

Staff Report



To	City Council
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Environment
Date	Wednesday, November 13, 2024
Subject	37 Christie Lane: Notice of Intention to Designate

Recommendation

1. That the City Clerk be authorized to publish and serve notice of intention to designate 37 Christie Lane pursuant to Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.
 2. That the designation bylaw be brought before Council for approval if no objections are received within the thirty (30) day objection period.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to recommend that Council publish its intention to designate 37 Christie Lane pursuant to Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The cultural heritage significance and heritage attributes of the property are described in this report.

Key Findings

The glass conservatory at 37 Christie Lane is listed as a non-designated built heritage resource on the City of Guelph’s Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties under Part IV, Section 27 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The building is one of the few remaining pagoda-style conservatories in North America.

A property may be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act if it meets at two or more of the criteria used to determine cultural heritage value or interest as set out in Ontario Regulation 9/06 (as amended by Ontario Regulation 569/22; see Attachment-4).

Heritage planning staff, in consultation with Heritage Guelph, have completed a [Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report and Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest](#). Staff have determined that the property meets eight of the nine criteria used to determine cultural heritage value according to Ontario Regulation 9/06 (as amended by O. Reg 569/22) under the Ontario Heritage Act. Therefore, the property merits individual heritage designation under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The key findings and recommendations of this report align with 2024-2027 Strategic Plan priority 6.1.4 to conserve our cultural heritage resources.

Future Guelph Theme

City Building

Future Guelph Objectives

City Building: Grow and care for our community space and places

Financial Implications

None.

Report

Location

37 Christie Lane is located on the University of Guelph campus, at the end of Christie Lane. The legal description is GUELPH CON 1 DIV G PT LOTS 3 TO 9 CON 2 DIV G PT LOTS 6 TO 9 PLAN 378 LOT 8 PT LOTS 5 TO 7; City of Guelph.

Historical Background

Conservatories, also known as greenhouses, orangeries, or hothouses, have been used for thousands of years as a means of providing warmth to extend the growing season of crops, or to provide protection to tropical plants in northern climates. The modern conservatory building type emerged in the sixteenth century as citrus plants gained popularity in Northwestern European horticulture. Orangeries, as they were called, were the preserve of the very wealthy, who regarded them as a mark of their elevated social status.

In the early nineteenth century, increased public interest in horticulture coincided with industrial developments in the manufacture of glass and iron that dramatically lowered the cost of conservatory construction, and led to the spread of more elaborate and large-scale structures. While most eighteenth-century conservatories were shaped like a shed or lean-to, horticulturist Sir George Mackenzie proposed in 1815 a form that was one-fourth of a sphere, or a semi-dome, supported by a wall. By 1851, the popularity of the conservatory was cemented by the construction of the Crystal Palace for the Great Exhibition at Sydenham in England. Designed by gardener and architect Joseph Paxton, the large structure was a sensation, and greatly popularized the conservatory across Europe and North America in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The [Rutherford Conservatory](#), as it is now known, was constructed in 1931 by Lord and Burnham Company, North America's premier builders and designers of glass conservatories in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Founded in 1872 by Frederick Lord and his son-in-law Addison Burnham, the company grew to be the most prolific glasshouse manufacturer in North America. Famous works by the company include the 1877 Conservatory of Flowers in San Francisco and the 1903 New York Botanical Gardens Conservatory. In the 1920s, a Canadian branch of the firm, the Lord & Burnham Company Ltd, was established in St. Catharines, Ontario to serve the Canadian market.

In the early 1930's, the Ontario Agricultural College retained Lord and Burnham Co. Ltd. to design and build an ornate conservatory to function as a showpiece and formal entrance to the greenhouse complex used by the Department of Horticultural Science, housed in what is now the Hutt Building. Completed in 1931, the structure expresses the orientalism typical in conservatory design of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, drawing influence primarily from Middle Eastern and South Asian architecture with its four centered ogee arches and faceted dome, topped by a cupola. Constructed of wrought iron and cypress wood, the structure sits on a stone dwarf-wall and contains limestone raised garden beds composed of stone blocks salvaged from original Ontario Agricultural College barns. According to the University of Guelph, the conservatory is one of the few remaining pagoda-like glass and cypress wood structures remaining in North America (University of Guelph, [1998](#), [1999](#)).

In the early 1990s, the conservatory had fallen into disrepair and was threatened by demolition. In 1998, a group of alumni, faculty, students, and staff worked together to raise funds for the restoration of the conservatory. A gift of \$256,000 from Don Rutherford, an Ontario Agricultural College alumnus, represented the funding required to restore the conservatory. According to Rutherford, once fully restored to its previous glory, the conservatory greenhouse would be an ideal greeting and welcome spot for visitors and newcomers to the University, as well as old friends renewing their acquaintance (University of Guelph, 1998). Restoration and relocation work was conducted in 1998-1999, and the renamed Rutherford Conservatory opened its doors on June 19. The restored conservatory was surrounded by six thematic gardens: spring, summer, fall, winter, water, and woodland.

Architectural Description

The Rutherford Conservatory is a glass conservatory with a square footprint and faceted dome roof topped with a cupola. A front-gabled entryway, relocated from the north to the south elevation of the conservatory during restoration in the 1990s, protrudes from the south elevation. A stone dwarf wall runs along the perimeter of the building. The frame of the building is constructed of cypress wood with metal supports, with glazed walls and roof throughout. Transom windows run the length of the walls. Double doors on the east elevation exit into a gated garden with a pond. The floor is tiled with terra cotta, and the raised beds on the interior are constructed from limestone salvaged from demolished Ontario Agricultural College barns.

Statement of Significance

The conservatory at 37 Christie Lane is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act because it meets eight of the nine prescribed criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest, according to Ontario Regulation 9/06 as amended by 569/22. The subject building at 37 Christie Lane has design and physical value, historical and associative value, and contextual value.

Design/Physical Value

The subject property meets criterion 1 because it is a rare and unique example of a glass conservatory in the City of Guelph. The conservatory is the last of its type in the City and is one of the last pagoda style conservatories in North America.

The subject property meets criterion 2 because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship in its cypress wood, glass, and metal construction.

Historical/Associative Value

The subject property meets criterion 4 because it has direct associations with the Ontario Agricultural College and the history of horticulture in the Province of Ontario. When constructed in 1931, the Conservatory functioned as the formal entrance to the Ontario Agricultural College's horticultural greenhouses.

The subject property meets criterion 5 because it yields information that contributes to an understanding of the Guelph student and faculty community. The Conservatory has historically functioned not only as a working greenhouse, but as a meeting place for students and faculty.

The subject property meets criterion 6 because it demonstrates the work of Lord and Burnham Ltd., significant builders of greenhouses and conservatories in nineteenth and twentieth-century North America.

Contextual Value

The subject property meets criterion 7 because it is important in defining the character of the University of Guelph botanical gardens, which were designed around the Conservatory.

The subject property meets criterion 8 because it is physically, functionally, visually, and historically linked to the University of Guelph botanical gardens, a landscape designed around the conservatory building. The Conservatory is historically linked to the Hutt Building, formerly the Horticulture Building, which is located to the north of the conservatory.

The subject property meets criterion 9 because it is a landmark. The Conservatory occupies a location of visual prominence, and is well known amongst students, staff, faculty, alumni, and citizens of Guelph.

Heritage Attributes

The following elements of the property at 37 Christie Lane should be considered as heritage attributes in a designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act:

- The location of the Conservatory within the designed landscape of the botanical gardens
- The scale, form, and massing of the single-storey structure
- The steel framing
- The walls, including wood, steel, and glass material
- The cyprus wood mullions and rafters
- The fenestration, with wood-framed windows, and transoms
- The iconic 4-sided glazed dome with curved trusses
- The square cupola, including the finial
- The vestibule, including the decorative arched window frame above the door

Consultations and Engagement

At the [July 8, 2024 meeting of Heritage Guelph](#), the Committee passed the following motion:

THAT the comments provided by Heritage Guelph members on the '37 Christie Lane: Cultural Heritage Evaluation Report' be provided to staff and Council for their consideration:

- More detail should be added to the Heritage attributes list
- Advise that staff continue to work with the University on the conservation of the Rutherford Conservatory

THAT the committee request that staff return to Heritage Guelph in September with an updated list of heritage attributes

At the [September 9, 2024 meeting of Heritage Guelph](#), the Committee passed the following motion:

THAT Heritage Guelph supports the heritage attributes identified for 37 Christie Lane as outlined in the staff report dated September 9, 2024; and

THAT Heritage Guelph recommends that City Council give notice of its intention to designate 37 Christie Lane pursuant to Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act

Heritage planning has met with representatives of the University on multiple occasions to discuss the proposed designation and potential for conservation of this built heritage resource.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Property Location

Attachment-2 Historical Photographs and Documents

Attachment-3 Current Photographs

Attachment-4 Ontario Regulation 9-06 Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

Departmental Approval

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