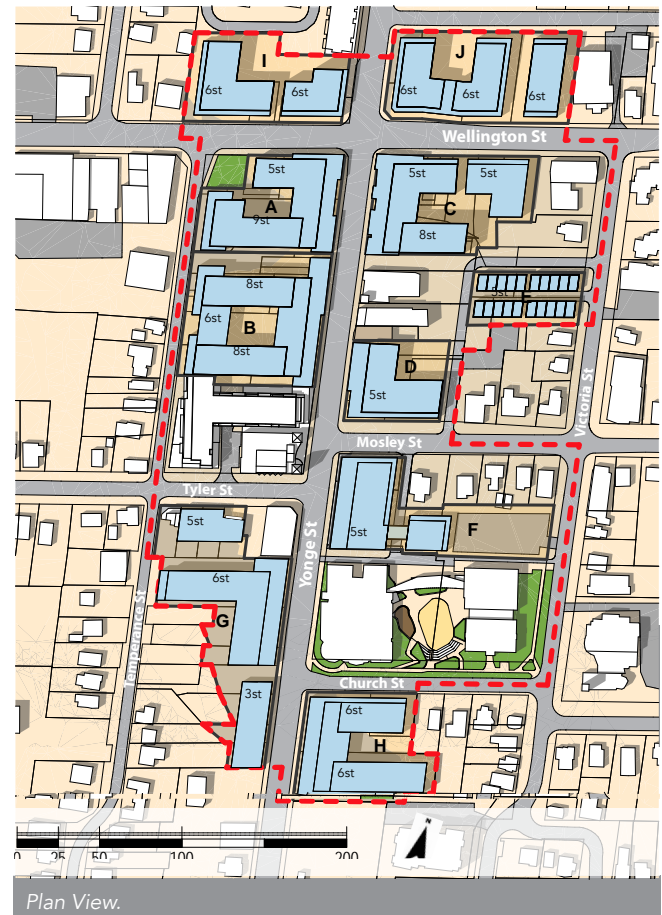
» Comparison of the Development Concepts

The images below and on the next page comparing the Alternative Development Concept to the As-of-Right Concept demonstrate that by increasing required step-backs above the third storey along Yonge Street and permitting greater height toward the rear of sites, the valued character and pedestrian experience of Downtown will be maintained.

As-of-Right Development Concept



Alternative Development Concept



As-of-Right Development Concept



View looking down Yonge Street from Wellington Street.

Alternative Development Concept



View looking down Yonge Street from Wellington Street.



View looking north on Yonge Street.



View looking north on Yonge Street.



View looking south on Temperance Street.



View looking south on Temperance Street.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the Alternative Development Concept described and illustrated in Section 5 provides the basis for recommended land use and built form regulations to be included in the Community Planning Permit By-law for Downtown. The section concludes with recommendations regarding parking, laneways, mid-block pedestrian connections, and other site planning and urban design matters.

The recommendations address where variances from the regulations may be appropriate, acknowledging that under a CPP By-law, the Town will be classifying CPP applications based on the number and degree of variances from by-law provisions. Applications requiring no variances or minor variances may be approved by the Town's Director of Planning and Development, whereas variances considered significant would require Council approval.

While the study's recommendations focus on the CPP By-law, some of them will require concurrent amendments to the Town's Official Plan's policies applicable to the Aurora Promenade, notably those regarding maximum building heights and minimum and maximum setbacks.

Note, in the event any of the recommendations below conflict with any requirements that may be imposed on a property under the Ontario Heritage Act, the latter requirements should prevail.

» Land Use

The land uses assumed in the Alternative Development Concept are generally consistent with those currently permitted by the Town's Official Plan and Zoning By-law. Although the concept assumes intensification will occur predominantly with residential uses, the ground floors of buildings fronting Yonge Street and Wellington Street were massed to accommodate commercial or institutional uses intended to help enliven the public realm. Office uses or other commercial or institutional uses could occupy the upper floors of the new buildings in the concept but may require wider floorplates and higher floor-to-ceiling heights (approximately four metres versus three metres). It is not expected that Downtown will attract significant multi-storey commercial office buildings given the availability of more suitable and accessible sites elsewhere in the Town.

Figure 25 is a proposed land use map for the CPP By-law recommending an area where the by-law would apply and identifying the area as "Downtown Mixed Use" or "DMU." Properties considered within Downtown but outside the DMU area and currently zoned PD1 or PDS1, where significant intensification would not be appropriate, would continue to be subject to Zoning By-law 6000-17.

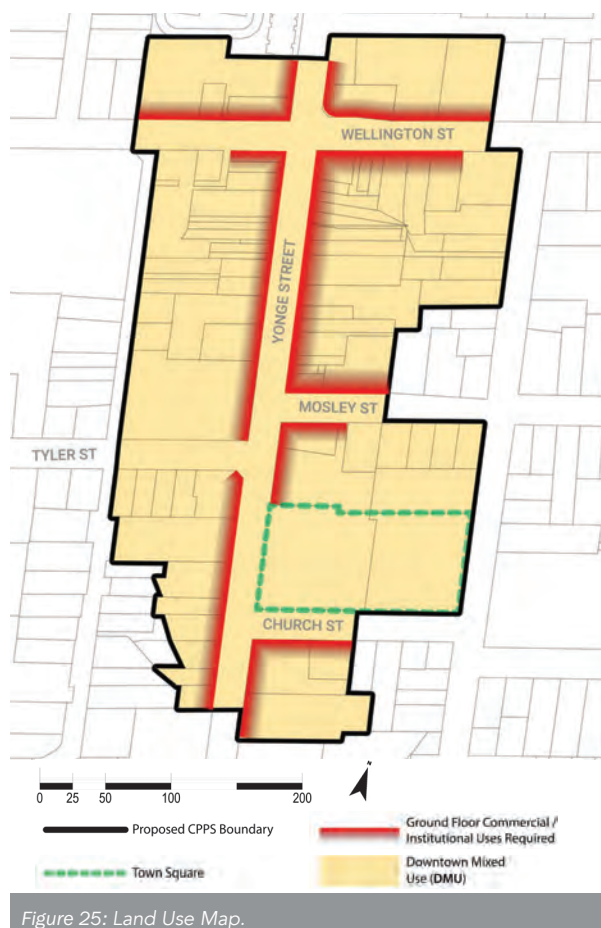


Figure 25: Land Use Map.

Within the new DMU area, most of the uses currently permitted in a PD1 zone should continue to be permitted. The only currently permitted non-residential uses that would be more suitable in other parts of Aurora Promenade or elsewhere in the town are athletic fields, cemeteries, day care centres, funeral homes, garden centres, and private and public schools (note, some of these uses are permitted through Section 11.1 of the Zoning By-law).

Regarding residential uses, the Zoning By-law only permits dwelling units above the first storey. Although dwelling units are not appropriate on the ground floors of buildings fronting Yonge Street and Wellington Street, they would be appropriate on ground floors along Temperance and Victoria streets and Downtown's other side streets. In addition, townhouses and multiplex dwellings (i.e., triplexes, fourplexes) are not currently permitted in PD1 zones; however, these forms of housing would be appropriate on Downtown's side streets as a transition from taller apartment and mixed-use buildings to the surrounding neighbourhoods, and to maintain a mix of housing types in the Downtown. It's recommended the Town consider amending the Official Plan to clearly permit multi-unit residential uses everywhere Downtown except on the ground floors of buildings along Yonge Street and Wellington Street, rather than stating a limited number of ancillary at-grade units may be permitted at the rear of sites.

These are the uses recommended to be permitted in the proposed DMU area:

- Art Gallery
- Bed and Breakfast
- Clinic
- Club
- Commercial Schools
- Dry Cleaning Establishment
- Dry Cleaning Distribution Centre and Depot
- Dwelling Units, provided no dwelling units are located on the ground floor of a building fronting Yonge Street or Wellington Street within 25 metres of the front lot line

- Dwelling, Multiplex, provided the dwelling is not located within 25 metres of lot lines abutting Yonge Street and Wellington Street
- Dwelling, Townhouse, provided the dwelling is not located within 25 metres of lot lines abutting Yonge Street and Wellington Street
- Financial Institutions
- Fitness Centre
- Hospital
- Hotel
- Laundromat
- Library, Public
- Long Term Care Facility
- Museum
- Offices
- Personal Services Shop
- Pet Services
- Place of Entertainment
- Place of Worship
- Private Park
- Restaurants
- Retail Stores, provided no single store is larger than 1,800 square metres GFA and no single store has frontage abutting a public street greater than 15 metres
- Retirement Home
- School, Post-Secondary
- Service Shops
- Studios
- Veterinarian Clinic

Proposed land uses not explicitly permitted by the CPP By-law should not be considered a minor variance from the by-law and should only be approved by Council.

» Built Form & Site Planning

More significant revisions to the current built form regulations applicable Downtown, specifically those regarding setbacks, heights and step-backs, are recommended for the new CPP By-law.

Setbacks

Table 5 recommends minimum and maximum setbacks for new buildings in the DMU area. Notwithstanding the minimum front yard and exterior side yard setbacks, where the façade of an existing building is being retained, the setback of the façade would be the minimum requirement. In addition, the by-law should identify where sight triangles may be required at intersections and state that front yard and exterior side yard requirements shall not apply where a build abuts a triangle.

The recommended minimum front yard setbacks along Yonge Street and the east-west streets in the Downtown depart from the current minimum of zero metres, recognizing that the streetscapes

would benefit from additional space for pedestrians, restaurant patios and retail displays. The recommended minimum front yard setbacks along Temperance Street and Victoria Street will provide space for landscaping, stairs, porches and/or patios, which will give the streetscapes a residential character consistent with the other side of these streets.

It is recommended the CPP By-law allow the Director of Planning and Development to permit variances of up to 10% from the above setback requirements. In the case of variances from front yard and exterior side yard requirements, Town staff should be satisfied a requested variance would result in a comfortable environment for pedestrians and appropriate space for proposed streetscape improvements in the private realm. In the case of variances from rear yard requirements, the impact on neighbouring properties in terms of shadows, sky views and loss of privacy should be assessed. Variances greater than 10% should be subject to Council approval.

	Abutting Streets	Minimum Setback	Maximum Setback
Front Yard and Exterior Side Yard	Yonge St or Wellington St	2 m	3 m
	Tyler St, Mosley St or Church St	1.5 m	2.5 m
	Temperance St or Victoria St	3 m	5 m
Interior Side Yard	n/a	0 m ¹	None
Rear Yard	n/a	7.5 m	None

¹ Except on lots fronting Victoria Street, where the minimum required interior side yard setback should be 1.5 metres.

Table 5: Recommended Setback Requirements.

Heights and Step-backs

Figure 26 is a map identifying the recommended minimum and maximum heights for future buildings. Consistent with the Alternative Development Concept, a maximum height of three storeys is recommended for the portion of buildings within 10 metres of the Yonge Street right-of-way south of Wellington Street. Effectively, this is a requirement for a minimum step-back of eight metres above the third storey of buildings constructed two metres from the front lot line (the recommended minimum setback). Beyond the eight-metre step-back, a maximum height of five storeys is recommended for the portion of buildings between 10 and 20 metres from the right-of-way, i.e., a further minimum step-back of 10 metres would be required above the fifth storey. Beyond the required step-backs from Yonge Street totaling a minimum of 18 metres, the recommended maximum heights vary from six storeys to nine storeys.

Along Yonge Street north of Wellington Street, and along the east-west streets of Downtown—Wellington, Tyler, Mosley and Church—a minimum step-back of five metres above the third storey, measured from the lot line, is recommended. On the south side of Wellington Street, an additional minimum step-back of three metres should be required above the fifth storey for buildings greater than five storeys.

Along Temperance Street, where the recommended minimum front yard setback is three metres, a minimum step-back above the fourth storey of eight metres from the right-of-way is recommended, i.e., three to five metres from the front wall of the building, depending on the front yard setback. This will help ensure there are appropriate built form transitions between buildings of potentially eight to nine storeys in the interior of the block to the adjacent low-rise neighbourhood. Along Victoria Street, a step-back of five metres from the front wall should be required above the third storey.

Since variances to maximum heights could result in significant impacts to the character and experience of Downtown, generally they should be subject to Council approval. Where the maximum height is five storeys, however, the Director of Planning and Development should have the authority to approve a variance of one storey if staff are satisfied the additional storey would not have a significant adverse impact on the public realm and the pedestrian experience.

In addition to limiting the overall height of new buildings, the CPP By-law should also require a minimum ground-floor height of four metres for buildings fronting Yonge Street and Wellington Street, to ensure they have the flexibility to accommodate a range of commercial or institutional uses over time.

Note, where properties currently zoned PD1 and PDS1 within the proposed CPPS boundary have been granted exceptions to the general land use and built form provisions, it may be appropriate to carry forward the exceptions in the CPP By-law. In addition, portions of properties in the south end of the proposed CPPS area are zoned EP (Environmental Protection). Rather than carry this forward in the CPP By-law, it is recommended the by-law require an Environmental Impact Study where a property proposed for development is partially located within or adjacent to lands designated Environmental Protection in the Official Plan.



Figure 26: Heights and Step-backs Map.

Rooftop Mechanical Equipment

Mechanical equipment on the rooftop of a building can have a significant impact on the building's overall appearance and the pedestrian experience. Significant residential and mixed-use developments in the Downtown should enclose mechanical equipment within a penthouse structure integrated into the overall design of the building. For all new development, the CPP By-law should require:

- Rooftop mechanical equipment to be set back a minimum of three metres from the building edges and to not exceed a height of three metres, except elevator penthouses, which should not exceed five metres;
- Rooftop mechanical equipment to be screened with solid screening designed to complement materials used for the building's façade(s).

Parking, Loading and Servicing Areas

It was not within the scope of the Urban Design Study to assess whether the parking requirements applicable Downtown should be updated. However, the location and configuration of parking is an urban design matter. Currently, parking must be located in the rear yard of a site. It is recommended the CPP By-law go further than this and require parking to be provided in the rear yard, underground or in an above-grade structure integrated with other uses. More specifically, parking structures should not front a public street or open space and instead should be lined with other permitted uses to minimize the visual impact they have on the public realm.

Like surface parking, loading and servicing areas can have adverse impacts on the living environment and pedestrian experience Downtown if not located and designed appropriately. The CPP By-law should require loading and servicing areas to be located at the rear or side of the building and be enclosed within the building where the rear or side abuts a public street or open space. Loading and servicing areas in the interior of a block should be screened from public view with walls and landscaping.

Laneways

As illustrated in the Framework for Change, in Section 4, and shown in the As-of-Right and Alternative Development Concepts, the Urban Design Study proposes that future development in the blocks east of Yonge Street, north and south of Mosley Street, be serviced by new public rear lanes. The introduction of rear lanes to these deep blocks will minimize the need for private driveways from streets thereby helping to minimize conflicts among vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. It is recommended that the Town acquire any private land required for the laneways through dedications at the time of applications or by other means, and the CPP By-Law should require the laneway be implemented in conjunction with new development on adjacent lands.

Mid-Block Pedestrian Connections

The Framework for Change also identifies opportunities for extended and new mid-block pedestrian connections west and east of Yonge Street. These connections will not only make it easier to get around Downtown by walking or using mobility aids but may also provide additional public realm frontage for shops, restaurants and other businesses. The CPP By-law should include provisions to ensure mid-block connections feel safe and inviting: They should have a minimum width of eight metres where new buildings are proposed, and new development should frame and help enliven them with grade-related residential units, storefronts and/or other active uses.

» Design Guidelines

In addition to incorporating the above recommendations regarding land use, built form, parking and site planning, the CPP By-law should require applicants to demonstrate their proposal generally is consistent with the Urban Design Guidelines in the Aurora Promenade Concept Plan and Urban Design Strategy, except where the guidelines may conflict with the recommendations. More specifically, the by-law should reference the following key guidelines to be considered in CPP applications.

Façade Articulation and Materials

- New buildings should respect the pattern of façade division by ensuring the horizontal and vertical architectural orders are aligned with neighbouring heritage buildings.
- New buildings should have entries and display windows at regular intervals consistent with the established pattern on the block.
- Windows should be vertically aligned from floor-to-floor and horizontally aligned with the neighbouring heritage buildings.
- New buildings should include a cornice that is carefully aligned with neighbouring heritage significant buildings and of similar proportions.
- New buildings should consider the pallet of materials and colours evident in existing heritage properties.
- Building materials should be chosen for their functional and aesthetic quality and exterior finishes should exhibit quality of workmanship, sustainability and ease of maintenance. High quality materials like brick and stone masonry are highly encouraged as exterior cladding elements due to their functionality, aesthetic quality and compatibility. Materials should also be chosen for permanence. Vinyl siding, plywood, concrete block, darkly tinted and mirrored glass, and metal siding utilizing exposed fasteners should be discouraged.

Storefronts

- To reflect the existing character and context, storefronts should generally have a frontage in the range of 4.5 to 7.5 metres, but not greater than 15 metres.
- Where retail frontages are greater than 7.5 metres, they should articulate narrow storefronts in the design of the façade.
- Storefronts should have a high-level of transparency, with a minimum of 75% glazing to maximize visual animation.
- Clear glass should be used for wall openings (e.g., windows and doors) along the street-level façade. Dark tinted, reflective or opaque glazing should be discouraged for storefronts.
- An identifiable break or gap could be provided between the street-level uses and the upper floors of a building. This break or gap may consist of a change in material, change in fenestration, or similar means.
- On corner sites, storefronts should address both street frontages through entries or glazing.

Grade-Related Residential Units

- Where townhouses or other forms of grade-related housing are proposed along the side streets of Downtown, to ensure they contribute to an inviting public realm separated from the private realm, the ground floor should be elevated a minimum of one metre.
- Where a front porch or patio is proposed and encroaches into the required minimum setback, it should be elevated and set back a minimum of two metres from the sidewalk and partially screened with a low wall, metal rail or coniferous hedge for privacy.
- Air conditioning units, heat pumps and other required utilities should be set back from the sidewalk and screened with a low wall and/or coniferous vegetation.