

Veterans' Housing Character Area: Guidelines and context

City of Ottawa

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1.0 Introduction and acknowledgements

This document was prepared by the City of Ottawa Heritage Planning Branch and was produced as a result of the findings and recommendations of the Carlington North Veterans' Housing Heritage Study. This document sets out the historical context for the area and establishes guidelines for managing change in the character area. This document contains guidelines intended to assist property owners within the Veterans' Housing Character Area (VHCA) with conservation, alterations or new construction

The City would like to thank each of the residents (current and past) who shared their knowledge and experiences of the area. In addition, staff thank the members of the Carlington Community Association for their ideas and input.

2.0 Boundary

The Veterans' Housing Character Area shown in Figure 1 is based on the 1946 and 1947 subdivision plan boundaries. It is generally the area bounded by Carling Avenue to the north, Fisher Avenue to the east, General and Marshall avenues to the south and Merivale Road to the west.

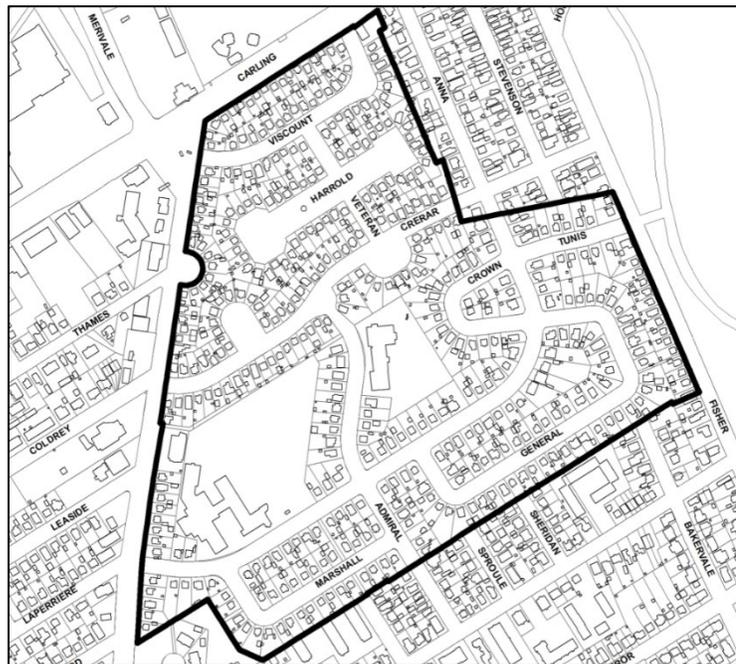


Figure 1 - Map of the Veterans' Housing Character Area boundary.

3.0 Policy framework

In November 2021, City Council approved a new Official Plan. The Plan has been sent for ministerial approval by the province. Once approved by the province, it will replace the previous Official Plan.

Both the previous and Council-approved Official Plan have policies related to heritage and the identification of special areas of cultural heritage value.

Section 2.5.5 (3) of the City's previous Official Plan (2003) stated that:

The City may recognize core areas of Villages, older residential neighbourhoods, cultural landscapes or other areas in both the urban and rural areas as Cultural Heritage Character Areas, where designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act* may or may not be appropriate. In these areas, the City will prepare design guidelines to help private and public landowners construct new buildings, or additions or renovations to existing buildings, to reflect the identified cultural heritage features of the community.

Section 4.5.1 (13) of the new Official Plan provides direction for establishing design guidelines in areas of cultural heritage value:

The City may identify areas of cultural heritage value where heritage designation may not be appropriate but that may benefit from design guidelines, interpretive programming or other tools that will assist in the conservation and understanding of these areas.

According to the new Official Plan, the character area is targeted for significant intensification. The guidelines in this document strive to balance intensification with conservation of cultural heritage.

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with all other relevant municipal and provincial planning policies and by-laws, including the Zoning By-Law, Merivale Road North Community Design Plan and relevant urban design guidelines.

4.0 Historical context

4.1 Setting

Wartime Housing Limited, a federal Crown corporation, built and managed houses for war workers and veterans during a nation-wide housing shortage following the Second World War. Subdivisions built by Wartime Housing Limited before 1944 provided housing to workers at wartime factories. After 1944, Wartime Housing Limited built subdivisions for returning veterans and their families. In Ottawa, two subdivisions were built by Wartime Housing Limited in Carlington North, referred to as Veterans' Housing Project No. 1 and Veteran's Housing Project No. 2, beginning in 1945.

Wartime Housing Limited efficiently laid out streets and dwellings within each subdivision. The placement of each house on its lot and the pattern of each street within the plans of subdivision creates a distinct and recognizable spatial arrangement that includes cul-de-sacs, ellipses, median islands, and curved streets. In total, 400 one and one-and-a-half-storey houses were constructed. The boundary of the Veterans' Housing Character Area (Figure 1) encompasses the boundaries of the two Wartime Housing Limited subdivisions.

Veterans' Housing Project No. 1 (1945 to 1946)

The first subdivision of 200 rental houses was constructed south of Carling Avenue at Merivale Road in former Nepean. Construction was completed in 1946 and the subdivision lands were annexed to Ottawa.

Veterans' Housing Project No. 2 (1946 to 1947)

A second subdivision of 200 rental houses and a school was built immediately south of the first subdivision. The lands of the second subdivision were annexed from Nepean to Ottawa in 1947.

Despite alterations over time and the loss of some original building stock, the Veterans' Housing Character Area survives as a legacy of the Second World War and as a marker in the growth and development of postwar Ottawa. Built in direct response to the housing crisis of the immediate postwar period, the subdivisions reflect a coordinated effort from several levels of government and various private sector players at a time of considerable need. They are some of the first subdivisions built in Ottawa after the Second World War and they represent a defining moment in residential planning in Ottawa and in Canada. The ongoing residential use of the subdivisions continues the traditions of the Second World War veterans and the families who once lived in them.

4.2 Key dates

The following timeline provides key dates associated with the development of Wartime Housing Limited subdivisions in Ottawa.

1939: Fighting begins; Canada officially enters the Second World War

1941: Wartime Housing Limited is founded as a Crown corporation under the *War Measures Act* and the *Department of Munitions and Supply Act*.

Wartime Housing Limited determines that Ottawa is not a centre of overcrowding due to industrial activity. Therefore, Ottawa is ineligible to apply for wartime housing.

1942: The federal government announces Wartime Housing Limited may assist municipalities that do not have direct connections to war industry. Ottawa is now eligible to apply for wartime housing.

1943 to 1944: The federal government directs Wartime Housing Limited to expand their operations to include the construction of housing for veterans and their families.

1944: Wartime Housing Limited house designs begin to acquire a more permanent character. This includes better frame construction and more integrated foundations.

1945: Ottawa City Council approves the construction of 200 rental houses for war veterans in collaboration with Wartime Housing Limited. The agreement stipulates that the houses will be available to lease to sailors, soldiers, or airmen of the armed forces of Canada and/or their dependents.

The Crown purchases lands of the former Booth Lumberyard in Nepean. This will become the site for the veterans' housing. Nepean agrees to transfer the subdivision lands to the city of Ottawa. Ottawa will service the neighbourhood with utilities and paving as part of the agreement.

Official end of the Second World War

The first veteran's home is completed on Merivale Road. The first tenants are T. E. Bishop and Maria Bishop, along with their three children.

1946: Wartime Housing Limited completes Veterans Housing Project No. 1, covering approximately 30 acres.

Federal government announces that all available labour and materials may be channeled into the building of houses and essential services.

Wartime Housing Limited offers to purchase the land immediately south of the first subdivision to construct an additional 200 houses.

City of Ottawa approves the construction of an additional 200 houses for war veterans in collaboration with Wartime Housing Limited.

Nepean Council officially passes Motion No. 63, approving the City of Ottawa's annexation of 30 acres of land for 'Project No.1 – Veterans Housing'. This is backdated to January 1, 1946.

The Nepean Council passes Motion No. 64, which approves the application from the City of Ottawa for another land annexation for the construction of an additional 200 housing units for 'Project No.2 – Veterans Housing.' Nepean Council stipulates that war veterans residing in Nepean cannot be prevented from applying for tenancy, and that their applications will be given the same consideration as veteran applicants from Ottawa.

1946 to 1947: Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation incorporates as a federal Crown corporation responsible for administering the National Housing Act. Wartime Housing Limited is dissolved. Its assets are transferred to Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

1947: Wartime Housing Limited completes Veterans Housing Project No. 2, covering approximately 71 acres.

W. E. Gowling school opens.

Tunis Avenue is paved late in the year.

1951: Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation begins to sell off the veterans' houses, making them available for tenants to purchase. The rent previously paid by tenants could go towards a down payment. The units sold for approximately \$6000 each.

4.3 Description of heritage character

The heritage character of the Veterans' Housing Character Area (VHCA) is defined by its historical associations, buildings, and design elements associated with Wartime Housing Limited and early postwar planning. Roadways, parkland, buildings, and open areas contribute to a distinct sense of place that reflects the identity of the veterans housing subdivisions and the history of veterans housing in Ottawa and in Canada.

The elements that define the VHCA's heritage character are its:

- **Pattern of development**

The VHCA features a distinct pattern of planned development as expressed by: street layout including cul-de-sacs, ellipses, median islands and curved streets; uniform orientation of dwellings towards streets, continuity of green front lawns, and large lot sizes. These subdivisions are representative and relatively intact examples of the planned neighbourhoods developed by Wartime Housing Limited across Canada in the postwar years. They are the only known Wartime Housing Limited subdivisions located within the amalgamated City of Ottawa. The social values contained in the Veterans' Housing Character Area support its character. Memories and emotional associations with the neighbourhood strengthen its historical identity as a veterans' community.

- **Associations with significant institutions and local government**

The subdivisions in Carlington North are associated with Wartime Housing Limited, a former federal Crown corporation and the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (later known as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) which took over operations from Wartime Housing Limited in 1947 and continued managing the rental houses until they were made available for private ownership in 1951. The work of Wartime Housing Limited and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation in the postwar period influenced residential and neighbourhood design for much of the second half of the 20th century. The lands were once within the boundaries of the former City of Nepean and were annexed by the City of Ottawa in cooperation with Wartime Housing Limited. This is a notable example of cooperation between municipal government.

- **Association with Ottawa's postwar transition and development**

The subdivisions in the Veterans' Housing Character Area were built from 1945 to 1947, reflecting the country's transition from wartime to peacetime. The tenants in Ottawa's subdivisions were not factory workers as was the case in earlier Wartime Housing Limited (WHL) development - they were returning veterans and their families. The arrival of hundreds of veterans and family members to this area transformed the edge of the city into a dynamic residential suburb. The migration of families into the veterans' subdivisions included war brides and coincided with a large increase in births, marking the start of Canada's baby boom.

The subdivision lands were once the site of J. R. Booth's Nepean lumber yard, also known as the City View yards. Lumber piles and rail cars were part of this landscape at the Ottawa-Nepean boundary line. The lumber yard was active into the 1940s until wartime demand for lumber cleared out its supply. The lumber yard was then acquired by the Crown in 1945 for WHL.

4.3.1 Attributes of veterans' houses

The Veterans' Houses in the VHCA are generally characterized by the following common attributes:

- One to one-and a-half storeys in height;
- side gable built form;
- street-oriented primary entrances;
- simple front façade fenestration patterns;
- uniform cladding materials and predominantly horizontal siding;
- consistent relationship to the street;
- near grade ground floors with entrances typically no more than five steps above grade.

5.0 Management guidelines

The guidelines in this section are intended to encourage the conservation of houses within the character area and to provide guidelines to manage change in the area. They are also intended to assist property owners interested in altering properties within the Veterans' Housing Character Area through the construction of additions and new infill housing. These guidelines should be consulted when considering proposals for additions or new construction or for development applications in the character area.

The guidelines provide direction on conservation issues within the character area and should be read in conjunction with applicable urban design guidelines and municipal by-laws including but not limited to the Official Plan, Zoning By-law and the Tree Protection By-law.

5.1 General guidelines

- I. The attributes referenced in Section 4.3.1 should be retained where existing. Where these attributes no longer exist or have been altered, they should be reflected in the design of additions, alterations, and new construction.
- II. The attributes identified in Section 4.3.1 should be repaired or restored where applicable.
- III. The demolition of veterans' houses is strongly discouraged.

5.2 Conservation guidelines

- I. The restoration and conservation of historic veterans' houses is strongly encouraged.
- II. If a property owner wishes to reinstate historic design elements or decorative features, the design should be based on documentary evidence such as historic photographs or blueprints. If no such evidence exists, the design should resemble other local examples on similar buildings.
- III. Property owners interested in restoring veterans' houses can contact City of Ottawa Heritage Planning Staff for assistance.
- IV. Parks Canada's Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada can be referenced for additional guidance on restoration, conservation, or renovation projects.

5.3 Alterations

- I. Front entrances should face the street, be clearly visible from the street, and be proportioned to not visually dominate the front façade.
- II. Existing entrance patterns should generally be maintained.
- III. The size, scale, and proportions of windows should generally be maintained.
- IV. Front façade fenestration patterns should be simple, balanced, and not dominate the primary front façade.
- V. New façade material should be uniform across façades and simple in character. Materials such as wood, composite, or vinyl siding are encouraged.
- VI. The addition of porches should not alter or detract from a dwelling's existing roofline. Porches with low pitched or flat roofs are encouraged.

5.4 Additions

- I. Additions should maintain the attributes identified in Section 4.3.1.

- II. Additions should generally be located in the rear yard but may extend into the side yard. Where an addition extends into the side yard it should be set back from the primary front façade.
- III. The side gable character of an existing dwelling should be sensitively integrated into new additions where an increase in height is proposed.
- IV. The roofline of a new addition should be a gable, side gable, or flat.
- V. New dormer windows should be located on the rear slope of a roof. If a new dormer window will be visible from the street, the roof form, size, and pitch of dormer should be compatible with the character of the existing building and street.

5.5 New development

- I. New development is encouraged to reflect the character of the area through the use of rectilinear forms and a simple material palette.
- II. New single detached dwellings should be built to approximately the same front yard setback as the lot's original dwelling. Where this is not possible, the setback of new buildings should align approximately with the average of the abutting lots' front yard setback abutting the street.
- III. New single-detached dwellings are encouraged to reflect the height, scale and massing of existing dwellings in the character area.
- IV. New development should incorporate green front yards and reflect the property's established spatial relationship with the street.
- V. Building entrances and ground floor heights should be built as close to grade as possible. Where this cannot be achieved, consider lowering front entrances and internalizing additional stairs.
- VI. New ground-oriented units are encouraged to include a side gable roof to reflect the historic character of the area.
- VII. New semi detached, duplex, and triplex buildings are encouraged to be designed to appear as single detached dwellings from the street.
- VIII. Higher density development may be permitted in the VHCA under specific provisions of the City of Ottawa's Official Plan and Zoning By-law. When designing developments at scales greater than that of single detached, semi-detached, and triplex dwellings give consideration to wartime housing precedents for similar building typologies. City of Ottawa staff can provide examples upon request.

- IX. Applicants should have regard for relevant municipal urban design guidelines, including but not limited to the Urban Design Guidelines for Low Rise Infill Housing, Urban Design Guidelines for High-rise Buildings, and the Urban Design Guidelines for Development along Arterial Mainstreets or similar successor documents.

5.6 Garages and accessory buildings

- I. Attached garages are strongly discouraged. Where attached garages are proposed, they should be set back from the front façade of the dwelling.
- II. Accessory buildings, coach houses and detached garages should be located in the rear yard.

5.7 Landscapes, public realm, and rights of way

- I. Existing block and street patterns should be retained in any new development.
- II. Mature trees on private lots should be maintained. Removal of trees should comply with all relevant municipal tree by-laws as well as any other provincial requirements (i.e., for endangered or protected species). Planting of new trees in native species is strongly encouraged.
- III. The retention and restoration of soft landscaped front yards and side yards is strongly encouraged.
- IV. Fencing, hedges, and other boundary demarcations are discouraged in front yards.
- V. The existing pattern of vehicle parking and driveways should be maintained.
- VI. The creation of parking spaces in front yards is strongly discouraged.
- VII. Grassy median islands located inside cul-de-sacs and crescent streets are a common, unique landscape attribute of the character area. These islands should be retained when the City of Ottawa undertakes any public works.

5.8 Views

Houses in multiple areas throughout the character area are oriented towards common viewpoints, such as the central grass islands or local parks. These areas include:

- Harrold Place and Harrold Place Park;
- Viscount Avenue between Veteran Avenue and Carling Avenue;
- Merivale Road between Crerar Avenue and Viscount Avenue;
- Crerar Avenue between Merivale Road and Admiral Avenue;

- Crerar Avenue between Admiral Avenue and Anna Avenue.
- I. Alterations within the character area should not detract from or negatively impact identified views.

5.9 Demolition

- I. Demolition is strongly discouraged in favour of retention, alterations, and the construction of additions.
- II. Where demolition is proposed, the salvage and reuse of building materials is encouraged.
- III. Applications to demolish an existing building should be accompanied by plans for a replacement building.

6.0 Implementation

The Veterans' Housing Character Area Management Guidelines are to be adopted by Council as a policy enabled through its Official Plan. The guidelines will be implemented by Heritage Planning staff in the Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development Department:

1. Heritage Planning staff will use the guidelines to advise and guide property owners regarding changes to their properties including restoration, renovation/alterations, construction of additions and new infill housing within the character area.
2. Heritage Planning staff will use the guidelines to comment on Planning Act applications, such as for site plan or minor variances, to conserve and enhance the character of the area.
3. Council's adoption of the Veteran's Housing Character Area does not designate the area or any properties within it under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Alterations and new construction do not require the issuance of heritage permits by the City of Ottawa.

7.0 Monitoring

The Veterans' Housing Character Area Management Guidelines should be monitored for a period of three years. Following the three-year monitoring period, staff should evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the guidelines.

8.0 Contact

For more information, please contact:

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heritage@ottawa.ca
613-580-2463