

DICKSON HILL

HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN

FOR CITY OWNED LANDS

April 2005

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ATTACHED TO AND FORMING PART OF BY-LAW 150-05

**DICKSON HILL HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN
CITY OWNED LANDS**

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DICKSON HILL HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PLAN CITY OWNED LANDS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document, known as the Dickson Hill Heritage Conservation District Plan, was prepared pursuant to Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, and provides a heritage conservation strategy for the City-owned public spaces in Dickson Hill. This document also promotes the provisions of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) related to significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes. The geographic limits of the affected area are illustrated on Schedule 'A' - *Heritage Conservation District Plan*.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The process of consideration for a Heritage Conservation District Plan for Dickson Hill started in December 1998. Shortly thereafter, heritage consultants Nicholas and Margaret Hill, and planners Green Scheels Pidgeon Planning Consultants (now GSP Group), were retained to prepare a background study in accordance with the requirements of the Ontario Heritage Act. The background study is appended to this report as information.

A Steering Committee with a diverse membership led the process for consideration of heritage designation that included extensive public consultation through:

- information newsletters;
- public meetings;
- open houses;
- walking tours;
- landowner interviews; and,
- comment sheets.

On May 22, 2000, Cambridge City Council resolved to designate City-owned public spaces in the Dickson Hill Heritage Conservation District under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Council resolution provides clear direction to prepare a final report for a Heritage Conservation District Plan for the City-owned public spaces in Dickson Hill.

The Heritage Conservation District Plan presents a unique opportunity to conserve and enhance one of the most historic parts of the City of Cambridge by designating the public City-owned lands in this area.

3.0 GOAL

The goal of this Plan is to recognize and promote the cultural heritage significance of Dickson Hill. This Plan is a statement of Council's commitment to the long-term conservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage features of City-owned public spaces in Dickson Hill. This Plan provides a framework for ensuring that all new civic work is compatible with Council's commitment to conserving the area's cultural heritage significance, which is summarized below and described in further detail in the sections that follow.

Statement of Significance

Dickson Hill is one of the most unique communities in the City of Cambridge. Dickson Hill is named for the Honourable William Dickson, a prominent Galt settler who arrived to the area in 1816. Dickson is credited with founding the Village of Galt due to his considerable land holdings and was responsible for much of the commercial development on the west bank of the Grand River.

His son, William Dickson Jr., acquired most of the lands that currently make up the residential area of Dickson Hill. His own residence, located at 16 Byng Avenue was constructed in 1832. The development of the residential component occurred over several decades and by a series of developers. Florence Dickson, niece to William Dickson Jr., and his heir, controlled the development of this area until the 1890's.

Dickson Hill features an extremely high concentration of significant buildings of various types: residential, institutional, commercial and manufacturing. In addition to the buildings, key elements that define the character of Dickson Hill are:

- Tree-lined streets;
- Distinctive globe street lights; and
- Prominent urban public spaces and landscape features.

4.0 POLICIES

The policies that follow provide direction on the conservation of the key elements that define the character of Dickson Hill.

4.1 Public Spaces

A distinguishing feature of Dickson Hill is the wealth of beautiful and historic landscapes. They range from the small and urban Queen's Square of circa 1835 to the large and pastoral Victoria Park of 1901. Together with the wide tree-lined streets, they provide a handsome landscape character that is valued by residents. However, it is recommended that the design of a number of the principle public landscapes could be improved, both in their own right and as a means of coordinating the visual appearance of their surroundings. The recommended landscape design period is circa 1900, of which much photographic evidence is present in Picturesque and Industrial Galt, published in 1902.

The following policies are designed to enhance their historic sense of place, landscape beauty and pedestrian amenity.

4.1.1 Queen's Square

Established in 1835, Queen's Square is one of the oldest public spaces in the City of Cambridge. Originally it was a centre for ceremonies and gatherings. Today the square is comprised of two small parks separated by Grand Avenue. To the east is the 1967 Gore Centennial Park; to the west is Memorial Park, with a stone monument commemorating those lost in the great wars.

In Picturesque and Industrial Galt, Queen's Square was described in 1902 as follows:

"The centre of this square has been laid out as a park ... a small botanical garden. In it one sees evergreens, a rare tree or two, shrubs, and a number of very handsome flower beds in the summer.... This park is a little gem and a great delight to the eye during the summer months, when its carefully kept sward, foliage and flower beds are at their best."

To return Queen's Square to its historic grandeur, the following matters should be considered:

History	That Queen's Square should be recognized as one of the most historic spaces in the City.
Future Change	That any major future improvements or landscape master plans for Queen's Square shall be developed in consultation with the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee and shall be based on the period circa 1900, in order to enhance the area's sense of history, landscape beauty, pedestrian activity and importance as a public space. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 121 shall be consulted regarding any major future improvements in the vicinity of the cenotaph.

4.1.2 St. Andrews Park

Historically, St. Andrews Park originated in 1833 as the churchyard of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church. The congregation split in 1844, with a large number of parishioners leaving to form Knox Church. By 1879, St. Andrews was in decline and joined with the Union (Melville) congregation to build Central Presbyterian Church on Queen's Square. The old church was demolished in 1889 and the land acquired by the town for a public park. In 1907, a pergola was built to house the gravestones of the old cemetery. This structure is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Notwithstanding the historic significance of St. Andrews Park, today it presents a rather austere landscape of grass and trees. This contrasts with a description of the park in 1902, with its "flower beds and many shrubs". Landscape initiatives have been

undertaken more recently to provide plant variety on the bank to St. Andrews Street. The following matters however should also be considered:

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|---------------|---|
| History | That St. Andrews Park should be recognized as one of the oldest public landscapes in the City. |
| Future Change | That any major future improvements or landscape master plan for St. Andrews Park shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be developed in consultation with the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee;• be based on the period circa 1900 so as to enhance its sense of history, landscape beauty, pedestrian activity and usefulness; and• address the requirements of the Cemeteries Act and any City of Cambridge by-laws governing the maintenance of cemeteries. |

4.1.3 Victoria Park

Victoria Park was established in 1901 through the generosity of E. Langdon Wilkes with the donation of 28 acres as a memorial to Queen Victoria. Nine additional acres to the east were later acquired by the town. Thus it is a large park, comprising recreational open space to the east enclosed by the residential area, and a woodland to the west. A tennis club pavilion is located to one side of the recreation area. In general, this is a well designed and attractive park. A 1902 description of the park speaks of “handsome settees of English pattern, a pavilion, shelters and fountains to follow.” Various changes to the pavilion have diminished its historic appearance. The following matters should be considered:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| History | That Victoria Park should be recognized as one of the older and larger public landscapes in the City. |
| Future Change | That any major future improvements or landscape master plan for restoration of Victoria Park shall be developed in consultation with the Municipal Heritage Committee and shall be based on the period circa 1900 that would enhance its sense of history, landscape beauty, and pedestrian amenity. |
| Pavilion | That any future changes shall not further diminish the historic appearance of the pavilion. Major improvements or restoration shall be developed in consultation with the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee, and shall endeavour to restore the pavilion to its historic appearance circa 1900 where feasible. |

4.1.4 Dickson Park

Historically, Dickson Park was established in 1871 as a public park and agricultural fair grounds. By 1905, historic photographs show that a grandstand and a baseball

diamond had been built located at the south end. In 1966, a new recreation/exhibition complex replaced the earlier wood frame exhibition hall of 1897.

Dickson Park is a spacious and impressive open area that lacks landscape integrity. As changes have been made and buildings added, the overall impression has become cluttered and fragmented. A strong landscape design can both integrate and beautify the park. The following matters should be considered:

- History That Dickson Park should be recognized as one of the older and larger public landscapes in the City.
- Future Change That any major future improvements or landscape master plan for restoration of Dickson Park shall be developed in consultation with the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee and shall be based on the period circa 1871 that would enhance its sense of history, landscape beauty, and pedestrian amenity. Presently, an unattractive chain link fence encloses the park. While important for safety, alternatives should be explored.

Because of its 1966 construction date, improvements to Dickson Arena will be exempt from the circa 1871 objectives. However, MHAC shall be consulted in the case of major alterations, additions or reconstruction as set out in Section 5.0 Implementation.

4.1.5 Mountview Cemetery

While not a public park, Mountview Cemetery, established in 1867, contributes greatly to the landscape and heritage character of the district. The landscape setting is both beautiful and tranquil, with its hilly terrain and winding access lanes.

- History That Mountview Cemetery should be recognized as one of the older public landscapes in the City.
- Future Change The cemetery should continue to be maintained in its current state subject to the provisions of the Cemeteries Act and City of Cambridge by-laws governing the maintenance of cemeteries.

4.2 Street Trees

The long vistas of street trees are a defining element in the character of the residential areas of Dickson Hill. Interviews with residents revealed that the street trees were highly valued for their beauty and shade in summer season and colour during the fall. In general, the age of the trees is between 60 and 80 years. Many of the aged specimens are now in decline. Stress due to lack of moisture and insufficient ground nutrients also contribute to this. Streets most affected by decline are Brant Road North (sugar and silver maples) and Lansdowne Avenue North and South (sugar maples).

A further problem throughout the area is a lack of species diversity and the over-use of Norway maples, a highly invasive species. Over 80 percent of the existing specimens in the area are members of the maple family. A street that lacks species diversity is at risk to disease, defoliation and outright loss, as in the case of Dutch Elm disease. Diseased, decaying and dead trees shall be replaced where feasible and desirable. Any future tree replacement program shall be consistent with the objectives of this Plan and shall promote:

- Non-invasive species;
- Drought tolerant species; and
- Species diversity.

In addition, replacement trees shall have a minimum caliper of 50-70 mm and comparable tree canopy characteristics.

4.3 Street Lights

The globe streetlights in Dickson Hill are one of its most distinctive features. They provide a cohesive and historic character to the area. In interviews, residents said that the globe lights, together with the street trees and historic houses, give Dickson Hill its special charm. The intent of the street light policies is to retain and maintain the globe lights that exist and to extend them to the rest of the streets in the Heritage District wherever possible. This is part of the overall approach of defining Dickson Hill as a special and historic area of the City of Cambridge. The following matters should be considered:

Existing Lights That the existing globe streetlights on Brant Road, Lansdowne Road, Wentworth Avenue, Blair Road and Grand Avenue North should continue to be retained and maintained.

New Lights That consideration should be given to extending the globe streetlights throughout the rest of the residential areas in the Heritage District, as street light standards are replaced.

That in the mixed residential/commercial/institutional areas on Queen's Square, George Street, Grand Avenue South and Melville Street, a taller style of lighting complementary to the globe lights should be considered.

4.4 Signage

Signs are a visual feature in Dickson Hill. They provide an opportunity to further define and promote the area as a special historic neighbourhood.

Future Signage That consideration should be given to custom signs for the public open space areas in Dickson Hill. This signage would indicate the presence of the special and historic areas of Dickson Hill and could include interpretive wording setting out the cultural significance of the public open space areas. All signage shall be in conformity

with the City's Sign By-law, Core Areas Signage Master Plan and where possible integrated with existing signage to the satisfaction of the Community Services Department. The Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee shall be consulted prior to the installation of new signs on City-owned lands.

4.5 Public Parking Areas

Surface parking lots are visually prominent in sections of Dickson Hill. Often little to no landscaping is provided to buffer or define the parking areas. The result is often large areas of concrete and asphalt, out of keeping with the goal of beautifying and rebuilding the historic character of the subject area. It is considered important that to create a unified streetscape, that landscaping and innovative surface treatments be introduced over time.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Promoting the Plan

Education and community awareness of sound heritage conservation are considered essential initiatives in implementing the Heritage Conservation District Plan. To promote the Plan, the following actions should be undertaken:

Plan Distribution

It is intended that the Plan be distributed to all relevant departments of the City, the Region of Waterloo and to utility agencies and other interested parties, and copies made available for any members of the public who request it.

Public/Private Sector

Voluntary Guidelines for building maintenance/restoration are available through the City's Heritage Planner. Property owners are encouraged to pursue individual designations under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

5.2 Alterations and Improvements on City-Owned Lands

All permanent alterations and improvements on City-owned lands shall be consistent with the policies of this Plan. Projects that require Council approval shall obtain confirmation from the City's Heritage Planner that the proposed work is consistent with the Plan. If the proposal is found to be contrary to the Plan, the proposal shall be circulated to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee for a recommendation to Council.

Notwithstanding the above, the provisions of this policy do not apply to the following:

- Regular maintenance or repairs to restore to existing condition;
- Alterations or improvements to the interior of buildings; and
- Alterations, improvements or repairs that are required to satisfy health and safety requirements mandated by the federal or provincial government.

5.3 Alterations and Improvements to City of Cambridge Roadways

All future alterations or improvements to City of Cambridge roadways shall be consistent with the policies of this plan. This policy applies to all built features in City of Cambridge roadways such as retaining walls, sidewalks and streetlights.

Projects that require Council approval shall obtain confirmation from the City's Heritage Planner that the proposed work is consistent with the Plan. If the proposal is found to be contrary to the Plan, the proposal shall be circulated to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee for a recommendation to Council.

Projects that require approval under the Environmental Assessment Act shall be circulated to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee for a recommendation to Council.

5.4 Alterations and Improvements on Public Lands Not Owned by the City

The City of Cambridge shall request that the objectives of this plan be maintained whenever the opportunity is given to comment on alterations and improvements on public lands that are not owned by the City (e.g. Regional Roads).

5.5 Heritage Impact Assessments

City-owned Properties

A Heritage Impact Assessment in accordance with the City's approved guidelines shall be required in the following circumstances:

- (1) The construction of a new building requiring a building permit on City-owned property;
- (2) The major redesign of an existing building on City-owned property;
- (3) The approval of a landscape master plan for a City-owned property;
- (4) The construction of a new building requiring a building permit, resulting from an application under the Planning Act, on lands abutting a City-owned park or cemetery; and
- (5) Where otherwise required by the City of Cambridge Official Plan.

Private Properties

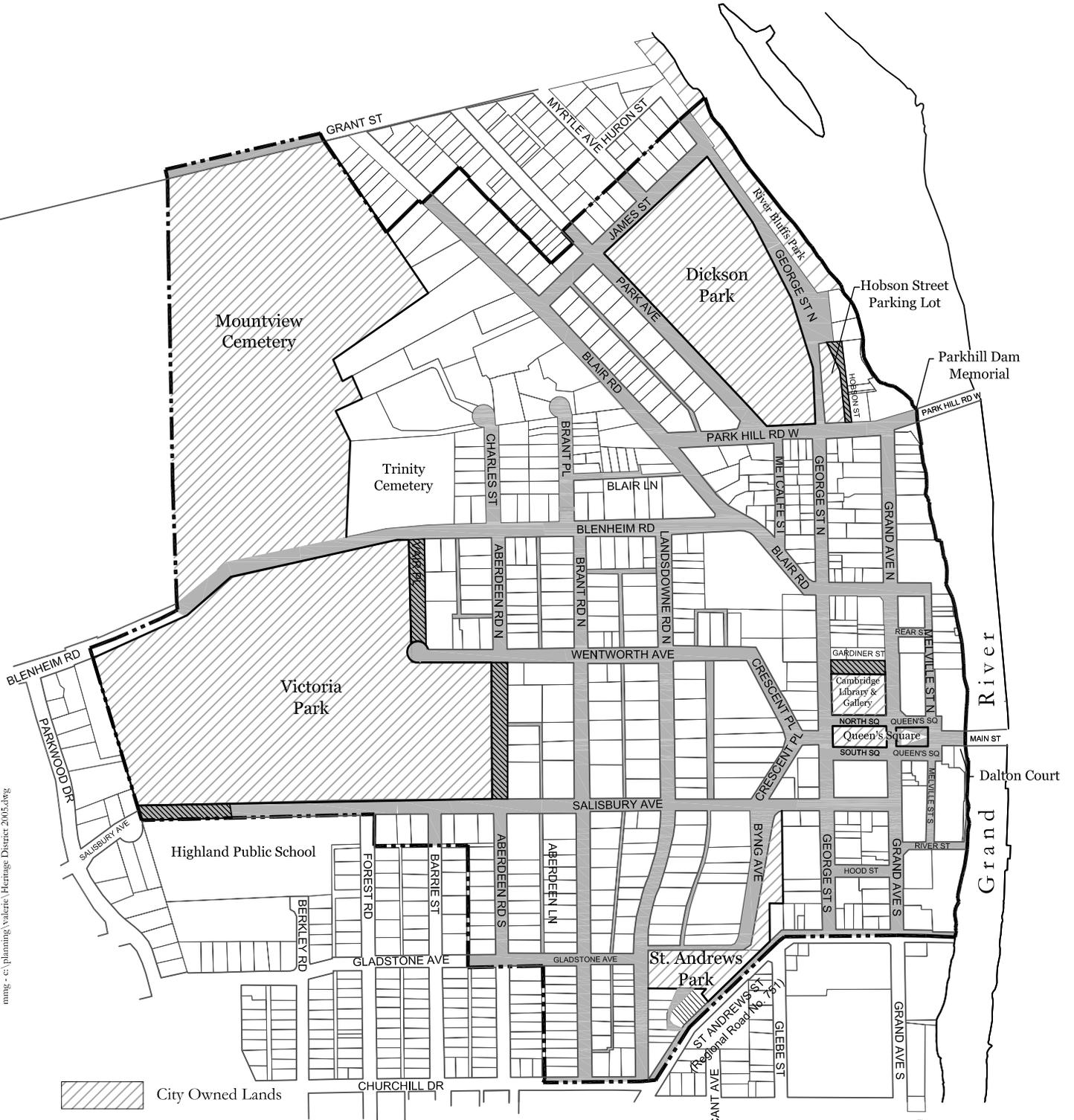
A Heritage Impact Assessment in accordance with City approved guidelines shall be required when a development proposal potentially impacts a built heritage resource, as stipulated in the Cambridge Official Plan. The Cambridge Official Plan defines a built heritage resource as follows:

The whole or part of buildings, structures, or monuments of historic and/or architectural value or interest and areas of unique, rare or effective urban composition, streetscape, landscape or archaeological value and interest and may include cemeteries.

DICKSON HILL

HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Heritage Conservation District Plan - Schedule 'A'



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-  City Owned Lands
-  City Owned Right of Ways
-  City Owned Unopened Road Allowances

All City Owned Public Lands are designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act



Adapted from Margaret/Nicholas Hill Architect
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