

Carlington North Veterans' Housing Heritage Study As We Heard It Report

Online Survey: September 7, 2021 – October 19, 2021

Public Meeting: October 7, 2021

Given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, public consultation was conducted digitally. Area residents, including all property owners, were mailed a letter dated September 9, 2021 inviting them to view project background information at ottawa.ca/vetshousing and complete an online survey, open from September 7, 2021 to October 19, 2021. The letter also contained an invitation to participate in a public information meeting, which was held over Zoom on October 7, 2021 and hosted by the City's Planning, Infrastructure and Economic Development Department with a welcome address by Councillor Brockington. At the meeting, Heritage Planning staff presented current research findings and a summary of project next steps, then took questions from attendees.

Approximately 30 people attended the October 7, 2021 public meeting, which included a question period with attendees and Heritage Planning staff. The following summarizes questions asked by those in attendance:

- Several attendees expressed concern and sought clarity related to potential limitations to property alterations imposed by heritage conservation tools such as listing on the City of Ottawa's municipal heritage register or designation under Part IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act.
- Multiple attendees expressed concern that designation under Part IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act would be inappropriate for the area, given the pervasiveness of additions and alterations to the houses.
- Multiple attendees expressed interest in further participation in the project and offered to provide historical information, photos, and other info.
- Several attendees requested additional public consultation before staff recommendations for heritage conservation strategies in Carlington North are presented to the City of Ottawa Built Heritage Subcommittee.

67 responses to the online survey were received. A selection of responses to the online survey questions are provided below (some responses have been edited for length and/or clarity):

1. How would you describe the veterans' housing subdivisions? What makes them special or notable?

(56 responses provided positive descriptions, 7 responses did not answer or provided neutral descriptions, 4 responses suggested that the subdivisions are not significant.)

- *I would describe the Carlington North Veterans Housing subdivision as a unique and cohesive place - one with a strong sense of community. It is special because although the houses have evolved over time, the character and density of the neighbourhood has remained intact. There is strong orientation of houses toward the streets, and the mature trees create a wonderful sense of scale relative to the size of the houses. It is pedestrian friendly and central to several important shopping and dining hubs, and yet next door to the biggest green space in the city: the Experimental Farm. I have not been in another Ottawa neighbourhood that has a similar sense of place.*
- *Not applicable. You're doing this study too late because the majority of the homes have already been altered.*
- *These houses are not special. There are thousands of these types of homes across the country.*
- *These homes are special because they hold people's history. They were made for vets coming home from WWII. Families grew up dealing with PTSD and substance use, but they still managed to form a community to support each other.*
- *The 'Vets' was a special place when I was growing up. Everyone had the same status socially, and the kids were all welcome in anyone's home. When my family moved there in 1946, there was wooden sidewalks and dirt roads.*
- *The houses were intended to provide low-income housing for veterans. They were built cheaply and not meant to have long life cycles.*
- *I love that all the houses started out as either the 1.5-storey, or bungalow models. Over the years, alterations have been made, but the integrity of the original models has been retained. The streets are well designed, they are wide enough for traffic, and there are crescents for children to safely play. Despite the houses being erected quickly, they are well built, with quality materials that last.*
- *Many current owners have family ties to the original owners.*
- *There is nothing special about the veterans' housing subdivision. They are all tiny homes that should be re-developed.*

- *They are small, well-built houses that reflect the way people lived at the time. I like that you can go across Canada and find one of these subdivisions and it looks just the same as ours.*

2. Are there any buildings, places, or views in the veterans' homes area which you believe are important?

(49 respondents felt that there were areas of importance, 12 respondents did not answer or provided neutral responses, and 6 respondents felt that there were not areas of importance.)

- *The significance of the military street names.*
- *The multiple small parks and tree-lined streets. The consistent height of the houses provides for a lot of natural light, and open sight lines.*
- *The little house that used to be a train house on the corner of Anna and Crerar*
- *The ticket house at the corner of Anna and Crerar.*
- *At the corner of Anna and Tunis there is a home that I believe belonged to the stationmaster when the area had a rail yard that ran through it. It's such an interesting shape and size that it stands out.*
- *The Vets Kids placed a Memorial Bench at Harrold Place Park. The park was a special place where all of us gathered to swim in the summer.*
- *No; these houses were meant to be temporary. Document them through pictures.*
- *I think the general feel of the area is more important than any particular location.*
- *The boulevard on Harrold Place, and the grassy areas on other streets like Crerar. These are unique streetscape features that are not found in other neighbourhoods.*
- *W. E. Gowling Public School.*
- *The mature trees.*
- *The proximity to the Experimental Farm.*

3. Do you have a nickname for houses in the area?

(49 responses provided names, 18 responses did not answer or did not suggest other names).

- *Vets Homes.*

- *Wartime Homes.*
- *Happy Valley.*
- *The Vets.*
- *Lunch Box Houses.*
- *Strawberry Box Homes.*
- *Monopoly Houses.*
- *Cape Cod Style homes.*
- *A-frames .*
- *Victory Houses.*

4. How would you describe the veterans' houses in Carlington North? For example, what is the general shape and size of the houses and lots? What materials are they made out of? Are additions common?

(38 responses described additions as common and positive, 27 responses provided neutral descriptions.)

- *Additions are very common. The size of these tiny homes isn't realistic long-term. Most homes have needed updating over the years, and they no longer have their original materials. Our home has had many materials ripped out that were not to code.*
- *They are humble family homes that many families have added to and refurbished over time. You don't find this type of house or lot in other areas in Ottawa. The lots are generous compared to the size of the houses. They are wooden built structures, and you can see that many people have built rear extensions as well as small additions to the upstairs rooms. Despite the additions, nearly all the homes are still clearly recognizable as the traditional 'lunchbox house.'*
- *The houses were spare but functional.*
- *The houses remain similar, but they have evolved in interesting ways over the past 75 years to accommodate how people have lived in them. This has created a lively streetscape. The houses are mostly 1 and 1.5-storeys, but additions are common. They are all wood framed with various siding treatments.*
- *I have always referred to my home as 'solid.' The houses have good bones that make them worthy of maintaining, improving, and expanding. The construction was simple and straightforward. The variety of lots, especially on the curved portions of the streets, disrupts the 'cookie cutter' look common to other subdivisions.*

5. Do you know of any past events or traditions in the veterans' housing area that are notable or significant?

(25 responses suggested past events or traditions, 42 responses did not answer or did not list events or traditions.)

- *The Victoria Day weekend plant sale at Harrold Place Park.*
- *These tiny houses commonly had whole families living in them [with several children]. Every month or so there would be huge block parties and all the neighbourhood kids would go to one of the houses to be looked after. It seems like it was truly a wonderful and tight-knit community back in the day.*
- *Some of the vets, or their descendants, would come to W.E Gowling on Remembrance Day to speak to the children.*
- *There used to be an annual parade which would weave up and down the streets of Carlington. It ended at Harold Place Park where we could meet veterans who still lived in the neighbourhood*
- *The success of the Carlington Summit newspaper is a standout tribute to the spirit of the neighbourhood.*
- *It was common for the original veteran owners to remain in these homes until they died, at which point their children would inherit and also reside at the same residence their entire lives. This is a unique custom for a subdivision in the city, and it is only now changing with the current generation.*

6. Please share a memory in the veterans housing area that you think should be captured as part of its history.

(21 responses provided memories or stories, 46 responses did not provide a response.)

- *When we moved into our home, we did some renovations. When we pulled down the ceiling in the kitchen, we found an old photo negative of a military man in uniform and his partner. We know nothing about the family, but it would be nice to know their names and maybe be able to get plaques done in remembrance of the original families.*
- *There are too many memories to list. We have an active Vets Neighborhood Kids Facebook group and several reunions have been held.*
- *Many of us found railway ties when landscaping. To that end, it would be interesting to have some markers about the previous use of the land before the veterans housing was built. It would also be nice to have more readily available information about the persons whose names adorn some of our streets. Finally, displays of photos of the original house on our properties would be very*

interesting, maybe with information about the service member that was the original owner?

- *My father, who grew up in Ottawa, told me that after we bought our Vets house that he remembered helping a few friends to build their own houses in the area.*

7. Do you have information about any specific house in the area? Please include the street name and number, if known.

(36 responses provided information, and 31 responses did not provide an answer).

- *Our house was lived in by its first owners. They moved in 1975, a year after the father died. The next people to own it added a second story to the house and rearranged the main floor. They left the paneling they found in the basement, and it was still there when we bought it from the third owner in 2006. I've been in touch with the second owner and a daughter of the first owner.*
- *Our house was originally owned by someone who worked at the Experimental Farm. Many of the plants, and in particular the rose bushes, are heritage from their work there.*
- *We bought our house 5 years ago. It was renovated several times over the past 25 years, including removing walls and finishing the basement. While the windows and doors have been updated, the original insulation is still in the walls and does not provide good R-value. [A neighbouring house] was owned by [Rosa] for at least 50 years and sold 2 years ago. The entire interior of the home was destroyed by fire in 2010 and completely remodeled.*
- *The house we currently reside in has only had two owners in its entire life. It has also survived a house fire, and still manages to stand to date.*
- *Our house was owned briefly by one vet family for a short time after the war who then sold it to another veteran. That family owned the house for more than 50 years and had 6 kids here, which is amazing considering that - at that time - it was a 2-bedroom house with no addition.*

8. Do you have a personal connection to this house? Example: Are you the current owner or a former occupant?

(45 respondents were current owners of a house in Carlington North, 16 respondents did not provide an answer, 4 respondents were not current owners or were past owners).

9. Do you know the names of any early tenants or owners?

(28 responses provided information, and 37 responses did not provide information).

10. Do you have other information about early occupants or about the history of the house? For example, which house plan was built? Did the original owner buy the house? When? What family members lived here? Details about armed forces service and later career information would be helpful if available.

(21 responses provided information, 44 responses did not provide an answer).

- *This study is too little, too late. In order to properly document the history of the neighbourhood, this study should have been conducted a decade or two ago when more of the original owners were still around.*
- *We lived in a 1.5-storey house. My father was in the navy, and upon returning from the war he applied to get a house. My brother remembers when our father got the call that there was a unit available, but we had to move-in immediately. It was Halloween, 1946. I still have my father's navy records.*
- *My parents were original occupants [of a veterans house] and they lived there for 20 years with myself, and later two brothers. My dad remained with the army for 10 years, and then went on to work for many years at the DVA.*

12. Do you recall any major renovations to the house? Why were the renovations needed?

(39 responses answered yes, 19 responses did not provide an answer, 7 responses answered no).

- *Essentially, my house was completely renovated prior to purchase. A second storey was added, and the interior layout was completely changed. The original houses are too small to be desirable, and many of them need substantial renovations.*
- *Renovations are needed. These are old homes that are very tiny. The materials used in the 1940s do not meet current building codes: the sewer pipes, electrical wires, outlets, and foundations are all out of date. The majority of the homes in this area have had major renovations.*
- *We've replaced almost everything but the original wood and concrete.*
- *Our house looks original, although we have had to repair the foundation and replace the roof with a steel one. We also added a second bathroom in the basement, updated the kitchen, and finished the basement. After 70 years, these houses need repairs and updates to ensure they are viable for the current housing market.*

- *These houses were built cheaply, and they are now at the end of their life cycles.*
- *Our house had no major renovations. Its interior is still the same as it was in the 1980s, with its original pine kitchen cabinets and an old wood stove. The previous owners updated the pipes, electrical and insulation.*
- *I have made major renovations (the first since the house was built) over the past 18 years. The renovations were designed to create more space, develop a better connection to the backyard, and to bring the house up to modern standards and amenities.*
- *I have a picture of our bungalow as it was in the early 1980s, and it is very little altered from the original (except for the addition of a garage). Streetlights had just been installed. We extended the house to provide a larger living/dining area.*

14. Is there anything else you would like to share about the veterans' subdivisions in Carlington North?

(29 responses provided information regarding the study area, 27 responses did not answer, and 9 responses expressed concern regarding potential study outcomes or to the survey in general).

- *I don't agree with this area becoming a heritage district.*
- *This is an area where the majority of the homes have been overhauled, and therefore they no longer have structural heritage value. The neighbourhood would benefit more from receiving real sidewalks than from receiving heritage status.*
- *I think the veterans' subdivisions should be designated heritage to ensure renovations are in keeping with the established neighbourhood character. There are many successful examples of additions where the original architecture design remains evident.*
- *The area is beautiful, and actions to preserve its beauty and heritage may be useful. However, most of the houses are not actually that nice. They were cheap wartime housing. As such, I do not think most of the buildings would benefit from heritage status, nor would heritage protection for most houses be of benefit to the community. Most of the houses already have additions and it would be unfair and unhelpful if new rules prevented additional additions or updates.*
- *I encourage documenting the history of the properties. It is an opportunity to show how houses evolve over generations.*

- *I hope that there will be preventative measures against infill in this area. On my street, there are houses that absolutely do not fit in style-wise and are more appropriate to the style of the infill in Westborough. I would be very disappointed if these original, lovely houses were routinely destroyed and replaced by new structures.*
- *These homes should be saved and listed as historic. Not only because they are a part of history, but because their proximity to the city and their size means they are affordable options for first-time home buyers looking to live near downtown.*
- *This area could benefit from restricted development to maintain its character but allow for improvements and the changing needs of today's residents.*
- *Personally, I'd like to see the character of these neighborhoods retained by increasing setback restrictions. I am also concerned that all the mature trees are going to die out at the same time.*
- *I am concerned about frequent tear downs of the houses and their replacement with "monster homes" on the generous sized lots. The area needs to be protected.*
- *There is nothing like the veterans' housing in Ottawa.*

Next Steps:

City staff will consider all responses and feedback received. Heritage staff will complete research on the history and development of the Carlington North Veterans' Housing area and will conduct a heritage analysis of the study area. Once complete, staff will draft recommendations that may include future studies or conservation approaches, based on the results of staff's analysis, feedback and policy research.

City staff plan to share draft recommendations with area residents and stakeholders in early 2022. City staff will notify property owners with any updates or changes that have the potential to impact individual properties.

For more information about the heritage study or to share information with us, please visit ottawa.ca/vetshousing or contact the project team:

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