

Excerpt of Veterans' Housing Character Area: Guidelines and Historic Context

City of Ottawa

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1.0 Boundary

The character area is generally the area bounded by Carling Avenue to the north, Fisher Avenue to the east, General and Marshall Avenue to the south and Merivale Road to the west. The area is primarily residential and consists mostly of houses built by Wartime Housing Limited following the Second World War.

The character area boundary is based on the 1946 and 1947 subdivision plan boundary.



Figure 1. Map of the Veterans' Housing Character Area

2.0 Historical context

Background

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. In Ottawa, two subdivisions were built by Wartime Housing Limited in Carlington North.

The sections below provide a high level timeline of the development of the neighbourhood and a description of its heritage character and values.

Key dates

Several key dates are 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 incorporates as a Crown company 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 erection 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 Carling Avenue. The first tenants are T. E. Bishop and Maria Bishop, and 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 erection 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.

Description of heritage character

The character of the Veterans' Housing Character Area is described through built features and design elements associated with Wartime Housing Limited and 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. These characteristics are further defined under Guidelines in Section 5.0.

The Veterans' Housing Character Area is comprised of two subdivisions planned by Wartime Housing Limited, referred to as Veterans' Housing Project No. 1 and Veterans' Housing Project No. 2. These subdivisions are generally bound by Carling Avenue to the north, Fisher Avenue to the east, General and Marshall Avenues to the south and Merivale Road to the west.

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

The first subdivision of 200 rental houses was erected 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.

The subdivision lands were once the home 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 edge of the city, at the Ottawa-Nepean boundary line. The lumber yard was active

into the 1940s when the wartime demand for lumber cleared out its supply. The lumber yard was acquired by the Crown for Wartime Housing Limited.

Wartime Housing Limited, a federal Crown corporation, rapidly built and managed houses during a nation-wide housing shortage during and immediately 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.

Employees of Wartime Housing Limited laid out the streets and arranged the groupings of houses with economy and efficiency. 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. Four hundred one-and-one-half-storey houses were constructed according to familiar Wartime Housing Limited standard plans. Commemorative street names were chosen to reflect the military heritage of the subdivisions including Admiral Avenue, Veterans Avenue and General Avenue.

The subdivisions in the Veterans' Housing Character Area were built from 1945 to 1947, reflecting the company's transition from wartime to peacetime. The tenants in Ottawa's subdivisions were not factory workers - 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 includes war brides and coincides with a large increase in births, marking the start of Canada's baby boom. 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.

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.

Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (later known as Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) took over operations from Wartime Housing Limited in 1947 and continued managing the rental houses. The houses were made available for private ownership in 1951. Many tenants purchased their homes.

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. Now iconic, the one-and-one-half-storey designs are simple, economical buildings that lend themselves well to innovation.

Despite changes since its development, the Veterans' Housing Character Area is an important place that reminds us of the nation-wide housing shortage during and immediately following the Second World War. The influx of returning soldiers and overcrowded urban conditions lead to the rapid construction of hundreds of rental homes in Ottawa. These subdivisions were built in direct response to the housing crisis and 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. These subdivisions survive as legacies of the war and as markers in the growth and development of postwar Ottawa.

3.0 Management Guidelines

The guidelines in this section are intended to encourage the conservation of houses within the character area and also 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 planning applications in the character area.

The guidelines provide high level guidance on conservation issues within the character area and should be considered in concert 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.

Conservation and Technical Guidance

- I. The restoration and conservation of the historic veterans' houses in the character area is strongly encouraged.
- II. Property owners interested in restoring veterans' houses can contact City of Ottawa Heritage Planning Staff for assistance.

- III. 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.

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.

General guidelines

Veterans' houses in the character area are generally characterized by the following common attributes:

- 1 to 1 ½ storey height;
 - side gable built form;
 - street oriented primary entrances;
 - simple front façade fenestration patterns;
 - uniform cladding materials;
 - consistent relationship to the street;
 - near grade ground floors with entrances typically no more than 5 steps above grade.
- I. The above noted characteristics should be retained where existing and be reflected in the design of additions and new construction.
 - II. Front entrances should face the street, be clearly visible from the street, and be proportioned to not visually dominate the front façade.
 - III. Building entrances and ground floor heights should be built as close to grade as possible. Where this cannot be achieved, front entrances should be lowered, and additional stairs internalized.
 - IV. Front façade fenestration patterns should be simple, balanced, and not dominate the primary front façade.
 - V. New development should incorporate green front yards and reflect the established spatial relationship with the street.

- VI. New low-rise development is encouraged to reflect the character of the area through the use of rectilinear forms and a simple material palette.

Additions

- I. Additions should maintain the common attributes identified in Section 5.3 above, where existing;
- 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. Where they are visible from the street, the roof form, size, and pitch of new dormer windows should be compatible with the character of the street.

New construction

- I. New single detached dwellings should be built to approximately the same front yard setback as the lot's original dwelling. Where not possible, the setback of new buildings should align approximately with the average of the abutting lots' front yard setback abutting the street;
- II. New single-detached dwellings are encouraged to reflect the height, scale and massing of existing dwellings in the character area.
- III. New ground-oriented units are encouraged to include a gable roof to reflect the historic character of the area.
- IV. New semi detached, duplex, and triplex buildings are encouraged to be designed to read as single detached dwellings from the street.
- V. When designing a new low rise apartment building give consideration to wartime housing precedents for apartment buildings.
- VI. 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.

Garages and accessory buildings

- I. Attached garages are strongly discouraged. Where attached garages are proposed, their entrances should not be oriented towards the street.
- II. Accessory buildings, coach houses and detached garages should be located in the rear yard.

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 of soft landscaped front yards and side yards is strongly encouraged.
- IV. The restoration of soft landscaping in front and side yards is encouraged.
- V. Fencing, hedges, and other boundary demarcations are discouraged in front yards.
- VI. The existing pattern of vehicle parking and driveways should be maintained.
- VII. The creation of parking spaces in front yards is strongly discouraged.
- VIII. 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.

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.

4.0 Contact

For more information, please contact:

Heritage Planning

heritage@ottawa.ca

613-580-2463

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