

**Queen's Park Neighbourhood Heritage Study (QPNHS)
Working Group Meeting**

**April 23, 2015
Committee Room #2**

AGENDA

1.0 Working Group Meeting Notes of March 26, 2015

2.0 Implementation Strategies

3.0 Open House Preparation

4.0 Review of Workplan

5.0 Next Meeting

Thursday, May 28, 2015
6:00pm
Committee Room #2

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Queen's Park Neighbourhood Heritage Study (QPNHS)

Working Group Meeting Notes of March 26, 2015

PRESENT:

Maureen Arvanitidis (NWHPS)
Rebecca Bateman
Tom Bellamy
David Brett (QPRA), Vice-Chair
Bruce Cheng
Steve North (NWHPS)
Dave Vallee
Jennifer Wolowic

REGRETS

Councillor Jaimie McEvoy, Chair
Deane Gurney (QPRA)
Gary Holisko

CITY STAFF:

Julie Schueck, Heritage & Community
Planner

Agenda Items:

1.0 Working Group Meeting Notes of February 26, 2015

- It was noted that the description under Group A and Group E were from January 2015. Further information was provided from Group E:

- city drawings be restricted to only the reno/restoration - not the entire building
- the city to make an overture and offer laneway houses to protected property
- educate the real estate agents in the area on the value of protected property and neighbourhoods
- protect the neighbourhood as a conservation area and minimize the use of HRAs (in favour of other alternatives).

2.0 Updates from Research Groups

Group A: *Definition of the character of the neighbourhood in order to identify what should be retained and/or protected.*

As previously stated and reported out, "Character" is defined as 'Qualities distinctive to' and synonyms of character are 'Personality, Nature and Makeup'

Thus, based on Queen's Parks' distinctive qualities, personality, nature and make up we feel not so much based on research but more so on actual and visible topography, existing architecture, horticulture/flora, and abundant green spaces we feel that every effort should be made to retain and protect these characteristics unique and distinctive to the Queen's Park area.

We feel that the following approaches would help to ensure the success of both retaining and protecting the character of the neighbourhood.

- Keeping the streetscape intact with emphasis on how the streetscape both looks and feels. There is a need to keep the visual to a standard where it does not distract from the neighbourhood
- Retain the ‘walkability’ feel, ie., the inviting street and avenue walks that the area has to offer, while at the same time providing the interesting architectural and garden visuals, as well as the multi-varietal treed streets and avenues. The antithesis is being in a boring treeless neighbourhood with tiresome row-like or cookie cutter housing
- Provide aggressive protection and maintenance of the boulevard lined trees, eg., cherry, magnolia, maples etc. ; as well as protecting old growth trees on both public and private properties
- Develop a building permit process in QP whereby owners would be required to adhere to and follow a process without bias, but with the intent to retain and protect the ambiance, look and feel of the QPN
- Allow for “good” infill/extension housing development provided that the building structure and the flora “fit in” with the feel of the QP neighbourhood
- Begin a detailed account of each and every QP house and building not unlike those already in the registry. Perhaps owners could submit their own data on a city developed form.

In conclusion Group ‘A’ feels that should prospective home owners wish to move into the QPN they should be pre-informed of the Queen’s Park ‘culture’ and thus would be expected to operate within the guidelines of protecting and retaining the QP characteristics, personality, nature and makeup.

Guidelines for the QPN need to be transferable , ie., they need to be handed down from owner to owner ensuring that if one is about to purchase in QP one needs to know the expectations of the area. Should prospective home owners not wish to live within the guidelines, there are alternative locations in which to settle.

We feel that the following approaches would NOT help to ensure the success of both retaining and protecting the character of the neighbourhood.

- Designating the entire area of QP as a heritage area. A blanket policy will likely not work as compared to working with small areas at a time ie., small sections of the entire area be they streets, avenues or blocks

Group B: *Lack of design guidelines for new construction, renovations, and restoration of single-family houses.*

- voluntary design guidelines are in-place but often not adhered to.
- OR given the structure of the guidelines it's possible to generally follow them by drawing from its different categories but the end result may still be a mish-mash of architectural design "styles."
- may be worthwhile to tighten the existing guidelines and offer a real incentive for adhering to them, for example, a scheme as in Kits where if the guidelines are met then the project can automatically benefit from extra density without requiring a rezoning/HRA or the like. Therefore, by following the guidelines outright you can get free density without the extra City red tape (time) and City costs.
- can the design guidelines be structured by a point system as is done with the Secondary Suite checklist?
- to be included in the guidelines, more "points" for people proposing permeable surfaces (as opposed to hard surfaces for walk ways, parking and driveways) and more green garden spaces
- taking the idea of guidelines to the extreme, could QP become its own Development Permit area so that any new design or renovation must be "approved" by the Planning Department via some sort of design review mechanism, Design Panel for example.
- encourage new construction to build with basements as opposed to all of the building being above grade – which makes the structure look bigger and overwhelms the streetscape – particularly if it is adjacent to smaller houses

Maureen's note: I liked the idea Don Luxton and his group were going to present to the City of Vancouver to save Shaughnessy ie conserve the existing heritage buildings but allow sympathetic additions. The guidelines would be very important for both the renovations and the infill.

Group C: *New or stronger regulations to deter demolition and to provide incentives for the retention of older single-family houses.*

Deconstruction:

Right now it's popular and easy to make the case for more sustainability. It will increase the cost time involved in demolition, which will provide disincentive. In order for this to be a deterrent the fine for not complying with recycling must be high enough to actually deter developers (\$40-60,000).

Carrot and Stick Approach to Re-zoning Queens Park:

By rezoning, if a house is torn down the total square footage allowed should be smaller than if the original structure is maintained and a larger square footage is allowed. This is the stick.

The carrots include similar options to what is being contemplated in Kerrisdale. Zoning regulations can create incentives that include keeping an original structure by allowing infill, a larger garage footprint. Renovations will allow a greater square footage if they maintain the original structure and meet guidelines than would be allowed if the house is torn down. Using zoning bylaws instead of applying heritage status also protects the city from lawsuits.

Heritage Conservation Area:

The carrot and stick approach can also be accomplished with an HCA, which can apply broader as well as more specific guidelines on what can be done on a property that maintains its heritage structure. We believe support can be found in the neighborhood if the HCA allows for incentives such as infill, larger square footage allowed if the street face stays the same, and bonuses for applying a number of design elements when remodeling. There must be enough wiggle room in the conservation area so that homeowners do not feel threatened but balanced enough to encourage the maintenance of heritage structures. Guidelines should be similar to the process in Kitsilano and developed based on the architecture of each house, which would allow updates and maintenance, while maintaining the look and feel of the neighborhood.

We should provide information packets with research to be ready to reply to public debate. We also are not convinced the council is brave enough to vote.

HRA's:

Instead of allowing every property to have a laneway house, we should encourage them to only be part of HRA's. Streamlining and making the HRA fees cheaper would also encourage homeowners. HRA's should also be advertised as a way to stratify a property.

Findings and Recommendations to Deter Demolition

1. Minimize HRA fees and need for architects. Lower building permit and other fees the city charges to make heritage restoration more affordable. These fees are part of what makes tearing down seem cheaper than renovating
2. Creating a "can do" instead of a "can't do" attitude in the permitting and engineering offices of city hall. There is a feeling that the city is working for the building code instead of the home owners. Find ways to promote the flexibility and work arounds that can exist in the building code.
3. Require deconstruction instead demolition. This will slow down demolition and raise the cost, which will deter developers. Find other ways to delay

- demolition so new owners can experience the qualities of the neighborhood and become invested in them
4. Make the common restoration/renovation pitfalls easier to manage. See contractor's list. Create more flexibility to grandfather in heritage aspects. Find and promote where compromises can be made.
 5. Have the engineering desk hand out a) Heritage/Renovation Roadmap Information Pamphlets and b) Promotional material that sells the quality of heritage (this should also appear more prominently on the city hall website). Make sure these resources are available at the places people start the process (contractors, real estate, engineering desk, architects offices, planning department, ect).
 6. Promote the creation of an advisory board or a contact list of people independent from business and the city that can answer questions about renovations and heritage. Make this list separate from the Heritage Society because the Heritage Society has a "fanatical" reputation
 7. Must be flexible with design guidelines (ie. paint colors) to get people to buy into heritage retention. People have a knee jerk reaction against "heritage paint colors" and design rules

Basil Restoration Comments :

Areas that have always been a pitfall to owners of heritage houses when we are considering their renovation are as follows:

- Cost of retaining existing wood siding and wood windows vs. new
- Encroachment issues
- Requirement to upgrade or re-route services by the city
- Building Density restrictions
- Height restrictions
- Parking requirements
- Insulation
- Garage/driveway costs
- Seismic upgrading
- Inclusion of attic space in square footage
- Inclusion of basement space under porch
- Limitation to replacement of existing building (ie: porch area)
- Board of Variance costs for small additions
- Permitting costs, including city upgrade costs

Group D: *Identification of the types of densification, if any, which would be acceptable as a way to protect old buildings and that might provide affordability and diversity of housing types.*

Types of Densification

Approaches

Increased Density

Increased density allowed with Heritage Designation. The process needs to be streamlined and as inexpensive as possible. Square footage bonuses for designation.

Subdividing bigger lots

Allow case-by-case subdivision of bigger lots. This can be allowed with a regulation that declares the minimal amount of green space square footage on lot. Allowed if they follow design guidelines on the new home. Current zoning allows for subdivision governed by min lot area (e.g., 5000 SF) and frontages (e.g., 25ft, or 30ft, or 33ft...) We saying smaller lots are approvable IF new house follows guidelines?

Infill and Laneway homes

No subdivision needed. Will allow buyer to subsidize their mortgage, which will help maintain some level of diversity in the neighborhood. Allowing increased densifications on large lots over a certain size. Typically (in Van) subdivision is NOT permitted for laneway. I'd argue either (rental / ownership of modest size property e.g., 700sf) promotes affordability. YES to small lots.

Basement and Foundation- additions out of street eye line

Encourage basement additions that will encourage many homes in the neighborhood to put in full basements without changing the face of the building. Make cheaper and streamlined.

Strata title conversion for bigger homes and bigger lots.

Allow infill strata buildings for maintaining heritage structure, similar to RT-7 RT-8 zoning in Vancouver. Also requires a bylaw for minimal green space on a lot.

Correcting Zoning of Rental lots

Rezoning existing multi-family (rental apartments) lots to match current usage so in case of disaster or redevelopment they do not revert to single-family home zoning. The argument here is to at least encourage the retention of the density we already have.

Tree Preservation Bylaw

Heritage tree designation. Vancouver and Burnaby have bylaws protecting trees. Part of the streetscape, look and feel of neighborhood- should be protected. It's also on the survey as something people really value about living in the neighborhood.

Inventory of Homes in Queens Park

An inventory of the age, identification of architecture styles, as well as how much character has been maintained. This is then used to define guidelines for each style allowing greater diversity within the bylaw policy and options for homeowners. This will also allow new homebuilders to have a stronger sense of the kind of designs that will fit in with the neighborhood. Goal is to prevent all architectural styles going on the same house.

Density bonus for following design guidelines

Following a set of design guidelines that fit with the character of the original structure. Selecting a certain number off a list will allow extra square footage or streamlined process. This allows the city to encourage design guidelines without making them mandatory. Adoption of a policy as in Kits, whereby if the builder follows the voluntary guidelines she automatically gets bonus density up to a certain area (say 0.15 fsr ; 800 sf) without having to designate or enter HRA or the like. So its automatic, no extra cost/red tape.

Grandfathering in Building code

Identify what can be grandfathered in according to building codes. Inspectors encouraged to work around the realities of rehabilitating heritage homes to keep renovations costs down.

Identify strategic locations within QP where NEW higher density multi-family (think Amsterdam row houses / Montreal walk-ups / New York brownstones) would be sympathetic to the neighbourhood and add to the diversity of housing stock and demographics.

6th Ave ? 2nd St ? 1st St ?



Not Work and Why

Heritage Conservation Area

Not enough understanding of what a conservation area means and the council is not supportive. Anything that communicates the idea of restrictions is not popular in the neighborhood.

Blanket Policy

A blanket policy for the entire area might not be the best. There must be ways of going on a case-by-case basis for property in Queens Park since the neighborhood has so many different kinds of homes, properties, as well as kinds of families and owners.

Grants

Grants or City funds used to designate or maintain your home.

Group E: Identification of ways to encourage buy-in from the community, the building industry and City Hall for neighbourhood heritage conservation strategies.

3.0 Neighbourhood Heritage Survey Summary

The working group received the full completed survey results, and a separate analysis based on the three questions that had been asked at the February meeting.

The formal portion of the meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.

Public Speaker 7:00pm

About 25 people attended.

Carmine Guadagno, Appraiser and Niko Papoutsakis, Deputy Assessor with the BC Assessment Authority (North Fraser Region) talked about what BC Assessment does and what factors they consider when assessing properties. They also shared some examples of recent sales in the Queen's Park neighbourhood.

Jim Cervo, Underwriting Manager from the Westland Insurance Group Ltd., spoke about how insurers assess potential risks to properties and what homeowners should think about when they are considering their home insurance options.

BC Assessment:

- 23% of single family dwellings constructed before 1930 are located in the Queen's Park neighbourhood.
- The majority of homes with the highest assessed family are located in the Queen's Park neighbourhood.
- There were two demolitions and one new house constructed in the Queen's Park neighbourhood in 2014.
- There were 41 demolitions and 52 new homes in the remainder of the City in 2014.
- People can look at assessments, land sizes, improvements, photos, property sales, etc. on the e-value page of the BC Assessment website: www.bcassessment.ca
- BC Assessment bases its assessments on a variety of sources: city permit records, real estate sites (for photos of both outside and inside), market sale records, etc. If upgrades or additions are made without permits and there are no photos of the work in the public realm, then BC Assessment will not know that the work took place and will therefore not be able to correctly assess the property.
- There are not that many situations in the Queen's Park neighbourhood where one house straddles two legal lots that could each accommodate their own house. In situations where there is one house straddling two lots, then there are two ways to assess them: 1) if the homeowner can show they have lived in the house for at least 10 years, then the lots are assessed as one lot. As soon as there is a new owner, the lots are assessed as two lots, until that person has been there for 10 years. If however, the house as it sat on the two lots was legally protected through a heritage bylaw, then the two lots would be assessed as one lot because the highest and best use has been 'restricted'.
- It is difficult to say if heritage recognition or protection has any effect on the assessed value of a property given that there are so many variables to consider: location, condition of house, lot size, etc. Each property has a unique set of variables. The only way to really determine if heritage recognition or protection has an effect on property value would be through a 'compared sale': ie: everything between the properties being compared is exactly the same except for the heritage status. If the whole neighbourhood were protected with a heritage bylaw, there is no information available to say whether or not this would affect the assessment value of any of the properties included in that area.
- If a property has an apartment building on it but is zoned for single-family residential, it is assessed at its highest and best use, which would be how the property is currently being used. But again, each property is unique and must be assessed individually.

Insurance:

- Most insurance companies will insure a heritage house, whether or not it is protected.
- Insurers assess the risks that might occur with each property.

- There are three main concerns with older homes:
 - Maintenance issues (roofing, plumbing, heating, wiring)
 - Are there any updates
 - Have those updates/improvements occurred with permits and were they carried out by qualified people?
- The insurer determines how much it would cost to replace the house as it looks today. However, there are two main issues that could impact the replacement:
 - 1 – Abatement (If a hazmat team must go into the house, it could take a while for them to remove the hazards and declare the house safe to enter.)
 - 2 – Local zoning and building bylaws
- The insurer will have the house rebuilt with like-materials to the same level of quality. The question for older homes becomes: are those materials still available and are there still experts who know how to install them?
- Insurers do not look at the assessed value from BC Assessment Authority; they only consider the replacement costs for that building. If a building is damaged or destroyed 75% or more, the house is typically demolished. In Vancouver, their building code bases the 75% on the assessed value of the house rather than on the replacement value of the building or on the physical loss of 75% of the building.

(Note, in New Westminster we follow the BC Building Code currently states that “no building that is damaged or destroyed to the extent of 75% or more of its value above its foundation shall be repaired or reconstructed unless the whole of such building is made to comply with this bylaw and the Building Code.” It does not specify what that ‘value’ is based on. The next iteration of the Building Code likely will specify what the value is based on, and this may indeed be the assessed value.)
- A big issue for the rebuilding or replacement of a building is what the local building and zoning bylaws will allow. For example, if an existing house is three storeys but the zoning only allows two storeys, then the house is insured for three storeys but gets rebuilt at two storeys.
- The most difficult issue for insurers tends to be the electrical system of the building. Pre-1950 houses had very few outlets and they were all two-prong. Now all of these homes have many more outlets that are typically three-prong. The challenge for insurers is whether or not these upgrades were carried out by professionals with permits. The old wiring is not a concern, but rather the lack of it because there is typically not enough to accommodate all of the upgrades. Now electrical outlets are required to be self-grounding.
- Heritage recognition or protection is not an issue for insurers, or it should not be. Knob and tube wiring is not an issue for insurers, or it should not be. The issue is whether or not any additions/upgrades were done correctly with permits.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 26, 2015

6:00pm in Committee Room #2

WORK PLAN

The highlighted section identifies the stage at which the study is at the writing of this report.

	Stage	Time Period	Action Items
1	Background Work	May – June 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of Working Group - Purpose and background of overall study - Legal context of heritage conservation - Communication strategy
2	Issues Identification and Research	July – September 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighbourhood case studies - Neighbourhood context statement - Issues identification - City processes - Open House preparation - Open House
3	Innovations, Solutions & Strategies Development	October – December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of Open House - Update issues identification - Research issues
		January – March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify and research case studies - Neighbourhood newsletter - Speaker series - Develop solutions and strategies
4	Implementation Strategies Development	April – May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open House preparation - Open House - Review of Open House - Develop implementation strategies

5	Document of Implementation Strategy	June – August 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft final document content and layout - Draft document - Review document drafts - Neighbourhood newsletter - Open House preparation - Open House (September)
		September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of Open House - Revise document - Prepare for presentation to Council
		October – November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present final document to Council