

**To:** SPECIAL COUNCIL

**Meeting Date:** 5/31/2022

**Subject:** Request to Alter a Part IV Property, McDougall Cottage Sign Permit Application

**Submitted By:** Lisa Prime, MCIP, RPP Chief Planner

**Prepared By:** Laura Waldie, CAHP Senior Planner-Heritage

**Report No.:** 22-066-CD

**File No.:** R01.01.60

**Wards Affected:** Ward 5

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT Report 22-066-CD (Request to Alter a Part IV Property, McDougall Cottage Sign Permit Application) be received;

AND THAT Cambridge Council approves the request to erect a freestanding sign frame with the maximum size of 2.44 metres by 2.13 metres adjacent to the rear addition southwest façade of the property municipally known as 89 Grand Avenue South.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to request approval for the placement of a sign frame to hold painted murals at the McDougall Cottage located at 89 Grand Avenue South.

### **Key Findings**

- A sign permit application was submitted by the Region of Waterloo, who owns the McDougall Cottage, on August 17, 2021 to the City's Building Division for a freestanding sign frame at 89 Grand Avenue South.
- The subject property was designated in 1988 under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act by by-law 58-88.
- The City's Sign By-law 03-191 gives the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee the delegated authority to approve sign permit applications related to heritage properties. According to the Sign Bylaw, should MHAC refuse to approve a sign permit application, the matter must be referred to Council for a final decision.

- The MHAC did not approve the sign permit request on October 21, 2021.
- The proposed sign frame has been reduced from its original size of 2.74 metres (nine feet) by 2.74 metres (nine feet) down to 2.44 metres (eight feet) by 2.13 metres (seven feet)
- No permanent alteration to the main structure is proposed as the sign frame will be 0.26 meters (10 inches) away from the house.

## Financial Implications

There are no financial implications to the City for this application. The property owner is responsible for all costs associated with this request.

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

- ☒ Strategic Action; or  
☐ Core Service

**Objective(s):** PLACEMAKING - Promote and create a wide range of destinations and activities that capitalize on the beauty of the rivers and heritage buildings

**Strategic Action:** Enhance opportunities to enjoy built and natural heritage

**Program:** Tourism Promotion & Visitor Information

**Core Service:** Not Applicable

## BACKGROUND:

A sign permit application was received on August 17, 2021 by the City's Building Division for a freestanding sign at 89 Grand Avenue South.

The property contains a one-storey coursed granite and limestone Ontario Cottage constructed in 1858. The property was constructed as a worker's residence under the ownership of John MacDougall. The property was designated for its architectural and contextual significance. The property owned by the Region of Waterloo and maintained by the City of Cambridge, currently functions as a historic site and interpretive centre that is open to the public. One of the most popular programs run from McDougall Cottage is their local arts program.

The applicant is proposing to install a new freestanding sign holder which will display a mural by local artists to assist with the interpretation of First Nations culture as part of the historic site's art programming. The proposed sign's dimensions are 2.44 metres (eight feet) by 2.13 metres (seven feet). The board will be constructed of crezon (a plywood core product) with a steel plate frame and steel legs. It will be mounted on concrete sonotube piles, that will be driven approximately 0.26 metres (10 inches) in front of the existing structure's southwest corner.

An evolving selection of murals, to be replaced every 1-2 years and depicting the work of local indigenous artists, will be painted on a sign board that will fit within the sign holder frame (**Figure 2**). No artificial illumination has been proposed and the sign holder frame will not be physically attached to the structure. Therefore, there will be no adverse effects to the structure itself.



Figure 1: 89 Grand Avenue South Current Conditions, Google Street View, October 2020.





Figure 2: Rendering of Proposed Sign Provided by Applicant, August 17, 2021.

## ANALYSIS:

On November 1, 2021, planning staff met with Region of Waterloo's McDougall Cottage staff to address some of the concerns that MHAC members had with the application. In terms of the location of the sign frame, planning staff asked if the Region would consider installing the sign frame in the Sculpture Garden, provided that the City of Cambridge, who owns the Sculpture Garden property, agreed to the installation and upkeep of the sign frame. The Region of Waterloo, who owns the McDougall Cottage, indicated they preferred to keep the sign frame on the McDougall Cottage property. Heritage planning staff then discussed the placement of the sign frame on the property including alternate locations on the property. Because of the size of the property, it was determined that the best location was the location indicated in the sign permit application. Moving the sign frame closer to the street was determined to not be a good option as moving it forward would likely visually obscure more of the stone work than from the proposed location. The Region would like to have the sign frame face the

street to entice people to come onto the property to see the art display up close. Attracting visitors onto the property would also encourage visitors to the interior of the cottage on days that it is open to the public.

The Region of Waterloo staff indicated that no formal consultation with the area's Indigenous groups was conducted. However, an Indigenous artist who has consulted with the Region before on artist programs throughout the Region, was contacted for their opinion about the sign permit application. Through that conversation, it was deemed that the McDougall Cottage was an important cultural asset in the Region of Waterloo and would make an ideal location based on its existing art programming, accessibility and potential for pedestrian drop-ins.

The McDougall Cottage was recognised at the time of its designation as having important cultural heritage value for its Scottish and Welsh heritage. The murals inside the cottage are also part of the designation statement and reveal very detailed Trompe L'oeil characteristics that had been painted by one of the cottages inhabitants in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These murals tell the story of how important art was to all citizens of early Galt and not just the wealthy who could afford such artistic styles. The McDougalls and, particularly, the Bairds were Scottish working-class citizens who enjoyed art and artistic styles as much as the McCulloughs or the Dicksons. Therefore, the Region of Waterloo feels that the McDougall Cottage is an important location to help tell the stories of other local area artists who also have an important voice in the artistic community.

Therefore, the Region of Waterloo is seeking to diversify its art programs at McDougall Cottage through the displaying of art from different ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic and gendered voices through its Public Art programs. The City of Cambridge also shares this vision by having inclusiveness and respect as two of its core values.

There is no physical impact to the stonework identified in the designation bylaw as the sign frame will not be physically attached to the building but will be .26 metres (10 inches) in front of the wall. The visual impact to the building is proposed to be minor as only a portion of the southwest addition, set back from the front façade of the structure, will obscure the stone work. The wood and steel materials of the sign board are not anticipated to detract from the heritage resource. Staff considers these compatible materials.

Planning staff is of the opinion that the proposed sign will enhance the heritage resource by providing the opportunity to interpret the indigenous history of the area and by showcasing the work of indigenous artists. Painting the mural onto a freestanding sign ensures that no damage will occur to the heritage resource and the alteration is easily reversible in future through removal. The visual impact is minimal as it will be erected at the rear of the property away from the main façade of the cottage nearest the

street. No external illumination has been proposed for any art work displayed in the sign frame.

## **EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):**

### **Ontario Heritage Act**

#### **Alteration of a Property**

33 (1) No owner of property designated under section 29 shall alter the property or permit the alteration of the property if the alteration is likely to affect the property's heritage attributes, as set out in the description of the property's heritage attributes in the by-law that was required to be registered under clause 29 (12) (b) or subsection 29 (19), as the case may be, unless the owner applies to the council of the municipality in which the property is situate and receives consent in writing to the alteration. 2019, c. 9, Sched. 11, s. 11.

### **City of Cambridge Official Plan**

Section 5.12 of the City of Cambridge Official Plan states that

1. The design and placement of signage will complement the streetscape and the built form and will minimize visual clutter.
2. Signs will be incorporated into the architectural design of the building. Placement of signage will be assessed as part of the design of the building and considered as part of a landscaping plan through site plan approval.
3. In Community Core Areas and where addressed in urban design guidelines, overhead lighting of signage is required instead of backlit signage unless there is no feasible alternative.

### **Sign By-law 03-191**

By-law 03-191 states that,

All proposed signs in Heritage Conservation Districts, and on Designated properties, shall be forwarded to the Heritage Planner for Cambridge Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee approval before being erected. However, the Cambridge Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee is not empowered to refuse to approve the plans or drawings of such signs referred to in this section of the by-law and shall refer such plans and drawings where refusal is recommended to the Council of the Corporation of the City of Cambridge.

The regulations prescribed in sections 8.1(a), 11.2, 13.2(a) and (b), 22.1 and 22.3 shall not apply to the permitted signs in Heritage Conservation Districts and on Designated Properties and the following regulations shall apply in their stead:

(a) A wall sign shall have a total sign area not greater than 0.3 m<sup>2</sup> for each 1.0 m of linear frontage of the building wall upon which the sign is located and, in any event, not greater than 1.25 m<sup>2</sup> for each sign.

(b) No sign installed or erected in Heritage Conservation Districts and on Designated Properties shall be internally illuminated.

(c) No business establishment shall have more than one sign per storey for each building face of such establishment.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact to the City of Cambridge. The property owner is responsible for all costs associated with the sign permit application.

### **PUBLIC VALUE:**

#### **Leadership:**

This project is contributing to residents' pride of place by involving the residents of Cambridge and beyond in the celebration of local Indigenous artists. This is an opportunity for inclusiveness and the sharing of the Indigenous experience through mural art.

#### **Engagement:**

Meetings of the MHAC are open to everyone to attend.

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:**

On September 16, 2021, a recommendation report was brought forward to the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee recommending approval of the sign application and variance. At that time, members of the MHAC expressed concern about the location of the sign frame. Some members expressed concerns that a portion of the stone wall on the southwest facing rear addition would be obscured by the sign frame. The MHAC members deferred a decision on the installation of the sign frame until the following information could be presented in a subsequent recommendation report:



1. Explore other options for installing the sign frame at another location on the same property or in the Sculpture Garden if another location on site is not feasible; and
2. What consultation was done by the Region with local Indigenous groups on the proposed sign application.

This information was brought back to the MHAC on October 21, 2021 for a decision. Members of the MHAC continued to express concern regarding the location for the sign holder since it obscured too much of the quoins on the southwest corner of the addition. Concerns were also raised about the subject matter materials that would be displayed in relation to the history of the house.

In a 8-1 vote, MHAC refused the application.

#### **PUBLIC INPUT:**

Meetings of the MHAC are open to everyone. The Committee continues to meet virtually.

#### **INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:**

City Planning staff met with Regional staff to discuss the MHAC concerns.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Based on the planning analysis in this report, staff is recommending that Council approve the request for a sign permit at 89 Grand Avenue South for the mounting of a freestanding sign adjacent to the front façade.

#### **REPORT IMPACTS:**

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

#### **APPROVALS:**

**This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:**



**Director**

**Deputy City Manager**

**Chief Financial Officer**

**City Solicitor**

**City Manager**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**N/A**