

SPEAKING NOTES -- HERITAGE MEETING, APRIL 15/04

Good evening, my name is Patrick Howe and I am president of the North Rosedale Ratepayers Association. On behalf of all NRRA directors, I would like to welcome each of you to this meeting tonight.

We should have advised everyone in our notice to wear hard hats as the Church sanctuary is undergoing a major renovation. In planning this renovation, the Church leadership gave a lot of thought to its use for public gatherings. You'll be happy to know that, when completed, the new Church sanctuary will feature – among other things - - a large and multi-functional stage that will be particular suitable and – I predict -- well used for many future public meetings like this one. That, by the way, is an apology for having to use this small room for our meeting tonight.

The NRRA has called this special public meeting to provide a forum for our community to discuss the proposal put forward by your residents' association to designate North Rosedale as a heritage district.

Some background will help establish the context for tonight's meeting. Designating neighborhoods as heritage districts is a recent phenomenon, but one that is growing in popularity. In the City of Toronto, there are seven neighborhoods now designated as heritage districts with another eight (besides North Rosedale) going through the necessary steps for designation, which requires legislation by the City. Communities with historical designations include South Rosedale, which received its designation last year.

I believe there are three reasons that explain this interest in heritage designations of neighborhoods:

First, many people have a continuing interest in the origins of their communities, as well as in the stories of the early residents -- whether the famous, infamous or the ordinary.

The second reason for heritage designations is the desire on the part of many people for more control over some types of development that are occurring on their streets. For those who think that this proposed heritage designation will end the torrent of renovation now occurring in North Rosedale, or make it onerous to obtain building permits, I can assure you

emphatically that this won't be the case. Even if there is a desire within the NRRRA for this type of restrictive covenant, it just wouldn't make it for a variety of reasons. For one thing, private property rights are well enshrined in our country and any measure that attempts to restrict unduly these principles is destined for failure.

However, there is always a public interest that needs some measure of protection. Among many other protections, we put in place rules that prevent high-rise apartments from being built in inappropriate settings. At times, the measure of the public interest is far from clear and can be arbitrary. At other times, it's easy to argue that there isn't enough protection of the public interest. What is being put forward tonight benefits our collective interest in North Rosedale **without** being the threat of being arbitrary.

As we'll hear from our speakers tonight, most change can and will continue as before, with applicants for building permits receiving their approvals in the normal course and without realizing that there was another invisible step at City Hall. What a heritage designation will do is provide that extra tool for use **only** when it's needed to prevent the

destruction of unique properties. Here in our community, we have a number of single homes on large lots with significant heritage value that we want to keep standing. This has much importance for neighbors on the street, or in the broader context of our community wanting to maintain Toronto as a livable and desirable city.

Two questions are often posed to me and to others. Will a heritage designation in North Rosedale make it difficult for homeowners to improve and upgrade their properties? Will a heritage designation begin a long-term decline in the quality of our buildings, turning North Rosedale into a – I hesitate to use the word – “slum?” The answer, I believe, is no on both counts. The objective is to retain the look and feel of our community.

I explain this to those who ask in this manner: the guidelines are designed to keep the fronts of properties in their original context as much as possible. Owners can make minor or major changes to interior or exterior features behind the fronts of designated properties, as long as they are in keeping with the other, traditional building regulations relating to lot size coverage and building code standards.

Our purpose is to encourage builders of new structures to make them fit within the context of the streetscape. It's sensible for builders to do so because it enhances their product and its salability – it's just that sometimes a builder doesn't realize this and needs to be reminded. The Heritage Designation will help deliver this reminder.

But a heritage designation has its limitations and won't in the end deter someone who is determined and sees no need to compromise. These heritage guidelines will not prevent demolition. They can only delay it and exert some control over what a new building will look like. Although residents, ratepayer associations and City Council can do their utmost to prevent demolition, the fact is that it can only be delayed. Council does not have the authority to prevent demolition if the owner is absolutely determined.

The third reason why there's a growing interest in heritage designations is the value – whether it be personal, community or real dollar value – in preserving elements of our past and neighborhood character. We see in Toronto

the continuation of a very positive trend to preserve, renew and reinvigorate our past.

Take, for example, the Distillery District. The popularity of the this area demonstrates three things:

- The personal value that individuals put on this property because of its huge success as an event venue;
- Its community value because it's creating unstoppable momentum to renew a derelict industrial area, creating among other things a livable, appealing downtown residential community
- And finally, it's building real, economic value for those in the game at the Distillery District.

We don't propose to get North Rosedale into the business of creating a tourism destination with busloads of sightseers peeking into our back yards. My point is more basic: preserving the look and feel of our community, while at the same time avoiding disincentives to renewal and rehabilitation of aging structures, represents something positive that will translate into stable and rising property values.

Our heritage initiative in North Rosedale grew partly from South Rosedale's experience, but evolved fairly quickly into something that is truly unique to our neighborhood. It started with a public meeting in November 2002 when the NRRA received mandate to proceed with a study of our community's heritage.

At that November 2002 public meeting, we detected a significant amount of enthusiasm about the concept of a heritage designation. Over 50 of your friends and neighbors volunteered to gather the information needed about the origins of our community. This included information about early developers and their trials and tribulations; the underlying economic conditions that turned North Rosedale from its early agricultural uses into an upscale residential community (with a golf course along the way!); and something about the first residents who called North Rosedale home.

This information was compiled into a report, which was delivered to every home in North Rosedale. This report took a lot of work on the part of many people and I would like to

thank everyone who participated – you have made a lasting contribution to our community, one that will have an impact for many years. I predict this report will be read thousands of times over the next few decades as people seek to understand how North Rosedale came into being.

I want to make three individual acknowledgements. I first want to acknowledge John Hogarth, who brought leadership to the team effort that allow this report to be created and brings us to where we are today. Second, to Sue Howe, who coordinated the volunteer effort to gather information about each of the more than 900 homes in North Rosedale. This effort involved a lot of time spent in the City's central reference library and with various archival materials to learn about our origins as a community. Third to Guy Upjohn, whose work to photograph the homes in our community and catalogue the information for our web site was a mammoth undertaking and a wonderful contribution.

I want to pay tribute to all who gave money to the project. The cost of the project was about \$50,000 and this was underwritten by the NRRA. Councilor Kyle Rae managed to loosen the purse strings at City Hall for \$25,000 of that

amount. The remainder came from more than 250 people in this community who gave into our appeals for financial support. To me, it says a lot about this community when such a large number of residents provided financial support for this effort. I'd like to extend my personal thanks to Nancy McFaydgan who helped in the fundraising effort.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to E.R.A. Architects who the NRRA retained to guide the heritage study of our community. E.R.A. has become a potent force for preserving heritage structures and districts in Toronto. As well as guiding the South Rosedale study, E.R.A. has played a prominent role in the restoration of the former Eaton Auditorium at College Park, now known as the Carlou. E.R.A. has played an equally prominent role as consulting architect for the restoration of the Distillery District, which has quickly become **the** place to have an event.

North Rosedale was indeed fortunate to be able to retain E.R.A. Their methodology, as well as the architectural information and the broad historical context in the report, were possible only because of the involvement of E.R.A. I

would like to acknowledge Michael McClelland and David Winterton.

The remainder of tonight's program starts with David and Michael who have an interesting visual presentation. They will be followed by a short presentation from Brian Gallagher, Preservation Co-ordinator in the City's Economic Development, Culture & Tourism Department.

Michael Rodger, who is an NRRRA director, has spearheaded the renewal efforts for our website. He'll take you through our website and make all of us familiar with the heritage section as well as what other features are available. Michael, along with the other NRRRA directors, has pursued a vision about the website as a widely used and valuable community resource. We have lots of practical ideas for adding more to the website, so don't be afraid to make any of your own suggestions to Michael.

After Michael, we will then ask Kyle Rae, our Councillor who has been such a great supporter of this effort, to make a few remarks.

And finally, we will have an open forum to discuss the report, share your views, and answer your questions. That will be moderated by John Hogarth.

Based on your views -- and hopefully your support -- the NRRA proposes to request that the City pass a bylaw that would designate North Rosedale as a heritage district.

Now...Michael and David...