

Cabbagetown Southwest Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Study

Community Advisory Group Meeting #1 – Summary Report

1. Meeting Details

Date: Tuesday October 2nd, 2018

Location: Central Neighbourhood House, 349 Ontario Street

Time: 6:30pm – 8:30pm

2. Attendees

Community Advisory Group Members

- John Rider, Resident
- Richard Chambers, Resident
- Vanessa Magness, Resident
- Wallace Immen, Cabbagetown HCD Advisory Committee
- Karen Marren, Cabbagetown South Residents' Association
- George Rust-D'Eye, Cabbagetown HCD Advisory Committee
- Philip Unrau, Central Neighbourhood House
- Bill Renieris, Cabbagetown BIA

Project Team

- Alex Corey, Project Manager and Heritage Planner, City of Toronto
- Tamara Anson-Cartwright, Program Manager Heritage Preservation Services, City of Toronto
- Sharon Hong, Project Manager and Heritage Planner, City of Toronto
- Dima Cook, EVOQ Architecture
- Reece Milton, EVOQ Architecture
- Susan Hall, Lura Consulting
- Zoie Browne, Lura Consulting

3. Meeting Purpose and Objectives

- Introduce the Cabbagetown Southwest Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Study, process and project team;
- Review and confirm the Terms of Reference and role of the Community Advisory Group;
- Present the results of preliminary data collection, character analysis and Community Consultation Meeting #1; and
- Discuss elements of significance and areas of concern with respect to heritage priorities for the study area.

4. Meeting Summary

Review of the CAG Terms of Reference

Susan Hall, Lura Consulting, reviewed the mandate, roles and responsibilities, code of conduct and terms of conditions of Community Advisory Group (CAG) membership outlined in the Draft Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference were mutually agreed upon and adopted with no amendments.

Presentation – Cabbagetown Southwest HCD Study process, Research and Analysis

An overview presentation covering the following topics was provided to CAG members:

- HCD Study Background, Process, Policy Framework
- History of the Area, Existing Conditions, and Survey
- Character Analysis
- Summary of Community Consultation Meeting #1 Feedback

Note – one member requested to receive a copy of the 2011 HCD Study Report and Garden District Study Report.

Guided Discussion

Following the presentation, Susan Hall led a guided discussion on the neighbourhood's character and the area's defining features as well as the HCD study process. The following points summarize responses from CAG members during and following the meeting:

Identifying Neighbourhood Features and Character

Q 1. Does the study area boundary accurately reflect the Cabbagetown SW neighbourhood? Why or why not?

- Some members questioned why the Study Area excludes Parliament Street and Sherbourne Street, and why Parliament Street was excluded from the other Cabbagetown HCDs.
- One member indicated that the boundary is different from the Resident's Association boundary.
- City staff clarified that the Study Area boundary excludes Sherbourne Street because the street is already included in the Garden District HCD, and HCD boundaries cannot overlap. Parliament Street was excluded from the Study Area as it is predominantly composed of commercial properties and this study is focused primarily on the residential

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neighbourhood. The Study Area boundary may be changed through the study process, and does not necessarily reflect any potential district boundary.

- City staff informed the group that a nomination has been received for a potential HCD Study of Parliament Street, but that it has not been reviewed or approved by City Council. Staff noted that consultation with stakeholders, including the BIA, will be done as part of their review of the nomination.
- One member discussed concerns with an HCD designation on a commercial street such as Parliament Street, noting that it may discourage redevelopment and maintenance, and could deter certain types of businesses from the area.

Q 2. What do you see as the most important features of the Cabbagetown SW neighbourhood? i.e., laneways, setbacks, building materials and elements, street pattern, specific houses, views, etc.

- One member suggested that the neighbourhood is one of the oldest in the City of Toronto and its properties are mostly intact.
- Others identified the neighbourhood's significant tree canopy as a defining feature on most streets and landscaping in front of homes enhance the walkability of the streets.
- Some members discussed the neighbourhood's strong sense of community. They identified a 'village-like' feeling for the neighbourhood where community members know each other and can walk around the community to access the things they need.
- A few members highlighted a change in community dynamic over the past 18 months, particularly around Sherbourne Street and Dundas Street, related to the increase in social service facilities within the area.

Q 3. What is distinct and specific about Cabbagetown SW? Are there defining character differences between the north of Dundas Street and the south of Dundas Street? What intangible values define the Cabbagetown SW neighbourhood?

- Members highlighted the value of the neighbourhood's active Cabbagetown South Residents Association (CSRA) as an indication that people are connected and care about their community. One member noted that the CSRA was preceded by the Seaton Ontario Berkeley Residents Association (founded in 1996) and the South of Carleton Community Association prior.
- It was also noted that a portion of Cabbagetown SW was developed earlier than other areas of Cabbagetown (east of Parliament Street and north of Carlton Street) and as a result the lot sizes tend to be larger and wider.
- A few members noted that there is a sense of self-containment of the community, yet still connected to the larger Cabbagetown area and City of Toronto.
- Members did not indicate specific differences between the neighbourhood north and south of Dundas Street.

Q 4. What is most valuable about laneways to the overall Cabbagetown SW neighbourhood?

- Several members identified the value of laneways in terms of walkability and circulation. One member noted that some properties have built up their back fencing for security purposes which restricts the view further.
- Members did not indicate that the view of houses from the laneways contributes to the neighbourhood's character.

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- Members indicated that community members, particularly dog walkers, use the laneways. However, some laneways are quite long with few exit points.
- Some members are very interested in “taking back the laneways” in reference to their upkeep and concerns with crime and loitering. One member noted the laneways are not well maintained and there is nothing to be proud of with regards to their contribution to the neighbourhood. Another member raised safety concerns regarding loitering in the laneways, which are poorly lit.
- A few members noted the few laneways that have been recently repaved are a good start but the City needs to do a better job of maintaining and lighting those areas.
- One member suggested investing in community laneway projects like Montreal’s Green Laneways.

Q 5. Do the housing types identified reflect the prevailing character of the neighbourhood? Why or why not? Are there other types of houses or buildings within Cabbagetown SW that contribute to its heritage character?

- Members provided no feedback to this question.

Q 6. Does the landscape analysis reflect your understanding of the neighbourhood's landscaping and public space? Are there landscaping features you think are missing or underrepresented?

- One member suggested that the fully mature landscape, including several century old trees, is distinct.
- Another member suggested there is a lack of greenspace in the neighbourhood. This has led to the rise of “gorilla gardening” where community members plant attractive little garden plots in public spaces (e.g.: Poulett Street, and Berkeley Street north of Dundas Street).
- It was also noted that new developments outside of the Study Area are built right to the lot line which limits opportunities for natural green landscapes. One member particularly stressed the need to address these concerns through future guidelines for development proposals in the area.

Q 7. Are there any other elements or features within the neighbourhood that you think contribute to its character? Are there streets, or groups of streets, that do or do not have a defined character?

- One member suggested there is a lack of defining character on Milan Street and Poulett Street and indicated that it is, in part, due to competing uses (i.e. residential front entrances, residential back entrances, commercial back entrances and social service client entrances). It was suggested that some lanes might benefit if coach house developments are encouraged.
- It was noted that the pattern of repeated groupings of types of homes (identified in the consultant's presentation) is a defining feature of the area, and that over the decades those houses that were built as identical groupings have had alterations that make them look different from one another.

History

Q 8. Are there specific periods in the history of the Cabbagetown SW neighbourhood that you consider to be more evident in its present-day character?

- One member noted the influx of development between 1870 and 1890 when the area was being established as a suburb of the growing city before a lot of the homes were built to the east of Parliament.
- It was noted that the iron fences and flower bed styles that are found in the neighbourhood today are a contrast to the low picket fences from 40 years ago.
- Members indicated that there are many homes where large garbage and recycling bins are stored in front yards which impacts the present-day character of the neighbourhood.
- Members discussed the change in diversity of the community over periods of history. One member indicated that through the area's gentrification it is presently mono-ethnic, which may not reflect its historic diversity.
- One member inquired whether the HCD Study would include a demographic analysis of the people who live and work in the Study Area. The project team clarified that the HCD Study does not include a demographic analysis of the neighbourhood, however the histories of the area's different communities can be recorded as part of the study.

Q 9. Do you have any comments on historical information about a building, street, public space or the overall neighbourhood that you would like to add to the history of Cabbagetown SW?

- A member provided information on Crook Shank Creek, a buried creek that ran beneath the Ontario Street Parkette. In 2013, the Cabbagetown South Residents Association collaborated with a local artist to install a mosaic at 227 Ontario Street to commemorate the lost creek. Funding for this community artwork was obtained through the City of Toronto Neighbourhood Grant Program.
- It was noted that many houses were not designed by architects but rather by carpenters working from pattern books that often originated in England. A grouping of 5 homes from the same design may have had embellishments added to set one or several apart.
- Some homes once had large porches that have been removed. This was particularly mentioned regarding homes on Berkeley Street.

Q 10. Are you aware of any historical information that was missing?

- One member noted that unfortunately a lot of historical information is missing because it was never written down in a retrievable form, however, it is possible to identify changes in occupancy through city directories, which can provide some insight into the ways that buildings were being used.
- Participants discussed the distribution of wealth from north to south on Berkeley Street and Seaton Street and noted that both streets were historically wealthier than other streets in the area.
- Participants also indicated that there was a social and economic dynamic in the area of modest worker homes interspersed with wealthier, larger and more detailed homes.
- Members noted that Milan Street and Poulett Street were laneways that were later developed as streets with houses.
- It was also mentioned that Ontario Street historically had industrial uses.

HCD Study Process

Q 11. Do you have any questions about the HCD Study process?

The following questions were raised about the HCD Study process:

- What are the pros and cons of HCD designation? How might a designation be detrimental to the area?
- How can we identify properties with historical significance that might be owned or operated by individuals who may not maintain them if there are associated high costs?
- What tools are available to encourage maintenance of heritage properties?
- Are there retail/commercial buildings that would be protected through designation, when demolition and replacement may enhance the visual appeal and economic vitality of the community?

Q 12. Thinking about the role and responsibilities of the CAG and the scope of the HCD study, how would you define a successful process?

- One member indicated that there are community members who are extremely in favour of HCD and others who are not but that it is important, through this process, to ensure that all sides are weighed and considered as part of the process.

5. Next Steps

CAG members were provided with comment sheets with the guided discussion questions in order to provide further feedback following the meeting. CAG members were invited to submit feedback until October 12th, 2018 in order for it to be included in this summary report. The next Community Advisory Group meeting will be held on November 13th, 2018.