

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT



MARJORIE HANCOCK HOUSE

2182 CORSAIR AVENUE
COOKSVILLE, MISSISSAUGA

27 APR 2020_FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The subject property is a residential lot that backs onto the Hancock Woodlands, a 6.7-acre community park in Cooksville. It contains the former home of Marjorie (Hancock) Van Alstyne and was acquired by the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division after Marjorie's death in 2016. It is not listed on the heritage inventory but was identified in a 2011 *Cultural Heritage Assessment* as a component of a cultural landscape that includes the Hancock Nursery, Woodlot, and 3 adjacent lots containing houses built by the Hancock family. In 2014 the City-owned portion of the Hancock Woodlands was added to the Municipal Heritage Register but the three houses were not included at that time because they were still in private ownership. This *Heritage Impact Assessment* has been prepared to assist the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division in exploring options for integrating the subject property into the Hancock Woodlands Park.

Marjorie Hancock was an accomplished designer, artist and horticulturalist. In 1969 she commissioned McLaren & Tsow architects to design a modern house for her and her family. The architectural design of the house reflects her interest in progressive architecture and the collection of rhododendrons and azaleas in the grounds reflects her horticultural achievements. The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division plans to demolish the house so that these grounds can be preserved as part of the Hancock Woodlands Park and made accessible to the public. A *Commemorative Strategy* is being developed in consultation with heritage staff to commemorate the house and the contributions of Marjorie (Hancock) Van Alstyne on the Hancock Woodlands site. The house is referred to in this report as the 'Marjorie Hancock House'.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This *Heritage Impact Assessment* was prepared by heritage consultant Megan Hobson for the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division to clarify heritage values associated with the Marjorie Hancock House and to assist them in developing a strategy for conserving those values on the Hancock Woodlands site. The process also allowed them to explore alternative options as part of the heritage impact assessment process. This report meets requirements in the City of Mississauga's *Terms of Reference for Heritage Impact Assessments*. Background information including a 2011 assessment of the Hancock Woodlands by Dan Chalykoff and Owen Scott was reviewed. Additional research and on-site investigation was undertaken and relevant heritage policies were addressed. Consultation with City Staff was undertaken that included meetings with John Dunlop, Supervisor of Heritage Planning, Sharon Chapman, Manager of Parks Planning, Olav Sibille, Team Leader for Long-Term Parks Planning and project manager Anna Melikian. The purpose of these meetings was to identify issues associated with the City's ownership and operation of the subject property and future plans for the Hancock Woodlands site.

2.0 LOCATION

The subject property is located at 2182 Corsair Road in a residential neighbourhood in Cooksville that is north of the Queen Elizabeth Way and east of Hurontario Street. It is a residential lot on the west side of Corsair Road, a residential side street lined with single-detached suburban homes. It abuts the northeast corner of Hancock Woodlands Park, a 6.7-acre community park that extends through the block to Camilla Road.



Left: The subject property is adjacent to the Hancock Woodlands Park, an area that is zoned G2 Greenlands and OS1 Open Space



Right: The subject property is zoned R3 Residential



Streetscape on Corsair Road: the dense woods on the subject property are a unique feature in the suburban streetscape.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

See Appendix A: SITE PHOTOS



2182 Corsair Road contains a 1-storey, L-shaped house built for Marjorie Hancock in 1969.

Marjorie Hancock House

The subject property contains a 3-bedroom house that is oriented at a 45-degree angle to Corsair Road. It is unique within the suburban streetscape in terms of its orientation and architectural character. It is a one-storey structure with flat and shed roofs and an L-shaped plan. The rear wall of the house is glass and the other walls are clad with wood siding. There is a stone chimney on the main elevation that is constructed of randomly coursed sandstone.



2182 Corsair Road – main elevation (left) from Corsair Road and rear elevation (right) from the back yard.

The house combines natural materials such as wood and stone with engineered and pre-fabricated components such as steel and glass. It is constructed with load-bearing wood beams that are joined with steel plates and bolts. The main living areas and the master bedroom have large floor to ceiling windows, exposed fir beams and cedar plank ceilings. These rooms are oriented towards the back yard and have spectacular views of the garden and woodland setting behind the house. The roof that slopes up towards the exterior wall gives added drama and emphasis to these views. The rustic stone fireplace in the main living room is a central focus of the interior. There is a forced air heat system with floor vents.



Living room with glazed wall, exposed beams and rustic stone fireplace

The wood beams, stone fireplace and transparent walls merge interior and exterior, creating a sense of immersion in nature. In contrast, the pod-like character of the bedrooms creates a sense of security for those private areas, similar to natural forms such as a seed-pod or a cocoon. The narrow entrance hallway provides shelter from cold winds and ensures privacy from the public street.

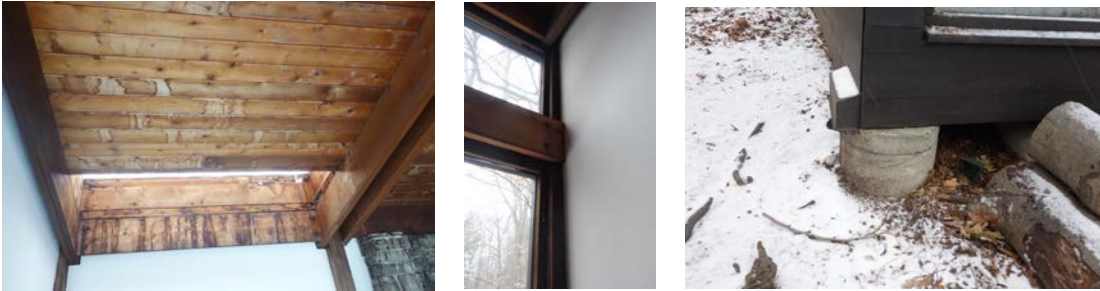


Futuristic 'sleeping pods' arranged serially along the secondary axis

Condition Issues

The house is currently vacant. During the site visit the condition of the house was investigated. Observations are based on a non-structural assessment and informed by a visual inspection only. The roof was not accessed. In general, the building appears to be in fair condition however some condition issues were noted including the following:

1. Roof: There was no evidence of active leaks on the interior but there was evidence of extensive roof leaks in the past, including staining on interior woodwork, damaged drywall and removal of floor coverings in the living room. Water staining on woodwork was most noticeable around the skylights and the fireplace.
2. Windows: There is some evidence that the seals have failed including gaps, condensation and water damaged frames and sills.
3. Foundation: the concrete block foundation wall appears to be dry and there was no standing water in the basement. The rear wall of the house rests on concrete piles that may not meet modern building code. (It was built this way to protect the roots of trees in the back yard)



Condition issues include water staining, failed window seals and areas without a foundation wall

Grounds

The house is surrounded by mature trees and shrubs and is well screened from Corsair Road. The back yard is located on the edge of the woodlot on the Hancock Woodlands site. Beneath the heavy canopy is a woodland garden that contains a collection of mature rhododendrons and azaleas planted by Marjorie Hancock. The site visit was undertaken in the winter so plants were dormant and the ground was snow covered. Further documentation in the spring is recommended.



View from Corsair Road (left) and views from the back yard into the woodlot behind the house (right)

4.0 HERITAGE PLANNING CONTEXT

The subject property is not listed on the Heritage Inventory. It is adjacent to the Hancock Woodlands, a public park that was added to the Municipal Heritage Register in 2014. The Hancock Woodlands was added to the Heritage Register based on recommendations in a *Cultural Assessment* carried out in 2011 that identified the site as an important cultural landscape within the Cooksville community. Heritage Mississauga describes the Hancock Woodlands as follows:

This property of approximately 10 acres was a commercial site known as Hancock Woodlands, a nursery, but also residences to the Hancock family. Leslie Hancock, founder of Woodland Nurseries with his wife Dorothy, was an internationally noted horticulturist, plant breeder, teacher, soldier and politician. Their son Macklin was a landscape architect and planner, responsible for planning Don Mills in the 1950s and Meadowvale and Lake Aquitaine in the 1960s and 70s; their second son Don is a landscape architect and their daughter Marjorie was an artist and nurserywoman. The property exists as an oasis of natural and built heritage under civic ownership and a future park. It is listed on the Heritage Register. Description as of May 2014. [Heritage Mississauga]



Leslie Hancock (left) and Woodland Nurseries in 1978 (right) [Heritage Mississauga]

The subject property is directly associated with the Hancock Woodlands because it contains a house built in 1969 for Marjorie Hancock, the daughter of Leslie and Dorothy Hancock. After Marjorie's death in 2016, the property was acquired by the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division so that it could become part of the Hancock Woodlands property. The Hancock Woodlands supports a number of community uses and a community group called the *Friends of Hancock Woodlands* has been formed to participate in the stewardship of the park. The park includes walking trails and gardens and has become a place for engaging and educating the public about nature and horticulture.



Hancock Woodland Park [Friends of Hancock Woodlands Facebook page]

The Hancock Woodlands is approximately 6.7 acres with about 3 acres of wooded space full of plants and trees. It contains a mature rhododendron, azalea and mountain laurel plant collection that grows beneath a canopy of ancient white pine, oak, beech and hemlock. The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division has developed a Master Plan for the park that includes a natural playground, a tree garden, an urban orchard, rain gardens, walking pathway loops, shade shelter and perennial and ornamental grass displays.



Concept drawing for Hancock Woodlands (2017)

Located within the Hancock Woodlands are a number of built heritage resources that will be restored and opened to the public including:

- Greenhouse & Header House (1930)
- Nursery Office (1951)



Header House, 1930 (above) and Nursery Office, 1951 (below)

5.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Historically, the subject property and the Hancock Woodlands are part of 10-acre parcel of land purchased by Leslie Hancock in 1930. He established a commercial nursery there called the Hancock Nursery and built a house on the property. He and his wife Dorothy had three children, Macklin, Don and Marjorie. All of the children were involved in the family business.

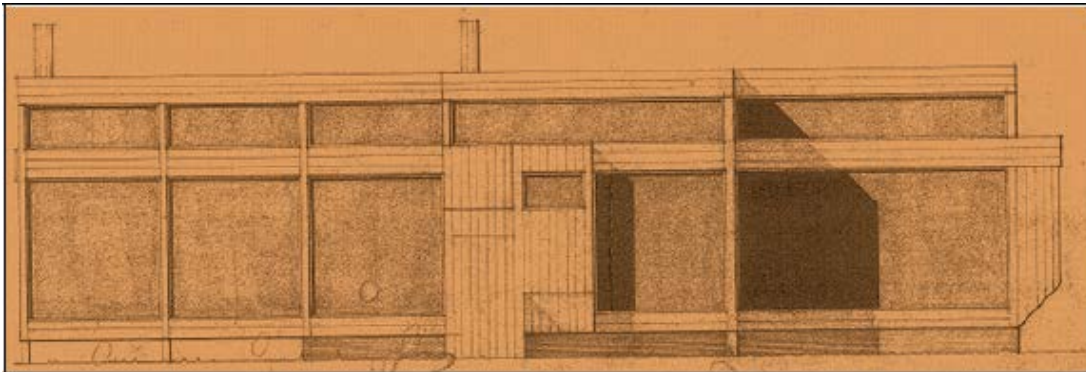
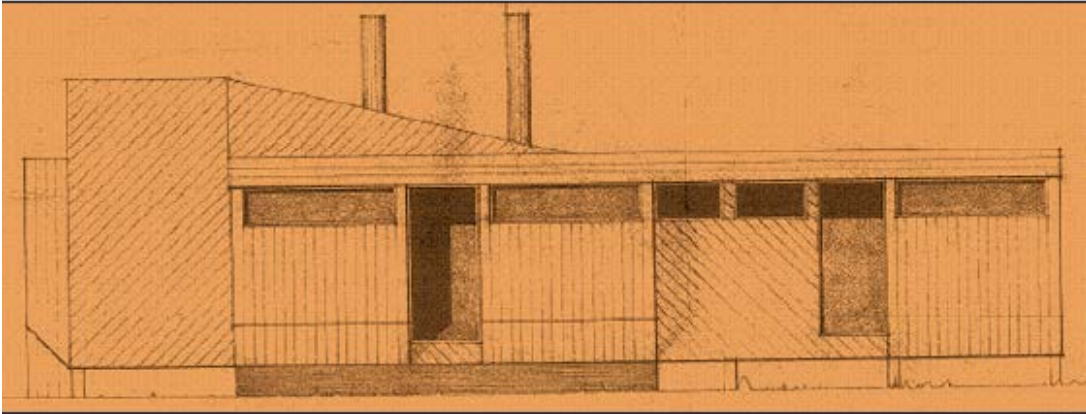


Marjorie Hancock as a child seated on her mother's lap (left) and later in life (right).

The subject property contains the house built in 1969 by the Hancock's daughter Marjorie, after her marriage to Bob Van Alstyne. She built her house backing onto the woodlot and raised her two sons here while working as co-manager of the Hancock Nursery alongside her father. The nursery imported rhododendrons and azaleas from Asia and at its height had more than 30 species. She worked with her father to found the Rhododendron Society of Canada in 1972 and she was a very knowledgeable horticulturalist and a fierce steward of the woodlot. The house is oriented in relation to the sun and to the arrangement of large trees on the property, rather than the suburban street grid. The shaded and well-drained conditions under the heavy tree canopy provided the perfect conditions for cultivating various species of azaleas and rhododendrons. The plant collection reflects Marjorie's many achievements as a professional nurserywoman and her lifelong passion for the woodlot and for rhododendrons and azaleas.

Marjorie was also interested in progressive architecture and this is reflected in the architecture of the house. She studied design at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto. After graduating, she worked with her brother Macklin who was an internationally recognized landscape architect and town planner. Macklin was instrumental in the design of Don Mills (1952-1958) one of the most important Post-War developments in Canada. He subsequently founded a firm called Project Planning Associates that went on to complete many significant Canadian and international projects. The Don Mills project represents a watershed in terms of modern architecture in Ontario because a Modernist aesthetic was maintained throughout the whole project. All of the houses and buildings in the original development were designed by Modernist architects such as John B. Parkin Associates, Venchiarutti & Venchiarutti, Henry Fliess, James Murray, Irving Grossman and Michael Bach. Marjorie Hancock worked on the Don Mills project designing 'colour palettes'. It is no surprise therefore, that Marjorie had very progressive architectural tastes. She hired McLaren & Tsow Architects to design her house on Corsair Road in a modern style.

In her obituary published in the Toronto Star in 2016, Marjorie Hancock is described by her family as a Nurserywoman and an Artist with “a lifelong interest in progressive architecture and landscape design.” Her house is a testament to her interest in progressive architecture and was designed by the Toronto architectural firm McLaren & Tsow. The work of this firm has not been studied so their significance and influence has not been evaluated. The only information that could be located was that Peter D. McLaren was appointed as a ‘Life Member’ of the Ontario Association of Architects in 2016.

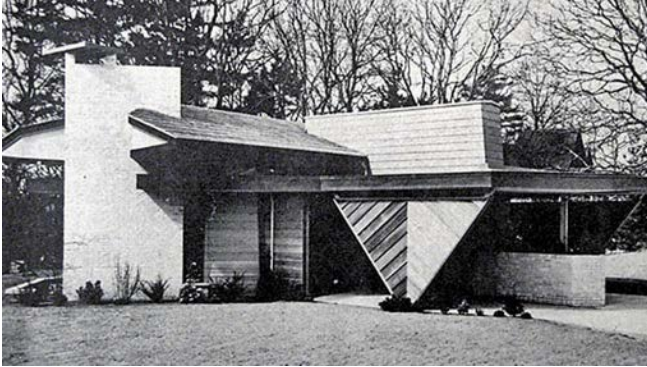


Drawings by McLaren & Tsow Architects for the front (above) and rear elevations (below)

Regardless of the lack of information about the work of McLaren & Tsow, the design clearly reflects progressive architectural ideas associated with the second generation of Canadian modernists who aimed at translating European modernism into a regional or Canadian Modernism by using Canadian materials and incorporating features suited to the Canadian climate. The subject dwelling combines aspects of West Coast Modernism of the 1950s with the interest in modular design of the 1960s. The former expressed in the open plan living areas with exposed rafters and large plate glass windows oriented towards the back yard. The latter is expressed in the pod-like bedrooms arranged serially along a secondary access. It uses Canadian wood products and local stone and the design is sensitive to its natural setting, all ideas that were at the forefront of design around mid-century.

The West Coast House was popularized through the 1954 Trend Houses that were built in major cities across Canada to promote Canadian wood products. Expo '67 in Montreal showcased

experiments in 'modular design' by Mosh Safdie in his designed for Habitat, a large apartment block of modular units stacked together. The Marjorie Hancock House combines aspects of these progressive trends and is a good example of Mid-Century Modern design.



Left: 1954 Trend House, Victoria BC by John Di Castri – West Coast Modernism
 Right: 1967 Habitat, Montreal by Mosh Safdie – modular design



Left: 1954 Trend House, Calgary with furnishings by Eatons
 Right: 1969 Marjorie Hancock House by McLaren & Tsow

6.0 HERITAGE VALUE

According to Subsection 1 (2) of Ontario Regulation 9/06, Criteria for Determining Cultural Heritage Value or Interest, a property may be designated under section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

6.1 EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ONT. REG. 09/06

CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT (YES/NO)	RATIONALE
2182 CORSAIR ROAD, MISSISSAUGA		
1. DESIGN OF PHYSICAL VALUE		
i) Is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method	YES	It is a representative example of Mid-Century Modern residential design dating from 1969.
ii) Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit	NO	It displays a moderate degree of artistic merit as a modern dwelling that combines West Coast Modernism, popularized through Trend Houses in the 1950s, and aspects of modular design from the 1960s.
iii) Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement	NO	It displays a moderate degree of technical achievement in relation to the mass production of Canadian wood products for residential housing. It is a good example of modern post and beam construction using pre-fabricated wood roof trusses joined with steel plates and bolts.
2. HISTORICAL OR ASSOCIATIVE VALUE		
i) Has direct associations with a theme, event, believe, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community	YES	It has direct associations with Marjorie (Hancock) Van Alstyne, a locally significant artist and nurserywoman who was co-manager of the Hancock Nursery founded by her father Leslie Hancock.
ii) Yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture	YES	It is a private residence that has potential to yield information about the life of Marjorie (Hancock) Van Alstyne and her family. It may have potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of architectural culture in the Greater Toronto Area in the 1960s.

iii) Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to the community	NO	It reflects the ideas of Peter D. McLaren, a Toronto architect who was appointed as a Life Member of the Ontario Association of Architects in 2016. The work of his firm McLaren & Tsow has not been studied so its significance is unknown at this time.
3. CONTEXTUAL VALUE		
i) Is important in defining, maintaining, or supporting the character of an area	YES	It is important in supporting the character of the Hancock Woodlands cultural landscape.
ii) Is physically, functionally, visually, or historically linked to its surroundings	YES	It is physically linked to the woodlot on the Hancock Woodlands and is historically linked to associations with the Hancock family in the period from 1930 to 2016.
iii) Is a landmark	NO	It is a small private residence that is screened from public view by large trees and vegetation.

7.0 PROPOSED DEMOLITION

The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division purchased the subject property so that it could retain the trees and mature plantings on the property as part of the Hancock Woodlands. The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division does not have a need for the house and does not have a budget to maintain the building. Based on an understanding that the house may have cultural heritage value, they sought advice regarding alternative options. This process included meeting with heritage staff and retaining a consultant to undertake a *Heritage Impact Assessment*.

Alternative Options

Potential For Re-Use

The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division does not have a need for the Marjorie Hancock House and does not have the financial capacity to upgrade and rehabilitate it to support a new use. There are existing buildings located on the Hancock Woodlands property that they own and maintain. Financial resources to restore and maintain these structures have already been earmarked in their budget. These buildings are expected to serve their needs on the site and have been included in a new Master Plan for the Hancock Woodlands site. These plans were put in place prior to acquisition of the Marjorie Hancock House.

Therefore, rehabilitation is not feasible from a financial and operational standpoint.

Mothballing For Future Use

The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division does not have the financial capacity to maintain a structure that it does not have a use for. It does not anticipate a need for this building in the future. The Marjorie Hancock House fronts on a residential street. Shuttering the building would not be compatible with the residential neighbourhood because it would be vulnerable to break-ins and vandalism. Residents in the area would likely be opposed to having a vacant boarded-up building on their street. If the building was mothballed it would have to be secured and protected. These measures would restrict public access. This would not be compatible with Parks, Forestry and Environment Division's reason for acquiring the property to increase the amount of publically accessible parkland.

Therefore, mothballing without a plan for future use is not recommended because it may have a negative impact on the neighbourhood and the Hancock Woodlands.

Disposal

The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division consulted with the Culture Division to determine if there was an interest in restoring and operating the site as a heritage site. John Dunlop, Supervisor of Heritage Planning, has indicated that the City already maintains a number of house museums and does not have the financial resources to take on any additional properties at this time.

The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division does not want to sell the property on the open market because it would be vulnerable to redevelopment by a future owner. It would like to retain this parcel as part of the Hancock Woodlands because of its association with the Hancock property and because it will allow them to better protect the woodlot that extends onto the subject property. It will also provide the park with significant frontage on Corsair Road. Retaining this parcel as part of the Hancock Woodlands will contribute to maintaining the integrity of the larger *Cultural Landscape* and will increase the amount of publically accessible parkland. It will also allow for better access and more visibility from Corsair Road.

Therefore, disposal of the property to another City department is not an option and sale on the open market is not recommended because the property would be vulnerable to redevelopment that may have a negative impact on the Hancock Woodlands.

Relocation

Relocation is not recommended because the house was specifically designed in relation to its physical setting, natural features, and scenic views into the woodlot. Relocation would sever these important relationships. Furthermore, relocation would likely require dismantling and rebuilding of the structure because of the large glazed walls and open plan interior. This would result in considerable loss of original fabric and would not be cost effective.

Therefore, relocation is not recommended because it may be detrimental to the cultural resource.

Demolition

Demolition of the Marjorie Hancock House will allow the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division to integrate the grounds into the Hancock Woodlands. This will increase parkland and ensure public access to the property. It will also provide better access into the Hancock Woodlands from Corsair Road. The mature trees and plantings will be protected and maintained as part of the Hancock Woodlands.

Therefore, given the financial and operational constraints noted above, demolition is a reasonable option in order to protect the integrity of the whole site as a cultural heritage landscape. However, mitigation to reduce the negative impact of demolition is recommended.

8.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

According to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, demolition is not a recommended conservation option and should only be considered as a last resort after careful consideration of other options. All options have been considered and it has been determined that demolition of the Marjorie Hancock House is the only feasible option.

The proposed demolition will have the following beneficial impacts; it will allow the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division to conserve the mature trees and plants in the grounds and make them accessible to the public. It will increase the frontage of the park on Corsair Road and improve access from Corsair Road. The historical and contextual values of the property will be conserved and will be interpreted and communicated to the public as part of the Hancock Woodlands site.

The proposed demolition will have the following negative impacts; it will result in the loss of a building that has been identified as having architectural value as a representative example of progressive residential design in 1969 that combines West Coast Modernism and modular design. It reflects the progressive tastes of Marjorie (Hancock) Van Alstyne and the architectural work of McLaren & Tsow. The work of this firm has not been fully documented or studied so the significance of this residential commission is not fully known at this time. Regardless, it has merit as an example of progressive residential design in Cooksville and is comparable to works by more well-known and celebrated Canadian modernists working in a similar style.

Demolition of a structure that meets one or more criteria for Designation requires significant mitigation to reduce negative impacts. Appropriate mitigation measures include the following:

- Documentation
- Salvage
- Commemoration

9.0 CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division recognizes that the Marjorie Hancock House has heritage value that requires mitigation as a result of the proposed demolition.

The historical and contextual values will be conserved on the Hancock Woodlands site in the following ways:

1. Mature trees on the Marjorie Hancock property will be identified and retained
2. Plants with horticultural interest on the Marjorie Hancock property will be identified and retained ('Spring' woodland garden)
3. Interpretive material will be installed on the Hancock Woodlands site that conveys the significance of the Marjorie Hancock House and grounds
4. The location and outline of the Marjorie Hancock House will be conveyed through visual marking and/or interpretive signage

The architectural values will be conserved on the Hancock Woodlands site in the following ways:

1. The Marjorie Hancock House will be fully documented prior to demolition
2. Potential salvage items will be identified and removed prior to demolition in the form of a *Salvage Plan*
3. Options for the re-use of salvaged materials on the Hancock Woodlands site will be provided in the form of a *Commemorative Plan*
4. The Nursery Office (1951) located on the Hancock Woodlands site provides opportunities to showcase relationships between the Marjorie Hancock, Macklin Hancock and progressive Canadian architecture in the 1950s & 60s

10.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

All reasonable options to preserve the building have been considered by the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division and the only viable option is demolition. This decision is based on the following considerations:

- the building's condition and the cost of retrofitting for an appropriate use
- the building's potential for re-use by the Parks, Forestry and Environment Division
- the possibility of mothballing the building without a future use
- the possibility of disposal to another department or on the open market
- consultation with other City divisions including the Culture Division that maintains and operates heritage buildings

The Parks, Forestry and Environment Division recognizes that Marjorie Hancock House and grounds have heritage value. The heritage values associated with the grounds will be retained because they will be incorporated into the Hancock Woodlands. The natural and horticultural features of the grounds will be retained and made accessible to the public. Strategies will be employed on the Hancock Woodlands site to acknowledge the importance of Marjorie Hancock and convey the architectural significance of the Marjorie Hancock House as an example of Mid-century Modern residential architecture and as an example of the work of McLaren & Tsow Architects. These strategies will allow for the potential re-use of materials salvaged from the Marjorie Hancock House as part of a commemorative strategy that will be outlined in a *Commemorative Plan*.

11.0 QUALIFICATIONS OF THE AUTHOR

Megan Hobson is a professional member of the *Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals*. Formal education includes a Master of Arts in Architectural History from the University of Toronto and a diploma in Heritage Conservation from the Willowbank School of Restoration Arts. Professional experience includes an internship at the Ontario Heritage Trust, three years as Architectural Historian and Conservation Specialist at Taylor Hazell Architects in Toronto, and 8 years in private practice in Ontario as a heritage consultant. Other relevant experience includes teaching art history at the University of Toronto and McMaster University and teaching Research Methods and Conservation Planning at the Willowbank School for Restoration Arts in

Queenston. In addition to numerous heritage reports, the author has published work in academic journals such as the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* and the *Canadian Historical Review*.

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APPENDIX A: SITE PHOTOS



MARJORIE HANCOCK HOUSE – view from Corsair Road



FRONT ENTRANCE



MAIN ELEVATION – flagstone path to front door



MAIN ELEVATION – stone chimney on the north (front) elevation



MARJORIE HANCOCK HOUSE – front (north) elevation



MAIN ELEVATION - window well



SIDE ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION – bedroom windows



SIDE ELEVATIONS – basement windows above grade



REAR ELEVATION – sliding door from master bedroom



SIDE ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION



FOUNDATION – kitchen extension



REAR & SIDE ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION



REAR YARD – large trees and rhododendron collection



SIDE YARD – large trees and rhododendron collection



FRONT ENTRY HALL – front door



ENTRY HALL – basement access



LIVING ROOM



LIVING ROOM



LIVING ROOM



LIVING ROOM



LIVING ROOM



LIVING ROOM



LIVING ROOM



LIVING ROOM - skylight



KITCHEN



KITCHEN



KITCHEN



KITCHEN



KITCHEN



MASTER BEDROOM



MASTER BEDROOM



HALLWAY TO BEDROOMS



BEDROOM 2



BEDROOM 2



BEDROOM 3



BASEMENT



BASEMENT