

# NOVÆ RES URBIS TORONTO

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■ NORTH YORK MIXED-USE PROPOSAL TO ADD MULTI-RESIDENTIAL TO INTENSIFYING AREA

## RISING FROM RETAIL

**Matt Durnan**

A mixed-use development proposed for a site in the Newtonbrook neighbourhood of North York would bring significant housing to a part of the city that is the midst of a massive transformation that will see a primarily low-rise retail stretch of Yonge Street evolve into a mixed-use complete community with mid-rise and tall buildings.

At its September 5 special meeting, Toronto city council approved with amendments **Arkfield Development's** official plan and zoning by-law amendment applications for a site at 6125 Yonge Street to permit the development of a 17-storey, 'U-shaped' mixed-use building that would bring 437 new residential units to the neighbourhood.

Currently, the roughly 0.36-hectare site is occupied by a single-storey retail strip plaza

that accommodates a **Popeye's** restaurant and a supermarket, along with a sizable surface parking lot that spans the majority of the site's 85-metre frontage along Yonge Street.

The existing plaza and parking lot on the site would be demolished to make way for a new mixed-use building that has gone through a number of

tweaks and alterations since the applicant first sought to redevelop the site back in March of 2022.

Arkfield's original application for the site proposed to develop a single stepped tower of 27 and 22 storeys on a four-storey podium. The tower would have accommodated 391 dwelling units and retail

uses at grade. The proposal was revised in August of 2023 to a two-tower development of 19 and 23 storeys atop a seven-storey podium for a total of 491 residential units, with retail at

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Rendering of Arkfield Development's proposed 17-storey mixed-use building at 6125 Yonge Street. This proposed building would bring 437 new dwelling units to the area, along with retail uses at grade. The project would improve the existing car-dominated public realm by removing existing curb cuts that interrupt the sidewalk along Yonge and ensuring that the building is set back 10 metres from the curb to accommodate a generous pedestrian right-of-way.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO  
ARCHITECT: DIALOG

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street level. Today, the proposal calls for a 17-storey building that would accommodate 437 residential units and retail space at grade.

“I think from the City’s perspective, this started out as a tall building and we have negotiated with the City to make this what I would call a ‘tall mid-rise building.’ And I think from the City’s perspective, this reinforces the urban structure of the Yonge Street North secondary plan,” **Goldberg Planning** founding principal **Michael Goldberg** told *NRU*.

“The City did not want a tall building. They had approved at 6080 and 6200 [Yonge Street], 14 and 16-storey buildings. This one went up a bit to 17 storeys, but it basically maintained that urban structure.”

Much of this stretch of Yonge Street between Drewry Avenue/Cummer Avenue to the south and Steeles Avenue to the north is in line for significant transformation, with plans in motion for the extension of the Yonge subway line. A new station is proposed at Steeles and Yonge and there is potential to consider another station at Cummer.

As a result of this incoming higher-order transit in the area, the City of Toronto’s

Yonge Street North secondary plan has set out a vision for this stretch of Yonge Street to intensify greatly, with the tallest buildings and highest densities to be permitted on sites located closest to the proposed and potential new subway stations.

“The proposal adds housing and commercial space in an area that will leverage new transportation infrastructure in the Yonge-Steeles area, including the new subway station,” **City of Toronto** planner **Michael Romero** told *NRU*.

The Arkfield site lies almost exactly at the midway point between Drewry/Cummer and Steeles Avenues, and as a result is more appropriate for a tall mid-rise building, as opposed to the far taller buildings being proposed just a few blocks north. Closer to Steeles, **Osmington Gerofsky Development Corp’s** proposal to develop a 50-storey mixed-use building at 6355 Yonge Street, just 550 metres north was adopted by council with amendments this week (See: “*Changing Landscape*”, *Novae Res Urbis Toronto*, August 30, 2024).

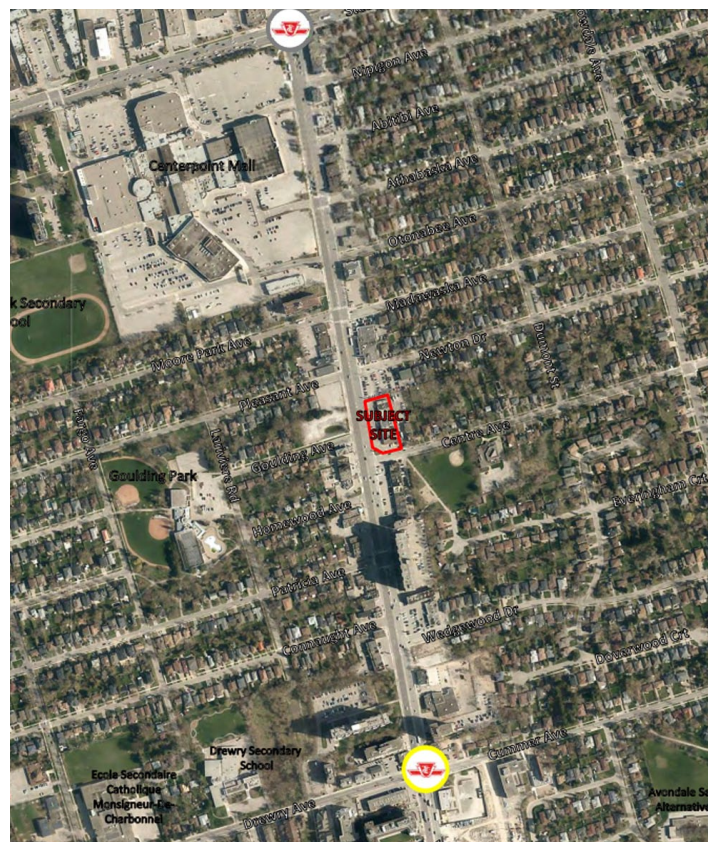
It’s not just the properties fronting Yonge Street however that are poised to see a significant transformation. The Yonge Street North secondary

plan covers the nearby low-rise residential neighbourhoods that the Yonge Street sites back onto, and there are already a number of active applications in the area on side streets like Athabaska Avenue and Abitibi Avenue (See: “*Transitioning to Towers*”, *Novae Res Urbis Toronto*, July 28, 2023).

“The policy regime for those lands [away from Yonge Street] will change as well. So even those ‘Neighbourhood’ areas to the east and west of Yonge Street, for about a two-block extension, are being redesignated from ‘Neighbourhoods’ to ‘Mixed-use’ to allow for more intensification,” Goldberg said.

“The [Yonge Street North] secondary plan covers more than just the [Yonge Street] corridor, so there are applications along Athabaska, Nipigon, Abitibi, which are not on the corridor but are on the side streets that you’ve probably seen are intensifying as well

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Aerial photograph showing the location of the site at 6125 Yonge Street where Arkfield Development is proposing to develop a 17-storey mixed-use building. Currently, the site accommodates a single-storey commercial plaza and associated surface parking lot. The site sits roughly midway between a potential new subway station at Cummer Avenue (yellow circle) and the proposed Steeles subway station (grey circle) as part of the line 1 extension to Richmond Hill. The plaza and parking lot would be demolished to make way for a mixed-use building that would bring 437 new residential units to the site, along with retail space at grade.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

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because of this secondary plan.”

With a massive transformation in the offering for the built form in the area, so too will come a transformation to the public realm and how pedestrians interact with the area.

“The Yonge Street North secondary plan has objectives to ensure the built form provides access to sunlight, an active streetscape and setbacks for public realm improvements,” Romero said.

“By proposing a mid-rise built form, the development ensures access to sunlight on Yonge Street, while incorporating setbacks that ensure the building creates a comfortable pedestrian

environment.”

Currently, the street is very motor-vehicle dominated, with sidewalks regularly interrupted by curb cuts for vehicular entry into the numerous retail plazas that line the east side of Yonge Street.

Aerial photograph of the site at 6125 Yonge Street where Arkfield Development is proposing to develop a 17-storey mixed-use building. The roughly 0.37-hectare site is currently occupied by a single-storey strip plaza that accommodates a restaurant and small grocery store, along with a surface parking lot fronting Yonge Street. The plaza and parking lot would be demolished to make way for a new 17-storey mixed-use building that would accommodate 437 new residential units and retail space at grade.

SOURCE: CITY OF TORONTO

“From a public realm perspective, many of the policies that would apply to the North York Centre secondary plan are being carried into this area. One of the glaring examples is that you won’t have any curb cuts off Yonge Street if you have access [to a site] off of one of the side streets,” Goldberg said.

“In this case, we’re at the northeast corner of Yonge Street and Centre Street, so we’re getting our access off Centre Street. Another example of how the streetscape will improve is the retail store frontage must be set back 10 metres from the curb, so there will be this continuous 10-metre-wide public realm from the curb to the storefront space along the entire reach of the development.”

While the 6125 Yonge and other proposed developments in the area will all contribute to a more pedestrian-friendly public realm, the close proximity to residential neighbourhoods to the rear of the sites on the east of Yonge make for some challenging

conditions to introduce any measure of park space or privately-owned publicly accessible space (POPS).

At Toronto city council’s special meeting yesterday, ward 18 Willowdale councillor **Lily Cheng** introduced an amendment to the 6125 Yonge Street application requesting that city council request the Arkfield to work with acting general manager of parks, forestry, and recreation **Howie Dayton** to identify a suitable off-site parkland dedication to be conveyed to the city. The architect for the project is **DIALOG Design**.

*Novae Res Urbis reached out to councillor Cheng for comment but did not receive a response before deadline.* 🌸



HAVE A STORY TIP OR IDEA RELATED TO YOUR MUNICIPALITY?

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