



# Heritage Ottawa NEWSLETTER

**Dedicated to Preserving Our Built Heritage**

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Photos: Courtesy The Ottawa Citizen



[www.heritageottawa.org](http://www.heritageottawa.org)

Since it opened in 1912, the Château Laurier has been an integral part of the symbolic heart of our Nation's Capital.

Despite a massive public outcry, City Council voted on July 11 to allow this defacing addition.

### IT'S NOT OVER!

Heritage Ottawa is raising funds toward a legal challenge to protect the integrity of the Château and its nationally symbolic landscape.

### YOUR SUPPORT COUNTS!

All donations, large or small, will make a difference. Tax receipts will be issued.

### PLEASE DONATE NOW!

Online at GoFundMe ([gofundme.com/save-chateau-laurier-sauver](http://gofundme.com/save-chateau-laurier-sauver)) or by cheque payable to Heritage Ottawa (with "Château Laurier" on the memo line).

For more information visit:  
[Heritageottawa.org/  
save-chateau-laurier](http://Heritageottawa.org/save-chateau-laurier)  
or call 613-230-8841

## Château Laurier: How did it come to this?

By Peter Coffman



*Proposed addition to the north side of the Chateau Laurier*

Despite a massive wave of public opinion and expert analysis urging otherwise, Ottawa City Council voted on July 11 to allow the proposed incompatible addition to the iconic Château Laurier to go ahead. Caught up in procedure over consequences, many councillors voted in favour of the project even after publicly stating how much they disliked it. Cries of "Shame!" resonated from the packed public gallery.

### How did it come to this?

From the very beginning, this issue has been about compatibility — or, more precisely, about the planned

addition's lack of compatibility with the heritage building to which it is attached.

Compatibility may sound hopelessly subjective, but in fact there are coherent principles behind it and time-tested ways of achieving it. The new can simply reproduce the forms of the old, which happened when the Château was enlarged in 1927. Or the new can allude to the old in a more metaphorical way by echoing salient forms, patterns and other design characteristics in a modern addition. This is what Diamond Schmitt did at the National Arts Centre in 2017.

Photo: City of Ottawa dev apps

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*Heritage Ottawa is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of Ottawa's built heritage.*

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*Heritage Ottawa acknowledges the financial support of the City of Ottawa and the Ontario Ministry of Culture*

## How did it come to this? (contd.)

Or the new can eschew the forms of the old completely, but express its underlying ethos and values in contemporary architectural language as Arthur Erickson did at the Bank of Canada in 1974.

Ignoring all of these paths to compatibility is not really making an “addition” to the historic building at all — it’s just marking territory. And that’s what is happening at the Château Laurier.

The Château is picturesque, romantic and playful. Its towers, turrets and gables are an integral part of the sublime, rugged silhouette of Parliament and its surroundings. The planned addition is essentially a box: all straight lines, right angles and mathematical precision. It does not echo the older building’s forms, nor does it join in its romantic spirit.

What will disappear is a series of iconic views of the Château Laurier: from Major’s Hill Park, from the Bytown Museum, from the river and from Gatineau. But it’s not just the Château that will be affected. Parliament Hill, the Rideau Canal (itself a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the Château form an ensemble, all situated on a dramatic landscape that these structures were carefully crafted to complement. This vista has been on our dollar bill and on our postage stamps. It is emblematic of the capital, and by extension the nation. The addition will draw a curtain across an integral part of one of the country’s most spectacular and revered architectural tableaux.

## How did the process fail?

First, there’s the design process. Yes, the Château Laurier is private property. But it is also a designated heritage building, abutting

(and benefiting from) a publicly owned park, canal and parliamentary buildings. It is a private building in which the public has a huge and legitimate stake. Yet what passed for “consultation” amounted to a parade of speakers, mostly affiliated with the building’s owner, explaining why they thought the design was brilliant. A truly consultative process would not have meant unanimity on another design, but we could have had a public that was engaged, rather than enraged.

It was ultimately up to City Council to accept or reject the result. According to the Mayor, Council did not have the authority to dictate to private property owners what style or architect should be used. This ignores the fact that City Council had not only the authority but the duty to reject any addition deemed unsuitable to a heritage building. Although not a single councillor could find anything positive to say about the design, a majority voted to accept it. They genuinely seem not to know that they have a legal responsibility to enforce the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

## Next steps

In order to obtain a building permit the owner, Larco Investments, must obtain a minor variance at the Committee of Adjustment that would allow the removal of the Heritage Overlay on the property. This is a public forum that welcomes input by citizens concerned about what is being proposed. Heritage Ottawa will be participating in that process and will be notifying others as the date approaches.

*Peter Coffman is the supervisor of Carleton University’s History and Theory of Architecture Program, past president of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, and a member of the board of Heritage Ottawa.*

# Heritage Ottawa's Rural Heritage Initiative

By Sampoorna Battacharya

Photo: Sampoorna Battacharya



*Metcalfe Village grocery store and pizza shop*

Thinking of “Ottawa” brings to mind the Parliament buildings, the famous Rideau Canal, the Byward Market, with its daytime charm as well as its thrilling nightlife, and the excellent museums and galleries. Although often assumed to be a small city, Ottawa is geographically larger than the cities of Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and Montreal combined. Ninety percent of this land is rural, but with only ten percent of the total population residing

there. Due to this, the heritage of rural Ottawa has been overlooked, neglected and underrepresented in inventories of heritage properties.

On January 1st, 2001, eleven municipalities were amalgamated under the jurisdiction of Ottawa. Before amalgamation, the townships were represented by their own mayors and municipal councils. Afterward, the previous townships became wards within Ottawa.

Heritage Ottawa's Rural Initiative aims to improve heritage awareness and advocacy of rural historical villages of Ottawa, as advised by the residents of rural communities. Several rural residents, heritage leaders and City Councillors have been interviewed over the summer to better understand the challenges and potential concerning rural heritage conservation.

If you would like to provide your thoughts and ideas on how Heritage Ottawa can better publicize and advocate for rural heritage, please email us at [info@heritageottawa.org](mailto:info@heritageottawa.org)

Rural communities are the heart of Ottawa, contributing to our livelihoods which are enriched with healthy food and greenspace. Rural heritage deserves to be understood, celebrated and protected for generations to come.

*Sampoorna Battacharya has been the Heritage Ottawa office manager/intern for 2019. She will leave Ottawa soon to pursue post-graduate studies at the University of Guelph.*

## Heritage Ottawa 2019-2020 lecture series.

Heritage Ottawa's 2018-19 lecture series concluded with a fascinating talk on modern residential architecture in Ottawa by architectural historian Saul Svirplys. This fall's lectures will continue with our modernist theme as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Bauhaus movement. Our line up includes a history of modernism in Canada with Globe and Mail architecture critic Alex Bozikovic (rescheduled from February 2019) as well as presentations featuring reuse and renewal of modern sites in Ottawa and around the world. Our traditional emerging scholar pub night, a history of Vanier and Ottawa's LGBTQ communities, a look into the Algonquin Way Cultural Centre, and the captivating stories of two local restoration efforts round out the programme. Watch for all the details on the Heritage Ottawa website or in the 2019-20 lecture series brochure coming to your mailbox later this summer.

# Adaptive re-use of heritage buildings: A conversation with architect practitioners Robert Martin and Mark Brandt

By Hunter McGill

***Are commissions for adaptive re-use of heritage buildings welcome? Do they allow for architectural creativity?***

**Mark Brandt (MB)** There is considerable scope for creativity, taking into consideration the building as ecosystem, and being mindful of the context in which it sits. Successfully revitalizing and renewing the existing structure challenges the architect's creativity. Adaptive re-use of heritage buildings helps reduce our carbon footprint, recognizing and retaining their embedded energy

**Robert Martin (RM)** A further challenge for the architect is to overcome the consequences of "deferred maintenance" of an old building. Though the developer may want to get a bigger structure to compensate for existing building retention and repair, the architect should emphasize the attraction of the dialogue between old and new and the story of the original building and its material, re-used respectfully.

**MB** We should not overlook industrial built heritage, though the origins of a building may be "unpleasant" (exploitation of labour, brownfield consequences), opportunities for re-use remain. Industrial buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have many interior and exterior features which offer opportunities for retention and re-use. The tendency is to demolish.

**RM** There is a perception that heritage buildings are an "albatross",

weighing down future development potential, which is often not true at all. The task of the architect is to persuade and educate the owner/developer on adaptive re-use and its value and attractiveness.

***Have you done adaptive-re-use projects you believe are noteworthy and could be models for future projects?***

**RM** The former TD Bank at the corner of Richmond Road and Churchill Avenue, now Gezellig Restaurant, is an example of a "standard" 1950s-1960s commercial building with good features and materials which was adapted to open up interior spaces and enlarge windows to admit more light, while respecting the original silhouette. The Dome Building at Rideau Hall, originally a 19<sup>th</sup> century heating and lighting gas storage facility, was restored and adapted for use as offices for the Governor General's secretariat, requiring the installation of an elevator and other features to meet code stipulations, while respecting distinctive exterior features. Also the St Charles project on Beechwood Avenue, involving preservation and adaptation of a church and sympathetically adding a link to the new building components of the project.

**MB** all saints, redevelopment of a former Anglican church in Sandy



Photo: Hunter McGill

*Sir John A Macdonald building on Wellington Street, previously a bank and now a federal government conference space*

Hill, with heritage significance to the interior and exterior spaces, presented challenges in terms of which elements of the collection of buildings to retain or dismantle (ie Bate Hall) in order to provide opportunities to accommodate new structures essential to the financial success of the adaptive re-use project overall. Also, the Sir John A Macdonald building on Wellington Street, previously a bank and now a federal government conference space, necessitated the incorporation of significant technical features and security features. As an example of what is possible, MTBA has prepared proposals for the building and grounds at 24 Sussex Drive, the Prime Ministerial residence, ("24 Designs for 24 Sussex") focussing on conservation and sustainability.

## ***What are the opportunities and challenges in Ottawa for adaptive re-use? How should the City encourage/facilitate adaptive re-use?***

**MB** The federal government owns many interesting buildings of the 1950s and 1960s which are candidates for renewal, and could be adapted and rehabilitated to incorporate re-use elements. There are many opportunities to be found in the redevelopment of the Parliamentary Precinct along Wellington Street. In terms of potential actions to promote adaptive re-use and rehabilitation there are examples of tax and grant incentives implemented in the USA over the last 40-50 years, based on the evidence that preservation and adaptive re-use has significant socio-economic multiplier effects, using important, rigorous criteria.

This would require a sustained federal initiative, filtering down through the province to the municipal level. In the case of CHIS reports, these should be done from the start of the project planning process, rather than waiting until the design work is well advanced.

**RM** The City has taken an important step by increasing the grants available to property owners for heritage building repair and restoration, though the amounts are still modest in terms of the cost of work for some candidate buildings; this can be an important incentive for individual owners. The City could investigate using Section 37 offsets for development approvals to create additional incentives for larger scale projects. As Mark has commented, the economic impact of built heritage re-use is significant. City planning staff could make further efforts to

communicate the objectives of the heritage register, a tool aimed at documenting (not controlling) the city's built heritage resources.

**MB and RM** The City has to resist façadism, which is not really re-use as the interior is lost and it is a slippery slope, very tempting to some developers who can claim to be preserving through this "Lick and Stick" approach. This approach fails to retain the existing buildings' embodied energy which is lost in the required demolition.

Robert Martin is Principal/CEO at Robertson Martin Architects, Ottawa

Mark T Brandt is Principal at MTBA Architects, Ottawa

*(This article has been condensed from a rich and wide-ranging two-hour conversation on the many dimensions of adaptive re-use.)*

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## **Note from the City of Ottawa's Heritage Planning Section**

**Court Curry, Manager, Right of Way, Heritage and Urban Design, City of Ottawa**

The prelude to summer is always a busy time at City Hall and this one has been a busier one than usual with several important heritage applications, including the addition to the Chateau Laurier. Wherever you sit on the spectrum, this proposal has provoked a healthy debate in our community on the importance of architecture and place-making.

There have been two initiatives that have moved forward in the past month that will shape the heritage program. The first is Council's approval of our Term of Council Heritage Action Plan - the City's built heritage workplan for the next four years (available in the heritage section on Ottawa.ca). Connecting, Policy Innovation, and Process Improvements are the three main

thrusts and I encourage you to see our ambitious plans to develop new heritage conservation district plans, a commitment to more proactive Part IV Ontario Heritage Action designations, and improving our communications, through initiatives such as this note.

Our second major initiative has been Council's approval of 2,344 properties to our robust new Heritage Register.

With properties dating from the 1790s to the 1970s, the Register will serve as a city-wide inventory of properties that have cultural heritage value that provides us with an opportunity to take stock of our city's finest jewels, and also allows the City to monitor their demolition through the requirement to provide the City with 60 days' notice of

an owner's intent to do so. The project will be completed later this year with the addition of properties affected in parts of the city damaged by the 2018 tornado and flooding. One of the legacies of this project is an interactive map on Ottawa.ca where you can see all Register properties, including photos and their architectural descriptions. This project is a giant step forward for the heritage program that will unlock many other opportunities, and it wouldn't have been possible without the support of Heritage Ottawa over the years.

We always welcome your ideas and comments about built heritage in Ottawa. For general inquiries please reach out to us at heritage@ottawa.ca or myself directly at court.curry@ottawa.ca. Best wishes for the summer ahead!

# Heritage Ottawa Completes Hat Trick: Exploring Eastern Ontario

By Nicole Sammut

Photo: Nicole Sammut

Heritage Ottawa completes the hat trick this year with their third annual field trip to Eastern Ontario. Community members and Heritage Ottawa volunteers alike set out in late May to visit Ontario's Gingerbread capital, Vankleek Hill followed by a visit to Macdonnell-Williamson House near Pointe Fortune.

The outing began with a walking tour of Vankleek Hill from tour guides, Debbie Hall and Gary Barton from the Vankleek Hill & District Historical Society. The group was exposed to a wide variety of architectural features that define the Picturesque or Canadian Gingerbread style. These features are consistent in both the design of residential and commercial buildings within the town. Picturesque features include the decorated red brickwork accentuated by white, wooden trim, gables with asymmetrical rooflines, quaint porches and balconies. Buildings are further elaborated with detailed latticework, scalloped roof and porch tiles, columns, brackets and spindles.

There is a remarkable sense of community pride and support in Vankleek Hill which is demonstrated by the continued care and maintenance of the countless picturesque properties. This care also extends to the historical murals painted by Elisabeth Skelly and Odile Tetu. Painted in the trompe-l'oeil style, the principal mural located on Home Avenue illustrates early storefronts and community life of the town. Some of the murals are currently under restoration to preserve their integrity and longevity.



*Principal Historical Trompe l'oeil mural illustrating early storefronts and community life*



*Guided Walking Tour with volunteer Gary Barton, retired Mayor of Vankleek Hill*

Photo: Ian Ferguson



*Macdonnell-Williamson House, 1817*

Following the walking tour, the group headed near Pointe-Fortune to the Macdonnell-Williamson House. The two-storey villa was built by John Macdonnell on the Ottawa River in 1817. The building is a National Historic Site and an exemplary structure built by the North West Company fur trading partners. While the structure is in need of extensive restorations, the building is supported by the Friends of Macdonnell-Williamson House.

Heritage Ottawa would like to acknowledge and thank all of the participants that joined us on our visit to Eastern Ontario. Thank you for another successful exploration of Ontario's built heritage!

*Nicole Sammut is a volunteer and past member of the Heritage Ottawa Board of Directors.*

Photo: George Henderson

# A Century Later. What has come of the promise of Bauhaus and its “New Architecture”?

By Barry Padolsky

*(The unabridged version of this article first appeared in the Ottawa Citizen on December 1, 2018)*

April 1, 2019, marked exactly 100 years since the founding of the iconic Bauhaus School of Design in Weimar, Germany.

Born out of the ruins of the First World War, the Bauhaus pioneered a “New Architecture.” Led by its founder, architect Walter Gropius and his successors, Hannes Mayer, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the Bauhaus explored space and form using 20th century science and technology.

Learning from the lessons of the industrial revolution, Gropius and his peers, such as the Swiss/French architect Le Corbusier, argued that the New Architecture must embrace, not resist, standardization. It should exploit mass produced building materials such as steel, glass and concrete (beton brut).

This New Architecture, Gropius prophesied, would meet modern society’s urban needs through less cost and effort. Workers would be liberated for the pursuit of higher activities. The egalitarian dreams of the enlightenment would be fulfilled through applying the tools of industrial revolution to architecture. Buildings and indeed cities would be “machines for living.”

Design would have a new aesthetic, free of “dead styles from antiquity which ceased to have significance.” Building forms would reflect their functions and be unencumbered by ornamentation. Their beauty would be inherent in their pure forms.

In addition to architecture, the Bauhaus taught painting, pottery, sculpture, industrial design, furniture design, theatre, photography, film, glassmaking, weaving, graphics, typography and bookbinding.

The Bauhaus dream was to integrate the arts into a holistic habitat for humanity. The New Architecture,

Gropius predicted, would embrace the visual arts in “one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith.”

## Utopian cities

Gropius advocated that the principles of the New Architecture should also be applied to city planning.



*Bauhaus building (1925), designed by Walter Gropius.*

*Photo: Creative Commons Wikimedia/Janine Pohl*



## The promise of Bauhaus (contd.)



*Walter Gropius, architect and founder of the Bauhaus School, circa 1919*

Europe's historic cities and architecture, congested and unsanitary, should be replaced by new cities where blocks of apartment buildings 10 to 12 storeys high, spaced evenly apart in parkland settings, would incorporate the wholesome qualities of the countryside.

These principles were dramatically illustrated in 1925 by Le Corbusier in his urban renewal plan for Paris. In the "Plan Voisin," the historic district around the Louvre would be razed and replaced with 18 identical monumental cruciform towers set in parkland and bisected by freeways. "Paris of tomorrow" he wrote "could be magnificently equal to the march of events that is day by day bringing us ever nearer to the dawn of a new social contract." To the relief of many, the project was never realized.

### Death of the Bauhaus

Sadly, the Bauhaus was short-lived. In 1933, when Hitler's National Socialist party seized power in Germany, the Bauhaus (now in Berlin) was forcefully shut down.

Former staff and students were persecuted, jailed and executed. Walter Gropius and his colleagues fled Germany for America.

Notwithstanding its rejection by the Third Reich, modern architecture, named the "International Style" by American historian Henry Russell Hitchcock, was poised to sweep the planet.

### Never ending modernism?

In the century since the birth of the Bauhaus, modern architecture has evolved from a counterculture movement to the default visual language of an urbanized planet. More than 73 per cent of the planet's population inhabits the world's cities built since 1919. Their visual habitat is a never-ending modernism. Designing in "historical" styles has all but been abandoned. Would Gropius be pleased?

Modern architecture, he warned, could easily become fashionable and imitative. Even worse, it could reflect a form of "snobbery that distorts the fundamental truth and simplicity upon which the principles of the New Architecture were founded."

Gropius argued that if the Bauhaus evolved into just another visual "style," its teachings will have failed.

He may have been prophetic.

### Is modern architecture history?

In 1996, the Bauhaus campuses in Weimar and Dessau, Germany, were declared by UNESCO to be World Heritage Sites. One wonders what Gropius and his colleagues would have felt about this honour.

On the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bauhaus it may be worth re-examining the Bauhaus's remarkable legacy: its revolutionary achievements and its awesome failures.

Is it time to admit that the solutions offered by "modern architecture" may have exhausted their usefulness?

Is it time to concede that "modern architecture" may have mutated into just another "historic style" with no intrinsic values to help us face our contemporary urban cultural and environmental challenges?

The answers may be yes.

*Barry Padolsky is the president of Barry Padolsky Associates Inc. Architects, an Ottawa based architectural, urban design and heritage consulting practice founded in 1969.*



*Gropius House (1938) in Lincoln, Massachusetts*