

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (WORKING SESSION) - APRIL 6, 2009

WOODBIDGE HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT PRESENTATION

FILE #15.99

WARD 2

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Planning recommends:

1. That the presentation by Office for Urbanism and Goldsmith Borgal and Company be received, and that this report serve as a status update on the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan.

Economic Impact

The funds for the Study were approved by Council on May 7, 2007.

Communications Plan

Property owners within the Study area were notified by direct mailings, advertisements were placed in local papers, and the Study and notification of each meeting were highlighted in the Policy Planning section of the City's website. Three public consultation meetings were held at strategic milestones in the study process, and a fourth was held to address questions raised at the statutory Public Hearing. On average 80 residents and business owners attended each of the public meetings.

The Study and Plan were also circulated to members of the Heritage Vaughan Committee, and presented to them at their meeting of October 29, 2008. At this meeting, the Committee moved to approve the final draft of the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Study, Plan and Inventory.

Purpose

To provide Council with a status up-date on the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation Plan since the Public Hearing of January 13, 2009, and to provide additional information on the proposed District Plan through a presentation specifically addressing questions and concerns raised at the Public Hearing and the March 4, 2009 community meeting.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Ontario Heritage Act governs the protection of the natural and built environment. In order for a Heritage Conservation District to be designated by a municipality there are specific tasks that must occur. These include:

1. Inclusion of Heritage Policies within the Official Plan, in this instance the Woodbridge Community Plan, OPA #240;
2. The designation of the area to be studied;
3. Consultation with Heritage Vaughan;
4. A public meeting; and,
5. Notification of property owners if a Heritage Conservation District is approved.

Based on these requirements, at the Council meeting of May 7, 2007, the following recommendation (in part) was approved:

- "1. A Heritage Conservation District Study be undertaken in order to secure the long-term protection of Woodbridge's historic built and natural environment to ensure that new development within the area is compatible with the architectural and contextual character of the community;*
- 2. Council enact a By-law to identify the area shown on Attachment 1 as a potential Heritage Conservation District pursuant to Part V, section 40, of the Ontario Heritage Act; and,*
- 3. Council approve the Terms of Reference for the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan."*

In accordance with these recommendations "By-law 139-2007" a by-law to define an area to be examined for future designation of the whole or part of the area as a Heritage Conservation District" was adopted at the May 7, 2007 meeting of Council.

Terms of Reference

The key tasks outlined in the Terms of Reference for the Heritage District Study and approved by Council on May 7, 2007 are outlined below:

1. To review the building stock and natural heritage landscape within the study area to determine if a Heritage Conservation District is an appropriate tool to manage change within the community.
2. To provide a suggested boundary for a Heritage Conservation District, if it is determined to be warranted.
3. To highlight key development issues that should be addressed in a Heritage Conservation District Plan.
4. To identify and provide appropriate policies for the preservation and enhancement of built and natural heritage in Woodbridge.
5. To provide appropriate design guidelines and standards for development in Woodbridge.

Public Hearing of January 13, 2009

The Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Study/Plan was presented to members of Council and residents at the statutory public hearing of January 13, 2009, for their consideration and comment.

On February 3, 2009, Council approved the recommendation to receive the Study Report and proposed Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Plan; that issues identified be addressed in a comprehensive report to a future meeting of the committee of the Whole; and, that prior to the matter returning to a Committee of the Whole, a further public consultation meeting be held with members of the community to fully explain the implications of the proposed Plan.

A number of residents spoke at the hearing or submitted written comments. Their comments and those of Council are summarized as follows:

(1) Comment

"It is too late to preserve the heritage character of Woodbridge, as most of the historical buildings have been lost to redevelopment."

Response

There are over 130 Heritage buildings, and a number of significant landscapes, monuments and bridges still remaining within the proposed Woodbridge Heritage District. It is interesting to note that the proposed Woodbridge Heritage District has the greatest number of Contributing buildings (buildings of heritage significance), and also the second highest ratio of Contributing buildings to non-Contributing buildings, relative to the established Heritage Districts of Thornhill, Maple, and

Kleinburg-Nashville. Given the significant concentration of heritage buildings remaining in the Woodbridge core, it is important to protect and encourage the evolution of the heritage character of this area through the establishment of a Heritage District.

(2) Comment

A few residents questioned why their homes were noted as having heritage significance, given that the structures have been altered, or were built within the last 60 years.

Response

The Heritage Architect for the study has surveyed each property within the proposed District boundary with respect to the "Heritage Character Statement" contained in the Heritage Plan and also the Heritage Character Area in which the structures are situated, to determine whether a structure is contributing to the historical significance of that particular area. Structures that have been altered may still contain heritage attributes that continue to contribute to the spirit of the District. The Heritage Architect has determined that some properties built within the last 60 years have cultural value as part of the more recent history and heritage character of the District.

(3) Comment

A few residents expressed concerns that should the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Plan be approved, they would be unable to renovate/make additions to their homes.

Response

Renovations/additions are permitted within a Heritage District, provided they are appropriate to the heritage character of the existing building, and in compliance with the Heritage District Guidelines. Proposals for renovation/additions to any structure within a Heritage District will be reviewed by City of Vaughan Cultural Services Division.

(4) Comment

A resident asked whether there are any regulations within the proposed District Plan respecting non-Contributing buildings (buildings which are not noted as having heritage significance) located next door to a heritage property.

Response

New buildings/renovations to non-Contributing buildings within the Heritage District are also addressed within the proposed guidelines of the Heritage District Plan (Section 6.3). Proposed development must adhere to the design guidelines provided in the Plan respecting the Character Area in which they are located. In addition, when located adjacent to a heritage structure, new development must not detract, hide from view, overwhelm, or impose in a negative way on existing heritage resources. Transitional Design Guidelines are provided in the District Plan and are specifically included to ensure that new structures and landscapes harmonize with Contributing properties. These guidelines regulate building heights, yard setbacks and landscape continuity adjacent to Contributing properties. However, the Transitional Design Guidelines offer more leeway in terms of the building materials, and architectural style of the new building.

(5) Comment

A few members of the community attending the Public Hearing, expressed confusion with respect to the proposed boundary line of the District.

Response

It should be noted that the study area included a larger area, while the proposed District boundary has left out pockets which were not considered to add to the heritage character of the area. Attachment #3 to this report outlines the study area, the proposed District boundary, and the Character Areas.

(6) Comment

A number of residents at the Public Hearing spoke in support of the proposed Heritage District Plan as an effective and necessary approach for preserving the valuable heritage character of Woodbridge.

Additional Public Consultation Meeting Held March 4, 2009

Over 60 residents attended the public consultation meeting on March 4, 2009. The City's Consultants for the Heritage Conservation District Study provided a presentation specifically geared to addressing questions and issues raised at the Public Hearing on January 13, 2009. The remainder of the evening was devoted to a question and answer period to allow any additional questions from residents to be addressed by the Heritage Architect, and City Staff.

While some residents expressed opposition to the creation of a Heritage District in Woodbridge, others were optimistic that a Heritage District would have a positive influence on the quality of their community. A number of residents suggested that a Heritage District would be more successful in achieving its objectives, if Council would recognize it as a special area in the City worthy of public funding to improve the streetscape, roads, and other public spaces within its boundary.

Additional Comments Received at the Public Consultation Meeting of March 4, 2009, and Since the Public Hearing Date

(1) Comment

At the March 4, 2009 meeting, the owner of a smaller heritage home within the proposed District expressed concerned that he would not be permitted to demolish his home to re-build a larger structure for his growing family, if the District were established. In addition, he stated that the home is in need of costly repairs which he does not feel are justified in view of the fact that he needs a larger building.

Response

It can be less costly to repair and add onto the existing house than it would be to demolish the structure and build anew. The proposed Heritage Plan details how additions may be made to existing structures using appropriate materials, and maintaining the architectural integrity of the building. Cultural Services Staff are available to discuss the potential for renovating, restoring and adding onto a building.

(2) Comment

A letter was received by the City on March 3, 2009, signed by 16 homeowners residing in the section of Kipling Avenue north of Meeting House road, and south of Chavender Place, requesting the exclusion of their properties from the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Plan.

Response

These properties form part of the Kipling Avenue Character Area, and represent a concentration of heritage homes, over half of which are listed as "Contributing" in the Study inventory. Staff are of the opinion that the properties should be included in the District as per the recommendations of the Study's Heritage Architect.

(3) Comment

Two additional letters were received from home owners residing on Kipling Avenue, opposing the District Plan because of concerns respecting (i) de-valuation of property values, and (ii) perceived restrictions (particularly with respect to Section 8.3.1.1 Exemptions). Questions were also raised respecting the (iii) City's responsibility in improving the public streets/streetscape.

Response

- (i) With respect to the question of property values, studies have shown that property values of heritage buildings in Ontario performed very well in the real estate market. In addition, designated Heritage properties are more resistant to negative fluctuations in the market. A study conducted in 2000 on property values of designated heritage buildings in different parts of Ontario found that 74% of properties were valued above the average sale prices in their particular area. (The Lazarus Effect, Robert Shipley, Heritage Resource Centre, University of Waterloo, www.fes.uwaterloo.ca/research/hrc/documents/lazarus-jan20-verA.pdf). Please see study references for further articles on this topic.
- (ii) Section 8.3.1.1 Exemptions, respecting building projects which do not require a Heritage Permit, has been revised to clarify that a Heritage Clearance Approval is not required for this class of projects. It is however, encouraged that residents confirm verbally with Cultural Services Staff that the work they are planning to undertake is in an exempted class.
- (iii) Regarding improvements to roadways and to the public realm, the City of Vaughan is undertaking re-construction of Kipling Avenue from Hwy # 7 to Woodbridge Avenue this summer (2009). Streetscaping is also projected for Kipling Avenue (from Hwy # 7 north to Langstaff Road), and Woodbridge Avenue Commercial Core for 2015; and, will be designed in accordance with the recommendations of Draft OPA 695 (Kipling Avenue Study), and the recommendations of the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation Plan. Any new streetscaping policies arising from the Woodbridge Focused Area Study will also be considered.

In conclusion to this section on comments received, it should be noted that the total number of property owners who have notified the City of their opposition to the proposed District Plan is 27. This represents about 9% of the 295 lots situated within the proposed Heritage District.

Proposed Heritage Conservation District Boundary

By-law 139-2007 defined the area subject to the study (See Attachment 1). Based on the review of existing conditions by the consultant, the proposed boundary of the Heritage Conservation District was modified to better reflect the location of the heritage resources (See Attachment 2). A final adjustment was made to the Heritage District boundary as a result of further review following the Public Hearing, to exclude the property at 8142 Islington Avenue from the District boundary. It was decided that because this was the only property within the district fronting onto Islington Avenue, the continuity of the District could be maintained and the "Modern" Church located on the lot could be protected through a Part 1V Designation based on further review by the City.

Once the Heritage Conservation District Plan is approved, the Official Plan will need to be revised to reflect the contents of the Heritage Conservation District Plan. These amendments will

address items such as built form and policies to preserve and enhance the heritage landscape of Woodbridge. It should be noted that the concurrent Kipling Avenue Corridor Study includes the information and policies pertaining to heritage for the portion of the Heritage Conservation District Study which falls into the Kipling Avenue study area.

Next Steps

Policy Planning Staff will proceed to complete the comprehensive report for the Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Plan, incorporating any new information, or direction received at this Working Session. The report will be prepared for a future Committee of the Whole as quickly as possible.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

Section 4.6 of Vaughan Vision outlines the City's commitment to preserving "significant historical buildings and communities". The proposed Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Study/Plan is consistent with the policies of Vaughan Vision 2007.

Regional Implications

While the Region does not have a direct interest in the creation of municipal Heritage Conservation Districts, their creation does help implement various policies contained within Section 4.2 "Cultural Heritage" of the Region's Official Plan. As previously noted, the Region has and been informed of all meetings pertaining to this Study, and will continue to be advised of all progress on the proposed Heritage District Plan.

Conclusion

The City of Vaughan was one of the first municipalities in Ontario to make use of the Ontario Heritage Act in creating the Thornhill Village Heritage Conservation District in the mid 1980's. Subsequently, studies and plans were prepared for Kleinburg-Nashville (2002) and Maple (2007), and the Thornhill HCD policies were updated in 2007. The creation of a Heritage Conservation District in Woodbridge would recognize the importance of this community as one of the founding villages in the City. Staff recommend that we proceed with the "next steps" towards the creation of a Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District.

Attachments

1. Study Boundary as identified on By-law #139-2007
2. Proposed Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Plan Boundary
3. Character Areas within the proposed Conservation District Plan

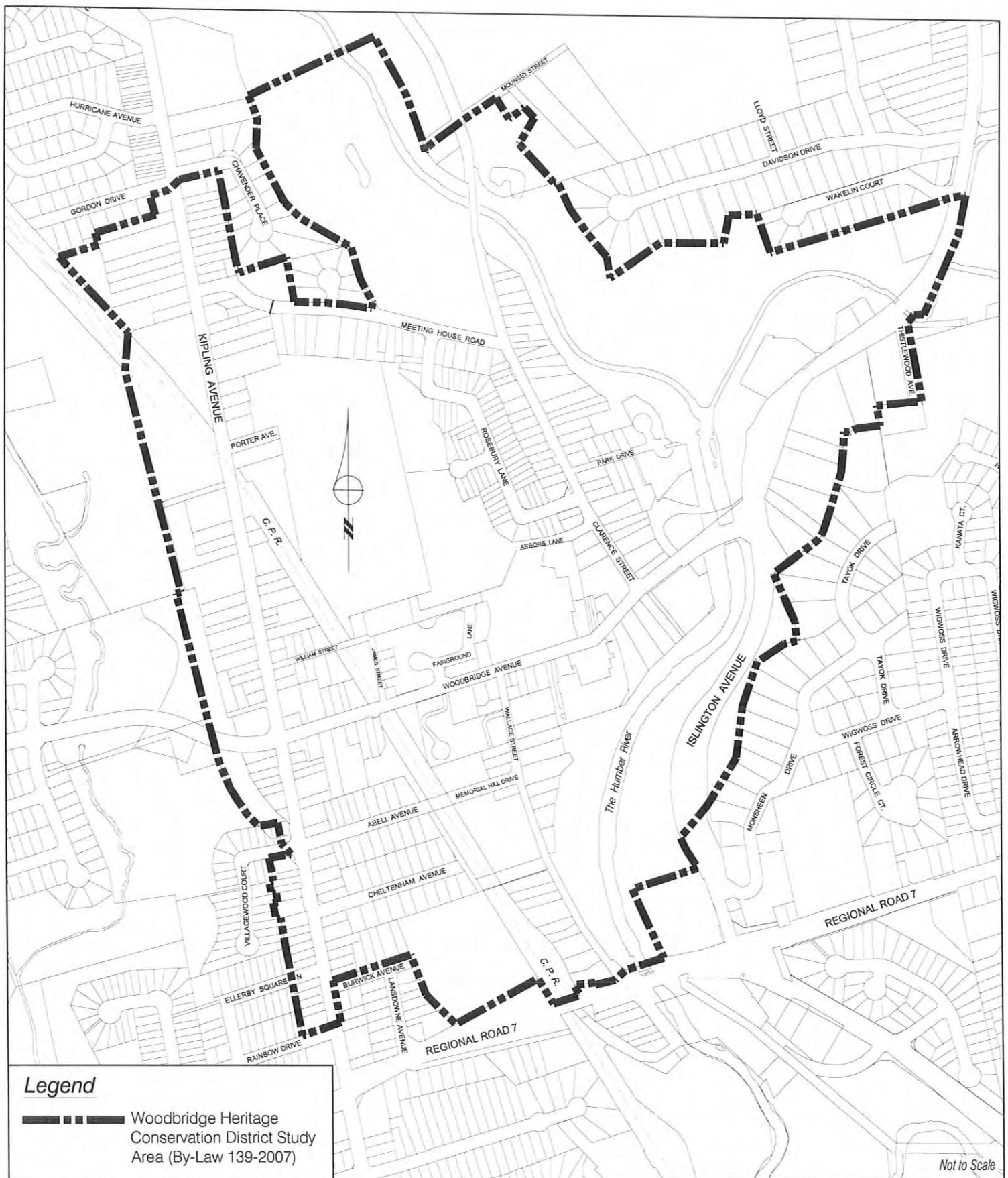
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Respectfully submitted,

John Zipay
Commissioner of Planning

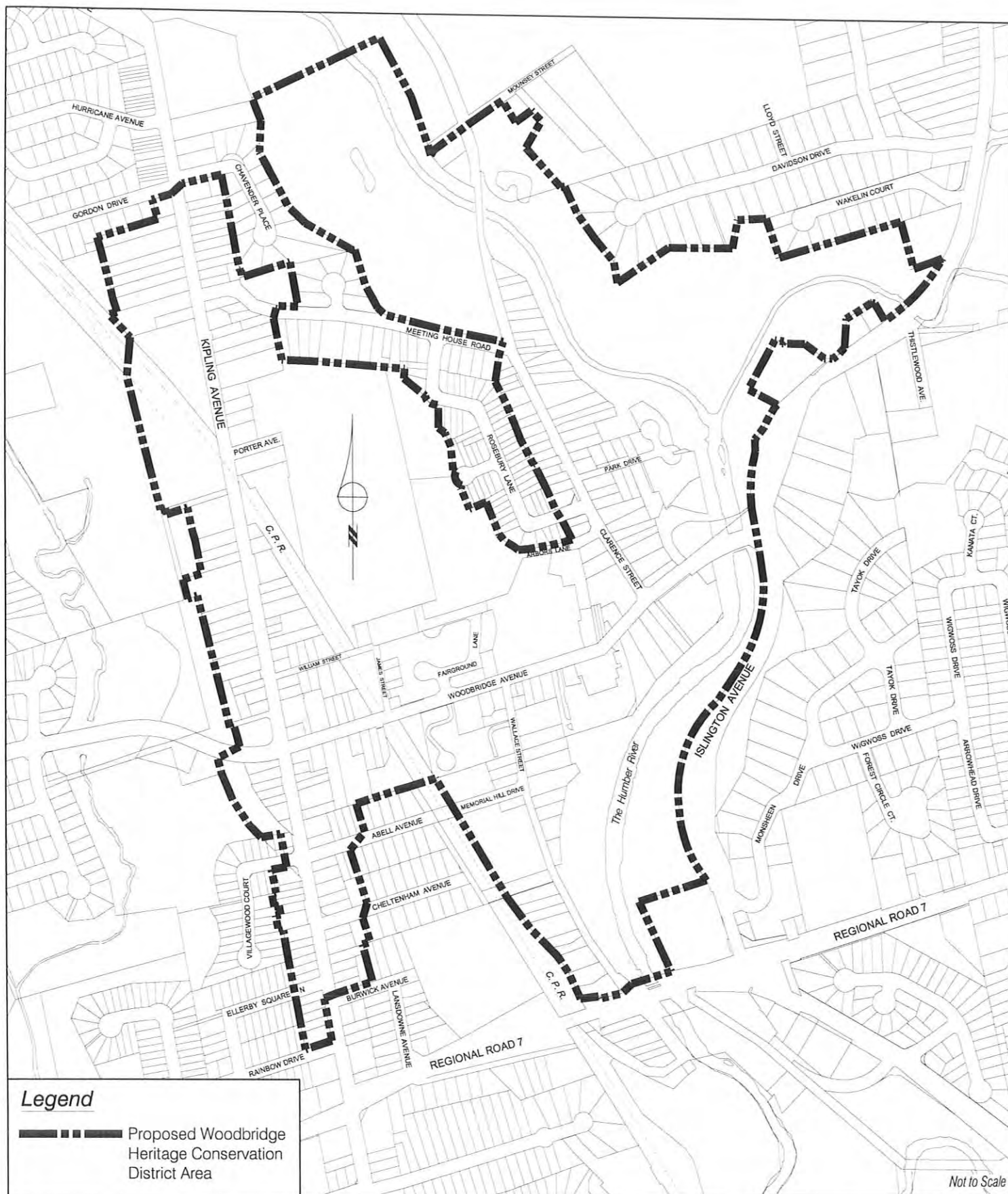
Diana Birchall
Director of Policy Planning



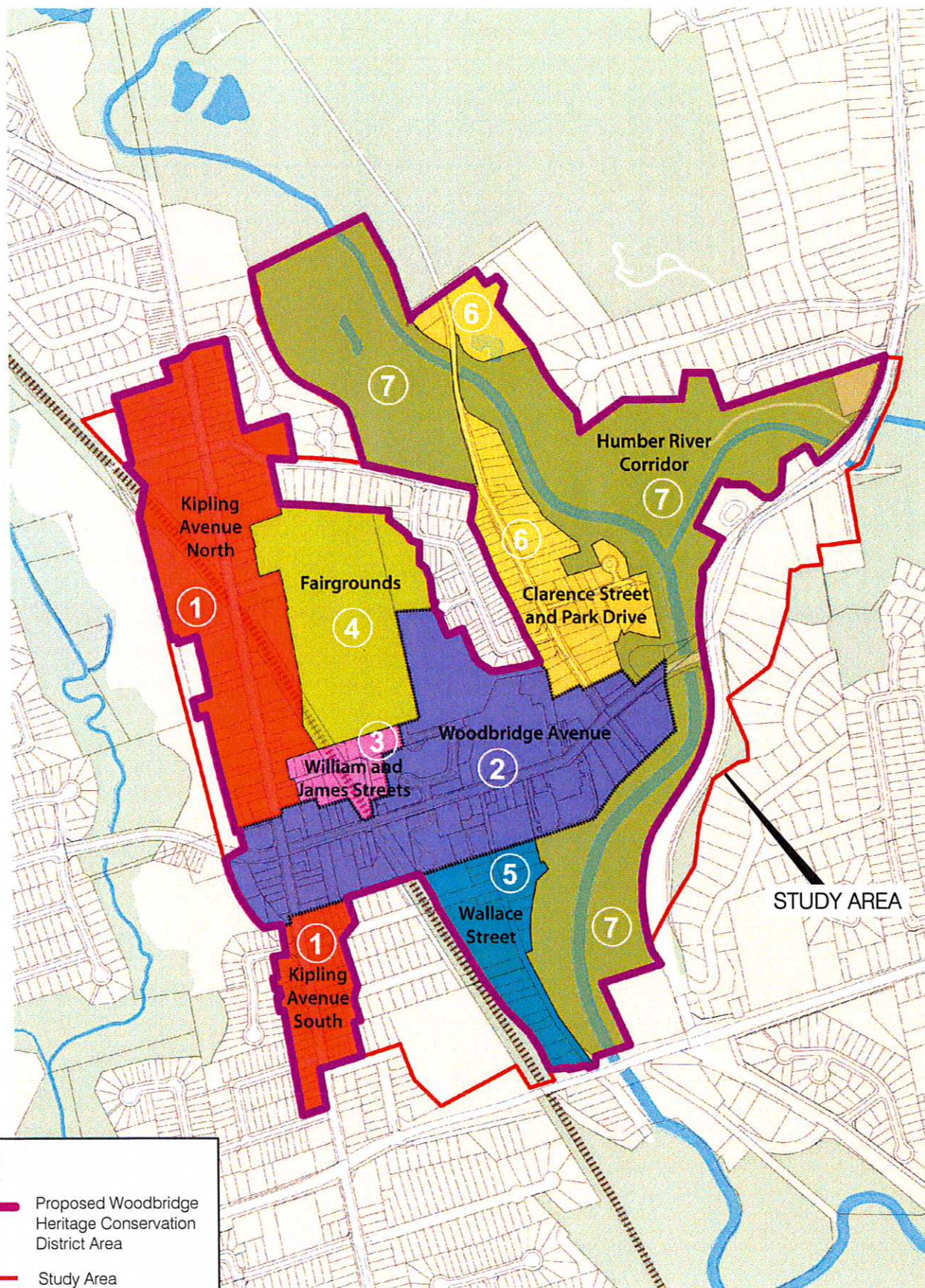
Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Study Area



Attachment 1



Proposed Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Area



Legend

- Proposed Woodbridge Heritage Conservation District Area
- Study Area

HCD Character Areas Within the Proposed District Boundary



Attachment 3