

4.0. Streetscape Elements - Review and Recommendations

4.1. General

The uniqueness of the Study area is largely due to its character. In turn the character is made up of many components, some tangible and some not so tangible. One such component of this character is the scale of the environment.

The streetscape helps define the scale of the area in question. At present the scale is considered to be "personal". Such a quality is a great attraction to both residents and visitors.

The following is an itemized account showing the major elements of the streetscape. Along with each element is a description of those characteristics and options available to maintain or improve the scale and thus enhance the character of the study area.

4.2. Roads

Existing roads are deemed adequate with regard to pavement width, location and surface material. However, in certain areas the road grades disrupt an even drainage run-off which results in water collecting in various sized puddles.

To ensure public safety and health underground services such as water and sewage will have to be replaced in the near future. The works that are required entail digging in the road right-of-way. The new surface of the road should exhibit the same characteristics of scale as the existing roads do. To this end the following may be considered:

1. Pavement width and location to be maintained.
2. Existing grades to be kept where possible.
3. To lessen the visual impact of a new road surface on the streetscape, the new surface should not be exposed asphalt or concrete. The new pavement can be surfaced dressed i.e. washed gravel and asphalt, or asphalt or concrete containing a course aggregate.

4.3. Curbs

Curbs contribute to the personal scale of the area through both their presence and absence. In some cases where there are no curbs a country lane effect is created by narrow road, grass verge and dry stone wall or simple wooden fence.

When curbs are present they are for the most part inconspicuous. Those curbs that are easily noticed result from sunken road surfaces or heaving sidewalks. There are a few cases where the curbs appear to be two tiered. These unusual examples lend character to the street and help reduce the sense of distance between a low road surface and high sidewalk.

The contribution of curbs to the sense of scale of the area by replacing existing ones is as follows:

1. 6" concrete curb with no gutter
2. 4" concrete curb with no gutter

4.4. Sidewalks

As with curbs, sidewalks contribute to the scale of the area through both presence and absence. Many of the sidewalks are 4 feet wide. Also there are several examples of sidewalks having a dimple finished surface, adding to the character of a given street.

It appears that no additional sidewalks are necessary in the study area. This is due to both the lack of heavy pedestrian traffic and the questionable effect of additional sidewalks on the streetscape.

However, it is evident that several sections of sidewalks will have to be replaced in the near future because of heaving and various service requirements. The following should be kept in mind if the replaced portions of sidewalk are to contribute to the streetscape as effectively as the original sections:

1. that the sidewalk width not exceed 4 feet on local roads, but should be 5 feet wide on Robinson Street.
2. the replacements to be of concrete, but not bleached.
3. the dimple effects to be copied where possible.

4.5. Light Standards

The existing lighting system appears to provide ample light to the study area. In some cases the effectiveness of the lights is hampered because of tree foliage obstructing the lamps. In these cases the trees may be pruned or the lamps lowered.

The Public Utilities Commission have attempted to enhance the character of the area by trying a colonial style of lamp in a few places. This action is commendable and future attempts should be encouraged with attention given to improved designs now on the market.

In view of the above the following should be considered:

1. That the present effort policy of the P.U.C. be encouraged
2. That existing light standard designs remain along Robinson Street.
3. That during the review of light standards for the remainder of the study area and with particular reference to point 1. above, the following approaches be considered:
 - a) lighting with more appropriate fixtures having less physical impact on the streetscape.
 - b) a mixture of both modern and historical style light standards.
4. The following types of lamp could be considered:
 - a) incandescent
 - b) mercury vapour
 - c) high pressure sodium

The incandescent type would be more appropriate where lower, screened light standard is employed.

5. Should the hydro services be placed underground the light standards will not be affixed to hydro poles as is the case now. Instead, the lights will be on separate poles as is the case in the newer areas of Town. However, of concern here is that the new poles should reflect the scale and character of the study area.

4.6 Fences and Walls

There are a variety of fences and walls in the study area. Almost every property has its own fence/wall design and material. Most of them tend to reflect the early 20th Century. The diversity of material and height adds to the overall charm of the area.

The presence of the different fences and walls adds definitive edges to the general streetscape that distinguishes the public right-of-ways from the private gardens of the residences.

New fences and walls to be built in the study area should be of materials that are sympathetic to scale and character of the study area. The following may be considered in this respect:

1. Brick, native stone, wood and cast iron are appropriate materials.
2. Fence style should consider the character of the area and the immediate adjoining properties.

4.7 Signs

A. Traffic

The number and location of traffic information signs (ie. "No Parking") attest to the presence of the automobile in the daily life of our society. They have to be considered as a "necessary" evil since, for the most part, their location, size and material are standardized. However, it is possible to reduce the number of signs on a given street, thus reducing the effect of such street furniture on the overall streetscape. To this end the following may be considered:

1. Encourage a Town policy to reduce the number of traffic information signs on each block in the study area through:
 - a) mounting traffic control signs on existing available poles.
 - b) on future light poles, incorporate traffic signs on the units.
 - c) removing a certain number of "No Parking" signs on each block face.

B. Street

The existing street name signs in the study have a strong impact on the overall character and streetscape. This is due in part to the fact that the same styles of sign can be seen in all other parts of the Town and, that the material, colour and style befit a modern era.

More appropriate period style street signs should be investigated for use in the study area. The mounting of street signs on building walls and wooden posts would also lessen the impact.

C. Park

Existing park signs are typical of styles employed throughout the remainder of the Town and indeed, the remainder of the Province. As such they do not associate with the character of the area nor with the period. Appropriate colours and styles should be investigated along with sign design.

4.8 Pathways

Pathways represent an engaging element in the streetscape. Diversity of design, material and character is the only consistent description of most of the pathways in the study area. With this in mind the following are offered as material choice:

1. brick set in sand
2. native stone set in sand
3. wooden (ie. boardwalk)
4. limestone fines
5. dirt ie. natural desire lines

Scale of the pathway would vary according to use, location and material.

4.9. Other

A. Fireplugs

Fireplugs are the quiet, sturdy element of streetscapes that, while they are not readily noticed, when replaced can invoke a sense of loss. At present there are many fireplugs in the study area dating back to 1908. Their

size, colour and design are typical of the turn of the century era. If at all possible they should be retained or replaced with a style compatible with existing fireplugs.

B. Bollards

The importance of bollards can lie in their practicality and use in design for effect. Practically speaking bollards are used to prevent access to places by large vehicles and obviously by water craft to tie up to (to be moored). Their use can be extensive, ranging from the purely decorative to the functional as in the creating of edges and paths.

With respect to the above, the following should be considered:

1. wooden square or round bollards of appropriate dimensions can reflect the maritime influence in the development of Oakville.
2. cast iron bollards can also be consistent with the character of the study area.
3. bollards could be consciously employed at road endings and in parks as a design element.