

## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

### 2.1 Examination

Thornhill is one of Ontario's earliest settlements, dating from the original construction of Yonge Street. Governor Simcoe laid out Yonge Street as the first north-south street in the region in 1793. Subsequent colonial settlement and development north of the Town of York often centered on Yonge Street and took advantage of the street's "connector" function. Thornhill was one of the early settlements and Yonge Street was its major street and connection to other communities. As with many early villages, it was the intersection of the road with a river, giving the opportunity to develop water-powered mills, that gave rise to a concentrated settlement within the general agricultural context. The first mill in what became Thornhill was built in 1801. The British Corn Laws created a ready market for Ontario's grain and Thornhill prospered and grew for 45 years. The repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 ended the boom. The village entered a long stable period with little economic growth, but new houses continued to be built, though at a slower rate. The stability preserved the village and its buildings for another century and more. Special credit is due to the Society for the Preservation of Historic Thornhill (SPOHT), which began its efforts in 1974—a year before the *Ontario Heritage Act* was proclaimed. SPOHT was instrumental in the initiation of the Thornhill Conservation Districts in 1983.

An examination of the Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District shows that it has retained much of the character described in the 1984 District Plan. A measure of its success is the fact that only one heritage building has been lost in the interim—a small Loyalist Cottage at 8046 Yonge Street. Some of Yonge Street's heritage houses have been incorporated in new larger developments, thereby securing their survival. This praiseworthy effort has been slightly diminished, in some cases, by a lack of care and rigour in detail decisions, as noted in the District Inventory. In the other streets in the District, the heritage buildings are all intact, and many have been improved by restoration efforts. Of the non-heritage buildings, mostly bungalows, many have had alterations and additions, and a number have been replaced by new and larger buildings—not always reflective of local heritage precedents.

Considering the District as a whole, the goal and objectives of the 1984 Plan have been largely sustained, and the District has been successful in preserving its heritage resources and heritage character.



The MacDonald House, 121 Centre Street, before 1932.  
MM-Weaver #165.



A recent photograph of the same house.

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### 2.2 Individual Designations within the District

Of the 82 properties in the District, six have been individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. These properties are included in the Part V District designation, but are governed by Part IV. However, the general policies and guidelines of the Plan will apply to those individually designated properties located within the District.

<u>Address</u>	<u>Name of Building/Property</u>
140 Brooke Street	Holy Trinity Anglican Church
121 Centre Street	MacDonald House
42 Old Yonge Street	William Armstrong House
7780 Yonge Street	Robert West House
7788 Yonge Street	Methodist Church
8038 Yonge Street	Soules Inn

At the time of individual designation, a detailed designation report identifying the “reasons for designation” was prepared for each of the above properties. These reports are on file at the City and are a useful resource when exterior changes are proposed. Any work that affects the reasons for designation require approval of Council.



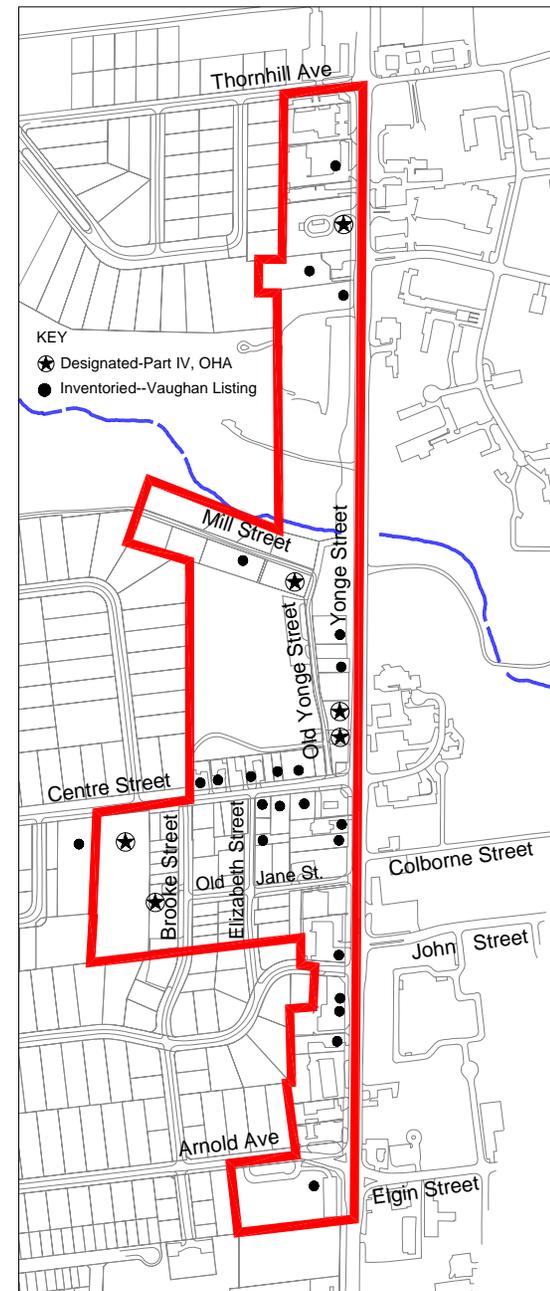
Holy Trinity Anglican Church, on its original site in front of the Burying Ground on Yonge Street, 1942. ThA-Weaver Collection (2003.81)

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### 2.3 Listed Properties within the District

The City of Vaughan maintains a Listing of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Value. There are 30 such Listings within the District, including the six previously noted properties that are designated under Part IV. Sixteen of these are also included in the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings (CIHB) and/or the Ontario Inventory of Buildings (OIB). The buildings inventoried in the Vaughan Listing are tabulated below, and inclusion in the CIHB and OIB is noted where applicable. Locations are mapped to the right.

Vaughan Listing	CIHB	OIB
140 Brooke Street	yes	yes
18 Centre Street	yes	yes
19 Centre Street	yes	yes
24 Centre Street		
33 Centre Street	yes	
39 Centre Street	yes	yes
46 Centre Street	yes	yes
66 Centre Street	yes	
78 Centre Street	yes	
121 Centre Street		
141 Centre Street		
25 Elizabeth Street		
15 Mill Street	yes	
42 Old Yonge Street		
7554 Yonge Street		yes
7616 Yonge Street		yes
7626 Yonge Street		
7636 Yonge Street		
7666 Yonge Street		
7714 Yonge Street	yes	yes
7718 Yonge Street		
7724 Yonge Street		
7780 Yonge Street	yes	yes
7788 Yonge Street	yes	
7808 Yonge Street	yes	
7822 Yonge Street	yes	yes
8000 Yonge Street	yes	yes
8018 Yonge Street		
8038 Yonge Street	yes	
8064 Yonge Street		



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### 2.4 Community Consultation

The first community consultation was held at 7pm on December 7, 2006 at the Dufferin-Clark Community Centre. About 25 community members attended. Many of the attendees were long-time residents who were present for the original District Plan process.

The consultants made a presentation:

- introducing themselves, and looking at some of the changes that have occurred in Thornhill over the past 20 years;
- outlining what a Heritage District is and isn't, describing the workings of a District—the Heritage Permit process;
- and giving examples of the kind of well-illustrated, user-friendly documents that have become the standard of practice.

A short questionnaire was handed out, and the floor was opened for questions and comments from the public. The variety of input from the meeting and the questionnaire are summarized below:

#### People like:

- the village atmosphere, with small streets, mature trees and gardens, and open spaces;
- walkable distances to amenities such as the library, shopping and banking, and the Farmer's Market;
- proximity to the health centre, proximity to Toronto;
- The MacDonald property and the spirit of Thoreau MacDonald.

#### People don't like:

- Noise, traffic, lack of pedestrian crossings on Yonge Street;
- Overhead utility wires;
- Automotive uses on Yonge Street—sales, rentals, and servicing of cars.
- Littering on Centre Street;
- Lack of quality retail and restaurants;
- Monster homes and out-of-character buildings.

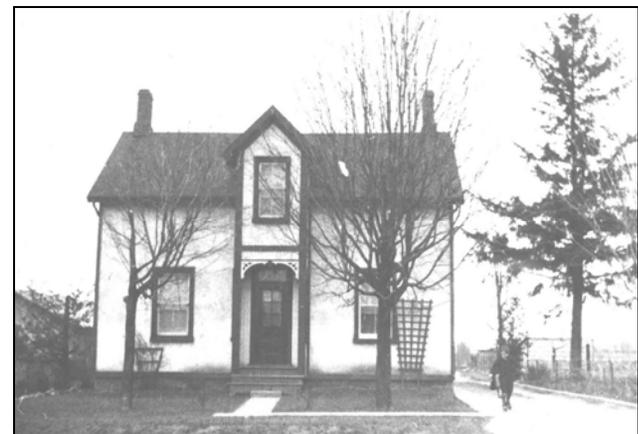
#### People want the Plan to:

- Limit the size of buildings;
- Allow greater density on Yonge Street;
- Call for underground utility wires in designated areas;
- Call for street lights like those in MacDonald Park;
- Call for walkways, improved street paving;
- Flexibility for owners who are co-operating in preservation of historic properties;
- Flexibility for owners concerning pruning and removal of sick and dead trees;
- Tax relief for owners of historic properties.

#### People are concerned about:

- Redevelopment on Yonge Street, particularly as to scale.

Some of the items above have general assent. In some cases, contradictory ideas are expressed by different people. Many of the items are not directly related to the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act. The development of consensus on significant issues will be part of the task of future public consultations. Consensus items that are outside of the heritage area will be forwarded to Council.



78 Centre Street, Circa 1938, MM-Weaver #146

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### 2.4 Community Consultation Cont'd

**The second community consultation** was held at 7pm on March 8, 2007 at the Thornhill Presbyterian Church. Again, about 25 community members attended.

The consultants made a presentation:

- Introducing the concepts and structure of a Heritage Conservation District Plan: Policies, Guidelines, and Implementation.
- Describing the necessity, under the Heritage Act, to explicitly exempt minor classes of work from the heritage permit requirement.
- Presenting samples of Design Guidelines.

A short questionnaire was handed out, asking for input on what kinds of things the Plan should control, and what minor classes of work should be exempted from the permit requirement. The floor was opened for questions and comments from the public. The variety of input from the meeting and the questionnaire are summarized below:

- Consultant's recommendations for the scope of the Guidelines was generally supported.
- Consultants' recommendation for exempted classes of work was generally supported.
- Concern was expressed about the particular problems of Centre Street, where many heritage houses are now in commercial use. Councillor Shefman proposed to arrange a meeting with Centre Street owners to specifically address those concerns.

The Centre Street meeting was held on April 12, and the creation of a Community Improvement Area for Centre Street, distinct from and in addition to the Yonge Street Community Improvement Area was discussed.

**The third community consultation** was held at 7pm on April 25, 2007 at the Thornhill Public School library. Again, about 25 community members attended. In order to assist community members, a draft of the Heritage Conservation District Plan was posted on the City's website, in downloadable form, on April 8, 2007.

The consultants made a presentation that described the structure of the Plan, and showed a section-by-section outline using actual pages from the draft Plan. The floor was opened for questions and comments from the public.

Much of the discussion focused on subjects not directly tied to the Plan, such as property maintenance standards and their enforcement. The consultants answered questions related to the Plan, and generally the consensus was support for the draft Plan.

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### 2.5 Statement of Heritage Value

The Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District is a distinct community in the City of Vaughan, characterized by a wealth of heritage buildings, historic sites, and landscapes. Although none of Thornhill's mills or the earliest houses have survived, a wealth of buildings, both residential and commercial, dating from the 1830s, 40s, '50s remain—largely intact. These constitute the original basis of the village's heritage character.

The continuing development of Thornhill saw new buildings erected, decade by decade. Houses dating from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century represent many of the styles developed during those prolific decades. Victorian vernacular, Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne, Foursquare/Edwardian, Arts and Crafts, and Craftsman Bungalow styles are all represented in the District. Many of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century houses, including the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) housing, were built in the Cape Cod Cottage style, which shares the New England Georgian model with the old village houses of a century before, and many of the more recent houses have made an effort to reflect the heritage styles in the village.

The ongoing development of Thornhill has maintained the scale and character of the older parts of the village, with a variety of lot sizes and sitings, mostly modest-sized buildings, mature and rich planting and landscaping, and a rural or modified-rural road profile in many places. This character is strongly maintained in most of the village. Although the mills and their ponds are long gone, the river valley remains unbuilt, as woodland and grass (the golf course), and serves as a reminder of the mill-town origins of Thornhill.

The quality of the heritage resources in the District is indicated by the number of properties carried on municipal, provincial and national inventories, as listed above on page 8.



8038 Yonge Street  
Neo-Classical, 1830



39 Centre Street  
Ontario Gothic Vernacular, Circa 1855



33 Centre Street  
Queen Anne Revival, 1910

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### 2.6 Statement of Heritage Attributes

The heritage attributes of the Thornhill Vaughan Heritage Conservation District are embodied in its buildings and landscapes, which are shown and described in detail in the 1984 Study, and reviewed in Section 2 of this document, and in the built form, architectural detail, and historical associations, which are depicted and described in more detail in the District Inventory. These attributes are worthy of preservation.

### 2.7 Statement of Objectives in Designating the District

#### 2.7.1 Overall Objective

To ensure the retention and conservation of the District's cultural heritage resources and heritage character, and to guide change so that it contributes to and does not detract from, the District's architectural, historical, and contextual character.

#### 2.7.2 Objectives for Heritage Buildings

To retain and conserve the heritage buildings as identified in the *City of Vaughan Listing of Buildings of Architectural and Historical Value*.

To conserve heritage attributes and distinguishing qualities of heritage buildings, and prevent the removal or alteration of any historic or distinctive architectural feature.

To correct unsympathetic alterations to heritage buildings.

To facilitate the restoration of heritage buildings based on a thorough examination of archival and pictorial evidence, physical evidence, and an understanding of the history of the local community.

To promote retention and reuse of heritage buildings to prevent their demolition.

#### 2.7.3 Objectives for Non-Heritage Buildings

To discourage the demolition of those non-heritage buildings which are supportive of the overall heritage character of the area.

To encourage improvements to non-heritage buildings that will enhance the District's heritage character.

#### 2.7.4 Objectives for Landscape/Streetscape

To facilitate the introduction of, as well as conservation of, historic landscape treatments in both the public and private realm.

To preserve trees and mature vegetation, and encourage the planting of species characteristic of the District.

To preserve historic fences and introduce new fences that respect historic patterns and styles while meeting contemporary needs.

To preserve the existing street pattern and rural cross-sections and refrain from widening existing pavement and road allowances.

To introduce landscape, streetscape, and infrastructure improvements that will enhance the heritage character of the District.

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### 2.7.5 Objectives for New Development

To ensure compatible infill construction that will enhance the District's heritage character and complement the area's village-like, human scale of development.

To guide the design of new development to be sympathetic and compatible with the heritage resources and character of the District while providing for contemporary needs.

### 2.7.6 Objectives for Community Support

To foster community support, pride and appreciation of the heritage buildings, landscapes, and character of the District, and promote the need to conserve these resources for future generations.

To facilitate public participation and involvement in the conservation of heritage resources and further development of the District.

To offer assistance and incentives to individual heritage property owners to encourage the use of proper conservation approaches when undertaking improvement projects.

### 2.7.7 Objectives for Business/Tourism

To work with owners on Yonge Street to maintain a progressive and competitive business environment while at the same time protecting the heritage attributes of the District that make the area a unique and distinctive shopping environment.

To acknowledge that the Heritage District is an asset that the City can leverage and celebrate in order to contribute to the greater commercial success of the City.