TOWN OF HALTON HILLS
MATURE NEIGHBOURHOODS
CHARACTER STUDY
BACKGROUND REPORT
executive summary

In recent years, the Town of Halton Hills has experienced an increase in the redevelopment of properties within its older, mature residential neighbourhoods. Concerns have been raised by members of the community with respect to the type of replacement housing being built and the incompatibility of some homes with the character of the mature neighbourhoods. Many of the older residential areas in Halton Hills have zoning similar to that which was in place when the neighbourhood was first planned and built which permits larger homes to be built.

In September 2015, direction was given by the Mayor of Halton Hills to initiate a review of the Town's Zoning By-law in response to redevelopment activities. In February 2016, Council enacted Interim Control By-law 2016-0009 to control the erection of, or additions to large-scale single-detached dwellings within certain residential areas of the Town for a period of one year, until the recommendations of the Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study are in effect.
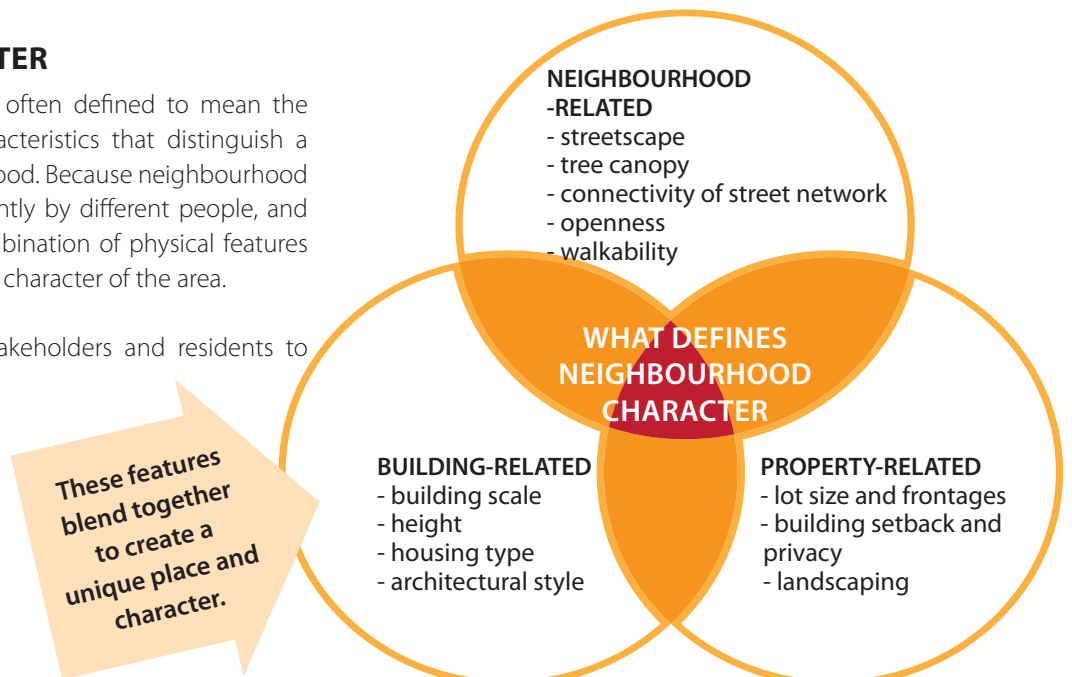
The Mature Neighbourhoods Character Study is to be carried out in 3 phases and is expected to be completed in early 2017. Each phase includes engagement with the community. This Background Report is prepared at the end of Phase 1 of the Study to inform public workshops and open houses in Fall 2016.

WE ARE HERE

PHASE 1 BACKGROUND REVIEW → NEIGHBOURHOOD WALKING TOURS → STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS → TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE → STEERING COMMITTEE → BACKGROUND REPORT → PUBLIC WORKSHOP AND OPEN HOUSE

PHASE 2 EVALUATION OF OPTIONS → TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE → STEERING COMMITTEE → DRAFT OPTIONS REPORT → PUBLIC WORKSHOP AND OPEN HOUSE

PHASE 3 FINAL REPORT → TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE → STEERING COMMITTEE → FINAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT → COUNCIL MEETING

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

1 Neighbourhood Character is often defined to mean the collective qualities and characteristics that distinguish a particular area or neighbourhood. Because neighbourhood character is perceived differently by different people, and therefore is subjective, a combination of physical features and characteristics can help define the character of the area.

The study has sought input from stakeholders and residents to obtain their views.

These features blend together to create a unique place and character.

NEIGHBOURHOOD -RELATED
- streetscape
- tree canopy
- connectivity of street network
- openness
- walkability

WHAT DEFINES NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

BUILDING-RELATED
- building scale
- height
- housing type
- architectural style

PROPERTY-RELATED
- lot size and frontages
- building setback and privacy
- landscaping

OBSERVED CONDITIONS

2

GEORGETOWN

The mature neighbourhoods of Georgetown feature a grid patterned urban fabric, and are within close proximity to the GO train station and Downtown Georgetown. The majority of houses in this area were built between 1851 and 1945, with a few houses built after 1945 through redevelopment and infill. The neighbourhoods built before World War II includes the Park District, GO Train Station Area (Albert Street), the John Street Neighbourhood, and the Main Street North and Arletta Street Neighbourhood. In general, these neighhourhoods are low density with relatively small houses on large rectangular lots.

ACTON

The study area of Acton has two distinct character areas. One is centered around Mill Street and is the oldest neighbourhood in Acton, generally built prior to 1945. The second area includes the four neighbourhoods built after 1945, in the north, south, east and west of downtown.

PRE-1945 NEIGHBOURHOODS

- Primarily a grid street pattern
- Relatively short blocks
- Sidewalks provided on at least one side of the street
- Mature street trees in boulevards
- A range of lot widths from 18 to 25m
- Lot areas are generally large (700 square metres or greater)
- Majority of houses date from the late 1800's to the early 1900's with some mid to late 1900's infill and redevelopment
- Majority of houses are 1.5-2 storeys in height

- Houses are located close to the street
- Houses are generally located in the centre of the lot with driveways to one side
  - o Garages, where they exist, are detached and located to one side or rear of the house
  - o Post 1950 infill and redevelopment typically have attached garages
- Variety of architectural styles which are consistent with the time period of development
- Older homes are predominately brick

POST-1945 NEIGHBOURHOODS

- Curvilinear street pattern with many discontinuous streets and cul-de-sacs in Georgetown
- Modified street grid patterns including some cul-de-sacs and discontinuous streets in Acton
- Street design considers natural features and street layout purposely locates many lots onto the ravine
- Medium to large street blocks
- Mature street trees in boulevards
- Sidewalks often on both sides of the street
- Lots are generally 15-18 m wide in Georgetown and 18-25 m wide in Acton
- Predominately rectangular shaped lots with considerable number of pie-shaped and irregular shaped lots due to the curvilinear street pattern
- Lot sizes are generally between 550 and 700 square metres, with larger lots located on the cul-de-sacs and curves of the street
- Mainly built between the late 1950s and 1970s
- Predominately 1-storey and 1.5-storey
- 2-storey dwellings are more prevalent in the later phase of development
- Limited range of architectural styles

Photos of walking tours in Georgetown and Acton

# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE COMMUNITY

3 IMPORTANT FEATURES TO THE COMMUNITY

- Mature Trees and Landscaping
- Variety of Styles and Designs
- Architectural Style
- Size of Homes
- Façade Details
- Building Height and Scale
- Quiet Neighbourhood
- Front Yard Setback
- Lot Coverage
- Size and Location of Garages
- Side Yard Setback
- Streetscape
- Heritage

STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

- The mature neighbourhood areas are evolving in different ways. Each area is balancing changing lifestyles, preferences and complementary design considerations.
- There is a growing number of seniors looking to have ground-level living.
- There must be respect for evolving changes that are needed versus those that are wanted solely for quick financial returns.
- A larger proportion of change is located in areas with Victory housing being replaced by large homes.
- Homes on irregularly shaped lots can overwhelm neighbouring properties.
- Change must respect the existing character and defining elements of mature areas.
- Database of building information should be used to inform local residents of upcoming construction activities.
- Control of change should be about preventing adverse impacts instead of minimizing them.
- There should not be over-control of building design as individual lots and homeowners have different needs.
- Regulations should better address elements that define character including setbacks, massing, height and scale.
- Tree canopy should be maintained through replacement or protection of existing trees.
- Heritage designations may not be appropriate in all mature neighbourhoods and should not be used as a way to "freeze" a neighbourhood in time.
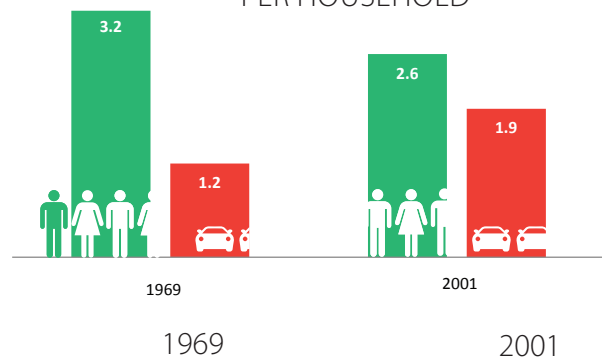
4 AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY SIZE

800 ft^2

2,400 ft^2

1940

2010
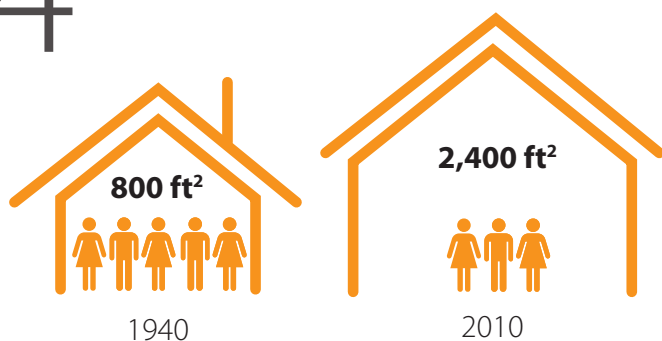
(Source: Statistics Canada)

AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS AND VEHICLES PER HOUSEHOLD

3.2

1.2
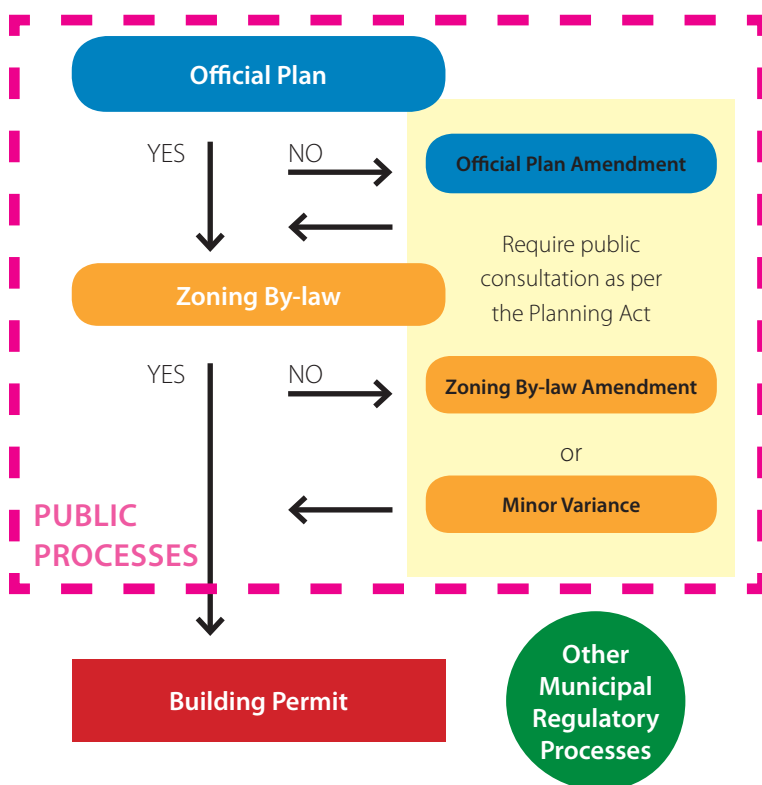
1969

2.6

1.9

2001

1969

2001

PLANNING PROCESSES AND TOOLS

5 When changes are sought to an existing home, either to replace or undertake a substantial addition, a number of policies and regulations are considered.

Under the Planning Act, each municipality is required to approve an Official Plan that outlines the guiding policies for the future vision and direction of the community.

The Official Plan is implemented by a Zoning By-law that regulates uses and the size of development permitted in each zone. If the proposed development does not conform to the policies of the Official Plan, an Official Plan Amendment is required. If the proposal does not conform to zoning requirements, a minor variance or a site-specific amendment to the Zoning By-law is required.

Once planning permissions are in place, site plan and architectural drawings are reviewed to ensure each development is legally built to safety standards as per the Ontario Building Code. Building Permits are issued when Town authorities are satisfied and must be obtained prior to construction.

Official Plan — YES → **Zoning By-law** — NO → **Official Plan Amendment**

Require public consultation as per the Planning Act

Zoning By-law — YES → **Building Permit** — NO → **Zoning By-law Amendment** or **Minor Variance**

PUBLIC PROCESSES

Building Permit

Other Municipal Regulatory Processes

BEST PRACTICE

6

	Special Zoning Area for Mature Neighbourhood Areas	Focus of Special Mature Neighbourhood Zoning Provisions	Other Provisions to Protect Mature Neighbourhoods
Ottawa	Yes	• Front Yards And Corner Side Yards • Parking And Driveway • Front Entrance Treatment	• Streetscape Character Analysis Form • Urban Design Guidelines
Toronto	No Fragmented zoning provisions mostly aligned with development history of former municipalities		• Proposed Official Plan policies for stable neighbourhoods • Stable neighbourhood urban design toolkit (2016) • Urban Design Guidelines
Cambridge	Yes (in proposed ZBL)	• Height • Front Yard and Side Yard Setbacks • Garage Projections • Driveway	• Urban Design Guidelines
Oakville	Yes	• Lot Coverage • Maximum Residential Floor Area • Height	• Urban Design Guidelines • Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities
Brampton	Yes	• Rear Yard Depth • Building Setbacks • Lot Coverage • Height • Parking and Driveway • Front Entrance Treatment • Landscape	• Official Plan policies on Older Mature Neighbourhoods • Site Plan Control • Guide for Infill Housing in Mature Neighbourhoods
Richmond Hill	No Site-specific zoning provisions and parent zoning designation		• Official Plan policies on Priority Infill Area • Infill Area Studies/ Territory Plan • Urban Design Guidelines
Burlington	Yes	• Lot Coverage	• Neighbourhoods character studies (new recommendations)