

# Heritage Inventory Project

## As We Heard It Report

### Background

A report being presented to the Built Heritage Sub-Committee on November 12, 2019 proposes adding over 500 properties to the City of Ottawa's municipal Heritage Register as non-designated listings.

Property owners were notified by mail in mid-September 2019 of the City's intention to add their properties to the Heritage Register. The notice invited them to attend any of two drop-in information sessions and a client centre drop-in day at locations across the city. Some residents attended previous HIP events in April and May 2019.

The November 12, 2019 report impacts 14 wards and includes properties in flood-impacted wards 1, 5, 7 and 19 that were not added to the Heritage Register in the June 26, 2019 report, owners of properties deferred from the June 26 report and owners of newly-identified properties.

### Meetings

Two public information sessions were held:

- Shinkman Arts Centre, Orléans – Monday, October 7 from 6pm to 8pm
- Foster Farm Community Centre, Ottawa – Wednesday October 9 from 6pm to 8pm

One client service centre drop-in session was held:

- West Carleton Client Service Centre – Wednesday October 16 from 8:30am to 4:30pm

These sessions were hosted by the Heritage Services Unit, part of the Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Department. Heritage staff were available to speak with participants and answer questions about their properties.

The information sessions were attended by 7 residents. The drop-in day was attended by 16 residents. Pre-registration was not required for any of the events and no formal presentation was delivered at either the information sessions or drop-in day. The sessions were an opportunity for owners to discuss the HIP and the proposed additions to the Heritage Register. Most participants were owners of properties being proposed for addition to the Heritage Register. One information session participant was a resident

attending another event in the same building, and another participant was a councillor's assistant who wanted to promote the event on social media.

At the information sessions and drop-in days, participants were invited to submit written comments and/or communicate directly with staff about their questions and concerns about the HIP. Although no written comments were received, staff noted all comments and concerns that arose during discussion with participants. The following themes reflect both verbal and written comments made during the information sessions.

## **Pride of Ownership**

**Comment:** Many owners are very proud of their properties and had memories, stories, and additional historical research to share. Many rural owners indicated that the properties have been in their family for many generations. Many owners offered additional photographs of their properties to showcase their restoration and conservation efforts. Some owners were pleased to be recognized by the City, while other owners felt that they were being punished for their efforts to improve their properties. Some owners requested information related to researching the history of their properties.

**Response:** Staff will consider all comments and feedback provided before finalizing the staff recommendation. Each building was assessed by Heritage staff against design criteria and Neighbourhood Heritage Statement attributes. Buildings that met the criteria are being proposed for inclusion on the Heritage Register.

Where owners provided additional information about their properties, staff will update property information sheets to ensure all information on file and online is correct.

## **Restrictions on Land Development**

**Comment:** Some owners perceived that a Heritage Register listing will prevent development on the property. Several rural property owners are considering demolishing their existing homes and constructing more modern and efficient homes, and are concerned that the heritage listing will delay or prevent the process.

Some owners were surprised that the outcome of the 60-day notice period is uncertain. This scenario frustrated owners who wanted a clear answer as to whether or not they would be permitted to demolish. Other owners were concerned that the City might designate their properties to prevent the loss of a heritage building and, as a result, prevent them from building a new home on their property.

**Response:** Owners are free to make any alterations, repairs, additions, etc. to the property without approval from heritage staff. Owners are not required to restore the building.

Owners of properties listed on the Heritage Register must provide the City with 60 days' notice of intent to demolish. During this time, the City may take no action (thus allowing the building to be demolished at the end of the notice period), work with the owner to retain part or all of the building, or, if meeting the criteria under Regulation 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act (OHA), recommend that Council issue a Notice of Intention to designate the property under the OHA.

## Decreased Property Value

**Comment:** Some owners believed that being on the Heritage Register would reduce the property's resale value, reduce the number of potential buyers and that any interested developer will purchase elsewhere. Other owners worried that potential buyers will not be able to develop the property as a result of the heritage status, and that their properties would not sell within a reasonable time, or at all.

**Response:** There are no associated costs to owners as a result of their property being listed on the Heritage Register.

MPAC's property assessment and municipal property taxes are not be affected as a result of a property being listed on the Heritage Register. Inclusion on the Heritage Register as a non-designated listing is not noted on a property title.

Owners are free to make any alterations, repairs, additions, etc. to the property without approval from heritage staff. Owners are not required to restore the building.

Staff cannot predict resale results or number of potential buyers of properties listed on the Heritage Register, nor is there any available information or statistics on the resale value and/or loss of value on listed properties.

## Privacy and surveillance

**Comment:** Some owners were opposed to the idea of being on any government list. Others were against the idea of the government monitoring their private property.

**Response:** City Council directed staff to update the Heritage Register. The City has the authority to add properties of cultural heritage value or interest to the Heritage Register. Names and other information about the property owner(s) are not published, and photos are blurred to obscure faces, licence plates, and other identifying details. Other online

applications (Google Streetview, etc.) show more of the property than the photographs published of Heritage Register properties.

In cooperation with Legal Services, staff will consider specific requests regarding privacy concerns.

## Consent

**Comment:** Some owners were unhappy that they were not consulted before their property was proposed for the Heritage Register. Other owners were upset that they were not able to choose whether to opt in or opt out of being included on the Heritage Register. A few owners were already frustrated with the City about other policies affecting their properties, and were additionally upset to learn that the City was adding a heritage recognition to the property. Other owners did not want to be on any type of government list.

**Response:** There is no requirement under the OHA for a municipality to notify a property owner before or after their property is added to the Heritage Register. Many properties in question were already on the City's previous Heritage Reference List without the owners' knowledge or consent. Staff proactively contacted owners in advance of all public meetings in order to be accountable and transparent, and encouraged owners to share their comments with the Built Heritage Sub-Committee in writing and/or in person.

## Government Mistrust

**Comment:** Some owners stated that they do not trust the municipal or provincial governments and expect the rules regarding non-designated properties to change unfairly. Some owners believe that in the future there will be more restrictions on what they are able to do with their properties. Others are concerned that restrictions on alterations will increase for non-designated properties, that the OHA will change such that demolition of any heritage property will be prohibited and/or that all non-designated properties will automatically be designated.

**Response:** Under the OHA, municipalities are required to keep a register of properties of cultural heritage value or interest. City Council directed staff to update the Heritage Register. Current proposed reforms to the Ontario Heritage Act by the provincial government do not contemplate more restrictive actions regarding properties on municipal heritage registers.