

1621 Major Mackenzie Drive East
RICHMOND HILL, ON

INTERPRETATION PLAN

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Prepared by PE / SI / EC / CH

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Interpretation Plan identifies an approach and strategy for communicating the cultural heritage value of the property at 1621 Major Mackenzie Drive East (the “Site”), in the context of the proposed development.

ERA has established the following two themes that will be interpreted:

- The Site is associated with the David Hislop House and the Headford Mills; and
- The Site’s historic association with the Rouge River Watershed, which influenced indigenous and colonial settlement patterns in present-day Richmond Hill.

The proposed interpretation strategy includes a cohesive landscape design, including interpretive structures, panels, and a plaque to communicate the Site’s history and significance.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of the Report

ERA Architects Inc. (ERA) has been retained by Treasure Hill Homes (the “Owner”) as the heritage consultant for the redevelopment of 1621 Major Mackenzie Drive East (the “Site”). This Interpretation Plan should be read in conjunction with the Heritage Impact Assessment (“HIA”), dated August 3, 2021, prepared by ERA.

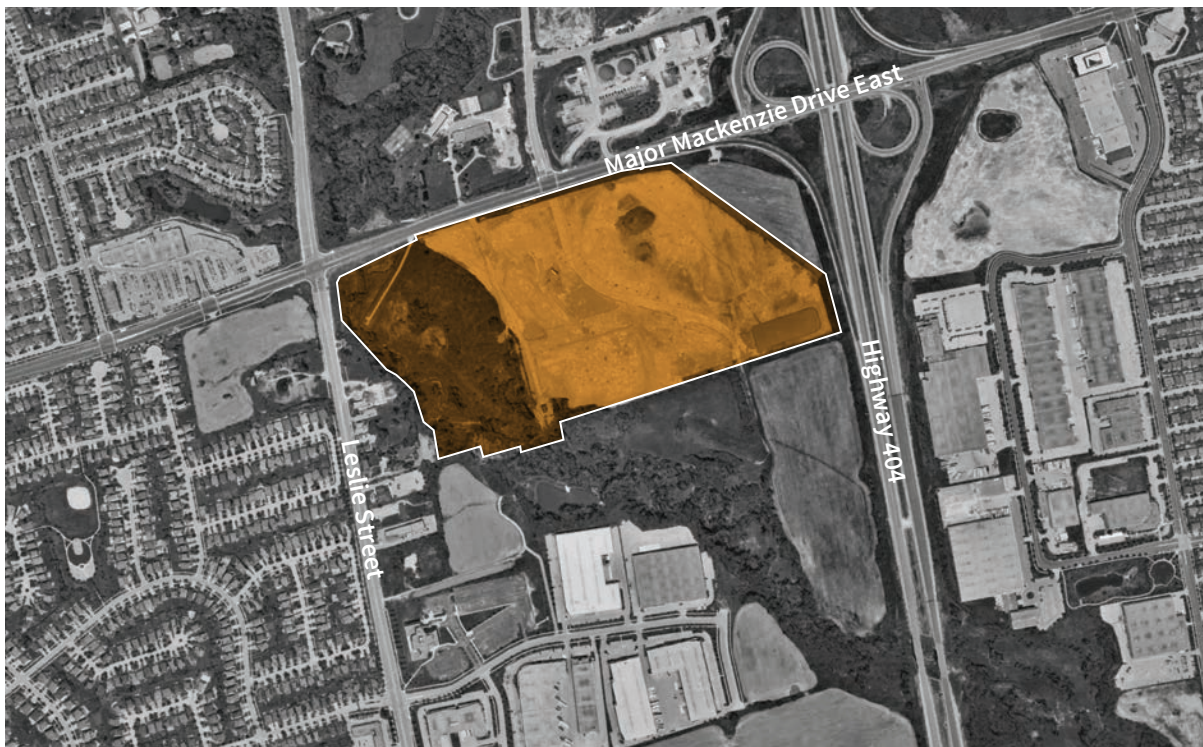


Looking towards the David Hislop House from Major Mackenzie Drive East (ERA, 2021).

1.2 Site Location and Description

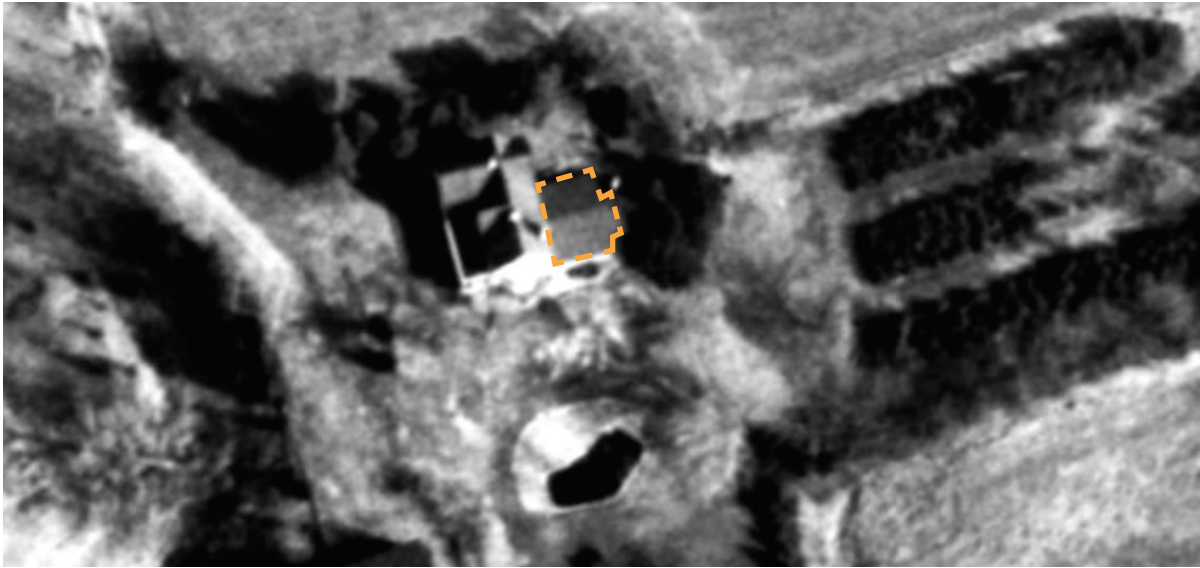
The Site is located on the south side of Major Mackenzie Drive East, east of Leslie Street in Richmond Hill. The Site is currently occupied by a 1½ storey vacant dwelling built for David Hislop in 1877 (the “David Hislop House”) and open space. The Rouge River runs through the western edge of the Site.

The Site’s context is broadly characterized by a mix of employment, commercial and residential uses ranging in density and style.



Aerial image of the Site, highlighted in orange (Google Earth, 2021; annotated by ERA).

The David Hislop House (c. 1877)



1970 aerial photograph

A later addition projecting from the east elevation (outlined in orange) was constructed by 1958. The Site was continued to be farmed and an orchard is visible to the east of the dwelling (York Maps; annotated by ERA).



2020 aerial photograph

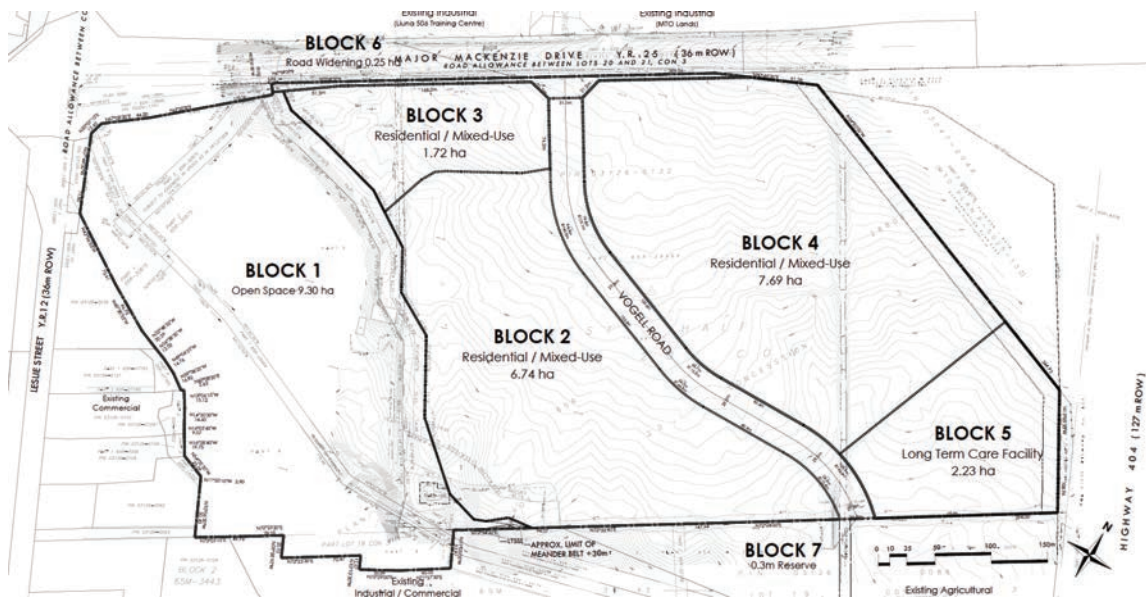
Since 2013, the David Hislop remains on a structural platform and the later addition removed. The Site is vacant and awaiting redevelopment (York Maps; annotated by ERA).

1.3 Proposed Development

The redevelopment of the Site, known as Mackenzie Commons, was designed by Malone Given Parsons Ltd (“MGP”). The proposed Master Plan for Mackenzie Commons introduces a mix of uses and housing tenures, as detailed below:

- Residential and mixed-use blocks in Blocks 2-4;
- Long term facility in Block 5; and
- An extension of Vogell Road.

Existing open space is maintained at the western edge of the Site. Per the recommendations contained in the Building Condition Assessment Report by Soscia Engineers Ltd, the David Hislop House will be demolished. ERA recommends that its bricks be salvaged and incorporated in the interpretation strategy for the Site, as detailed in Section 4 of this Report.



Master Plan for Mackenzie Commons (MGP, 2022).

2 CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE

The David Hislop House is designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* by By-law 143-97, amended by By-law 86-06.

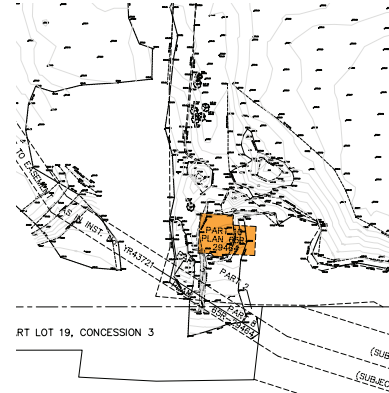
The Designation By-law for the property predates the Provincial requirement to explicitly identify a list of heritage attributes (per the OHA updates of 2005, Section 27(8) subsection 2). Nevertheless, key features are included in the body of the by-law's 'Reasons for Designation' pertaining to the property's "historical and architectural" value. The full Reasons for Designation is included in Appendix B of this report.

These features can be reasonably understood, in the context of this impact analysis, as those heritage attributes deemed significant by the City (selectively excerpted verbatim from designation by-law, below):

- *L-shaped main block*
- *Steeply pitched cross-gable roof*
- *Segmentally headed one-over-one oak windows*
- *Canted bay window with a metal-clad mansard roof*
- *4-panelled front door*
- *Segmentally headed transom lite*
- *White (buff-coloured) brick with decorative tuckpointing*
- *Millstone motif worked into the brick of the gables*

In addition, the 'Reasons for Designation' recognizes the David Hislop House as "*an important link with Headford Mills and their significance to the early development of the community of Headford*".

The designation By-law (143-97) was partially repealed and amended by By-law 86-06 on May 8, 2006. The applicability of the designation is now limited to the footprint of the David Hislop House.



2020 survey of the Site. The area subject to Designation By-law 143-97 (as amended by By-law 86-06) contains the David Hislop House and is highlighted in orange (Schaeffer Dzaldov Bennett Ltd.; annotated by ERA).

3 THEMES

The proposed interpretation strategy is to communicate and commemorate the rich agricultural and natural history of the Hamlet of Headford. Historic themes related to the Site, such as its association with Headford Mills and the Rouge River Watershed, will be explored below.

3.1 The Headford Mills

In 1832, the Headford Mills was established on the Site by John Clever Burr, a farmer. Within the year, John Burr had built a small grist mill and dam (the “Mill Complex”) adjacent to the Rouge River. His brother, Rowland Burr, constructed a larger dam and enlarged the grist mill. In 1841, subdivision of half to 1-acre parcels was completed along Leslie Street to establish the Hamlet of Headford. The Hamlet’s growth had coincided with the success of the Mill Complex.

Between 1848 to 1874, the Mill Complex was acquired by a series of owners and tenant millers. Improvements to the Site included the addition of a woolen mill during John Eyer’s tenure in 1861. The woolen mill was in operation until at least 1875.

In 1878, the Mill Complex was acquired by the Hislop family, and later consolidated with the farmed portion on-Site by 1897. A 2-storey picturesque brick building located directly adjacent to the Mill Complex was built in 1877 for David Hislop, a farmer and miller. The grist mill’s continued success led the Hislops to modernize its operation with the replacement of the stone grinder to a roller in 1889.

By 1916, the Mill Complex had ceased its operation and was dismantled for construction material. Remnants of the Mill Complex, being the foundation of a mill building, are located southwest of the David Hislop House (“Mill Remnant”).



1878 York County Map showing the Headford Mills on the Site. The location of the mill is highlighted in orange, and the Site is outlined in white (McGill University; annotated by ERA).



c. 1900 photograph of the west elevation of the David Hislop House, located directly adjacent to the Mill Complex (Champion).

3.2 The Rouge River

The Site is situated within the Rouge River watershed and west of the Rouge River Carrying Place Trail, a historic Indigenous portage route that connected Toronto with the Upper Great Lakes. For each of these groups, Toronto's regional watershed has been used for trade, transportation, fishing, and adjacent settlement and agriculture.

This section was prepared from a non-Indigenous perspective based on written and archaeological records. It does not reflect or represent the full rich history of Indigenous peoples in this region.

Similar to the establishment of the Hamlet of Headford, the Rouge River influenced indigenous and colonial settlement patterns in present-day Richmond Hill. The Headford Mills received its name due to its location at the head of a Rouge River tributary, where it could be traversed easily.



The Mill Complex on the Site was powered by the Rouge River and located adjacent to its mill pond. At the centre of the photograph is the dam, to the right are mill buildings (Richmond Hill Library, n.d.).

4 STRATEGY

4.1 Recommendation

While interpretation strategies are typically undertaken using plaques and panels, they are recommended to make use of creative and diverse media to more wholly engage audiences, so that they may experience and feed back into the interpretation process.

We recommend that the interpretation program be implemented through a cohesive landscape design, including interpretive structures, panels, and a plaque to communicate the wider thematic narrative explored in Section 3 of this Report. Interpretive interventions are proposed to be located in Block 1 and 2 of the Master Plan, and more specifically in the park, in the municipal right-of-way, and near the Mill Remnant.

Following approval of the Interpretation Plan and Demolition Permit, the proposed design and text for the panels will be provided to Staff for review. This will be part of the detailed design process. At that time, ERA recommends engagement with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to assist in informing the content of the panels.

The final design of the interpretive materials are subject to the review and approval of City of Richmond Hill's Heritage Staff, and where applicable, City of Richmond Hill's Development Engineering and Operations staff at the detailed design stage.

4.2 Audience

The anticipated audience of the interpretation strategy includes the general public, residents and employees of the proposal, and employees within the Headford Business Park.

4.3 Interpretive Design

Themes explored in Section 3 of this Report should drive the landscape design with special attention to representative elements of Mill Complexes. The interpretation strategy will be based on a whimsical approach to engage users' imagination and curiosity with the Site's history. The images to the right and on the following pages provide precedents for the strategies noted in this section.

Park Programming

The following interpretive strategies are proposed for the park, located at Block 2.

1. Native species planting beds to connect the Site's landscaping to the Rouge River valley;
2. Incorporating graphical street furniture and/or paving that features the circular millstone motif found on the Hislop House;
3. Install mill-inspired play equipment in the playground;
4. Use of salvaged bricks from the David Hislop House to re-establish its footprint in a new setting, and serve as a seat wall (the "David Hislop Seat Wall")*; and
5. Two Interpretative panels will be located at the park's access points and/or along its internal pathways. The panels will detail the following:
 - Explanatory text for the above-mentioned strategies; and
 - Chronological history of the Site and surrounding context, including natural heritage and the development of the Hamlet of Headford and the Mill Complex.



Strategy 1: Precedent native planting bed (unknown source)



Strategy 2: Precedent circular paving motif (unknown source)

**Note: Approximately 2,500 salvaged bricks will be required to construct the David Hislop Seat Wall. The salvaged bricks will form the outside and inner face of the seat wall, and will be supported by concrete blocks in the inner core.*

The dimensions of the footprint of the David Hislop House are illustrated on Page 10.

Strategy 3: Precedent Themed Playground Design

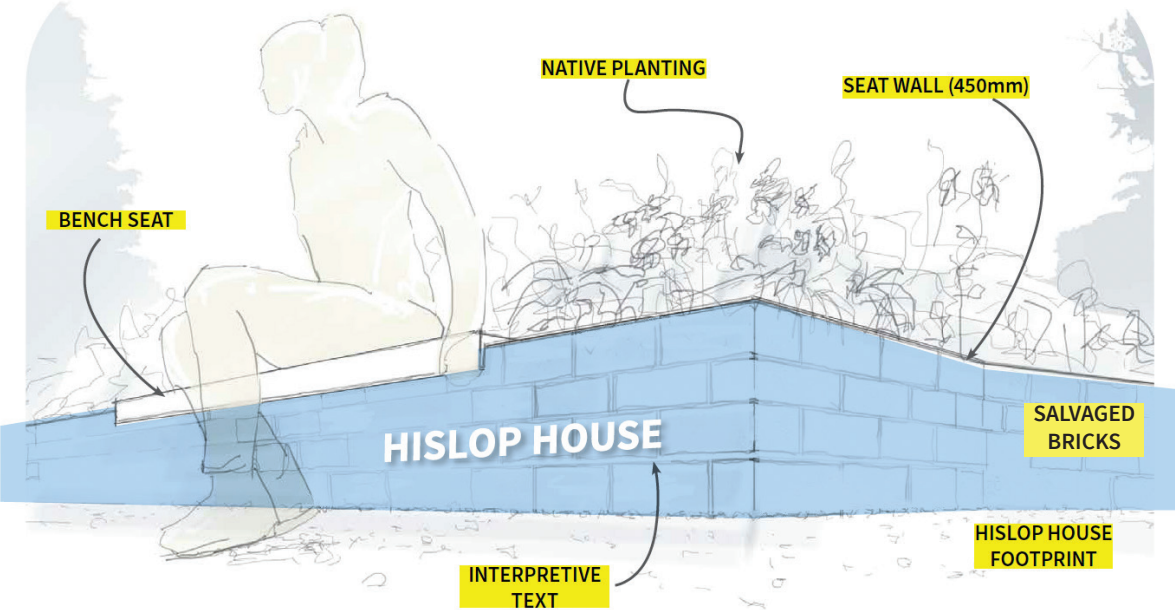


(Earthscape, 2017).

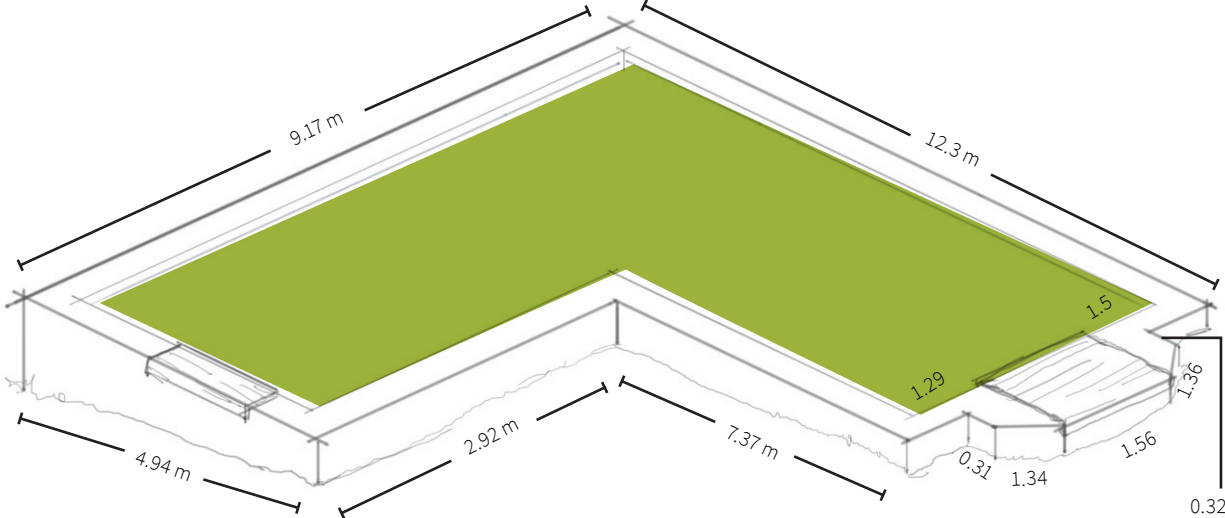


(Earthscape, 2020).

Strategy 4: The David Hislop House Seating Area



Conceptual strategy for the interpretation of the David Hislop House through salvage and reuse of its bricks in the David Hislop Seat Wall (ERA, 2022).



Dimensions of the proposed David Hislop Seat Wall. All measurements shown are expressed in metres (ERA, 2022).

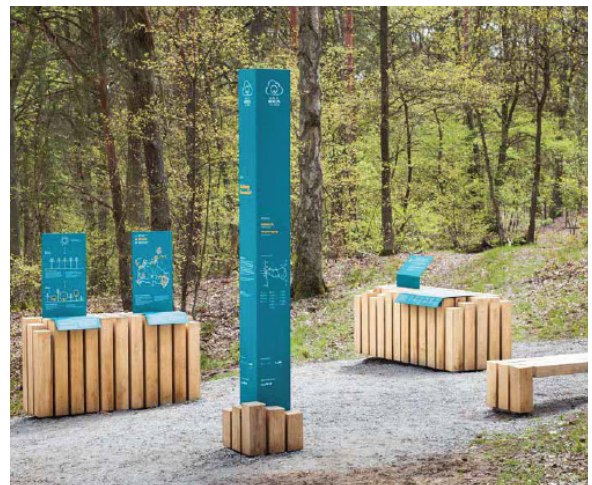
Strategy 5: Precedent Interpretive Panels



(Unknown Source)



(Unknown Source)



(Wald. Berlin. Kilma., n.d)

Historical Location Programming

The following interpretive strategies are recommended to connect the park's programming to the historic location of the Mill Complex:

1. Install custom street signs throughout the subdivision, which reference the Site's key historical use and occupants, such as:
 - John Clever Burr
 - Rowland Burr
 - John Eyer
 - David Hislop
 - Cyrus Mapes
 - Headford Mills
 - Mill Pond
2. Incorporate interpretive landscape markers and/or paving along "Street A", southeast of Block 116, to call attention to the Site's historical context and guide users from the park to the Mill Remnant. The design and location of the markers and/or paving are subject to approval of the City of Richmond Hill's Development Engineering and Operations staff.
3. An interpretive panel will be located in Block 116, "Vista/Servicing Block", and will be visible from the public realm along "Street A". The panel will contain similar content found on the proposed panels in the park, and introduce the user to the historical setting of the Mill Complex and the location of the Mill Remnant.
4. The Mill Remnant is anticipated to undergo a conservation scope to be repaired and stabilized. A standard heritage plaque will be located near the Mill Remnant. The content of the plaque will be designed in consultation with the City of Richmond Hill's Heritage Staff during the detailed design process.



Strategy 1: Custom street sign in Ripley, Ontario (Google Earth, 2013).



Strategy 3: Ground sign (Essa Punt, n.d.). Additional panel precedents are provided on page 11.



Strategy 4: Heritage Plaque at 12125 Yonge St (Waymarking, n.d.)

Strategy 2: Landscape Markers and/or Paving



(Unknown Source)



(Essa Punt, n.d.)



(MRSY, 2012)



(RCP Block & Brick, n.d.)

4.4 Location

Interpretive interventions in the landscape are proposed for the park located in Block 115, in the municipal right-of-way, and near the Mill Remnant.

Please note that larger interpretive structures such as play structures or larger seated areas may pose a functional issue within the servicing block and original Hislop House location due to the limited space and grading challenges, given the proximity to the existing sloping surrounding the Rouge River. Access to the stormwater management facility for maintenance purposes by City operations staff (i.e. via maintenance holes and access road) should also be left unencumbered. Additionally, if City staff are required to excavate and/or expose the stormwater management facility in the future for maintenance or replacement purposes, any interpretive structures may become disturbed and need to be replaced.

Park, Block 115

Due to its direct access to Vogell Road, the park is easily accessible to users in its immediate vicinity and the general public. The park's size (0.57 hectares) and public setting will accommodate a robust Interpretation strategy that engages with an audience of all ages.

The perimeter of the park, including its entry points, will host interpretive materials that provides context to the Site's historic development and associated themes. The interior of the park will provide an immersive experience to users through a series of design features, which harness the spatial and material characteristics of the Site's landscape and former mill use.

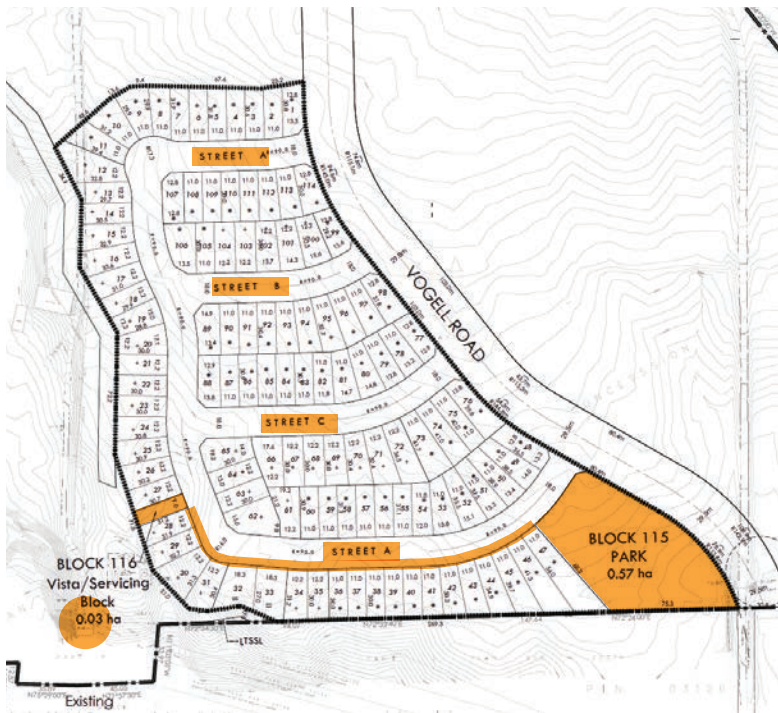
Please note, opportunities to locate interpretation materials near the original location of the David Hislop House were explored, however, were not pursued due to its lack of accessibility to the public and topographic restrictions. The proposed location will allow for increased engagement with a wide audience. The location of each interpretive strategy within the park will be determined at later design phases.

Municipal Right-of-Way

The municipal right-of-way along the proposed street network provides physical connection to the historic location of the Mill Complex. The municipal right-of-way will host interpretive materials that will engage one's curiosity and provide direction to the historic location of the Mill Complex. The "Vista/Servicing Block" located at Block 116 will contain an interpretive panel that will provide context to the Site's historic development and associated themes, and direct users to the nearby Mill Remnant.

Mill Remnant

The foundation of the former mill building is located within the retained open space and will be accessible by Block 116. A standard heritage plaque is recommended near the Mill Remnant. The content of the plaque will be designed in consultation with the City of Richmond Hill's Heritage Staff during the detailed design process.



Proposed Draft Plan of Subdivision. The proposed locations for the Interpretation Strategy are highlighted in orange (MGP, 2022; annotated by ERA)

5 CONCLUSION

This Interpretation Plan proposes a cohesive interpretive landscape design, structures and panels to communicate the Site's history and significance. The nine interpretation strategies are proposed within the park located in Block 115, in the municipal right-of-way, and near the Mill Remnant. Together, the proposed interpretation strategies provide a distinct heritage character to Block 2 and allows for users of all ages to engage with the interventions.

ERA recommends that the bricks on the David Hislop House be salvaged and used to re-establish its footprint within the park, and serve as a seat wall.

Overall, the proposed strategy will complement the redevelopment of the Site, and will conserve its cultural heritage value.

