

NOMINATION FOR HERITAGE CANADA FOUNDATION'S MOST ENDANGERED PLACES LIST

Type of Site (residential, civic, commercial, engineering work, cultural landscape, etc.):

Lansdowne Park is a municipally owned public space located next to the Rideau Canal World Heritage Site in the heart of the Nation's Capital. Since 1868, the site has been host to agricultural exhibitions, sporting events and military troops. The site contains two designated heritage buildings, an aging football stadium with a connected arena and large parking lots. The Aberdeen Pavilion National Historic Site is a prominent feature on the site and within the neighbourhood.

Heritage Status (designation, zoning, protective covenants, easements):

Although the entire site has not been designated as a cultural heritage landscape, arguably it would qualify under regulation 9/06 of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

The site contains two designated heritage buildings, one of which is protected by easements with the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT).

The Horticulture Building (1914) was designated in 1994 under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and is on the national register of historic buildings. It exhibits an outstanding example of the Prairie Style of architecture, which is rare in Canada. Despite its heritage status, the City of Ottawa is considering moving this masonry building, which is over 200 feet in length, from its present location adjacent to the main entry of the Aberdeen Pavilion National Historic Site to the rear of the Pavilion. These intentions fail to recognize that one of the building's character defining elements is its proximity to the Pavilion. The justification for moving the building is to make additional space available for retail development on public land.

The Aberdeen Pavilion (1898) was designated in 1982 under the *Ontario Heritage Act* and in 1983 as a National Historic Site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The Aberdeen Pavilion also has two Ontario Heritage Trust easements. The first easement extends from Bank Street to the building, and includes a buffer zone around the structure where approvals are required for design and location. The second easement deals with protecting three sightlines from Queen Elizabeth Driveway to the building, which means that any new structures placed in this area must meet Ontario Heritage Trust Approvals.

Owner:

The City of Ottawa has owned the site from 1868 to the present. The National Capital Commission owns adjacent land between Lansdowne Park and the Rideau Canal World Heritage Site. Public ownership is threatened by a private/public partnership that would lead to retail and residential development on the site.

What was the original use of the site?

The site was originally used in 1868 as a showground for the Ottawa Agricultural Society. Beginning in 1875 the site was used for Provincial exhibitions. The Central Canada Exhibition was hosted on the site for the first time in 1888, a tradition that has continued for over 120 years. The grounds were also used for training troops entering both the First and Second World Wars. Throughout the 20th century Lansdowne Park has hosted Stanley Cup Championships and Grey Cup Games. Recreational activities, including curling in the Horticulture Building, have also been part of the site's heritage.

What is the current use of the site?

Use of the site evolved in the latter 20th century to include trade shows and concerts. An OHL hockey team, the Ottawa 67s, has utilized the Civic Centre since their inception in 1967. Recreational soccer games are played in a dome on the stadium field in the winter. The Central Canada Exhibition continues to run at Lansdowne Park for two weeks every August. The site is also home to a local Farmer's Market, a tribute to the site's agricultural tradition.

What is the current condition of the site?

The Aberdeen Pavilion was restored in the mid 1990s and remains in excellent condition. It is, however, surrounded by an asphalt parking lot and structures in need of repair. The municipally designated Horticulture Building has been closed to the public for several years and is currently used for storage. The windows are boarded up and the building is not well maintained. Frank Clair Stadium (1966) and the attached Civic Centre Arena are in need of repair. The lower portion of the stadium's south side stands was deemed unsafe and demolished in 2009.

What is the threat(s) that is endangering the site?

The main threat is the loss of public space to private retail and residential development with the transfer of a large portion of the site from the City of Ottawa to a consortium of private developers. The developers want to build 300,000 square feet of commercial retail on the site: large-scale stores that will hold no relationship to the long-term historical, cultural, or aesthetic nature of the site. This type of development next to two designated buildings will obscure their heritage attributes as they compete with storefront signage and advertising. A site of this significance not only should remain in public hands, it should be designed as a world-class civic space for residents and visitors to enjoy for generations.

The City is also threatening its own heritage designation of the Horticulture Building, a masonry building that is approximately 200 feet in length, by entertaining options to relocate it within Lansdowne Park. This option is being considered regardless of the fact that one of the building's character-defining elements is its physical relationship to the adjacent Aberdeen Pavilion. A heritage report prepared jointly for the City and private developers indicated that several exhibition buildings were relocated within the site over its nearly 150-year history and therefore justified the option to relocate. It does not, however, include that the previous buildings were more conducive to being moved and were not designated structures.

What actions have been taken to protect the site? (Describe any actions taken to alleviate the threat(s) described above and indicate if these actions were taken by governments, local groups or individuals).

Many private citizens, local community organizations and politicians have spoken out against the transfer of public space to private interests and the proposal of large-scale retail and residential development. These organizations and individuals have vociferously campaigned the city to consider ideas from more than one developer and to reject the shopping mall concept that threatens to diminish the cultural landscape. The City has hired a respected urban design consultant to oversee a design competition for green space that will occupy approximately one fifth of the site. Redesign for the majority of the site, including the football stadium and commercial/residential components, are under the control of private developers.

Please summarize why this site should be considered for inclusion on HCF's Top Ten Endangered Places List. The summary should address the three criteria listed above. Please indicate if the site has any formal designations.

The current process to turn nearly 25% of Lansdowne Park into commercial development is inappropriate and inconsistent with its nearly 150-year history as a public space. The Park is historically associated with sports, recreation and exhibitions but may soon be associated with large-scale retail.

The grounds and the buildings, including the municipally designated Horticulture Building, have been under utilized while maintenance to the sports facilities has been under funded. The City threatens its own heritage designation by entertaining options to relocate a masonry building that is approximately 200 feet in length. Rather than finding a lucrative adaptive reuse, the City is considering something that is arguably logistically and financially impossible.

Initial threats to the fabric of the Aberdeen Pavilion National Historic Site have been mitigated but plans for the building remain unclear. City-wide concerns about the proposed development from private citizens, community organizations and local politicians have led to additional reports and studies but they have not led to a fundamental change to what is being promised for the site – large-scale retail. Lansdowne Park's history and proximity to the Rideau Canal World Heritage Site in the heart of the Nation's capital should be worthy of continued use as a public space of world-class caliber not endangerment. City council will decide the future of Lansdowne Park in June 2010.