

APPENDIX D

Halifax Common Conservation Strategy

This document is a preliminary investigation done in conjunction with the Halifax Common Master Plan. Details and priorities identified in the Conservation Strategy may change upon formal designation of any properties within the Halifax Common district under the *Heritage Property Act*.

1.0 Conservation Strategy and Management Recommendations

The Second Edition of *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* (SGCHPC) provides a theoretical foundation as well as practical guidance for the identification of heritage resources and their tangible and intangible heritage values. It also provides a phased approach to build on an initial inventory and assessment of the heritage resources prior to proceeding with any removals, alterations or additions to the significant heritage fabric. The recommended process bases management actions on a thorough assessment of the nature of the historic site, comprehensive planning for conservation and maintenance and followed by implementation of the improvement plans. The process has three main phases: Understanding, Planning and Intervention.

The previous sections of this report relating to Heritage Conservation Findings have identified the many resources within and adjacent to the Halifax Common that should be considered in any proposed change in use or form. The heritage values and the character-defining elements form the basis for the evaluation of any impacts of proposed changes on the heritage resources. Some impacts may be short term such as during construction, minor in nature, or long term and major. The evaluation of impacts includes a discussion of mitigation strategies to lessen the long-term effect.

As well, in addition to a review of major new works, the day-to-day operations of the various municipal departments who carry out maintenance and repairs have the potential to impact on the heritage resources. Regular activities that are appropriate for other parks and streets may require adjustment when undertaken in the Common in order to ensure the heritage features are not impacted. Maintenance activities may be considered as conservation activities since much of this work ensures that the heritage resources are kept in good repair so that the historic uses may continue.

Planning for the future of the Halifax Common requires consideration of its heritage significance. This is contained in the Statement of Significance that summarizes the heritage values of the Common.

Statement of Significance:

Halifax Common is a continually evolving Cultural Heritage Landscape with a long and rich history evident in the many heritage resources found throughout its borders. The Common continues to be a location for institutional uses for health care and education and for recreational activities, both passive and active. These varied uses support social benefits for the community. It is defined by the historic street grid, now lined with street trees, creating a unifying effect around the original survey of 235 acres established in 1763. The Common makes a significant contribution to the identity of the neighbourhoods that surround it and

to the larger region since it is one of the largest flat green open spaces in the area that can accommodate temporary uses for civic celebrations and special events.

The density and visual character of the Common vary dramatically from the north to the south end with the majority of the recent large-scale buildings located in the central area and the south. This pattern follows the nineteenth century creation of lots along Spring Garden Road that established private residential development within the boundary of the Common. The creation of the Dalhousie campus and other health care complexes located primarily in the south end began in the nineteenth century and continues.

Character-Defining Elements

As the planning for the future continues, the character-defining elements that have heritage value must be protected. The following list of character-defining elements provides details about the key heritage attributes that must be conserved in order for the heritage values to be safeguarded in the future.

- the street alignment and layout that define the original survey border,
- the generally level landform of the open green space of the North and Central Common,
- the landscape settings of the built heritage resources,
- the designed landscapes of Camp Hill Cemetery, Halifax Public Gardens NHS and Victoria Park,
- the individually designated or recognized heritage properties, the Wanderers' Grounds, Bengal Lancers site, Halifax Public Gardens NHS, Carleton Victorian streetscape, Power Cottage at 1606 Bell Road, Victoria Park and Camp Hill Cemetery
- the variety of public recreational features that provide year-round use. Beginning in the early twentieth century, some of the lands have been developed with active recreational facilities, (skating oval, skateboard area, aquatics area, ball fields, soccer field, tennis and basketball courts).
- the scale and form of buildings in the North and Central Common that are subordinate to the open space
- the scale and form of the buildings in the remainder of the historic Common are larger scale, primarily institutional uses particularly in the south end and each set in a smaller surrounding landscape context
- the large collection of street trees defining the circulation routes, primarily the street network that crosses and goes around the Common connecting the surrounding neighbourhoods with the downtown core and the institutional uses to the south
- the pedestrian and cycling routes that link the Common with the remainder of the community
- the ornamental plantings at entrances and associated with special features, commemorative features and art installations that enhance the aesthetic value of the area

-the visual relationships of the Common including views from the open lands to a variety of building types and uses along its borders. Key views from the North Common include the view of the Armoury and the Halifax Citadel NHS. Views into the Common are from the adjacent public streets and across the uninterrupted open space.

Heritage Values

The character-defining elements are the physical evidence of past activities that have heritage significance. These elements may have tangible heritage value as well as intangible value. They may be a rare form of a historic design style such as the Victorian garden design of the Halifax Public Garden NHS. In this case the tangible value is the layout and configuration of the design elements that are a typical pattern of the Victorian era. The intangible value of the Public Garden is that it reveals the Victorian relationship with nature and a sense of aesthetics based on control and order.

Some of the character-defining elements may be associated with an earlier period of significance such as the Freshwater Brook, formerly part of the pre-contact environment used by First Nation peoples. Or they may be a contributor to the identity of the community through the contribution to the historic context of Halifax. An example of this identity is the commemoration of the Halifax explosion that devastated such a large part of the waterfront. The Common played a key role in the reconstruction response providing a temporary housing site for survivors. This past use of the open space has intangible value as it demonstrates the resilience of the community when faced with a tragic event.

In summary the heritage values are as follows:

The heritage values of the Common are in its long-standing use by the community and its transformation from communal pasture to maintained parkland. Its heritage resources come from various time periods and they represent past beliefs, styles and priorities.

1.1 Management Recommendations

The planning for the Conservation of the Halifax Common is based on an understanding of the various activities that fall under the term Conservation. The SGCHPC contains clear definitions of this overall term, as well as the specific approaches to conservation activities, Preservation, Rehabilitation and Restoration. The planning for a historic place may involve one primary activity or a combination of all three approaches. The selection of an appropriate strategy is based on the nature of the heritage resources found there, the Statement of Significance, the heritage values and the character-defining elements.

In the case of the Halifax Common, there are several properties where the Preservation approach is recommended since these sites – the Halifax Public Gardens NHS and Carleton Victorian Streetscape – have been separately designated and there is little likelihood that a new use will be proposed for these sites. In the case of the Richard Power Cottage at 1606 Bell Road, the Wanderers' Grounds and the Bengal Lancer's facility, there are potential alterations that may be required to ensure the

facilities remain in use. These alterations should be planned to be compatible with the heritage designation and a combination of Preservation and Rehabilitation is the appropriate strategy.

In the case of Camp Hill Cemetery, the site will benefit from Rehabilitation and Restoration activities such as vegetation management and grave marker conservation. Development of modest improvements for accessibility and the creation of an Interpretation Plan that explains the historic importance of this site in the Halifax context will ensure that the cemetery is fully appreciated as a key part of the heritage resources of the Common.

The selection of a conservation approach is affected by the existing condition of the resources and their requirements for repair, ongoing maintenance, restoration or rehabilitation. Several improvements may be required to ensure current standards for accessibility, sustainability and security are addressed. Planning for this work involves an evaluation of how the proposed undertakings will impact on the heritage resources and identification of potential measures for mitigation to avoid or lessen any negative impacts.

The implementation of the proposed works, such as removals, alterations or additions should be undertaken only after the works have been reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate for the heritage site. During the implementation phase of the conservation work, monitoring of activities is recommended to ensure that the protection measures are in place and that the work proceeds according to the reviewed and approved plans.

There are day-to day maintenance operations such as grass mowing and snow removal that may potentially affect some of the landscape features, such as the tree collection that is a key part of the visual character of the Common. Recognizing the heritage value of the Common as a unique historic site and integrating that special recognition in the regular maintenance practices will assist in the ongoing conservation of the heritage features.

Guiding principles for the various conservation activities are found in the fourteen Standards contained in the SGCHPC. Nine Standards guide Preservation, Rehabilitation and Restoration, three more guide Rehabilitation and two additional Standards relate to Restoration activities. The application of these Standards relies on the defined character-defining elements, and the heritage values already described.

General Standards for Preservation, Rehabilitation and Restoration

1. Conserve the heritage value of an historic place. Do not remove, replace or substantially alter its intact or repairable character-defining elements. Do not move a part of an historic place if its current location is a character-defining element.
2. Conserve changes to an historic place that, over time, have become character-defining elements in their own right.
3. Conserve heritage value by adopting an approach calling for minimal intervention.
4. Recognize each historic place as a physical record of its time, place and use. Do not create a false sense of historical development by adding elements from other historic places or other properties, or by combining features of the same property that never coexisted.
5. Find a use for an historic place that requires minimal or no change to its character-defining elements.
6. Protect and, if necessary, stabilize an historic place until any subsequent intervention is undertaken. Protect and preserve archaeological resources in place. Where there is potential for disturbing archaeological resources, take mitigation measures to limit damage and loss of information.
7. Evaluate the existing condition of character-defining elements to determine the appropriate intervention needed. Use the gentlest means possible for any intervention. Respect heritage value when undertaking an intervention.
8. Maintain character-defining elements on an ongoing basis. Repair character-defining elements by reinforcing their materials using recognized conservation methods. Replace in kind any extensively deteriorated or missing parts of character-defining elements, where there are surviving prototypes.
9. Make any intervention needed to preserve character-defining elements physically and visually compatible with the historic place and identifiable on close inspection. Document any intervention for future reference.

Additional Standards Relating to Rehabilitation

10. Repair rather than replace character-defining elements. Where character-defining elements are too severely deteriorated to repair, and where sufficient physical evidence exists, replace them with new elements that match the forms, materials and detailing of sound versions of the same elements. Where there is insufficient physical evidence, make the form, material and detailing of the new elements compatible with the character of the historic place.
11. Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to an historic place or any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.
12. Create any new additions or related new construction so that the essential form and integrity of an historic place will not be impaired if the new work is removed in the future.

Additional Standards Relating to Restoration

13. Repair rather than replace character-defining elements from the restoration period. Where character-defining elements are too severely deteriorated to repair and where sufficient physical evidence exists, replace them with new elements that match the forms, materials and detailing of sound versions of the same elements.
14. Replace missing features from the restoration period with new features whose forms, materials and detailing are based on sufficient physical, documentary and/or oral evidence.

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada 2nd Edition”, page 22.

One of the key principles in the Standards and Guidelines has to do with the role of new design. In Standard 11, the principle states that new additions or any related new construction should be “physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.” The use of replicas is not recommended as best practice. With any new additions, the form and scale of the new works should be carefully planned so that the overall visual character of the Common is sustained.

1.2 Designation as a Cultural Heritage Landscape: Review and Approval Process

One of the recommended tools for the future conservation of the Common is to designate it as a Cultural Heritage Landscape (CHL). The *Standards and Guidelines* define a Cultural Heritage Landscape as “any geographical area that has been modified, influenced, or given special cultural meaning by people.” The historic uses, the built heritage and landscape features and the immense importance of the Common to the community confirm that the Common more than satisfies the definition of a CHL. UNESCO identifies three different types of cultural landscape, which are referenced in the *Standards and Guidelines*. The Halifax Common falls into the ‘vernacular’ category: an “organically evolved cultural landscape developed in response to social, economic, administrative or religious forces interacting with the natural environment. Continuing landscapes in which the evolutionary process is still in progress, exhibit significant material evidence of their evolution over time.”

The process of designating CHL’s is similar to designation of individual properties, where the character-defining elements that are of heritage value and significance are identified and used as a basis for planning. Heritage designation as a Cultural Heritage Landscape enables the identification and protection of the many individual features that both singly and collectively, create a visual character that must be respected in any potential changes. The designation does not deter changes from happening. Rather it allows for potential changes to be reviewed and evaluated as to how they may impact the reasons for designation, the Statement of Significance, the character-defining elements and the heritage values.

The benefit of designation as a CHL is that it involves an approval process that enables the community, through the review of the application, to participate in the planning of any major proposed alterations to the Common. A formal permit process may be initiated as part of the building permit process for large projects to ensure that the undertakings are appropriate in safeguarding the heritage resources and their associated heritage values.

1.3 Regulations for Adjacent Lands and Impact Assessments

There may be changes within the surrounding context of the Common that will have an impact on the heritage resources within the historic site. At the present time, major redevelopment projects must submit shadow and wind assessment reports to assess the impact of the development on the Common. These assessments provide important understanding of these impacts. However, assessment of the impact on the heritage resources that have been identified through a formal designation provides a

more thorough evaluation of the proposed changes on lands adjacent to designated property. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is a tool that has been successfully used in other jurisdictions to measure impacts and identify potential mitigation strategies. The Heritage Impact Assessment process facilitates a review of proposed changes in the adjacent lands by assessing their impact on the identified heritage attributes. The HIA is a means to begin discussion about the appropriateness of the changes.

The contents of the HIA include a description of the proposed change, the reasons for designation (Statement of Significance) and list of character-defining elements. Typically, it includes historic research undertaken to understand how the site has evolved and the early history of the extant features found on the site. It also includes a listing of the key heritage features that may be affected by the proposed change. Using this information, the impact of the change on the heritage features is described as well as alternatives, mitigation strategies and conservation methods that may be used to lessen the impacts. Negative impacts may include demolition of features, unsympathetic alterations, direct obstruction of key historic views or changes in the elevation or topography of a site that may impact on both site drainage but also archaeological resources. In the case of the Common, the key heritage values and character defining elements listed in Section 1.0 above must be considered in any new undertaking that could impact these features.

Mitigation measures vary considerably from avoidance to establishing a buffer zone or setback for screening or blocking of views to and from the heritage resources. Determining appropriate mitigation strategies is based on the nature of the impact in terms of its scope and permanence and the sensitivity of the heritage resources to change. Consideration of alternatives is an important part of the HIA allowing for selection of a proposed change in use that will have the least negative impact on the heritage resources. Once the preferred alternative is selected, monitoring of the implementation phase of the undertaking is a key step ensuring that the plan is completed as approved.

There are several key strategies for mitigation when avoidance of direct impact on a heritage resource is not possible. One is **relocation** of the heritage resource to a new location. However, relocation is not recommended when the original location is part of the reasons for heritage significance. A thorough review of alternatives is required before any relocation plan is developed. If the built heritage resources contain architectural details that have heritage value not associated with the location of the structure, conservation by relocation may be appropriate if other alternatives are not feasible.

A second mitigation alternative when avoidance is not possible is **documentation and interpretation**. Prior to loss of the heritage features, a complete inventory and description of the resources should be undertaken and a plan for the sharing of the information about the heritage significance should be made. This is to ensure that the heritage values of the historic place are continued for the future. The interpretation of the heritage site may form a key part of a recommendation of a Conservation Plan that indicates how the heritage resources are to be protected and which intervention or combination of interventions is recommended.

Designation of the Common as a Cultural Heritage Landscape does not anticipate that there will be no change or evolution within the Common or the adjacent lands. The benefit of the designation process is that it accommodates review and comments on proposed changes.

1.4 Preparation of a Conservation Plan

The Conservation Plan, whether prepared as part of a Heritage Impact Assessment or as part of the ongoing maintenance and operations for the historic property, contains important direction for the future management of the site. The Conservation Plan should include the historical research background information identifying key periods of past activities in a site chronology or time line. It also includes the Statement of Significance and the principles that are to be utilized to conserve the resources. The Conservation Plan should include recommendations for actions, both short term and long term, a management structure as to responsibilities, scheduling for implementation based on priorities, physical conditions, and costing. The Conservation Plan should also identify any specialized expertise that is required to complete the work on specific heritage features. Applying practical guidance included in the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada will assist in selecting the most appropriate intervention and implementing the conservation work.

In summary, understanding Halifax Common as a Cultural Heritage Landscape provides a way forward in safeguarding the historic place as a whole and protecting the many individual features that contribute to its overall heritage value. The Conservation Planning process may be applied to the entire Common and to the components that form part of the Common. To this end, the following section outlines a Conservation Plan for Camp Hill Cemetery to demonstrate the process and principles involved in conserving this significant section of the Common.

Case Study: Conservation guidance for Centennial Fountain

In 1967, communities across the country celebrated the 100 years of Confederation. Halifax commemorated the accomplishment with the construction of Centennial Fountain located in the North Common. It was placed in the centre of open lawn with no connections to the adjacent pathways or other landscape features. The selected location is highly visible from the surrounding land when it is operating or when it is illuminated.

The fountain consists of a low concrete wall encircling a concrete basin with a collection of surface-mounted pipes, fountain heads and drains. It is now surrounded by a tall metal fence and signage warning of Danger, High Voltage. The concrete wall shows considerable evidence of deterioration. The primary view of the fountain is from a distance where these aspects are less prominent.

The process for developing a conservation strategy for the fountain involves several steps,

1. Determine its heritage value
2. Prepare a list of character-defining elements
3. Assess alternatives for Conservation: Restoration, Relocation or Rehabilitation
4. Implement the appropriate interventions

In this case, the heritage value of the Centennial Fountain resides in its association with the Centennial celebrations that marked Canadian Confederation 1867-1967. The commemoration honouring this major accomplishment is the significant intangible heritage value associated with the fountain. The poor condition of the materials in the fountain and the unwelcoming visual character of the perimeter fencing reduce the ability of the fountain in its current state to successfully convey that message of

recognition of such a major accomplishment. The most important character-defining element that expresses the message, is the water display when it is operating and especially at night when the spray jets are illuminated.

The fountain requires major repairs to most of its components to continue its operation. As with many similar outdoor fountain installations, new considerations for sustainability, water conservation and energy efficiency must be integrated in conservation planning. For the Centennial fountain to be upgraded to current standards, a great deal of restoration or replacement of components is required. However, if most of the component parts are replaced, the historic integrity and authenticity of the fountain is negatively impacted. Therefore, restoration as an intervention strategy is not recommended.

Rehabilitation involves making changes to keep the heritage resource in continuing use. As with Restoration, to upgrade the fountain for ongoing use, the integrity and authenticity of the original fountain is lost. The Additional Guidelines for Rehabilitation in the SGCHPC acknowledge that heritage resources may require alterations for Health, Safety and Security, Accessibility and Sustainability. Given the amount of work required, rehabilitation will likely also negatively impact the integrity and authenticity of the fountain and is not a preferred alternative.

The guidance for conservation does not recommend relocation unless the original location convey heritage value to the resource. In the case of the fountain, it was placed in isolation within the North Common and was not connected to the circulation system of the site. Moving the fountain to a new location within the North Common would not result in the loss of a character-defining element of this structure.

Prior to any removal of the fountain, it should be inventoried and documented so that a record of its original materials and construction techniques is made.

Standard 11 provides guidance where new construction is considered as a way of safeguarding the key features of the heritage resource. New design should not replicate the original but should be compatible with the original design intent. The key heritage value of the Centennial Fountain to be expressed in new design is the commemoration purpose and the association with the Confederation celebration. The intangible value captured in that celebration was a sense of national pride expressed in communities across the country. The key features that should be part of a new design are a circular layout, a distinctive display of water jets, illumination, an overall inviting appearance that welcomes public views, and an accessible connection with the pedestrian circulation system of the North Common.

In summary, it is possible with a high quality design, to capture the message of the original fountain and to share through interpretation the story of the fountain and the commemoration of Canada's Confederation.

References

A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Collaboration. "Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada 2nd Edition". Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, 2010.