



## REPORT

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**TO:** Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Laura Loney, Manager of Heritage Planning

**DATE:** August 25, 2023

**REPORT NO.:** PD-2023-054

**SUBJECT:** Cultural Heritage Strategy Recommendation Report

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. PD-2023-054, dated August 25, 2023, regarding the final recommended Cultural Heritage Strategy entitled “The Halton Hills Cultural Heritage Strategy: Planning for Heritage in an Evolving Landscape”, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council adopt “The Halton Hills Cultural Heritage Strategy: Planning for Heritage in an Evolving Landscape”, as proposed in Appendix A, and direct staff to undertake the work as recommended in the Cultural Heritage Strategy, subject to the availability of appropriate staff and financial resources;

AND FURTHER THAT the Cultural Heritage Strategy be utilized as an input to the Strategic Plan process.

### KEY POINTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- This report recommends the adoption of the Cultural Heritage Strategy (CHS) known as “The Halton Hills Cultural Heritage Strategy: Planning for Heritage in an Evolving Landscape” (previously referred to as the “Cultural Heritage Master Plan”, or “CHMP”).
- The CHS has been prepared following extensive background research, data review, public engagement, and consultation with key Indigenous stakeholders.
- Research and evaluation of the Town resulted in the development of a Historic Context Statement which identifies the key themes that have shaped and

continue to define the community, including transportation networks, natural systems and resources, and immigration/migration.

- The CHS identifies the heritage attributes that contribute to the cultural heritage character and value of the Town of Halton Hills and its distinct communities, including both natural and built features.
- 30 strategic recommendations are identified within the CHS to support the Town's heritage program. Seven key recommendations are highlighted as high priority focus areas for the Town.
- Staff are recommending that Council adopt the CHS as presented and that work relating to the Town's cultural heritage resources continues to be undertaken within the framework as proposed, subject to the availability of appropriate staff and financial resources.
- Staff are also recommending that the Cultural Heritage Strategy be utilized as an input to the Strategic Plan process.

## **BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:**

### **Project Background**

In 2021, the Town awarded ERA Architects Inc. with the contract to undertake a Cultural Heritage Master Plan (CHMP), which had been approved by Council in the 2021 Capital Budget. The CHMP in its final form is now known as a Cultural Heritage Strategy, and is entitled "The Halton Hills Cultural Heritage Strategy: Planning for Heritage in an Evolving Landscape"; the document will be referred to as the "Cultural Heritage Strategy" or "CHS" throughout this report.

The intent of developing the CHS was to provide the tools to identify, protect, and celebrate the Town's rich and diverse cultural heritage resources, and to provide comprehensive guidance for the management of identified cultural heritage resources, including, but not limited to, cultural heritage landscapes, properties designated under Parts IV and V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and properties that are listed on the Town's Heritage Register. The following is a summary of the objectives for the project as originally identified:

- Articulate the goals of heritage conservation in Halton Hills;
- Develop a cohesive vision that reflects the community's values and proposes a strategic approach to heritage conservation and the management of the Town's cultural heritage;
- Establish a meaningful relationship with Indigenous communities, and identify and conserve resources that have value for these communities;
- Identify potential cultural heritage landscapes that contribute to the heritage value of the Town;
- Establish policies for the Town's cultural heritage resources, building on the Town's existing policy framework and recommending revisions to this framework as required;

- Review current research and best practices relating to the conservation of cultural heritage resources, including the evaluation of cultural heritage resources and the update/review of the Town's Heritage Register;
- Identify strategies to identify and overcome barriers to the conservation of the Town's cultural heritage resources; and,
- Recommend approaches for the prioritization of research, evaluation, and designation of significant individual cultural heritage resources.

## **Project Overview**

### Phase 1 – Existing Conditions Report

The first phase of the project was initiated in May 2021 and involved an information-gathering phase to form an Existing Conditions Report. This work included a review of the Town's municipal heritage planning framework; provincial, regional, and municipal policies; the Town's historic context; the existing Heritage Register including listed and designated properties; and, public engagement, which included a Let's Talk Halton Hills page, survey and mapping exercises, a Stakeholder Workshop (September 2021) and Public Open House (October 2021). A Technical Advisory Committee and Steering Committee were also established to inform the process.

A parallel Indigenous engagement process was also undertaken, with outreach to the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Six Nations of the Grand River, the Huron-Wendat Nation, the seven First Nations of the Williams Treaties, and the Metis Nation of Toronto. The MCFN and Huron-Wendat Nation expressed interest in the project, while other Indigenous communities consulted indicated that they did not consider Halton Hills to be within their traditional territory. Historical resources and feedback were provided by the MCFN to inform the Historic Context Statement within the Existing Conditions Report.

### Phase 2 - Cultural Heritage Strategy (CHS)

The Cultural Heritage Strategy (CHS), included in Appendix A, was finalized in August 2023, and incorporates the background and information provided in the Existing Conditions Report. An additional Stakeholder Workshop and Open House were held in April 2023 to review a draft of the CHS and the proposed recommendations.

The CHS provides an overview of the Town's history with a Historic Context Statement, outlines the existing policy framework and tools that can be used to conserve and manage cultural heritage resources in the Town and throughout Ontario, identifies a vision for the Town's heritage program, and outlines 30 recommendations for the program that are derived from the vision and a strategy for the measured implementation of those recommendations.

#### *Historic Context Statement and Identified Heritage Attributes*

Section 2.0 of the CHS identifies three key themes within the Historic Context Statement that are apparent throughout the evolution of Halton Hills, including its

transportation networks, natural systems and resources, and immigration/migration. The heritage attributes identified for the Town, derived through the lens of the Historic Context Statement, include both natural and built elements and highlight the unique cultural heritage value and character of the community, including:

- The Credit River (*Missinnihe*) and its river-valley topography;
- The Niagara Escarpment, and its topography of rolling hills;
- Grand Trunk Railway (now Canadian National Railway and RailAmerica) infrastructure, including tracks, rail bridges and train stations;
- Historic inter-community thoroughfares including Trafalgar Road;
- Historic urban settlements, with their distinct street grids, lot patterns, tree canopies, and mix of historic institutional, commercial, residential, and ecclesiastical built forms. These include Acton, Georgetown, Glen Williams, Limehouse, Norval, and Stewarttown, and may include Ashgrove, Hornby, Scotch Block, Silver Creek, and Speyside (subject to feedback through future research and engagement for individual character areas);
- Agricultural landscapes along the concessions and sideroads between the historic urban settlements, typically characterized by open fields, linear driveways lined with mature trees, farmhouses, outbuildings including a barn and silo, and coniferous windrows delineating property lines;
- Numbered rural school section schoolhouses located along concessions and sideroads, typically single storey with front-gabled roofs;
- Pioneer heritage cemeteries;
- Historic economic and industrial sites, including flour, paper and woolen mills, lime kilns, agricultural fairgrounds, and tanneries;
- Parks, trails, and sites for outdoor recreation, including the Bruce Trail, the Limehouse, Silver Creek and Terra Cotta Conservation Areas, Fairy Lake, Prospect Park, the Old Seed House Garden, the Lucy Maud Montgomery Heritage Garden / Children's Garden of the Senses, Scotsdale Farm, and Hungry Hollow trails.

### *Heritage Planning Framework and the Conservation Toolbox*

Section 3.0 of the CHS provides an overview of Ontario's heritage planning framework, and the conservation toolbox available in Halton Hills, incorporating recent changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act* and other policy through Bill 23. It outlines regulatory tools and components of the heritage program under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, as well as regulatory and non-regulatory tools that may be used for heritage conservation outside the scope of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Regulatory tools identified include, but are not limited to, demolition control by-laws, interim control by-laws, subdivision development agreements, financial incentive programs, secondary plan policies, height and setback restrictions and site plan control. Non-regulatory tools identified include, but are not limited to, maintaining an unofficial inventory of heritage properties, utilizing heritage incentive programs, implementation of Parks Canada's *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, and interpretation plans.

### *Vision and Objectives*

Section 4.1 of the CHS identifies the vision established for the Town's heritage program through the public consultation process as well as work to understand best practices in heritage conservation. Eight objectives are identified to implement this vision in Section 4.2, as follows:

1. The heritage program will recognize, celebrate, emphasize, and conserve the character and identity of Halton Hills' historic settlement areas.
2. The heritage program will recognize and conserve the rural character between Halton Hills' historic settlements.
3. The heritage program will embody a cultural landscape approach and rely on a variety of tools to conserve cultural landscapes of heritage value.
4. The heritage program will reflect community interests and values, and conduct active outreach to engage underrepresented voices, including those of Indigenous rights holders.
5. The heritage program will accept that urban density and heritage conservation can co-exist and will model best practices for intensification in the right places.
6. The heritage program will help to facilitate cultural economic development and programming in Halton Hills.
7. The heritage program will recognize that the Halton Hills climate emergency necessitates high-priority responses that must be balanced and embedded with heritage conservation.
8. The heritage program will be transparent, balanced, and defensible.

### *Recommendations*

Section 5.0 of the CHS identifies 30 distinct recommendations in three categories, including General Recommendations, Strategic Program Directions, and Additional Heritage Program Recommendations.

General Recommendations identified in the CHS include the following:

- 5.1.1 Develop a strategic program of rolling Historic Context Statements for settlement areas in Halton Hills.
- 5.2.1 Maintain the Halton Hills Inventory of Prospective Heritage Resources as an official, permanent record of prospective heritage properties, and undertake rolling evaluations of the inventoried properties for designation, guided by a prioritization framework.
- 5.2.2 Establish an official process for heritage evaluation of properties on the Halton Hills Heritage Inventory when they are proposed for redevelopment.
- 5.2.3 Engage a research intern to collect archival information on priority listed / inventoried properties in service of municipal cultural heritage value assessments.

5.3.1 Use Historic Context Statements to develop an inventory of character areas of significance, of varying types and scales.

5.3.2 Study Character Areas, Nodes and Corridors of significance to identify the degree to which the properties within them contribute in defining or supporting their character, and prioritize the highest-contributing resources for conservation.

5.3.3 Develop a process for the conservation of Character Areas, Nodes and Corridors that includes consideration of the range of tools available within and outside the OHA, and selection of the most appropriate tool or set of tools for each specific area.

Section 5.4 of the CHS identifies Strategic Program Recommendations which focus on heritage projects or programs in various areas, including:

5.4.1.1 The Town of Halton Hills should undertake outreach to develop meaningful long-term relationships with Indigenous rights-holder communities outside the context of any project.

5.4.1.2 Establish a 'capacity fund' for Indigenous rights holders to be engaged on municipal projects.

5.4.1.3 Explore opportunities and mechanisms to jointly recognize, conserve, steward and celebrate the Credit River as a Character Corridor of significance in Halton Hills.

5.4.2.1 Establish farmstead-specific criteria to identify which farmsteads are candidates for protection under the OHA.

5.4.2.2 When designating a farmstead under Part IV of the OHA, identify attributes that reflect both the built and landscape features of the site; but acknowledge that some of these attributes may be conserved only through interpretation.

5.4.2.3 Develop an incentive program for redevelopments that retain non-designated farmhouses, and/or outbuildings with or without heritage status.

5.4.2.3 Develop a set of urban design guidelines for farmstead redevelopment.

5.4.3.1 Establish a grant for climate change resiliency-related retrofits on designated heritage properties, to facilitate upgrades compatible with cultural heritage value.

5.4.3.2 Collaborate with Climate Change & Asset Management staff to establish incentives to manage flood risk for properties in the floodplain, in order to conserve Glen Williams, Norval and other historic settlements as cultural landscapes.

5.4.3.3 Coordinate across municipal departments to pursue landscape based flood-management strategies for historic settlements in the floodplain.

5.4.3.4 In the long term, undertake a Cultural Resource Vulnerability Assessment and Strategy, which might recommend flood adaptation strategies based on building typology and/or materials.

5.4.4.1 Designate the full roster of rural schoolhouses, providing they retain the integrity to convey their value as representative examples of their type.

5.4.4.2 For historic community institutions up for redevelopment, build on existing incentives to encourage adaptive reuse that incorporates public or community uses.

5.4.4.3 Develop a set of criteria for the designation of historic church properties in Halton Hills.

5.4.4.4 Provide congregations with the support required to maintain their designated church properties and remain active on site in the long term.

5.4.5.1 Contribute to cultural economic development by using Historic Context Statements to identify local heritage landmarks and protect them through designation.

5.4.5.2 Build on an inter-departmental incentive structure for the adaptive reuse of large-scale historic economic resources (e.g. mills, farms) with cultural drivers and public-facing uses

5.4.5.3 Develop municipal Heritage Interpretation Plans for significant Character Areas, Nodes and Corridors.

Lastly, Section 5.5 of the CHS identifies Additional Heritage Program Recommendations to be implemented by the Town:

5.5.1 Identify 3-4 positions on Heritage Halton Hills to be reserved for specific demographic representatives.

5.5.2 Develop a strategy to reach new audiences in publicizing and seeking applications for vacant Heritage Halton Hills positions.

5.5.3 Review and revise the Heritage Halton Hills webpage for clarity and accuracy.

5.6.1 Consider publicizing the Inventories of Prospective Cultural Heritage Resources and Character Areas, Nodes and Corridors to the Heritage Planning webpage.

5.6.2 Link the interactive, searchable map application for the Heritage Register to the Heritage Planning webpage.

5.7.1 Adopt the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* as a benchmark for the conservation of properties designated under the OHA.

5.7.2 Revise heritage-related definitions in the Official Plan to be consistent with the highest-order provincial policy definitions available.

### *Implementation*

Section 7.0 of the CHS provides a framework for the implementation of the 30 recommendations identified within the document. The General Recommendations within Sections 5.1 to 5.3 are identified as a priority, with subsequent recommendations to be implemented as time, resources, and Council direction allow.

### **Comments**

The final Cultural Heritage Strategy provides clear guidance for the Town of Halton Hills' heritage program for the definition, management, and conservation of the significant cultural heritage resources unique to this community. Building on the Town's existing policies and wider Provincial policy framework, the 30 recommendations included in the CHS reflect best practices in conservation as well as the feedback received through extensive public consultation and stakeholder workshops.

The CHS has responded to key changes to Provincial legislation such as Bill 23, the *More Homes, Built Faster Act* while remaining flexible within a changing policy framework. Amendments made to the *Ontario Heritage Act* through Bill 23 changed several processes relating to heritage properties. The recommendations in the CHS reflect the new limitations of municipalities to maintain listed properties on Heritage Registers in perpetuity and provide guidance for staff to navigate these challenges, complementing the work already being undertaken by staff as part of the Heritage Strategy and prioritization framework adopted by Council in early 2023.

While the recommendations proposed within the CHS represent a significant undertaking, it is important to note that several of these recommendations incorporate work that is already underway both within the Planning & Development department and inter-departmentally. The CHS provides a clear framework for the Town's heritage program and direction for staff and Council within an environment of significant policy changes.

Significantly, the CHS also emphasizes a continued commitment to Truth and Reconciliation that aligns with and complements the work already underway within the Town and under Council's direction. The CHS acknowledges the inter-connectedness of Truth and Reconciliation within all municipal programs and identifies that, as a key principle, the Town continues to recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples while working to facilitate conservation, interpretation, and celebration of Indigenous cultural values.



Staff recommend that Council adopt the Cultural Heritage Strategy as proposed, in line with the Town's policy framework in the *Official Plan* and in accordance with best practices in the conservation of significant cultural heritage resources.

Staff would like to highlight the significant work of the entire project team, and in particular ERA Architects Inc. for their efforts in creating a such a comprehensive, flexible, and digestible guiding document for the Town's unique cultural heritage value and resources.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to preserve, protect and promote our distinctive historical urban and rural character of Halton Hills through the conservation and promotion of our built heritage, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources.

This report also identifies shaping growth as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

Given the pending Strategic Plan exercise, it is recommended that the Cultural Heritage Strategy be utilized as an input to that process.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:**

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target. However, recommendations within the Cultural Heritage Strategy are linked to ongoing climate change initiatives, and the adaptive re-use of the Town's cultural heritage resources through the Cultural Heritage Strategy will directly contribute to the Town's sustainability goals.

### **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

Public Engagement has been conducted as follows: Providing updates and reports via Let's Talk Halton Hills, Online Survey Questions, Open Houses (2), Stakeholder Workshops (2), and social media engagement.

### **INTERNAL CONSULTATION:**

Staff from Recreation and Parks, Corporate Services, Office of the CAO, Economic Development & Culture, Planning & Development were consulted throughout the CHS process as part of the Technical Advisory Committee for the project.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

This report will be funded through an existing approved budget source.

Many of the recommendations identified in the Cultural Heritage Strategy can be implemented as part of staff's ongoing work program and are not anticipated to require additional funding or staffing resources. However, those recommendations that have the potential to require additional resources would be subject to the Operating and Capital budget process.

Reviewed and approved by,

Bronwyn Parker, Director of Planning Policy

John Linhardt, Commissioner of Planning & Development

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer