

APPENDIX B

December 8, 2017

Residential Character Study Team
Town of Oakville
1225 Trafalgar Road
Oakville, ON L6H 0H3
Via email: rcs@oakville.ca

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to review work to date on the Residential Character Study. We have considered the draft document and wish to provide the following comments:

- The Design Guidelines developed in 2013 were an excellent step forward. Unfortunately, those guidelines are constantly challenged. One such challenge was successful at the Ontario Municipal Board. These objections suggest the Guidelines have had insufficient ability in deterring infill developments that are not in character with surroundings. Neighbourhoods continue to experience levels of change that do not provide the adjacent area with sufficient protection. As such, we support stronger policy language in the Official Plan, continued protection of special policy areas such as the former R-01 lands and additional protections for the former O-suffix lands as well as definitions and descriptions of specific older stable neighbourhoods to inform the application process.
- Our zoning by-laws experience constant pressure from development applications seeking amendments. When they are not granted, applicants simply take the next step and make requests of the Committee of Adjustment. When staff provides a recommendation the request be denied, the COA often overrides it. The process at COA can, in many ways, be likened to an appearance at an OMB hearing. Residents in the immediate vicinity of a variance request often have no knowledge or understanding of the scope of the request, nor do they have sufficient depth of knowledge to voice an objection. The development of a Citizens Guide by staff in 2016 is applauded. Sadly, due to the “appeal board style” of the process residents without the benefit of a paid planner or lawyer continue to find themselves in situations that are often overwhelming and intimidating. We support a thorough review of the COA and urge that it be undertaken quickly. Change is required.
- We support stronger protections through the use of a design review as identified in 8.2 of the recommendations. Further, we favour processes much like those undertaken in Ottawa and Hobsons Bay. While the Oakville study has identified Type A and Type B areas, within those areas are neighbourhoods with distinct differences. Variations in those characters need to be recognized and protected.
- While we support the intent of the recommendations outlined in the report under Zoning By-law, we feel they do not represent definitive actions that can be taken to protect stable neighbourhoods. The prospect of more review and exploration does not give rise to positive expectations.
- We support the refinement of Zoning by-laws to enhance protections and reduce the impacts of new construction relative to existing development. These refinements may represent deeper setbacks, larger side or rear setbacks, limitations on window placement, retention of a ban on balconies, siting of construction that is sympathetic with surroundings, protection of

privacy and reduction of view impacts for existing residents as well as minimums for landscaping and open areas, dwelling depth regulations, the protection of trees within the building footprint and a limit on the permitted height of the basement above the natural grade.

A good deal of work has been undertaken, however we feel even more is necessary and at hand.

We note in 1.3 of the draft document the Final Study will be prepared and presented to the Planning and Development Council as an information item. As all residents associations across the town have a genuine desire to effect positive change that will result in better protection of our stable neighbourhoods, we would appreciate receiving direction on the steps and timing necessary to attain our mutual goals.

We remain encouraged and keenly interested in this project moving forward.

Sincerely,

Pamela Knight
President

Don Cox
Vice President

cc: Councillors Duddeck & Chisholmm, Ward 2
JCRA, TCRA, WRRRA, WHRA, OLRA, CMGRA, COCA



December 14, 2017

Mark Simeoni
Director of Planning
Town of Oakville
1225 Trafalgar Road
Oakville, ON
L6H 0H3

Re: Residential Character Study

Dear Mr. Simeoni:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Residential Character Study undertaken by the Planning Department.

We support the Town's undertaking of analysis to define Neighbourhood Character so that preservation of that character will be the key criterion in the Town's and Committee of Adjustment's review of individual development applications in stable residential neighbourhoods. It is important work that has the potential to positively impact our Town for years to come.

We are also pleased staff have looked at other municipalities and outlined best practices from those locations. We are excited about the potential of including them in how Oakville addresses development applications.

Our feedback on the draft report includes:

Focus on defining Neighbourhood Character

On page 3, the study says: "Examining residential character through separate distinct elements misses out on relationships that contribute to the overall look and feel of an area or street."

However, the report proceeds to examine residential character through distinct elements, with feedback on specific elements, and has missed out on how to define "the look and feel of an area".

This should be a study about preservation of Neighbourhood Character, not planning for new development. Put the study focus on identifying the look and feel of the neighbourhood rather than specific planning elements so that preserving residential character can be accomplished.

Compounding this problem, the list of distinct elements identified on p.3 of the Study fails to include some key ones which do contribute to the overall look and feel of an area.

For example, the list of specific elements in the private realm does not include Privacy, Backyards or Shadowing. It refers to Building height and shape rather than Massing and Scale of a building. Nor does it include key zoning elements such as Lot Coverage. Privacy, Shadowing, Massing and Scale are included in Section 11.1.9 of the Livable Oakville Plan. We would suggest that our understanding was that 11.1.9 was to be strengthened not reduced.

Furthermore, Lot Coverage is not considered as an element of neighbourhood character in this study; yet it impacts significantly on the look and feel of a neighbourhood.

Consider, for example, that many original homes in the JCRA area do not have windows, or only have 1, on the sides of homes. New homes are being built with large numbers of windows on larger buildings with smaller setbacks, both at the side and back of homes. Additionally, the larger scale of homes with smaller setbacks, on all 4 sides, creates shadowing on adjacent properties. Shadowing and Privacy become even bigger issues when lot coverage ratio increases.

Reduce the geographical area for which Neighbourhood Character is defined

While Town staff acknowledge they did not undertake a street by street analysis, the neighbourhood character is in those individual streets. Using date of development is a good starting point, but we suggest it is too general. It also does not acknowledge that the mix of housing stock has already changed, and on some streets, quite substantially so. We can see this walking along area streets but also in the town's analysis and mapping of Residential Building permits and Committee of Adjustment Variance Requests since 2007. Unless Neighbourhood Character is defined by street, or smaller groupings of adjacent streets, it will be so general that character will not be a factor in the outcome of variance requests. Indeed, this appears to be the current situation, which can be compared to a 30,000 ft. view rather than a ground level reality check.

Reduce the Lot Coverage ratio

The current 35% lot coverage ratio has become a base level for variance applications, not the maximum level. Reducing this ratio would mitigate the pressure to accept ever larger Variance requests.

Lot Coverage Today versus Past

Classifying homes in the Type A area as underbuilt indicates a fundamental misunderstanding of the prevailing characteristic of homes built in that area: the sense of openness that results when spacious lots predominate, not the homes. It also could appear as strong support for building larger homes that will effectively undermine and negatively impact neighbourhood character. The town should undertake a comprehensive study of existing lot coverage ratios to better understand how lot coverage influences Neighbourhood Character and to provide a quantitative comparison for Variance requests

Require development applications and Variance Requests to maintain and enhance Neighbourhood Character

We suggest that as noted in Australia the responsibility to maintain character is placed on those who are undertaking development. Currently, Variance Requests require neighbours to voice their concerns or support for a Variance request. This is cumbersome and puts residents at a disadvantage versus applicants with developers and architects. All Variance requests and development applications should require the applicant to demonstrate how their proposal will maintain and enhance character. That character needs to include, as mentioned previously the look and feel and be focused on the specific streets in which they wish to build

Variances

In our view, the simplest approach would be to disallow all variances. Specific and unique cases could be looked at on a case-by-case basis, but care would be needed so as not to open the system to abuse by non-critical applications. No variances would preserve the look and feel of the neighbourhood.

Identify Best Practices for Oakville as part of Recommendations

Our suggestions for developing best practices that would support how we define Neighbourhood Character and how they will be incorporated as criteria to review development applications and variance requests include:

1. Small geographic character studies (e.g. Burlington) and not Type A and Type B.
2. “Your street gives you your rules” – include a review of 21 lots, located on either side of and across from the proposed development to determine if the development maintains integrity of neighbourhood character (e.g. Ottawa).
3. “Reduce Building Bulk” (e.g. West Vancouver).
4. Require development applications and variance requests to demonstrate how they respect and maintain neighbourhood character (e.g. Hobsons Bay, Victoria, Australia); alternatively, disallow variances altogether as a ground rule, with exceptions to be strictly limited to unique situations.

Strengthen Recommendations

The current recommendations are comprehensive and with further work, the true definition of character for each of our neighbourhoods will be realized. We encourage the Town to articulate an Action Plan as to how they will advance this important work, including how it will be documented and incorporated into the criteria used to review development applications and Variance Requests. We would appreciate knowing when you will be reporting back to Council summarizing the communities’ feedback.

We look forward to the final study report and working with town staff and Council to ensure changes to policies and guidelines have a meaningful impact on preservation of Neighbourhood Character.

Sincerely,

Janet Haslett-Theall
President
Joshua Creek Residents' Association

CC
Mayor Burton
Regional Councilor Gittings
Town Councilor Hutchins
Commissioner Jane Clohecy
Gabe Charles, Senior Manager, Planning Department

Residential Character Study

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, December 10, 2017 9:11 PM
To: Residential Character Study
Subject: Residential Character Study

The study just quick addresses homes in Oakville built starting in the 1980's. Nothing was identified to follow up on the issues caused by the residential character in these areas. As, by numbers this is the largest group of housing in Oakville and it is almost exclusively all that is being built in new developments, I think these areas should have had more consideration in the report. In fact, some of the issue on infill housing may be that there is a demand for housing that looks like the post 1980's homes but on the larger lots of the pre 1980's homes.

Thank you,
Gordon Moores

Residential Character Study

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, December 09, 2017 1:10 PM
To: Residential Character Study
Subject: Re: Reminder: Draft Residential Character Study now available

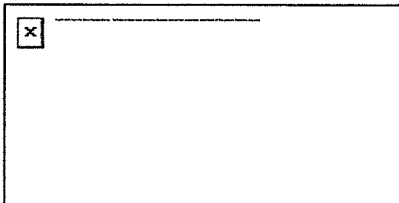
In reviewing the recommendations, my overall comment is I would expect a public hearing to review the actual "recommendations" before being fully implemented.

I do not believe the recommendations are written with any true conviction when the second bullet under 8.1 is so non-committal. When there is town wide concern over the rapidly changing character of existing neighbourhoods and 8.1 has "consider" incorporating.....existing residential character is to be respected" is candidly too wishy-washi. Especially after it follows the previous bullet point identifying 5 elements as important which contribute to the existing character of the residential areas.

Respectfully submitted,

Harry J. Shea

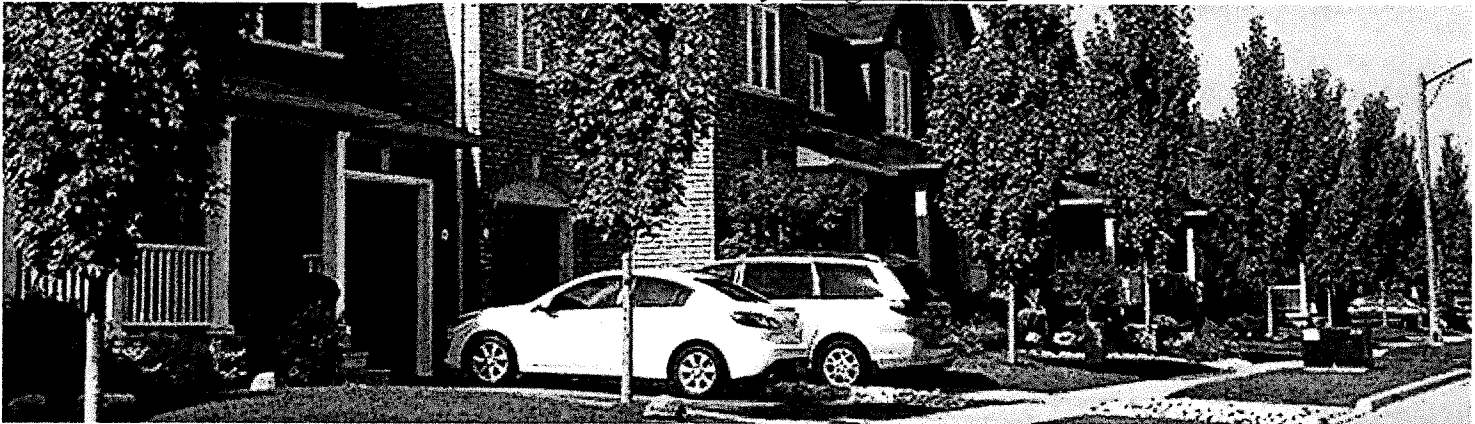
Corporate Secretary, BVRA



Your Ward 1 Voice!

Contact us at:
P.O. Box 60057
Hopedale Mall Post Office
Oakville, ON
L6L 6R4
www.bronte villagers residents.com
BVRACorporateSecretary@gmail.com

On Fri, Dec 1, 2017 at 11:58 AM, Residential Character Study <rcs@oakville.ca> wrote:



Residential Character Study

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, December 03, 2017 12:10 PM
To: Residential Character Study
Subject: Re: Reminder: Draft Residential Character Study now available

hello,

I am thinking that our Town needs more roads that discussions on trees

Dundas is full every day, so is Bronte, with more houses to come - what are you planning to do ?
why Dundas has not been expanded to 6 lines each way before NO development? same for Bronte?

regards
M. Jaklewicz

Sent from my iPad

On Dec 1, 2017, at 11:58, Residential Character Study <rcs@oakville.ca> wrote:

<image001.jpg>

Draft Residential

Tell us what you think!

Staff presented the Draft Residential Character Study to the public at an open house on November 23, 2017.

This is your chance to review and comment on the draft study document before it goes to Council in early 2018.

Residential Character Study

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, December 01, 2017 2:51 PM
To: Residential Character Study
Subject: Set backs

I realize that I am late to the game, but for my husband and I breathing room between buildings and houses is very important. The town appears to no longer worry about set backs and jams in houses almost to the lot line regardless of its impact on existing houses and light penetration. Houses should not be of a size to take up most of the lot. Too many houses are far too massive. It already has changed the character of Oakville beyond recognition. Shouldn't our carbon footprints be smaller, why this obsession with size for relatively small families?mwemseem to have moved from green space to gray space. Such a pity.

Just my thoughts

Gudrun and Bryan Bennett

Sent from my iPad

Residential Character Study

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, December 01, 2017 1:13 PM
To: Residential Character Study
Subject: Draft Residential Character Study

Good afternoon,

I appreciate the intent of this study to help inform potential improvements to policy, urban design, zoning, etc.

I have two concerns in reading over the draft.

First, after completing the survey which seemed considerably broader in scope, I am concerned that this draft is too narrow. I think parks and programming for recreational and other activities that would promote community and neighbourhood engagement are critical to this piece.

Second, even if the scope were to remain focussed on planning-related issues, I think lighting is a very important part of the “look and feel” of a neighbourhood. The lighting changes that are being made around Oakville are greatly changing the look and feel of neighbourhoods, as is being felt by many residents, especially those whose bedrooms face schools or other properties that have parking lots and other spaces that are being lit with new high-intensity lighting. Lighting can have a significant and unhealthy impact on sleep patterns, and so this should be part of the definition of Residential Character.

Also decorative light fixtures have been removed and replaced with fixtures “characterless” in appearance, and this has been done without notification to residents.

As well, in our neighbourhood, the area with no sidewalks, a route which is used by many children going to and from school everyday and by all residents who are trying to access the Devon Road bus, is very poorly lit, even with the new LEDs. And the LEDs on our street have actually made driving more difficult.

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback, and I look forward to hearing back from you on your thoughts on these concerns.

Regards,
Terry Murphy
[REDACTED]

Residential Character Study

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, November 29, 2017 1:19 PM
To: Residential Character Study
Subject: Residential Character Study

I'd like to add my comments especially regarding lighting.

For the downtown business area, Oakville listened to residents' feedback and went for a lower luminosity light (3000K as opposed to 4000K, if memory serves) giving a softer light. Unfortunately in our neighbourhood (Charnwood) the lights were upgraded without any consultation to the brighter level, and the decorative light standards were replaced at the same time. The result has been harsh, unpleasant street lights, which are distracting at night (I always feel that there is a car approaching when I'm trying to back out of our driveway. We are fortunate that the poles are on the other side of the street, as I imagine that having that light shining on your bedroom windows would also be unpleasant

Our church in downtown Oakville recently upgraded the parking lot lights to the higher level and this is totally out of character with the surrounding neighbourhood. We don't want it in our neighbourhood.

The lack of any facilities in Southeast Oakville is already a detriment to our neighbourhood. An opportunity to benefit us was lost when it was decided to build housing on the Charnwood School site. The harsh lighting works to destroy whatever character we are striving to maintain.

I would ask that the question of lighting in our area be revisited, and either the former standards and lights be restored, or the bulbs be refitted to the 3000K variety.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael Johnson B.A., LL.B.

COMMENTS?

I am a bit disappointed that the "character" has been narrowed to height, setback, & often planning issues. Southeast Delcille needs some attention. There needs to be more park space. Why did we lose →

Name (optional): _____ E-Mail: _____



COMMENTS?

It's very important that we get more access to the waterfront (eg. the estate at the corner of Maple Grove + Lakeshore) →

Name (optional): _____ E-Mail: _____



Chisholm School?). We need something other than Maple Grove Arena. The new community centre is too far away. Why was the neighbourhood not consulted on the new lighting? Also, the lack of safety (no room for children walk to school or bike to school) because parking on both sides of road (e.g. Princess Margaret Hwy

It's been a long wait. Also, more access (coffee, beer, for food) along the creek.

COMMENTS?

1 reduce lot coverage ratios
- currently too high and as they have become a standing point not the end point

2 do quantitative analysis of existing lot coverage to understand the size of buildings that create the existing character

3 provide a specific definition of "minor"

Name (optional):

E-Mail:

OAKVILLE

COMMENTS?

There is a need to control "fencing" design and material. There are way too many plain "wooden" fences going up - concealing the gardens completely and providing a barrier view from the street.

Name (optional):

E-Mail:

OAKVILLE

4 overall character is not being maintained in built form that is being allowed via Ctr of Adjustment

COMMENTS?

Control street side (curb side) residential lighting.

Name (optional):

E-Mail:

OAKVILLE