

King|Parliament

SECONDARY PLAN REVIEW

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

September 2019



INTRODUCTION

As part of the King-Parliament Secondary Plan Review, City Planning undertook a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) to document and evaluate properties to identify the area’s cultural heritage resources and in turn to inform policy development. At the commencement of the CHRA, the King-Parliament Secondary Plan area already contained a large collection of recognized cultural heritage resources. Those resources had previously been identified through inclusion of individual properties on the Heritage Register, through the First Parliament site, through the Council-adopted St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District (under appeal), and through a completed Heritage Conservation District study for the Distillery District. The St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District Study also recommended preparation of a second Heritage Conservation District plan for the area largely comprising the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood development of the 1970s.

The research and analysis of the CHRA includes a Historic Context Statement which identifies themes that have informed the area’s present-day built form and landscape and can assist in the subsequent evaluation of properties for cultural heritage value. The Historic Context Statement for King-Parliament, included below, considers the history of the entire King-Parliament Secondary Plan area.

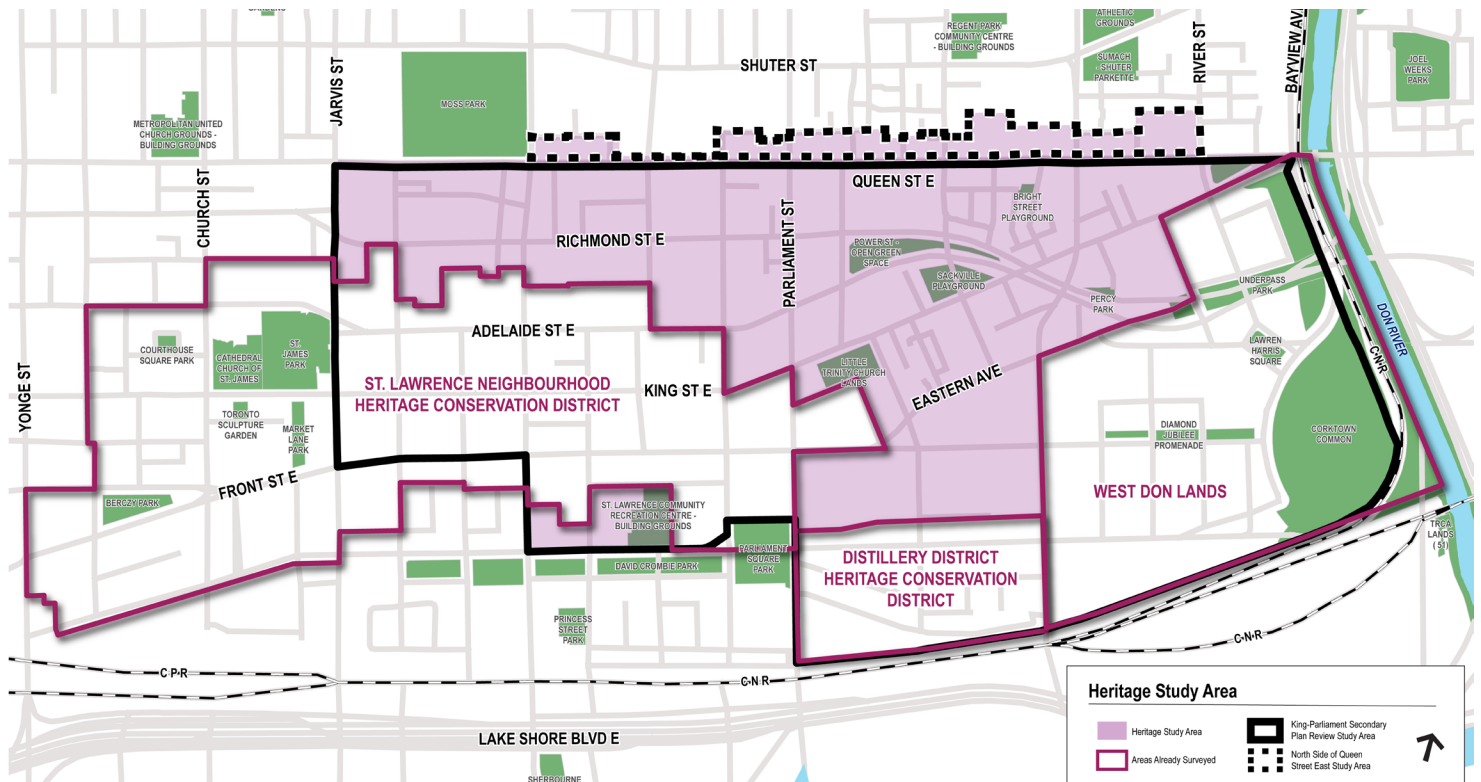


Figure 1. Map illustrates heritage studies in King Parliament including Heritage Conservation District studies and the heritage survey undertaken in 2019.

Public consultation to seek community input is an important part of the CHRA process. Between December 2018 and March 2019, City staff initiated a series of three Heritage Focus Group meetings to inform the identification of historical themes, building typologies, and patterns of development within the CHRA study area prior to the drafting of a Historic Context Statement, to review a draft Historic Context Statement, and to inform the subsequent recommendations regarding the identification of built heritage resources. The group was composed of local historians and representatives of local organizations with insight into the area's heritage.

Historical themes, building typologies, and patterns of development, informed by the heritage focus group, were presented at a January 2019 King Parliament Secondary Plan Review Open House for input from the larger community. A version of this Historic Context Statement was also included in a Heritage backgrounder which was posted online, as well as distributed to the general public for review and comment at the King-Parliament Secondary Plan Review Pop-up.

THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE KING-PARLIAMENT SECONDARY PLAN AREA

Introduction

The King-Parliament area includes some of Toronto's oldest neighbourhoods and commercial and industrial areas. Within its boundaries are cultural heritage resources, including built heritage, cultural heritage landscapes, and archaeology that reflect the long evolution of the area, from ancient Indigenous habitation through the late 18th century founding of the Town of York, to the present day.

The contemporary road network and built form of the area reflects its evolution from a primarily residential and commercial area in the first half of the 19th century, to a commercial and industrial area with pockets of working class housing by the end of the 20th century. City-wide periods of development were used to structure the Historic Context Statement into 6 key periods.

1. Pre-Town of York
2. Early Toronto (1793-1850)
3. Urban and Industrial Expansion (1850-1914)
4. WWI, Interwar, WWII Period (1914-1945)
5. Industrial Decline and Post-war Urban Renewal (1945-1970)
6. Residential and Mixed-use Renewal (1970-Present)

Pre-Town of York

The land within the boundaries of the City of Toronto, and the King-Parliament area within it, has been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for millennia. Small groups of Indigenous peoples once moved across this land, hunting and gathering the food they needed according to the seasons. Approximately 1,500 years ago, maize (corn) was introduced to what is now Southern Ontario. As it became an important food source, it shaped the way of life of those who farmed it. Small mobile



Figure 2. This 1792 survey of Toronto harbour by Joseph Bouchette shows an Indigenous camp on the lakeshore, near the mouth of the Don River. Plan of Toronto Harbour, With the Rocks, Shoals & Soundings Thereof, Surveyed & Drawn by Joseph Bouchette. 1792. City of Toronto Archives: MT101

groups gathered into larger villages, surrounded by fields of corn, beans and squash.

Creeks, rivers, and marshes were vital sources of fresh water and nourishment, and areas around rivers were important sites for camps. The Don River watershed, which includes a significant part of the King-Parliament area, was also a part of trail networks that linked Lake Ontario to Lake Huron to the north, and to communities to the east and west. The mouth of the Don River, which acts as the eastern King-Parliament area boundary, may have been a particularly important place for Indigenous peoples in the Toronto area. The sand spit which has been transformed into the Toronto Islands was traditionally known as a place of healing, and was easily reached from the mouth of the Don River. The former marsh at the mouth of the Don River was also a rich hunting ground¹ (see Figure 2).

¹ For stories about Indigenous history on the Lower Don River, see First Story Toronto, and in particular the “Indigenous Knowledge and Storytelling along the Lower Don” tour. <https://firststoryblog.wordpress.com/>.

A summary of the Indigenous history of Toronto, see “Toronto: The First 12,000 Years: An Illustrated History.”

In the 1780s, as the British government prepared to settle this area, it signed treaties with Mississauga and Chippewa First Nations to obtain title to the land. Indigenous peoples continued to be present in the Town of York and surrounding area, and played a particularly vital role in the defense of the town in the Battle of York (1813). Toronto remains part of the traditional homelands of First Nations, and is home to many Indigenous peoples today.

Early Toronto (1793-1850)

Following the signing of treaties, the British government surveyed the Toronto area in preparation for settlement. Alexander Aitken's Plan for the Town of York (1793) established a street grid composed of ten nearly square blocks running west of today's Berkeley Street to George Street, with one block extending north and south from King Street. The land between Berkeley Street and the Don River was reserved for government uses. Above the town, Lot Street (today's Queen Street) was surveyed as a baseline for large 100 acre "park lots" which were reserved for government officials (See Figures 3, 5.)

The irregular road network that helps to define the King-Parliament area is the direct result of Aitken's plan, how subsequent surrounding surveys ignored it, and the location of former watercourses. Jogs in Front, Adelaide and Richmond streets as they pass west of Jarvis indicate where a new street grid was surveyed in 1797 that only aligned with King Street in the original town. To the north, the same 1797 plan extended new blocks between the original town and Queen Street that were much larger than the original town blocks, preventing the extension of some town streets.

To the east of today's Berkeley Street, land was reserved for government use until it was first surveyed for subdivision in 1819². In this area, today's Corktown and West Don Lands, the streets

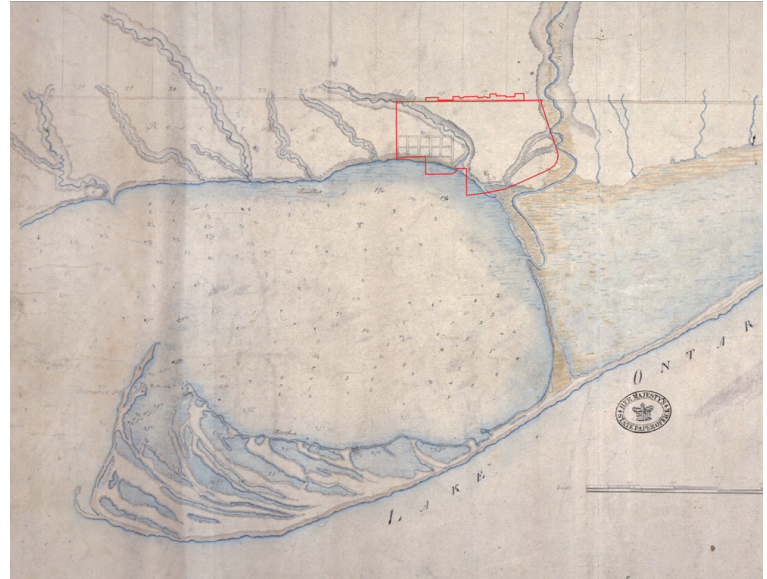


Figure 3. Plan of York Harbour Surveyed by order of Lt Govr Simcoe [Sgd] by A. Aitken. 1793. The National Archives of the UK: CO 700 Canada no.60.



Figure 4. House for James Vance, 115 Berkeley Street, 1845

² Lemos, 25.

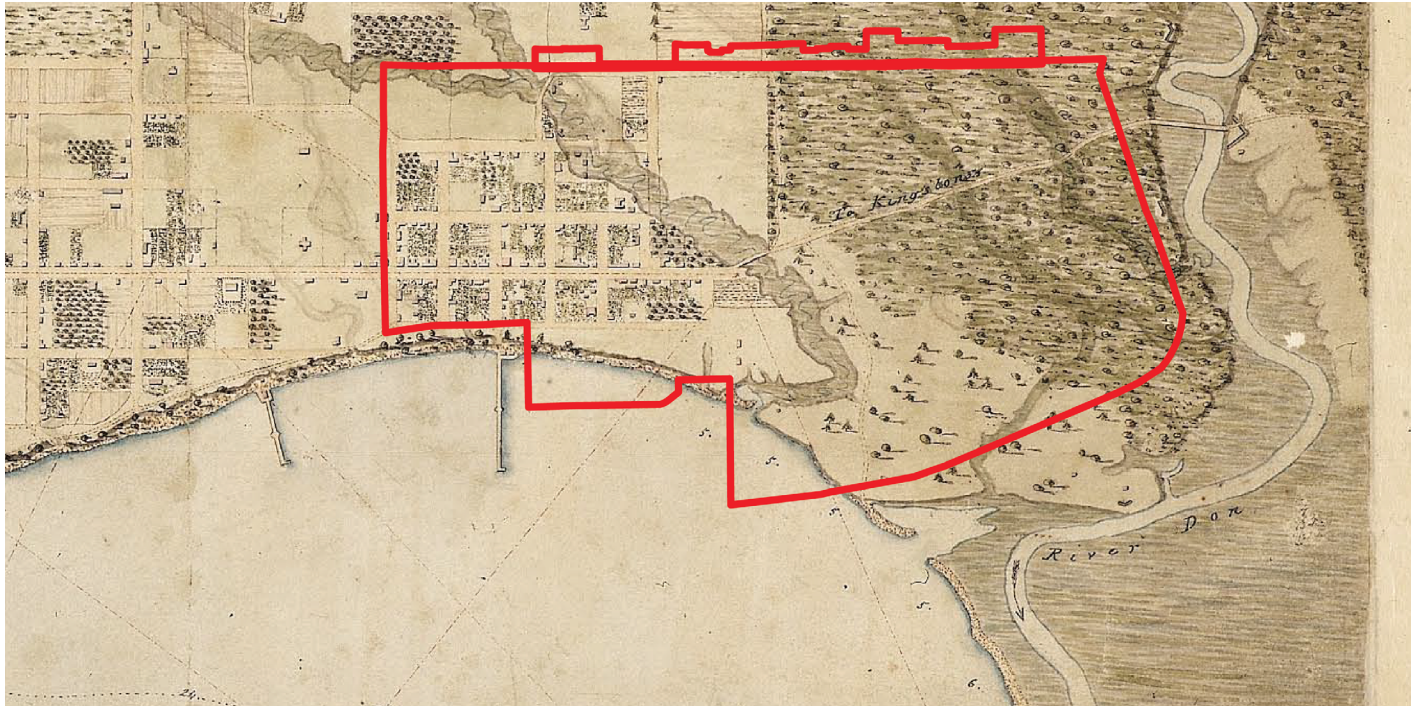


Figure 5. Plan of York Surveyed and Drawn by Lieut. Phillpotts, Royal Engineers. 1818. King Street runs east-west through the centre of the original square town blocks, and cuts up at an angle after Berkeley Street through undeveloped land to cross the Don River. Library and Archives Canada: NMC 17026.

are defined by the angle of King Street, the oldest road through the area, which defied the street grid of the town as it cut in a northeast direction from the original town edge at Berkeley Street to cross the Don River at today's Queen Street East. Notably, nearly all contemporary streets in the King-Parliament area were laid out prior to 1850, though Queen Street East was completed later than most due to obstruction of the former Taddle Creek, which crossed it by Moss Park.

The development of the former "Government Park" east of Berkeley Street was a major legacy of this period. Begun in the 1830s, that development included industry (notably with the founding of Gooderham and Worts distillery site in 1832) and housing related to industry. The first owners of industry, including the Gooderham family and brewer Enoch Turner, lived next to their factories, as did their workers³. They also helped to fund the first institutions in the area to serve the growing number of residents: Little Trinity Church (425 King Street East, 1843) and Enoch Turner School House (106 Trinity Street, 1848). St. Paul's Roman Catholic

Church (83 Power Street, 1822) was established over 20 years prior to both.

Buildings from the pre-1850 period are rare and are largely contained within the boundaries of the St. Lawrence Neighbourhood Heritage Conservation District. They form an early and valuable collection of cultural heritage resources, and can be identified primarily by their representation of the Georgian style. Most notable is Toronto's longest row of 1830s-40s commercial buildings on the south side of King Street East from Jarvis to George streets, the Bank of Upper Canada building (252 Adelaide Street East, 1825-37 and Toronto's First Post Office (260 Adelaide Street East, 1833-34) on the north side of Adelaide, east of Jarvis, Little Trinity Church (1843) and Enoch Turner Schoolhouse (1848) and the Paul Bishop Buildings (363-365 Adelaide Street East, 1848) on the south side of Adelaide, east of Sherbourne Street (See Figures 4, 6.)

³ Gibson.

Urban and Industrial Expansion (1850-1914)

The King-Parliament area was transformed into the urban cityscape that we recognize today primarily in the 1850-1914 period. Two developments in the 1840s and 1850s fueled a dramatic change in the area. First, famine in Ireland sent a large wave of poor, largely Roman Catholic migrants to North America. A significant number of those who chose to remain in Toronto found homes, community and work in the working class neighbourhoods of the King-Parliament area, close to St. Paul's Church (later Basilica) (see Figure 8) Their presence contributed to the founding of the House of Providence in 1857 to provide care and support for Toronto's most disadvantaged residents. Expanded over time, the House of Providence was a dominant feature in the neighbourhood.

The main attraction to the King-Parliament area was the growth of industry which flourished over the next 100 years. While access to shipping would continue to draw industry to the area, the introduction of railways to Toronto in the 1850s had a far greater impact. The Grand Trunk railway was the first to cross the Don River, and was laid out along the Esplanade in 1855⁴. The railways dramatically changed the landscape of the area, filling the harbour for their tracks and yards over successive periods, and extending the shoreline south from Front Street (see Figure 7). The railways also encouraged economies of scale through quick access to much larger markets than was previously imaginable in an era of poor roads and laborious travel. Toronto industries could now compete with smaller industries in towns connected to it by rail all over Ontario⁵. The result was a concentration of large scale industrial power in the King-Parliament area. By the end of the 19th century, two businesses – William Davies Pork Packing Plant



Figure 6. Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity Street, 1848

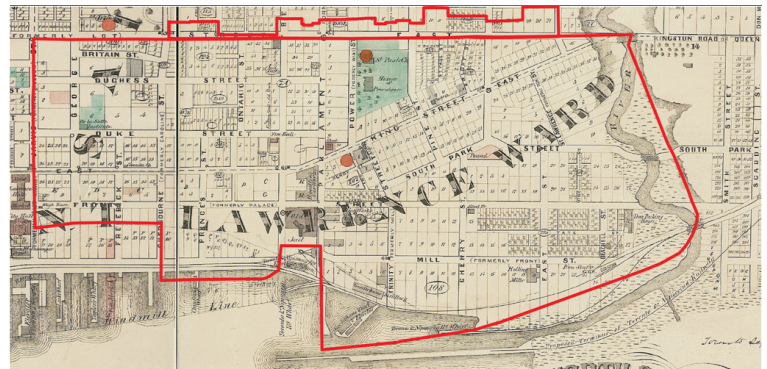


Figure 7. Wadsworth & Unwin's Map of the City of Toronto [showing real estate exemptions from taxation], compiled and drawn by Maurice Gaviller, C.E. & P.L.S., from plans filed in the Registry Office and the most recent surveys, 1872.1860S-70S MAP Library and Archives Canada: NMC25641.

⁴ Historica Research Limited, 9,22.

⁵ Careless, 83.

(since demolished) and the Gooderham and Worts Distillery – claimed to be the largest of their kind in the British Empire.

Industrial growth directly contributed to the Don Improvement Plan of 1886, which led to the straightening of the Don River below Gerrard Street by 1892. The massive engineering project reclaimed significant lowlands along the banks of the river for industrial use, and made room for a new Canadian Pacific Rail line completed through the King-Parliament area on the west side of the Don River in 1892⁶.

With the dramatic expansion of industry in the area first came an increase and change in housing. The wealthy left the area, their homes either demolished or converted for other purposes, and denser housing predominated⁷. Demand for worker's housing was strong enough by the 1880s, in fact, that the Wilkins family developed a business redeveloping lots by inserting narrow lanes off of King Street with row houses that survive today, including Wilkins Avenue, Percy Street, and Ashby Place⁸. Residential occupation reached its peak in the entire area by about 1900, when dense streets of small homes also occupied today's West Don Lands (see Figure 9).

In this period, the commercial main streets of the area were also generally built out. King Street's commercial character now extended from Jarvis Street through Corktown, broken by larger scale industrial or warehouse buildings from Ontario to Parliament Streets, and near the Don River. Queen Street also developed much of its present character in this period. Consistent street walls of significant three-storey commercial/residential buildings continue to line the north and south side of Queen Street from Jarvis to Berkeley Streets, broken now by Moss Park on the north (see Figure 12).



Figure 8. St. Paul's Basilica, 83-93 Power Street, 1887

⁶ Careless, 118.

⁷ Archaeological Services Inc., "Stage 1..." 9.

⁸ Lemos, 10-12.