

Heritage Matters...in

Commercial Properties in Heritage Conservation Districts

Markham has protected the older parts of Thornhill, Markham Village, Buttonville and Unionville as heritage conservation districts using Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. **In a heritage district, all exterior changes to buildings and properties require heritage review and approval.** A heritage conservation district is:

- A collection or grouping of buildings, streets and open spaces that together are of cultural heritage value to our community.
- An area with a special character that distinguishes it from other areas of the community
- An area defined by a boundary where all properties are protected from inappropriate changes through the use of policies and design guidelines.

Heritage conservation district maps are available on the City website at www.markham.ca/heritage. Search the **Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value of Interest** to see the status of your property in a heritage conservation district.

Objectives of the District

Changes will occur in heritage conservation districts. They are living parts of our community, not museum sites. District designation protects existing heritage resources and guides change so that it contributes to the area's unique character. The key objectives are:

- To **preserve heritage resources**- these are fragile gifts from past generations. They are not a renewable resource. Once lost, they are gone forever.
- To **preserve original/early features** - it is important to retain original or early building fabric such as windows, wall claddings and architectural elements.
 - **It is better to maintain than to repair**
 - **It is better to repair than to restore**
 - **It is better to restore than replace**
- To ensure **new construction is complementary and respectful** - ranging from an addition to a heritage or non-heritage building to a new building in the district.
- To protect **features in the public realm** that make the area unique - this includes streetscapes, lot patterns and vegetation.

Commercial Signage in the District

Markham's heritage districts are also identified as **Special Sign Districts** in the City's Sign By-law to ensure appropriate heritage friendly signage on both public and private property. See section 10.0 - Special Sign Districts. **A Sign Permit from the Building Department is required before installing a new sign or replacing an existing sign face.**

The Sign By-law limits the size of signs, placement, materials and illumination methods in heritage areas. This helps ensure that signs are compatible with the heritage character of these areas. There are sign design policies in each heritage conservation district plan.

Older signs that pre-date the Sign By-law and in some cases, the heritage conservation district designations, are 'grandfathered' and in a number of instances, do not comply with the Sign By-law. This explains why there are still some oversized and back-lit signs in our heritage areas. To encourage the installation of new appropriate signage, the City offers grant assistance to replace inappropriate legal non-conforming signage.

Appropriate Heritage Commercial Signage:

- Doesn't obscure architectural features of buildings.
- Locates signs in traditional locations such as above the storefront or as a stand-alone ground sign.
- Uses traditional materials such as wood and canvas awning signs as opposed to modern plastics and vinyl (which are not permitted).
- Uses letter styles and fonts appropriate to the heritage character of the area such as Roman, Clarendon, Egyptian and sans serif styles.
- Uses capital letters instead of lower case letters
- Uses heritage colours- no fluorescent or very bright colours not considered traditional in nature.
- Uses symbols where feasible to enhance product recognition
- Illuminates the sign with external light fixtures (i.e. goose-neck lighting) rather than backlit panels.

Changes to Property in a Heritage District

All properties located within a heritage conservation district are subject to a specific review and approval process—ranging from a Major Heritage Permit and Site Plan Control Approval for larger development projects to a Minor Heritage Permit for smaller projects.

The following information summarizes the type of approval required depending on the size and location of the commercial project. Please consult with City staff regarding complete application requirements.

1. Interior Alterations

- ✓ Any interior alterations that do not affect the exterior of the building do not require review by Heritage Markham or the Planning Department (unless a specific interior feature is identified in a designation by-law).
- ✓ If interior alterations are contemplated, the City's Building Standards Department should be contacted to assess whether a Building Permit is required.

2. Exterior Addition/Alterations or a New Building

- ✓ Any addition or alterations or new building requires a Major Heritage Permit and Site Plan Approval through the Planning Department.
- ✓ There are application fees and submission requirements such as a site plan and elevation drawings will be required.
- ✓ A Major Heritage Permit with or without conditions is required prior to applying for Site Plan Approval.
- ✓ A letter of credit or other form of financial security is required to be deposited with the City to ensure the work is undertaken as per the approved Heritage Permit plans.
- ✓ A Building Permit application can be submitted once the Heritage Permit is secure and Site Plan Approval is obtained.

3. Minor Heritage Permit Application

This permit form is only used when minor alterations are proposed that do not require any other permits or planning approvals. Typical projects requiring a Heritage Permit include:

- ✓ New or different wall cladding or roof treatment
- ✓ Painting
- ✓ Masonry cleaning and repointing

- ✓ New or different windows or doors
- ✓ Changes to architectural decorations (i.e. Verandas, trim, soffits, fascia, etc.)
- ✓ Front yard patios, lamp installations, awnings
- ✓ Mechanical equipment
- ✓ Structural repairs that effect the external appearance
- ✓ Fences

Tree Removal

Property owners must apply for a permit before injuring or destroying **any tree** in Markham with a trunk diameter of 20 cm (about 8 inches) or more, measured at 1.37 metres (about 54 inches) above the ground at the base of the tree. Anyone contravening the Tree Preservation Bylaw and found guilty of an offence will be subject to penalties.

Where can I learn more about heritage district requirements and how to alter my property?

Each district has its own Heritage District Plan. If you want to alter your property in any way, review the Plan's policies, design guidelines and other useful information. Heritage Section staff are also available to provide advice and assistance.

How do I get a copy of a Heritage District Plan?

All Markham heritage conservation district plans are available in paper versions from the Development Services Commission at the Markham Civic Centre for a small fee. Or you can download a PDF copy of the Heritage District Plans from the City of Markham webpage (Markham Heritage).

What financial assistance is available?

Markham has created a variety of financial programs to help designated properties including grants for Commercial Façade Improvement, Commercial Signage Replacement, restoration of Designated Heritage Property and property tax reductions for heritage properties. Contact staff or the review the Markham Heritage section of the City's website.

**“Heritage Matters...in Markham”
is a series of information brochures
on heritage planning topics.**

**For further information, contact:
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www.markham.ca/heritage