

# Council reverses decision, will now seek heritage designation on Barber Mill

**CYNTHIA GAMBLE**  
Staff Writer

Based on discussions with the developer, Halton Hills council has reversed its decision, and will now pursue a heritage designation on the Barber Mill property.

The decision was confirmed at last week's council meeting (Sept. 18).

The Barber Mill property, located on River Dr., is the site of the former Barber Paper Mill, a late 19th century industrial complex that housed a papermaking/wallpaper operation that was instrumental in the economic development of Georgetown. More importantly, it was the first industry in North America to use hydro-electric power.

In July, council had deferred the designation while the developer worked through some issues.

But late summer discussions changed the minds of some councillors and staff, when they met with Victor Boutin of Everlast Restorations, which plans to build possibly a hotel and other commercial ventures, plus a 14-storey residential condominium. According to the staff report, Boutin advised he was concerned about the conditions of the structures and whether they could be preserved. He suggested instead of possibly demolishing the structures and reusing the stone to replicate the structures during the development of the site.

As a result, staff recommended that council proceed with designation under Part 4 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The developer will also be required to prepare engineering assessment report to review the current condition of the buildings and what needs to be done to preserve them. As well, the developer will be required to submit at Heritage Impact Assessment to detail the impacts of the proposed development on the heritage buildings. Council will review the status of designation for possible modification after receiving those two reports.

Ward 3 Councillor Moya Johnson said the buildings are now being "demolished by neglect".

"What changes if we do get this designation? Probably nothing at the moment, we certainly can't go in and do the work ourselves, ...but at least the buildings can't be torn down. Designation protects them from demolition. ...At least the site will be protected if we designate it; it's too important to leave to happenstance and the nature of the elements."

"Designation," she said, "is the first step, and the details will play out in the fullness of time."

Wards 3&4 Regional Councillor Jane Fogal attributed part of the blame to the Credit

Valley Conservation, which has put the developer into a holding pattern for four years, waiting for answers from that agency.

Boutin had told staff and councillors he needs approval for the condominium in order to make redevelopment financial viable, and because it is so intertwined with the site plan of the rest of the property, he cannot proceed. However, final decisions by Town and other agencies such as the Credit Valley Conservation on the condominium has been delayed for years. Most of the delay is due to the environmental conditions of the site and of studies requested by the CVC and the Ministry of Environment, according to a staff report.

"It's part of the reason this place is falling apart," she said. "You wait around and wait around (for a decision) and it just deteriorates. It's more than a shame, it's a crime to have it unfold in that way."

"It was shocking to hear Mr. Boutin say quite clearly the buildings were gone in his opinion and his solution was to take them down and use them in the rebuilding," said Fogal. "Whether that counts as heritage, I don't know. ...We all thought we were working to similar goals to protecting these buildings, preserving them, bringing back to life. But in effect they been ignored and left there to deteriorate."

All members of council approved the designation motion, with the exception of Ward 4 Councillor Ron Chatten, who abstained.

Several citizens attended the Sept. 5 council meeting to press the civic body for a designation approval, condemning the council for its early summer decision not to proceed with designation, unaware the Town had already changed its position.

Jim Troy, a representative of the neighbourhood group, Barber Mill Credit River Valley Association, said the town is at a crossroads with this site, and its protection should not be left in the hands of the builder but instead, should be the responsibility of the Town. Any further delay he said would only serve to cause the systematic destruction of the place.

"We're realistic in this thing. We understand that there are pieces of those buildings that will now have to come down or be made safe," he said, commenting that the effort to get the property designation began more than two years ago. He said, while the group does not oppose development of the site, designation would allow the Town to supervise the building activity to protect its heritage.

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**MOYA JOHNSON**  
Buildings are now being 'demolished by neglect'



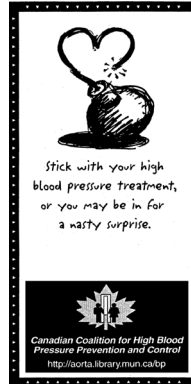
**JANE FOGAL**  
Blames delay on CVC. 'You wait ...and wait (for a decision)'



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