

# Residential Character Study

December 2017

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# 1.0 Introduction

The Livable Oakville Plan defines character as “the collective qualities and characteristics that distinguish a particular area or neighbourhood”. It identifies maintaining, protecting and enhancing the character of existing residential areas as an objective of the residential land use policies (S.11.a).

Staff initiated the Residential Character Study in January 2017 to further examine residential character in an Oakville context and better understand the collective qualities and characteristics identified in the official plan definition. Obtaining greater insight into what character means will assist staff in evaluating the existing Livable Oakville Plan policies, design directions and other implementing documents and processes.

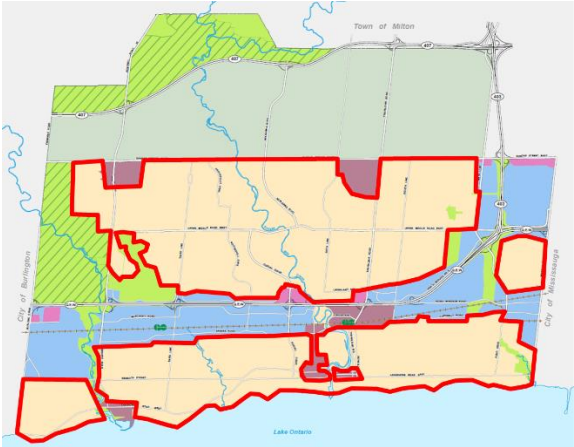
## 1.1 Study Purpose

The purpose of the Residential Character Study is to:

- consider the existing character within the residential areas of the town, south of Dundas Street
- understand what elements and qualities influencing character are important to residents
- review the existing policies and procedures in the context of the character analysis and feedback received
- provide recommendations for improvements to policy, design direction, zoning and other processes based on the findings of the study

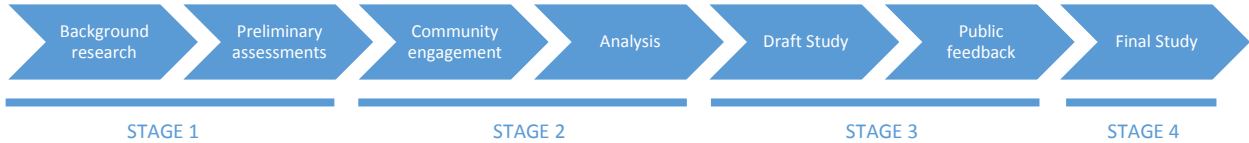
## 1.2 Study Area

The study area includes the town’s residential areas south of Dundas Street, excluding growth areas and heritage conservation districts.



# 1.3 Study Process

The study process is composed of four stages and includes a number of opportunities for public input and feedback. A summary of the work associated with each stage is included below. The draft study is part of Stage 3, and public feedback on this document will inform the preparation of the final version of the study.



### Stage 1 – Preliminary Work

- Review existing policies, design guidelines, processes and past work
- Undertake best practice research, reviewing international and Canadian examples
- Analyze residential building permit, committee of adjustment and site plan application data to identify trends
- Map residential plans of subdivision chronologically to identify the historical pattern of residential development in the town
- Conduct site visits to various residential areas across the town and correlate era of development, trends in the data, and on the ground observations

### Stage 2 – Community Engagement + Analysis

- Create a study webpage with background information
- Lead walking tours with residents’ associations to introduce study, discuss aspects of character and listen to community concerns
- Develop an online survey to gain feedback from residents on the aspects of character they value
- Hold open houses town-wide to introduce the study, discuss findings

- from the background research and analysis and receive feedback from residents on what elements and qualities are important and contribute to the character of their neighbourhood
- Analyze the public feedback received
- Present update to the Livable Oakville Council Sub-Committee with summary of feedback and next steps

### Stage 3 – Draft Study

- Preparation of the draft Residential Character Study document, based on the feedback and analysis compiled in Stage 2
- Public open house to present the study findings and recommendations, and collect feedback on the draft document
- Analysis of the feedback submitted

### Stage 4 – Final Study

- Refinement of the draft Residential Character Study document, based on feedback received in Stage 3
- Preparation and presentation of the final Residential Character Study to Planning and Development Council as an information item

# 2.0 What is Residential Character?

The concept of residential character is based on how elements of the built and natural environment combine to create the context and feeling of an area or neighbourhood.

For some, residential character is reflected in the broad attributes of an area, like proximity to parks and trails, shops, schools or community services. For others, it may be tied to the socioeconomics of an area, or qualities like the presence/absence of traffic.

It can be subjective and mean different things to different people, or in different situations, making it difficult to define.

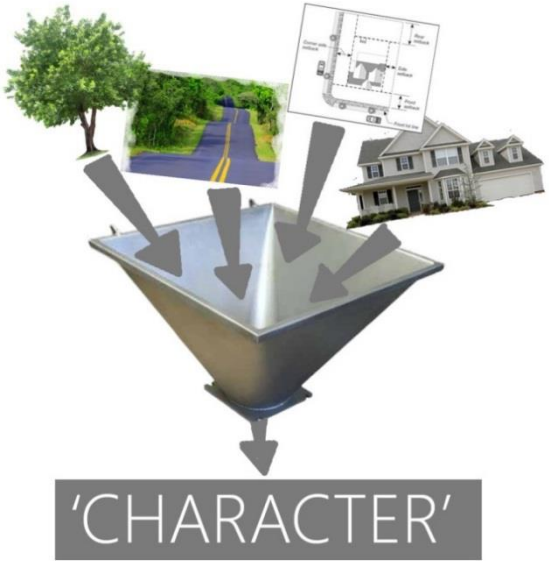
This study examines residential character through a planning lens, in order to identify outcomes that can be influenced through planning policy, design and other processes.

**Residential character is created by the qualitative interplay of built form, vegetation and infrastructure elements, in both the public and private realms.**

It is the combination of these elements working together within a streetscape which creates the character we interpret. Examining residential character through separate and distinct elements alone misses out on the relationships that contribute to the overall look and feel of an area or street.

The following table provides some examples of elements and qualities in the public and private realms:

Public Realm	Private Realm
<i>Street trees</i>	<i>Landscaping</i>
<i>Road pattern</i>	<i>Trees</i>
<i>Road Profile</i>	<i>Building height and shape</i>
<i>Sidewalks</i>	<i>Front yards</i>
<i>Infrastructure (e.g. powerlines)</i>	<i>Distance between buildings</i>
	<i>Fences</i>
	<i>Garages</i>



Residential character is to be interpreted from the street and is not perceived from the backyard.

## 3.0 How is Residential Character Managed?

The Province gives direction to municipalities to manage land and resources. The following provides an overview of provincial, regional and local policy frameworks for residential land uses to understand what tools municipalities use to manage development and subsequently character.

### 3.1 The Planning Act, 2016

The *Planning Act* sets out the legislative “rules” for land use planning in Ontario and describes how land uses may be controlled and by whom. The Act provides municipalities the basis to prepare official plans, zoning by-laws and utilize other planning tools to guide and regulate development.

#### **Zoning By-laws – Subsection 34(1)**

Local municipal councils may pass zoning by-laws regulating the height, bulk, location, size, floor area, spacing, character, use of buildings or structures, minimum frontage and depth of a parcel of land and the proportion of the land a building or structure may occupy (S.34.(1).4).

#### **Site Plan Control - Subsection 41(4)**

Local municipal councils may pass site plan control by-laws to regulate external building design, site and streetscape matters including the character, scale, appearance and design features of buildings (S.41(4)).

### 3.2 The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS), 2014

The PPS is issued by the Province under the *Planning Act* and provides clear policy direction on land use planning.

Municipalities use the PPS to develop their official plans and to guide and inform decisions on other planning matters. The PPS states that long-term economic prosperity should be supported by encouraging a sense of place, by promoting well-designed built form and cultural planning, and by conserving features that help define character (S.1.7.1.d).

### 3.3 Halton Region Official Plan, 2009

The housing policies of the Region’s Official Plan permit “intensification of land use for residential purposes such as infill, redevelopment, and conversion of existing structures provided that the physical character of existing neighbourhoods can be maintained” (S.86(11)), where development or redevelopment of a property results in a density higher than what currently exists (i.e. more units or homes).

### 3.4 Livable Oakville Plan, 2009

The Livable Oakville Plan, the town's Official Plan, applies to all areas south of Dundas Street and north of Highway 407. It was adopted by Town Council in 2009 and approved with modifications by the OMB in 2011. It is intended to guide decisions around land use, development and growth in the community and sets out an urban structure, of which residential areas is one component.

Residential land use designations comprise the majority of the residential areas, and the land use policies of Section 11 of the Livable Oakville Plan apply to these residential designations. Maintaining, protecting and enhancing the character of existing residential areas (S.11.a) and encouraging the conservation and rehabilitation of older housing in order to maintain the stability and character of the existing stable residential communities (S.11.e) are identified as objectives for the residential areas.

Section 11.1.9 of the Livable Oakville Plan establishes criteria for assessing development in all stable residential communities to ensure that the existing neighbourhood character is maintained and protected. It states:

*“Development within all stable residential communities shall be evaluated using the following criteria to maintain and protect the existing neighbourhood character:*

- a) The built form of *development*, including scale, height, massing, architectural *character* and materials, is to be *compatible* with the surrounding neighbourhood.
- b) *Development* should be *compatible* with the setbacks, orientation and separation distances within the surrounding neighbourhood.
- c) Where a *development* represents a transition between different land use designations or housing forms, a gradation in building height shall be used to achieve a transition in height from adjacent *development*.
- d) Where applicable, the proposed lotting pattern of *development* shall be *compatible* with the predominant lotting pattern of the surrounding neighbourhood.
- e) Roads and/or municipal *infrastructure* shall be adequate to provide water and wastewater service, waste management services and fire protection.
- f) Surface parking shall be minimized on the site.

- g) A proposal to extend the public street network should ensure appropriate connectivity, traffic circulation and extension of the street grid network designed for pedestrian and cyclist access.
- h) Impacts on the adjacent properties shall be minimized in relation to grading, drainage, location of service areas, access and circulation, privacy, and microclimatic conditions such as shadowing.
- i) The preservation and integration of heritage buildings, structures and uses within a Heritage Conservation District shall be achieved.
- j) *Development* should maintain access to amenities including neighbourhood commercial facilities, community facilities including schools, parks and community centres, and existing and/or future public transit services.
- k) The transportation system should adequately accommodate anticipated traffic volumes.
- l) *Utilities* shall be adequate to provide an appropriate level of service for new and existing residents”

The Livable Oakville Plan also identifies portions of low density residential designated areas as Special Policy Areas and provides direction in Section 26.2 to protect the unique character of these areas due to their special attributes of large lots and homes, limiting the density to a maximum of 10 units per site hectare.



### 3.5 Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities

As an implementation tool, staff developed “Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities” to further illustrate how to apply the S.11.1.9 evaluation criteria outlined in the Livable Oakville Plan to new development proposals. The guidelines were endorsed by Planning and Development Council on April 29, 2013 and are a component of the Livable by Design Manual.

The guidelines are intended to address the changes occurring in stable residential communities so that compatibility can be achieved within the existing context and neighbourhood character. The document is organized into four sections according to neighbourhood, architectural, site and heritage resource contexts. The guidelines are applicable at the site plan stage and through the review of a minor variance. They are also intended as a resource to use by those redeveloping their property or undertaking significant additions.

### 3.6 Zoning By-law 2014-14

Zoning By-law 2014-014 was passed by Council on February 25, 2014, and partially deemed in force by the Ontario Municipal Board on February 23, 2015. It applies to all properties in Oakville south of Dundas Street and north of Highway 407.

It is intended to implement the policies of the Livable Oakville Plan and assigns a zone that corresponds with the land use designation in the official plan. Within the study area, there are eleven low density residential zones, as well as medium and high density residential zones.

The zoning by-law provides further detail on specific uses permitted, and through regulations, controls the size and placement of buildings on a lot, building heights, and outlines other provisions, such as landscaping and parking requirements.

### 3.7 Committee of Adjustment

When a development proposal does not comply with the zoning by-law, an owner may submit an application to the Committee of Adjustment for a minor variance. A minor variance approval provides relief from a specific zoning by-law requirement, excusing a property owner from meeting the exact requirements of the by-law.

The committee is made up of five citizens who are appointed by Council and they must ensure that minor variances, if approved, satisfy the following:

- Is considered to be a "minor" change from the zoning requirements
- Is desirable for the appropriate development or use of the land, building or structure
- Generally maintains the intent and purpose of the official plan
- Generally maintains the intent and purpose of the zoning by-law

Planning staff review and provide comments to the committee on minor variance applications. For residential variances, staff consider the residential policies of the Livable Oakville Plan, as well as the design direction in the Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities.

### 3.8 Site Plan Control

Site plan control is a site-specific type of development control that applies on all lands within the Town of Oakville. A site plan application is required if developing or re-developing lands and staff review the submitted materials and provide comments on the external building design, site layout, and function of the proposal.

Through this process the urban design guidelines, including the Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities, are referenced. Approval is via the Site Plan Committee or Director of Planning Services.

However, low density residential development is generally exempt from the site plan process. Typically, unless a property is located within 50m of Lake Ontario, a new lot has been created, or it is a condition of a minor variance, site plan approval is not required to construct a new house or make major renovations to an existing house.

## 4.0 Best Practices

As input to the study, staff undertook a best practices review to understand how other municipalities approach residential character locally, nationally and internationally. The examples demonstrate that there is not one prescribed approach to addressing residential character, and that detailed character analysis should be focused on specific geographic areas, and not on large town-wide scales. Strategies are varied and influenced by other factors like the history of the municipality and the legislative framework that applies, which further reinforces the complexity of understanding and managing character.

### 4.1 Burlington, Ontario

The City of Burlington undertook character studies for three separate residential areas due to community concern about changes occurring in those neighbourhoods. They included Indian Point, Shoreacres and Roseland. The small geographic scale of the study areas allowed for a detailed analysis of the neighbourhoods to be achieved. This informed recommendations for official plan and zoning by-law amendments specific to these areas, including introducing a character area residential land use designation and support for “legacy zoning” which would set minimum front and side yard setbacks as they exist on the date of enactment.

### 4.2 Mississauga, Ontario

The City of Mississauga has high level residential land use policies in its official plan that apply to residential land uses town wide. It further identifies 22 neighbourhood character areas which have additional policy considerations including specific direction around urban design and land use.

### 4.3 Ottawa, Ontario

The City of Ottawa introduced a zoning by-law to ensure that infill development was in character within established neighbourhoods. Front yard setbacks, driveways, walkways, the treatment and landscaping of front, corner and side yards, the orientation of the principal entrance and the front wall of a dwelling were identified as elements contributing to the streetscape of area, the fundamental component of character. Using a “your street gives you your rules” approach, the city’s strategy was to link character to zoning through the introduction of a mature neighbourhoods zoning overlay with a requirement to undertake a streetscape character analysis whenever a rezoning, site plan, consent, minor variance or building permit application is submitted, or when a change to the incidental use of a front yard is proposed (i.e. new driveway). The analysis requires a review of 21 lots, located on either side of, and across the street from, a proposed development, to ensure that the development reflects an average within the area.

## 4.4 West Vancouver, British Columbia

Changing neighbourhood character as a result of large replacement homes, as well as lengthy and impactful construction processes were identified by residents as concerns in the District of West Vancouver.

In response, a number zoning by-law amendments were made in an attempt to reduce 'building bulk' and lessen the negative impacts associated with new construction. Fencing regulations, site landscaping requirements, boulevard guidelines and limits to lot consolidation were all adjusted in an attempt to minimize the impacts of development on existing streets and neighbourhoods.

## 4.5 Hobsons Bay, Victoria, Australia

Hobsons Bay completed a Neighbourhood Character Study to describe the key characteristics and develop a preferred neighbourhood character statement for a total of 42 precincts in the City. The precincts were defined on the basis of consistent style and era of development, and the relationship of dwellings to the streetscape and landscape in different parts of the city.

The study translates the variations in character into design guidelines which are to be used in formulating and assessing development proposals. In addition, Hobsons Bay requires a 'design response' be submitted as part of a development application, explaining how the proposed design responds to and respects the established neighbourhood character.

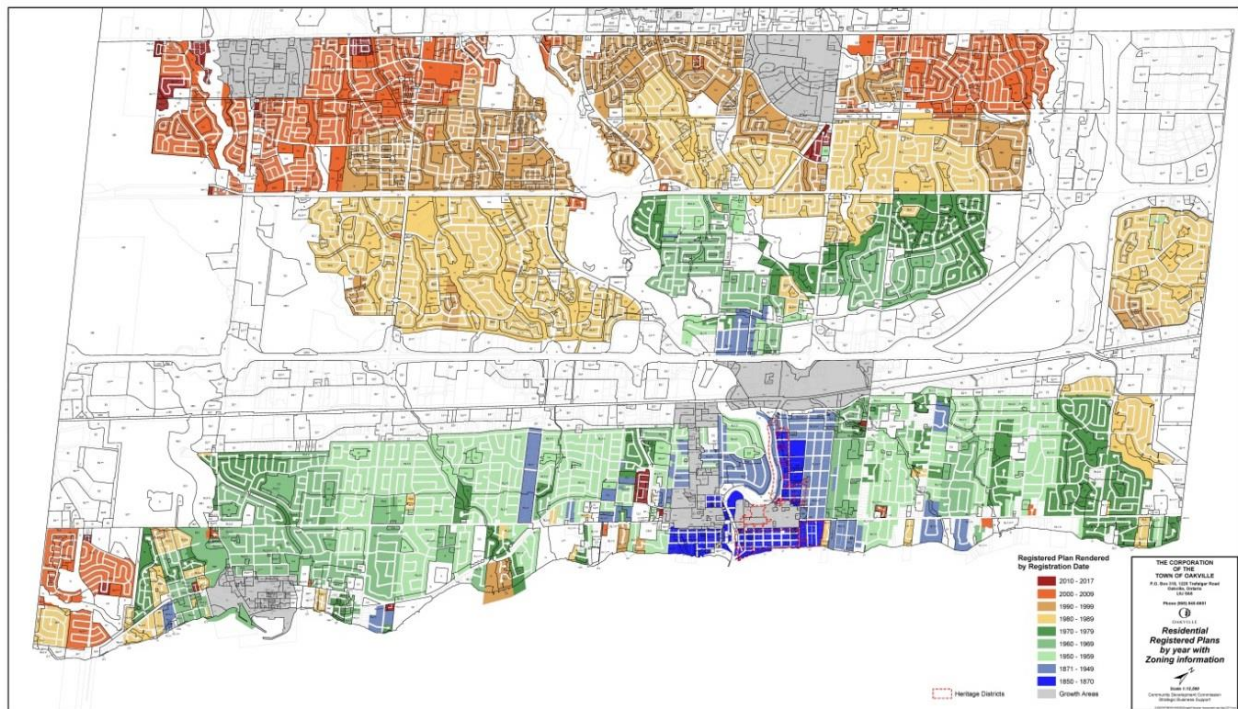
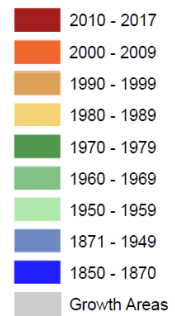
The Victorian Government provides direction to municipalities on neighbourhood character and how to undertake neighbourhood character studies.

# 5.0 Background Analysis

Staff carried out background research to gain a better understanding of how historical development patterns have influenced the character of the residential areas, what aspects of character emerge in the Oakville context, and where changes are occurring that may influence existing residential character.

## 5.1 Era of Development

Residential development in Oakville has spread east, west and north over time from the historic Downtown area. As demonstrated in the below mapping, significant residential growth has occurred since the 1950s.



The era of development, street pattern, road profile, lotting pattern and built form are all interconnected. They also have relationships to other elements like the placement of buildings (setbacks), style of garage, and the presence and age of trees. As mentioned, all of these components work in combination to influence the character of a street or area.

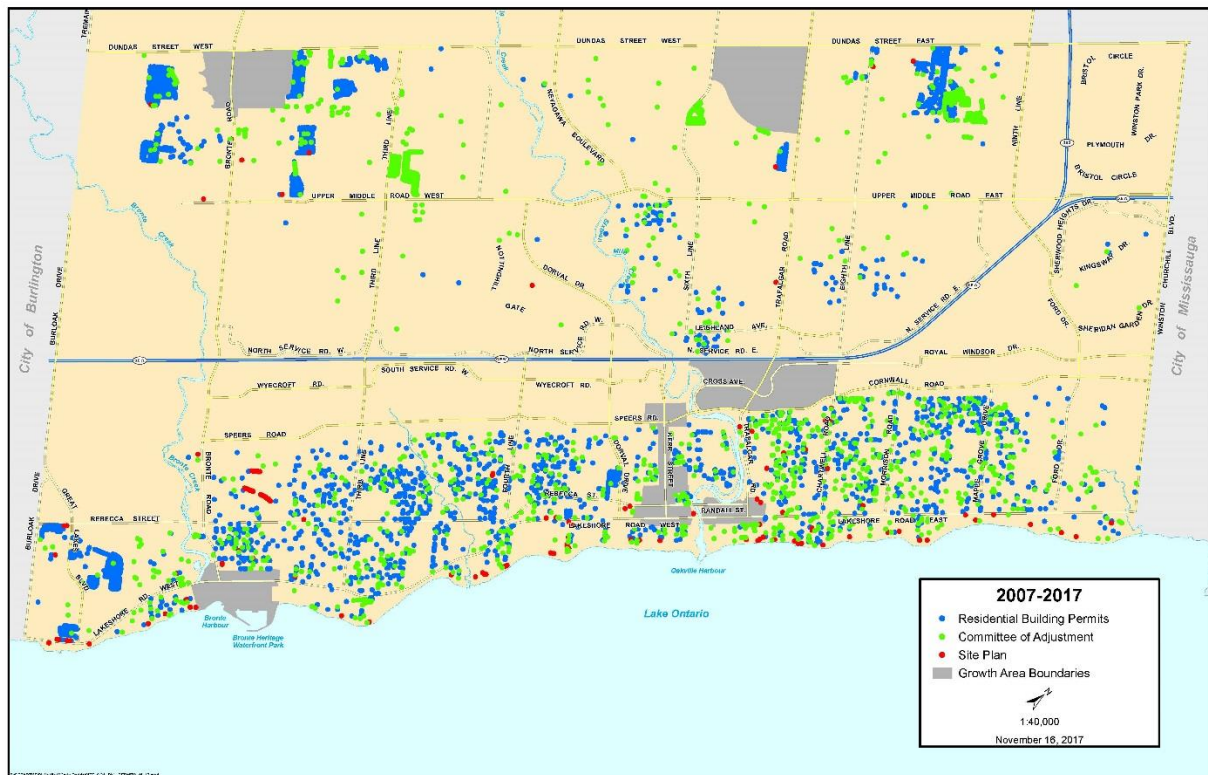
Staff did not undertake a street by street analysis town-wide as part of this study. General observations about street pattern, road profile, lotting pattern, built form, vegetation and street trees were made as part of the background work to understand what elements and qualities stood out and to identify any patterns within the town’s residential areas. These observations are included for reference purposes in the adjacent table, and do not reflect a precise image of every neighbourhood in the town. Staff acknowledge that there may be examples that do not fit within these observations, which are to be understood as typical and not site specific.

Street Patterns	
WARPED PARALLEL	
LOLLIPOPS ON A STICK	
LOOPS AND LOLLIPOPS	

Era	Typical characteristics
Pre-1950s	Mature vegetation, rural road profile, mix of original and new building stock, varying building heights, grid street pattern defined by the lake
1950s	Mix of original and new building stock, varying building heights of one to two storeys, varying garage style, generous spacing between buildings, consistent lotting pattern, fragmented parallel, inconsistent road profile, mature vegetation
1960s	Mix of original and new building stock, varying building heights of one to two storeys, varying garage style, generous spacing between buildings, consistent lotting pattern, warped parallel road pattern, inconsistent road profile, mature vegetation
1970s	Mix of original and new building stock, varying building heights of one to two storeys, varying garage style, generous spacing between buildings, consistent lotting pattern, lollipops on a stick road pattern, inconsistent road profile, mature vegetation
1980s	Original building stock, attached garages, consistent lotting pattern, loops and lollipops road pattern, urban road profile, underground hydro, street trees
1990s	Original building stock, attached garages, consistent lotting pattern, varied road pattern, urban road profile, underground hydro, street trees
2000s +	Original building stock, attached garages, consistent lotting pattern, warped parallel road pattern, urban road profile, underground hydro, street trees,

## 5.2 Development Activity

Staff undertook a review of development activity in the town's residential areas over a period of ten years. The below mapping identifies locations of residential building permit applications, committee of adjustment applications and site plan applications.



### 5.2.2 Residential Building Permits

The blue dots represent residential building permits for new construction (tearing down and replacing or a new home on a vacant or newly created lot) or additions greater than 500 sq. ft. A total of 3,841 permits were processed in the study area between 2007-2017, and includes subdivisions north of Upper Middle Road and west of Bronte Road that have been built within the last decade. A portion of these permits would also be associated with other approvals like committee of adjustment and site plan.

The residential building permits shown on the mapping represent those which did not have any other applications associated with them. These conceptually indicate as-of-right development, meaning that the building conforms to the zoning by-law requirements and no planning-related applications are required to be submitted to the town. Planning and urban design staff do not review these applications.

### 5.2.3 Committee of Adjustment

The green dots represent committee of adjustment applications for minor variances. A total of 1,551 committee of adjustment applications were processed in the study area between 2007-2017. Previously, there was no distinction in the data for type of variance, and this application total includes all residential and non-residential minor variances from 2007-2015 and all residential minor variances from 2015-2017.

These dots indicate development proposals that did not conform to the zoning by-law. Through the variance application process, town planning and development engineering staff review the proposed development and provide comments to the Committee of Adjustment. Both the Livable Oakville Plan policies and the Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities are considered in this review.

### 5.2.4 Site Plan

The red dots represent residential site plan applications, which totaled 177 in the study area between 2007-2017. As mentioned previously, site plan typically does not apply to residential development, which explains why there are few applications. Site plan approval is required for detached dwellings which are within 50m of Lake Ontario, or are proposed on lands which were created by a consent to sever. Through the site plan review process, urban design staff applies the Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities.

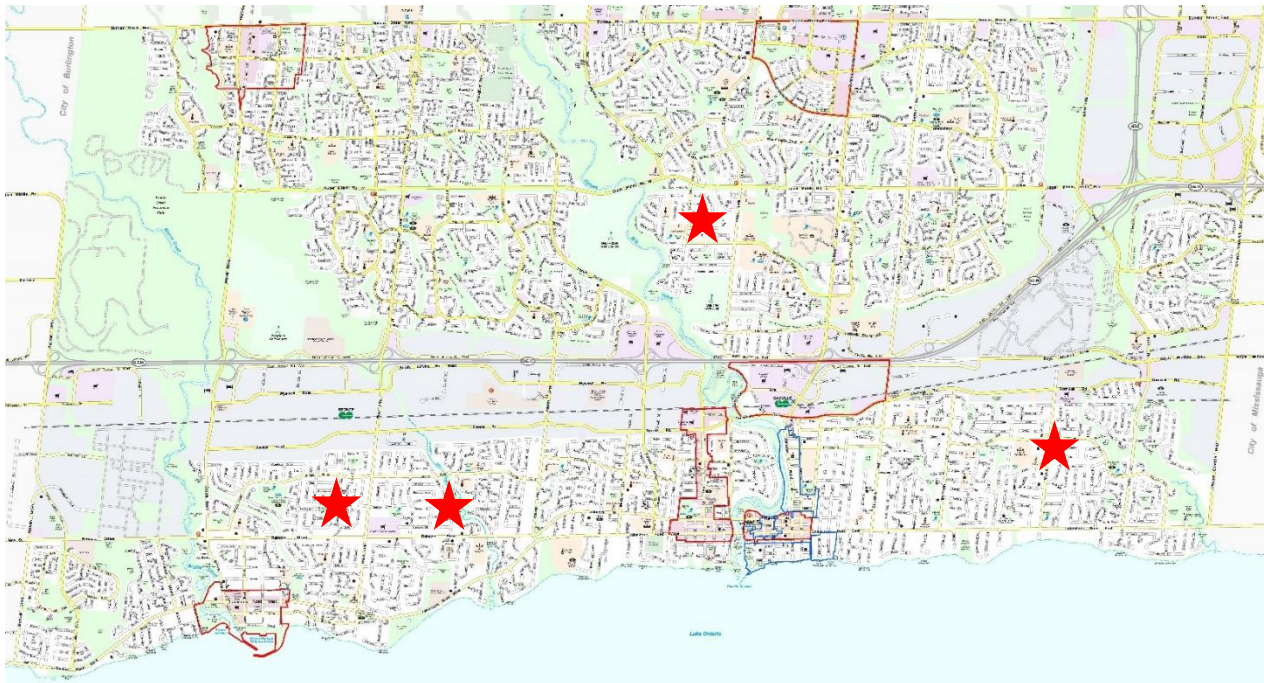


# 6.0 Public Engagement

Public engagement has been a major component of the Residential Character Study. The following provides a summary of the engagement opportunities held in Stage 2 of the study process.

## 6.1 Walking Tours

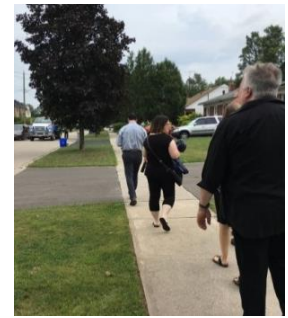
Four walking tours were held in August 2017 with residents' associations to introduce the study, discuss aspects of character in a residential setting, consider their opinions and share knowledge. Representatives from all associations and all Ward Councillors were invited to attend any or all of the walks. Overall, 15 representatives from six residents' associations and five Councillors attended the walks.



*Location of walking tours*

Some of the key observations heard from the groups were that maintaining existing separation distance between buildings (side yard setbacks) is important to the character and greater front yard setbacks allow higher buildings to blend in on a street. The road profile was identified as contributing to the look and feel of a street because it influences the crossing point between the public and private realms. The importance of vegetation, landscaping and trees to the character of a street was also highlighted by every group.

These group walking tours were a mutual learning experience for both staff and participants, as it provided staff an opportunity to listen first hand to the associations. There was dialogue about architecture, design, the planning process, and what elements within the residential environment were thought to influence character.



Participants of the walking tours in conversation

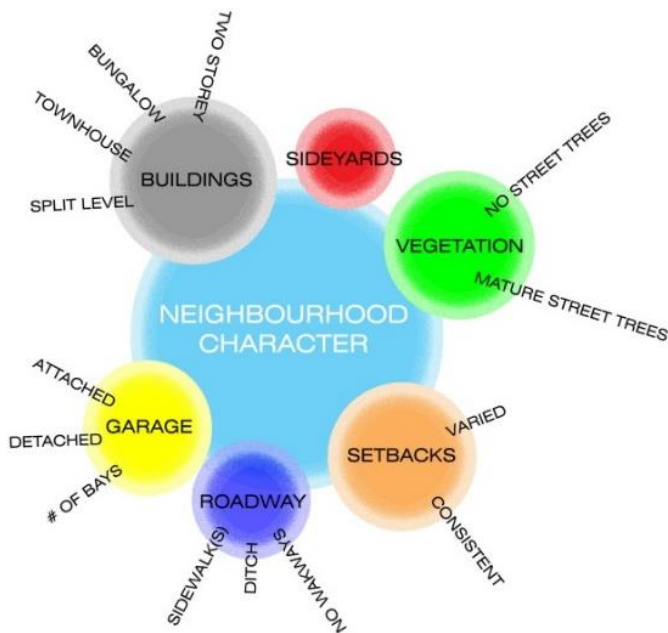


Diagram of topics discussed during walking tours

## 6.2 Open Houses

Six open houses were held across the town to introduce the study, discuss findings from the background research and analysis and receive feedback from residents on what elements and qualities they felt were important and contribute to the character of their neighbourhood.

The open houses were held at the following locations:

- Oakville Public Library – Central Branch, September 13, 2017
- River Oaks Community Centre, September 14, 2017
- Glen Abbey Community Centre, September 18, 2017
- Oakville Public Library – Clearview Branch, September 19, 2017
- QEPCCC, September 21, 2017
- Town Hall, September 22, 2017

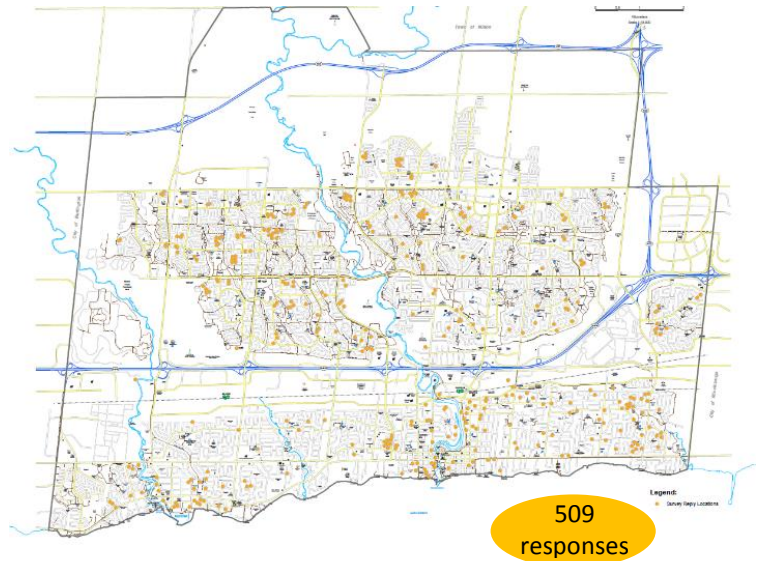
In total, 25 residents attended the open houses. Staff heard a mix of comments regarding residential character. Some residents had no concerns and questioned the need to study character, while others felt the town needed to have more control to ensure that changes in neighbourhoods were minimized. Several residents identified concern about replacement housing, particularly from one to two storeys, as having a negative impact on the existing character. Also noted was the importance of retaining mature trees in redevelopment, as they contributed positively to the existing character.



## 6.3 Online Survey

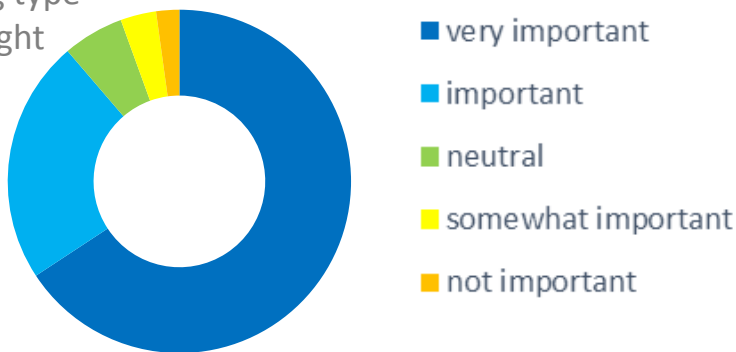
Based on the background work and input received during the walking tours, staff developed an online survey to seek further input from residents. Within the survey, residents were asked questions about what aspects of character they felt were important and if they had any concerns related to residential character.

509 responses were received throughout September 2017 from all across the town. The results are summarized in the below graphic.

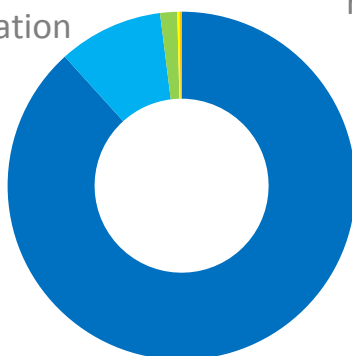


### How important to your neighbourhood's character is...

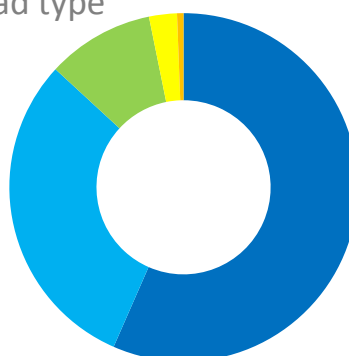
building type and height



trees and vegetation



road type



When asked to highlight additional elements...

**18%**

valued landscaped yards and mature trees

**17%**

identified setbacks and the siting of homes on a lot as important

**11%**

thought of massing or built form of replacement homes as an issue

**9%**

identified building heights as a concern

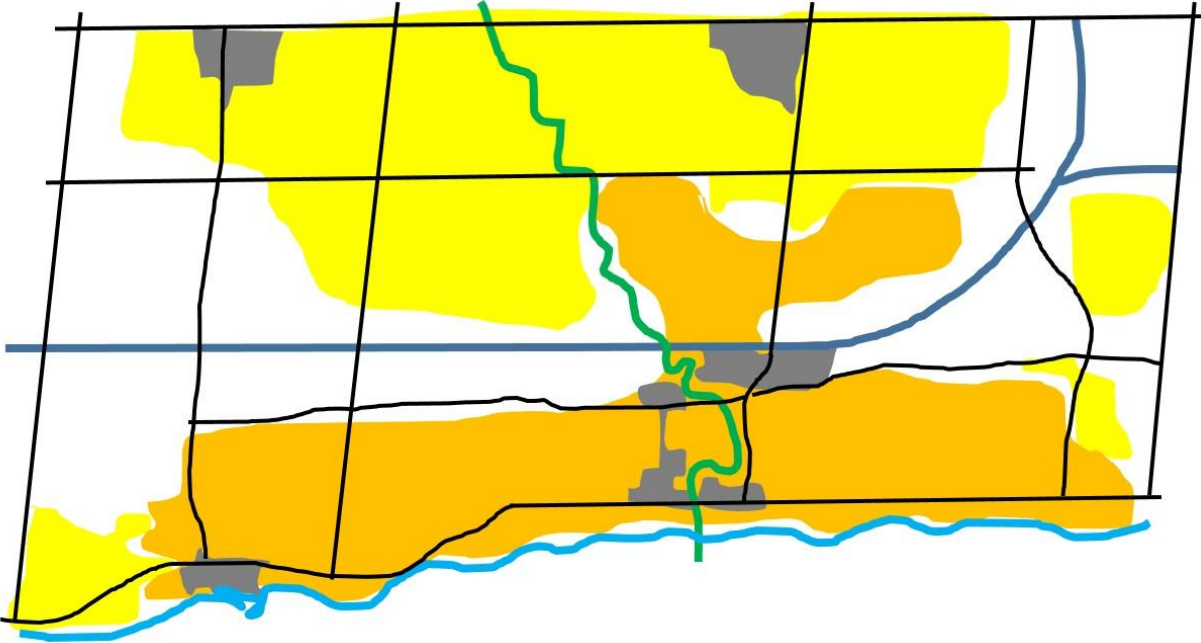
# 7.0 Findings

The residential areas within the study consist primarily of post-1950 suburban development. A variety of street patterns, road profiles, lot sizes, building types, building heights, setbacks, vegetation and street trees can be found in these areas and many of these elements are closely tied to the era of development. While no single element is a solely distinguishing factor when considering residential character, because of the relationship to other elements and qualities, the era of development was identified as an important factor when considering residential character in the Oakville context.

Based simply on era of development, residential development in Oakville can be generally categorized into two areas areas – those built before 1980 and those built after 1980. The 1980s are used as a distinguishing period in this study because around this time there was a shift in residential development to maximize zoning permissions by building homes with larger footprints and greater floor area. Stormwater management practices and infrastructure approaches were also changing and influencing the residential streetscape at this time.

The data shows that there have been significant concentrations of building permits and committee of adjustment applications south of the QEW and in pockets north of the QEW, south of Upper Middle Road. This corresponds to the areas of residential development built prior to the 1980s and indicates change, which may or may not influence the residential character.

Based on these findings, the town’s residential areas can be seen conceptually as two broad character types - **Type A** and **Type B**.



**Type A** generally comprises areas developed prior to 1980. Single detached homes are the primary built form in this area, with a mix of bungalows, side splits, back splits and two storey homes on a range of lot sizes. The primary zones in this area are RL1, RL2, and RL3. The original building stock has evolved in this area, and there is a mix of original, original with additions and completely new construction, known as “replacement homes”. Mature trees and vegetation are prevalent. Garages may or may not be present, and includes detached, attached and carport styles. There is also a mix of road profiles - some with and without curbs or sidewalks, others with drainage ditches separating the homes from the street. Hydro infrastructure is also varied with a mix of above and below ground wires.

Public feedback indicated that mature vegetation, street trees, and the siting, spacing and massing of homes were valuable character-contributing elements and qualities in these areas. Also noted were comments related specifically to the management of architectural style and materials, as well as general property maintenance.

**Type B** generally comprises areas developed after 1980. While low density, single detached homes are the primary built form, an increase of medium density, townhouse form development can be seen when compared to the Type A area. Two storey homes are the most prevalent building type in this area. The primary zones are RL4, RL5, RL6, RL7, and RL8 and few changes to the original building stock have been seen. Hydro infrastructure is underground with sidewalks, curbs and storm sewers incorporated in the road design. Street trees and vegetation range in age and attached, “snout nose” garages are a common element of the streetscape.

Comments received from residents located in Type B areas were primarily concerned with broader concepts of residential character, noting the importance of open space and trails, reduction of traffic and access to community services. Trees and vegetation as contributing elements was identified in the comments, and generally there were far fewer concerns related to character change from residents in Type B areas, when compared to Type A.

The current official plan policy and design direction for residential areas speaks to maintaining and protecting the existing neighbourhood character (Section 11). The interpretation from some residents through this study process has been that change to original building stock does not maintain or protect the existing neighbourhood character. However, respecting residential character does not mean that no change can occur. As neighbourhoods age, some change is inevitable. From a planning and design perspective, it is how those elements of character are addressed through the proposed change that is important to the overall residential character of an area.

As described previously, Section 11.1.9 of the Livable Oakville Plan establishes criteria for assessing development in the town's residential areas to ensure that the existing neighbourhood character is maintained and protected. Based on the understanding of residential character established through the study, this criteria list also addresses function and amenity associated with development.

During the various walking tours the discussion was more robust about the elements within the neighbourhood and not specifically about the architectural style. Built form began to fall into the background and the focus was on other elements within the streetscape such as landscaping, front yard setbacks, separation distance between buildings and road profile. Witnessing the layering of these elements in the field reinforced the concept of residential character as an interplay of built form, vegetation and infrastructure elements in the public and private realms.

From the work conducted and public feedback received through this study, staff have determined that building siting (especially side yard setbacks), massing, height, soft landscaping and mature trees are particularly important elements contributing to residential character in Oakville. Ensuring that the policies and design direction capture and/or address the elements and qualities that are deemed to contribute to the residential character, and which can be influenced through municipal tools such as zoning, is essential.

Trends in the development data point to greater activity in terms of building permits and committee of adjustment applications for replacement homes and large additions in the Type A areas. This corresponds with the public feedback received, which identified concerns around changes to original building stock in the Type A areas.

A closer look at the Type A areas is warranted to ensure that the current policy, design and development approval framework is appropriate and aligns with the understanding of residential character that has been confirmed through this study. Within the Type A areas, further review of specific geographic areas may also be warranted. This would allow for a detailed area analysis to inform and/or direct specific design-related development review prior to building permit that could be applied in instances of new construction or large additions. This detailed review may also inform area-specific zoning changes.

## 8.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations outline a range of options to improve the policy direction and development approval process to better address residential character, development trends and the public feedback received through this study. Further studies are strongly recommended, including, but not limited to:

### 8.1 Official Plan

- Review the existing Residential Land Use policies in the Official Plan to ensure that building siting, massing, height, landscaping and trees are identified as important elements contributing to the existing character of the residential areas.
- Consider incorporating policy language in the official plan and design documents which clarifies that existing residential character is to be respected.

### 8.2 Zoning By-law

- Review the existing Residential zones within the Type A areas, to ensure that the regulations related to setbacks, height and landscaping are appropriate to align with and respect the existing character.
- Explore options for the residential zones within the Type A areas that would be associated with potential design review for new construction and large additions, to ensure that the residential character of the existing streetscape is addressed through the proposed development.

### 8.3 Urban Design

- Review the Design Guidelines for Stable Residential Communities, in conjunction with Official Plan and Zoning By-law reviews, to ensure consistency between policy and design direction and terminology.
- Explore options for design specific development review prior to building permit for low density residential new construction or large additions within Type A areas.

### 8.4 Committee of Adjustment

- Review the committee of adjustment process and explore the option of additional prescribed criteria for the consideration of minor variances, as permitted by the *Planning Act* (2016).