

Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment – Final Report

Date: April 14, 2026

To: Toronto Preservation Board

From: Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning

Wards: Ward 10 – Spadina-Fort York

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the findings of the Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA) prepared by Heritage Planning staff and requests that the Toronto Preservation Board endorse the list of properties identified within the CHRA as having cultural heritage value.

On December 13, 2023, City Council accepted a settlement which resulted in the conversion and re-designation of lands in Liberty Village west of Hanna Avenue from Core Employment Areas to Regeneration Areas. In the Summer of 2024, the Liberty For All Planning Study (www.toronto.ca/libertyforall) was initiated to establish a comprehensive planning framework for Liberty Village and to set out a long-term vision for the achievement of a complete community centered around transit investment.

The Liberty Village CHRA was initiated as an integral component of the Liberty For All Planning Study.

The CHRA presents an understanding of the Liberty Village CHRA study area as an evolved cultural heritage landscape, comprising a significant area of industrial production, economic activity, and labour activism spanning the mid-nineteenth century to the present. The character of the area is evident in the range of cultural heritage resources, including the late-19th to mid-20th century industrial buildings and complexes that have been adaptively reused, remnant rail spurs, extant smokestacks and courtyard spaces within building complexes and mid-block connections which created permeability through the large blocks to facilitate the movement and storage of raw materials and manufactured goods.

The CHRA makes recommendations intended to conserve, interpret and commemorate the evolved Liberty Village cultural heritage landscape. Recommendations include the identification of 22 properties with cultural heritage value, the retention of extant rail spurs, smokestacks, and courtyards, and the creative commemoration and interpretation of the area's labour history in the public realm. A final recommendation supports the consideration of opportunities to advance truth and reconciliation within

new development and public realm design to reflect the values and heritage of Indigenous communities, where supported through consultation with Indigenous communities.

The final report for the Liberty For All Planning Study will be considered by Toronto and East York Community Council and City Council. The findings from the CHRA have informed and guided the development of site and area specific policies, ensuring that heritage considerations are meaningfully integrated. Furthermore, the staff report will recommend that City Council identify the properties listed in Attachment 2 as having cultural heritage value or interest, as identified through the Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning recommends that:

1. The Toronto Preservation Board endorse the properties listed in Attachment 2 as having cultural heritage value or interest, as identified through the Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment.
2. The Toronto Preservation Board recommends that the Toronto and East York Community Council recommend that City Council identify the properties listed in Attachment 2 as having cultural heritage value or interest, as identified through the Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

On June 14, 15, and 16, 2005, City Council adopted the inclusion of 34 properties on the City's Inventory of Heritage Properties (now City's Heritage Register) identified through the Garrison Common North Area Study. Six of the identified properties are located in Liberty Village.

On July 19, 20, 21, and 26, 2005, City Council adopted the inclusion of 3 properties on the City of Toronto Inventory of Heritage Properties (now City's Heritage Register)

identified through the Garrison Common North Area Study. Two of the properties are located in Liberty Village.

On January 31 and March 1, 2018, City Council adopted the report Prioritization of Outstanding Heritage Conservation District Studies and Interim Protective Measures. Council directed that a Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment be initiated for Liberty Village. [Agenda Item – 2018.PG25.4](#)

On December 13 – 15, 2023, City Council adopted a settlement for Official Plan Amendment 231 which resulted in the re-designation of the lands west of Hanna Avenue from employment Areas to Regeneration Areas. [Agenda Item History - 2023.CC13.20](#)

On April 17 and 18, 2024, City Council adopted the Liberty Village Public Realm Strategy – Final Report. The Public Realm Strategy includes a map noting potential heritage properties requiring evaluation. [Agenda Item – 2024.TE12.16](#)

On May 22 and 23, 2024, City Council adopted Official Plan Amendment 720 (OPA 720) which amended Section 3.1.6 and Schedule 3 of the Official Plan pertaining to complete application requirements. Among other matters, OPA 720 established Policy 3.1.6.22 and Schedule 3 of the Official Plan requiring a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report as part of a complete application for Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Draft Plan of Subdivision applications. OPA 720 came into effect City-wide on June 19, 2024. By-law 500-2024 adopting OPA 720 may be found here: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2024/law0500.pdf>

POLICY AND REGULATION CONSIDERATIONS

Legislative Framework

Provincial Planning Statement and Planning Act

The conservation of cultural heritage resources is an integral component of good planning, contributing to a sense of place. In Ontario, heritage conservation is identified as a provincial interest under the Planning Act. Cultural heritage resources are considered irreplaceable and valuable assets that must be wisely protected and managed as part of planning for future growth under the Provincial Planning Statement (2024) ("PPS"). Heritage conservation is enabled through the Ontario Heritage Act. The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime and provides policies to guide decision-making within the city.

Good planning within the provincial and municipal policy framework has at its foundation an understanding and appreciation for places of historic significance and ensures the conservation of these resources are to be balanced with other provincial interests. Heritage resources may include buildings, structures, monuments, and geographic areas that have cultural heritage value or interest to a community, including an Indigenous community.

The Planning Act establishes the foundation for land use planning in Ontario, describing how land can be controlled and by whom. Section 2 of the Planning Act identifies heritage conservation as a matter of provincial interest and directs that municipalities shall have regard to the conservation of features of significant architectural, historical, archaeological, or scientific interest. Heritage conservation contributes to other matters of provincial interest, including the promotion of built form that is well-designed, and that encourages a sense of place.

The Planning Act requires that all decisions affecting land use planning matters shall be consistent with the PPS which positions heritage as a key component in supporting key provincial principles and interests. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>

The PPS provides policy direction on land use planning in Ontario and is to be used by municipalities in the development of their official plans and to guide and inform decisions on planning matters, which shall be consistent with the PPS. The PPS articulates how and why heritage conservation is a component of good planning, explicitly requiring the conservation of cultural heritage and archaeological resources, alongside the pursuit of other provincial interests. It provides specific direction for the protection of built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes, archaeological resources, and areas of archaeological potential, both on development sites and where development is proposed on adjacent properties. The PPS states that cultural heritage and archaeology help provide people with a 'sense of place'.

Policy 4.6.1 of the PPS directs that "Protected heritage property, which may contain built heritage resources or cultural heritage landscapes, shall be conserved." Policy 4.6.3 specifies that "Planning authorities shall not permit development and site alteration on adjacent lands to protected heritage property unless the heritage attributes of the protected heritage property will be conserved." Policy 4.6.4 (b) encourages planning authorities to develop and implement proactive strategies for conserving significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes. Through the definition of conserved, protected heritage property, built heritage resources, and cultural heritage landscape, the PPS identifies the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage conservation will be implemented.

The PPS also defines a cultural heritage landscape as "a defined geographical area that may have been modified by human activity and is identified as having cultural heritage value or interest by a community, including an Indigenous community. The area may include features such as buildings, structures, spaces, views, archaeological sites or natural elements that are valued together for their interrelationship, meaning or association".

The PPS can be found here: <https://www.ontario.ca/files/2024-10/mmah-provincial-planning-statement-en-2024-10-23.pdf>

Ontario Heritage Act

The Ontario Heritage Act is the key provincial legislation for the conservation of cultural heritage resources in Ontario. It regulates, among other things, how municipal councils can identify and protect heritage resources, including archaeology, within municipal boundaries. This is largely achieved through listing on the City's Heritage Register, designation of individual properties under Part IV of the OHA, or designation of districts under Part V of the OHA.

Section 27 of the OHA gives municipalities the authority to maintain and add to a publicly accessible heritage register. The City of Toronto's Heritage Register includes individual heritage properties that have been designated under Part IV, Section 29, properties in a heritage conservation district designated under Part V, Section 41 of the OHA as well as properties that have not been designated but City Council believes to be of "cultural heritage value or interest."

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o18>

Section 1 of Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to determine cultural heritage value or interest under Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. Section 3 of Ontario Regulation 9/06 also sets out the criteria to determine cultural heritage value or interest for heritage conservation districts under Section 41 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The criteria are based on an evaluation of design/physical value, historical and associative value and contextual value.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

Further, the Bill 23 amendments to the OHA regarding Listed properties include provisions stating that properties will be removed from the City's Heritage Register two years after their listing date if no further action is taken by Council to designate them under the OHA. Bill 200 extended the original removal deadline of January 1, 2025 to January 1, 2027 for properties on the Heritage Register on or before January 1, 2023. Properties listed since January 2023 will be deemed removed on the original two-year timeline. Once removed, Council may not relist any property under section 27 of the OHA for a period of five years.

City of Toronto's Official Plan

The City of Toronto's Official Plan (the "Official Plan") contains policies related to identification of properties with potential cultural heritage value or interest through area planning studies, the conservation of properties on the City's Heritage Register and properties adjacent to them, as well as the protection of areas of archaeological potential. Indicating the integral role that heritage conservation plays in successful city-building, Section 3.1.6 of the Official Plan states that, "Cultural heritage is an important component of sustainable development and place making. The preservation of our cultural heritage is essential to the character of this urban and liveable City that can contribute to other social, cultural, economic and environmental goals of the City."

The City of Toronto's Official Plan can be found here: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>

Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report

On June 19, 2024, Official Plan Amendment 720 came into effect City-wide, which among other matters, established the requirement that a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report be prepared for specified properties under Schedule 3 of the Official Plan for Official Plan Amendments, Zoning By-law Amendments and Plan of Subdivision applications. Policy 3.1.6.22 resulting from OPA 720 sets forth that the CHER requirement is triggered where a property has been identified by City Council through a City-led study as having potential cultural heritage value or interest, but which is not included on the Heritage Register. The CHER requirement supports the City's ability to identify properties with cultural heritage value early in the development application process.

COMMENTS

Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment Survey Area

The Liberty Village CHRA adopted the boundary of the Liberty For All Planning Study. The study area is bounded by King Street West and the rail corridor (north), Dufferin Street (west), Strachan Avenue (east), and the rail corridor (south) (Attachment 1).

Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment (CHRA)

City Planning conducted a CHRA as an integral component of the Liberty For All Planning Study. A CHRA is undertaken to document an area's development history, and to ensure that properties with potential cultural heritage value or interest are proactively identified, understood and conserved.

CHRAs prioritize an understanding of the historic context of a study area and how properties relate to and support that context. A Historic Context Statement (HCS) is produced to explain the contemporary form and character of an area through the identification of significant periods of historical evolution and analysis of key themes. A CHRA then relates properties to periods of development and themes to inform the identification of buildings, features and landscapes with cultural heritage value.

Following the development of a HCS, and informed by community engagement, CHRAs include a survey of all properties within the study area in order to recommend a list of properties that might meet Provincial criteria for determining cultural heritage value.

Heritage Planning staff began work on the Liberty Village CHRA in July of 2024. Following familiarization with the study area, including the photographic documentation of all properties within the study boundary, a historic context statement (HCS) for the study area was prepared. Through the spring and summer of 2025, the HCS was informed by community engagement through community, stakeholder and Heritage Focus Group meetings. A survey and evaluation of all properties in the study area against Provincial Criteria (Reg. 9/06) was then completed to identify those that may merit inclusion on the Heritage Register. A draft list of properties with heritage potential

was prepared by Heritage Planning staff. The resulting draft list of identified properties was presented to the community through the final Heritage Focus Group and through the Community Consultation Meeting (CCM) held on November 18 and 20, 2025. Following the conclusion of public engagement and in preparation for this report, Staff confirmed the list of properties as having cultural heritage value or interest.

The Liberty Village CHRA (April 2026) included as Attachment 3 directly informed the development of proposed site and area specific policies for Liberty Village included in the final report for the Liberty For All Planning Study that will be considered by Toronto and East York Community Council and City Council and the properties listed in Attachment 2 as having cultural heritage value or interest.

Liberty Village Historic Context: Summary

The Liberty Village Historic Context Statement presents the historical development of the area through the following themes and sub-themes which shaped the evolution of the area. Typologies of extant buildings in the study area with strong connections to the themes are noted. The full Historic Context Statement can be found in the Liberty Village CHRA (Attachment 3).

- Theme: Ordnance Reserve
- Theme: Transportation
- Theme: Public Institutions
 - Sub-theme: Prison History
- Theme: Industrial Development
 - Sub-theme: Labour History
 - Sub-theme: Workers Housing and Residential Development
 - Sub-theme: Canadian National Exhibition
- Theme: Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
 - Sub-theme: Creative Communities and Live/Work Spaces

For time immemorial, Toronto has been home to Indigenous peoples. The wider area near the banks of Lake Ontario supported the gathering, trading, hunting, fishing, settlement and ceremonies of Indigenous communities. The land surrounding Liberty Village has several sites of archaeological potential as well as Archaeological Sensitive Areas connected to Indigenous peoples in the early colonial period.

When Toronto was first settled by the British colonial government in the 1790s, a vast tract of land surrounding Fort York was reserved for military purposes. After 1850s, portions of the reserved lands within the boundaries of today's Liberty Village were transferred to public institutions that significantly shaped the land use of the area. The Central Prison for Men (1870) was constructed on the west side of Strachan Avenue north of today's East Liberty Street. In 1880, prison labour was used to construct the Mercer Reformatory for Women. After the Mercer was closed in 1969, its large site became the home of Lamport Stadium. The warden's house at 1177 King Street West is the only remaining structure associated with that institution.

Railways were built through Liberty Village from the 1850s forward and fundamentally shaped the existing character of the area. Curving diagonally through and running along the southern edge of the area, the railways provided easy access to resources and markets and laid the foundation for industrial expansion in the area. By the mid-1880s, the existing street grid in the west portion of Liberty Village had been surveyed, distinguishing the character of the area from the lands between Hanna and Strachan Avenue.

Much of the existing built form west of Hanna Avenue was then developed into the early 20th century to support industrial activities. The area continues to be defined by one-to-six storey brick warehouse/factory buildings, many of which form industrial complexes. Given the concentration of specialized metal-working industries in the area in particular, Liberty Village became an important site for labour movement in the City.

Industry began to recede from Liberty Village beginning in the 1970s. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the area became known as a hub for creative communities, such as artists and musicians, some of whom adapted the vacant industrial buildings for new uses. Other creative industries, such as new media and technology driven work, followed. The portion east of Hanna Avenue, which had been defined by the Central Prison complex, an expansive industrial complex, private roads, and rail corridors, was designated mixed-use and was almost entirely redeveloped with condominiums that replaced the former industrial buildings in the early 2000s.

Through the first quarter of the 21st century, the west side of Liberty Village remained zoned as employment lands and continued to be a distinctive economic hub in the city with a strong concentration of creative industries operating in adapted early 20th century industrial buildings.

Community Consultation

Community engagement is important to the success of CHRAs. Community members can provide essential local or specialized knowledge regarding the historical development of a study area, complementing documentary research. They can also inform the assessment and documentation of cultural heritage value with information related to people, places, and events of significance to the community.

Community consultation for the Liberty Village CHRA was fully integrated into the community engagement plan for the Liberty Village For All Planning Study. The local community, including residents, land owners, business owners, community members, historical societies and the business improvement area, participated in the consultation process and provided input and feedback for the Study throughout 2025. Community and stakeholder meetings and online surveys were used in order to gather feedback from the community, build consensus, and get broad based support on the direction of the Study, including the CHRA.

Throughout 2025, the following meetings were held: Two Community Consultation Meetings, one Landowners/Developers Meeting, one resident association meeting, and two Heritage Focus Group meetings. The Liberty for All Planning Study team, including Heritage Planning Staff, also sought feedback for the CHRA study at the Give Me Liberty Street Party. The two CCMs for the Liberty For All Planning Study were held on April 2, 2025 at 2 Fraser Avenue in Liberty Village, and the second meeting was held in-person on November 18, 2025 at Fort York National Historic Site (250 Fort York Boulevard) and virtually on November 20, 2025. During the first CCM, which was an open house format, Heritage Staff heard from many participants about how much the community valued the industrial character of Liberty Village and the many historic buildings still extant.

The CHRA was also informed by the input from a Heritage Focus Group (HFG) composed of local historians, heritage experts, and property owners all with insight into the area's history. Two meetings were held with the HFG on May 8, 2025 and June 10, 2025. At the first meeting, participants were introduced to the process and methodologies of a CHRA. Prior to the meeting, participants were sent a draft of the Historic Context Statement (HCS) of Liberty Village. Feedback was gathered on the HCS, including themes that may be missing, and participants also shared information about specific properties that they considered to have heritage interest. Participants were invited to provide any additional comments through email in the two weeks following the meeting. The HCS was revised based on the feedback from the HFG.

During the second Heritage Focus Group, participants were presented with draft results of the CHRA, including a revised Historic Context Statement, and a high level summary of properties considered to have heritage potential. The Heritage Focus Group generally agreed with the draft results of the heritage survey as presented. The CHRA results were also shared with the Toronto East York Community Preservation Panel on February 9, 2026.

Materials and summaries from the Heritage Focus Group and community consultation meetings are available on the project's website: <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/liberty-for-all/>

Recommendations

The Liberty Village CHRA concludes that the study area is an evolved cultural heritage landscape, comprised of a significant area of industrial production, economic activity, and labour activism spanning the mid-nineteenth century to the present. The area's heritage character is evident in the range of cultural heritage resources, including the late-19th to mid-20th century industrial buildings and complexes that have been adaptively reused, remnant rail spurs, extant smokestacks, and the courtyard spaces within building complexes and mid-block connections which created permeability through the large blocks to facilitate the movement and storage of raw materials and manufactured goods. The CHRA makes recommendations intended to conserve, interpret and commemorate the Liberty Village cultural heritage landscape.

Staff recommend that City Council identify the 22 properties listed in Attachment 2 as having cultural heritage value or interest, as identified through the Liberty Village CHRA. The identified properties reflect the institutional and industrial history of the area. If Council adopts this recommendation, all properties listed in Attachment 2 will be subject to a CHER requirement through planning application submissions. Applications that include properties identified as having potential cultural heritage value must submit a Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report as part of a complete application for any Official Plan Amendment, Zoning by-law Amendment, or a Plan of Subdivision application under the Planning Act. This requirement allows properties with cultural heritage value to be identified early in the development application process.

In addition, staff recommend that the 22 properties identified as having cultural heritage value merit inclusion on the Heritage Register and should be evaluated for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The CHRA also recommends the creative commemoration and interpretation of labour history in the public realm; the conservation of remnant rail spurs and smokestacks in Liberty Village and the interpretation of former rail spurs; and the conservation of existing courtyards to support and maintain the former industrial character of the cultural heritage landscape.

A final recommendation supports the advancement of truth and reconciliation within new development and public realm design to reflect the values and heritage of Indigenous communities, where supported through consultation with Indigenous communities.

CONCLUSION

City Planning staff have completed the Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment and recommend that the Toronto Preservation Board endorse the identification of the 22 properties as having cultural heritage value or interest, as listed in Attachment 2.

The recommendations of the Liberty Village CHRA have informed the Liberty For All Planning Study final report and proposed site and area specific policies which will be considered by Toronto East York Community Council and City Council.

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SIGNATURE





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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Map of the Liberty Village CHRA study area
Attachment 2 - Properties Identified as having Cultural Heritage Value
Attachment 3 – Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment



Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment

-  Planning Study and CHRA Boundary
-  Regeneration Study Area
-  Properties on the City's Heritage Register
-  Properties identified as having cultural heritage value through CHRA

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Not to Scale
02/03/2026

Address	Estimated Dates of Construction	Building Type	Themes
1 Atlantic Avenue	c. 1954	Smokestack	Industrial Development
28 Atlantic Avenue	c. 1905	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
30 Atlantic Avenue	c. 1915 - 1918	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
32 Atlantic Avenue	c. 1915 - 1918	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
102 Atlantic Avenue	c. 1910	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
153 Dufferin Street	c. 1906 (with later additions dating to c. 1920)	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
159 Dufferin Street	159 Dufferin St: c. 1924; 18 Mowat Ave: c. 1945	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
163 and 165 Dufferin Street	c. 1910	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse

Address	Estimated Dates of Construction	Building Type	Themes
165 R Dufferin Street	c. 1910	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
233 Dufferin Street	c. 1917	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
171 East Liberty Street	c. 1942	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
1 Fraser Avenue	c. 1909	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development
2 Fraser Avenue	c. 1910 (with later additions c. 1950)	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
29 Fraser Avenue	c. 1909	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
33 and 35 Fraser Avenue	c. 1909 - 1924	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
64 Jefferson Avenue	c. 1901 - 1910	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
190 Liberty Street	c. 1924 - 1931	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse

Address	Estimated Dates of Construction	Building Type	Themes
20 and 22 Mowat Avenue	22 Mowat Ave: c. 1913 – 1924; 20 Mowat Ave: c. 1935	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
78 Mowat Avenue	78 Mowat Ave: c. 1917; 96 Mowat Ave: c. 1941 – 1947; 249 Dufferin St: c. 1917	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse
2 Pardee Avenue	c. 1913 - 1924	Warehouse/Factory	Industrial Development; Redevelopment and Adaptive Reuse

The Liberty Village Cultural Heritage Resource Assessment is provided under separate cover.