



Toronto Cultural Heritage Landscapes Forum: From Plan to Action

Summary Report Toronto Community Preservation Panels November 5, 2016

Introduction

The Cultural Heritage Landscapes Forum: From Plan to Action¹ was organized by the four Community Preservation Panels² of Toronto (Etobicoke and York, North York, Scarborough, and Toronto & East York) and held at Metro Hall on November 5, 2016. The purpose of the CHL Forum was to stimulate awareness of, interest in, and positive action towards development and implementation of a Toronto Cultural Heritage Landscape Guideline, as anticipated in Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 199 *Public Realm and Heritage Policies*.

OPA 199, which was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board in May 2015, states:

43. “Potential cultural heritage landscapes will be identified and evaluated to determine their significance and cultural heritage values. Significant cultural heritage landscapes will be included on the Heritage Register and/or designated under either Part IV or Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act.”

However, an accompanying “sidebar” in OPA 199 requires that:

“The City will establish a city-wide guideline for identifying and evaluating potential cultural heritage landscapes prior to including individual cultural heritage landscapes on the Heritage Register or designating them under the Ontario Heritage Act. Such a guideline will be adopted by Council and will include direction for the clear delineation of the boundaries of cultural heritage landscapes at the time of their listing or designation, as appropriate.”

The origins of the Forum also go back to The Cultural Landscape Foundation’s *Second Wave of Modernism III: Leading with Landscape* annual conference on May 22, 2015, which was held in Toronto for the first time. This conference explored

¹ An edited video of the Forum is “live” on YouTube at:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOEMD7aEb6k5w5fLvgyNf8Q/featured>

² The mandate of the community preservation panels includes the following: “provide for public awareness and promotion of issues related to heritage properties, in co-operation with Heritage Toronto and other heritage groups, as required” (Toronto Municipal Code 1144-2008)

landscape architecture's role in Toronto's growth and evolution, including "looking at the co-mingled and complex human and natural systems—including the world's largest ravine system—that are the city's foundation."³ The Conference also included *What's Out There Weekend Toronto* walking tours featuring Toronto neighbourhoods exemplifying cultural heritage landscape characteristics, including Leaside and Lawrence Park.

This 2015 Conference stimulated the collective interest of the Community Preservation Panels in cultural heritage landscapes, and happened to coincide with the approval of Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 199. As a result, the Panels agreed to organize a symposium for the fall of 2016 focused on the concept and application of cultural heritage landscapes in Toronto. It was specifically intended to create a foundation from which to address the Official Plan's pre-condition to moving forward on identifying and evaluating cultural heritage landscapes.

Format

The Forum was moderated by Alex Bozikovic, Architecture Critic for *The Globe and Mail*, and the welcome was given by Carolyn King, former Chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

The first three sessions consisted of presentations, followed by facilitator-led workshops exploring the ideas discussed and their relation to the session questions. Session One covered the definition and identification of cultural heritage landscapes, Session Two presented case studies, and Session Three addressed the practical application in the existing planning policy environment. See the attached program for details.

In the fourth and final session, Moderator Alex Bozikovic engaged in a conversation with Paul Bedford, former City of Toronto Chief Planner, summarizing the Forum's findings, followed by a wrap-up question and answer session with a highly attentive audience.

³ Charles A. Birnbaum, President and CEO, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, *Second Wave of Modernism: Leading with Landscape Conference*, May 22, 2015

Conclusions

The scope of Cultural Heritage Landscapes (CHLs) extends from ideas: “how we represent the environment to ourselves” and “landscape as cultural geography” that “needs to be experienced not observed” (Julian Smith), to the day-to-day reality: “I live in the real world” (Mary MacDonald).

It was evident throughout the day that the Forum stimulated the interest of professionals and engaged residents, but a consensus is still to be reached around the role of regulation, and other mechanisms such as education and persuasion, in achieving conservation of cultural heritage landscapes.

Here are some observations and learnings:

- The importance of each ELEMENT:
 - cultural: the imprint of each occupying ethno-cultural group;
 - heritage: the element of time;
 - landscape: topography, landforms, the vegetation (natural, or human-impacted landscaping or gardening); and
 - buildings
- The importance of the COLLECTIVE (inter-relationships, layering, and patterns of features) as well the individual element;
- APPRECIATION of the collective elements is not universal—“unfortunately people may not see the whole, only their piece” (Mary MacDonald);
- INTENTIONALITY (designed or evolved) as a key consideration.

Moving forward on the listing or designation of individual cultural heritage landscapes is subject to the OP’s precondition of the City establishing a city-wide (i.e., City Council–adopted) guideline for identifying and evaluating potential cultural heritage landscapes.

The Forum produced some potential directions in regard to the establishment of cultural heritage landscapes in Toronto:

- First, it confirmed that regulation is a necessary component of moving forward, and suggested that batch listings may be the best way to assert some control over losses.
- Second, the guideline should:
 - be principle-based rather than exhaustively detailed

- propose engaging people in a substantive way so that they learn more about and appreciate the cultural geography of their community; for example, engage people in drawing their “mental maps”
- be accompanied by a strong public and professional educative element
- Third, the Forum produced clear examples of potential CHLs in Toronto, Kensington Market in particular. There is a clear opportunity to define Kensington as a cultural heritage landscape as part of the current Plan Phase of the Kensington HCD Study.

If our cultural heritage landscapes are not protected, these complex intrinsic parts of Toronto could easily be lost. Only the creation of guidelines and an official recognition of CHLs ensures they will continue to represent the interweaving of Toronto’s history and its present for the sake of the City’s current citizens and visitors, and those to come.

Forum follow-up

The one-day Forum attracted a multi-disciplinary audience, including practitioners in culture and heritage planning, land-use professionals, community association executives, and engaged residents.

It was the intention of the Organizing Committee to create and present to the Toronto Preservation Board, Heritage Preservation Services, and all participants and stakeholders, as well as the general public, a summary document of the results of the event. This is that report. In addition, all the Forum proceedings were videotaped and are being made available on-line on the *TEYCPP.ca* web site. A longer report will be available there also.

It was our hope and expectation that in presenting this free public Forum, and by sharing this follow-up report, the Panels, in collaboration with preservation experts and stakeholders, could encourage those involved to move the discussion around the fundamental elements of cultural heritage landscapes forward, and thereby continue to co-ordinate our efforts to protect heritage in Toronto. We look forward to future Panel collaborations.

Acknowledgements

The Organizing Committee for the Forum of the Community Preservation Panels gratefully acknowledges the assistance and contribution of the speakers, the moderator, and many heritage and planning professionals and enthusiastic volunteers.

The Forum was generously supported and assisted by the City of Toronto, ERA Architects, The Cultural Landscapes Foundation, the Ontario Heritage Trust, *Spacing Magazine*, the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario's NextGen group, and many volunteers from the Panels, especially Pat Main of the North York Community Preservation Panel (NYCPP), as well as planning students.

The Committee acknowledges the important definitional work on Cultural Heritage Landscapes by the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT). In addition, the OHT devoted its September 2016 issue of *Heritage Matters* to Cultural Landscapes.

Our thanks to the City of Toronto for its financial support to the Community Preservation Panels, which made the Forum possible as a no-charge event, and for hosting the Forum at Metro Hall. A special thanks to ERA Architects, who printed the promotional postcards, name tags, and posters, as well as providing the design work for all printed and digital graphic elements at no charge to the Panels, and to Carl Shura of ERA, who provided invaluable assistance as well as his beautiful graphic designs.

And thanks to those who helped in the creation of the report, this summary, and other follow-up activities, especially Megan Albinger of the Toronto & East York Community Preservation Panel (TEYCPP), Alex Grenzebach of the North York Community Preservation Panel (NYCPP), and Jennifer Rieger, Chair, Toronto Preservation Board.

Organizing Committee

Jane Clark (Toronto & East York CPP)
Geoff Kettel (North York CPP) (Chair)
Connor Turnbull (North York CPP)
Madeleine McDowell (Etobicoke and York CPP)

Attachment: CHL Forum Program

Session 1: Cultural Heritage Landscapes: What are they? Why are they important?

Julian Smith, Architect and Director, Willowbank Centre for Cultural Landscape
“Cultural Heritage Landscapes: What are they and why are they important?”

Brendan Stewart, Landscape Architect and Urban Designer, ERA Architects
“Narratives of Place”

Wendy Shearer, Landscape Architect, Cultural Heritage Specialist
“How to identify a diverse range of cultural heritage landscapes and evaluate their significance, integrity and associated heritage values”

Carolyn King, Former Chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation:
“The Moccasin Project”

Session 2: Cultural Heritage Landscapes in Ontario: What is our experience?

Stephen Robinson, Senior Heritage Planner, City of Guelph
“An Action Plan for Cultural Heritage Landscapes in Guelph”

Mark Warrack, Manager, Culture and Heritage Planning, City of Mississauga
“Mississauga Cultural Heritage Landscapes – A mixed blessing”

Catherine Nasmith, Architect, and President, Architectural Conservancy of Ontario
“Conserving The Bala Portage”

Madeleine McDowell, Educator and Heritage Advocate
“Toronto Landscape in Succession: Cultural Impact from Glacier to Managed Plan”

Session 3: Toronto’s Cultural Heritage Landscapes: How do we protect them?

Michael McClelland, ERA Architects and Advisory Council of The Cultural Landscape Foundation

Mary MacDonald, Senior Manager, Heritage Preservation Services, City Planning, City of Toronto

Session 4: What have we learned? And what questions remain to be answered?

Alex Bozikovic, Architecture Critic, *Globe and Mail*

Paul Bedford, Urban Mentor, Former Chief Planner, City of Toronto