

HERITAGE MATTERS IN SURREY

An overview of heritage conservation in Surrey

What is heritage and why does it matter?

Heritage is what we inherit from the past, value in the present, and plan to preserve for the future. Our historic roots stem from the influence of First Nations people and later settlers that harvested the trees, farmed the fertile soils, and established communities. As a result, Surrey is rich in the diversity and variety of its built surroundings, cultural experience, natural environment, pastoral landscapes, and traditions.

There is value in keeping memories of the past alive. Our heritage helps to define our unique character and image. Preservation of heritage is an important part of creating community pride and identity. Surrey has many buildings, sites and features that contribute to a strong sense of place and community.

The challenge is to conserve and protect the buildings, features, and natural and cultural landscapes that are the best examples of our heritage, while continuing to accommodate orderly growth and development. The City works with property owners and developers to encourage our built, natural and cultural heritage to be retained, recognized, and protected.

Heritage Sites in Surrey

Efforts to conserve our heritage through City initiative extend to the 1970s when Council designated Surrey's first heritage site, the Semiahmoo Trail. The Heritage Advisory Commission (then a Committee) came into being in 1976. Surrey's community heritage register, which now contains over 220 sites, was established in 1997. Over 80 registered sites have since been added to the Canadian Register of Historic Places.



What is the Surrey Heritage Advisory Commission?

The Heritage Advisory Commission is a group of volunteers who serve as an advisory body to Council. The Commission's mandate includes heritage awareness and education, heritage conservation, review of land development proposals, protection measures for heritage buildings and sites, and administering financial assistance.

Commission members are appointed annually by Council, and meet monthly at City Hall. They provide their time and expertise to develop community awareness and appreciation of Surrey's heritage. The Planning & Development, Parks, Recreation & Culture and Engineering Departments, and Legislative Services, each provide staff liaison at the monthly meetings.

What is Surrey's Heritage Strategic Review ?

The City of Surrey has developed a number of heritage-related plans, strategies and guidelines including design guidelines for specific heritage features, a heritage strategic review, and numerous neighbourhood-based heritage studies. Surrey's Heritage Strategic Review:



- provides a background of past heritage awareness and conservation initiatives,
- reviews key components of the existing program,
- defines the community's vision, goals and strategies for the program, and
- proposes an implementation plan to execute specific planning, outreach and collaboration strategies and actions to work toward the realization of the renewed vision and goals.

What are the main tools for heritage conservation in Surrey?

Heritage conservation in Surrey is undertaken under provisions of the Local Government Act. The Act provides for a number of tools allowing heritage places to be recognized and protected. The main tools used in Surrey are as follows:

- **Identifying Heritage Places** – To promote awareness, the City and the Heritage Advisory Commission have installed a number of plaques, storyboards, markers and signs identifying heritage places, roads and other sites of significance.
- **Listing Heritage Places** – The City of Surrey maintains two lists. Surrey's heritage inventory is an internal database that lists sites which have been identified as having potential heritage value, and as such need to be assessed to determine the degree of recognition or protection justified. Surrey's community heritage register lists sites determined by Council to have significance because of their heritage value.
- **Protecting Heritage Places** – Protected properties are properties where the owner and the City have a voluntary agreement or where Council adopts a by-law to formally protect sites listed on the Surrey community heritage register.
- **Heritage Alteration Permits** – Protecting heritage buildings in need of alterations through a heritage alteration permit encourages changes to be made in a way that respects the character of a protected heritage property.
- **Temporary Heritage Protection** – If a demolition or alteration is proposed for a building or structure on Surrey's community heritage register, the City can place an order for temporary protection for up to 60 days. During this time, the site can be evaluated in more detail, and discussions can take place with the owner.
- **Withholding of Demolition Permits** – If a demolition is proposed for a building or structure on Surrey's community heritage register, the City can withhold the demolition permit until a building permit or any other necessary approvals are issued.



More information...

This bulletin offers a brief overview of heritage conservation in the City of Surrey. More information is available in separate bulletins about Surrey's Heritage Inventory and Community Heritage Register, Heritage Protection, Heritage Applications, and Financial Incentives for property owners.