



Source: LECPTA Home Tour

# Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study

Terms of Reference  
February 2016



# Context

The Town of Halton Hills is currently experiencing large scale residential redevelopment, often referred to as “monster homes”, which has raised public concern about the character and integrity of the Town’s mature neighbourhoods.

On September 8, 2015, Mayor Rick Bonnette issued a media release titled “Town to review new home building bylaws”. The media release indicated that Planning staff would be directed to review existing construction bylaws that govern new builds in established neighbourhoods. Following the media release, at the Council meeting of September 14, 2015, Council received Memorandum No. MEM-PI-2015-0003 titled “Large Scale Home Rebuilds in Established Residential Neighbourhoods,” which advised Council of Planning staff’s intent to develop a Terms of Reference for a study regarding large scale home rebuilds in established residential neighbourhoods.

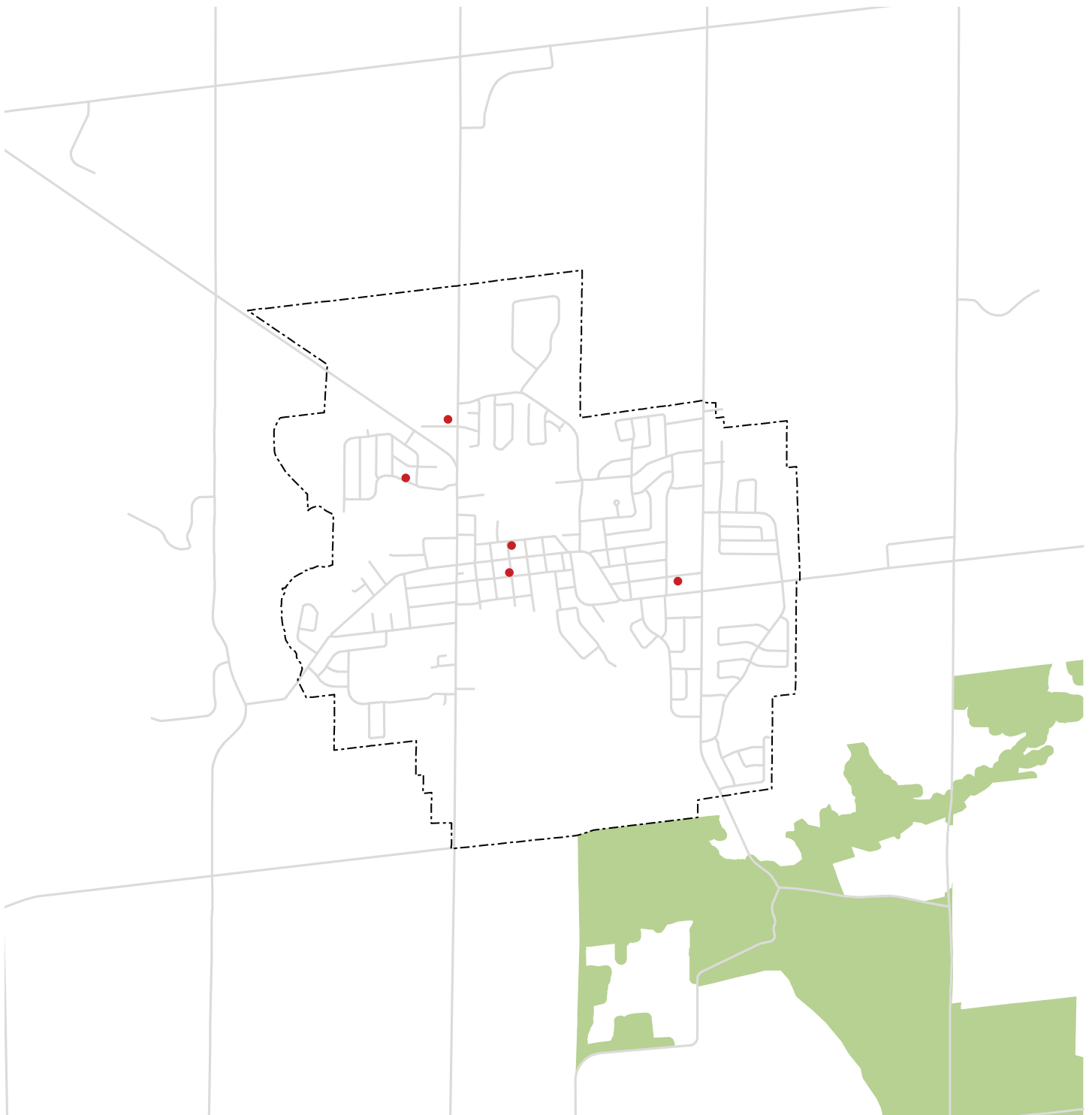
The demand and pressure for large-scale residential rebuilds in mature neighbourhoods is expected to rise as the supply of larger properties within the Town decreases and land values across the Town continue to increase. As mature neighbourhoods often consist of older and smaller dwellings on larger properties and quiet streets, their redevelopment potential attracts significant interest. Often, these properties are purchased with the intent of redeveloping existing dwellings with larger ones that may be incompatible with existing built form. As neighbourhoods undergo this transition, one property at a time, their original character may be compromised.

In mature neighbourhoods, existing properties that have not been built to their maximum development potentials as permitted by the Zoning By-law may result in existing built form or neighbourhood character that is not reflective of zoning. With surplus development potential on these properties, development applications are able to conform to all applicable zoning regulations without requiring any planning review. The Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study will examine whether the regulatory framework of the Town’s Zoning By-law is effective in maintaining the character of mature neighbourhoods, and propose recommendations for amendments if necessary. In contrast to mature neighbourhoods, recently developed neighbourhoods do not often maintain surplus development potential on a property. As such, these neighbourhoods are often less threatened by large-scale residential rebuilds and loss of character.

Many other municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area have conducted similar studies in recent years to address an increasing trend of “monster homes” in mature neighbourhoods. Neighbouring municipalities of Oakville, Burlington, and Brampton amongst others have adopted a number of policy and regulatory tools to address the issue on a context-specific basis, but at varying scales. While some approaches amend a municipality’s policy or regulatory framework as it applies to all low density residential areas within its jurisdiction, other approaches involve the identification of specific neighbourhoods and implementation of a localized policy or regulatory overlay. A best practices review of implemented approaches including analysis of their success and/or lack thereof will form a component of the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study, as described in this Terms of Reference.

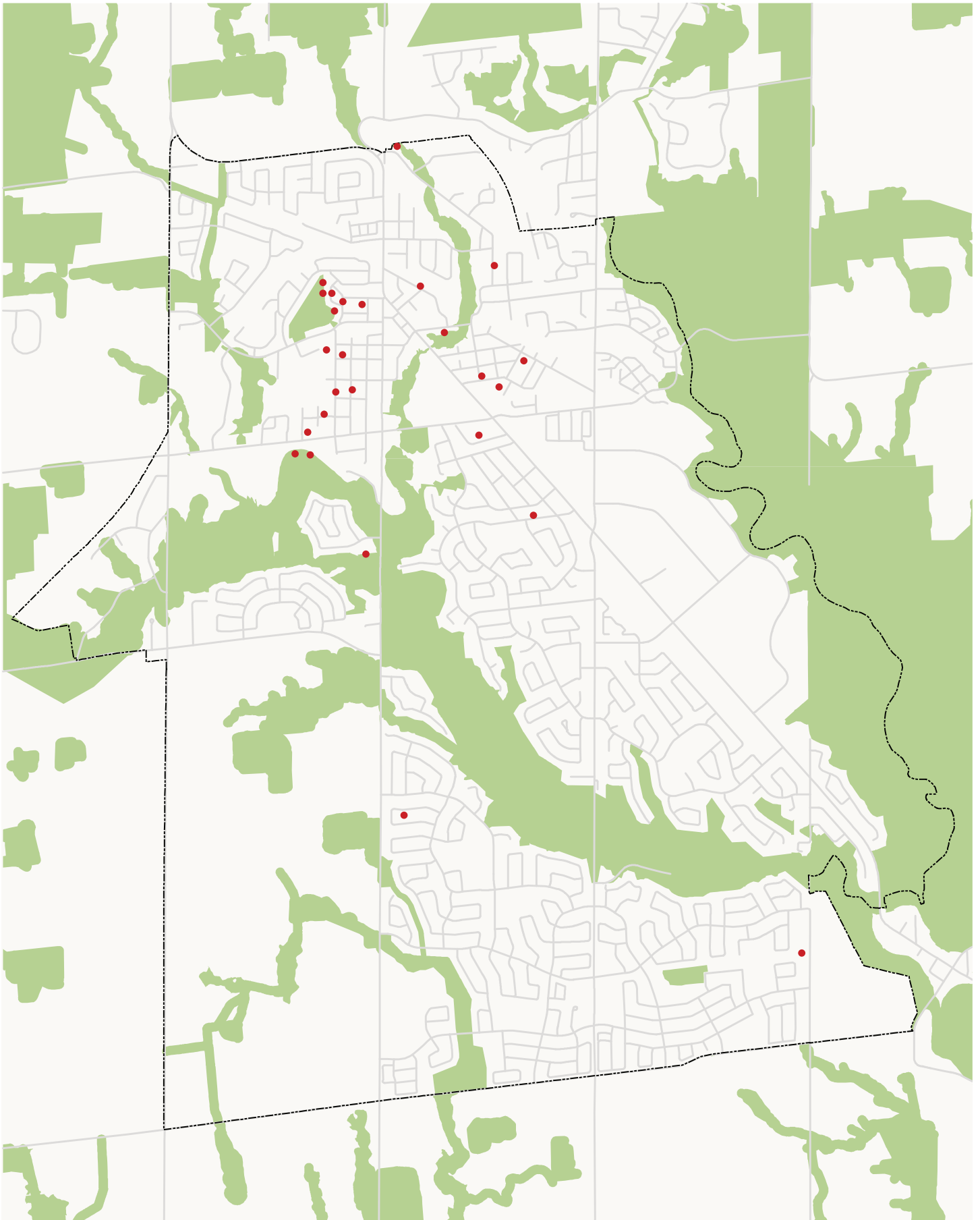
# Town Trends

The plans on the following pages identify the 31 residential properties within the urban areas of Acton and Georgetown that have been subject to demolition and new construction of a detached dwelling, since the first request was received by the Town in 2000.



*Demolition and New Construction of Residential Properties in Acton (2000-2015)*





Demolition and New Construction of Residential Properties in Georgetown (2000-2015)

# Background

## Town of Halton Hills Strategic Action Plan 2014-2018

A Strategic Action Plan was developed by the Town of Halton Hills Council identifying Council's 'Top Eight' priorities for the 2014-2018 Council term. The Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study relates to:

### Priority 3: Planning for Growth

- C: Preserve the established character of stable neighbourhoods by focusing development in identified intensification areas, and utilizing 'best practices' in urban design for infill development.

## Town of Halton Hills Strategic Plan 2031

The Town's Strategic Plan sets out goals and strategic objectives to lead the Town into the future. Relevant goals and objectives relating to the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study include:

### Goal G: Achieve Sustainable Growth

- To ensure that growth is managed so as to ensure a balanced, sustainable, well planned community that meets the needs of its residents and businesses.

### Strategic Objective G.7

- To ensure that the character and stability of existing residential neighbourhoods is maintained when accommodating growth.

## Town of Halton Hills Official Plan 2006

The Town of Halton Hills Official Plan is structured by a number of themes, one of which is urban character. Elaborated in Section A2.3, the related goal aims *"to protect and enhance the character of existing urban areas and to maintain them as diverse, liveable, safe, thriving and attractive communities."* The goal of urban character is supported by strategic objective A2.3.2c which aims *"to ensure that the character and stability of existing and well established residential neighbourhoods is maintained and enhanced by ensuring that development and redevelopment is compatible, in terms of built form, with the character of adjacent buildings and neighbourhoods and the scale and density of existing development."*

The Official Plan also includes general residential and housing policies, and policies that apply to low density residential areas. In addition to these policies, the Official Plan defines *character* as, *"the aggregate of the distinct features that work together to identify a particular area or neighbourhood. The distinct features may include the built and natural elements of an area."*

## Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study

Section D1.4.2 of the Official Plan provides the following policies for *Infill Development in Established Residential Neighbourhoods*:

*Infill development, in accordance with the applicable land use designation in this Plan, shall be encouraged provided Council is satisfied that:*

- a) the proposed development, including building form and density, is compatible with the character of the existing neighbourhood;*
- b) new buildings are designed in a manner that is sensitive to the location, massing and height of adjacent buildings;*
- c) a suitable transition in lot sizes, densities, building forms and heights is provided from adjacent development;*
- d) existing trees and vegetation will be retained and enhanced where possible and additional landscaping will be provided to integrate the proposed development with the existing neighbourhood;*
- e) the proposed development will not create a traffic hazard or an unacceptable increase in traffic on local roads; and,*
- f) significant views and vistas which help define a residential neighbourhood are preserved.*

### Town of Halton Hills Comprehensive Zoning By-law 2010

The Town's existing Comprehensive Zoning By-law regulates many development standards for low density residential zones, inclusive of lot frontage, lot setbacks, and building height. The Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study will examine these standards as well as the potential inclusion of additional zoning regulations to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law, such as lot coverage, floor area ratio, etc.

# Objectives

The following objectives will guide the Town's Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study:

- To define and establish boundaries for the Town's mature neighbourhoods;
- To identify and evaluate the unique qualities and characteristics of the Town's mature neighbourhoods and key issues regarding large-scale residential rebuilds that are of concern to Town residents;
- To develop options to maintain and enhance the distinct character of the Town's mature neighbourhoods; and,
- To develop and propose amendments to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law, as necessary, that define and manage large-scale residential rebuilds in mature neighbourhoods.

# Scope

The Town of Halton Hills will retain a qualified consultant to conduct the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study. It is anticipated that the Study will take 1 year to complete.

The scope of the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study will initially be confined to all low density residential areas in the Town (as designated in the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan) that were developed prior to 1990 and located north of Hungry Hollow in Georgetown and west of Churchill Road in Acton. However, the scope may be further confined to specific areas or neighbourhoods within the Town, as determined in Phase 1 of the Study.

From an implementation lens, the scope of the Study will initially be confined to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law. However, further analysis in the Study may recommend that the scope is expanded to include the Town's policy framework or other planning avenues such as urban design and site plan approval.

The scope of the Study will not address residential redevelopment, infill, or intensification, which imply an increase in density as defined by the Town of Halton Hills Official Plan:

- *Redevelopment means the creation of new units, uses or lots on previously developed land in existing communities, including brownfield and greyfield sites;*
- *Infill means development on vacant lots or through redevelopment to create additional new residential units; and,*
- *Intensification means the development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists through:*
  - a) redevelopment, including the reuse of brownfield sites;*
  - b) the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots within previously developed areas;*
  - c) infill development; and*
  - d) the expansion or conversion of existing buildings.*

The Town's definition for *intensification* is consistent with that of the Provincial Policy Statement and Halton Region Official Plan. The Town's definition of *redevelopment* is also consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, however the term is not defined in the Halton Region Official Plan. Neither the Provincial Policy Statement nor Halton Region Official Plan define the term *infill*.

The Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study will include the following elements:

- review of the existing Comprehensive Zoning By-law;
- issue identification and analysis;
- background research;
- best practices review;
- public engagement;
- draft amendments to the Comprehensive Zoning By-law; and,
- final amendments to the Comprehensive Zoning By-law.



# Project Design

The Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study will be defined by the following key phases:

## Phase 1: Background Review

Tasks of Phase 1 will consist of:

- review of the Town's existing Comprehensive Zoning By-law;
- issue identification and analysis, including a literature review of market trends;
- study of the trend of large-scale residential rebuilds in the Town through analysis of building permit activity and variance request history;
- best practices review of the approaches implemented by other municipalities in addressing large-scale residential rebuilds in mature neighbourhoods, and evaluation of their respective approaches;
- definition of key terms and establishment of boundaries of the Town's mature neighbourhoods; and,
- public engagement to identify the unique characteristics of the Town's mature neighbourhoods and the key issues, comments, and concerns of Town residents.

Deliverables of Phase 1 will consist of:

- a public workshop for Town residents, inclusive of presentation of issue analysis and best practices review, question and answer session, and breakout discussion; and,
- a Background Review Report, inclusive of a review of the Town's existing Comprehensive Zoning By-law, issue identification and analysis, best practices review, summary of public engagement feedback, and preliminary options to amend the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law.

## Phase 2: Draft Zoning By-law Amendment

Tasks of Phase 2 will consist of:

- synthesis and analysis of public engagement feedback to identify major themes of public consensus and concern;
- development of draft directions and amendments to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law;
- development of an implementation strategy for draft directions and amendments; and,
- public engagement to present and collect feedback on draft directions and amendments.

Deliverables of Phase 2 will consist of:

- a Draft Recommendation Report, inclusive of draft directions and amendments to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law; and,
- a public open house for Town residents, hosted by Town staff, inclusive of presentation of draft directions and amendments.

## Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study

### Phase 3: Final Zoning By-law Amendment

Tasks of Phase 3 will consist of:

- analysis of public engagement feedback on draft directions and amendments to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law;
- revision of draft directions and amendments; and,
- recommendation of final directions and amendments.

Deliverables of Phase 3 will consist of:

- a Final Recommendation Report, inclusive of final proposed directions and amendments to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law, and a detailed implementation plan.

The selected consultant will be responsible for each of the tasks and deliverables listed above for Phases 1, 2, and 3 of the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study. Accordingly, this Terms of Reference will serve as a framework to guide the preparation of a more detailed work plan by the selected consultant. The consultant's detailed work plan will be reviewed and approved by the project team, in consultation with the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee.

# Consultation Strategy

Public engagement will be a key component of the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study.

The Study will combine formal and informal public consultation. Formal consultation will consist of a Phase 1 public workshop to identify the key concerns of Town residents in regard to large-scale residential rebuilds in mature neighbourhoods, and a Phase 2 public open house to present draft directions and amendments to the Town's Comprehensive Zoning By-law. Informal consultation will also be conducted by Town staff, consisting of newspaper advertisements, a project website, e-mail notification, social media engagement, and individual meetings with Town residents or community groups during Phases 1 and 2 of the study, as requested and necessary.

A Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee composed of key stakeholders will also be formed, as elaborated in the following section.

# Town Responsibilities

The Planning Policy Division of the Town of Halton Hills Planning and Infrastructure Department will be responsible for leading and managing the completion of the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study. Under the direction of the Manager of Planning Policy, the Planner – Policy will coordinate and supervise the completion of the project. Responsibilities of the Planner-Policy will include:

- coordinating a Steering Committee;
- coordinating a Technical Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from various Town Departments;
- ensuring financial resources are well managed;
- ensuring compliance with the Terms of Reference;
- ensuring participation of all stakeholders;
- chairing Technical Advisory Committee meetings;
- coordinating communications;
- coordinating the public consultation program;
- updating web information; and,
- preparing status and recommendation reports to Council.

## Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee

The Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study will be guided by a Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee. The role of these committees will be to:

- provide comments during the study process;
- assist with issue identification and resolution;
- liaise with respective departments to ensure study awareness and provide a consistent message;
- provide data input; and,
- meet as needed to monitor the progress of the study.

The Steering Committee will be comprised of selected members of:

- Town of Halton Hills Council (including the Mayor (ex-officio) and two Councillors);
- Heritage Halton Hills committee; and,
- Local residents and landowners from the mature residential neighbourhoods of Georgetown and Acton.

The Technical Advisory Committee will be comprised of key representatives from Town staff, including:

- Planning, Development and Sustainability (planning policy staff, development review staff);
- Infrastructure Services (zoning staff, building permit staff); and,
- Staff from other departments as needed.