



Report to: Council

Meeting Date: August 25, 2020

SUBJECT:	Proposed Demolitions – Rouge National Urban Park
PREPARED BY:	Regan Hutcheson, Manager, Heritage Planning, ext. 2080
REVIEWED BY:	Ron Blake, Senior Development Manager, ext. 2300

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That the staff report entitled “Proposed Demolitions – Rouge National Urban Park”, dated August 25, 2020, be received;
- 2) That Rouge National Urban Park staff be requested to confirm if any alternative retention options for the structures were considered, such as marketing the buildings for long term residential lease in exchange for necessary renovations, the exploration of adaptive re-use opportunities, or advertising the availability of the structures for relocation or salvage opportunities;
- 3) That if demolition is to be pursued, Rouge National Urban Park staff be requested to follow Markham’s standard Building Code application requirements as it applies to the proposed demolition of structures within the City, and that any municipal application fees be waived;
- 4) That the two structures which are identified on the Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest be circulated to the Heritage Markham Committee for comment;
- 5) That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

PURPOSE:

To inform Council of the notification by Parks Canada of the proposed demolition of three structures located in Rouge National Urban Park of which two properties are cultural heritage resources.

BACKGROUND:

Rouge National Urban Park has notified the City of proposed demolitions

On July 17, 2020 Parks Canada notified the City that for health and safety reasons, they are planning to decommission three failing houses in the Markham/York Region portion of the Park later this summer. According to Parks Canada, these houses have no or very low heritage value and pose significant safety and liability risks.

Parks Canada noted that it remains committed to working with and engaging with Markham on cultural heritage protection, but unfortunately, these houses are too far gone.

Two of the identified structures are cultural heritage resources

Of the three structures identified for demolition, two are on the *Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*. One is designated under the Ontario Heritage Act and the other is listed.

- 9619 Reesor Road – John Hand House, c.1855, listed on the Register.
- 11122 Reesor Road – Noble Tenant Farmer’s House, c.1840 – designated under By-law 2012 – 75. One of the “Markham 8” properties designated and previously leased by the City to preserve them while owned by Transport Canada.

The structure at 9139 Reesor Road is not a heritage property and is in poor condition.

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:

City staff visited the sites of the structures proposed for demolition

Staff visited the properties on August 7, 2020. There are two structures at 9139 Reesor Road (a possible former dwelling or accessory building, and a barn). The first structure is in very poor condition with collapsing roof and walls. The barn is in a better condition and it is unclear if it is part of the demolition request.

The two cultural heritage resources (John Hand House at 9619 Reesor Road and Noble Tenant Farmer’s House) are both vacant and have been for many years, and are in a declining state. Both structures do not appear to have had any maintenance or improvements undertaken in many years. However, it is Heritage staff’s opinion that both appear salvageable, but require investment.

Comments on Parks Canada’s approach to managing its properties

Heritage staff were asked in November 2019 by Parks Canada to offer any suggestions or feedback on how the cultural heritage resource properties were to be managed. City staff indicated:

- A desire for a better understanding of the protocol and policy that will be associated with the each of the new heritage property classifications;
- That the currently vacant structures identified in the highest classification category (blue) by Parks Canada be repaired and inhabited once again;
- That tenants should be retained in all heritage properties (as the best manner to ensure ongoing protection and preservation), and encouraged the long term leasing of heritage properties for both residential and commercial uses, especially when large scale investment is required by the lease holder to maintain and rehabilitate the building;
- A request to apply for any demolition permits through the Markham Building Department as Transport Canada had previously done, and at a minimum, notify the City if demolition was to occur; and
- That if it was found necessary to remove a heritage resource, the availability of the resource should be advertised for potential relocation or the salvage of building components by others. A sustainable approach to keep materials out of landfill.

The exploration of alternative retention options

It would be helpful to know if Parks Canada considered alternatives to demolition, such as marketing the buildings for long term residential leases (perhaps at reduced rates) in exchange for undertaking costly rehabilitation and renovations, exploration of adaptive

re-use opportunities, or advertising the availability of the structures for relocation elsewhere or salvage opportunities. If these options have not yet been exhausted, then the City encourages Parks Canada to do so, and to only consider demolition as a last resort due to health and safety concerns.

Municipal permits should be acquired if demolition is to be pursued

If demolition is to be pursued, Rouge National Urban Park staff are requested to follow Markham's standard business practice as it applies to the proposed demolition of structures within the City. This would involve applying for a demolition permit for each property through the Markham Building Department. It is suggested that any municipal permit application fees be waived.

Review by Heritage Markham Committee

As two of the properties are on the *Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*, the proposed demolition of these cultural heritage resources would be reviewed by the Heritage Markham Committee for the benefit of Markham Council.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

As the senior level government entity, Parks Canada is not required follow City processes, however to encourage voluntary participation, it is recommended that any municipal permit application fees be waived

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Protecting cultural heritage resources is a key objective in the Growth Management for the City. Supporting Rouge National Urban Park is aligned with Building Markham's Future Together 2020-2023.

BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Planning and Urban Design (Heritage), Sustainability and Asset Management; CAO Office

RECOMMENDED BY:

Biju Karumanchery, RPP, MCIP
Director of Planning and Urban Design

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Commissioner of Development
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ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A - Photographs