



Staff Report for Heritage Richmond Hill Meeting

Date of Meeting: February 6, 2025

Report Number: SRPBS.25.021

Department: Planning and Building Services

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPBS.25.021 – Notice to Demolish the Buildings at 53 St. Laurent Drive – City File D12-07405**

Purpose:

To seek Heritage Richmond Hill committee's recommendation that Council endorse the notice to demolish the buildings on the listed heritage property at 53 St. Laurent Drive because the property does not merit heritage designation.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That staff report SRPBS.25.021 be received;
- b) That Council approve the demolition of 53 St. Laurent Drive;
- c) That, once the buildings are demolished, 53 St. Laurent Drive be removed from Richmond Hill's Heritage Register.

Contact Person(s):

- Pamela Vega, Urban Design and Heritage Planner, 5529
- Kunal Chaudhry, Manager of Heritage and Urban Design, 5562
- Maria Flores, Director of Development Planning, 905-771-5438
- Gus Galanis, Commissioner Planning and Building Services, 2465

Report Approval:

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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Location Map:



Background:

The property at 53 St. Laurent Drive is located on the south side of St Laurent Drive, east of Yonge Street. It contains a c.1915 one-and-a-half storey cottage, a detached one-storey garage, and a one-storey cabin. It was listed on the Richmond Hill Register as a non-designated building in 2007 when the City's *Inventory of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Importance* was formally recognized as the Heritage Register.

The property is part of a development application for a medium-density residential subdivision. The demolition of the three buildings on the subject property are required to allow the construction of a stormwater management pond.

The applicant has submitted a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report (CHER) prepared by MHBC Ltd., which evaluated the cultural heritage value of the subject property. Staff have reviewed the CHER and have confirmed that it meets the City's Terms of Reference. The CHER is attached as Attachment "A" to this report.

Discussion:

For a property to be deemed worthy of designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, it must meet at least two of the nine criteria prescribed under Ontario Regulation 9/06 (as amended). O. Reg. 9/06 criteria include the following:

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1. The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method;
2. The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit;
3. The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement;
4. The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community;
5. The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture;
6. The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community;
7. The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area;
8. The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings;
9. The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.

The following sections provide Staff's summary and determination of the subject property's cultural heritage value based on the application of O. Reg. 9/06 criteria (as amended), and as presented in the CHER prepared by MHBC Ltd.

Design or Physical Value

For a building to be considered a candidate for designation based on design or physical value, it must be a rare, unique, representative, or early example of a style, type, or expression of a particular period. Alternatively, the building may display a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit or demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.

None of the buildings on the subject property are indicative of a particular architectural style, are not considered to be of a high level of craftsmanship or artistic merit, and do not demonstrate a high degree of technical or scientific merit. Accordingly, none of the buildings possess significant design or physical value.

Historical or Associative Value

For a building to be considered a candidate for designation based on historical or associative value, a strong connection must be established between the building and an

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activity, person, or architect of historical significance. Alternatively, the building may yield information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.

The subject property does not have known associations with individuals that had a significant impact on the community, nor is it associated with any significant theme, event, belief, person or activity. The property does not yield information that would significantly contribute to the understanding of the community. Accordingly, the subject property does not possess significant historical or associative value.

Contextual Value

For a property to be considered a candidate for designation based on contextual value, the property must be important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area. Alternatively, contextual value may be met if the property is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings, or considered a landmark.

The subject property is the only dwelling with frontage on St. Laurent Drive, and the dwelling is not visible from either Yonge Street nor the neighbouring property at 13515 Yonge Street. It is also not known to be a landmark. Accordingly, the property does not possess significant contextual value.

Staff Comments

While the CHER does not provide strong evidence or conclusions for a specific construction date for the dwelling, the structure's vernacular style and ownership history indicate that confirming the building's construction date would not change the property's cultural heritage value significance.

The CHER states that the garage was likely constructed in the early- to mid-20th century and aerial photography confirms that it was constructed between 1954 and 1970. Staff do not believe that this changes the property's cultural heritage value.

While the assessment of the cabin's age was based on building material and style, aerial photography confirms that it was constructed between 1970 and 1978. This aligns with the CHER's assessment that the cabin was constructed in the mid- to late-20th century.

While the first two owners of the property, Charles Thompson and Alex McKechnie were significant local people in the 19th century, the existing buildings were constructed many decades after their ownership and have no ties to either of these individuals. Historical research conducted by City staff confirm that William A. Thomas, who owned the property from 1884 to 1911, was not someone who was highly significant to the community. Similarly, the Craigie family, who owned the property from 1911 to 1935, did not seem to be highly significant members of the community either.

Staff agree with the conclusions of the CHER prepared by MHBC Ltd. that the subject property does not hold design or physical, or historical or associative, or contextual

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value. It fails to meet the threshold for designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

Process/Procedural Requirement for Demolition Requests:

The following is a summary of the key process and notification requirements associated with the demolition of a building/structure listed on a municipal heritage register under the Act:

- Council is to consider the request for demolition within 60 days of the demolition notice being given;
- Council is to be advised by its municipal heritage committee with respect to an application to demolish or remove any building or structure;
- Council may either consent to the demolition or not support the demolition and pass an intention to designate the property under Part IV of the Act; and,
- If Council fails to make a decision within the identified time period, Council is deemed to have consented to the application and an application for a demolition permit may proceed. For the purpose of this demolition request, the City received the notice of intention to demolish on January 14, 2025 with the timeline expiring on March 15, 2025.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial or staffing implications at this time.

Relationship to Strategic Plan 2024-2027:

The demolition of a built form that does not merit designation under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* supports Pillar 3 of the City's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, "Strengthening our Foundations"; specifically, it supports Priority 1, to "*make decisions that are evidence-based and data-driven to enable the City's long term social, environmental and economic sustainability.*" Since the buildings at 53 St. Laurent Drive do not hold cultural heritage value, the proposed demolition is supportable as it will provide new opportunities for inclusive community building through the construction of more homes.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. All attachments have been reviewed and made accessible. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Attachment "A": Cultural Heritage Evaluation, 53 St. Laurent Drive, City of Richmond Hill, ON

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPBS.25.021 - Demolition Request for 53 St Laurent Dr.docx
Attachments:	- SRPBS.25.021 Appendix A - CHER for 53 St Laurent Dr - AODA.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jan 22, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Maria Flores - Jan 21, 2025 - 5:01 PM

Gus Galanis - Jan 21, 2025 - 5:19 PM

Darlene Joslin - Jan 22, 2025 - 8:58 AM