5.0. Block Analysis

5.1. General

The standard urban block is generally bounded and defined by four streets and can be easily identified on a map. However, what is generally perceived from a street corner is an area which is usually referred to as 'site' or 'locality' but which will be called a 'visual block' in this study. Every object within this smaller area works to establish or enhance a particular quality which is perceived as the character of that visual block. By examining the arrangement and particular nature of the objects within the block, its unique character can be described.

The following identifies twenty visual blocks in the study area. In each case those features which determine the character have been identified and their role has been explained. The recommendations have been made recognizing that the established character is, in most cases, desirable. These recommendations are designed to maintain or enhance the existing street quality or reinforce certain aspects of a particular streetscape.

Notwithstanding the importance of all existing features in the composition of a streetscape, certain structures have been identified in this study as being "key buildings". These are buildings or features which through their historical or architectural significance and/or their scale, materials and positioning, are essential in the establishment of the visual block character or quality as it is perceived.

5.2. Assumptions

"The words 'site' and 'locality' should convey the same sense that the word 'person' does: a complexity so closely knit as to have a distinct character worthy of interest, concern, and often of affection."1

The area under review in this study enjoys a wide reputation as an area marked by quiet shaded streets and elegant older homes. Such a description characterizes the area on a broad level of comprehension.

A more intimate examination of the district would reveal that a great diversity of character exists within the larger area and that in fact due to the complexity of components and their intricate patterning together, the larger area is composed of a series of smaller sections, each of which is in some way unique.

Lynch's sentiment accurately summarizes the basic assumptions of this study. 'Site' and 'locality' are smaller divisions of a larger area which are capable of being comprehended as a single, cohesive unit. This condition of comprehension can be referred to as 'visual' connectedness and facilitates the recognition of these smaller areas.

5.3. Block Review with Analysis and Recommendations

The following is a block by block analysis. Figure No. 7 shows the boundary of each block. For each of the 18 blocks there is an analysis and a set of recommendations. The analysis consists of the recognition of the major elements within a given block. Block recommendations are included to show the direction needed to preserve or enhance the block's major characteristics.
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the predominant features of this block are the steep valley slope and the creek

* terraces, retaining walls and exposed foundations set into the slope emphasize the steep valley

* the narrow, undefined nature of Water Street gives it an informal "back lane" character

* connections to the water are visual only
  there is very limited physical connection to the water for the general public

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* any new construction should recognize the sloping site through the use of retaining walls, terraces and exposed foundations

* materials used for such structures should be of a highly textured nature in keeping with the existing materials
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the most dominant features of this area are the lake and the harbour
  the high bank affords a commanding view of both

* the use of this natural shoreline resource has been neglected
  there is no convenient public access to the waters edge available

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the presence of the lake and harbour should be exploited as pleasant visual and recreational resources

* the provision of simple and inexpensive facilities would greatly improve the amenity of this area
Provide pedestrian access from the foot of King St. to allow a circular pedestrian route in this area.

Retain this section of the floodplain as a natural area.

Gateway to mark entrance to footpath.

Improve access to pier.

Gate to mark top of stairs to pier. Design similar to bandstand in park.

Introduce low bank planting to prevent further erosion but not interrupt views.

Block recommendations 2
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* this area forms the southern end of a deep gully which runs through the Old Oakville residential district from north to south

* the central feature of this area is the house at 212 Front Street. It is a focal point in the block and defines the street edge as well as visually separating the street from the lake

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* this area should become an integral part of a walkway system which would traverse the length of the lake shore in the Old Oakville area
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* this publicly owned, narrow shoreline strip is a unique recreational resource in the downtown Oakville area

* the area has an intimate atmosphere, being located behind the houses along King Street and enclosed by vegetation and the lake

* the attractive shingle beach should be made more accessible to the public

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* **NONE**
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the buildings along the east side of Navy Street visually define the beginning of the residential district

* the open space and valley slope clearly suggest the recreational aspects of the west side of Navy Street

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the role of the house facades on the east side of Navy Street as a backdrop to the open space on the west side should be maintained and strengthened
LARGE PARKING LOT SEPARATES THE HOTEL BUILDING FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD FABRIC.

VIEW TO CHURCH

VIEW TO LAKE

blocks analysis

0  20  50  75  100

A PAIR H1 THE SISTESEAPE

Houses along the east side of Navy St. have a consistent size, height, & setback which form a defining edge to the open space on the west side.
The introduction of low-rise green & screen planting would lessen the impact of the open parking area on the Navy St. streetscape.
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* this area is characterized by a neat ordered appearance
  the wall along Navy Street is a continuous element linking the whole length of the street and terminating in the large buildings at its south end. these buildings are constructed on a grand scale in the same materials

* the houses are all approximately the same height and effectively enclose the street with a formal atmosphere

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the importance of the wall along Navy Street as a unique and interesting article of street furniture should be recognized

* the interior of the Chisholm Estate grounds should be made accessible to the public as a formal garden park
The interior of the garden has a pleasant intimate atmosphere due to the wall.

Key structure: the garden wall is a very rare structure, giving a unique and enclosed character to the estate grounds and nearby streets.

This house is an important feature to the streetscape.

Entrance to front street has narrow lane character. Trees & house are close to street.

Large, 2-story house enclosed by streets.
WALL MUST BE MAINTAINED

GATES IN WALL SHOULD BE OF SUCH A DESIGN AS TO BE INVITING TO THE PUBLIC.

block recommendations 6
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the south side of Robinson Street is struggling to maintain its identity as an edge where the central business district meets the downtown residential area

* the presence of heavy vegetation in the area strengthens the contrast between the two districts

* the presence of a continuous line of building facades has begun to break down with the development of parking lots

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* landscaping and planting should be introduced to reduce the impact of the gaps where parking lots exist
Introduce screen planting to reduce impact of parking lot.

Alter surface material of retaining wall to give some texture & colour to streetscape.

Introduce planting to enclose corner enhance gateway effect.

Block recommendation 7A
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the continuity of the streetscape has suffered severe decay due to the encroachment of facilities serving the central business district

* in most cases, older buildings have lost their nineteenth century detailing which leads to a visual disassociation with the Old Oakville residential district

* the presence of heavy vegetation defines this block as the northern boundary of the Old Oakville residential district

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the south side of Robinson Street should be recognized and maintained as a barrier between the downtown commercial and residential areas

* a program of facade restoration should be undertaken on older homes in this area
The north side of Robinson St. is dominated by the backs of buildings & parking lots. It does not form an attractive or unified streetscape.

Notes:
- View house to historic
- Parking lot forms gap in streetscape and breaks the continuity
- House have same setback and form interesting rhythm of facades
- Streetscape forms barrier which defines edge of Old Oakville residential area
- Trees form "gateway" effect in street
BLOCK 7C

BLOCK ANALYSIS

* this section of the south side of Robinson Street displays many of the characteristics exhibited throughout the Old Oakville residential area and acts as an effective edge to the area

* new development has generally been sympathetic to the nature of this area by repeating certain items of street furniture and materials which are found throughout the area

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the south side of Robinson Street should be recognized and maintained as a barrier between the downtown commercial and residential areas

* no commercial uses should be allowed to locate in this area
North side of Robinson St. is barren, composed of parking lots and backs of buildings.

Building grouping has good rhythm of facades and variety of heights.

Historic 1½ story house forms definitive corner feature. Brick walls give continuity to streetscape.

Robinson St.

Trees form gateway to street.

Block analysis

0  20  50  75  100

7C
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the church facade and tower, with their interesting massing, colours and textures, dominate this entire block

* the large open space around the church emphasizes and complements its role as a focal point

* the north west corner of William and Thomas Streets is open and lacks definition

* good balance is achieved between the north-east and south-west corners with similarity in materials and setback

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the church facade and tower are the focus for this section and any new development should recognize this and preserve site lines and open space related to the church
In important view to church façade

View to lake

Visual balance

House is set back from street & slightly down hill

Block is dominated by these elements

Open space increases church's impact as a focal point

Rhythm of church windows is seen from William st.

House is set back from street & slightly down hill giving space to dominate church building

William st.

Thomas st.

King st.

Block analysis

0 20 50 70 100
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the south side of the church has an entirely different nature than the north; it is massive and set very close to the street.

* a balance is achieved by the relaxed atmosphere of the south side of King Street where the houses are set well back and their pitched roofs slope away from the street giving space to the church and resulting in a wide, open character.

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the deep setback and building profiles should be maintained on the south side of King Street.
ATTRACTION TO FACADE FORMS PLEASANT VIEW FROM STREET

VIEW TO LAKE

* KEY BUILDING: CHURCH IS VERY TALL & CLOSE TO STREET. TENDS TO BE OVERPOWERING.

Houses on south side of King St. have consistent deep setback. This offsets the overpowering nature of the church building.

block analysis
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the composition of Thomas Street is one of the most cohesive and pleasing in the area. There is a consistent, narrow setback, harmony of soft pastel colours and a complementary variety of materials.

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* any changes in this area should be very careful to maintain the existing street character.

* Colour schemes should continue to be coordinated.

* The abandoned extension of Thomas Street should be recognized and retained as an item of historic and archaeological interest.
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* this section of William Street is the longest streetscape in the area that has a visual continuity

* the gentle rise and fall of the land gives an interesting variety of views and vantage points

* the housing stock in this area has a good combination of age and materials

* houses are well spaced along the street and can be appreciated as a group or in isolation.

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the interesting topography and various views and vistas to block interiors should be preserved
BLOCK 12

BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the predominant feature of this block is the deep gully which runs from north to south. George Street is located in this gully

* because of the gully and the surrounding higher elevations various viewpoints at higher and lower elevations give a unique interest to this block

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the interesting topography of this area should be recognized and enhanced as a major feature
Tree canopy completely covers this section of the street.

Modern house is setback & does not interfere with the tone of the streetscape.

Cedar shingle siding.

View across & into gully is dominated by large, mature maples.

Cedar shingle siding.

Bright white beck stands out in street.

Block analysis 12
BLOCK 13

BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the west section of this block is built on a grand and spacious scale. Its character is derived from spatial arrangements and the balance of the massing of the two large houses.

* the east section of the block is built on a much smaller and more intimate scale. Its character is based largely on colours and materials which blend with the abundant vegetation.

* the street closes in and becomes more intimate as one travels from west to east along King Street and conversely it opens out and becomes more grand as one travels from east to west.

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the two distinct characters exhibited in this block should be maintained as it is this sort of mixture which helps to produce the unique character of the entire district.

* preserve or replace the existing vegetation in the eastern section of this block to maintain the changes in the perceived street edge.
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the southern section of this block is a quiet backwater, away from the main traffic routes

* large trees and pleasant views to the lake and St. Andrews Church characterize this area

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* greater definition of the street corner and the addition of more trees or shrubs would greatly reduce the impact of the new house on the north-west corner of King Street and Trafalgar Road
MATERIALS & DESIGN OF HOUSE IS NOT SYMPATHETIC WITH SURROUNDINGS

INTERESTING FACADE FORMS VISUAL FOCUS IN THIS BLOCK

VIEW TO LAKE

VIEW TO FACADE OF CHURCH

BUILDING IS SET CLOSE TO STREET & GIVES GOOD DEFINITION TO THE CORNER

STREET BECOMES VERY NARROW AT SOUTH END, DEAD END

SINGLE STORY DOUBLE HOUSE OF SIMPLE DESIGN CONTRASTS WELL WITH LARGER HOUSES

block analysis 14
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the most important and dominant feature of this area is the church it provides a focal point for the block and is a landmark building for the whole area

* the consistent setback of buildings along King and Reynolds Streets results in an orderly and unified appearance which reinforces the position of the larger church building as a focal point

* the predominant material used in the area is white or grey stucco this gives a visual unity to the block which is found nowhere else in the area

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* the church should remain as the focal point of this block it should be designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, Part IV for its historical and architectural significance.

* continuation of the use of stucco as a building material should be encouraged
BLOCK 16

BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the entire block is dominated by the large school building

* the school site is generally barren and open without the type of visual amenity present throughout the remainder of the district.

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* landscaping should be introduced which would reduce the imposing effect of the school building
LARGE, OPEN PAVED AREA.

CHAIN LINK FENCE SURROUNDS SCHOOLYARD.

TREES GIVE DEFINITION TO STREET & ENCLOSE OPEN SPACE.

**KEY BUILDING AUSTERE PRESENCE OF SCHOOL BUILDING DOMINATES THIS SITE.**

SCHOOL YARD IS VERY BARREN.

VIEW TO SIDE OF CHURCH.

WOODEN FENCE GIVES DEFINITION TO CORNER.

**KEY BUILDING THIS HOUSE TERMINATE ALLAN ST. AND DEFINES THE CORNER.**

THE SOUTH END OF ALLAN STREET HAS A QUIET, BACK LANE QUALITY.
INTRODUCE LANDSCAPING & PLANTING TO SOFTEN IMPACT OF SCHOOL BUILDING.
BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the consistent setback and subtle rhythms of the facades along William Street give this block a neat and well-ordered appearance

* despite this consistent setback, the houses on William Street, east of Reynolds Street lack a common element which will visually unite them into a cohesive streetscape

BLOCK RECOMMENDATIONS

* NONE
BLOCK 18

BLOCK ANALYSIS

* the narrow setback of houses on Allan Street give it a quiet, enclosed atmosphere which contrasts with that of Robinson Street

* the frame houses have a consistency of scale, materials and setback which results in a unified, flowing streetscape

BLOCK RECOMMENDATION

* all trees should be maintained and replaced when required to preserve the cosy enclosed street atmosphere
ROBINSON ST. IS BRIGHT, WIDE & BREEZY.

FRAME HOUSES HAVE A CONSISTENCY OF SCALE, MATERIALS & SETBACK.

ROBINSON ST.

THE NARROW SETBACK ENCIRCLES THE STREET & PROVIDES A QUIET RETREAT FROM ROBINSON ST.

VIEW TO LAKE IS FRAMED BY TREES.

WASHINGTON ST.

WILLIAM ST.

BLOCK ANALYSIS 18
All trees should be maintained & replaced when required to preserve the cozy, enclosed street atmosphere.