

## Heritage advocates attempt to woo 700 North Shore homeowners

### Revitalization agreements pitched

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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Heritage expert Donald Luxton speaks to a crowd of heritage homeowners and advocates at a meeting held Wednesday night, aimed at persuading owners to restore and protect their homes. photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

The North Shore's heritage advocates are mounting a blitz to save the area's remaining heritage homes as they come under threat of demolition and redevelopment.

The North Shore Heritage Preservation Society spent two weeks going door to door and pamphleteering roughly 700 homes with heritage value in hopes of informing the owners what incentives are available to them to preserve and protect the home, rather than sell them as tear-downs.

The campaign, which was followed up with a public meeting organized by the society on Wednesday night, has netted some impressive results and a few hidden gems, Clay said.

"It got a lot of interest. I think we had between 80 and 100 people (Wednesday) night. I have never seen a lineup for one of our events that doesn't serve wine," she said. "We literally had people out the door."

The event featured talks from heritage expert Donald Luxton as well as heritage planners from all three municipalities who let homeowners know what options were on the table in heritage revitalization agreements.

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Among them: heritage designation and covenants, the addition of extra square footage to the home, coach houses and secondary suites, relaxation of parking space requirements, relocating the home on the same property or subdividing the lot for a new home construction or some combination of the above.

“It’s important to know you can do these things now while you’re living in the home but you don’t necessarily have to proceed with the actual development. You can set it up on paper. It’s attached to the title of the property so that when it’s sold, the house is already designated heritage,” Clay said.

The campaign is specifically targeting older homeowners who likely have lived in the home for a long time and, as the preservation society sees it, are more likely to have a sentimental desire to see the house preserved.

“They’re the ones who put their blood, sweat and tears into the restoration of the home and feel helpless and don’t know what to do to protect it before they sell,” she said. “We felt the excavators and developers breathing down our necks, so timing is crucial.”

While locking up a bunch of old-timers with permanent protection might be a heritage preservationist’s dream, revitalizations agreements are often resisted by the neighbouring community, Clay acknowledged. Typical grievances are that the subdivisions and coach houses bring unwanted change and more people living on what used to be a single-family lot. But, Clay said, it’s either that or outright demolition and redevelopment, which still brings change and sacrifices a tangible link to a community’s past.

“We can’t reasonably expect we’re going to preserve all heritage homes, as-is, on double lots or even single lots without some kind of development into the future, given the demand for housing,” she said. “People have to expect change. They have to be flexible. There has to be compromise and there has to be neighbourhood consultation.”