

HERITAGE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT - OCTOBER 2022

Every year, as is our mandate, the Heritage & Development Committee of NECA reviews and comments on proposals for the construction of new infill housing or for the alteration of existing homes, usually in the form of substantial additions. The opinion of NECA along with the position of the city's heritage planners and the Built Heritage Sub-Committee is critical to the final outcome at the City's Planning Committee.

Proposals are evaluated by the H & D Committee not on the basis of the personal preferences of the individual committee members, but using the criteria laid out in existing documents that pertain to Ontario's designated historic districts. These include the City of Ottawa's Official Plan, zoning by-laws governing, and the historic district in particular, as well as the directives and guidelines spelled out in New Edinburgh's Heritage Conservation Plan which has been in effect since 2000 and upgraded in 2016.

This has been an unusual year for the committee. The city's heritage staff and the committee did not receive any requests for development proposals in the historic district during this period and only one application for an addition to an existing house. The main focus of NECA has been Ottawa's new Official Plan, and specifically evaluating how the push for intensification will impact the city's fifteen heritage conservation districts.

1) 171 Stanley Avenue: This was a proposal by the owners to remove a clapboard addition on the side of the house and replace it with a much larger one extending towards the sidewalk and eliminating the open space between the applicant's house and the adjacent property. The materials for the new structure were to be large panes of glass within black metal frames, overwhelming the character of the small house. The committee did not support the initial proposal because of its strong presence at the streetscape level. After several collaborative meetings with the city's heritage planner and the applicant's architect, the footprint of the proposed addition was substantially reduced, the materials changed to soften the impact and the open view into the park was maintained.

2) 255 MacKay Street: The redevelopment of the original Manse of MacKay United Church has been an ongoing saga for several years. The current owner has remained 'invisible' and has not been willing to engage with the community about his intentions. In 2020, his architect produced an outrageous proposal which ignored both the city's heritage overlay zoning by-laws and the directives in New Edinburgh's Heritage Conservation District Plan. What was proposed was a 3-storey wrap-around addition, three times the size of the existing house, which projected forward beyond the manse facade and in the rear to the edge of Avon Lane. The proposal was not endorsed by either the city's heritage planners or NECA. Since then the building appears to be used as a boarding house, which is a permitted use under the existing zoning regulations.

3) 189 Stanley Avenue: The initial proposal for this site was to demolish a bungalow-style single family home and replace it with two front-to-back semi-detached dwellings, 3 storeys high, with flat roofs, floor-to-ceiling glass with black metal frames and a cladding of grey brick. The city's heritage planners and NECA did not endorse the proposal due to the lack of sympathetic connection to the other houses in the surrounding streetscape. In 2021, the city's Built Heritage Sub-Committee approved a contrasting more appropriate design, endorsed by NECA. Two brick homes each containing three independent units which would be compatible in terms of massing, scale and materials with other houses nearby. They are now ready for occupancy and represent a positive example of intensification while respecting the neighbourhood aesthetic.

4) Ottawa's New Official Plan: In March 2021, NECA submitted its comments and recommendations for the City of Ottawa's Draft Official Plan. It included a section emphasizing the necessity of incorporating language that ensured heritage conservation policies have priority standing and that the city's cultural heritage resources would continue to be protected. The draft official plan was approved by City Council and forwarded to Ontario's Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing for review. The Ontario Government is responsible for assessing municipal official plans with respect to matters of 'provincial interest'. NECA joined four other community associations (representing 15 heritage conservation districts) in preparing a document sent to the Ontario Government requesting changes in the wording in sections of the Official Plan that relate to Ottawa's heritage conservation districts. The goal was to clarify language and intent of four key areas to strengthen the protection for heritage districts. A detailed summary of the document can be found on page 7 of the April issue of the *New Edinburgh News*. There has been no response from anyone representing the Ontario Government to date.

5) Ontario's Bill 109 - More Homes for Everyone Act 2022: The Government of Ontario is embarking on an aggressive plan to increase the supply of housing in existing residential neighbourhoods. It is a laudable goal, but if the measures outlined in its Housing Affordability Task Force Report are implemented, existing provincial policies, municipal zoning by-laws and heritage conservation plans that protect designated heritage districts will be overridden. A letter expressing our collective concerns was sent to the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs suggesting that any new housing policies include explicit language to guarantee the protection of Ontario's heritage conservation districts. For details see page 8 of the October 2022 issue of the *New Edinburgh News*.