

Discussion Topic Information Sheet

Discussion Group #4

Heritage

Heritage in Richmond Hill

Each city, town, township or county has places, spaces and stories that enrich it, inspire it, enlighten it and guide it in its growth and development. The Town of Richmond Hill's *Archaeological Master Plan* (1989) provided information on the evolution of the Town's urban structure over time, revealing layers of settlement history and subsistence patterns since 12,000 A.D. The Town's above ground cultural history dates back to two hundred years ago when Yonge Street was first carved out of the landscape to serve as a military route. Since then the Town has continued to transform itself from a village and surrounding hamlets into a thriving municipality. In the latter half of the 20th century more land was annexed from neighbouring townships to further provide more opportunities for growth and development. These built features and dynamic landscapes form an important urban structure for the Town.

Heritage is an integral part of the identity of our communities, but it also plays a significant role in economic development by helping to enhance a community's quality of life, strengthen its distinctiveness, and stimulate revitalization. Through People Plan Richmond Hill the Town heard that residents value a strong sense of community and celebrate Richmond Hill's unique character and identity – an aspect that is closely related to the Town's evolution as a place.

Conservation Practice in Richmond Hill

The Town of Richmond Hill'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 relate to impacted, previously identified cultural heritage resources. These tools and processes include the Town's Heritage Register '*Inventory of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Importance*', and the establishment of a development application and demolition permit review process. While these mechanisms enable the town to monitor impacts to cultural heritage resources and provide opportunities for the Town 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 the Town's land use policies.

Policy Context

Through the *Place to Grow Act*, the Province of Ontario has emphasized that intensification is a key principle in its growth management plan, designed to limit urban sprawl and protect valuable ecosystems and natural features. It is anticipated that there will be increased development pressures along major regional corridors, around the historic village core and in the rural landscapes that are located within designated 'Settlement Areas' and outside of the Oak Ridges Moraine. The Town needs to tailor its heritage conservation approach so that it proactively addresses impacts to areas of redevelopment at an early stage in the development process.

The intensification policy context will present new impacts to cultural heritage resources but it also presents an opportunity for Richmond Hill to establish focused, strategic and innovative conservation policies and become a leader in the integration of heritage conservation into the land-use planning process.

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What should the Town's Heritage policies focus on?

The roundtable discussion will touch upon a number of topics that will form the basis for the development of the Town's heritage policies. These topics include:

Balancing conservation of significant cultural heritage resources with intensification priorities;

The Official Plan is required to direct growth to existing built-up areas. This will introduce increased development pressures along Yonge Street and lands within designated 'Settlement Areas'. As a result, the Town needs to tailor its heritage conservation approaches so that it proactively addresses impacts to areas identified for intensification at an early stage in the development process.

Protection of heritage resources through policies;

Planning policies such as zoning regulations and Site Plan controls should be developed to help implement heritage conservation objectives, and to ensure heritage resources are protected, managed, or adaptively re-used. These policies can assist in providing development that is consistent with and enhances heritage resources in the Town, and which encourages a proactive, long-term approach to heritage conservation.

Establishment of evaluative criteria that will help focus and prioritize conservation strategies and efforts.

A site's cultural heritage value is determined by applying general evaluation criteria 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 serves 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.

Questions:

- 1. Protecting cultural heritage resources must be balanced with the need for change. Changes to heritage resources can include alterations, new uses, adjacent site developments, relocations, and removals. To what degree and under what circumstances can we permit and manage these changes?**
- 2. Preservation of heritage resources can be accomplished in a number of ways. Discuss the relative merits of the following methods: retention of the existing structure or landscape, adaptive re-use, partial retention of structures, moving a structure to a heritage enclave; and commemoration of a former structure or use within a new structure.**
- 3. Heritage structures and properties may be listed or designated for a number of reasons. What characteristics do you think contribute to a property's heritage interest?**

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