

7 November 2024

To: Mayor Guthrie and Council members:

I have read the draft OR HCD Plan & Guidelines with alarm. The document reads less as a statement of heritage protection and conservancy than a blueprint for future development.

To quote: *“OR HCD policies encourage the adaptive re-use of existing built heritage attributes and landscape heritage attributes as mixed land uses and allow for intensification and residential development where deemed appropriate by the City.”*

As I see it, the only difference between the draft OR HCD Draft Plan and the City’s GID Secondary Plan is the designation of a small part of the OR Heritage Conservation District as “Core Conservation Heritage Landscape”. The rest of the area in both plans is simply designated “Adaptive Re-use” or “Adaptive Re-use (with Residential)”; and “Significant Natural Areas and Natural Areas.”

*Adaptive re-use* allows for a wide range of mixed land use that includes commercial, office, light industrial, institutional and residential. The main restrictions on any such development seem to be physical and visual coherence. To my mind adaptations that are “sympathetic to” and “compatible with” don’t cut it. The emphasis here should be on *conservation, rehabilitation, restoration and maintenance*.

*Significant Natural Areas and Natural Areas* are mere descriptions and are treated in the text without any vigorous protection statements.

I respectfully request that Council direct WSP to re-write its draft plan to:

1. Extend the HCL Core designation (Figure 9, Plate 5, p. 38) to include ALL lands and features within the OR HCD boundary.
2. Exclude the following adaptive re-uses from the plan: commercial, office, light industrial, residential and institutional.
3. Include only uses that are *strongly consistent with and supportive of conserving the historical, cultural and natural character of the area in question*. Specific ideas:
  - a public education centre focusing on the history, evolution and natural setting of the OR;
  - an indigenous art restoration and contemporary indigenous art centre;
  - dedicated parkland in existing green areas.

If the foregoing usage types can’t be accommodated under adaptive re-use, then I would ask that zoning be changed to embrace these suggestions.

4. Contain *unambiguous* statements of maintenance and preservation of OR HCD natural areas AS NATURAL AREAS, protected from other land uses.

5. Contain *unambiguous* statements of preservation, restoration and maintenance of built features, including stone walls, ponds, the century-old trestle bridge and McQuillan's bow bridge.

***I request these changes to the WSP draft plan because the wording is vitally important if the true intent of heritage conservancy of the subject terrain is to be met.***

Finally I would like clarification from Council on the projected ownership of the OR land. It is currently provincially owned, so how can it be included in the City's GID unless the City intends at some point to acquire the land?

Yours Sincerely,  
Michelle Wan  
Concerned Guelph resident

To Mayor Guthrie and Council members:

I recently sent a letter asking Council to direct WSP to produce a more robust, more protective OR Heritage Conservation District Plan. I am now writing with respect to a closely related issue: Guelph's National Urban Park Proposal, an initiative that I strongly support. The Proposal and a strong HCD Plan are mutually supportive; they share complementary goals and visions that I feel would greatly benefit the citizens of Guelph; and it is logical and timely that the two should be considered in conjunction with one another. The Urban Park Proposal has been queued for a long time. Just as Council intends to move ahead with the HCD Plan, I ask Council to give its support to the Guelph National Urban Park initiative without further delay.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Wan  
Concerned Guelph resident