

Real Estate

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How a style of house specific to Toronto has evolved through the ages



Ever notice those tall, narrow, tightly arranged homes decked out with oversized bay windows you see in Toronto neighbourhoods like Trinity

has been around for over a century.

The iconic 'Bay-and-Gable' style houses have shaped Toronto's residential neighbourhoods and are a signature look of the city's landscape. Their namesake is inspired by their form: large bay windows sit vertically atop each other on the home's front facade, lining up with gable rooftops.

Built during a time of economic challenges and rapid population growth, Victorian Toronto residents were compelled to devise alternative methods for building homes that got around local taxes.

By the late 1800s, Toronto's property taxes **were based on the width of a home's frontage**, and lots were quickly severed and built out with narrow homes that would cost the builders less in the long run.

Residential streets quickly became lined with the Bay-and-Gable homes — an efficient way to build a house narrowly up, not widely out, to maximize space on lots to avoid high property taxes.

Today, as the city's built form has evolved, so has its infrastructure. Heritage homes like the Bay-and-Gable have had to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of Toronto while still maintaining their historic charm.



Bay-and-Gable homes, once integral to Toronto's landscape, are being reimagined with the times. Photo: Archinect

As work is done on these properties to keep up with the times, real estate developers have grappled with the question: how do we preserve heritage homes while adapting them for modern needs?

Some real estate firms have turned the feat into a project, as homes face the pressures of rising home values and the amenities needed in modern Toronto — the former likely to stump pioneers of the bay-and-gable style.

Take **44 Foxley** off Ossington, for instance: **a project** led by JA Architecture Studio and Houyan Homes, this address was home to a long-standing Bay-and-Gable house. It still is, but with modern redevelopment that still keeps its signature elements intact.



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Still present is the gabled roof, just in a curved form, clad with a rectangular bay window in its front. It's where the classic meets the contemporary, completed last year.

testament to how Bay-and-Gable homes can thrive somewhere between modernity and tradition.

Their take on the Bay-and-Gable style at the **Everden Residence** is a minimalist, gabled three-story building that stays true to the style of its neighbours.

Homes in Toronto are embracing classic vertical structures while incorporating the sleekness of today's minimalist trends.



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Everden Residence, and buildings like it, are the Bay-and-Gable homes of the new century, drawing from the past to inform the present.

It's also common to find rows of Bay-and-Gable homes in historic areas like Cabbagetown or Roncesvalles that are used as storefronts. The bottom level often serves as the business front, as the upper level maintains its original character.

Examples of that include Second Cup and St George Dental on College, or the Cocktail Emporium in Kensington Market. Revitalizing the row gives the space a more functional purpose, not to mention a new lease on life.



Bay-and-Gable homes have been transformed into businesses along College. Photo: City of Toronto Archives

Bay-and-gable homes and their influence on Toronto's current and former architectural styles have also been recently studied to inform real estate development.

ERA Architects firm principal Scott Weir also wrote on the Bay-and-Gable style in a 2016 paper called "The Picturesque Gothic Villa Comes to Town: The Emergence of Toronto's Bay-and-Gable House Type," where he examines how the distinctive architectural style, once suitable for a growing city, is being revived in newer projects.

It's proof that, over 100 years later, experts still emphasize that the layout is integral to Toronto's growth, laying a foundation for developers to adapt Bay-and-Gable homes in new ways.

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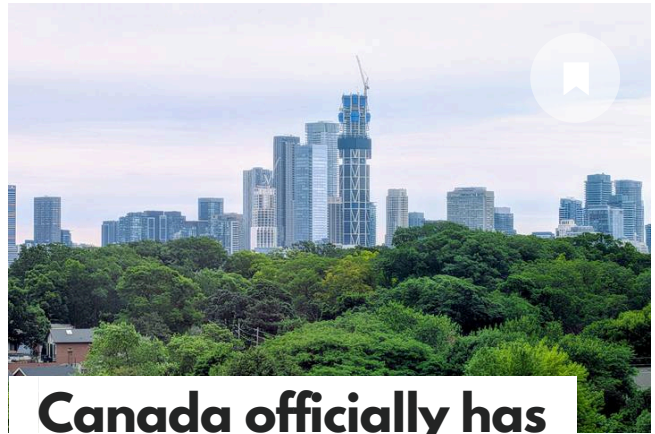
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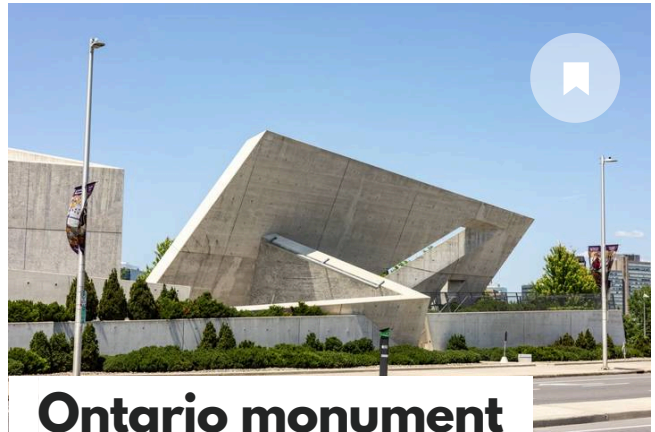
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