

Residential Character Preservation Guidelines for House Renovations, Additions and Infill Development in the Community of Leaside

Updated August 2020



This version of the guidelines was prepared in 2020 by the Leaside Residents Association.

The original version of the guidelines was developed in 2003 by the City of Toronto, Urban Development Services, City Planning Division, in consultation with the Leaside Character Preservation Advisory Committee.

FOREWORD - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

A City, to invoke a sense of pride, must strive to create a built environment that functions well to serve our needs, to provide lasting value, and to be visually appealing. The above principle extends equally to its individual parts – communities.

Leaside is a community that exemplifies these qualities. It has a distinct and enduring identity created by the interaction of its natural landscape and built environment. This distinct visual community character contributes to its worth and maintains its desirability as a place to live.

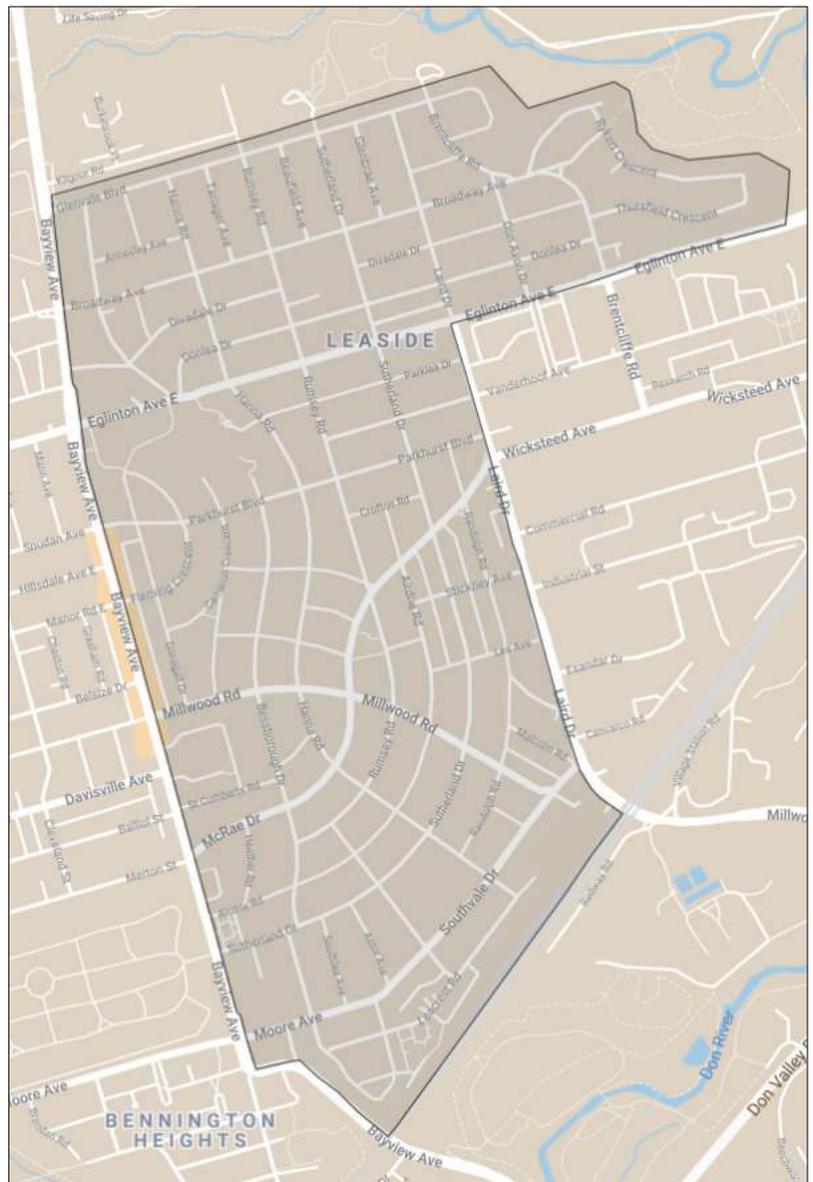
Unfortunately, recent construction activity - renovations, house expansions, and infills - has produced a number of buildings that have not been sensitive to their setting and that are increasingly eroding the very qualities which make Leaside so highly regarded.

Expanding or renovating a home is an undertaking that has consequences not only for the appearance and value of that house, but also for the value of the entire neighbourhood. A considerate and sympathetic response to the setting - the streetscape and dominant architectural styles - and a complementary house design can make a difference between just another house and a house that has curb appeal.

INTENT AND FUNCTION OF THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines contained in this document reflect the City's and the Community's consensus and preferred approach to the design of renovations, additions and infill development. They are not intended to mandate a specific design but rather to provide approaches that are to be applied in a flexible manner in conjunction with other site-specific considerations.

The guidelines provide design principles that are meant to assist members of the community - architects, designers, and contractors - as well as city officials and staff, in gaining an understanding of what make Leaside's natural and architectural attributes valuable and how to extend these attributes to new developments.



1 PEDESTRIAN REALM/STREETScape

Leaside's streetscape is comprised of the private and public areas between the street and the house. Together these exist as a common space and function as the neighbourhood's centrepiece. The public portion of these lands is typified by continuous sidewalks enclosed on one side by a narrow, grassed planting strip and on the other by a strip of municipally owned lands which typically contain mature, large canopy street trees. These trees are one of Leaside's most prominent defining features and a key contributor to its character. The privately-owned lands tend to be similar in depth and made up of simple lawns and foundation planting. Together these public and private front yard areas, their characteristic dimensions and elements are an essential component of the community's visual integrity.

Objective

The characteristic front yard setback should be respected so as to maintain the established hierarchy and progression of public to private spaces, from 'public space' (characterized by mature large canopied trees), to 'semi-private space' (consisting of simple lawns and foundation planting), and to 'private space' (containing the main entrance to the house).

Guidelines

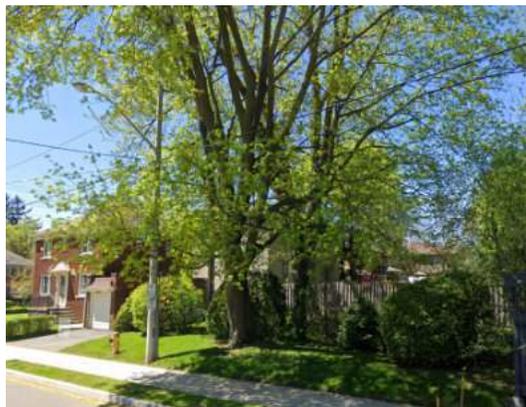
Ensure that the front yard setback (depth of the front yard) is similar to that of the adjoining lots by adhering to the minimum 6 metre setback standard specified in the municipal by-law.



Preserve existing street trees. Toronto's Trees By-Law requires a permit for removal or substantial trimming of all street trees.



Preserve any trees on private property that are greater than 15 cm in diameter. The Trees By-Law prohibits the injury, destruction, or removal of any tree on private property that is greater than 30 cm in diameter.



1 PEDESTRIAN REALM/STREETScape

Guidelines continued...

Protect the root systems of existing trees by:

- Locating new driveways and other paved or hard surface areas outside their drip lines;
- Avoiding trenching or soil compaction within their drip lines;
- Maintaining the existing grade or, when this is impractical, placing them within protective planters or retaining walls; and
- Setting up protective fencing prior to commencing construction.



Landscape the front yard predominantly with soft landscaping - plants, sod, etc. - and minimize, to the greatest extent possible, the use of paved surfaces.



Avoid enclosing the front yard with fencing of solid wood, masonry or chain-link so as not to interrupt the continuity of the open front yard pattern. A fence in the front yard should be no more than 1.2 metres in height; and made of material that allows for through views or preferably consist of a natural hedge.



Use appropriate landscaping to add interest and soften the impact of privacy fences on corner lots or use natural hedges as screening.



2 FRONT ENTRANCE AND PARKING

Front entranceways in Leaside are typically comprised of streamlined, fairly evenly spaced 'stoop' type entrances. These play an important part in imparting an air of distinction and a sense of cohesion to the area. Similarly, garages in Leaside are typically located at the side or to the rear of the house and behind the main front wall. This garage placement helps to showcase the house, preserves the integrity of the established streetscape and is vital in a neighbourhood typified by narrow lots.

Objective

Front entrance design should emulate the traditional 'stoop' entrance design, and garages should be located at grade and behind the main front wall.

Guidelines

Choose a front entrance design that generally reflects, in terms of size and style, the predominant entrance designs along the same street, or within the general area.



Locate the garage at grade and behind the main front wall and minimize the amount of paved surface in the front yard by restricting the driveway leading into the garage or the rear of the lot to a width of 3 metres or less; and minimize the number and length of curb cuts. NB: Below grade garages are not permitted.



Whenever possible, use permeable pavers to minimize the amount of impermeable surface.



3 MASS AND SCALE

The shape or form that is created by the walls and the roof of a house is referred to as its mass. Its relative dimensions - height, width, etc. - comprise its scale. These two elements are crucial in ensuring that a house fits its surroundings. To be effective, mass and scale must respect the character of the building that is to be modified, preserve its scale and proportions, and complement adjacent house designs. Failure to observe these dynamics often results in a project that is incompatible with the existing character and built form of the neighbourhood.

Objective

The height and width of the primary building face - the front elevation - of any renovation or addition should be designed to be within the range of the heights and widths of typical residences along the same street and should, to the greatest extent possible, comply with the maximum standards of the Zoning By-law.

Guidelines

Design the house to de-emphasize its height and ensure that the height of the front elevation is within the range of heights established along the same street, and within the maximum height of 8.5 metres.



Preserve the primary plane of the front of the structure and increase the rear plane instead.



Ensure that finished ground floor heights are consistent with the prevailing floor heights typical of the street.



3 MASS AND SCALE

Guidelines continued...

Whenever possible, minimize the visual impacts of additions by placing them at the rear of a building.



Design the front wall of house and roof mass as a composition of architectural elements incorporating projections, dormers, gables and subordinate wall planes.



Design the building's front façade so as to retain the ratio of solid wall to window and door openings of typical residences along the same street.



4 BUILDING ELEMENTS

The extension of traditional building lines, forms and materials is vital to retaining a neighbourhood's authenticity and a major determinant of whether a newly built or refurbished house will fit its setting. Leaside's existing houses demonstrate a notable uniformity in element style and placement. Rooflines, molding, windows and entrance stoops tend to be coordinated in terms of their location, styles, quantities and spacing. Likewise, building materials used in the past typically consist of a generally dark brown or reddish brick with very little use of wood, siding or stucco in evidence. Matching these materials and recreating the cadence of building forms and lines typical of the majority of homes along the same street or within the community is critically important to reinforcing the original setting.

Objective

Building lines and forms, rooflines and materials used in the buildings' exterior front façades should correspond to established and traditionally used elements.

Guidelines

Design a new roof to correspond to the roof pitch, scale and height typically encountered along the same street. Roof design on any addition should reflect the form and the character of that found on the primary architecture. Use roofing material that appears similar in scale and texture to that used along the same street.



Use brick, which is similar in colour to that used on the majority of the houses on the same street, as the primary building material for the front façade. In particular, on the front façade, use stucco only as an accent material.



Ensure that dormers on the front face of a house are subordinated to the overall roof mass and are in scale with those found along the same street. Maintain the regularity of various front façade elements, particularly the windows and the entrance stoop.



4 BUILDING ELEMENTS

Guidelines continued...

Use material for additions that complements that used in the existing structure. Choose window and door designs or styles that complement those found on the rest of the street or the original building. Restrict the use of wood siding and trim, stucco, or aluminum siding to rear portions of buildings.

