



MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Markham Committee

FROM: Regan Hutcheson, Manager, Heritage Planning

DATE: May 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Request for Feedback – Site Visit
Proposed Demolitions – 2024
Rouge National Urban Park

Property/Building Description:

1. 10295 Ninth Line – James Brison Johnson House, c.1915 (Designated)
2. 7933 Fourteenth Avenue – James Dimma House, c1850 (Designated)
3. 10676 Reesor Road – Adam Betz House, c. 1871 (Designated)
4. 8331 Fourteenth Avenue – David Badgerow House (Listed)
5. 8200 York Durham Line – William Boyd House, c 1890 (Listed)
6. 11122 Reesor Road – Noble Tenant Farmer’s House, c. 1840 (Designated)
7. 11190 York Durham Line – John Boyles House, c.1870 (Designated)
8. 11223 Reesor Road – James Collins House, c.1850 (Designated)

Use: Vacant, formerly Residential

Heritage Status: Listed or Designated on Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Application/Proposal

- To review the proposed demolitions and provide feedback to Parks Canada – Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) staff and Markham Council through a future report.

Background

- In July 2023, Heritage Markham referred consideration of the proposed demolitions to the Architectural Review Sub-Committee;
- On October 2023, the members of the Sub-Committee, City Staff and two members of the public were hosted by Parks Canada staff and visited each building proposed for demolition;
- The notes from the site visit are attached as Attachment ‘A’

Staff Comment

- After the site visits, the Architectural Review Sub-Committee did not make any recommendations regarding the proposed demolitions, but raised questions for City and Parks Canada Staff including:
 - How many heritage buildings are contained within the Markham portion of the Rouge National Urban Park?
 - What buildings did Heritage Staff consider to be of the greatest cultural heritage significance?
 - What relationships exist between heritage buildings and features of the Park?
 - How much money does Parks Canada have to spend on heritage buildings contained within the Markham portion of the Park?
 - What are the estimated and relative costs of making certain heritage buildings habitable?
- City Staff will continue to work with Parks Canada staff to secure the requested information;
- At the March 2024 meeting, Heritage Markham Committee indicated a desire to further discuss the findings of the site visit and an appropriate strategy to move this matter forward.
- Heritage Markham requested that a sub-Committee be arranged to help further evaluate the identified buildings prior to the May meeting.

Suggested Recommendation for Heritage Markham

THAT Heritage Markham receive the memo as information.

Attachment A – Architectural Review Sub-Committee Notes October 23, 2023

Architectural Review Sub-Committee of Heritage Markham

MEETING NOTES

October 23, 2023

Site Visits

Rouge National Urban Park

Members Present:

Councillor Karen Rea
Councillor Reid McAlpine
Victor Huang
Liz Wimmer
Ron Blake
David Butterworth

Staff:

Graham Seaman, Director of Sustainability &
Asset Management
Peter Wokral Senior Heritage Planner

Host:

Robyn Simard, Manager of Agriculture Assets & Realty

Guests:

Barry Nelson, Heritage Advocate, Thornhill Historical Society
Mike Clare Markham Inter Church Committee for Affordable Housing (MICAH)

ITEM 1: **Project: Proposed Demolitions**
Owner: Federal Government (Rouge National Urban Park)
Addresses:
10531 Reesor Road, David Burke House, c. 1850
10676 Reesor Road, Adam Betz House, c. 1871
11122 Reesor Road, Noble Tenant Farmer’s House, c. 1840
11223 Reesor Road, James Collins House, c. 1850
11190 York-Durham Line, John Boyles House, c. 1870
8200 York-Durham Line, William Boyd House, c. 1890
8331 14th Avenue, David Badgerow House, c. 1840
7933 14th Avenue, James Dimma House, c. 1840
10295 Ninth Line, James Brison Johnston House, c. 1915

The members of the Architectural Review Committee and two members of the Public were provided with an opportunity to visit properties in the ownership of the Rouge National Urban Park that are proposed for demolition in order to assess their physical condition, ask questions

of their Parks Canada host, and ultimately make recommendations regarding the proposed demolitions.

The site visit started at the Parks Canada office at 10725 Reesor Road, Markham. A site visit summary document prepared by Heritage Section staff was distributed to those in attendance. At each site, the Parks Canada Host Robyn Simard, provided a brief summary of the condition reports for each building, as well as photographs to help explain to those in attendance why Parks Canada proposes to demolish these vacant heritage homes.

Ms. Simard also highlighted the work and money spent by Parks Canada to stabilize other heritage buildings to enable the public to invest in long term leases and develop adaptive reuses for the buildings compatible with the goals of the Rouge National Urban Park. The members visited one of these sites at 10531 Reesor Road, David Burke House.

Ms. Simard also provided some idea of the number of heritage buildings contained in the Park both in the City of Markham and in neighbouring municipalities, and informed those present that although there are funds available to stabilize and restore buildings, that money needed to be evenly distributed throughout the Park, and directed to the most significant and useful heritage buildings.

Following the tour of the various properties, some of those present sat down for a discussion in the outdoor pavilion at the Parks Canada headquarters. Members of the Sub-Committee did not make any recommendations but wanted to know the number of heritage buildings owned by Parks Canada in Markham, and which ones were considered by Heritage Planning Staff to be the most culturally and architecturally significant.

Without knowing the answers to this question, as well as how much money Parks Canada had available to spend on Markham heritage resources, the estimated costs of stabilizing or restoring particular heritage buildings, the relationship of particular properties to features of the Park such as trails, or the willingness of Parks Canada to invest, it was difficult for the Sub-Committee members to come to any informed conclusions or recommendations.

Ms. Simard indicated that Parks Canada was not in a rush to demolish the homes visited by the Sub-Committee members in order to encourage meaningful participation and cooperation with various stakeholders, but that if no solution was found, that the planned demolitions would likely take place in the winter months of 2024-25.

Peter Wokral indicated that of the properties visited, the James Dimma House was felt by Heritage Planning Staff to be one of the most worthy of retention and investment due to its early date of construction, history of occupancy, unique and intact early design features, strategic location adjacent to a major trail, and past investment made by the City in providing a new roof.

Suggested Heritage Markham Recommendation:

THAT Heritage Markham receive the meeting notes of the October 23, 2023 Architectural Review Sub-Committee site visit to the 8 heritage resources proposed for demolition within the Rouge National Urban Park.

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