



OAKVILLE

REPORT

LIVABLE OAKVILLE (OFFICIAL PLAN) COUNCIL SUB-COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE: NOVEMBER 6, 2017

FROM: Planning Services Department

DATE: October 26, 2017

SUBJECT: Residential Character Study Update

LOCATION: Livable Oakville Plan area

WARD: All wards

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the report entitled *Residential Character Study Update*, dated October 26, 2017 be received for information.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Residential Character Study addresses the residential areas south of Dundas Street, within the Livable Oakville Plan area.
- The Residential Character Study will inform the future Residential Policy Review component of the five-year Official Plan Review, as well as other implementing documents and associated planning processes.
- Staff presented the terms of reference for the Residential Character Study to the Livable Oakville Council Sub-committee on June 12, 2017.
- This report summarizes the public feedback received through the residents association walking tours conducted in August 2017, the online survey and open houses held in September 2017, and identifies next steps.

BACKGROUND

The *Livable Oakville Plan* defines character as ““the collective qualities and characteristics that distinguish a particular area or neighbourhood”. It identifies

maintaining, protecting and enhancing the character of existing residential areas as an objective of the residential land use policies (S.11.a).

Staff initiated the Residential Character Study in January 2017 to further examine what constitutes residential character and better understand the collective qualities and characteristics identified in the official plan definition. Obtaining greater insight into what character means will assist staff in evaluating the existing Livable Oakville Plan policies, design directions and other implementing documents and processes.

The purpose of the Residential Character Study is to:

- consider the existing character within the residential areas of the town, south of Dundas Street
- understand what elements and qualities influencing character are important to residents
- review the existing policies and procedures in the context of the character analysis and feedback received
- provide recommendations for improvements to policy, design direction, zoning and other processes based on the findings of the study

The study process is composed of four stages and includes a number of opportunities for public input and feedback.



The purpose of this report is to update the subcommittee on what staff heard from the public through the engagement opportunities in Stage 2.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement is a key component of the Residential Character Study. A number of opportunities have been available for residents across the town to be involved and provide staff with input related to residential character, including walking tours, open houses and an online survey.

WALKING TOURS AND FEEDBACK

Four walking tours were held in August 2017 with residents' associations to introduce the study, discuss aspects of character in a residential setting, consider their opinions and share knowledge. Representatives from all associations and all Ward Councillors were invited to attend any or all of the walks via email invitation. The routes of the walks and the handout provided to participants are included as Appendix A. Overall, 15 representatives from six residents' associations and five Councillors attended the walks.

Some of the key observations heard from the groups were that maintaining existing separation distance between buildings (side yard setbacks) is important to the character and greater front yard setbacks allow higher buildings to blend in on a street. The road profile was identified as contributing to the look and feel of a street because it directly influences the interface or crossing point between the public and private realms. The importance of vegetation, landscaping and trees to the character of a street was also highlighted by every group.

These group walking tours were a mutual learning experience for both staff and participants, as it provided staff an opportunity to listen first hand to the associations. There was dialogue about architecture, design, the planning process, and what elements within the residential environment were thought to influence character.

OPEN HOUSES AND FEEDBACK

Six open houses were held across the town to introduce the study, discuss findings from the background research and analysis and receive feedback from residents on what elements and qualities they felt were important and contribute to the character of their neighbourhood.

The open houses were held at the following locations:

Oakville Public Library – Central Branch, September 13, 2017
River Oaks Community Centre, September 14, 2017
Glen Abbey Community Centre, September 18, 2017
Oakville Public Library – Clearview Branch, September 19, 2017
QEPCCC, September 21, 2017
Town Hall, September 22, 2017

In total, 25 residents attended the open houses and the material presented is included in Appendix B. Notification included:

- The Oakville Beaver;
- Direct email invitation to all residents' associations;
- Corporate Communication's e-newsletter;
- Featured as a main "hero" on the oakville.ca webpage; and,
- Residential Character Study project webpage.

Staff heard a mix of comments regarding residential character. Some residents had no concerns and questioned the need to study character, while others felt the town needed to have more control to ensure that changes in neighbourhoods were minimized. Several residents identified concern about replacement housing, particularly from one to two storeys, as having a negative impact on the existing character. Also noted was the importance of retaining mature trees in redevelopment, as they contributed positively to the existing character.

A summary of the written comments received includes:

- Importance of green (softscape) front yards and trees contributing to the character of a street; too much pavement (hardscape) negatively affects the character
- Policy that existing neighbourhood character is maintained is very limiting, some areas of the town need to be updated
- Increased side yard setbacks for new builds of two storeys
- Importance of street trees
- Concern about the minor variance process
- New builds may or may not fit in with the existing homes, newer houses are larger and take up more space on a lot

ONLINE SURVEY AND FEEDBACK

Based on the background work and input received during the walking tours, staff developed an online survey to seek further input from residents. Within the survey, residents were asked questions about what aspects of character they felt were important.

Three ranking questions were included and the results are summarized below:

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“How important to your neighbourhood’s character is...”

| | Building Type and Height | Trees and Vegetation | Road Type |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Very Important | 66% | 88% | 57% |
| Important | 23% | 10% | 30% |
| Neutral | 6% | 1.6% | 10% |
| Somewhat Important | 3% | 0.2% | 3% |
| Not Important | 2% | 0.2% | 1% |

When asked to identify other elements that contributed to their neighbourhood’s character and asked about any concerns, 18% valued landscaped yards and trees. 17% identified setbacks and the siting of homes on a lot as important, 11% thought of massing or built form of replacement homes as an issue and 9% identified building heights as a concern. A large proportion of the responses were left blank in this section of the survey, or noted issues unrelated to the Residential Character Study. Over 6% of the respondents identified they had no concerns and were happy with their neighbourhoods. 10% of the identified concerns were related to property maintenance and 9% were concerns about the style of homes.

509 responses were received throughout September 2017. A summary of the feedback and the locations of the survey responses are provided in Appendix C.

NEXT STEPS

Staff are in the process of finalizing the draft Residential Character Study document based on the background research, analysis and public feedback received as part of Stage 2 and Stage 3 of the study process.

An open house will be held in mid-November 2017 to present the draft study document and seek further feedback from the public. This feedback will then inform the preparation of the final Residential Character Study.

The final Residential Character Study document is anticipated to be presented for information to Planning and Development Council in January 2018.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Consultation is an important part of the Residential Character Study. The public will continue to have an opportunity to provide feedback on the Residential Character Study in Stage 3 of the study process.

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(B) FINANCIAL

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

Coordination with other departments is ongoing.

(D) CORPORATE AND/OR DEPARTMENT STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal to:

- continuously improve our programs and services
- be accountable
- be innovative
- be the most livable town in Canada

(E) COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

The Residential Character Study will work to support and enhance the social, economic and built environment of the community.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Walking tour route maps and handout

Appendix B – Open House material

Appendix C – Feedback summary and survey response locations

Prepared by:
Carly Dodds, MCIP, RPP
Planner, Policy Planning

Prepared by:
Dwight Ingalls
Urban Designer, Urban Design

Recommended by:
Gabe Charles, MCIP, RPP
Senior Manager, Current Planning and
Urban Design

Submitted by:
Mark H. Simeoni, MCIP, RPP
Director, Planning Services