



Report to: Development Services Committee

Report Date: December 9, 2025

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATION REPORT

Demolition Request for a Fire-Damaged Detached Dwelling within the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District, 16 John St. (Ward 1)
File HE 25 140685

PREPARED BY: Peter Wokral, Senior Heritage Planner ext. 7955

REVIEWED BY: Regan Hutcheson, RPP, MCIP, Manager of Heritage Planning, ext. 2080
Stephen Lue, RPP, MCIP, Senior Development Manager, ext. 2520

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report entitled “Demolition Request for a Fire-Damaged Detached Dwelling within the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District, 16 John Street, (Ward 1)” dated December 9, 2025, be received;
2. That Council approves the proposed demolition of the fire-damaged dwelling at 16 John St. in the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District on the condition that the owner constructs a historically accurate replica of the heritage portion of the house, in the same general location on the property, based on measured drawings and archival photographs, using brick salvaged from the existing dwelling as recommended by the Heritage Markham Committee on November 12, 2025; and further that,
3. Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

To recommend that Council support the proposed demolition of the existing fire-damaged, heritage dwelling at 16 John Street (the “Subject Property”), which is designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act as part of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District (the “THCD”), conditional on the owner building a historically accurate replica of the existing heritage portion of the house, in the same general location on the property, using brick salvaged from the existing house, based on measured drawings and archival photographs of the existing house.

BACKGROUND:

Location and Area Context

The Subject Property contains a one-and-a-half storey Classic Ontario style heritage dwelling thought to have been constructed in 1879 and relocated from the west side of Yonge Street during an early widening of the street (see Figure 1). Based on the existing granite fieldstone foundation, the building was likely relocated in the late 19th or early 20th century and possibly clad with the existing brick veneer. Figure 2 shows the Subject Property on the north side of John Street, just east of Yonge Street.

The historic dwelling has suffered damage from a fire

On August 21st 2025, a fire occurred at the property which started in the attic space of the 1-storey non heritage tail of the building and spread into the 1-1/2 storey portion of the house. The 1-storey tail was almost completely destroyed, and the rear wall and roof of the 1-1/2 storey historic portion of the house was significantly damaged. Further damage was caused by smoke and the water used to extinguish the flames.

Following the fire, the City's Building Department issued an order to make the property safe and required the owner to engage a structural engineer to prepare a report outlining any temporary measures necessary to preserve the structural integrity of the damaged portions of the building and the repairs necessary to restore the building and bring it to a safe condition.

The owner has obtained a professional condition assessment report recommending demolition

The owner hired a professional structural engineer Steve Dahl to prepare a condition assessment report for the building which concludes that due to the damage caused by the fire, the archaic and dilapidated structure of the building, and the water saturated contents and fire debris, that the installation of temporary shoring and selective demolition would represent an undue risk to the safety of workers. Given this, the structural engineer recommends the complete mechanical demolition of the building as soon as possible to eliminate any risks resulting from the compromised structure of the dwelling (see Appendix A- condition assessment report).

PROPOSAL:

Based on the condition assessment report prepared by the structural engineer, the owner has submitted a demolition permit application to the City's Building Department as well as the required Demolition Heritage Permit application to the City's Planning Department, which can only be approved by Council as per the Ontario Heritage Act.

OPTIONS/DISCUSSION:

The Ontario Heritage Act (the "Act") requires Council to consider all demolition applications for designated properties.

Section 42(1) of the Act requires an owner to obtain a permit from the municipality to:

1. alter any part of the property other than the interior
2. erect, demolish or remove any building or structure on the property or permit the erection, demolition or removal.

The Act allows Council to delegate its power to grant permits for the alteration of property situated in a heritage conservation district to an employee or official of the municipality. Markham Council approved such a by-law delegating its power for the approval of alterations to the Manager of Heritage Planning. However, upon consultation with Legal staff, it has been determined that the delegation of the authority to approve "alterations" to staff does not include the authority to consider applications for demolition or removal that are addressed under Parts IV and V of the Act. No delegation provisions apply in such circumstances.

Therefore, all applications for demolition of buildings and structures within heritage conservation districts whether of cultural heritage value or not, must be considered by Council. Once an owner

provides their written intention to demolish structures on a property that is designated under Parts IV and V of the Act, a municipality has 90 days from the date the notice of receipt is served to the applicant to either:

- Approve the demolition;
- Refuse the demolition; or
- Approve the demolition with conditions.

Heritage Section Staff recommend that demolition be conditional

It is the opinion of Staff that that Council should only approve the demolition of the historic dwelling on the condition that the owner constructs a historically accurate replica of the existing building, based on details derived from measured drawings and archival photographs of the building (see Figure 3-archival photograph of the building).

According to Heritage Section Staff, a replica of the historic building is warranted in this instance for the following reasons:

- The architectural design of a building arguably represents the most significant and tangible aspects of its cultural heritage value independent of the age of its constituent building materials.
- The accurate replication of historic buildings damaged beyond repair can be a reasonable and logical approach that honours the true architectural history of Markham and maintains the skills and knowledge of the specialized designers and contractors who work with historic properties.
- The dense and contiguous cluster of Class 'A' historic buildings on Colborne Street and the north side of John Street west of Church Lane are particularly important in defining the overall historic character of the Thornhill Heritage Conservation District. The buildings on these properties represent 56% of the Class 'A' buildings in the entire District and it is therefore important to ensure that the particular and unique qualities of this portion of the District are maintained.
- The accurate replication of the existing building does not penalize the owner as it would replace what the owner knowingly purchased as a Class 'A' building with the understanding that the City would not support its demolition. The replication of the existing building also does not prevent the owner from constructing a modern interior or a rear addition that would significantly enhance the usability of the property.

The Heritage Markham Committee also recommends that demolition be conditional

On November 12, 2025, Heritage Markham adopted the Staff recommendation that approval of the demolition of the fire-damaged building should be conditional on the owner constructing a historically accurate replica of the historic portion of the house in the same general location as the existing house based on measured drawings and archival photographs. The Committee further recommended that the owner salvage as much of the existing brick veneer for use in the construction of the replica dwelling (see Appendix B-Heritage Markham Extract of November 12, 2025).

The owner agrees with the recommendations of Heritage Staff and Heritage Markham

At the November 12th meeting of Heritage Markham, the owner of the house indicated that he was supportive of the demolition proceeding on the condition that a replica of the historic dwelling

be constructed in its place, incorporating salvaged bricks to the extent possible, based on measured drawings and archival photographs.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Not Applicable.

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS:

Not Applicable.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The protection and preservation of cultural heritage resources is part of the City's Growth Management strategy.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Heritage Markham, Council's advisory committee on heritage matter, was consulted on this matter.

RECOMMENDED BY:

Giulio Cescato, RPP, MCIP
Director of Planning and Urban Design

Trinela Cane
Acting Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS AND APPENDICES:

- Figure 1: Photograph of the existing heritage dwelling
- Figure 2: Location Map
- Figure 3; Archival photograph of the existing heritage dwelling

- Appendix A: Condition Assessment Report by Steve Dahl
- Appendix B: Heritage Markham Extract of November 12, 2025

Figure 1: Photograph of the existing heritage dwelling



Google Street View from June 2025

Figure 2: Location Map

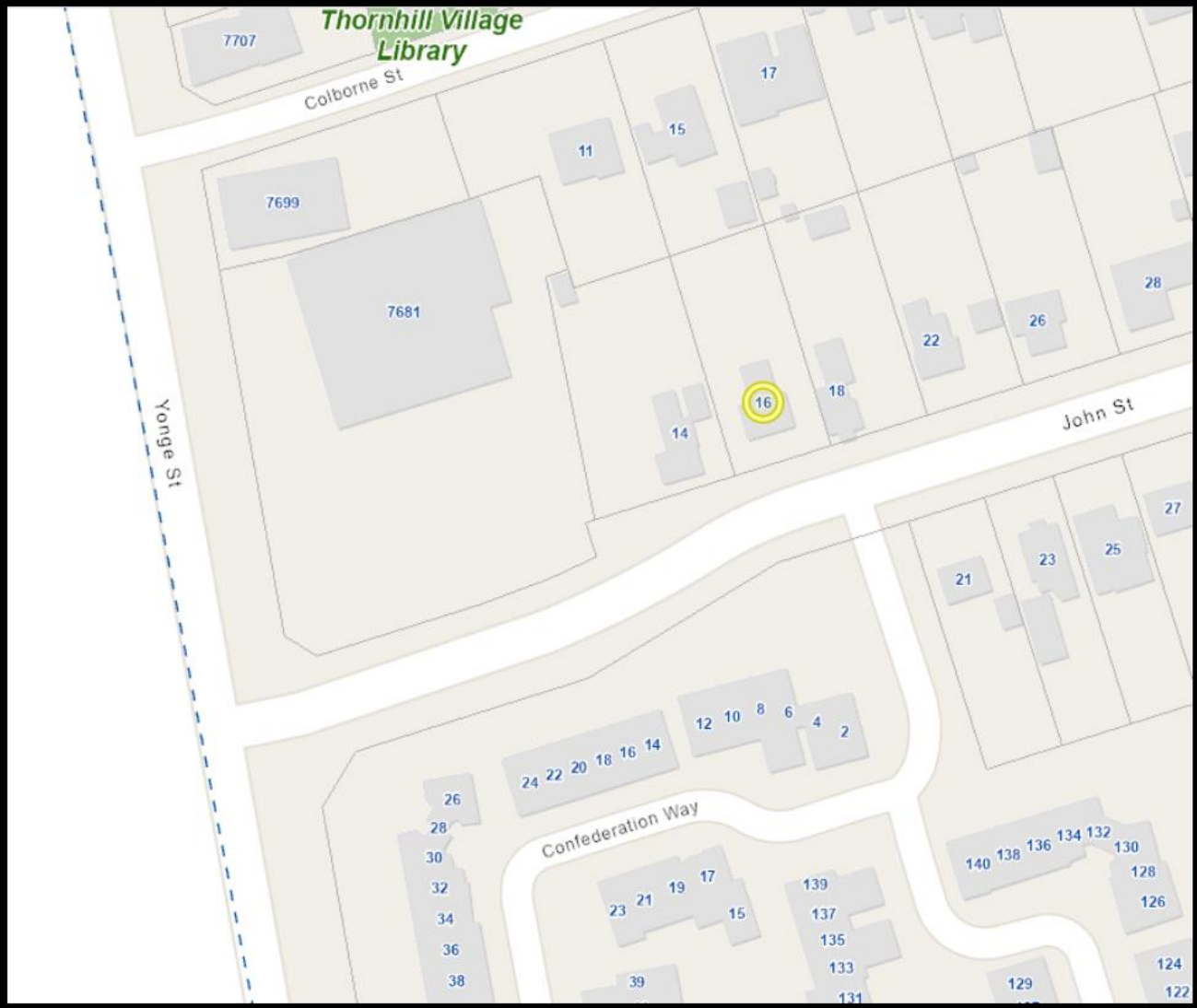


Figure 3: Archival Photograph of the existing heritage dwelling



Archival photograph of 16 John Street Thornhill from the Weaver Collection 1969