

# Weston II Heritage Conservation District Study - Community Advisory Group Meeting #1 Part 2

Monday August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Cisco Webex

3:45 pm – 5:30 pm

## Meeting Summary

### Attendance

#### Project Team:

- City of Toronto Heritage Planning Unit
  - Shelby Blundell
  - Gary Miedema
  - Loryssa Quattrociocchi
- LURA Consulting
  - Liz McHardy
  - Amitai Zand
  - Alexander Furneaux

#### CAG Members:

- Mary Louise Ashbourne
- Cherri Hurst
- Jim Lisowski
- Chris Menary
- Glorianne Ropchan
- Laura Sestito
- Dave Sovran
- Bob Young

#### Regrets/Absent

- Dave Bennett
- Marlene McKintosh (regrets)

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### Timeline:

CAG members began logging in to the meeting on Webex at 3:45pm.

The CAG meeting started at about 4:15pm

Liz McHardy welcomed all in attendance and explained meeting procedures.

Gary Miedema gave a land acknowledgement.

Liz facilitated a round of introductions and introduced the purpose of the meeting.

Gary provided a brief presentation of the history and evolution of Weston HCD.

Loryssa provided a brief presentation on architectural styles.

Liz facilitated a discussion (summarized below).

The Project Team advised the CAG members to submit any written feedback by August 24, 2020 (compiled below).

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:35pm.

A CAG member asked for more information about who is attending the meetings and their role (project team and fellow CAG members) to become more familiar with each other.

### **Discussion Questions and Comments from CAG members:**

#### **What are the most important features of this area of Weston?**

- Building materials, particularly in houses built in the nineteenth century, are important to retain
- Outdoor retaining walls, houses, and trees contribute to tapestry of Weston. Lot sizes, setbacks, and open spaces, heights; riverstone, and unique details included in the different styles of houses are all important.
- The eclecticism of the neighbourhood: the pattern of streets (some were more affluent, some less), different road widths, and the history of different builders adding their own character to the area. One can see the level of incomes of individuals when people first built these homes; it shows the differences among the people that lived in Weston historically.
- The leaded glass windows/stained glass at 100 Church St, its construction material (woodwork, glass), and overall construction techniques (e.g. cement beams rather than studs).
- The character inside and outside houses, the spacing between the houses, and the appearance/materials used in the homes.
- The diverse sizes of the homes (e.g. a duplex across from a 3-storey home).
- The variety of the homes (individuals rather than a uniform subdivision). Would like to see the variety of homes preserved.

#### **Are there any other elements or features within the neighbourhood that you think contribute to its character?**

- The comfortable ambiance of the street: the open space between homes and setbacks from homes, socializing between neighbours.
- Dedication to the changing nature of the town: embracing some aspects while being vocal about others (e.g. new builds, renovations, landscaping).
- The psychological ambiance of the neighbourhood.
- The large trees. There is a need for recognition that trees have a limited lifespan; gardens feature prominently. It is disconcerting when trees have been lost.
- The parkland (e.g. Elm Park, which is the central meeting place of the neighbourhood and is a junction of multiple streets). Smaller parks and quiet streets are important for young families
- The unique geography of the Lake Iroquois shoreline as it manifests through Weston's topography (i.e. half of the water drains into the Humber River while half drains into Black Creek; there is an old stream running through Elm Park).
- Trees add to the neighbourhood and there is a concerted effort to replace them.
- Multitude of pieces taken together: Some streets have sidewalks and some do not; hilliness varies from street to street, there are back lanes running through the neighbourhood.
- There is a sense of pride in the community over the neighbourhood space.

## Do you have any comments on local history you would like to add as it relates to the heritage conservation study?

- The Moffat Corporation and the CCM plant on Lawrence Ave have historical significance.
- The CCM plant closed fairly recently (on a relative scale) in the 1970s and some other aspects about it are beyond the scope of the HCD. The industrial aspect of Weston and the Kodak plant (now replaced by the Eglinton LRT barns) and local industry (Moffat and Cruickshanks) played an important role in employment and development of Weston.
- 168 Rosemount has been heavily modified from its original look. We must look at homes' styles to see how modifications can be accounted for when considering heritage status (i.e. do both original and modified styles count?).
  - [Project Team: We look at what is present, and to try to understand how a property may have been changed over time; please let us know which homes have been heavily altered. "Integrity" is a part of this discussion. We need to discern if an altered property still has integrity or if alternations to a property have removed its cultural heritage value.]
- Retain history but do not turn the neighbourhood into a museum. We can shape what will happen to keep the best pieces of the past while recognizing the many changes that have occurred.

### Written Feedback Submissions:

Weston's history is not that of a residential subdivision, but of a once-autonomous small village and town. Independent of Toronto, Weston developed and maintained its own civic and physical infrastructure, including town council, school board, water, sewers, gas, hydroelectric power generation, etc. The town had its own town hall, post office, library, train stations, schools, fire station and even hotels. Weston also had its own main street with businesses and shops, operated by and serving the needs of local residents. Many of the homes in the Phase II area date back to this time and would have been connected with the people and events of that independent small-town way of life, which is worth remembering and preserving because it is distinct from many other areas of Toronto which were developed as suburban expansions of the existing city.

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Thank you for sending along the presentation from our last discussion on August 10. This is much appreciated and has been helpful to frame my thoughts on the study and associated process. Indeed, on page 29, the photo of the home on Joseph Street (pre-1924) fully shows my neighbour's house (#86) as well as the corner of our own house (#88) on Church St (peaking around the corner of the Joseph St house). The original owners must have felt a bit "on their own" with only a couple of close neighbours at the time. It is interesting that neither our own home, or that of our neighbour, has changed much in the hundred or so years. Having lived in Weston since 1988, we have seen a number of changes both positive and negative over the intervening time. It is very heartening to see new young families choosing to purchase and live in Weston recently. This is a very positive development and one that we collectively need to support and encourage.

During the discussion of August 10, both the content of the presentation and many comments provided by the CAG members focused on the physical and historical characteristics of the Weston neighborhood. All of which are certainly valuable and important for the HCD review and study. Two of these, I would like to focus on here: (1) the history of Weston developing as a "working" town; and, (2) the "eclectic" nature of the house forms and streetscapes.

As shown in the presentation, Weston developed from an Indigenous communication and trading route along the river, to a farming and milling town and then a railway oriented community, through to a semi-industrial suburban town with the likes of the CCM bicycle plant operating into the 1970s.

I am certainly not a qualified historian, but I believe that as a result of this history, the plans of subdivision, with the variety of lot widths and sizes, also reflected the desire to attract both well-to-do business entrepreneurs as well as the necessary working class to build a vibrant and affordable community. This most likely contributed to the very eclectic nature of the architecture and variety of house size throughout Weston. I do believe that this variety and eclectic nature is a characteristic of the neighborhood that should be recognized and embedded in some way within the HCD study and future recommendations.

Lastly, and I recognize my comments below may perhaps be more appropriate within the “Recommendations to the TPB” process segment, or perhaps the “Plan Phase” when the HCD policies and guidelines are developed. I believe an important issue for discussion is the possible impact on home values that may result from the Heritage designation. From its historical beginnings, Weston has been a relatively affordable neighborhood to live. With new young families moving into the neighborhood, It will be important for the success of the HCD process to ensure the potential benefits of the designation are broadly and well understood. Otherwise, I fear that the recommendations may be viewed as benefiting only a few. House prices are again on an upward swing, and the possible public perception of the heritage designation adversely affecting home value, would be less than helpful. So a plan for communicating the benefits of the heritage designation to the community as we move forward should be an important part of the process.

The previous open house presentations have been positive and very helpful. Yet, more will be needed to engage the community in a fuller understanding of the benefits of the HCD. When making final recommendations to the TPB, this broader engagement would be in accordance with Weston’s history in supporting a vibrant, affordable and eclectic family community, for many more years to come.

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A CAG member provided a map of modelled heritage watercourses and background documents pertaining to the natural history and archaeology of the area.