

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Heritage District Review and Update: Status Report

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** June 2, 2025

**Report Number:** PDP 31-25

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Planning and Development Department  
(Planning Services)

**Submitted by:**

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Planning and Development

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
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### 1. Recommendation:

1. **THAT report PDP 31-25 be received for information, as an update to the on-going Review and Update of the Brooklin HCD Plan and the Werden's Plan Neighbourhood HCD Plan.**

### 2. Highlights:

- The Town, along with its retained consultants, Stantec, is currently undertaking a review and update of its two Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Plans - Brooklin HCD Plan and Werden's Plan Neighbourhood HCD Plan. The purpose of this report is to update Council on work to-date on this project.
- A Public Information Centre (PIC) was held on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025, with a concurrent survey seeking public input. The PIC was attended by approximately 18

residents from both the Werden's Plan Neighbourhood HCD and the Brooklin HCD.

- Stantec has completed a Phase One Background and Analysis report, summarized in this report.

### **3. Background:**

Enabled by the Ontario Heritage Act, Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs) are identified by municipalities as locations where history is embraced, and heritage resources are to be preserved. Broadly speaking, an HCD allows municipalities to protect an entire area containing heritage character, buildings, and/or landscapes.

The Town of Whitby currently has two HCDs – Brooklin and Werden's Plan Neighbourhood (Southwest quadrant of Downtown Whitby), each with their own Heritage Conservation District Plan (HCD Plan). An HCD Plan is a policy and guidance document that helps protect cultural heritage resources and manage change within an HCD.

To implement the HCD Plan, the Town uses a heritage permit system for certain things like additions, new design, or major alterations to buildings to manage change over time.

A brief overview, highlighting key elements of the Town's two HCDs, is provided below.

#### **Brooklin HCD:**

- Designated in 2007 as the Town's first HCD.
- Contains 185 properties.
- A former rural village with a main commercial corridor and adjacent residential streets.

#### **Werden's HCD:**

- Designated in 2017, and approved, as amended, by the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal in 2019.
- Contains 250 properties.
- Town's largest concentration of historic residences.

The boundaries of each HCD are illustrated in Attachment #1.

### **4. Discussion:**

The Review and Update of The Town's two existing Heritage Conservation District Plans was initiated in January 2025. The purpose of the review and update is to:

- continue to best conserve the cultural heritage resources within each district, while also encouraging compatible redevelopment;
- bring the HCD Plans into conformity with recent legislative changes and current land use policies;
- create more user-friendly HCD Plans for the public and Town staff; and

- provide greater clarity and enhance consistency between the two HCD Plans, where appropriate.

The HCD Plans Review and Update will not include a review or update of the existing HCD boundaries.

The project is taking place in two Phases, as follows:

**Phase 1: Background Review (January to June 2025):**

- Background Review and data collection;
- Town staff and Heritage Whitby Advisory Committee (HWAC) meetings and presentations;
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting;
- Public Information Centre (PIC) 1;
- Fieldwork;
- HCD Plans Review; and,
- Committee/Council meeting.

**Phase 2: HCD Plans Update (July to December 2025):**

- Draft Updated HCD Plans;
- TAC 2;
- PIC 2;
- HWAC presentation of draft updated HCD Plans;
- Final HCD Plans; and,
- Committee/Council meeting.

Since January 2025, site visits and significant background work has been undertaken to gain an understanding of each HCD Plan and collect relevant data.

On April 10, 2025, a Public Information Centre (PIC) 1 was held for the project. Related materials, including links to an engagement survey, were posted to the Town's HCD website following the event. Feedback on the existing Plans was also gathered from the project's Technical Advisory Committee and the Town's Heritage Whitby Advisory Committee.

**Phase 1 Report**

Stantec has prepared a Phase One Background and Analysis Report (Attachment #2) on the Town's two Heritage Conservation District Plans which includes a review of existing conditions, an engagement summary, Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) Analysis of each HCD Plan, and preliminary recommendations for their updates to the HCD Plans. The Phase 1 Report identifies what is working well; what has been challenging to implement; opportunities to refine and/or enhance policies or guidelines; as well as how any threats to existing HCDs can be mitigated through the review and updated HCD Plans. The Phase 1 Report also identifies priorities and direction for next steps in the review and update of the HCD Plans.

The following is a summary of the key findings of the SWOT analysis (Section 8 in Attachment 2).

### **Brooklin HCD Plan**

Overall, Stantec's SWOT analysis has determined the policies and guidelines of the Brooklin HCD are generally being met.

Strengths of the Brooklin HCD Plan include:

- limited alterations of many heritage properties;
- minimal unsympathetic alterations to properties (including to windows, doors, painting, siding and roof cladding); and
- new development that has largely followed the policies and guidelines of the HCD Plan.

The primary weakness of the Brooklin HCD Plan was identified as being a relatively brief and broad Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest (CHVI) and lack of a clear list of Heritage Attributes. In addition, Stantec identified challenges discerning contributing vs. non contributing properties as well as policy gaps for sympathetic development and infill, sustainability and accessibility, and signs.

Opportunities identified in the report for Brooklin HCD Plan, that could help mitigate the threat of development pressures include:

- An updated Statement of Cultural Heritage Value of Interest to include Heritage Attributes for the HCD to assist the Town when determining whether new development, additions, public works, etc. have a positive or negative impact on the Districts' attributes.
- Enhanced HCD Plan education and alignment by developing a digital form/ checklist with heritage guidelines as well as material regarding the benefits of HCDs and potential effects on property insurance.
- Alignment of HCD Plan with updated provincial (Ontario Heritage Act) and municipal (Official Plan) policies.

The main threat to the Brooklin HCD continues to be development pressures.

### **Werden's Plan Neighbourhood HCD Plan**

Stantec's SWOT analysis for the Werden's HCD Plan also identified the policies and guidelines of the Werden's HCD Plan are generally being met.

Strengths of the Werden's HCD Plan include:

- new development, additions, and alterations that has largely followed the policies and guidelines of the HCD Plan.
- limited alteration of public and private landscapes.
- many of the heritage properties in the HCD have seen relatively little change since the establishment of the District.

The primary weaknesses of the Werden's HCD Plan were identified as the Statement of Cultural Heritage Value and Heritage Attributes as well as a lack information regarding compatible sustainable design and accessibility improvements.

Opportunities to enhance the character of the HCD and mitigate the threats posed by development pressures include:

- an updated Statement of Cultural Heritage Value to include Heritage Attributes for the HCD;
- guidance where sympathetic intensification of existing land-uses may be suitable;
- contemplation of whether a number of mid-20th century residences along Byron Street should be considered "contributing" properties to the HCD as well as applicable policies and guidelines for alteration, additions, or replacement of these buildings;
- enhanced HCD Plan education and alignment by developing a digital form/checklist with heritage guidelines; and;
- updated policies for tree planting and removal, and additional dwelling units.

The greatest threat to the Werden's Plan HCD, similar to the Brooklin HCD, was considered to be development pressures, particularly given the neighbourhood's prevailing low density nature in proximity to intensification areas and corridors.

**Preliminary Recommendations and Directions:**

Based on the consultant's review and input from the public, Stantec has made the following preliminary recommendations (Section 9 in Attachment 2):

- Bring Brooklin and Werden's Plan HCD's into conformity with recent changes to the Ontario Heritage Act. Updated HCD Plan policies and objectives will also strengthen alignment with Official Plan, Zoning, and other applicable Town plans and strategies.
- Update the Statements of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and more clearly articulate the list of Heritage Attributes for both HCD's.
- Align classification system/nomenclature of heritage properties across the two HCD Plans and ensure alignment with updates to the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Incorporate mapping which identifies the classification of each property within each HCD Plan.
- Incorporate / strengthen policies and/or guidelines on the following topics:
  - Sustainability and accessibility;
  - New development and alterations;
  - Demolitions;
  - Signs - including their type and placement;
  - Tree removals and replacement; and
  - Construction and placement of additional dwelling units.

Finally, the consultant has also recommended increased public awareness and a checklist for heritage attributes to assist with implementation of the policies and guidelines in the HCD Plans.

### **Next Steps**

Over the coming months, Stantec will work with Town staff to develop Draft Updates for both the Werden's HCD Plan and Brooklin HCD Plan. Phase 2 will also include consultation with the public, HWAC, and the internal TAC. The final recommended updates to the HCD Plans will then be brought forward for Council's consideration.

## **5. Financial Considerations:**

Budget for the Town's Heritage Conservation District Plan Review and Update was included in previously approved Capital Budgets, and as carry forward items for the 2025 Budget.

## **6. Communication and Public Engagement:**

### **In Person Engagement**

The Town of Whitby and Stantec held PIC 1 on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025, to introduce residents of the two Heritage Conservation Districts to the project. A notice was sent to all property owners in the Brooklin and Werden's Plan Neighbourhood HCDs two (2) weeks in advance of the PIC.

The PIC took place at Town Hall and included a series of display boards providing general information about the project, and District-specific information for each of the HCDs. This included information about the current objectives for each District, the characteristics that make these areas special, and items for the community to consider when providing comments about what they would like to see in the updated plans.

Town of Whitby Staff and Stantec team were available at the PIC to answer questions and explain the project. Information was also provided on how residents and business owners can continue to engage in the project.

### **Online engagement**

In addition to in-person engagement opportunities, links to an initial engagement survey were made available on the Town's Heritage Website. The surveys were distributed to PIC attendees and remained posted on the project web page from April 11 to May 2, 2025. A total of nine (9) responses were received - 2 from Brooklin and 7 from Werden's Plan. Survey questions focused on general challenges and opportunities managing change and redevelopment in Heritage Conservation Districts.

All project information, including copies of materials from the PIC, is being hosted on the Town's [Heritage Conservation Districts](#) webpage. A detailed description of

engagement done to date can be found in Section 6 of Stantec's report (Attachment 2).

**7. Input from Departments/Sources:**

Stantec attended and presented at the March 11, 2025, meeting of Heritage Whitby Advisory Committee. Stantec presented an overview of the Brooklin and Werden's HCD Plans and the review and update project to the Committee. Committee members were then given an opportunity to provide feedback on strengths and weaknesses of the two HCD Plans as well as the clarity/ user-friendliness of the HCD plans.

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of Town Staff has been established for the project. The first TAC meeting was held on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Stantec delivered a presentation, provided an overview of the HCD's and the project and sought feedback from the group.

**8. Strategic Priorities:**

Protecting heritage properties supports Pillar #1 of the Community Strategic Plan, Whitby Neighbourhoods, by promoting and strengthening the local arts, culture, heritage, and the creative sector.

Heritage conservation further supports Pillar #2, Whitby's Natural and Built Environment, by enhancing community connectivity and beautification.

**9. Attachments:**

Attachment #1 – Boundaries of the Brooklin HCD and Werden's HCD

Attachment #2 – Phase 1 Background and Analysis Report (Stantec)