

Cabbagetown Southwest Heritage Conservation District Plan

Cabbagetown Southwest HCD Community Advisory Group Meetings #3 and #4

May 17 and 27, 2021

Zoom

6:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Attendees

CAG Members

- Elaine Scott
- John Rider
- Jordan Allison
- Joran Chevalier
- Judith Crichton (Only meeting #3)
- Karen Marren
- Martha Fusca (Only meeting #3)
- Richard Chambers
- Robin Buxton Potts (Councillor Wong-Tam's team, only meeting #3)
- Wallace Immen

Project Team

- Alex Corey, City of Toronto
- Tamara Anson-Cartwright, City of Toronto
- Dima Cook, EVOQ Strategies
- Emily Cheng, EVOQ Strategies
- Mark Elsworthy, EVOQ Strategies
- Jim Faught, LURA Consulting
- Stella Zhou, LURA Consulting

Introduction

The City of Toronto hosted the third and fourth Cabbagetown Southwest Heritage Conservation District Plan Community Advisory Group meetings via Zoom on May 17 and 27, 2021. The purpose of the meetings was to:

- Review background information, including highlights from the community meeting
- Provide an overview of the draft policies and guidelines
- Provide an update on the project timeline
- Discuss and collect feedback on the draft policies and guidelines
- Discuss the format for the second community meeting

CAG Meeting # 3 was structured as an informative meeting to review the HCD draft policies and guidelines while answering some immediate questions; CAG Meeting #4

provided an opportunity to gather feedback and comments on the draft policies and guidelines and plan for the second community meeting.

Community Advisory Group Meeting #3 – May 17, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Introduction and Overview

Jim Faught of LURA Consulting opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, facilitated a round of introductions, reviewed the agenda and delivered the Land Acknowledgement. Alex Corey, Senior Heritage Planner, City of Toronto, presented the project background and timeline update. Dima Cook, EVOQ Strategies, explained the draft policies and guidelines of the Cabbagetown Southwest Heritage Conservation District Plan. Jim Faught facilitated a round of questions of clarification with the CAG members on the draft policies and guidelines. Lastly, Jim Faught wrapped up the meeting and reviewed the next steps.

Next Steps

Jim Faught closed the meeting and shared that the fourth CAG meeting would be held on May 27, 2021. The fourth meeting will focus on CAG members' feedback, comments, and questions about the drafted policies and guidelines presented in CAG Meeting #3.

Community Advisory Group Meeting #4 – May 27, 2021, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Introduction and Overview

Jim Faught, LURA Consulting, opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, provided the Land Acknowledgement and reviewed the meeting agenda. Alex Corey, Senior Heritage Planner, City of Toronto, presented the draft policy direction update after meeting with the Cabbagetown HCD committee. Dima Cook, EVOQ Strategies, provided an update on the massing policies in the proposed HCD Plan. Jim Faught led the discussion period. Jim Faught and Alex Corey provided the next steps for the Cabbagetown Southwest Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Plan.

Discussion

The guided discussion followed the questions outlined below. CAG member responses are summarized as bullets under each relevant question.

The draft policies and guidelines model more recent HCD Plans and differ in structure from the other Cabbagetown HCD Plans. This includes providing "best practices" and adopting the framework of Parks Canada's "Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada."

What types of best practices will be most beneficial to property owners and residents of Cabbagetown South?

- It is important to provide a framework for adjacency to help inform newer infill developments within the District.
- In terms of best practices, include as much information as possible for people. For example, even if someone is a long-term resident of the area, they might not know all the necessary details about maintaining older houses.

Is the policy framework clear, legible, and organized so that homeowners can interpret and understand?

- Provide more clarity on how preserving the neighbourhood's prevailing pattern of sightlines and roof ridges apply to non-contributing buildings. This can include clarifying what materials to avoid because they may be susceptible to rusting.
- When meeting with the community, it is important to be very specific about the details of the policies. This can include providing more information, for example, about windows, doors, newer materials, etc. This plan will be in place for the long-term, but things can change over time, including material costs. Therefore, it is essential to be clear on the details and make sure there are options.
- Use plain language for terms such as "public realm" so residents know precisely what the terms mean.

- When defining the "public realm," we should identify both the front and the side of the building. For example, there are some corner houses on laneways, so it may also be necessary to preserve these homes' side elevations.
- Ensure that the consequences of non-compliance with the HCD policies and guidelines are clearly outlined.
- Explain how to deal with non-complying precedents. For example, if one side of a semi-detached house has an existing non-complying dormer in the roof facing the front, and the owner of the other side of the semi-detached house wants to install a non-complying dormer, how is it handled?

Are there policies you think we have missed?

- *No additional policies were suggested by CAG members.*

Are there any additional suggestions or comments?

- The BIA is doing a Master Plan that will apply to Gerrard Street and Carlton Street within the District, but Parliament Street (part of the BIA) is not part of the proposed HCD. Therefore, it may be important to connect with the BIA and understand how their Master Plan could work with or affect the proposed HCD plan.
- Consider creating a recommendation guide for Cabbagetown that helps property owners find the right resources for maintenance and projects.
- One participant noted that the following could also be considered: Can property owners be provided with information about incentives for both mixed use and residential areas and reference material and resources to help determine the original appearance of the properties? Can Cabbagetown Southwest HCD build a visual library to inventory the original or historical appearance of the district properties?

The mixed-use streets (Gerrard and Dundas) have a mix of historic and evolved storefronts. The draft policies allow for flexibility and permit new storefronts on contributing properties, including 'bump-outs' like what currently exists in the area. What are your thoughts on a more flexible framework for contributing properties and storefronts on Dundas and Gerrard?

Consider flexibility regarding:

- **Maintenance and restoration**
- **Signage**
- **New infill development incorporating storefronts**
- **Additions or alterations integrating new storefronts**
- **Alterations involving the removal of storefront additions.**

Are there any scenarios that we missed?

- Several buildings along Gerrard Street were built as houses but have now changed in many ways. There should be policies and guidelines that recommend

property owners return their buildings to their original appearance when repairing them.

- We need to consider how to integrate security features for historic storefronts and main street buildings so they do not disrupt the exterior appearance of the buildings and the streets.
- Is there language around signage?
 - The City clarified there is a section on signage for commercial properties. Policies and guidelines around signage may also apply to newer condos with retail on the ground.
- Garbage and parking are also potential issues. Consider how garbage bins should be stored correctly in front of buildings. Suggest guidelines on shielding or screening the garbage bins, so they are not too visually prominent.
- Cabbagetown's charm is seeing the gardens in front of houses. They are a big part of the historical and cultural landscape. Any materials used for building fences should preserve this aspect while also being safe and secure. The gardens and houses should be visible from the streets and not completely shielded.
- Several front yards in the District have a disproportionate amount of hardscaping, including artificial grass, despite City bylaws. The HCD policies could encourage property owners to undertake some soft landscaping to minimize hardscaping and not rely solely on the City bylaws and enforcement.
- In addition to the distinct front gardens, the District is enhanced by its old (100 year+) trees and significant tree canopy. Many of these trees are reaching the end of their life span. It is essential to maintain and replace them with like trees that would grow to the same scale and height. This would ensure the distinct tree population and canopy are maintained.
- There can be more incentives for homeowners on front yard softscaping and tree planting. This may include establishing a partnership with the City's free tree planting service for the City-owned portion of the front properties. A list of suitable trees should also be created to ensure the appropriate trees are planted.

The draft policies seek to permit new front porches and basement entrances on contributing properties and provide guidelines for how this might be compatibly achieved. Do you agree with the policies regarding the addition of new front porches and basement entrances? Why or why not?

- Every property is unique. It is important to ensure that any porch additions do not alter, destroy, obscure or block any heritage attributes visible from the public realm.
- Explore options to provide policies for second-floor decks. Some second-floor decks have features that are out of scale or materials that are incongruous with their surroundings (i.e. railings and awnings).

- Consider the need to conserve heritage attributes while meeting current building codes.
- The scale of the material and the scale of the surrounding building is critical. What is added should not be out of scale with similar materials within the neighbourhood.
- The use of glass balcony railings in the neighbourhood can be problematic – easily break/crack, require constant cleaning, etc.
- We need to make sure that adding a basement entrance does not overwhelm the front of the house.
- "Basement entrances on the primary façade will only be considered if alternatives are not possible" - this is a good guideline.
- Consider ways to obscure hydro meters located in front of the houses.

The policies include terms such as features/elements/components.

Are those terms clear for property owners and residents?

- Can a property owner remove a rotting wood porch without question?
 - They would not need a heritage permit to replace rotting boards and porch components (considered regular maintenance), but they would need approval and a heritage permit to demolish the existing porch and replace or redesign it.

Suggestion for the Second Community Meeting

CAG members were asked to provide suggestions for the upcoming second community meeting based on the following questions:

What worked/did not work with the format of the first community meeting?

- Miro boards and breakout rooms are appreciated. Smaller breakout rooms help people feel more comfortable speaking up.
- Diagrams are beneficial to help people know what is protected and what is not protected. In addition, diagrams help people understand how things (like additions) would look from the ground.

What material do you think community members would be most interested in discussing?

- Provide useful information about windows and doors, and paint. Many people do small projects and would appreciate guidance
- Consider showing visuals of successful repairs, maintenance or streetscapes.

Did the time and duration of the meeting work well?

- *No comments from the CAG members on this matter.*

What additional suggestions do you have for the Community Consultation Meeting?

- Send out some overview materials beforehand, so people are prepared; however, they do not need to be very extensive.
- The presentation should use as many visuals as possible to break down complicated terms into something tangible and easy to understand.

Next Steps

Alex Corey shared the next steps for the project team. The policies and guidelines will be updated for the draft HCD Plan in preparation for the Second Community Meeting. The tentative time for the Second Community Meeting is in July 2021. Jim Faught closed the meeting and thanked participants for joining.