



SYNDICATE HOUSING HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Bower Street, Acton



DESIGNATION REPORT and HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN

Prepared by Heritage Halton Hills
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PART I: SYNDICATE HOUSING DESIGNATION REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

Recognizing the unique configuration of worker housing and their unusual brickwork, Heritage Halton Hills decided to investigate the possibility of creating a Heritage District to protect these buildings. It was our intention to designate one, two or all of the buildings, depending upon support. In February 2003, John Mark Rowe and Janis Fread headed a committee to meet with residents and encourage their participation in this process. The response was warm and encouraging. The following month a second meeting was held to inventory the buildings and record their features. A final meeting was held on 4 May to present the reasons for designation to the residents and amend them as suggested.

Finally, Janis Fread circulated a petition for each property owner to sign. Those present signed and Mrs. Fread proceeded to contact the missing signatories, explain the decisions, give them a copy of the Reasons for Designation, and then successfully solicit their signatures. All ten property owners embraced the idea. The original Designation Report prepared by Heritage Halton Hills included a copy of the petition with the signatures of all ten property owners.

On July 7, 2003 J.M. Rowe, Chair of Heritage Halton Hills, appeared before Council. He presented Council with the original Designation Report, and requested that Council establish the District, noting the support of all property owners within the proposed district for the idea of heritage conservation district designation. Council subsequently passed Resolution No. 2003-0209, receiving the Heritage Halton Hills presentation, and directing that Town staff meet with Heritage Halton Hills to review the Designation Report and report back to Council.

Following the direction of Council, John Mark Rowe met with Planning staff and the Deputy Clerk on 29 August 2003 to discuss the creation of a heritage conservation district plan for the District. J.M. Rowe then prepared a draft heritage conservation district plan, and a meeting to discuss the proposed plan, was held at the Acton Town Hall on September 15, 2003. Subsequently, Heritage Halton Hills was able to obtain written support for the draft Plan from nine of the ten property owners. Town Planning staff also circulated the draft heritage conservation district plan to Town departments and the provincial Ministry of Culture for comments.

On November 24, 2003, Town Planning staff reported back to Council with a number of recommendations. Council approved Recommendation No. GC-2003-0374, which stated that the designation of the Syndicate Housing in Acton as a Heritage Conservation District, be endorsed in principle, as a positive step in preserving the cultural heritage of the Town of Halton Hills, subject to the completion of a final Heritage Conservation District Plan.

Staff and Heritage Halton Hills were directed to finalize a Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District Plan, and provide the property owners within the proposed Heritage Conservation District an opportunity for review and comment. Upon completion of a final Heritage Conservation District Plan supported by the property owners within the proposed District, it was directed that the necessary steps be taken to adopt the Plan and designate the Syndicate Housing in Acton as a Heritage Conservation District under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

In 2004, Heritage Halton Hills prepared a revised Syndicate Housing Designation Report and Heritage Conservation District Plan, and received the written endorsement of nine of the ten property owners for this Plan. Additional revisions in order to clarify the purpose and structure of the Plan were made, and the final draft Syndicate Housing Designation Report and Heritage Conservation District Plan, dated January 2005, was presented to Council for approval.

2.0 LOCATION: Lot 28, Concession 3, Esquesing Township,
Rufus Adams Survey Block 4, Village of Acton
#69, 71, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89 Bower Street, Acton,
Town of Halton Hills.

3.0 THE HALTON HILLS OFFICIAL PLAN

The Official Plan for the Town of Halton Hills contains policies with respect to heritage conservation. The Plan specifies that certain areas of the Town may be studied with a view towards establishing them as Heritage Conservation Districts. The Plan notes that Heritage Conservation Districts may have the following characteristics:

- (a) a majority of the buildings which reflect some aspect of the heritage of the community or are of historic or architectural significance; and,
- (b) significant natural features, which complement the buildings that should be preserved because of historic or architectural significance.

Section 8.10.5 directs that a Heritage Conservation District Plan may be prepared for an area under study. Section 8.10.5 also specifies that an area may be designated as a Heritage Conservation District under the *Ontario Heritage Act* (Part V), having received the endorsement of the Ontario Ministry of Culture for the Heritage Conservation District Plan. It should be noted that the Ministry of Culture does not endorse individual Heritage Conservation Districts, as it is a locally initiated process, but does generally support the establishment of Heritage Conservation Districts as an effective tool in the conservation of heritage resources.

Based upon the public consultation process undertaken by Heritage Halton Hills, as outlined in Section 1.0, and the Designation Report and Heritage Conservation District Plan prepared, the designation of the Syndicate Housing in Acton conforms to the intent of Section 8.10.5 of the Halton Hills Official Plan.

4.0 HISTORY

In 1829, the Crown granted the Lot 28, Concession 3, in the Township of Esquesing to the Canada Company. In 1833, Rufus Adams purchased it. Rufus and Maria Adams built their farmhouse at the head of St. Alban's Drive. The orchard lane later became Bower Avenue. The growing Village of Acton did not have a financial institution, so in January 1882, the Acton Banking Company was formed with industrialist William H. Storey, merchants Christie & Company and David Henderson as bankers. They may have bought debentures from the Village Reeve to finance the proposed Town Hall.



In February 1882, Messrs. Christie & Henderson surveyed their property on Bower Street and Willow Street into village lots. A street was surveyed to run from Bower Street to Henderson's pond and an alley ran along the rear of the lots. The new street was called Alice and the alley Accommodation. Worker housing was in great demand. Beardmore Tannery announced in March that they would need about 50 tenement houses for their employees. These developments may have prompted the principals of the Acton Banking Company to form the Acton Building Association. William H. Storey was the President of the Association and in contrast to the fumbling progress of the Town Hall; these ten tenements were built without delay and of excellent

workmanship. William Firstbrook of Toronto was engaged as contractor and work began in the summer of 1882. The *Acton Free Press* announced in October that the brickwork was almost done. By the end of November they were ready for occupants. The newspaper placed the cost of building the ten units at \$7500.

In the book, *Acton's Early Days*, newspaper editor Henry P. Moore noted;

All the houses are now owned by private parties, and nearly all are occupied by the owners. There have been the scenes of much happy home life, and will continue to be. They have housed preachers and teachers; business men and professionals; manufacturers and employees; tradespeople and retired folk; young and old; none excessively rich, and no needy poor. Many citizens of high character have had them for home; and never was there a man arrested there for crime in the all the years.

Originally rented, they are now all free-hold tenure homes, situated on the original lots. All have been altered from the original in varying degrees.



5.0 ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

STYLE

The row houses were created using inspiration from the Second Empire style. This style was very popular around the time these homes were constructed. It is named for the Second Empire period during which Napoleon III ruled France. The home features elaborate brickwork with contrasting colours and patterns. The tall windows featuring a rounded brick arch along with similarly adorned bay windows is just one of the second empire features which make these homes so attractive. As with all the homes on Bower, these homes draw from other styles as there seems to be some Italianate influences as well.

COMMON FEATURES



MASSING: Double semi-detached, related by a vertical division.

PLAN: rectangular with short façade

FACADE: full two storey with one bay on ground floor of each unit. Constructed of clay brick, laid in a stretcher pattern. The other walls are of the same construction.

WALL DETAIL: Quoins of yellow brick; belt courses of yellow, red and black bricks, plinth at base, and entablature on top of a plain parapet with decorative brick.



EXTERIOR BEARING WALL: stone

ROOF: Nearly flat roof of tar with gravel with metal trim. Former brick chimneys have been removed.

WINDOWS: Within a flat horizontal opening, surmounted with voussoirs of thin yellow, red and black bricks of equal height. A plain lug sill of stone sits below each window. Original upstairs windows were double-hung with an unusual 6 over 2 pane arrangement. Ground floor bays featured a large single window in a 6 over 2 pane arrangement, flanked on each side of the bay with a thin 1



over 1 paned window of a height equal to the front window.

ENTRANCE: Each building façade has a door for each unit set in a flat horizontal opening surmounted with voussoirs of thin yellow, red and black bricks of equal height. Within the structural opening is a flat, single light transom. Each entrance has a single door. Three steps run directly from the ground level to the entry level, on a flat horizontal surface, without any covering. The porches are currently concrete. The original material is unknown.



6.0 UNIT FEATURES

UNIT ONE



ADDRESS: **69\71 Bower St.,
Acton, ON L7J-1E4**
ESQUESING: Lot 28, Con. 3
VILLAGE LOT: 12
PLAN NO.: 75
ASSESSMENT ROLL:
(71)24-15-050-002-169-00
(69)24-15-050-002-170-00
PICTURE REF: Bower6971-01.jpeg
2003 OWNER(S): Peter Miller (71)
Richard & Judith Dobbs (69)

UNIT TWO



ADDRESS: **75\77 Bower St.,
Acton, ON L7J-1E4**
ESQUESING: Lot 28, Con. 3
VILLAGE LOT: 13
PLAN NO.: 75
ASSESSMENT ROLL:
(75)24-15-050-002-168-00
(77)24-15-050-002-167-00
PICTURE REF: Bower7577-01.jpeg
2003 OWNER(S): Steve K (75);
Glen Wilkinson (77)

UNIT THREE



ADDRESS: **79\81 Bower St.,
Acton, ON L7J-1E4**
ESQUESING: Lot 28, Con. 3
VILLAGE LOT: 14
PLAN NO.: 75
ASSESSMENT ROLL:
(79)24-15-050-002-166-00
(81)24-15-050-002-165-00
PICTURE REF: Bower7981-01.jpeg
2003 OWNER(S): Michael Agnelli
(79) David & Kimberly Butler (81)

UNIT FOUR



ADDRESS: **83\85 Bower St.,
Acton, ON L7J-1E4**
ESQUESING: Lot 28, Con. 3
VILLAGE LOT: 15
PLAN NO.: 75
ASSESSMENT ROLL:
(83)24-15-050-002-164-00
(85)24-15-050-002-163-00
PICTURE REF: Bower8385-01.jpeg
2003 OWNER(S): Garth & Vicki
Smith (83) Paul & Belynda
Campbell (85)

UNIT FIVE



ADDRESS: **87\89 Bower St.,
Acton, ON L7J-1E4**
ESQUESING: Lot 28, Con. 3
VILLAGE LOT: 16
PLAN NO.: 75
ASSESSMENT ROLL:
(87)24-15-050-002-162-00
(89)24-15-050-002-161-00
PICTURE REF: Bower8789-01.jpeg
2003 OWNER(S): Robert Palmer &
Gizella Tscheligi (87) Teresa
Downey (89)

7.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The ten semi-detached units, known as the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District are significant for the following reasons:

1. They are an important aspect of the industrial heritage of the Village of Acton, representing an effort by leading industrialists of the Village to provide housing for workers during a time of housing shortage.
2. These ten units contained in five detached buildings are a unique grouping, being co-terminus to each other and having been built at the same time by the same builder.
3. The unique and unusual patterning of brickwork on the façade and the sides of the buildings identify each building with distinctive designs on each.
4. A single-light transom surmounts each entrance door.
5. Each unit of each building has a bay with three windows. The bay is topped with

- decorative crown moulding.
6. The white wood trim surrounding all windows on the façade and sides of each building.

SOURCES FOR THE DESIGNATION REPORT:

Matthew J. M. B. Rowe, “Acton Urban Inventory – Bower Avenue” *Building and Landmark Inventory*, Heritage Halton Hills, 2002.
John Mark Benbow Rowe, *Acton: The History of Leathertown*, Esquesing Historical Society, 2002.
H. P. Moore & G. A. Dills, *Acton’s Early Days*, Dills Printing and Publishing, 1939.
Township of Esquesing and Town of Acton land records.
Town of Halton Hills, Assessment Rolls
Historic Photographs courtesy of Doug and Janis Fread
Colour Photographs by J. M. Rowe for Heritage Halton Hills, deposited in the Esquesing Historical Society Archives, Georgetown.
Eric Connelly & Steve Foster



PART II: HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN

1.0 DISTRICT GUIDELINES & POLICIES

1.1 DISTRICT BOUNDARIES

Lot 28, Concession 3, Esquesing Township,
Rufus Adams Survey Block 4, Village of Acton
#69, 71, 75, 77, 79, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89 Bower Street, Acton,
Town of Halton Hills.

The boundaries of the District are generally shown on Schedule A to this Plan. The District is comprised of the ten properties listed above, as well as the private lane running behind the properties, and the portion of the public right-of-way extending to the curb of the street.

1.2 GOAL OF THE DISTRICT

The Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District is created to maintain, protect and enhance the character of the houses on Bower Street, Acton, in the Town of Halton Hills, which, are known as the Syndicate Houses.

1.3 DISTRICT OBJECTIVES

The stated goal of this Conservation District has several objectives:

- To maintain and preserve the five units, which comprise this District.
- To encourage the ongoing maintenance and repair of the individual units within this District in a manner sympathetic to the original features of the buildings.
- To maintain the lot sizes of each unit within this District
- To maintain or replace the trees lining the street which were planted for the Diamond Jubilee of H.M. Queen Victoria by the residents of Acton.
- Where existing heritage buildings are either demolished or otherwise destroyed by Acts of God, to encourage the replacement of such buildings by buildings comparable in scale or character to the lost buildings.
- To implement the designation by means of a process that is open, fair, flexible and not unduly onerous on property owners, and allows for community participation, review and involvement.

1.4 DISTRICT POLICY

Part I of this document gives reasons for designation as they apply to each building within the conservation district. However, since the District encompasses more than one property certain District guidelines must be defined and spelled out. District designation under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* has only limited powers to protect and preserve the heritage character of a given district. Establishing policies and principles and developing guidelines

for growth within the designated Heritage Conservation District can direct growth and change. This is acknowledged by the Ministry of Culture, which recommends the implementation of guidelines to direct heritage conservation activities within the designated District.

The policies and principles contained in this plan have been prepared to establish clear and consistent criteria for the evaluation of requests for heritage permits, for defining standards for the heritage permit process and for setting conservation goals for the conservation district. These policies and principles are intended to provide direction to District Committee members, Heritage Halton Hills, Town staff and Councillors, and property owners within the District.

In addition to these policies and principles, the District Committee, or Heritage Halton Hills may, from time to time, recommend to Council the adoption of additional policies and principles or the removal of existing policies or principles.

1.5 GUIDELINES FOR ALTERATIONS

Any alterations that do not adversely affect those characteristics of the District specified in the Statement of Significance (Part I – Section 7.0) will be considered acceptable. ‘Significant external alterations’ that would be considered unacceptable are defined as any alteration that would adversely affect those characteristics of the District specified in the Statement of Significance. Heritage Permits will be reviewed according to Part II, Section 2.3 of this Plan.

1.6 DEMOLITION OR REMOVAL

The demolition or removal of any building within the District cannot be prohibited under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, however it is strongly discouraged by this Plan. No person shall demolish any structure within the District without obtaining a demolition permit from the Council for the Town of Halton Hills under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act. Council has 90 days to respond to an application for demolition. If Council refuses the permit, demolition or removal can only occur after 180 days have elapsed from that refusal. During the 180-day period, Council shall investigate and consider all reasonable alternatives to demolition of the structure.

1.7 PUBLIC WORKS

This Plan recommends that trees and sidewalks be maintained along the public portions of the District in a manner appropriate to modern standards of safety.

In initiating public works and landscaping within the District, the Town should endeavour to preserve the existing streetscape, and ensure that changes consider the heritage character of the District. Road, curb and servicing improvements should be undertaken in a manner that respects the heritage character of the District.

2.0 IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF A DISTRICT COMMITTEE

Upon designation of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District, Heritage Halton Hills will meet with registered property owners to choose a committee to implement the Heritage Conservation District Plan, based on the guidelines and policies of Part II, Section 1.0 of this Plan.

Heritage Halton Hills will provide notice of meeting to each registered property owner of the District two weeks before the convening of said meeting by way of letter delivered either by hand or by Canada Post. The registered property owners present at the meeting will reach a consensus or elect one of themselves present as the Chair of this Committee. This Chair will be the liaison between the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District and Heritage Halton Hills for the duration of a term of the Council of the Town of Halton Hills or until such time as the Chair resigns. The term of Chair will be renewed within 180 days of the election of a new Town Council.

Failing the willingness of a resident of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District to take on the role of Chair, such a capacity will be assumed by the Chair of Heritage Halton Hills until such time as residents chose a Chair or until the election of a new Council for the Town of Halton Hills.

2.2 DISTRICT COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon selecting the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District Committee, said Committee will inform all property owners within the District. The name and address of the Chair of the Committee will be provided to each property owner and to Heritage Halton Hills. This information will be provided to the Clerk of the Municipality, or the Staff designated with responsibility for Heritage, within ten days.

A Committee meeting authorized to meet and make recommendations on the approval of Heritage Permits, shall consist of representatives of six units out of the ten units. Each unit is entitled to one vote, regardless of the number of joint property owners or tenants. This vote may be exercised by one of the registered property owners. A person who is authorized to speak and vote on their behalf may use a proxy signed by the individual property owner(s). Said proxy will be forwarded with the Minutes and Recommendations to Heritage Halton Hills.

The Chair of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District will provide general information and answer general questions on the District to property owners. The Chair will also see that a copy of this Plan is provided to each new property owner who does not have a plan or any existing property owner who requests a second copy.

The Chair of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District will convene a District meeting, after providing two weeks notice, as requested by any one owner within the District. The Chair must convene one meeting per term of Council to review the Heritage

Conservation District Plan with owners, elect or confirm the position of Chair and to meet members of Heritage Halton Hills, who must be invited.

Any property owner or tenant of the District may call a meeting to discuss:

- Proposed work that may affect any one of the items listed in the Statement of Significance.
- Proposed landscaping changes that may alter the character of the District.
- Proposed additions, alterations or improvements to any structure within the District.
- Proposed demolition of any structure within the District.
- Any work within the District that requires a permit by the Town of Halton Hills.
- Plans to replace demolished buildings or those destroyed or damaged by Act of God.
- Proposed changes to the guidelines and policies of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District Plan.

Minutes and recommendations of all such meetings will be forwarded to the Chair of Heritage Halton Hills and the Clerk's Department of the Town of Halton Hills within one week of the meeting.

2.3 HERITAGE PERMITS

Pursuant to Section 42 (1) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* a Heritage Permit will be required for any alteration, erection, demolition or removal, of any building or structure within the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District. Heritage Permits will not be granted for any significant external alteration as specified in Part II, Section 1.5 of this Plan.

The application for a Heritage Permit will be made to Heritage Halton Hills through the Clerk's Department of the Town of Halton Hills.

Under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, a permit is not required for alterations to the internal portions of a building or structure. Owners are cautioned however that such work may require a building permit and are to govern themselves accordingly.

Due to the size and scope of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District, standardized Heritage Permit application forms are not recommended at this time. Permit applications should include standard information about property location, address and name of owner, as well as specific and clear information about the proposed work. The application should normally include drawings showing both plans and elevations of the proposed work, and the Town may require these drawings to be professionally executed. There should also be detailed information concerning the materials and methods to be used.

All Heritage Permit applications, for which a building permit is also required, shall follow the prescribed format for building permits required by the Building Department of the

Town of Halton Hills.

As determined to be necessary by the District Committee, Heritage Halton Hills or Town staff, the need for a standardized heritage permit application form shall be reviewed.

2.4 PERMIT REVIEW PROCESS

Once a Heritage Permit application has been received, the Clerks Department will forward a copy of said application to Heritage Halton Hills, the Planning Department for information, the Building Department if a building permit is required, and to the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District Committee Chair.

The Chair will endeavour to convene a meeting within two weeks of receiving the application. The Committee will make recommendations to Heritage Halton Hills.

Heritage Halton Hills will review the application and the recommendations of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District Committee at its next regular meeting. They will make a recommendation to Council who will make a decision in accordance with Section 2.5 of this Plan. Heritage Halton Hills Chair will communicate to the Chair of the Syndicate Housing Heritage Conservation District the recommendations that Heritage Halton Hills forwarded to Council.

The applicant shall be given notice of Council's consideration of the application. The applicant or his/her authorized representative shall be entitled to speak to the application prior to Council's consideration of the application. Council may, if it deems the circumstances appropriate, direct that public hearing be held into any aspect raised by the application.

2.5 PERMIT APPROVAL

In accordance with Section 42(3) and (4) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, Council shall make a decision regarding the Heritage Permit application within 90 days after notice of receipt of a complete application has been given to the applicant. Council may approve the permit, refuse the permit, or approve the permit with conditions in the case of an application to erect, or significantly alter the external portions of any building or structure.

Schedule A: HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT MAP



