

# Part A

## District Overview



## 1.0 Introduction

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### 1.1 The Heritage Conservation District Concept

A heritage conservation district is a collection of buildings, streets, and open spaces that collectively are of special historical and/or architectural significance to the community. The individual elements of a district must combine in such a way as to present a sense of cohesiveness. A heritage district is a place of special character or association with an integrity of its own that distinguishes it from other areas of the community.

Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, provides for designation of heritage conservation districts. The parameters of this legislation enable municipalities, through study, to define the areas to be designated and to use development guidelines to assist in the regulation of various types of development within heritage conservation districts in order to ensure that the district's character and viability are maintained and/or enhanced.

It is not the purpose of heritage conservation district designation to make the district a static place where change is prohibited. Rather, the purpose is to guide change so that it contributes to the district's architectural and historic character.

### 1.2 Heritage Conservation District Plan Documents

The Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Plan consists of two parts, published in separate volumes:

- This Plan document,
- The District Inventory.

These documents are complementary, and they are to be considered as a whole interpreting the Plan.



*Buttonville -1909. View north on Woodbine Avenue. Only some foundations remain of the Lutheran Church on the left. Casella #24*

### 1.3 Background to the District Plan

The Town of Markham is committed to preserving its past, as reflected in the motto "Leading While Remembering". The legacy of Markham's built heritage and its remaining historical communities is valued and protected. The Town currently has three Heritage Conservation Districts, created under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*: Thornhill Markham, Markham Village, and Unionville. Each district has a Heritage Conservation District Plan, to guide development activity so that it preserves and enhances the heritage character within those districts.

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The hamlet of Buttonville is one of Markham's oldest communities. Its history goes back to 1804, when William Willcocks, magistrate and postmaster of the Town of York (Toronto), purchased a 100 acre property on the west side of Woodbine Avenue. Here he established a sawmill that became the nucleus of a village known as Millbrook. When a post office was established, the existence of a previous Millbrook in the province required a name change. Buttonville was chosen, in honour of Major John Button, who owned land to the east of Woodbine, and helped to develop the layout that persists to this day. Buttonville contains a collection of historically and architecturally significant buildings of cultural heritage importance.

#### 1.4 The 1988 Plan

Buttonville was identified as a potential Heritage Conservation District over twenty years ago, and a preliminary study and plan was produced by a consultant team in 1988. In many details, this document remains relevant to the current situation. For example, most of the "Goals and Objectives for a Buttonville Heritage Conservation District" remain useful as guidance for the current Plan:

1. To preserve architecturally and/or historically significant buildings; retain, where possible, buildings that are compatible; and make incompatible buildings, where possible, fit with the visual character of the district.
2. To guide proposals for the repair, restoration and alteration of, and additions to, existing buildings, and also proposals for new

construction so that they will, when realized, add to and not detract from, the character of the district.



*Venice Grist Mill, on the north bank of the River, and the dam. Buttonville's origins are tied to the mills and the river that powered them. Casella #23*

3. To develop vacant building and development sites in a way which will enhance the district's character.
4. To ensure that signs on buildings and sites and along streets are appropriate to the district's character.
5. To have street lighting and street furniture appropriate to the district character.
6. To preserve trees and other vegetation; and encourage the planting of species characteristic to the district.
7. To preserve historical fences and have new fences respect historical patterns as well as meet contemporary needs.
8. To preserve the Rouge River valley lands as open space; preserve St. John's Cemetery and Buttonville Cemetery; and protect any historical features therein.

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9. To preserve the identity and integrity of Buttonville as a distinct community within the larger context of the Town of Markham.
10. To ameliorate the effects of Woodbine Avenue on the district, including the negative visual impact of vehicular traffic travelling along it.
11. To increase appreciation of the district's historical and architectural significance among Town of Markham residents.

The policy recommendations and heritage conservation guidelines in the 1988 plan are also relevant. Their spirit can be adapted to present needs and standards.

### 1.5 The need for a new plan

The 1988 plan was not adopted due to uncertainty about the future design of Woodbine Avenue. At its heart was a recommendation to create a bypass around the hamlet, retaining the existing roadway of Woodbine Avenue through it. The Town was unable to execute this recommendation and, as a result, the plan was not adopted. Since the 1988 plan, four significant changes have occurred to the context of the Buttonville hamlet:

- In the absence of a bypass, Woodbine Avenue was widened to four lanes and regraded. This removed extensive roadside tree lines in the old hamlet and on the west side of Woodbine, north of Millbrook Gate. It also reduced front yards, and disturbed the relation between buildings and the street.
- Municipal services were introduced, making possible the intensification of development.

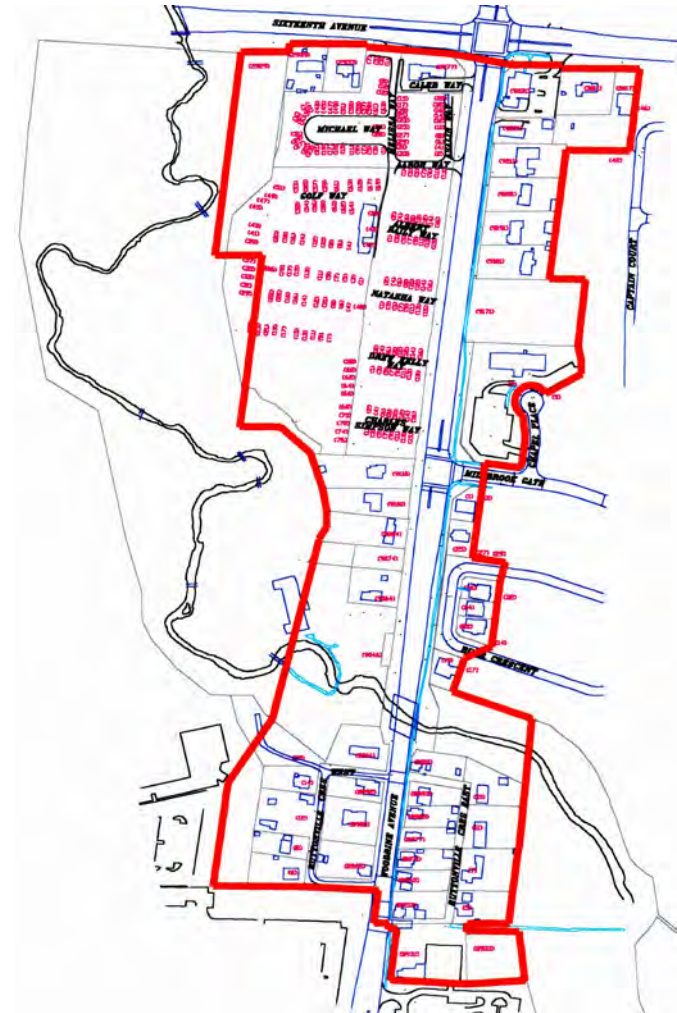


Figure 1: Study Area

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- Changes have been made to Official Plan designations and Zoning By-law provisions. In 1988, zoning was amended from low-density residential to Urban Residential Medium Density (I) and (II). On the privately held lands south of the River, this zoning envisions up to 89 dwelling units where 20 buildings currently stand.
- New development has occurred along Woodbine Avenue.

In spite of these changes, the historic hamlet of Buttonville has remained a distinctive community in the Town of Markham. Most of the heritage resources that were present in 1988 remain. Many historic properties have been restored, and some have been converted to new uses. 14 properties within the Study Area have been designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*—all since the original study and plan.

### 1.6 Updated Heritage Conservation District Study 2004-2006

#### 1.6.1. Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Study Process

Council authorized the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan Update project in 2004. The extent of the study area is shown on Figure 1. The consultant team of Phillip Carter and Paul Oberst was hired to undertake the work, and a Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Advisory Committee was appointed to oversee the process. There were two meetings with local property owners. The first was an introductory meeting on April 27, 2005, to present the heritage conservation district concept and to seek public input into the study.

A follow-up meeting was held on October 27, 2005, to present the findings of the study to the public and to seek input on appropriate boundaries for the proposed heritage conservation district.

#### 1.6.2 Results of the Study

In June 2005, the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan Update Report was completed by the consultant team and presented to the advisory Committee at its meeting of June 15, 2005. The Advisory Committee was supportive of the study, including the consultant team's recommended boundary for the heritage conservation district, which consists of the core area of the village and the adjacent valleylands that once contained the mills and mill ponds. The key findings of the study were that:

- Buttonville contains a significant number of buildings of cultural heritage value and significance,
- Buttonville is a district cultural heritage landscape worthy of designation as a heritage conservation district,
- local residents value the special character of old Buttonville including the heritage homes, village like scale, back streets, trees and valleylands,
- main concerns include the negative impact of Woodbine Avenue on the community and instances of poor property maintenance,
- the community is generally supportive of heritage district designation.

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### 1.6.3 Study Review and Approval

In September, 2005, the study and boundaries were presented to Heritage Markham. The Committee recommended approval of the study but suggested that the boundaries of the district be expanded to include properties fronting on Woodbine Avenue all the way up to 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue, as well as several properties on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue west of Woodbine Avenue.

The Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Study and proposed boundaries were presented to local residents and property owners at a meeting held at the Heritage Schoolhouse, south of Buttonville, on the evening of October 27, 2005. At this meeting, most of the questions and input from the public centred on the implementation of the heritage conservation district plan and the process of approvals for alterations to properties and buildings.

The Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Study and Boundary was received and endorsed by Markham Council on January 31, 2006. The boundaries of the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District as recommended by the consultant team and Town staff were approved, and authorization was given to proceed with the preparation of the Heritage Conservation District Plan on the basis of these boundaries. Significant heritage properties in the northern portion of the study area not included in the Heritage Conservation District Boundaries were subsequently individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* to ensure their long-term protection.



*The Rouge River valley and the woodlands define the setting of the hamlet.*

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### 1.7 Policy Considerations for the New Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Plan

#### 1.7.1 Overview

The *Ontario Heritage Act* allows a Heritage Conservation District Plan to address many policy areas directly, and Heritage Conservation District plans can recommend changes to existing municipal policies to help reinforce the preservation of heritage character. The 2005 amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act* (Bill 60) enlarges the mandate of heritage conservation district plans in some areas. For example: a municipality can now prevent, not just delay, demolition of properties designated individually or as part of a heritage district; design guidelines can control landscape elements, not just “structures;” and municipalities can now enact property maintenance standards for heritage elements on buildings.

Section 1.7.2 and 1.7.3 below, outline policy areas that the Plan can directly address, and those that the Plan can recommend be addressed by other municipal action.

#### 1.7.2 Heritage Conservation District Policy Areas

**Key Policy areas of the District Plan include:**

- prevention of demolition of heritage buildings,
- design guidelines to control alterations, additions and restoration to heritage buildings,
- guidelines for alterations and additions to non-heritage buildings,
- guidelines for infill buildings,
- guidelines for landscapes and fences,

- design guidelines for public works, including Town and Regional governments,
- develop a plan to reinforce the heritage character of the hamlet, recognizing that the crescents and the valley are at the heart of that character.



*In front of the original house at 8971 Woodbine Aveue, with the houses at 8977 and 8985 in the background. Casella #44*



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### 1.7.3 Policy Recommendations in Other Areas

Key policy recommendations for other areas affecting Buttonville include:

- create a by-law establishing standards for the maintenance of heritage attributes of property situated in the district, under the newly added Section 45.1 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*,
- reclaim the old Lutheran Church site at the south side of Buttonville Crescent West as a public amenity, and maintain it,
- reinforce the viability and character of the crescents by bringing the surface, base, and drainage up to standard, and by installing appropriate street lighting,
- revise Official Plan and Zoning By-law provisions to support the goals and policies of the heritage district plan,
- study ways to reduce traffic speeds on Woodbine Avenue, and to minimize the negative impact caused by the volume of traffic,
- issue of air traffic is beyond the scope of this Study.

### 1.8 District Boundaries

During the 2004-2005 Heritage Conservation District Study, it was noted that the aspects of Buttonville most valued by the participants are the old hamlet and the natural areas, and that the distinction between these and the surrounding developing context is appreciated. This agrees with:

- the consultants' analysis of the effects of the changes since the 1988 plan,
- the principle that a Heritage Conservation District should form a distinct area,
- and the historical origins of the Buttonville hamlet.

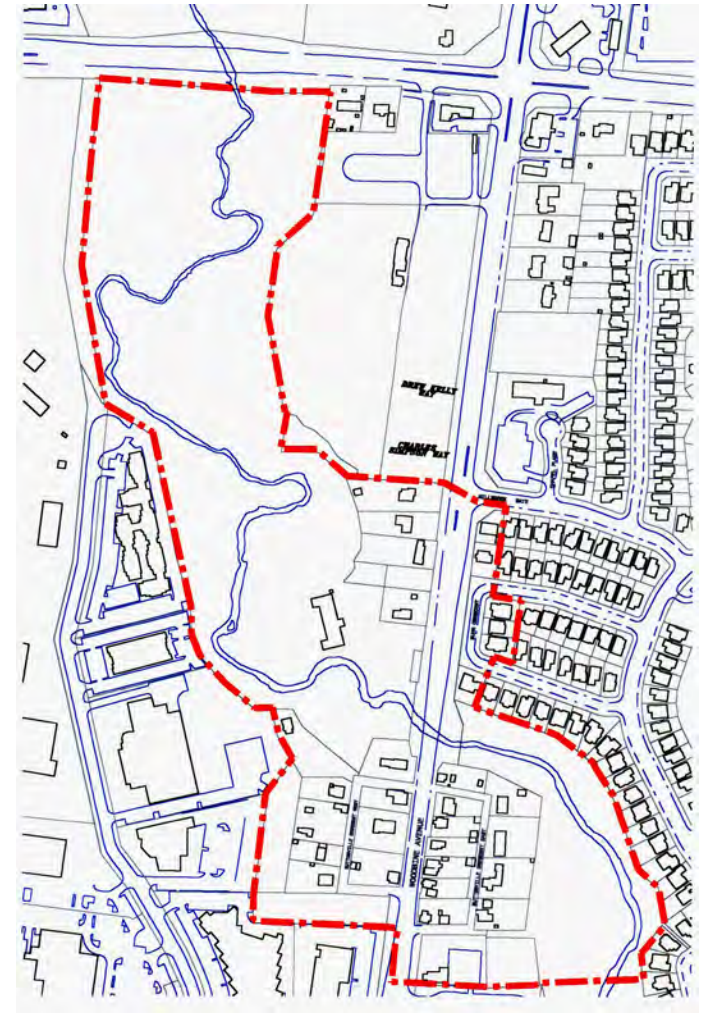


Figure 2: Buttonville Heritage Conservation District

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The consultants recommended that the 1988 boundary be revised to reflect these concerns. The intensive redevelopment north of Millbrook Gate, combined with the widening of Woodbine Avenue has created a modern suburban character that is distinct from the character of the core hamlet. The intermittent heritage resources in this area are protected by Part IV designations. The historical genesis of Buttonville lies in the mill hamlet and the Rouge River, which drove the three local mills.

Council endorsed the boundaries of the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District in January 2006, as illustrated on Figure 2.



*The Buttonville Heritage Conservation District boundaries focus on the core of the hamlet that grew up around the local milling industries. Casella #22*

## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

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### 2.1 Examination

In accordance with the provisions of Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the consultants conducted an examination of the Study Area and the surrounding area. The examination had two components:

- an investigation of the overall heritage character of the various features and sections of the Study Area to determine where a suitable District boundary should be located.
- a detailed inventory of every building and property, whether historical or recent, within the boundary of the proposed Heritage District. The inventory forms the second part of this document.

In accordance with the *Ontario Heritage Act*, a “Statement of Heritage Value” was developed based on the findings of the examination. This is found in Section 2.2 of this document.

#### 2.1.1 Heritage Character

The heritage character of the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District reflects the built and natural heritage of the original hamlet. As in many of Upper Canada’s early rural settlements, the conjunction of Simcoe’s road grid with a stream presented the opportunity for a sawmill – a necessity as timber was cleared for farms and lumber was needed for construction of barns and houses. As the farms began to produce, grist mills were needed to turn wheat into flour. Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century maps are dotted with “SM” for sawmill, and “GM” for gristmill.

The history of Buttonville begins with the Willcocks and Baldwin mills on the west side of Woodbine Avenue. The coming and going of local farmers to the mills presented the opportunity for other enterprises, and the mills required housing for the workers. Major Button, who owned the land on the east side of the road, co-operated with Robert Baldwin in arranging the layout of a hamlet with back streets (the current crescents) on either side of Woodbine Avenue. Baldwin’s preference for large lots, and Button’s preference for small lots, are still preserved in the plan of the hamlet.

The Stiver Sawmill, on the eastern (Button) side, added further employment and economic activity. However, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, railroads and large-scale industry made Buttonville an economic anachronism, and Venice Mill – the last hold-out – stopped production when the dam washed out in 1920. The hamlet remained, largely undisturbed, for another half century.

The District includes the sites of Buttonville’s mill pond and its three mills: Willcocks, Baldwin, and Stiver. It includes the original two-crescent hamlet, and the nearby heritage houses north of the Rouge River. Of the 31 properties in the proposed district, 20 are graded “A” in the District Inventory and 14 of these are individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. In addition, the town-owned Lutheran Church site, St. John’s Lutheran Cemetery and the mill sites have historical and archaeological interest though no original buildings remain.

## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

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The heritage buildings in Buttonville date from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and represent the range of styles typical of the period. Most of the houses are the simple, modest dwellings built for the tradesmen and labourers that lived in the hamlet during its historical period as a mill village.

The majority of the heritage buildings are residential, but other types are included in the district: shops, town barns, a smithy and a community meeting hall.



*Heritage Buildings on Woodbine Avenue have been converted to commercial uses.*



*The former site of Buttonville's Mill Pond is a significant green space.*

## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

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### 2.2 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest

The Buttonville Heritage Conservation District is a distinct community in the Town of Markham, characterized by a wealth of heritage buildings, sites, and landscapes.

The Buttonville hamlet is representative of the earliest rural settlement type in Upper Canada: the mill-based village that was necessary for the development of farms from forest in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Though its origins are typical, the layout of the hamlet is a unique plan of twin crescents flanking a historic main road.

Buttonville is also noteworthy for its association with William Willcocks who was the Town of York's first postmaster and a member of Upper Canada's social elite, and Robert Baldwin, a lawyer and politician known as the father of responsible government in Canada.

Although the widening of Woodbine Avenue has changed the spine of the hamlet, the District retains its original layout and many heritage buildings and sites, including outbuildings, remain largely intact. The historical context of the river-driven mills that brought the hamlet into existence lies in the valley lands along the Rouge River.



*The Tomlinson house & store at 8953 Woodbine Avenue is said to be Buttonville's first shop.*



*The Mill House at 9064 Woodbine Avenue was originally a 1-1/2 storey Georgian house, associated with the Venice Mill.*

## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements



*The Button Family House at 8977 Woodbine Avenue is the best-preserved pre-Confederation building in Buttonville.*

### 2.2.1 Individual Designations within the District

Within the District, there are 14 properties that have been individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. These properties are included in the Part V designation of the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District.

In accordance with the revised *Ontario Heritage Act*, these properties are governed by both Part IV, in terms of alterations that affect the reasons for designation, and Part V in terms of provisions of the District Plan.

These properties are individually designated under Part IV:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>By-law</b>
William Willmott House	25 Burr Crescent	2002-5
William Morrison House and Cobbler's Cottage	12 Buttonville Cres. W	2001-150
John Stiver House	1 Millbrook Gate	180-98
Women's Institute	8931 Woodbine Ave.	2005-79
St. John's Cemetery	8933 Woodbine Ave.	2005-77
Tomlinson House, Store and Craig Blacksmith Shop	8953 Woodbine Ave.	2008-7
Edward Pease House	8965 Woodbine Ave.	178-88
Sanderson Store	8966 Woodbine Ave.	2004-43
Buttonville General Store and Hood House	8971 Woodbine Ave.	2003-9
Button House	8977 Woodbine Ave.	2008-247
Alexander Brown House	8980 Woodbine Ave.	2001-147
George F. Kelly House	8992 Woodbine Ave.	2001-194
Jackson Willmott House	9001 Woodbine Ave.	72-1999
Buttonville Mill House	9064 Woodbine Ave.	2003-315

At the time of these designations, a detailed designation report was prepared, identifying "reasons for designation", or a "statement of cultural heritage value or interest" for each property. These reports are on file with the Town of Markham, and should be consulted whenever changes to these properties are proposed.

## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

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### 2.2.2 Building Classification System

All the buildings within the District have been evaluated in the course of preparing the District Inventory that forms a separate volume of the Plan. Each building has been placed in one of three categories:

#### **Class A**

Buildings/properties of major importance to the District.

- They have cultural heritage value or interest;
- They are the buildings that maintain the heritage character of the District, primarily pre-1940;
- These buildings/properties possess heritage attributes or character-defining elements such as materials, features, characteristics, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses, or cultural associations that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the District (i.e., historic architectural styles and building placement, the use of traditional wall claddings, windows, architectural features, roof shapes, porches, and landscape features);
- Includes buildings that are designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

#### **Class B**

Buildings/properties that are important in terms of contextual value:

- They are good neighbours to the significant buildings, and contribute to the heritage character of the District by virtue of design, materials, and scale—though they may not be heritage buildings themselves, and may be very recent;
- They support and help to define the character of the District;

- They may be heritage buildings that have been altered in ways that have diminished their heritage qualities, but could be restored;
- Over time, a Class B building could be reclassified as a Class A, as certain styles become more significant, or restoration work is undertaken.

#### **Class C**

Buildings that do not relate to the heritage character of the District.

- They are not sympathetic to the heritage character of the district by virtue of design, materials, and scale.
- They may be newer buildings that were designed and built without consideration of the heritage character of the District.

Once approved, the classification for each property will remain in place until formally changed by Council, with opportunity for both owner and public input.

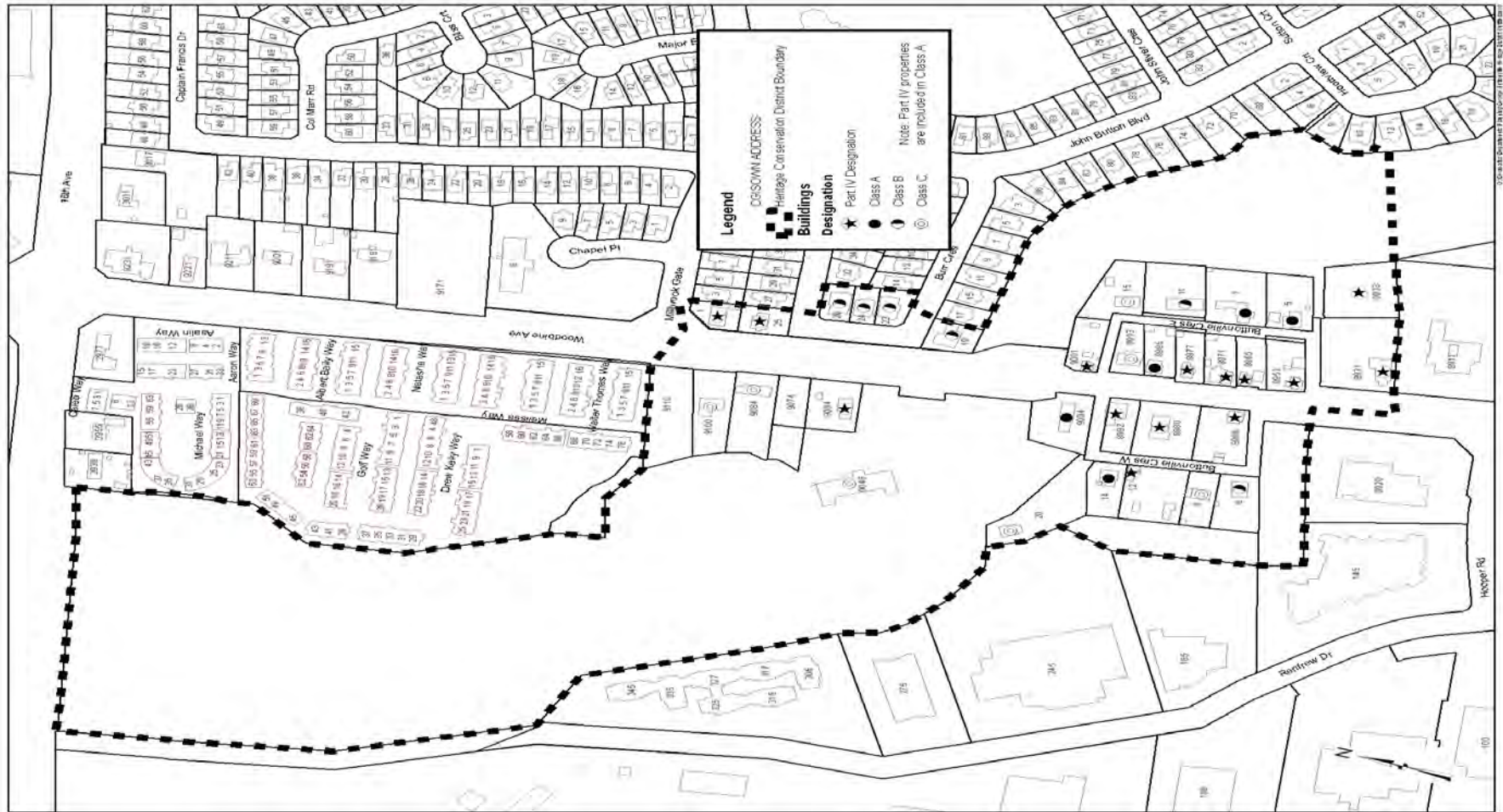
Classifications may be subject to change over time as more information becomes available about a property or if significant restoration work or improvements are undertaken. For example, a Class C building may be modified so that it becomes complementary to the district and should be revised to a Class B.

The process by which a building/property classification could change is summarized in Appendix C.

The classification of each property is shown on Figure 2. A detailed description of each property in the District can be found in the District Inventory, published separately.

## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

### 2.2.3 Building Classifications Map 2 – Figure 2



## 2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements

## 2.3 Statement of Heritage Attributes



The heritage attributes of the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District are embodied in its historical associations, buildings, street and lot patterns, and landscapes. These attributes are of significant cultural heritage value or interest, and are worthy of preservation. They are described in detail in the Buttonville Heritage Conservation District Inventory, which forms a separate volume of the District Plan.

## **2.4 Statement of Objectives in Designating the District**

### **2.4.1 Overall Objective**

To ensure the retention and conservation of the District's cultural heritage resources and heritage character, and to guide change so that it contributes to and does not detract from, the District's architectural, historical, and contextual character.

### **2.4.2 Objectives for Heritage (Class A) Buildings**

To retain and conserve the heritage buildings identified as "Class A" in the District Plan.

To conserve heritage attributes and distinguishing qualities of heritage buildings, and prevent the removal or alteration of any historic or distinctive architectural features.

To correct unsympathetic alterations to heritage buildings.

To facilitate the restoration of heritage buildings based on a thorough examination of archival and pictorial evidence, physical evidence, and an understanding of the history of the local community. To promote retention and reuse of heritage buildings and take exceptional measures to prevent their demolition.

### **2.4.3 Objectives for Other (B and C Class) Buildings**

To retain or enhance the complementary character of Class "B" buildings.

To discourage the demolition of Class "B" buildings and encourage their retention, especially if the building is supportive of the overall heritage character of the area.

To facilitate improvements to Class "C" buildings so that they may further enhance the District's heritage character.

### **2.4.4 Objectives for Streetscapes, Landscapes, and Open Space**

To preserve the rural character of the village core and the natural character of the valley lands, and to reconnect the two halves of the hamlet with each other and the valley.

To preserve trees and mature vegetation, and encourage the planting of species characteristic of the District, such as lilac.

To facilitate the introduction of, as well as conservation of, historic landscape treatments in both the public and private realm.

To preserve historic fences and introduce new fences that respect historic patterns and styles while meeting contemporary needs

To retain the existing street pattern, ameliorate the negative effects of the widening of Woodbine Avenue, and discourage further widening.

To encourage the enhancement of Woodbine Avenue through

## **2.0 Heritage Character and Heritage Statements**

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### **2.4.5 Objectives for New Development**

To ensure compatible infill construction that will enhance the District's heritage character and complement the area's village-like, human scale of development.

To guide the design of new development to be sympathetic and compatible with the heritage resources and character of the District while providing for contemporary needs.

### **2.4.6 Objectives for Community Support**

To foster community support, pride and appreciation of the heritage buildings, landscapes, and character of the District, and promote the need to conserve these resources for future generations.

To facilitate public participation and involvement in the conservation of heritage resources, landscape character and further development of the District.

To offer assistance and incentives to individual heritage property owners to encourage the use of proper construction approaches when undertaking maintenance and improvement projects.

streetscape studies or environmental assessments.

### **2.4.7 Objectives for Business/Tourism**

To work with business owners on Woodbine Avenue to maintain a progressive and competitive environment while at the same time protecting the heritage attributes of the District that make the area a unique and distinctive commercial office environment.

To promote and protect the historic character of the District as a basis for economic development elsewhere in the Town.

## 3.0 Review and Interpretation

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### 3.1 Review of Activities in the District

#### 3.1.1 Activities Subject to Review

In accordance with Section 42.1 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the Goal and Objectives, Policies, and Design Guidelines in this document will be used to review the following types of activities in the District, other than those exempted below:

- The erection, demolition, or removal of any building or structure, or the alteration of any part of a property other than the interior of a building or structure, and excluding activities described in Section 3.1.2 below. (A 'Structure' is anything built that is intended to be permanent, such as outbuildings, fences, signs, and infrastructure items such as utility boxes.)
- All matters relating to the Town of Markham Official Plan, and the regulation of zoning, site plan control, severances, variances, signage, demolitions, building relocation, and planning, urban design and other related studies.
- All municipal public works, such as street lighting, signs, landscaping, tree removal, utility locations, and street and infrastructure improvements.
- All activities of the municipal and regional governments.
- All activities of the provincial and federal governments (even though not binding)

The review of activities in the District will primarily focus on work or projects visible from the public realm (i.e., front and visible side elevations of property.)

#### 3.1.2 Activities Exempt from Review

In accordance with Section 41.1 (5)(e) of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the following classes of alterations that are minor in nature, are not required to obtain a heritage permit, and are not subject to review under this Plan:

- any interior work, except that which affects external appearance.
- general repairs to eavestrough, roofs, chimneys, fences, exterior cladding, and weather-stripping (not replacement).
- Repairs to broken window panes to original specifications, not window unit replacement.
- Roof re-shingling as per the District Plan policies and guidelines.
- New or replacement rear yard fencing unless on a corner lot or a lot with visibility from the crescents.
- Repainting in existing colour scheme if the colours are in conformity with the District Plan or in conformity with a previous Heritage Permit.
- Paving or re-paving a driveway in asphalt, and
- Backyard features that are not visible from the public realm, such as patios, pools, ponds, fountains, garden, and tool sheds, gazebos, doghouses/dog runs, and other small outbuildings.

### 3.2 Contexts for Interpretation

Provisions of the District Plan should be considered within the contexts of:

- The Ontario Planning Act
- The Provincial Policy Statement, and
- Overall municipal objectives and goals.