



TOWN OF NEWMARKET

Legal and Development Services

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REPORT ON THE DECEMBER 11, 2008 PUBLIC INFORMATION SESSION REGARDING THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY FOR LOWER MAIN STREET SOUTH

Open House

Panels displaying maps and photographs of the study area and banners showing the east and west sides of Lower Main Street South as photo montages decorated the ground-floor room in Old Town Hall where the public information session was held. The public also had the opportunity to watch a video about the experience of property owners in four Toronto-area heritage conservation districts. A handout entitled "Some Useful Quotes" was available to read (it is reprinted on the back of a sheet enclosed with this report). Town staff and consultants were on hand to answer questions.

Introductory Remarks

Dave Ruggle, senior planner at the Town of Newmarket, introduced Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Councillor Joe Sponga, planning director Rick Nethery, economic development officer Chris Kallio, project steering committee volunteers Ron Marriott, Jackie Playter and Bob Buchan and consultants Peter Stewart of George Robb Architect and Paul Dilse, heritage planner.

Mayor Van Bynen welcomed property owners, business owners, residents and the general public. He noted a series of initiatives that Town Council has taken towards revitalizing Lower Main Street South – investing in a beautified roadway and boulevard, offering a comprehensive set of financial incentive programs for building improvements, and providing professional design advice at the preliminary stage of improvement projects. He discussed how plans for improving public access to the Holland River and for developing the northern portion of Town-owned lands adjacent to Lower Main Street South would, when realized, bring new residents, workers and visitors within walking distance of the street's stores and services. He recounted Council's decision in 2007 to go the next logical step and proceed through a process to recognize the historic value of Lower Main Street South and work with property owners, business owners and residents on a plan for enhancing the area's historic character. Mayor Van Bynen acknowledged that, although the process is new to Newmarket, 34 municipalities across Ontario have established a total of 90 heritage conservation districts. He invited everyone to hear what a heritage conservation district for Lower Main Street South could mean for Newmarket, and asked all to consider how a heritage conservation district plan would work on Lower Main Street South.

Councillor Joe Sponga, who represents Ward 5 where Lower Main Street South is located and who serves on the project steering committee for the heritage conservation district study, also extended an invitation to property owners, business owners, residents and the general public to participate in the study process. He cited the example of Savannah, Georgia, which capitalized on its historic resources to revitalize its core and become a premier destination.

[Newmarket's vision: A community well beyond the ordinary](#)

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Dave Ruggle, who has co-ordinated the heritage conservation district study on behalf of the Town, explained the purpose of the meeting, which was two-fold: 1) to clarify what district designation means; and, 2) to consider objectives to be achieved by designating Lower Main Street South a heritage conservation district.

Slide Presentation

Paul Dilse gave a three-part PowerPoint presentation.

In Part One, he provided information about heritage conservation districts in general. He defined a heritage conservation district as an historic area that is protected under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. He compared district designation in Ontario to the oldest protected historic area in the United States (Old City District, Charleston, South Carolina, 1931) and to the even earlier Polish preservation law of 1928 that protected the Old Town of Warsaw. He illustrated a number of heritage conservation districts, starting with Meadowvale Village in Mississauga, the first one designated in Ontario (in 1980). He said there were six heritage conservation districts in York Region – Markham Village, Unionville, Thornhill-Markham, Thornhill-Vaughan, Kleinburg/Nashville and Northeast Old Aurora. He addressed seven misconceptions that still circulate about heritage conservation districts even though support for heritage conservation districts is growing in Ontario. He then proffered four advantages in designating an historic area as a heritage conservation district. In relation to the fourth advantage, he shared the surprising and inspiring story of old Amsterdam and compared the international success of Amsterdam's revival to the regional success that Port Hope enjoys through its two contiguous heritage conservation districts.

In Part Two, he evaluated the merits of making Lower Main Street South, arguably the most historic street in Newmarket, a heritage conservation district.

In Part Three, Paul Dilse introduced draft objectives for designating Lower Main Street South (see enclosed).

Workshop

The audience broke into two groups to discuss the objectives for designation and to have questions about district designation answered. Peter Stewart led one group, and Paul Dilse facilitated the other.

There was general agreement on the objectives for designating the lands along and near Lower Main Street South a heritage conservation district, with one participant vocalizing opposition in principle. The same property owner and another property owner expressed their opposition in e-mail messages following the public information session. All others were open to further discussion about district designation.

Questions posed in the workshop groups and comments written on feedback sheets and in e-mailed responses are summarized on a separate sheet (see enclosed).

Next Steps

Dave Ruggle outlined next steps in the district planning process. He told the audience that the consultants would conclude the heritage conservation district study and proceed to drafting a heritage conservation district plan that meets the objectives that were discussed at the public information session. Another public information session would be held in the spring to consider the content of policies and guidelines and the approach to implementing them. A public meeting would follow.