

To: Toronto Preservation Board
Date: May 28, 2010
From: Janice Etter, Chair, Etobicoke York Heritage Round Table

Recommendation:

That the TPB support the recommendations from HPS staff and the Etobicoke York Community Preservation Panel regarding the designated property at 691 Scarlett Road.

I am deputing on behalf of the Etobicoke-York Heritage Round Table. This group was formed in 1995 at Montgomery's Inn, which one of the ten community museums owned and operated by the City of Toronto. Its purpose is to bring together all of the historical societies and heritage groups in our community council area to keep informed and work together to identify and resolve common issues.

Attached is a list of members. The group now meets twice a year, and holds a Heritage Fair in conjunction with Montgomery's Inn's Community Corn Roast every year in September.

The following motion was passed at the May 15, 2010 meeting:

Resolved that the Etobicoke York Heritage Roundtable support the continued preservation of the designated property at 691 Scarlett Rd. at every opportunity. (Lisette Mallet / Jeanine Avigdor; carried unanimously).

Behind this motion is a shared belief that preserving heritage is the most important way that communities can acknowledge and store their shared memories and continue to build on them. This is not just about real estate. It's about making a statement that we do not want to slip further into collective memory loss. Losing your memory is a terrible thing, and that applies not only to individuals. We forget our heritage at the risk of compromising our present and our future.

That said, I will attempt to convey the discouragement and outrage that another designated property in our community council area is under threat, and not for the first time.

Much of Etobicoke's pre-war built heritage was agricultural, and was wiped out by subdivisions in the post-war period. What survived the transition from rural to urban is now being torn down as reno-mania creeps through our neighbourhoods. Every lot that is bigger than a single standard lot is generally regarded as a development opportunity, whether or not it is occupied by a heritage building.

We have tried to stem the losses in the last few years. Our attempt to get the Etobicoke Trend House at 48 Rathburn Ave. was unsuccessful. It is now gone, replaced by a McMansion. The farmhouse at the corner of Burnhamthorpe and Kipling is gone, along with the remnants of its orchard. Ten years ago we watched some of the original farm buildings on the site of the Woodbine Race Track be torn down. The Valhalla Inn on Hwy. 427 was a landmark that helped to set a trend for a new kind of accommodation for the motoring public in North America in the 1950s; little of it remains.

We thought we had drawn a line in the sand a few years ago with the remnants of the Horner House in Alderwood, which was built in 1856 and was designated by Council in 2006. HPS staff and the TPB did everything possible to save this property but the Conservation Review Board overturned the designation. The buildings have been demolished and replaced by two McMansions.

A variation of the same circumstances now threatens 691 Scarlett Rd. As noted in the strong staff report from Kathryn Anderson, this is a rare example of a 19th century country church. It was designated in 2003. It stands in a prominent place on a major road as a reminder of the village that once stood there. Designation is supposed to protect properties. It is meant to be a statement of clear intent, not a vague wish, to respect our heritage. Far from being an invasion of property rights, it is a means of supporting Official Plan policy, and it remains the City's most important policy tool to protect heritage buildings and resources.

The language of the building assessment report on this property is distressing. It is not a fair and objective assessment. It leaves no stone unturned in its attempt to portray the designation as moot, even though the owners have a record of not adhering to basic building maintenance standards. If there is a way for this board to register discontent with the report, we urge it to do so.

The Etobicoke-York Heritage Round Table urges this Board to do everything in its power to make 691 Scarlett Road the landmark that stems the tide of loss of heritage properties in our community council area.

Demolition by neglect is not acceptable, under any circumstances.

Thank you for hearing our concern.

Janice Etter
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