

Heritage Review Discussion Paper

Town of Richmond Hill Official Plan



August 2009

Department of Planning & Development





Department of Planning & Development
Planning Division

August 2009

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Discussion Paper

Heritage Policy Review

Overview

The Heritage Policy Review is being undertaken as part of the Town of Richmond Hill's new Official Plan process. Based on the People Plan consultation process, ten guiding principles have been established to provide a basis and rationale for developing the Town's land use policies, including heritage policies. One of the new Official Plan guiding principles will be to recognize and enhance the inherent and unique aspects of Richmond Hill and to create focal points, gateways, experiences and landmarks. Developing policies and programs that conserve archaeological and above ground cultural heritage resources in the Town of Richmond Hill is an integral component of the Official Plan Review. The Heritage Policy Review has been designed to address the following objectives:

- To analyze the current Official Plan policies relating to archaeological and above ground cultural heritage resources in order to identify strengths and weaknesses;
- To identify relevant practices and policies adopted by other municipalities and non-municipal public agencies (e.g., Ministries of Culture, Environment, Transportation, Natural Resources, Municipal Affairs, Parks Canada etc.) that can confirm and shape heritage programming in the Town of Richmond Hill;
- To recommend policies that may be included as part of the Town's new Official Plan which respond to the specific development and intensification needs of the Town and which also reflect changes to the Provincial Policy

Statement and amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act*;

- To research best practices in First Nations consultation and develop a process and protocol for the Town in this regard.

The primary objective of the Heritage Policy Review is to identify and develop contextualized policies that will assist in the conservation and enhancement of significant cultural heritage resources as the Town continues to develop and intensify. New policies will be modeled on best practices in the field of heritage conservation and designed in consideration of the Town's development priorities and trends.

This discussion paper summarizes the Town of Richmond Hill's current policy approach to heritage conservation and identifies accompanying strengths and weaknesses. Such an analysis presents an opportunity to identify the program areas, tools, and policy provisions that warrant further research and possible inclusion into the Town's operating policy framework.

Key issues to be addressed are as follows:

- A. Balancing protection and conservation of significant cultural heritage resources with intensification priorities;
- B. Development of incentive programs and funding mechanisms to support conservation of significant cultural heritage resources;

- C. Fostering of public-private partnerships to conserve significant cultural heritage resources;
- D. Identification of policies and programming that will respond to 'at-risk' geographical areas and cultural heritage resource types;
- E. Establishment of evaluative criteria that will help focus and prioritize conservation strategies and efforts; and
- F. Identify a range of conservation strategies.

Background

Richmond Hill's Cultural History

The Town's archaeological record is over 11,000 years old and its post-contact history dates back to over two hundred years ago when Yonge Street was first carved out of the landscape to serve as a military route. Settlement patterns soon emerged, largely concentrated along this well traveled corridor and were initially carried out by British immigrants and United Empire Loyalists. By the early 1800s, lands surrounding the Yonge Street and Major Mackenzie Drive intersection became a focal point for development and by the 1850s, many of the streets that currently surround this intersection were established. In the latter half of the 19th century, the Village of Richmond Hill was firmly established and smaller communities began to emerge, concentrated around major intersections.

At the dawn of the 20th century, the Town of Richmond Hill continued to transform itself from a village and disparate hamlets into a thriving town centre. The laying of a radial line and railroad between 1890 and 1910 and the emergence of the automobile resulted in the Town's growing urbanization. By 1910, the first Plan of Subdivision has been registered in the vicinity of

the Town core. In the post-war years, residential subdivision and industrial development continued to dominate land use development themes in the Town. In 1957, official Town status was granted and in the latter half of the 20th century more land was annexed from neighbouring townships to further provide more opportunities for growth and development.

Evidence of this rich and layered development continues to exist in the Town today, endowing it with a dynamic physical character. For example, vestiges of early settlement patterns associated with the Headford hamlet and mill can be viewed in the vicinity of the Leslie Street and Major Mackenzie intersection, while vehicles continue to traverse original road allowances and circulation routes in the Town core. Maintaining these built features and dynamic landscapes is a priority for the Town of Richmond Hill and is accomplished through the development and application of various heritage-specific protocols, programs and policy statements.

Conservation Practices in Richmond Hill

Conservation of cultural heritage resources in the Town dates back to the late 1970s when the Town started to officially protect properties through designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Since then, close to 60 properties have been designated. During the 1980s, the Town's heritage conservation efforts were further strengthened by developing an Archaeological Master Plan and by establishing a local heritage committee. The Master Plan identified areas with archaeological potential and recommended policy frameworks in this regard. In 1985 the Richmond Hill Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee was established to advise Council on matters pertaining to the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The committee, now known as Heritage Richmond Hill, developed an *Inventory of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Importance* which identifies properties within the Town that are of heritage interest. It should be noted that inclusion of a property on the inventory

did not ensure protection. Rather, the list of the heritage resources helped the Town identify and monitor its stock of cultural heritage resources.

Heritage Richmond Hill continues to be an advocate for the conservation of cultural heritage resources in the Town. It encourages designation of properties, provides advice to designated property owners regarding appropriate alterations, and helps administer the Heritage Grant program. The grant is accessible to owners of designated properties and can be used for appropriate restoration projects.

The Town's heritage inventory was updated in 1992 and was most recently reviewed and digitized in 2008. Hard copy and electronic versions of the inventory are now accessible and provide municipal address information, photographic documentation, and brief descriptions of each inventoried properties' potential cultural heritage value. GIS (Geographic information System) information for inventoried properties has also been compiled and the Town is now able to generate the location of identified cultural heritage resources on its base mapping. The Town's *Inventory of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Importance* was formally approved by Council as the heritage register, and properties listed on it now benefit from temporary demolition controls, as established under Section 27 (3) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Heritage staff review development applications and Demolition Permits as they relate to identified and inventoried cultural heritage resources.

Approval and updating of the Town's *Inventory of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Importance* has been an important accomplishment. In 2008, the Town drafted Terms of Reference for Heritage Impact Assessments, which are required to review the impact of development applications and Demolition Permits on designated and inventoried properties. These ToR supplement provisions outlined in the *Town of Richmond*

Hill's Consolidated Development Application Guide, which require applicants to determine if any heritage resources are located on affected lands. While the Town has made major strides in integrating heritage resources into the land use planning process via the adoption of a heritage inventory, it also continues to pursue protection of significant resources through designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Currently, the Town strives to consider designation of five properties on a yearly basis.

Policy Context

An active municipal heritage committee, codification of a heritage inventory and adoption of development and demolition review mechanisms are important components of municipal heritage conservation strategies. However, these mechanisms are most effective when harmonized with the planning process, applied in accordance with the Town's land use policies, and reflective of the local intensification-related policy context. Additionally, new and additional conservation tools and guidelines will be needed to supplement changes and increases in the Town's development and intensification patterns. The Town's population is projected to increase from 181,000 to 230,000 in 2031 and development is expected to be managed in accordance with provincially mandated intensification strategies.

Through the *Places to Grow Act*, the Province of Ontario has emphasized that intensification is a key principle designed to limit urban sprawl and protect value ecosystems and natural features. As a result, intensification strategies and notable transit initiatives will be pursued in the Town of Richmond Hill, particularly concentrated around already built-up areas and agricultural lands that lie outside of the Greenbelt and the Oak Ridges Moraine. This projected growth and intensification will certainly present new and increased pressures on the conservation of cultural heritage resources located in the Town's Village Core and in the vicinity of major

intersections which once anchored 19th and early 20th century hamlets. This new development context will present new impacts to cultural heritage resources but also presents an opportunity for the Town to establish focused, strategic, and innovative conservation strategies and to become a leader in the integration of heritage conservation into the land use planning process.

Consultations with town staff and a review of municipal heritage planning frameworks throughout Ontario have helped determine programming areas that may be pursued for application in the Town of Richmond Hill. The following section identifies heritage conservation strategies that may help to manage heritage conservation priorities with projected development and intensification.

A. Balancing conservation of significant cultural heritage resources with intensification strategies

The Town's current approach to heritage conservation entails designating properties under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, maintaining a municipal heritage inventory, and reviewing development applications and demolition permits as they impact on previously identified cultural heritage resources. These tools and processes have evolved over time and some are newly adopted. The town officially adopted its heritage inventory and established a development application and Demolition Permit review process during the last year. While these mechanisms enable the Town to monitor impacts to cultural heritage resources and provide opportunities to work with developers to conserve significant cultural heritage resources, they are most effective when harmonized with the planning process and applied in accordance with intensification strategies.

The Town of Richmond Hill is poised to undertake significant intensification strategies in already built-up areas. This will introduce increased development pressures in the historic Village Core and in the vicinity of agricultural landscapes that are located within designated 'Settlement Areas'. As a result, the Town needs to tailor its heritage conservation approach so that it proactively addresses impacts to areas slotted for intensification at an early stage in the development process.

Information relating to cultural heritage resources located in designated 'Settlement Areas' should be fully accessible to Town departments and integrated into planning-related software and GIS platforms. This will ensure that pre-consultation meetings with applicants submitting development applications provide appropriate and useful information with respect to resources and areas that should be avoided and/or effectively incorporated into development projects. Conserving cultural heritage resources in tandem with intensification strategies is incumbent upon identifying significant resources at the earliest stage possible. This can be achieved by maintaining an integrated information management system that identifies particular resources, types of resources, or areas that have high conservation priorities.

Questions for Discussion

1. Which streets do you think strongly contribute to the historic character of the Town?
2. How can cultural heritage resource sensitivities be identified at an early stage in the development review process?

B. Protection of heritage resources through Official Plan policies and Site Plan controls

The Town of Richmond Hill has minimally integrated planning-related tools into its heritage conservation framework. For example, several municipalities in Ontario have tailored planning mechanisms, such as Heritage Conservation District designations and Site Plan controls to implement heritage conservation objectives. These mechanisms can help to more fully identify the significant cultural heritage resources and areas that warrant preservation and encourage a proactive, long-term approach to heritage conservation.

Achieving consensus to designate the Town's Village Core as a Heritage Conservation Districts has proven to be difficult the past. As such, an alternative approach to managing development and growth in heritage sensitive areas such as the Village Core may include provision of area specific heritage conservation principles and directions, and/or urban design guidelines within the Official Plan. These studies can help maintain the visual and historic character of particular areas by establishing particular parameters for development. This type of designation could also facilitate maintenance of existing visual features that contribute to the heritage value of the area, such as:

- Street patterns and circulation routes;
- Building types;
- Height, massing, and scale;
- Setbacks of buildings; and,
- Significant landscape features.

The Town's heritage inventory provides considerable information that could help identify areas that retain heritage sensitivities and which may be suitable for neighbourhood land use designations and/or urban design guideline studies. This information could be used alongside consultations with neighbourhood residents to help create an effective approach to heritage

conservation in conjunction with intensification, which reflects community participation and buy-in.

Site Plan control policies may also provide an additional means to effectively manage development in heritage sensitive areas and to monitor alterations to previously identified cultural heritage resources. Such a process would encourage adoption of sympathetic alterations and promote the maintenance of features and landscape elements that contribute to an individual site's heritage significance, and which also comprise the Town's visual and historic identity.

Questions for Discussion

1. Should particular areas with a high number of cultural heritage resources receive specific heritage conservation direction within the Official Plan or be subject to urban design guidelines?
2. What types of alterations to cultural heritage resources should be subject to site plan control by-laws?

C. Development of incentive programs and funding mechanisms to support conservation of significant cultural heritage resources

To date, the Town has established a funding program that is designed to offset restoration projects undertaken on designated heritage properties. This program is administered through Heritage Richmond Hill. During the 2007 fiscal year, applicants were eligible to receive up to \$2,000 per year. Increasing the types of available funding and introducing planning based incentive measures will help integrate heritage conservation objectives into the land

use planning process and help ensure that they are financially feasible and not cost prohibitive.

Sustainable mechanisms for funding conservation of cultural heritage resources may be promoted by further examining how Development Charges might support heritage conservation initiatives. There is potential for the Town to utilize a portion of Development Charges to help fund heritage conservation initiatives undertaken by the municipality, aimed towards new infrastructure projects. Additionally, the Town can encourage residents to engage in the conservation of significant cultural heritage resources by developing indirect financial incentives. In this regard, there are opportunities to link property tax reductions with restoration projects and to develop Official Plan policies that provide financial incentives for the retention of significant cultural heritage resources.

Questions for Discussion

1. Should the Town pursue policies that encourage appropriate intensification of cultural heritage resources in order to achieve economic viability which, in turn, would allow for the continuing survival of the heritage resources?

D. Fostering of public-private partnerships to conserve significant cultural heritage resources

Conserving cultural heritage resources and integrating them into the land use planning process is often incumbent upon identifying new and continued uses for buildings and landscapes. While not all heritage resources can be adaptively re-used, some types of buildings and landscapes provide innovative opportunities to utilize the existing building fabric for the purposes of public works projects. Successful adaptive reuse projects in Ontario are often the result of

public agencies utilizing older buildings and landscapes, or acquiring lands with these types of resources which can be used for new community-based projects. The feasibility and effectiveness of adaptive reuse projects is often dependent upon building partnerships with private sector agencies to ensure that projects are cost effective and profitable.

Developing profitable projects that reutilize individual cultural heritage resources, as well as complexes and landscapes, will help promote heritage conservation alongside development and intensification strategies. Opportunities exist for the Town to develop an innovative framework for integrating its most significant cultural heritage resources into municipal property acquisition processes. Particularly significant resources located in areas that will be subject to development pressures can be reviewed to identify sites that may be suitable for capital planning projects. Where such resources do not appear to be suitable for capital planning projects, opportunities exist for the Town to identify private sector partners that may be ideal candidates for engaging in property-purchasing or leasing agreements. In this regard, funding incentives may be developed to encourage private sector developers to purchase and maintain properties with cultural heritage resources.

Questions for Discussion

1. Under what circumstances should the Town acquire lands which contain cultural heritage resources?
2. Are there specific private-public sector development projects that could be accomplished through adaptively re-using cultural heritage resources?
3. Are there landscapes and complexes in the Town of Richmond Hill, which appear to retain some combination of historical, architectural, and contextual value, and

which could be reutilized for public or private sector initiatives?

E. Establish evaluative criteria that will help focus and prioritize conservation strategies

Currently, the Town's most significant cultural heritage resources are identified through *Ontario Heritage Act* designations. However, the Town has also identified hundreds of properties on their heritage inventory, whose heritage significance has yet to be fully determined. A site's cultural heritage value is determined by applying general evaluation criteria as prescribed under Regulation 9/06 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Typically, such a process entails analyzing a site for its historical, architectural, and contextual values and establishing if it retains a high, moderate, or low degree of cultural heritage value. Evaluative criteria prescribed under Regulation 9/06 serve as a guide for this process. However, municipalities in Ontario are increasingly developing more detailed and place-specific evaluation criteria that can aid in the identification and long-term conservation of significant cultural heritage resources. Additional criteria to consider when evaluating a property for its cultural heritage significance may include: local cultural/historical relevance, location, surrounding character, architectural merits, contribution to positive historical narratives, and unrecorded historical narratives.

Establishing detailed evaluative criteria can help integrate heritage conservation objectives with development and intensification priorities in the Town. Development of such a tool will help identify resources that are high priorities for conservation and help inform reviews of development applications and Demolition Permits. Adopted evaluative criteria can be used on a case-by-case basis or as a longer-term strategic planning tool. When development applications are filed which may impact a cultural heritage resource, application of detailed

evaluative criteria can help identify appropriate mitigation measures (i.e. retention, retention in situ, relocation, document and salvage etc.). Evaluative criteria can also be used proactively to identify highly significant resources in areas slotted for development, intensification, and/or transit initiatives.

Questions for Discussion

1. When developing evaluative criteria, are there certain resources that may be considered of significance, based on resource type or age?
2. Are there certain areas or streets, which are expected to experience intensified development and which contain cultural heritage resources that could be evaluated to establish each site's cultural heritage value?
3. Should the evaluative criteria be developed to use a quantitative system for the purposes of assigning numerical scores to identified cultural heritage resources?
4. Are there particular criteria that are more important to consider in the evaluation process?

F. Identify a range of conservation strategies

Cultural heritage resources can be conserved in a number of ways. While retention of the complete resource in its original location is generally preferable, there are a range of conservation options that should be considered when a resource is threatened. The following briefly itemizes a range of preservation strategies:

- Retention of existing resource in situ;
- Adaptive re-use of resource;
- Partial retention of resource;
- Relocation of resource;

- Integration of resource into a new structure; and,
- Commemoration of resource following removal.

When considering the appropriateness and feasibility of various preservation strategies, the subject resource's cultural heritage value must be clearly understood. Increasingly, municipalities in Ontario justify the adoption of particular conservation strategies based on the resource's determined cultural heritage value and level of protection. Other factors that tend to be considered include: the type of development causing impact or threat, the location of the resource, the structural condition of the resource, and the resource's adaptive reuse potential.

Additionally, the adoption of preservation strategies such as partially retaining a resource or moving a resource to a heritage enclave requires careful consideration, planning, and consultation. Partially retaining a resource can result in facadism. Facadism serves to preserve a resource's exterior cladding or street-front elevation, while removing or altering all other structural components of the resource. This approach, and its removal of original material fabric, is generally considered undesirable and a last resort strategy. However, such an approach may be suitable if the resource is structurally unstable and/or it retains a visually or architecturally significant façade that contributes to the surrounding streetscape or area. Relocating structures to a new site or to a heritage enclave pose similar concerns. Relocating a resource is generally undesirable since it compromises the resource's authenticity, integrity, and historical associations. When considering the appropriateness of such a strategy, the significance of the resource's original location and historical associations must be fully understood. Moreover, the feasibility of such a strategy requires that new land be made available at an economical price and that the relocated structure be fully conserved and restored if necessary.

Questions for Discussion

1. Under what circumstances should relocating a cultural heritage resource be permitted?
2. Under what circumstances and in what areas might facadism be permitted?
3. Would it be more suitable to establish a heritage enclave program or relocate individual resources to disparate sites?

How to Provide Input

Send your comments by regular mail, fax, e-mail or by visiting the Town's website before:

June 30, 2009.

By mail:

Att: Richmond Hill Official Plan
225 East Beaver Creek Road
P.O. Box 300
Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 4Y5

By fax: (905) 771-2404

By e-mail: officialplan@richmondhill.ca

Go to: www.richmondhill.ca/officialplan to register your comments using the on-line form. Register your contact information at the same time to receive notification of upcoming consultation events.