



November 20, 2014

Attention: Municipal Heritage Committee

Designation and Demolition

With the most recent demolition request of Mount St Joseph, the recent 80% demolition of James Street Baptist Church, the near loss of significant portions of 1 St James Place this year, Council's direction to pursue another RFP for St Marks Church, and the hold up of the designation of 52 and 56 Charlton Avenue West, the Durand Neighbourhood Association has been under siege with significant change to our heritage. We have growing concerns regarding not only the heritage of our historically significant neighbourhood but also the heritage of Hamilton's other neighbourhoods that go largely unprotected.

As a protective measure, is it not possible to use heritage inventories from the past while the City continues in its work to develop new heritage inventory such as the one in the Downtown? The City's own Volume 2 which dates back to 2000 would be a good start. There is a lot in the City's archives, yet we seem to not access the record when it comes to development proposals in our community. Recently I came across a map listing over 7400 buildings of cultural and heritage significance in Hamilton. It was accessible via the internet. Why are we not accessing this information as part of the review of development applications?

<http://joeycoleman.ca/2011/05/18/map-of-hamilton-heritage-buildings-and-properties/>

The DNA would like to begin the discussion of incorporating the entire Durand Neighbourhood in one Heritage Conservation District. We need and want to be proactive.

Since 1980 there have been over 75 areas throughout Ontario designated as Heritage Conservation Districts. Part 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act enables municipalities to designate defined areas as Heritage

Conservation Districts. District designation enables a municipality to manage and guide future development and promote conservation, protection and enhancement of an area's special characteristics. It is the Durand Neighbourhood Association's current thinking that it is high time the whole of the Durand is recognized as a Heritage Conservation District.

Heritage districts contribute to the cultural understanding and appreciation of who we are and from whence we came as a community. Characteristics of Heritage Districts include:

- a concentration of heritage buildings, sites or structures;
- a framework of structural elements such as of major material features or street patterns
- a sense of visual coherence, by way of scale, massing, height, material, proportion,
- and a distinctiveness especially in the sense of a time, place, or period in the history of a greater area.

The City of Hamilton has 7 districts designated under the Ontario Heritage Act., two of which are in the Durand. They are the Durand-Markland Area designated in 1990 and the MacNab-Charles street area designated in 1994. The Durand neighbourhood is unique in the concentration of spectacular and exceptional heritage architecture. It has some of the country's most superlative "nouveau-riche" mansions from the turn of the century. The architecturally significant heritage buildings within the confines of the Durand's relatively small area are really unparalleled in their concentration and in their magnificence. The origins of the Durand trace back to the first half of the 19th century when the City began to really grow and wealthy business owners, entrepreneurs and industrialists sought out the area as a new suburb in a geographically distinct area of gently rising land at the base of the escarpment. The area afforded spectacular uninterrupted views just over the city all the way to the bay front. It was and still is a beautiful area of large lots with extensive grounds and gardens not far from the bustle and pollution of the downtown. By 1920 the Durand was considered the most exclusive neighbourhood in Hamilton at a time when Hamilton was revered as one of the Canada's most prosperous cities.

Sadly, the Durand has lost many significant heritage buildings over the last 80 years, many in the name of urban renewal, and often after they had fallen victim to disrepair. Significant loss was felt subsequent to the Great Depression when many were demolished. A shocking disappearance in the continuity of the neighbourhood fabric happened also in the late 50's, 60's and 70's when massive neighbourhood redevelopment occurred in the name of urban renewal whereby whole blocks of heritage dwellings were bulldozed to make way for high density housing and the midrise apartment buildings that we see now dotting the northern periphery of the Durand. It has been recorded that over 300 historical buildings were demolished in the Durand during this period. The Durand has been associated with a turning point in urban planning in the mid 1970's and was instrumental in the shift to participatory planning after the decimation of the historical fabric in prior years. The Association's efforts brought to a halt the construction of residential high rise towers in the 1970's and has since helped to conserve landmarks in the community and promoted community based solutions to urban issues.

The DNA now wishes to make a concerted effort to steward future development by identifying the Durand as a Heritage Conservation District so we do not repeat mistakes made in previous eras. To do

this, it is important that the community gets behind this. We are looking to make a supportive effort and push the municipality for a critical all encompassing district designation. It is through this effort that we hope to provide an agenda for preservation and conservation of the character of this most precious of neighbourhoods. The Durand is currently being pressured by a burgeoning renaissance within the City core and its real estate is becoming most sought after for the very reasons that make it a unique neighborhood. The DNA recognizes that the time is now to start to take ownership again of our neighbourhood and demand of our municipality that it recognize its uniqueness, so that we can take efforts to conserve, preserve and help steward future development of the area.

I would like to quote from our MPP for Hamilton Center and present leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, who said it best when she described the Durand as 'breathtaking and stunning'. To quote from Andrea,

"The turrets, ageless churches, and trees older than any of us, lining streets that beg for a return to cobblestones and horse ties (at the very least, a return to two –way traffic) all conspire to capture one's loyalty.....The Durand neighbourhood is a neighbourhood worth visiting, a neighbourhood worth preserving and protecting, a very livable neighbourhood, and definitely a neighbourhood worth bragging about."

Let's therefore start bragging, by identifying the entire Durand as a distinct Heritage Conservation District, a district worthy of preservation, worthy of conservation, and ultimately a destination of important historical record and resource for future generations in our city, province and Country!

Janice Brown

President, Durand Neighbourhood Association

***NOTE: references for the above were taken from :

- 1) Ontario Conservation Tool Kit- HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICTS- A guide to district designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.
- 2) Bill Manson's 'Footsteps In Time- Exploring Hamilton's Heritage Neighbourhoods.'