

Part A

District
Overview

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Heritage Conservation District Concept

A heritage conservation district is a collection of buildings, streets, and open spaces that collectively are of special historical and/or architectural significance to the community. The individual elements of a district must combine in such a way as to present a sense of cohesiveness. A heritage district is a place of special character or association with an integrity of its own that distinguishes it from other areas of the community.

Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* provides for designation of heritage conservation districts. The parameters of this legislation enable municipalities, through study, to define the areas to be designated and to use development guidelines to assist in the regulation of various types of development within heritage conservation districts in order to ensure that the district's character and viability are maintained and/or enhanced.

It is not the purpose of heritage conservation district designation to make the district a static place where change is prohibited. Rather, the purpose is to guide change so that it contributes to the district's architectural and historic character.

1.2 Unity of the Documents

The Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District Plan consists of three parts, published in separate volumes:

- This Plan document,
- The District Inventory, and
- The original 1986 Study document.

These documents are complementary, and they are to be considered as a whole in interpreting the Plan.



The view north from Yonge and Colborne Streets, circa 1905.
Weaver #260

1.0 Introduction

1.3 Background to the District Plan

The Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District, adopted by Council in 1986, was the first District in the Town of Markham. The consultant for the Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan was Phillip H. Carter, who concurrently prepared the study and plan for the Thornhill-Vaughan Heritage Conservation District.

The Thornhill Heritage Conservation Districts were among the first in the province. When the studies were begun there were only 5 municipalities with districts in place, and the Ministry of Culture hadn't yet published any guidelines to assist municipalities.

In the 20 years since the Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District was adopted, 60 or more districts have been created. The standards of practice for heritage districts have evolved with experience. In particular, a more holistic approach, including landscapes, has been developed, and user-friendly plan documents, pioneered by Markham's Unionville District Plan, have become the norm. The *Ontario Heritage Act* has been amended as well, most recently by Bill 60, which came into effect in May 2005.

The Town of Markham Council determined that after almost 20 years it was time to review and renew the Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District.

1.4 Purpose of the District Plan Review

The purpose of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District Plan Review was to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing policies and guidelines and to update the District Plan to modern standards of practice, incorporating the experience of the local community through a community consultation

process. As part of the review, a new inventory of every property in the District has been prepared.



25 Colborne Street, circa 1925. Weaver #109

1.0 Introduction

1.5 Phases of the District Plan Review

The first phase of the District Plan review was the examination of the existing District Plan and other related and relevant materials affecting District, and to undertake a community consultation program to help identify issues of concern.

A Thornhill District Plan Review Advisory Committee was formed to assist staff and the consultant by providing feedback on proposed policies and guidelines. The Advisory Committee was comprised of two elected members of Council, two members of Heritage Markham (Council's advisory committee on heritage matters), two local property owners, and one representative from each of the following organizations: the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill and the Ward 1 (South) Thornhill Residents Inc.

A community survey was mailed to residents to solicit views on suggested improvements to the District, the District Plan, and processes and procedures. A community meeting was also held at the Thornhill Community Centre in March 2005 to further obtain feedback and comments from local residents.

An Issue Identification Report was prepared which summarized the results from the community consultation and organized the issues into "areas for action" with recommendations. This document was presented to both the public and Council in June 2005.

Phase 2 of the District Plan Review involved the preparation of new policies and guidelines to address the issues. The new Heritage District Plan also reflects modern standards of practice and introduces specific elements that are now required to be included in all heritage conservation district plans as per the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

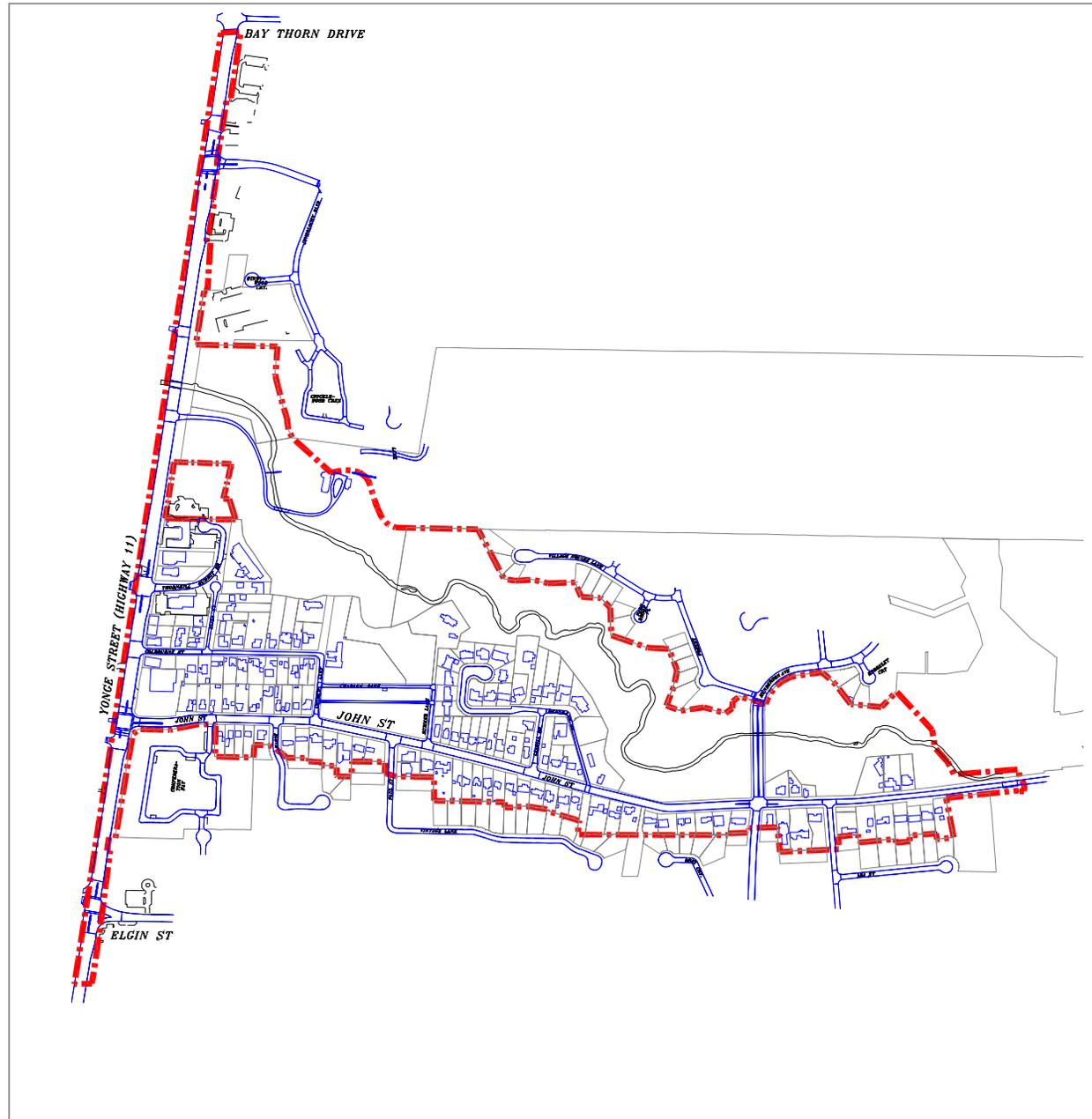


104 John Street, 1908. Weaver # 38.

1.0 Introduction

1.6 District Boundaries

The boundary of the original Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District was established by By-law No. 269-86, and was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board on November 23, 1986. It is shown with the dash-dot line on the map to the right, and it remains unchanged.



2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

2.1 Examination

An examination of the Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District shows that it has retained the character described in the 1986 District Plan. Indeed, the heritage character of the District has been enhanced in many cases, by virtue of heritage-friendly additions and alterations to non-heritage buildings. Many new houses, based on local heritage precedents have also been erected. The goal and objectives of the 1986 Plan have been largely sustained, and the District has been successful in preserving its heritage resources and heritage character. Credit is due to the community, local groups, and the staff and Council of the Town of Markham.

2.1.1 Heritage Character

Thornhill is one of Ontario's earliest settlements, dating from the original construction of Yonge Street. As with many early villages, it was the intersection of the road with a river, giving the opportunity to develop water-powered mills that gave rise to a concentrated settlement within the general agricultural context. The first mill in what became Thornhill was built in 1801. The British Corn Laws created a ready market for Ontario's grain and Thornhill prospered and grew for 45 years. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 ended the boom. The village entered a long stable period with little economic growth, but new houses continued to be built, though at a slower rate. The stability preserved the village and its buildings for another century and more. In 1986, the active effort of preservation, under the Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District, was undertaken.



30 Colborne Street, C. 1935. Weaver # 95.



A recent photograph of the same house

2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

2.2 Statement of Heritage Value

The Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District is a distinct community in the Town of Markham, characterized by a wealth of heritage buildings, historic sites, and landscapes. Although none of Thornhill's mills or the earliest houses have survived, a wealth of buildings, both residential and commercial, dating from the 1840s, '50s, and '60s remain—largely intact.

The concentration of mid-19th century Georgian and Neo-Classical buildings in the historic village core is remarkable, and constitutes the original basis of the village's heritage character. Other houses dating from the late 19th century through the early 20th century represent many of the styles developed during those prolific decades. Regency, Victorian vernacular, Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, Edwardian, Foursquare, Arts and Crafts, and Craftsman Bungalow styles are all represented in the District. Many of the mid-20th century houses, including the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) housing, were built in the Cape Cod Cottage style, which shares the New England Georgian model with the old village houses of a century before, and many of the more recent houses have made an effort to reflect the heritage styles in the village.

The ongoing development of Thornhill has maintained the scale and character of the older parts of the village, with a variety of lot sizes and siting, mostly modest-sized buildings, mature and rich planting and landscaping, a rural or modified-rural road profile, and a proliferation of white wooden picket fencing. This character is strongly maintained in most of the village. Although the mills and their ponds are long gone, the valleys are preserved in a mostly natural state as parkland and hazard land, with significant amounts of woodland. The preservation of the valleys respects and honours the mill-town origins of Thornhill.

The quality of the heritage resources in the District is indicated by the number of properties designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, and the large number of buildings carrying "A" and "B" grades in the District Inventory.



1892—Weaver #37.



1908—Weaver #38



1976—Weaver #39

The evolution of style, 104 John Street. The Victorian tail doesn't appear in the 1892 photograph. It's still a straight-forward Georgian, although the veranda posts have Victorian gingerbread. The front of the house was transformed in the early 20th century with the Arts and Crafts sunroom and veranda.

2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

2.2.1 Individual Designations within the District

Within the District, there are eight properties that have been individually designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. These properties are included in the Part V District designation, and the general policies and guidelines of the Plan will apply to those individually designated properties located within the District.

| Address | By-law Number | Name of Building/Property |
|------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| 15 Church Lane Rectory | 379-86 | St. Volodymyr's Church and Rectory |
| 10 Colborne Street | 4-78 | Thornhill Village Library |
| 14 Colborne Street | 80-90 | The Red Cottage |
| 37 Colborne Street | 7-78 | Thomas Hamill Cottage |
| 39 Colborne Street | 4-78 | Thomas Hamill Cottage |
| 111 John Street | 116-91 | Fisher House |
| 148 John Street | 298-78 | David Chapman House |
| 4 Leahill Drive | 4-78 | The Edey House |

At the time of individual designation, a detailed designation report identifying the “reasons for designation” was prepared for each of the above properties. These reports are on file at the Town and are a useful resource when exterior changes are proposed.

2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

2.2.2 Building/Property Classification

All the buildings/properties within the District have been evaluated with each being assigned to one of three categories. These classifications are as follows:

Class A – Buildings/Properties of major importance to the District

- They possess cultural heritage value
- They are buildings and properties that maintain the heritage character of the District, primarily pre-1900
- These buildings possess heritage attributes or character defining elements such as historic materials, features, characteristics, forms, locations, spatial configurations, uses or historical associations that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the District. For example, a building may represent a historic architectural style or may have historic claddings, windows architectural features, verandas or landscape elements.
- Includes properties designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* and buildings identified as being of architectural and historical significance in the 1986 Heritage District Plan

Class B – Buildings/Properties of importance to the District

- They include buildings or properties of emerging cultural heritage value primarily from the early 20th century
- They are good neighbours to Class A buildings/properties and contribute to the heritage character of the District by virtue of design, materials and/or scale.
- They support and help define the character of District.
- Includes buildings/properties that may possess specific historical or associative value (the building or property

is associated with the life of a person or group who was of importance to the Thornhill or broader community)

Class C – Other Buildings/Properties in the District

- They are buildings/properties primarily post 1939
- They include buildings/properties that are sympathetic to the District by virtue of their scale or design qualities
- They include buildings/properties not sympathetic to the historic character of the District.

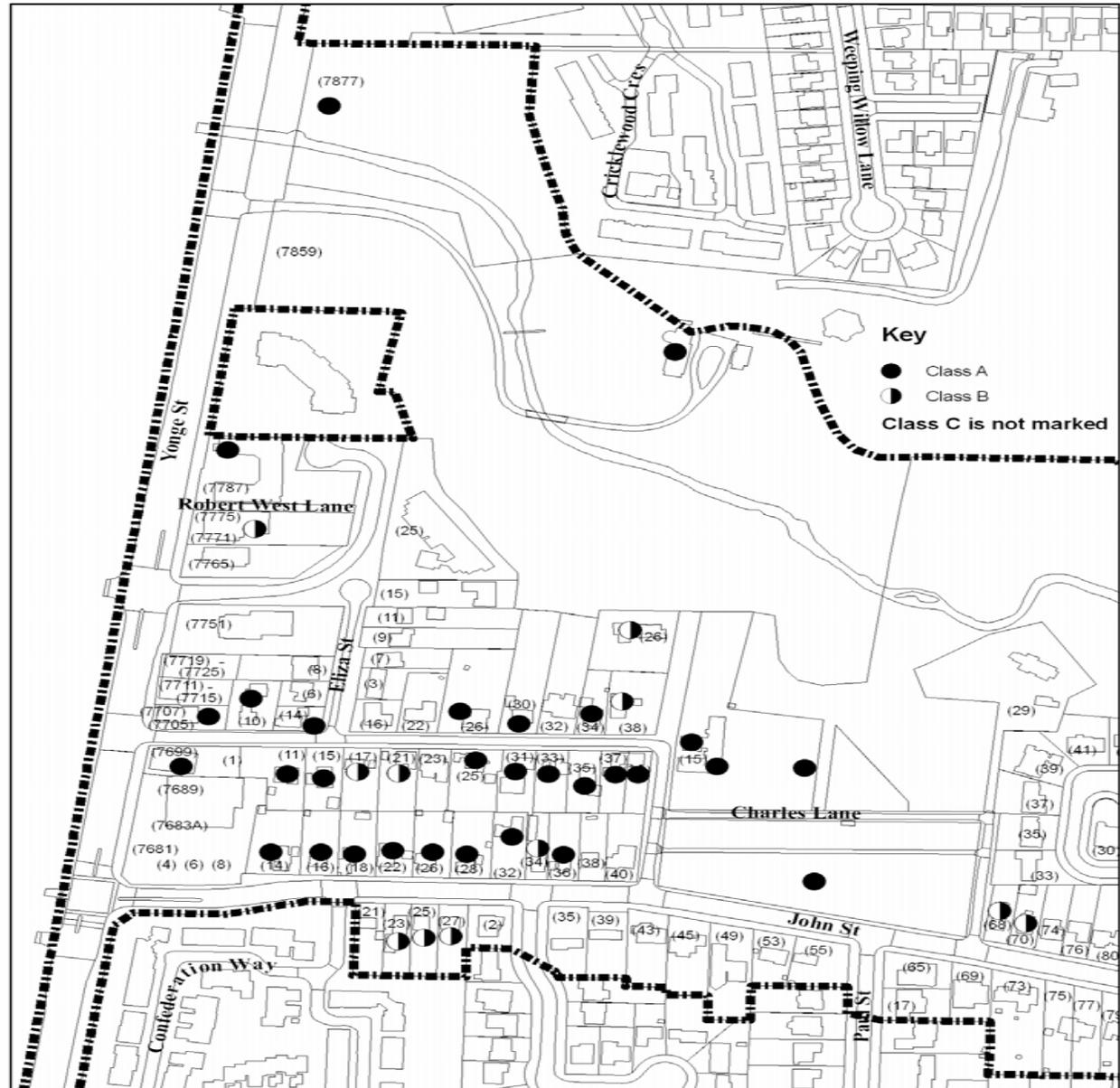
Once approved, the classification for each property will remain in place until formally changed by Council with opportunity for both owner and public input.

The process by which a building/property classification could change is summarized in Appendix C.

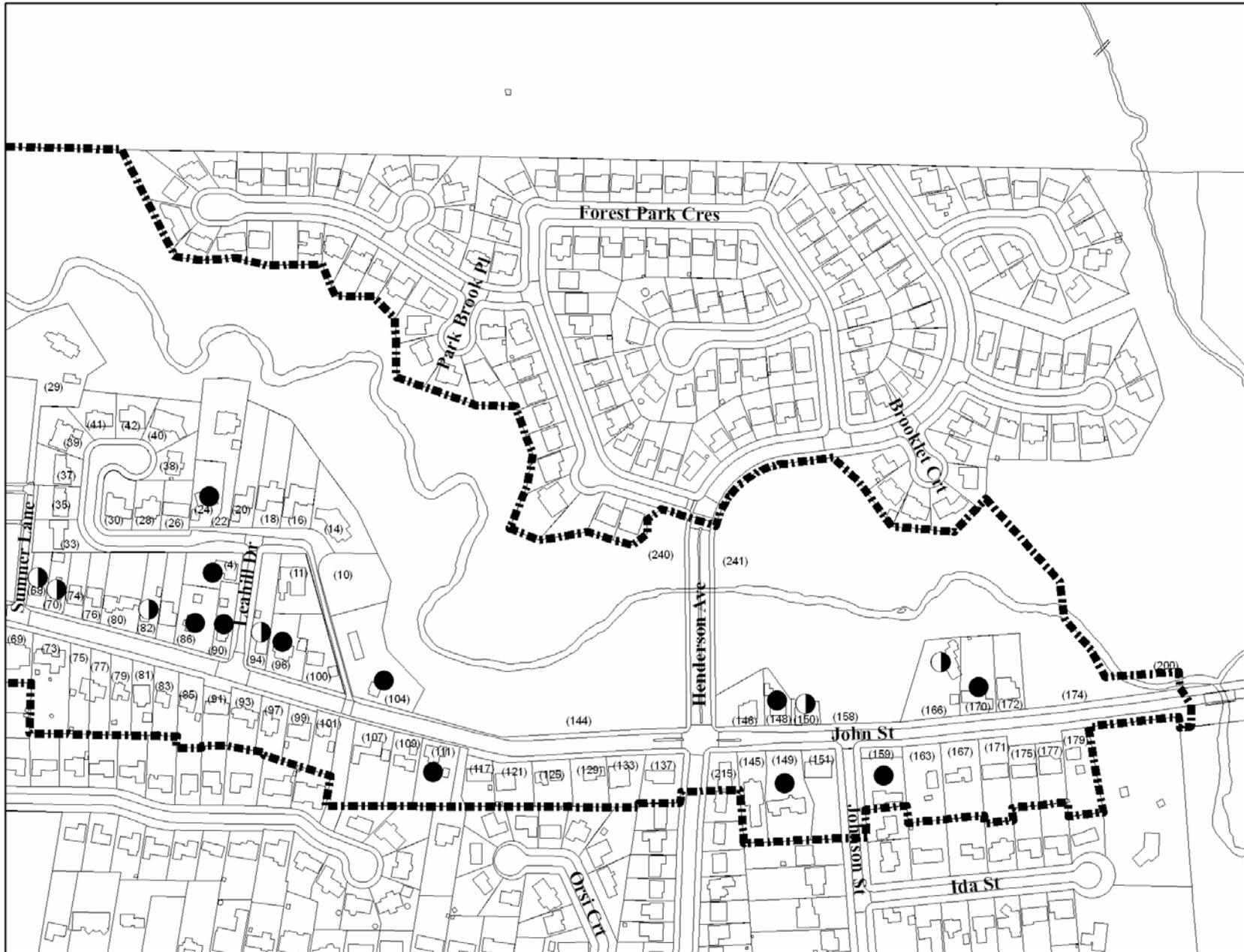
The classification of each property is shown on the maps that follow in Section 2.2.3 and identified by address in Appendix B. A detailed description of each property in the District can be found in the inventory, published separately.

2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

2.2.3 Building/Property Classification Maps



2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements



2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

2.3 Statement of Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Thornhill Markham Heritage Conservation District are embodied in its buildings and landscapes, which are shown and described in detail in Sections 4.1 through 4.4 of the original Study, and in the built form, architectural detail, and historical associations, which are depicted and described in detail in the District Plan Inventory. These attributes are worthy of preservation.

2.4 Statement of Objectives in Designating the District

2.4.1 Overall Objective

To ensure the retention and conservation of the District's cultural heritage resources and heritage character, and to guide change so that it contributes to and does not detract from, the District's architectural, historical, and contextual character.

2.4.2 Objectives for Heritage Buildings

To retain and conserve the heritage buildings identified as Class A in the District Plan.

To conserve heritage attributes and distinguishing qualities of heritage buildings, and prevent the removal or alteration of any historic or distinctive architectural feature.

To correct unsympathetic alterations to heritage buildings.

To facilitate the restoration of heritage buildings based on a thorough examination of archival and pictorial evidence, physical evidence, and an understanding of the history of the local community.

To promote retention and reuse of heritage buildings and take exceptional measures to prevent their demolition.

2.4.3 Objectives for Other Buildings

To retain or enhance the complementary character of Class B buildings.

To discourage the demolition of Class B buildings and encourage their retention, as they are supportive of the overall heritage character of the area.

To encourage improvements to Class C buildings which will further enhance the District's heritage character.

2.4.4 Objectives for Landscape/Streetscape

To facilitate the introduction of, as well as conservation of, historic landscape treatments in both the public and private realm.

To preserve trees and mature vegetation, and encourage the planting of species characteristic of the District.

To preserve historic fences and introduce new fences that respect historic patterns and styles while meeting contemporary needs.

To preserve the existing street pattern and rural cross-sections and refrain from widening existing pavement and road allowances.

To introduce landscape, streetscape, and infrastructure improvements that will enhance the heritage character of the District.

2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

2.4.5 Objectives for New Development

To ensure compatible infill construction that will enhance the District's heritage character and complement the area's village-like, human scale of development.

To guide the design of new development to be sympathetic and compatible with the heritage resources and character of the District while providing for contemporary needs.

2.4.6 Objectives for Community Support

To foster community support, pride and appreciation of the heritage buildings, landscapes, and character of the District, and promote the need to conserve these resources for future generations.

To facilitate public participation and involvement in the conservation of heritage resources and further development of the District.

To offer assistance and incentives to individual heritage property owners to encourage the use of proper conservation approaches when undertaking improvement projects.

2.4.7 Objectives for Business/Tourism

To work with owners on Yonge Street to maintain a progressive and competitive business environment while at the same time protecting the heritage attributes of the District that make the area a unique and distinctive shopping environment.

To acknowledge that the Heritage District is an asset that the Town can leverage and celebrate in order to contribute to the greater commercial success of the Town.

3.0 Review and Interpretation

3.1 Review of Activities in the District

3.1.1 Activities subject to review

In accordance with Section 42.1 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the Goal and Objectives, Policies, and Design Guidelines in this document will be used to review the following types of activities in the District, other than those exempted below:

- The erection, demolition, or removal of any building or structure, or the alteration of any part of a property other than the interior of a building or structure, other than activities described in Section 3.1.2, below. (A 'Structure' is anything built that is intended to be permanent, such as outbuildings, fences, signs, and infrastructure items such as utility boxes.)
- All matters relating to the Town of Markham Official Plan, and the regulation of zoning, site plan control, severances, variances, signage, demolitions, building relocation, and planning, urban design and other related studies.
- All municipal public works, such as street lighting, signs, landscaping, tree removal, utility locations, and street and infrastructure improvements.
- All activities of the municipal and regional governments.

The review of activities in the District will primarily focus on work or projects visible from the public realm (i.e., front and visible side elevations of property.)

3.1.2 Activities exempt from review

In accordance with Section 41.1 (5)(e) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the following classes of alterations that are minor in nature, are not required to obtain a heritage permit, and are not subject to review under this Plan:

- any interior work, except that which affects external appearance;
- general repairs to eavestrough, roofs, chimneys, fences, exterior cladding, and weatherstripping;
- Repairs to broken window panes to original specifications;
- Roof re-shingling as per the District Plan policies and guidelines (replacing asphalt shingles with the same material);
- New or replacement rear yard fencing unless on a corner lot;
- Repainting in existing colour scheme if the colours are in conformity with the District Plan or in conformity with a previous Heritage Permit;
- Paving or re-paving a driveway in asphalt; and
- Backyard features that are not visible from the public realm, such as patios, pools, ponds, fountains, garden, and tool sheds, gazebos, doghouses/dog runs, and other small outbuildings.

3.0 Review and Interpretation

3.2 Contexts for Interpretation

Provisions of the District plan should be considered within the contexts of:

- The Ontario Planning Act,
- The Provincial Policy Statement, and
- Overall municipal objectives and goals.

In accordance with Section 41.2 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, Council may not pass a by-law for any purpose that is contrary to the objectives set out in the Plan. And, in the event of a conflict between the Plan and a municipal bylaw that affects the District, the Plan prevails to the extent of the conflict.