

King moves to designate historic home

By Mark Pavilons

King Township is pushing for a heritage designation on a Schomberg home, to save it from destruction.

Councillors approved staff recommendations recently to file a "Notice of Intention to Designate" 66 Main Street, under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Staff was asked to consider the move back in late November. The preservation of the home is one of the issues surrounding a residential development in Schomberg.

The property meets provincial criteria and if it attains designation, it would allow council to manage any future alterations, "in a manner that respects the significant architectural features, and refuse demolition."

This is the key, as both politicians and residents want the home preserved.

The home, known as Hollingshead/Coburn house, sits on a roughly 3-acre property. Currently, it's listed on the Township's Heritage Register, which requests that the municipality receive 60 days' notice prior to demolition.

Back in July, owners of the property submitted zoning and Official Plan amendments to allow for a 32-unit townhouse development.

The proponents note they would remove the house to facilitate their project, but to date, a demolition permit has not been received. Some of the contention lies in the value of the home occupied by the Hollingshead and Coburn families. An expert hired by the applicant said there's no merit in designating the property under the Ontario Heritage Act, but there is merit in commemorating the site with a plaque.

King's Heritage Advisory Committee held a special meeting Nov. 23 regarding the home. The current proposal presents a threat to the building and the committee believe the house has significant cultural and heritage value.

Staff noted there is a 30-day appeal period and if opposed, it may be referred to the Conservation Review Board.

"Designation of this property would ensure the protection of a community landmark, a unique architectural structure and the preservation of the histories of important contributions made by its residents to the Schomberg and King Township communities," the staff report noted.

Council's decision came as good news to Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT).

"CCKT is delighted that the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC), Township staff and now, a unanimous council, agree that Marg Coburn's century home at 66 Main Street is worthy of protection under the Heritage Act in its strongest form. The house met all three tests for protection under Section 29, even though any one would have been sufficient: Physical/Design Value, Historical/Associative Value, and Contextual Value," said Greg Locke, chair of CCKT.

"In our opinion, a failure to designate a home of his nature would be to put any other home in King Township subject to risk of demolition in future.

"This home is a 'gateway' feature to our historic village. Its removal would leave a permanent scar on our community's legacy."

Locke added this developer will have to work with planning staff to revise his application.

"We might suggest he work with the community members most concerned with his plan. He could make this a meaningful development.

"As for the Hollingshead/Coburn house, the developer has choices. He may consider to preserve the home while making it a sustainable asset to the community."

King Ridge Developments plans to appeal King's zoning bylaw with regards to their proposal, on the grounds of a non-decision by council within an allotted time period (120 days).