

Sandy Hill

Cultural Heritage Character Area Guidelines



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1.0 Introduction

The Sandy Hill Cultural Heritage Character Area (Heritage Character Area) is an important historic urban landscape in Ottawa associated with the early development of the city in the 19th and 20th centuries and the growth of Ottawa as the national capital. The goal of the Heritage Character Area is to celebrate the rich history of Sandy Hill, encourage the retention of historic fabric and to guide new development that is appropriate to the character of the neighbourhood. Properties located in the Sandy Hill Heritage Character area are not designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

2.0 Boundaries

The Sandy Hill Cultural Heritage Character Area encompasses the properties shown on the map below but is generally bounded by Henderson Avenue in the west, the Rideau River in the east, Besserer Street in the north and Somerset Street East in the south. There are five existing heritage conservation districts within these boundaries that contribute to the character of Sandy Hill. As these areas are designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and are subject to the requirements of their respective heritage conservation district plans, they are excluded from the heritage character area.

All properties within the heritage character area have been evaluated and provided a ranking between Category 1 and Category 4. Properties ranked 1, 2, or 3 are considered to contribute to the heritage character area. Properties ranked as Category 4 are not considered to contribute to the heritage character. They may be new buildings, heavily altered buildings or vacant properties.

3.0 Policy Framework

Section 2.5.5 (3) of the Official Plan provides the following direction related to cultural heritage character areas:

The City may recognize core areas of Villages, older residential neighbourhoods, cultural landscapes or other areas in both the urban and rural areas as Cultural Heritage Character Areas, where designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act* may or may not be appropriate. In these areas, the City will prepare design guidelines to help private and public landowners construct new buildings, or additions or renovations to existing buildings, to reflect the identified cultural heritage features of the community.

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with all other relevant municipal and provincial planning policy and by-laws.

4.0 Implementation

The Sandy Hill Heritage Character Area Guidelines will be adopted by City Council as policy enabled by the City of Ottawa Official Plan. Property owners are encouraged to consult the guidelines when planning projects in the heritage character area. The guidelines will be implemented by staff in the Planning and Growth Management Department:

Heritage staff will advise and guide owners of historic buildings within the heritage character area regarding restoration and conservation work.

Planning staff will use the guidelines in the consideration of development applications in the heritage character area.

5.0 Description of the Cultural Heritage Character Area

The Sandy Hill Cultural Heritage Character Area is an urban cultural landscape that has evolved since the mid 19th century from one of Ottawa's earliest residential neighbourhoods at the edge of the city, to a vibrant and mixed urban neighbourhood in the core of the city. The heritage character area has three distinct sections, the former Besserer Estate, north of Laurier Avenue, the former By Estate, located south of Laurier Avenue and Laurier Avenue which forms the boundary between the two estates and has its own distinct character as the main artery through the neighbourhood.

The Besserer Estate consists of lands granted to Lieutenant René-Leonard Besserer in 1828. Besserer died suddenly after the land grant and his brother, Louis Besserer, a veteran of the War of 1812 and a businessman in Quebec City inherited his estate. Louis Besserer relocated

to Ottawa in the 1830s to develop the lands. Besserer's land was first subdivided beginning in 1834 by his agent, William Stewart, who laid out the street plan for the estate. Development was slow until after Ottawa was named the capital of Canada in 1857. The influx of politicians and civil servants upon the completion of the Parliament Buildings in 1865 triggered the transformation of Sandy Hill from a sparsely populated neighbourhood at the edge of the city to a sought-after upper class residential neighbourhood. The Besserer Estate is characterized by larger lots and grander houses than the By Estate to the south.

The former By Estate, located south of Laurier Avenue was owned by Colonel John By, the engineer responsible for the construction of the Rideau Canal. In 1832, By purchased 800 acres bounded by Laurier Avenue to the north, the Rideau River to the east, Gladstone Avenue to the south and Bronson Avenue to the west. By died in 1836 and the land was willed to his descendants and developed by agents through the 19th century. The By Estate developed later than the Besserer Estate and is characterized by middle class houses on smaller lots reflecting denser development.

Laurier Avenue (formerly Theodore Avenue) is the main artery through the neighbourhood and its character changes from a small retail corridor in the west to a residential character comprised of grand houses on large lots in the east. The street is characterized by both historic and modern multi-unit residential buildings. Laurier Avenue also features a number of significant landmarks in the neighbourhood including Laurier House, All Saints Anglican Church, Stadacona Hall, Strathcona Park and its fountain, and the Strathcona Apartments.

The area features a rich and diverse architectural character with buildings from all periods of development that contribute to the distinct sense of place. In particular, there are excellent examples of the range of architectural styles popular in Canada at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century including Queen Anne Revival, Tudor Revival, Edwardian Classicism and Italianate. The neighbourhood is characterized by the use of natural building materials including brick, wood, limestone and stucco. Two storey wooden front porches are typical of the heritage character area and the streets are characterized by mature deciduous street trees, consistent front yard setbacks, and front lawns, some with low front yard fences.

The 19th century street layout and lot pattern remains intact but the neighbourhood has evolved over the past 150 years. The growth of the University of Ottawa throughout the 20th century has prompted the conversion of larger houses into multi-unit residences to accommodate the growing student population. In addition, many of the large houses have been purchased by foreign governments for use as embassies or official residences.

The Sandy Hill Heritage Character Area is an important place in Ottawa that serves to remind residents of the early development of the city and Ottawa's role as the national capital. The area has evolved in form and use since its 19th century roots, but this continuing evolution contributes to its special character as a mixed urban neighbourhood in the heart of the city.

5.1 Heritage Character Area Guidelines

The guidelines in this document are intended to assist property owners interested in preserving, restoring or renovating their historic properties in Sandy Hill and to provide guidance to owners wishing to develop properties within the heritage character area.

Technical Guidance

Parks Canada's Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada provide excellent guidance for property owners planning restoration, conservation or renovation projects.

Additional technical guidance for restoration projects can be found online in the United States National Parks Service Preservation Briefs which provide detailed 'how-to' briefs on various elements of restoration (ie. masonry, woodwork, metal).

5.2 Guidelines for Category 1, 2 and 3 Buildings

Buildings identified as Category 1, 2 or 3 buildings are considered contributing buildings in the heritage character area. These historic buildings contribute to the overall sense of place in Sandy Hill and define its character. The guidelines in this section are intended to encourage restoration and sensitive renovation of contributing buildings.

5.2.1 General Guidelines

Ongoing maintenance of heritage buildings is strongly encouraged as it prevents deterioration of heritage attributes and is the most cost-effective means of preserving heritage character.

1. Repair and restoration of heritage attributes is preferable to replacement.
2. Demolition of Category 1, 2 and 3 buildings is discouraged.

5.2.2 Roofs and Chimneys

1. The retention of original roofing materials (ie. cedar, slate) is encouraged. Where the original roofing material is missing, property owners are encouraged to restore the roof

to its historic material. Modern materials that simulate historic roofing materials may also be appropriate (ie. artificial cedar shakes or slate).

2. Original rooflines (gable, hip, gambrel, flat etc.) should be maintained.
3. New dormer windows should be located on the rear slope of the roof or to the rear of the roof where possible.
4. Wherever possible, solar panels should be installed in a manner that will not impact the heritage fabric of the building if they are removed. In addition, solar panels should be located on the rear slope of the roof or on a flat roofed portion of the building so that they are not obvious from the historic streetscape.
5. The retention and maintenance of historic chimneys is strongly encouraged. Non-functioning chimneys should be capped and retained.

5.2.3 Cladding

1. The retention of original cladding is strongly encouraged. The restoration of historic cladding is preferable to replacement.
2. Removal of inappropriate cladding material (ie. vinyl siding) and restoration of the historic cladding is encouraged.
3. The repointing of historic masonry is complex and property owners are encouraged to hire a mason with experience working with historic buildings. New mortar should match the composition of historic mortar (soft, lime rich mortar rather than a cement based mortar).
4. The painting of unpainted brick is strongly discouraged.

5.2.4 Windows

Windows are an integral part of the historic appearance of a building. The size and placement of windows are known as the fenestration pattern. The material and profile of individual windows is also important. The profile includes the construction, operating mechanisms, sill profile and width and design of the window frame.

Well maintained historic windows can last much longer than contemporary replacements. There are practical and economical approaches that can be taken to repair historic windows including painting, re-puttying or caulking, and weather stripping. Heritage staff can provide

advice on appropriate methods of restoration for historic windows and appropriate replacement windows as necessary.

1. The retention of original wood windows and storm windows is strongly encouraged. Energy efficiency can be achieved with existing windows through the restoration of the windows and the installation of weather stripping and appropriate exterior or interior wooden storm windows.
2. Repair and restoration of historic windows and doors is preferable to replacement.
3. If windows are replaced, property owners are strongly encouraged to match the historic windows in size, shape, and muntin pattern. If windows cannot be replaced with wood, owners are encouraged to choose a sympathetic material such as metal clad wood. White vinyl windows are discouraged.
4. The replacement of inappropriate newer windows and doors with more compatible units is encouraged.
5. The shape and size of existing window and door openings should be retained.
6. Where a new window opening is required, it should be located in a discreet area and follow the rhythm and scale of the historic window pattern.

5.2.5 Doors

Existing historic doors should be retained and repaired.

1. The size, scale and proportions of existing doors and door openings should be preserved.
2. The retention of the pattern and arrangement of the entrance is encouraged, including doors, sidelights and transom windows.
3. New entrances should not be introduced on the street facing façade unless they are setback from the front facade.
4. The replacement of inappropriate modern doors with historically accurate doors is encouraged.

5.2.6 Porches and Verandas

1. Front porches are an integral part of the heritage character of Sandy Hill. The retention and maintenance of front porches including decorative elements such as brackets and railings is strongly encouraged.
2. Where a porch has been neglected or is badly deteriorated, restoration is preferable to replacement. If the porch is beyond repair, property owners are encouraged to replace it on the same footprint with the same materials and in the same style.
3. Where a component of the porch such as a bracket, railing, post, baluster or column has deteriorated beyond repair, it should be replaced in the same style, material, and proportions.
4. If a property owner wishes to reinstate a missing porch, the design should be based on documentary evidence (ie. historic photographs or blueprints). If no such evidence exists, the porch design should resemble other local examples on similar buildings.

5.2.7 Decorative Features

The architectural styles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries typically featured extensive use of decoration including intricate bargeboard (gingerbread) in the gable ends of a roof, finials, decorative brick work and terra cotta. These elements contribute significantly to the overall style of a building and ongoing maintenance can ensure their protection and longevity.

1. Decorative architectural features that contribute to the heritage value of the building should be restored and retained wherever possible.
2. Decorative wood elements should be maintained on an ongoing basis to ensure that areas of water penetration are found and repaired.

5.2.8 Garages and Accessory Buildings

1. New garages and accessory buildings should be located in the rear yard and should be designed to complement the heritage character of the neighbourhood.

5.2.9 Paint Colour

1. If the original exterior colour scheme of the building is still intact it should be retained. If a property owner wishes to determine the original colours of their house, paint scrapings from inconspicuous areas may reveal the history of the paint on the house.

2. Many buildings feature two or three paint colours to highlight various details in the decoration. Typical colours included cream, white, olive green, gold, pale green, gray, and ochre red.
3. Historical colour palettes are available from some of the major paint manufacturers. These colour schemes are largely based on research in the United States but can provide a starting point for colour choice in Canada. Advice on specific colours can be provided by staff in the Heritage Section.

5.2.10 Landscape and Setting

1. Properties in Sandy Hill were sometimes delineated with low front-yard fences. Fences two metres and lower can be appropriate depending on the street. Fences should be constructed of painted wood or decorative metal.
2. Linear walkways perpendicular to the sidewalk are common in Sandy Hill. These walkways are generally narrow and lead directly to the bottom of the front steps. Existing walkway patterns should be retained and restored where possible.
3. Front yards consist of primarily soft landscaping, typically a lawn. To maintain this character, patios or other hard surfacing in the front yard are strongly discouraged.

5.2.11 Additions

1. Additions to historic buildings should be sympathetic to the existing building, subordinate to, and distinguishable from the original. Falsifying a past architectural style in a new addition is strongly discouraged.
2. Additions should generally be located in the rear yard.
3. Where not located in the rear yard, additions should be consistent with the streetscape with respect to setback, height, scale, and massing.
4. New additions should respect the existing wall to window ratio and proportion of the existing building.

5.3 Guidelines for Category 4 Buildings

Buildings identified as Category 4 do not contribute to the cultural heritage value of the heritage character area. These buildings may be newer buildings or historic buildings that have been significantly and irreversibly altered over time. Guidelines for these buildings are

necessary because alterations or demolition and replacement of these buildings has the potential to impact the cultural heritage landscape in the future.

5.3.1 Alterations and Additions

1. Alterations and additions to non-contributing buildings should contribute to and not detract from the heritage character of the area.
2. Alterations and additions to non-contributing buildings should be of their own time and not attempt to recreate a historical architectural style.
3. Alterations and additions to non-contributing buildings should be designed to be compatible with the contributing buildings of the heritage character area and the streetscape, in terms of scale, massing, height, setback, entry level, materials and windows.
4. Additions and alterations to non-contributing buildings should protect any significant landscape characteristics of the property such as walkways, fences or other landscape features.
5. Alterations to the landscape should be sympathetic to the character of the streetscape.

5.4 Guidelines for Infill

The guidelines in this section are intended to guide the design of new buildings in the cultural heritage character area.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with applicable municipal planning policy and by-laws, including the Zoning By-law and the Official Plan.

1. New buildings should be of their own time and not attempt to replicate a historic style, but should be sympathetic to the character of the neighbourhood.
2. Any new residential development in the cultural heritage character area should be in keeping with the traditional scale of residential buildings in the heritage character area. New construction should be sympathetic to the immediate neighbours in terms of setback, footprint, and massing.
3. The existing lot pattern contributes to the character of the neighbourhood. Lot sizes north of Laurier Avenue are typically larger than those south of Laurier Avenue. Where lots are proposed to be severed, this character should be considered.

4. Cladding materials should reflect the character of the neighbourhood. Some appropriate materials include stucco, brick, natural stone, wood siding or fibre cement board.

5.5 Guidelines for Streetscape and Public Realm

1. Existing block and street patterns should be retained in any new development.
2. Existing street trees should be preserved and new street trees of appropriate species should be planted to ensure the continuity of the streetscape.
3. Boulevards should be planted with grass and trees but other low shrubs or flowers that are subordinate to the adjacent street trees may be appropriate.
4. The removal of existing front yard parking spaces is encouraged.