

Few homes added to heritage registry

By Mark Pavilons

Adding a handful of homes on Keele Street to King Township's Heritage Register met with mediocre success recently.

Township staff and heritage committee members recommended 13 properties along Keele in King City, given their significance in the community. After opposition from homeowners, only five were added to the Register.

Despite continual efforts by staff and councillors to assure homeowners the Register has no negative impacts, property owners remain retiscent and adamant about it.

Barbara McClelland appeared before council, said the committee failed to provide sufficient reasons to warrant its inclusion in the Register. "We know of no historic significance," she said, adding placing the property on the Register may adversely affect their ability to seek mortgage financing in the future.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer, who's been a diehard supporter of the Register and the work of the committee, said all of the properties met certain criteria. She said the committee held a well attended open house to give residents an opportunity to understand the Register and to ask questions.

She said these properties are all important to the streetscape and look along Keele Street.

Some residents believe it's too late to resurrect the charm of Keele by maintaining a historic feel.

"I don't think all is lost," Schaefer said. "It's important we take steps to preserve the streetscape of Keele Street."

She reminded her council colleagues that planning policies and provincial directives do point to preserving our heritage.

"Clearly, property owners have different views on it," Schaefer added. "No one else but us is paying attention" to the community's aesthetics.

The Ontario Heritage Act gives municipalities the responsibility for identifying, evaluating and conserving heritage properties.

Provincial policy statement says: "... built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved where they have been determined to have cultural heritage value or interest for the important contribution they make to our understanding of the history of a place, an event or a people."

The main tool municipalities have is the Heritage Register. Basically, adding a property to the list means the owners have to give 60 days' notice of demolition to the council, which gives the municipality time to decide whether a house should be saved.

King's heritage committee evaluates properties under provincial regulations.

King began its work plan to review and evaluate more than 500 properties on the built heritage inventory back in 2012. "Since then, 174 properties have been reviewed by the Committee of the Whole, and 137 properties have been added to the Register. To date, 150 properties are on the Register, as well as 34 properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

The staff report noted a total of 75 properties were considered within King City and surrounding area, and some 49 are being considered. Staff will hold information sessions throughout the year.