

SUBJECT: Request for Demolition and
Intention to Designate a Property under
Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act
Name: John Eby Reesor House
Address: 8402 Steeles Avenue
Owner: Infrastructure Ontario

PREPARED BY: George Duncan, Senior Heritage Planner, ext. 2296

REVIEWED BY: Ron Blake, Acting Senior Development Manager

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1) That Council refuse the “Request for Demolition” of the John Eby Reesor House and its associated accessory buildings at 8402 Steeles Avenue on the basis of their cultural heritage value or interest;
- 2) That Infrastructure Ontario be advised that the demolition of the heritage buildings on this property or any other property within the Rouge National Urban Park is premature pending further development of plans for the park, including a strategy to address cultural heritage resources;
- 3) That as recommended by Heritage Markham, the John Eby Reesor House at 8402 Steeles Avenue be approved for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of cultural heritage value or interest;
- 4) That the Clerk’s Department be authorized to publish and serve Council’s Notice of Intention to Designate as per the requirements of the Ontario Heritage Act;
- 5) That if there are no objections to the designation in accordance with the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act, the Clerk be authorized to place a designation by-law before Council for adoption;
- 6) That if there are any objections in accordance with the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act, the Clerk be directed to refer the proposed designation to the Ontario Conservation Review Board;
- 7) And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Not Applicable

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to recommend to Council that the request for demolition be refused for the “John Eby Reesor House” and its associated accessory buildings on the basis of their cultural heritage value or interest, and that the property be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

BACKGROUND:

The building is listed on the City of Markham Heritage Register

The subject building is located at 8402 Steeles Avenue. It is included in the *Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest*, the City’s inventory of non-

designated properties identified as having cultural heritage value or interest, as well as Part IV properties (individual designations) and Part V properties (district designation).

The property is located within the Rouge National Urban Park

The subject property is located within the Rouge National Urban Park. The lands are currently owned by Infrastructure Ontario, and ownership will be transferred to Parks Canada at a future date. The property is zoned A1 (Agricultural) under By-law 304-87, as amended. The land is designated “Greenway” under the in-force Official Plan (1987 revised) as amended, and “Greenway” in the Official Plan 2014 (not yet in fully in force).

The John Eby Reesor House is a heritage building in the historic community of Cedar Grove

The John Eby Reesor House is located on the north side of Steeles Avenue, just west of the York-Durham Line, in the historic community of Cedar Grove. The house has been vacant for several years but is protected by monitoring by Del Management, acting on behalf of Infrastructure Ontario. The house is not visible from the street when the trees are in leaf.

A “Request for Demolition” letter has been submitted to the City of Markham

Premier Environmental Services Inc. has submitted a “Request for Demolition” letter to the City and Heritage Markham on behalf of the property owner, Infrastructure Ontario (Appendix “A”). Verbally staff has been advised that the reason for the demolition is the cost of maintaining the vacant structures. Staff has made a site visit hosted by the owner’s consultant and found the house generally in good condition, and the accessory buildings in need of repair but restorable.

The John Eby Reesor House is an excellent example of a Pennsylvania-German Mennonite Farmhouse

The John Eby Reesor House, built in 1853, is an excellent representative example of a Pennsylvania-German Old Order Mennonite farmhouse. The house is very well preserved with most of its early detailing remaining intact both inside and outside. When the present-day appearance of the house is compared with an archival photograph in the collection of the Markham Museum, it is readily apparent how little this building has changed over time (See Figure 2).

The building has been assessed using the Ministry of Culture’s Designation Criteria

Government of Ontario Regulation (O.Reg. 9/16) prescribes criteria for determining a property’s cultural heritage value or interest for the purpose of designation. Municipal councils are permitted to designate a property to be of cultural heritage value or interest if the property meets one or more of the prescribed criteria. These include design or physical value, historical or associative value, or contextual value.

Through detailed research and evaluation, staff, with the assistance of Heritage Markham, has determined that the subject property has cultural heritage value or interest as it meets the criteria prescribed in the regulation as demonstrated in the Statement of Significance (Appendix ‘B’).

Heritage Markham has recommended that Council refuse the “Request for Demolition” and that the property be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Heritage Markham recommended that Council refuse the “Request for Demolition” at its meeting of August 12, 2015. The committee also recommended that the property be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act to highlight its significance to Infrastructure Ontario (Extract Appendix ‘C’). At the same Heritage Markham’s meeting, representatives of the Reesor Family in Canada submitted a letter in support of the preservation of the John Eby Reesor House and spoke to the committee about the importance of this heritage property (Appendix ‘D’).

OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**The heritage designation of the heritage resource is consistent with City policies**

The in-force Official Plan (1987 revised), as amended, contains Cultural Heritage policies related to the protection and preservation of heritage resources. The goal of these policies is *“To preserve and continue the distinctive tradition, history and heritage of Markham’s communities in coordination with the comprehensive planning needs and requirements of the Town.”* The Official Plan 2014 (not yet fully in force) carries forward the City of Markham’s commitment to heritage conservation through a strong policy framework.

Heritage Designation will highlight the exceptional cultural heritage value of the property to the owner

Although the City may designate this provincially-owned property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, the designation has no legal effect on the property since a lower tier level of government (municipal) cannot regulate an upper tier level (provincial). However, staff is of the opinion that the “symbolic” heritage designation of the John Eby Reesor House by the City of Markham will serve to highlight the exceptional cultural heritage value of the property to Infrastructure Ontario and compel them to withdraw the “Request for Demolition.” Other provincially-owned properties, and several federally-owned properties in east Markham have been similarly designated by Council to highlight their significance.

Demolition of any buildings of cultural heritage value or interest within the Rouge National Urban Park is premature

In the opinion of staff and Heritage Markham, the demolition of heritage buildings on this property or any other property within the Rouge National Urban Park is premature pending further development of plans for the park, including a strategy to address cultural heritage resources. Staff has been advised that Parks Canada has an agreement with the province that pertains to such matters prior to the formal transfer of the land. The loss of this important building would remove a key opportunity to interpret the Pennsylvania-German Old Order Mennonite culture and history of the park.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

Not Applicable

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

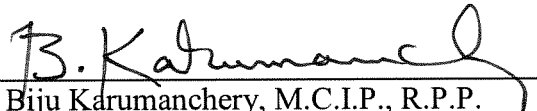
Heritage designation aligns with the strategic priorities of Managed Growth and Environment. Designation recognizes, promotes and protects heritage resources, which strengthens the sense of community. The preservation of heritage buildings is environmentally sustainable because it conserves embodied energy, diverts sound construction materials from entering landfill sites, and reduces the need to produce and transport new construction materials.

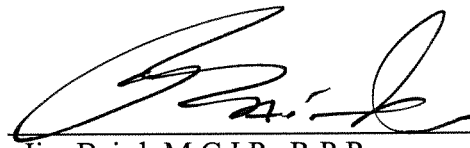
BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:

Acceptance of this recommendation to designate the property located at 8402 Steeles Avenue under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act will require the Clerk's Department to initiate the following actions:

- publish and serve on the property owner, the Ontario Heritage Trust and the public through newspaper advertisement, Council's notice of intention to designate the property as per the requirements of the Act: and
- prepare the designation by-law for the property.

RECOMMENDED BY:


Biju Karumanchery, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Acting Director of Planning & Urban
Design


Jim Baird, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of Development Services

ATTACHMENTS

Figure 1 - Owner/Agent and Location Map

Figure 2 - Building Photographs

Appendix 'A' - Request for Demolition letter

Appendix 'B' - Statement of Significance

Appendix 'C' - Heritage Markham Extract

Appendix 'D' - Reesor Family in Canada letter

FIGURE 1

FILE PATH:

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OWNER:

Infrastructure Ontario c/o
Premier Environmental Services Inc.
244 Montrose Street North, Unit 1, Upper
Cambridge ON N3H 2H7

Contact Persons:

Kyla Hoyles, Environmental Geoscientist
Dean Fitzgerald, Senior Ecologist
Telephone: (519) 653-7140
Email: dfitzgerald@premiercorp.ca

LOCATION MAP:

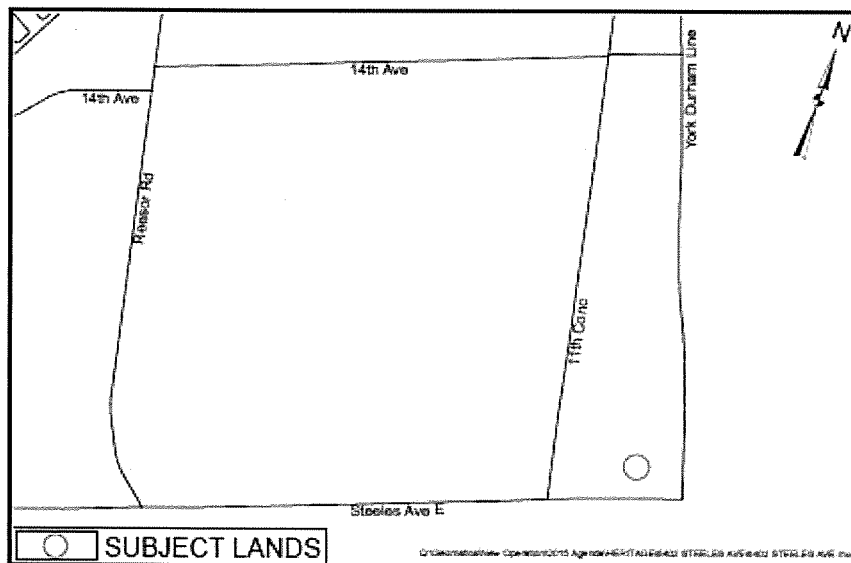
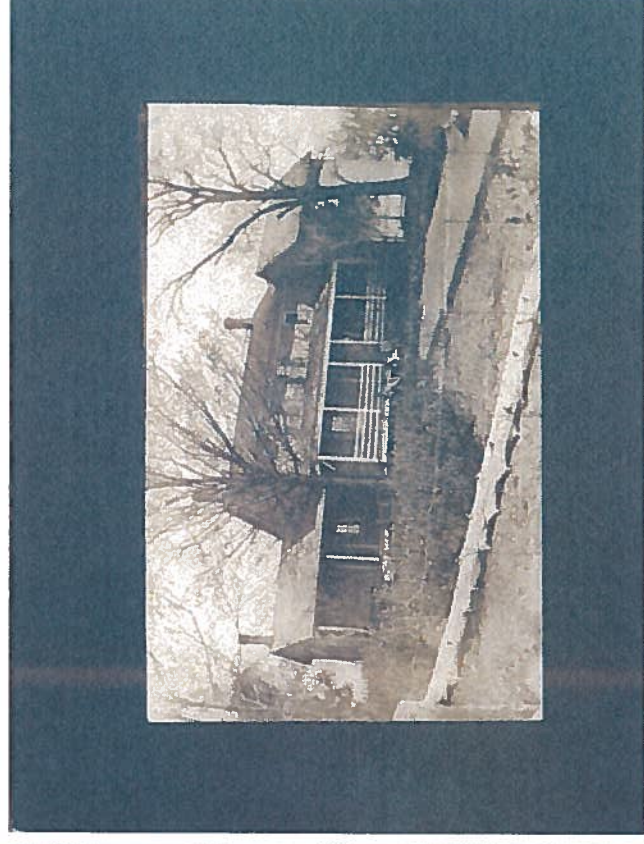


Figure 2
John Eby Reesor House, 1853

Present-day Photograph



Archival Photograph





244 Montrose Street North
Unit 1, Upper
Cambridge, Ontario
N3H 2H7
Phone 519.653.7140
Fax 519.653.8907
www.premiercorp.ca

July 6, 2015

Heritage Markham – Development Services Commission
City of Markham
101 Town Centre Boulevard
Markham, Ontario
L3R 9W3

Premier Project No. 615057.CE

Attention: Mr. George Duncan
Senior Heritage Planner

Sent via email: heritage@markham.ca

**RE: Request for Demolition
8402 Steeles Avenue East, Markham, Ontario**

Premier Environmental Services Inc. (Premier) has been retained by MHPM Project Managers Inc., on behalf of the owner (Infrastructure Ontario), to facilitate and manage the proposed demolition of the two-storey residence, barn and shed, located on the above-mentioned property.

It is our understanding that the property is listed on the Markham Register of Property of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest. On behalf of the property owner, we would therefore like to request that Heritage Markham consider this request for demolition. Should any objection to this demolition be forthcoming, we respectfully request that alternative options or conditions be considered.

It is our intention that a formal demolition permit application will be forwarded at a later date so that the Demolition Plan can incorporate any specific requests by Heritage Markham.


Premier is in the process of completing a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Designated Substances Survey and Category B Class Environmental Assessment for the property. These reports will be made available as part of the Class EA public consultation period.

We trust this letter meets your requirement for notification at this time. If you have any questions concerning the above, please contact the undersigned at 519-653-7140 at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Premier Environmental Services Inc.


Kyla Hoyle, P. Geo.
Environmental Geoscientist


Dean Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
Senior Ecologist

Cc: Summer O'Brien, MHPM Project Managers, Inc. (summer.obrien@mhpm.com)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPENDIX B

John Eby Reesor House

8402 Steeles Avenue

1853

The John Eby Reesor House is recommended for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act as a property of cultural heritage value or interest, as described in the following Statement of Significance.

Description of Property

The John Eby Reesor House is a two storey brick building located on the north side of Steeles Avenue, west of the York-Durham Town Line. The house is set far back from the road within a clump of mature trees and shrubs, in a rural area that is part of the Rouge National Urban Park.

Historical or Associative Value

The John Eby Reesor House is of historical or associative value as the 1853 home of John Eby Reesor (1806-1864), one of the sons of Reesor family patriarch, Peter Reesor, who came to Markham Township from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1804. The Reesors are historically important as the founding family of the community of Cedar Grove, a significant settlement of Pennsylvania German Mennonites in both Markham Township and Ontario. John Eby Reesor was a successful farmer, and contributed to his community by providing land on his farm for an early school and the Old Order Risser/Reesor Mennonite Church and cemetery. He was ordained as a minister in the Mennonite Church in 1836. His descendants owned and farmed this property well into the twentieth century.

Design or Physical Value

The John Eby Reesor House is an excellent representative example of a traditional Pennsylvania German Mennonite farmhouse, complete with a “doddy house” for the older generation of the family, a summer kitchen and a woodshed wing. The overall character of this Old Order Mennonite dwelling is one of simplicity. The four-bay arrangement of door and window openings on the front wall of the main block is a typical, early Pennsylvania German detail. The small, square attic windows of the main block are another typical Pennsylvania German Mennonite element, as is the extension of the roof slope of the kitchen wing to form the veranda roof. The design or physical value of the building is enhanced by its superior degree of architectural integrity.

Contextual Value

The John Eby Reesor House is a significant element in defining the agricultural character of the Cedar Grove community of east Markham. Its traditional Pennsylvania German Mennonite form,

in combination with the nearby Reesor Mennonite Church, driveshed and cemetery at 7070 York-Durham Line, clearly illustrates the influence of the Pennsylvania German Mennonite culture and heritage in this part of the Rouge River watershed. As one of the oldest structures in the community, the John Eby Reesor House has been a fixture on this land for over one and a half centuries.

Significant Architectural Attributes

Exterior character-defining attributes that embody the cultural heritage value of the John Eby Reesor House include:

- Overall form of the building, including the main two storey rectangular block, one and a half storey brick “doddy house”, one storey brick kitchen wing, one storey frame summer kitchen and woodshed;
- Fieldstone foundation;
- Brick walls of the main building, kitchen wing and “doddy house,” and vertical tongue and groove siding of the frame wings;
- Gable roof with projecting eaves, with eave returns on the main block;
- Hip-roofed front porch, a remnant of a former full-width veranda;
- Verandas formed by the extension of the roof of the kitchen wing and summer kitchen;
- Belfry on the roof peak of the summer kitchen;
- Four panelled wood front door with multi-paned transom light above;
- 6 over 6 wood windows.

HERITAGE MARKHAM
EXTRACT

DATE: August 17, 2015
TO: R. Hutcheson, Manager of Heritage Planning
G. Seaman, Sr. Manager, Sustainability Office
Deputy Mayor J. Heath

EXTRACT CONTAINING ITEM #14 OF THE EIGHT HERITAGE MARKHAM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 12, 2015.

14. Request for Demolition

John Eby Reesor House

8402 Steeles Avenue

Cedar Grove Community (16.11)

Extracts: R. Hutcheson, Manager of Heritage Planning
G. Seaman, Sr. Manager, Sustainability Office
Deputy Mayor J. Heath

David Nesbitt disclosed an interest with respect to Item # 14, 8402 Steeles Avenue by nature of representing the applicant, and did not take part in the discussion as a member of the Committee, or vote on the question of the approval of this matter.

The Senior Heritage Planner discussed the potential demolition of the John Eby Reesor House at 8402 Steeles Avenue, by Infrastructure Ontario. The property is proposed to become part of the Rouge National Urban Park and is currently under the jurisdiction of the province. Staff are recommending that the property at 8402 Steeles Avenue be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act to protect the building.

Betty and David Burkholder, representing the Reesor family, spoke in support of preserving the property, and other member of the public were in attendance in support. A letter of support from the "Reesor Family in Canada" was provided to the Committee.

The Committee supported preservation and suggested that the local MPP and Mayor Scarpitti be requested to assist in discussions with the province, in this regard.

Heritage Markham Recommends:

That Heritage Markham does not support the demolition of the John Eby Reesor House or any of the associated outbuildings on the property based on their cultural heritage value or interest; and,

That in the opinion of Heritage Markham, the demolition of the heritage buildings on this property or any other property within the Rouge National Urban Park is premature pending

further development of plans for the park, including a strategy to address cultural heritage resources; and further,

That Heritage Markham recommends to Council that the property at 8402 Steeles Avenue be designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

CARRIED

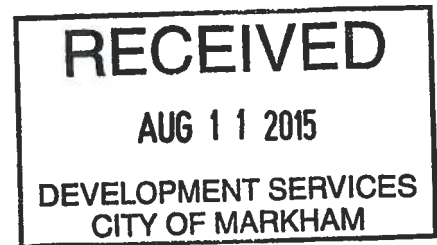
The Reesor Family in Canada

APPENDIX D

An incorporated body since 1989

August 10, 2015

City of Markham
Heritage Planning Dept.
101 Town Centre Blvd.
Markham, ON L3R 9W3



Dear Members of Heritage Markham,

Re: HERITAGE Designated Property of John Eby Reesor House
8402 Steeles Ave East Markham

It has come to the attention of the Reesor Family in Canada that Infrastructure Ontario has requested a permit from Markham for the demolition of the house at 8402 Steeles Ave East.

We are extremely concerned over this request as this is a Designated Heritage Building.

We believe that the Reesor story including this homestead has a significant role in the City of Markham's heritage and Cedar Grove's early history.

This brick house appears to have been built in 1853 by John Eby Reesor (1806-1864), the second son of Peter Reesor (1775-1854).

The house was continuously inhabited for well over 150 years and during this time there has been an ongoing line of direct Reesor descendants living in the home and farming the land (Concession 11, Lots 1, 2, 3 and 4).

In the early 1970's, this corner of Markham was expropriated by the Province for the purpose of developing a satellite city, Cedarwood which was intended to accompany the Federal expropriation of land for building an airport.

The expropriated homes in affected areas were then rented out to prospective tenants.

This included the property at 8402.

It continued to be rented until approximately 4 years ago when the Province discontinued the practice for this particular home. To date the house remains vacant.



The Reesor Family in Canada Genealogical and Historical Society Inc.,
PO BOX 1804, Locust Hill, Ontario, Canada, L0H 1J0

Barry Reesor
President

Dave Burkholder
Vice-President

Louise Pogue
Secretary

Paul Reesor
Treasurer

It is incredulous to learn that a building considered worthy of Heritage designation and protection could now after a few short years be deemed for demolition by permit, theft, and neglect or vulnerable to arson.

We, the Reesor Family in Canada strongly believe that the John Eby Reesor house has a significant and worthy role in the history of the City of Markham and that it should continue to be protected.

We have provided a short historical summary of relevant facts that may help to put the property into perspective.

We request that Heritage Markham continue to see the merit of this designated property and accordingly recommend to Markham Council to deny Infrastructure Ontario this permit to demolish.

The following quote from Macaulay was referenced at the 1980 Reesor Reunion and we believe that it has continued relevance to the issue at hand.

"A people that take no pride in the noble achievement of remote ancestors will never achieve anything to be remembered with pride by remote posterity."

Thank you for your consideration of our earnest request.

We appreciate Heritage Markham's positive support and input on this issue.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "per B. Bunkholder". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

The Reesor Family in Canada

Attachment