ELM STREET STREETSCAPE VISION

URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

2025

TORONTO

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Land Acknowledgement

The City of Toronto acknowledges that we are on 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. The City also acknowledges that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

1.INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Elm Street has an established history as a place of pedestrian interest, shaped by its commercial and retail past. Between Yonge Street and Bay Street, the street has evolved from a mix of residential and institutional buildings into a vibrant local retail area, now home to many well-established businesses in the hospitality, dining, and retail sectors. The street's character is defined by a significant collection of listed and Part IV designated low-rise heritage buildings, mature trees, sidewalk cafes, patios, and seating areas. Together, these elements give Elm Street a distinctive sense of place and welcoming atmosphere.

The street offers social opportunities and a peaceful escape from busy Yonge Street, while also serving as a key service access for nearby businesses. Key challenges include narrow sidewalks, degraded tree pits, and frequent curb cuts that disrupt pedestrian flow.

The Elm Street Streetscape Vision ("the Vision") provides a long-term framework to guide public realm improvements and inform the review of development applications between Yonge Street and Bay Street. The Vision seeks to maintain Elm Street's distinct character, shaped by its heritage buildings, sidewalk cafes, and landscaping, while enhancing its function as a safe, accessible and vibrant public space. The framework identifies opportunities for improvements along the boulevard and in areas adjacent to redevelopment sites and beyond. These enhancements will be implemented incrementally by individual developers as part of their projects, or through other capital works and infrastructure initiatives.

Sustainability is central to the Vision, with green infrastructure, new plantings, and improved conditions for mature trees creating comfortable and resilient year-round public spaces.

1.1 THE VISION BOUNDARY

The Vision boundary includes the section of Elm Street stretching from Bay Street to Yonge Street, located within the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA) in Toronto. It is located within Ward 11, University-Rosedale, and borders Ward 13, Toronto Centre.

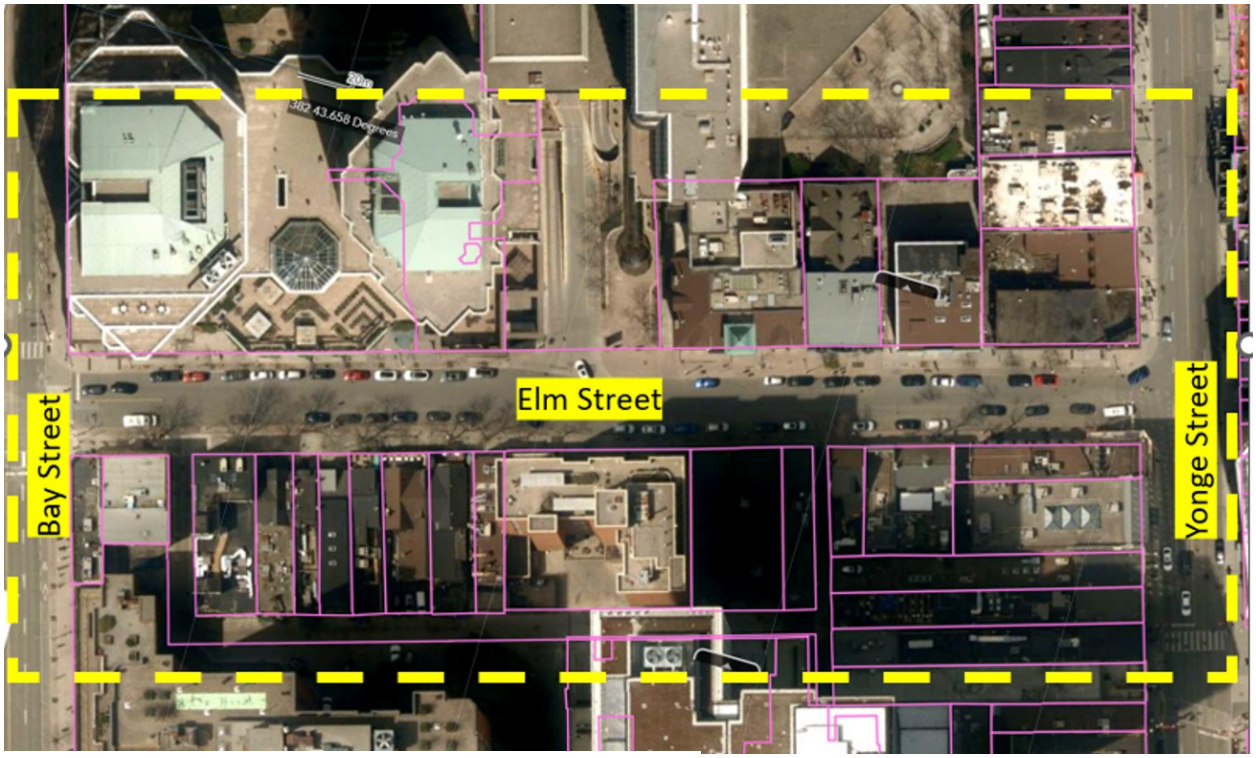


Figure 1: Elm Street Boundary Area.

2. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

2.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND KEY OBJECTIVES

The Vision builds upon the City's Official Plan and Urban Design Guidelines, offering a clear framework for enhancing the public realm along Elm Street. The following principles will inform decisions and streetscape design:

GREENING OF THE STREETS

Add new trees, where room permits, and enhance existing trees and planters to provide better growing environment and support the City's Transform TO Net Zero Strategy target of 40% canopy coverage by 2050.

- Prioritize retention of healthy, mature trees on City Road allowance or private property, as they provide greater environmental and community benefits than newly planted or small tree.
- Enhance the urban tree canopy by retrofitting existing tree pits and identify new opportunities for street trees and planting beds. Retrofitted planter lengths can be increased from 2.4 m up to 4.0 m or greater (east-west), with width maintained to preserve pedestrian clearway.
- Consolidate the tree pits to maximize open planting environments, soil volume and support healthier growing conditions. Group existing trees with new trees in consolidated planters where possible.
- Provide low fences within newly enlarged tree pits to protect them from compaction from pedestrian foot traffic and to keep the dogs out of the planters.
- Planting should use high-quality City standards focused on long-term maintenance, with streetscape elements designed for durability and ease of upkeep. Consultation with the DYBIA is recommended for public realm material selection. Partner with developers, adjacent property owners, local BIA and community groups to maintain enhanced planting.
- Favour perennial planting over annuals for resilience, pollinator benefits, and cost efficiency.
- Integrate planting beds with passive irrigation system and seating walls on curb.
- Consider tree grates, where appropriate, within patio spaces.

SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES

Design the street as a year-round destination that supports vibrant commercial activity and community life.

- Expand sidewalks to improve pedestrian safety, accessibility, and opportunities for patios, merchandise displays, and BIA programming. Provide flexible space for 24/7 programming, events and activity for all seasons to ensure the street remains active, welcoming and community-oriented throughout the year.
- Distribute ground fault circuit interrupter (GFI) outlets along the street in coordination with the DYBIA. The design, delivery and maintenance of City standard streetscape enhancements within the public ROW will be funded by the City. Non-City standard elements including custom site furnishings and any proposed new open planting areas will be subject to a new maintenance agreement with adjacent property owners, the DYBIA, or other 3rd party corporate entity.
- Provide space for ample seating and weather protection.
- Ensure efficient circulation and access for businesses, servicing and deliveries, and well programmed environments to draw locals and tourist alike.

Figure 2: Illuminated trees along Elm Street, (City of Toronto).

Figure 3: North side of Elm Street, looking towards 15-17 Elm Street, (City of Toronto).

Figure 4: Campfire at a DYBIA event, (DYBIA Instagram).

Figure 5: North side of Elm Street looking east. Winter scenario above and summer scenario below. The plant materials shown reflect that which has been site plan approved at 8 Elm and may change. In addition, the railing design shown reflects the current vision, but may also change as part of the detailed design stage. Curb extensions and wider planters will also facilitate winter snow removal and storage to help keep the pedestrian clearway and roadway free of obstructions.

Figure 6: North side of Elm Street looking east summer scenario - visualization of the proposed Elm Street Streetscape Improvements.

SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Create a safe, accessible, and well-connected pedestrian-oriented environment.

- Incorporate road safety enhancements, such as right-sizing of vehicular lanes, curb extensions, curb radii reductions, increased sidewalk space, and other road re-design opportunities, subject to feasibility assessments.
- Enhance pedestrian safety at the intersections with Yonge Street and Bay Street studying further adding high visibility crosswalks such as zebra markings, providing curb extensions and appropriate sized curb radii to increase visibility between all road users, shorten pedestrian crossing distance,
reduce vehicle speeds and provide additional pedestrian space.
- Improve pedestrian amenities to encourage the use of multimodal transportation systems.
- Create a streetscape that is welcoming, accessible, inclusive and considers people of all ages and abilities.
- Create a central mid-block crossing to increase the connectivity of existing and future open spaces north and south of Elm Street.

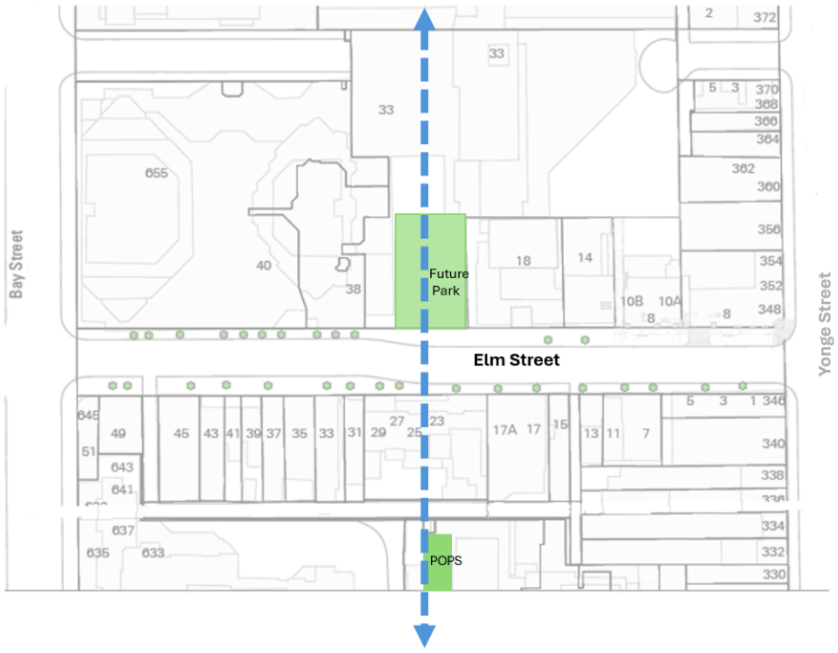


Figure 7: Mid-block connection between Edward Street and Gerrard Street.

UNIQUE CHARACTER

Enhance identity that showcases cultural heritage resources and landscape character.

- Incorporate material palette, finishes, and patterns in the design of the street that draws inspiration from the historical character of Elm Street and complements the existing heritage properties (red-brown sandstone, terracotta and brick).
- Reinstate existing heritage plaques and encourage the installation of new plaques and interpretative features.

STREET EXPERIENCE

Create a pleasant and comfortable experience for all users.

Provide sustainability related to ongoing maintenance of plant materials and use high quality City standard materials. This will not place additional requirements on the DYBIA.

- Identify areas for street furniture including seating, lighting and bike racks.
- Incorporate public art where possible and when the funding is available.
- Improve pedestrian connectivity, safety, and accessibility by expanding the pedestrian realm and reducing conflicts with road users. There is currently no confirmed timeline for when on-street parking removal or sidewalk widening will occur.
- Include wider sidewalks and planters to facilitate snow removal and snow storage.
- Integrate City standard concrete unit pavers, seat walls, benches, patios and existing historic lighting into the streetscape.
- Use durable materials and street elements that support long-term performance, sustainability and accessibility.
- Consider using contrasting red and light gray concrete pavers, with existing red granite square pavers reused for paving spaces within building-front setbacks.
- Provide light-coloured unit pavers with no chamfered corners and tight joint spacing for accessibility at existing pedestrian clearways between existing trees. Where wider clearances are not possible, maintain a minimum 2.1 m concrete pedestrian clearway, with dark red coloured square unit pavers between new planters and parking laybys.
- Provide standard asphalt pavement along the roadway with permeable pavers delineating parking laybys as a first choice.

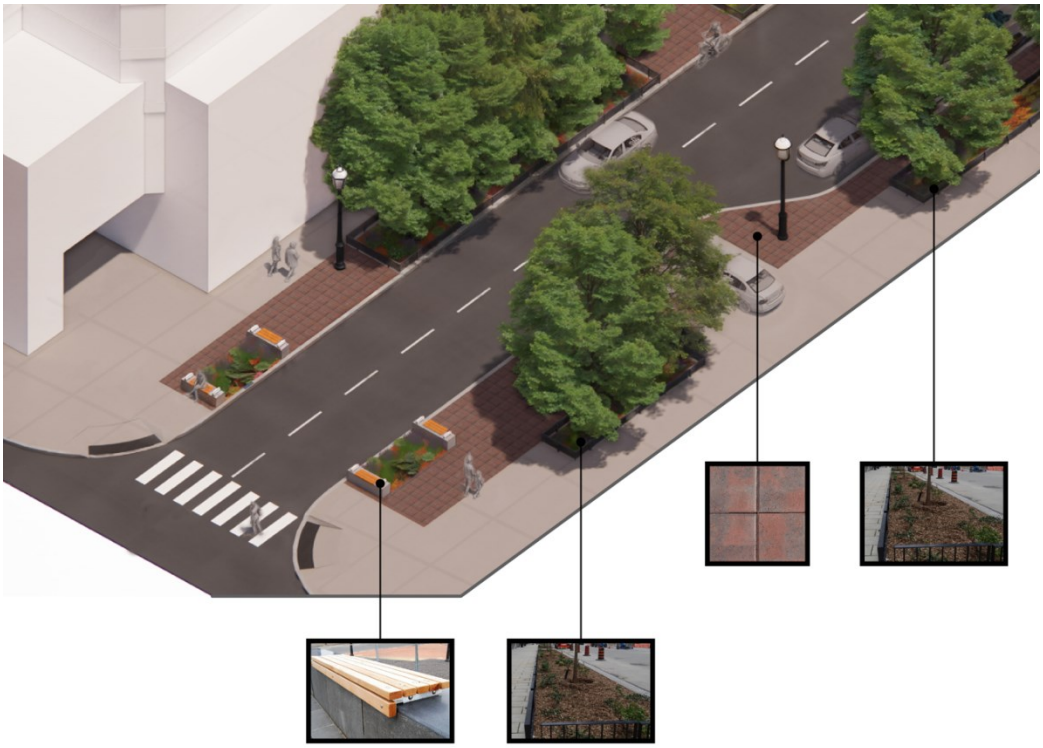


Figure 8: The indicative palette of finish materials and colours aims to establish a unified identity while allowing flexibility for site-specific refinement at later design stages.

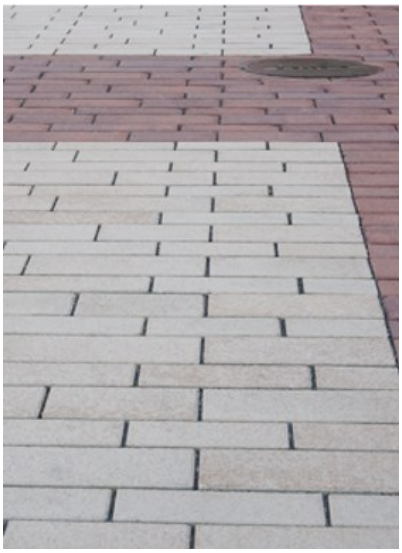


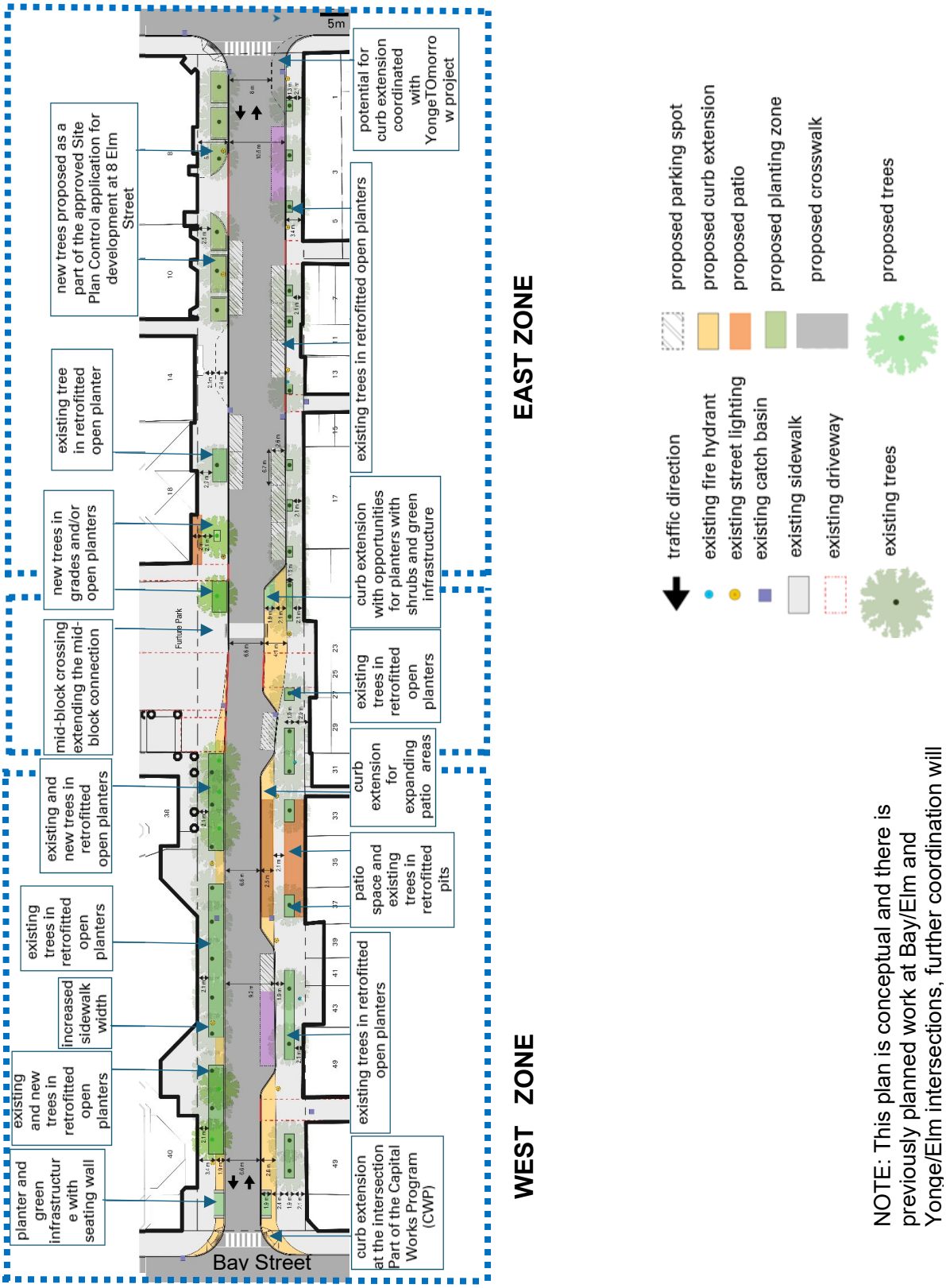
Figure 9: Example of pavement colour palette.

Figure 10: Example of pavement complementing the existing historic character of the street, Wellington St, Toronto.

3. STREETSCAPE MASTERPLAN

3.1 AREA SPECIFIC DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vision includes recommendations for 3 Zones along the street, identified as: West Zone, Middle Zone and East Zone (Figure 11).



NOTE: This plan is conceptual and there is previously planned work at Bay/Elm and Yonge/Elm intersections, further coordination will

Figure 11: Elm Street Streetscape Masterplan for the Vision – design concept.

3.1.1 East Zone

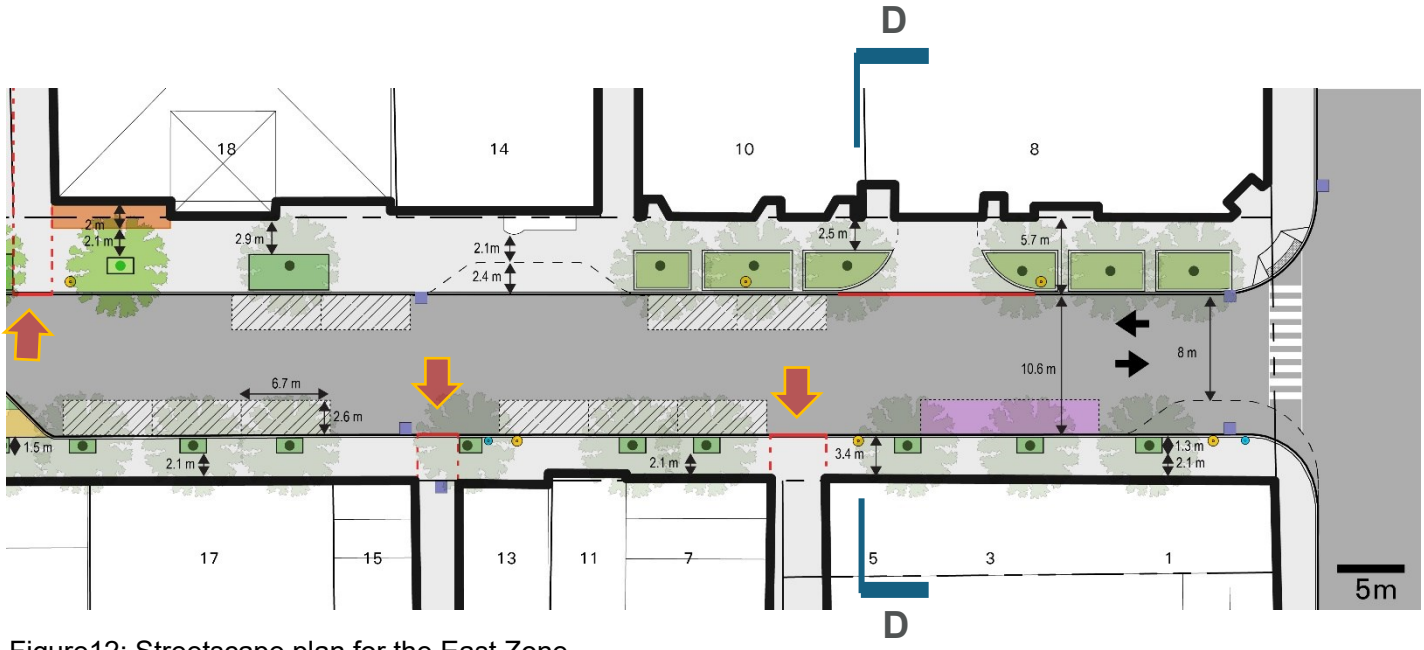


Figure12: Streetscape plan for the East Zone.

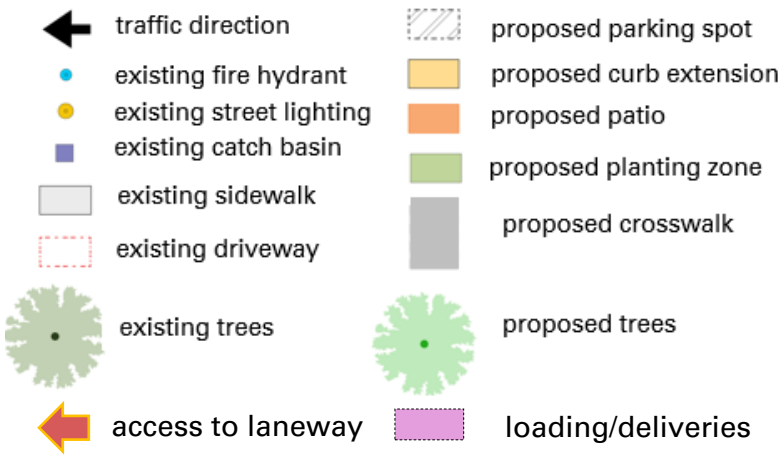


Figure 13: Proposed streetscape improvements, streetscape plan rendering for the East Zone.

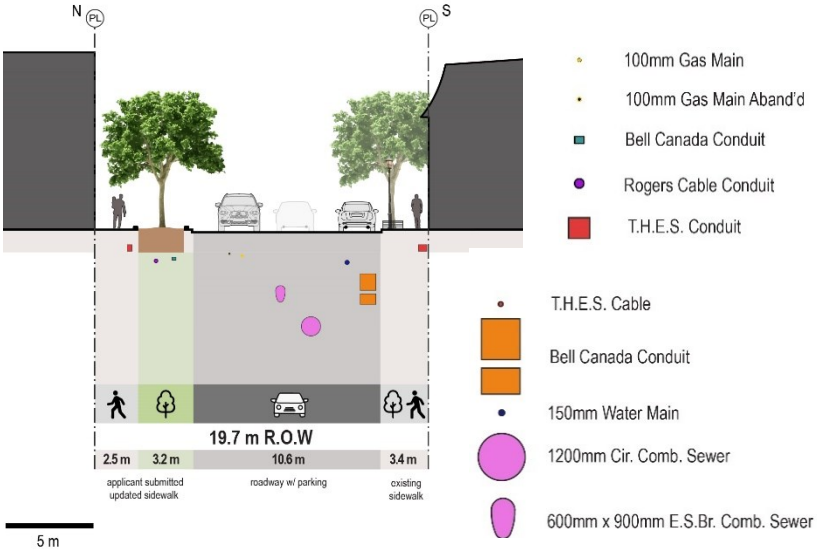
A. Delivery zone, Pick-up/ drop-off, Short-term activity and on-street parking

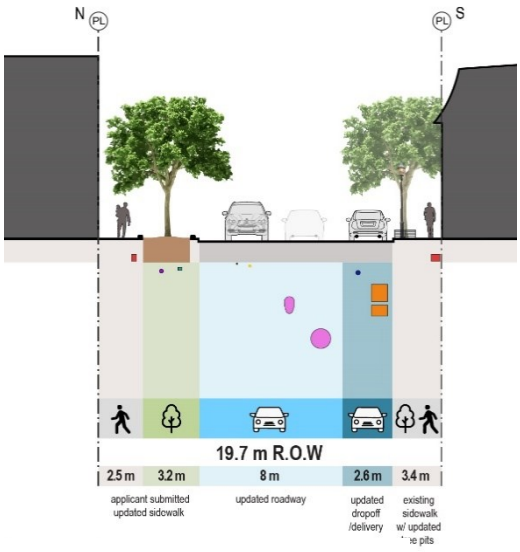
No curb extensions are proposed for the East Zone to maintain on street loading areas for business and parking.

- Recommend maintaining a portion of the curb side space for pick-up/drop-off and short-term activity zones to the northwest of the 8 Elm Street site driveway.
- Relocating existing delivery zone from the north to the south side of the street.
- On-street parking to be maintained on the north and south sides of the street.
- Add a loading lay-by in front of the Arts and Letters Club.

B. Trees

- Retain existing trees and add one new tree at the front of 18 Elm Street. To maximize space for patios at the front of 18 Elm Street, a tree grate for the new tree is recommended.
- Six new trees are proposed and approved at the front of 8 Elm Street as part of the Site Plan Control application.
- All proposed tree plantings must be supported by utility coordination and subsurface utility data to confirm there are no conflicts with existing infrastructure.
- Retaining the existing trees in retrofitted tree pits is recommended. Group the trees in open planters where possible to optimize the growing conditions and ensure a pedestrian minimum clearance of 2.1 m will be provided.
- Assessment of a potential curb extension on the southwest corner at the intersection of Yonge and Elm Streets may be part of the Yonge TOmorrow initiative.
- Access to servicing laneways should be maintained.





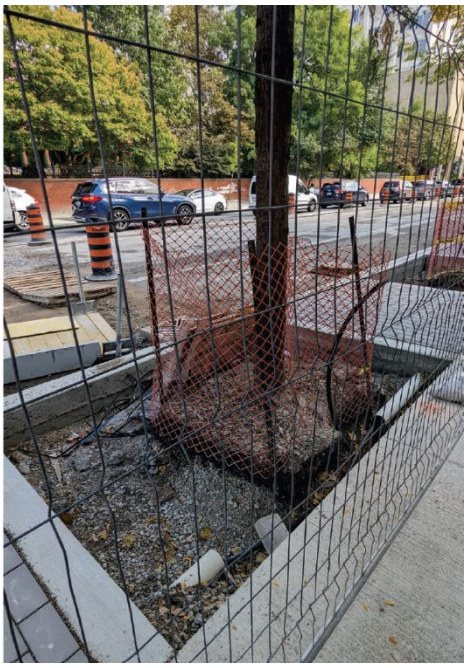
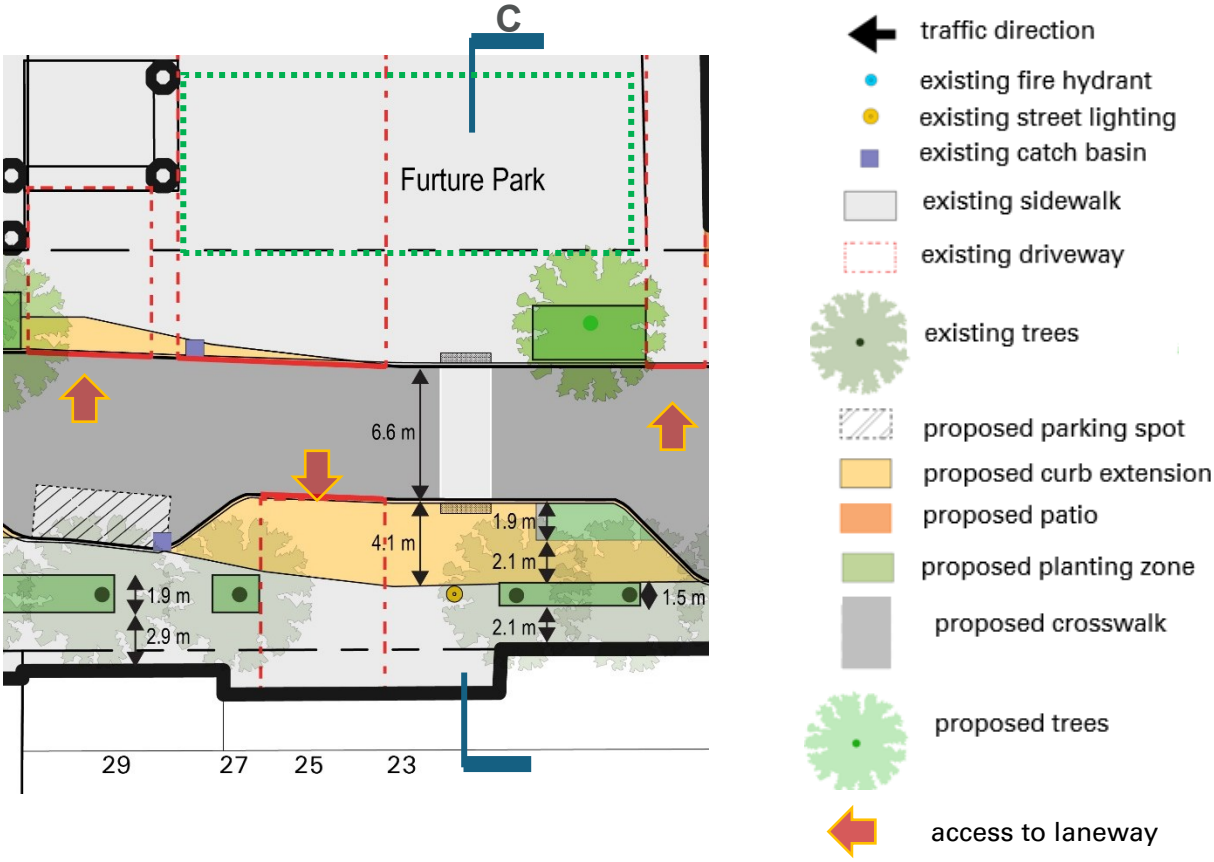


Figure 15: Example of retrofitted tree pit at Bloor and St George, City of Toronto.

Figure: 16 Example of retrofitted tree at East Liberty Street, City of Toronto.

3.1.2 Middle Zone



A. Potential Mid-Block Pedestrian Crossing opportunity and curb extension

West of 18 Elm Street is a large driveway for the Chelsea hotel block to the north (33 Gerrard Street West). As part of the eventual build-out, this existing access will be closed and dedicated as a public park. As such, a curb extension should be provided along the park frontage to the north and across the street

reducing the pedestrian crossing distance and creating a pedestrian connection between the south side of the street and the future park to the north. This is the location where Elm Street currently jogs to the north, presenting an opportunity to realign the roadway and smooth out the slight bend as it continues westward.

Figure 18: Example of Mid-block crossing at Temperance Street, City of Toronto.

Figure 19: Potential mid-block pedestrian crossing on Elm Street, streetscape plan rendering for the Middle Zone.

An assessment to determine the suitability of a mid-block pedestrian crossing at this location should be conducted closer to implementation.

B. Trees and green infrastructure

One new tree in an open planter is proposed to the north and 4 existing trees in retrofitted open planters to the south will be retained. Providing planters with green infrastructure are recommended within the new curb extension.

Figure 20: Examples of green Infrastructure planters with bioswales and parallel parking at Gladstone Ave, City of Toronto.

- Access to underground parking for 20 Elm Street and 38 Elm Street will be maintained.
- The access to drop-off functions and underground parking for 33 Gerrard Street should be maintained until the site will be redeveloped and the vehicle driveway replaced with the new park.

D. Existing Catch Basins

- The catch basin on the north side of the street may need adjustments to allow curb extensions.
- The curb extension may bridge the catch basin without the need for its re-location. The catch basin to the south can be retained along with the on-street parking spaces.

E. Street furniture

- Due to limited space, seat walls are recommended, provided they allow for sufficient pedestrian clearance.
- Depending on the future of the park design, additional street furniture such as benches, pedestrian lighting, garbage receptacles and bike racks can be provided to the north and south

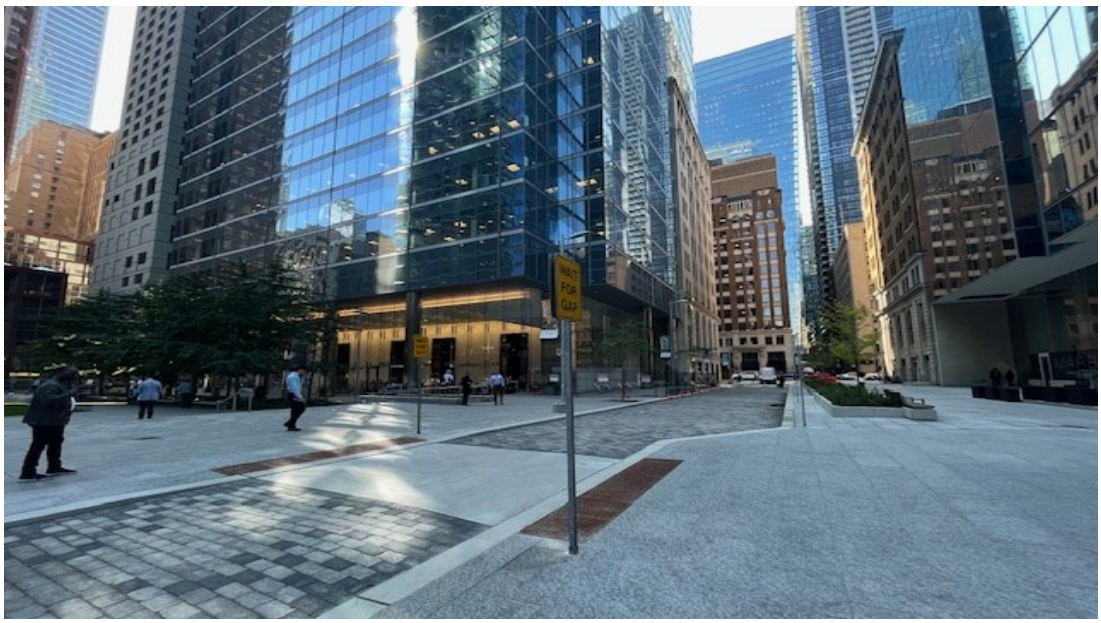


Figure 21: Example of curb extension at the mid-block pedestrian crossing connecting Arnell Plaza to Cloud Gardens at Temperance Street, City of Toronto.

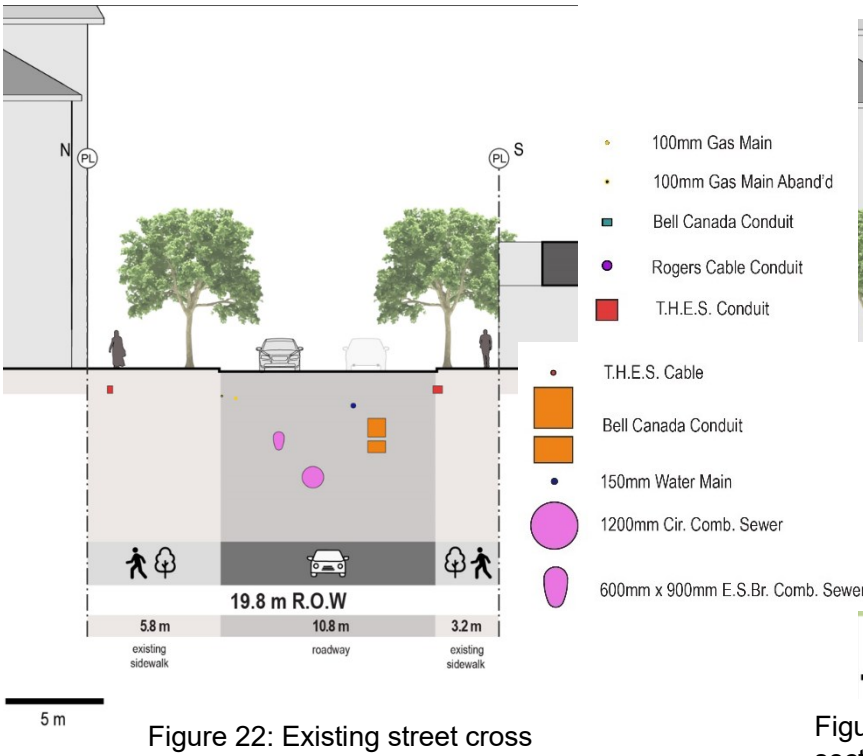


Figure 22: Existing street cross section C-C

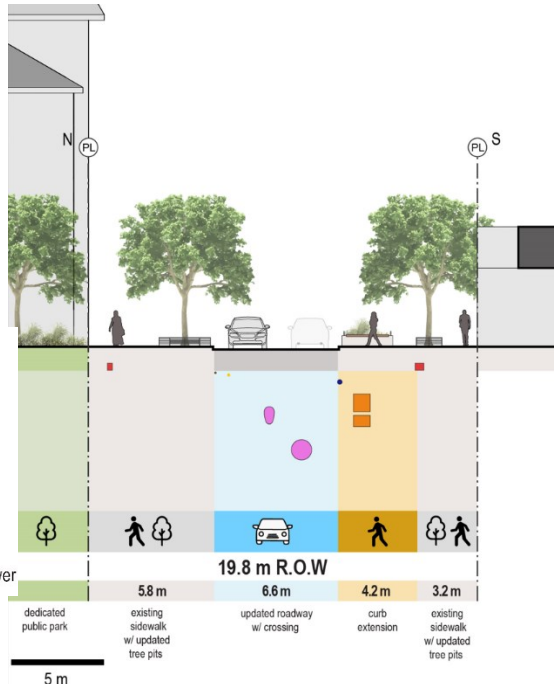


Figure 23: Proposed street cross section C-C

3.1.3 West Zone

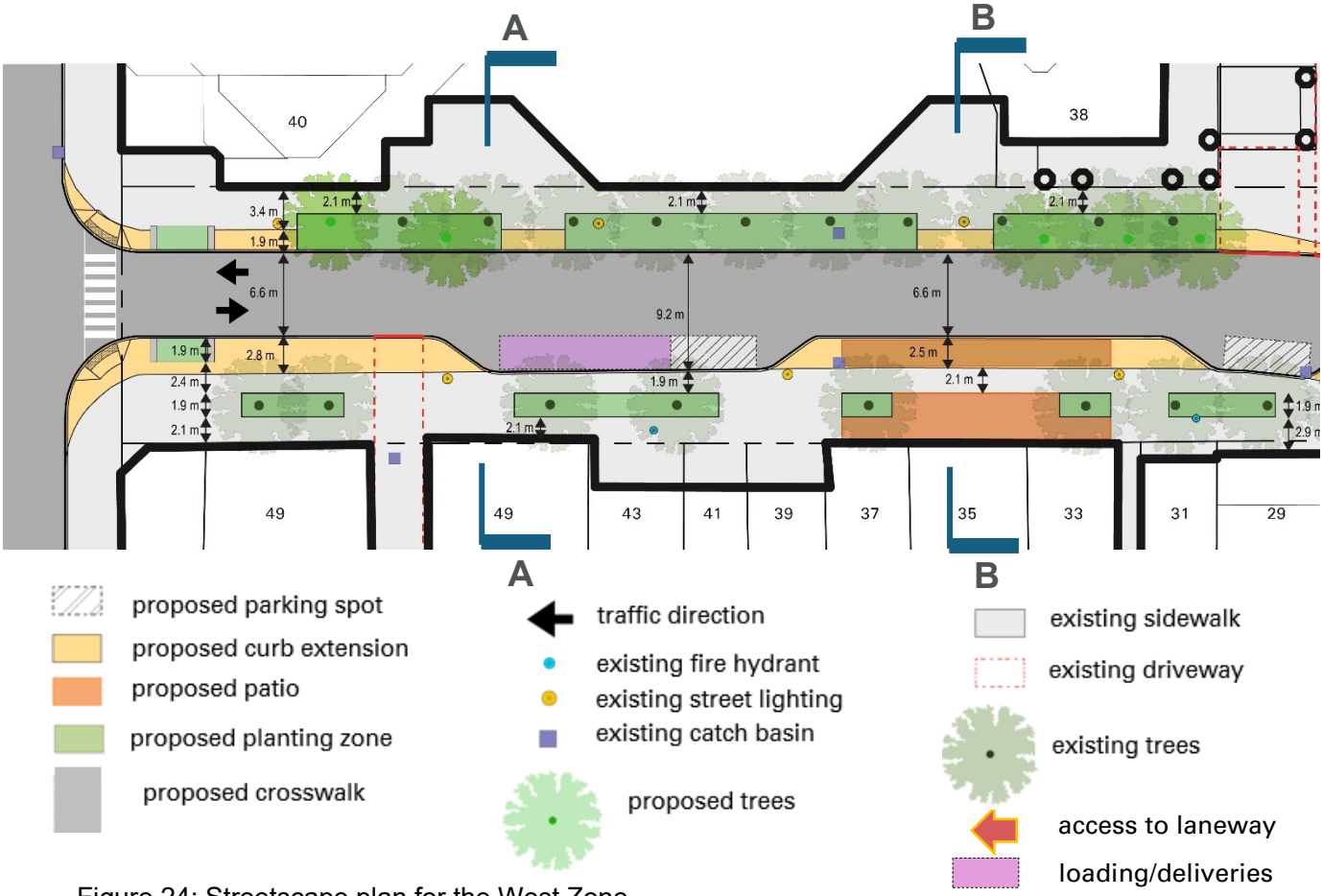


Figure 24: Streetscape plan for the West Zone

A. Curb Extensions

- Curb extensions may be provided at the intersection of Elm Street and Bay Street, if deemed feasible and appropriate. The curb extension on the north side of the street could extend east to the potential mid-block pedestrian crossing, adding more space for pedestrians and trees.
- A minimum 2.1 m pedestrian clearway is maintained along the building frontage, with additional space provided through frequent front setbacks.
- The curb extension on the south side of the street could frame the parking spaces and delivery zone and provides additional space for permanent curbside patios.
- South side of the street would benefit from two pedestrian pathways: a primary path with a minimum 2.1 m clearance along the building frontage, and a secondary path located closer to the curb or between patios, with widths of at least 1.5 m on the north side and 2.1 m on the south side. The pedestrian pathways will be separated by a row of existing trees.

Figure 25: Example of curb extensions with tree planters on-street parking at Grenville Street, City of Toronto.

Figure 26: Example of extended sidewalk with street furniture and decorative pavers at Wellington St, City of Toronto.

B. Trees

- New trees may not be viable on the south side of the street due to the potential conflicts with the watermain and sewer utilities. Retrofitting planters and grouping them together is recommended.
- On the north side of the street there may be opportunities to accommodate up to five new trees, subject to utility coordination and review. New trees should also meet soil volume and spacing requirements.
- Where wider building setbacks provide more space for pedestrians, the new trees are proposed and grouped with the existing trees in consolidated open planters to the east and west.

C. Patios

Currently, temporary curb side patio areas are provided as part of the CaféTO program, which can be maintained via a widening of the boulevard.

Figure 27: Example of permanent patio within the extended sidewalk at Wellington Street, City of Toronto.

Figure 28: Existing temporary patio along Elm Street in front of The Queen and Beaver Public House.

Figure 29: Proposed streetscape improvements, streetscape plan rendering for the West Zone.

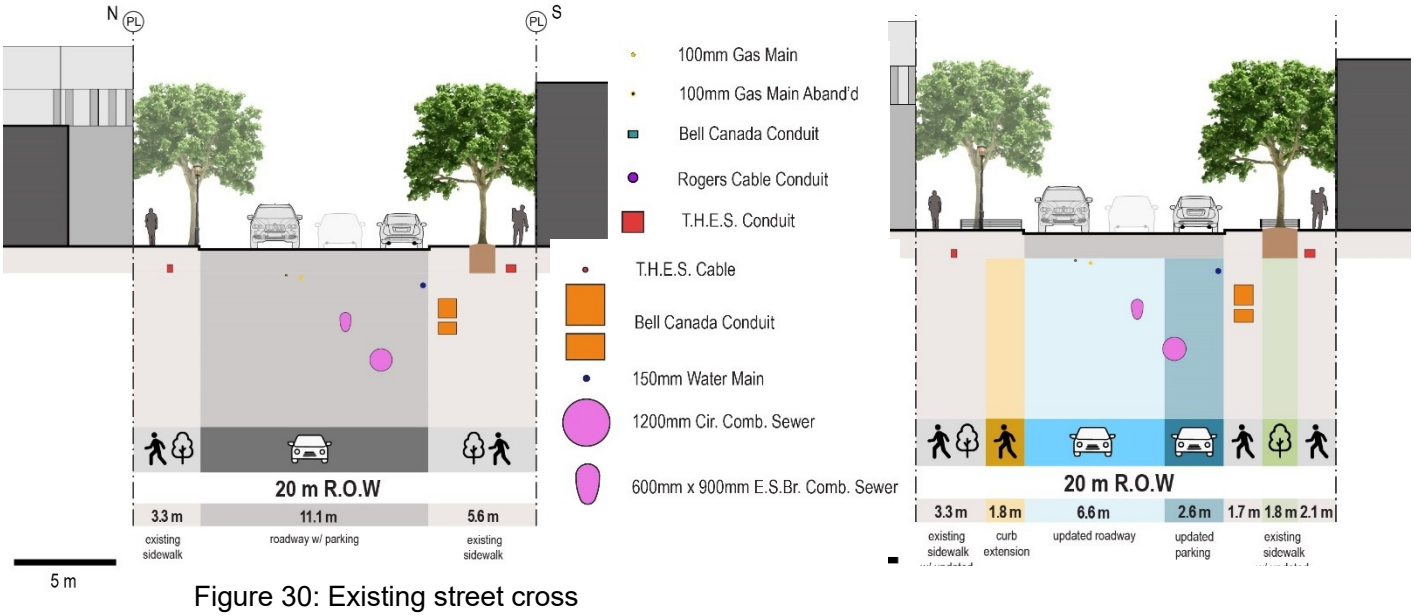


Figure 30: Existing street cross section A-A.

D. Existing Catch Basins

The existing catch basins may be relocated or adjusted to accommodate the new road curb alignment.

E. Street furniture

Given the constrained sidewalk space, seating walls integrated at the ends of planters are recommended, along with seasonal furnishings—such as Muskoka chairs—where space permits.

Wellington Street, City of Toronto.

Figure 33: Example of seating wall, City of Greensburg, Kansas.

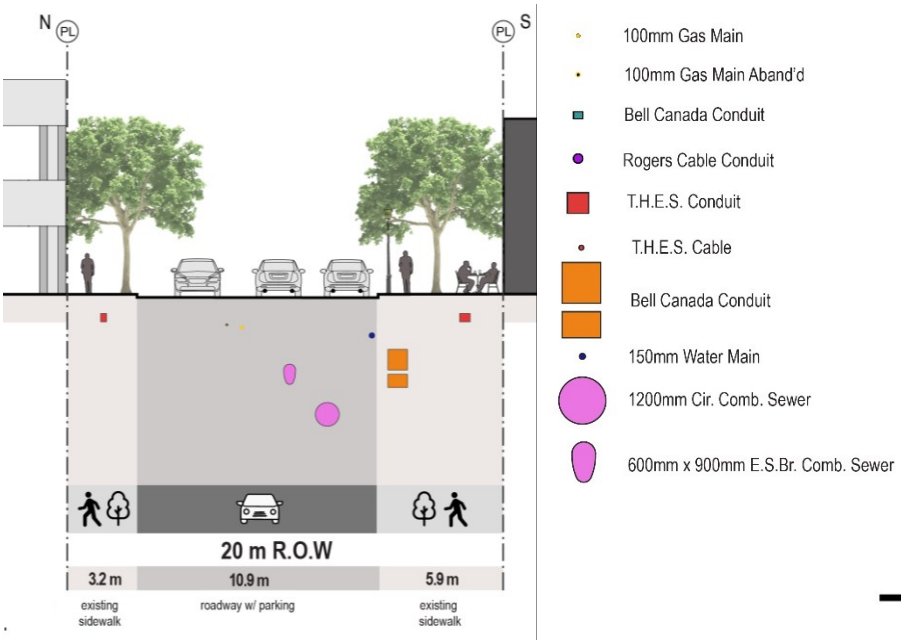


Figure 34: Existing street cross section B-B.

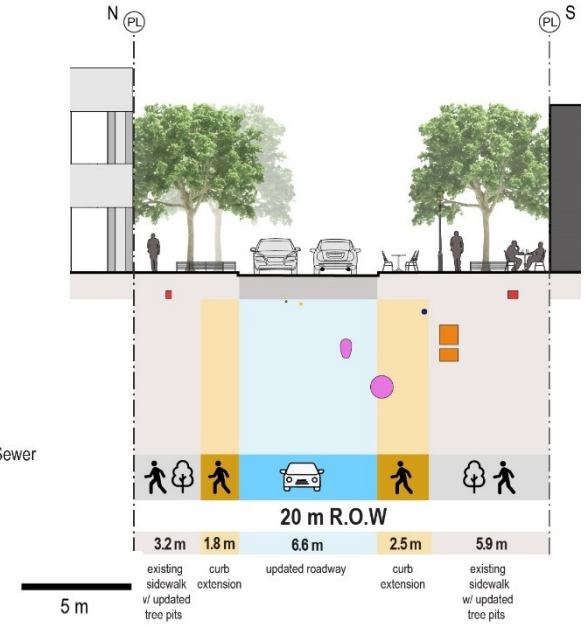


Figure 35: Proposed street cross section B-B.

F. Planters and Green Infrastructure with bioswales

At the entry to Elm Street from Bay Street within the curb extension area planters with inlets and outlets for passive irrigation are recommended. The planters could be equipped with seat walls and create a gateway feature. Evergreen plants should be considered for these areas to provide year-round greenery along Elm Street.

Figure 36: Example of planter with bioswale, City of Toronto.

Figure 37: Proposed streetscape improvements, streetscape plan rendering for the West Zone.

4. VISUALIZATIONS

Streetscape improvements before and after views

Middle part of Elm Street

Figure 39: South side of Elm Street looking north-west – existing view

Figure 38: South side of Elm Street looking north-east towards future park, visualization of the proposed street improvements. For presentation purpose only.

Elm Street and Yonge Street intersection

Figure 41: Elm Street and Yonge Street intersection looking west - existing view.

Figure 40: Elm Street and Yonge Street intersection looking west - visualization of the proposed street improvements. The Streetscape in front of 8 Elm St represents what is reflected on the approved site plan. The bump out on the south side of Elm Street reflects the design proposed as part of YongeTOmorrow.

Elm Street and Bay Street intersection

Figure 43: North side of Elm Street looking south-west at the intersection - existing view.

Figure 42: North side of Elm Street looking south-west at the intersection - visualization of the proposed street improvements for presentation purpose only. Refinements to the proposed design will be developed during the detailed design phase.

South side of Elm Street, looking east

Figure 44: South side of Elm Street looking east - existing view.

Figure 43: South side of Elm Street looking east - visualization of the proposed street improvements. The ornamental planting reflects that which is approved at 8 Elm Street. The planter design itself will be developed during the detailed design phase.

North side of Elm Street, looking east

Figure 46: North side of Elm Street looking east - existing view.

Figure 45: North side of Elm Street looking east - visualization of the proposed street improvements.