

THE CORPORATION OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF MISSISSIPPI MILLS

STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: March 5, 2025

TO: Heritage Advisory Committee

FROM: Drew Brennan, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: **Heritage Permit Application R01-CUR-24 - 7 Mill Street**

OWNER: Lanark Standard Condominium Corporation Number 17
(Victoria Woollen Mills Condos)

APPLICANT: James Curry

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Heritage Advisory Committee recommend that Council approve the Major Heritage Permit to construct a fence on the subject lands municipally known as 7 Mill Street, Almonte Ward, Municipality of Mississippi Mills following consideration of alternate design solutions.

PURPOSE AND EFFECT:

The purpose and effect of Heritage Permit Application R01-CUR-24 is to obtain approval for the installation of a fence on 7 Mill Street. The fence is proposed to restrict public access between the property and the Riverwalk viewing platform and trail. As noted in Attachment A, Heritage Permit Application, the applicant has indicated that restricting access will eliminate a potential safety hazard.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is individually designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and is also within the Almonte Downtown Heritage Conservation District (Part V of the Act); By-law 16-1978 which individually designates the subject property is provided by Attachment B.

The property is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of Mill Street and Almonte Street. The existing building, referred to as 'The Victoria Woollen Mill', was built in 1853 with a three (3) storey addition later constructed in 1862. Although the building was originally constructed as a woollen mill, it has historically been used for a variety of commercial uses. In 2008, the building was renovated and converted into a mixed-use condominium consisting of twelve (12) units with accompanying common elements and

exclusive use areas. The condominium currently features both residential and commercial uses.

Figure 1 below shows an aerial image of the subject property.

Figure 1: Subject Lands



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The Applicant is proposing to erect metal rail fencing at the rear of the property; a sketch of the fence's proposed location is provided in Attachment A. The proposed fence is approximately 1.2-metres in height and 10.9-metres in length. The fence will match and extend from existing fencing adjacent to the Woollen Mill out towards the eastern property line. The intent of the proposed fence is to address safety concerns by restricting public access to the Riverwalk viewing platform and trail from the Woollen Mills' parking lot.

During the condominium registration process, the Owners entered into an Easement Agreement with the Municipality regarding the section of Riverwalk at the rear of the property. The purpose of the easement is to preserve public access to the viewing platform and trail via access from the adjacent 27 Mill Street lot. The Applicant has provided a legal opinion with their Heritage Permit Application stating that the construction of a fence on the subject property to restrict access to the easement from the parking lot does not violate the Agreement as access to the viewing platform and

trail would continue to be provided from the 27 Mill Street lot as intended. The Municipality's Solicitor has reviewed this opinion and agrees with its conclusions. A diagram of the easement is provided by Attachment C.

EVALUATION:

Heritage Conservation District Plan

All properties within the Heritage Conservation District (HCD) are designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act and are subject to the HCD Plan. In 2019, a by-law was passed to amend the HCD to specifically exempt the construction of fences from the requirement for a Heritage Permit. Despite this, the subject property is also individually designated under Part IV of the Act, meaning that all exterior alterations to the property require a Major Heritage Permit. Although the HCD Plan exempts fencing from the need for a Heritage Permit, properties that are individually designated within an HCD, need to adhere to the policies and guidelines of the HCD Plan.

The HCD Plan speaks to the value of the district as a river-based cultural landscape of which Riverwalk is a defined attribute. Section 4.2 of the HCD Plan encourages that development be considered within the context of its impact on the cultural landscape of the HCD and that public views of the Mississippi River be protected. It should be noted that there is an existing fence line on the subject property that abuts the Mississippi River. As the proposed fence is the same height as the existing fence, Staff anticipate that the fence will not increase the obstruction to the viewscape beyond the current condition; however, the proposed fencing represents an added intervention that could obstruct the public viewscape of the Mississippi River from Mill Street because of the well established 'desire line' through the parking lot to the viewing platform.

Section 4.2.4 of the Plan states that the design of new interventions, such as fences, in and adjacent to the waterway will reinforce the primacy and significance of existing natural features. These interventions should preserve views of the character-defining elements of the river and its adjacent areas. While the proposed fence may introduce confusion regarding how to access the Riverwalk viewing platform and trail, it does not interfere with the easement and the publicly accessible path to and from the platform. Staff are of the opinion that the primacy and significance of the Mississippi River are upheld through the preservation of Riverwalk.

Despite above, Staff are of the opinion that there are less intrusive design solutions to address the issue of the public crossing through the private parking lot to access the Riverwalk viewing platform and trail. If the permit was to be approved and the fence was constructed, the resulting area would be largely overcrowded with fencing which could take away from the cultural landscape. In addition, as the parking lot is a well-established desire line (route) to the viewing platform, pedestrians may end up crowding at the new fencing, rather than backtracking to access the platform from the Riverwalk pathway.

Design interventions that integrate with the surrounding environment and minimize visual impact on the river's character-defining elements would be more in keeping with the policies of the HCD Plan and its emphasis on protecting the cultural and natural

heritage of the area. Signage indicating that access to the viewing platform should be accessed via the Riverwalk at the entrance to the private parking lot is a design intervention that may integrate better and minimize visual impact. Staff are supportive of signage as a first step in a design intervention and failing this, considering the proposed fencing as the next intervention.

SUMMARY:

Having reviewed and assessed the proposed Heritage Permit application, Staff are satisfied that that proposal is consistent with the Heritage Conservation District Plan but are of the opinion that there are alternate design solutions that would better align with the intent of the Plan.

Respectfully submitted by,

Approved by,



Drew Brennan
Senior Planner



Melanie Knight
Director of Director of Development
Services and Engineering

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Attachment A – Major Heritage Permit Application
2. Attachment B – By-law 16-1978
3. Attachment C – Easement Map

ATTACHMENT A

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED CHANGE

Scope of Work

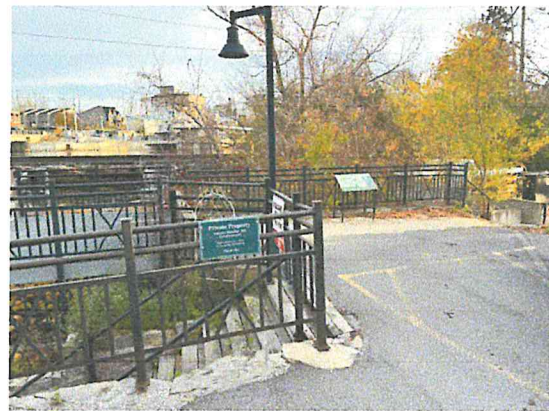
Construct approximately 36 feet of 4-foot high metal rail fence across north end of upper parking lot. The new Metal Railing Fence will match existing metal rail fencing.

Proposed Fence Type and Location

A sketch showing the location of the proposed fence is attached after this page. Below are photographs showing the existing fencing and views of the proposed location of the proposed new fence.



View of Proposed Fence Location
Showing Existing Fencing

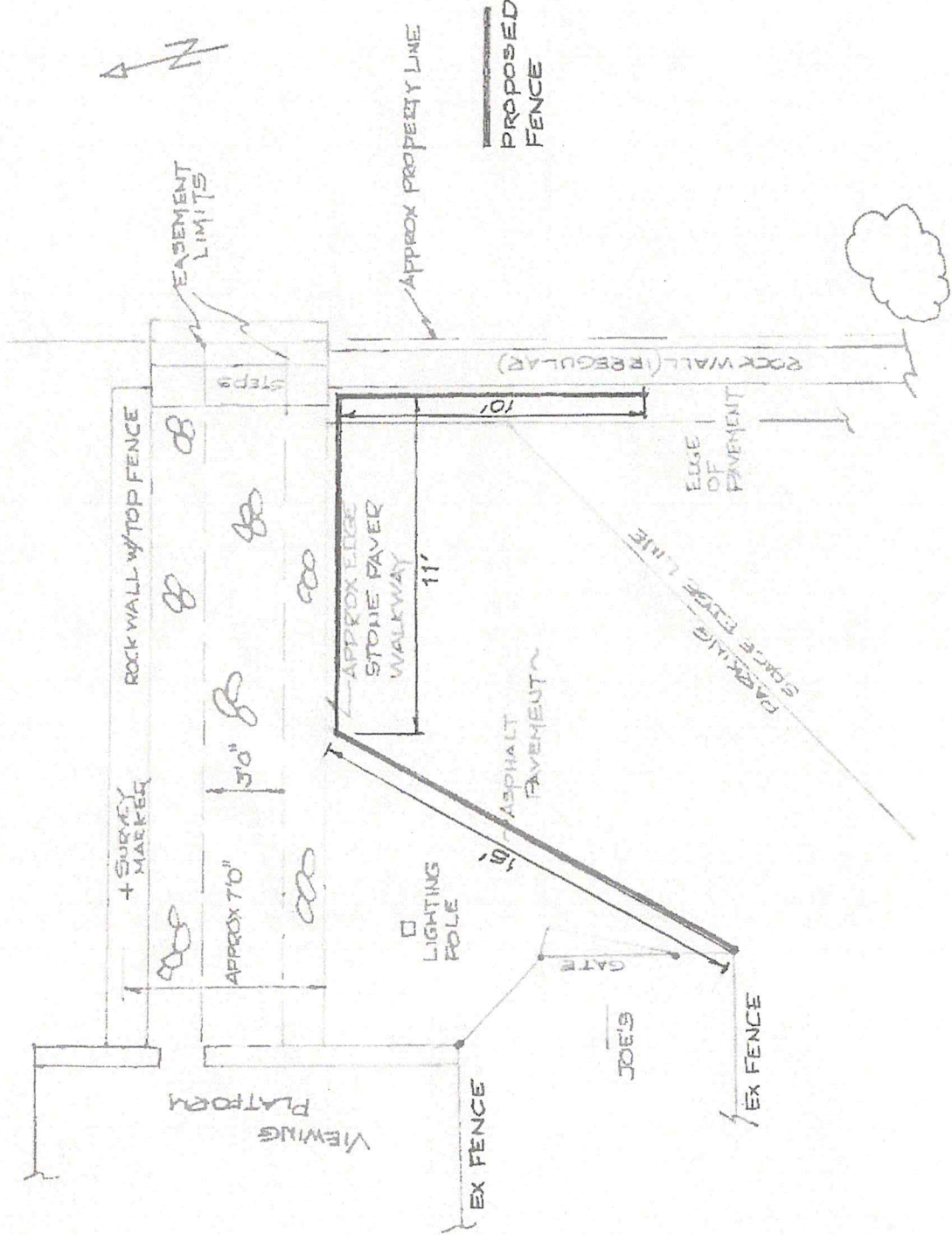


View of Proposed Fence Location
Showing Existing Fencing In Adjacent
Area



View of Existing Fencing

10/31/24
Approx 1"=5'



ATTACHMENT B

CHARACTER DEFINING ELEMENTS

The Victoria Woolen Mill building is designated as a heritage building under bylaw #16-1978 (copy from Mississippi Mills web site attached following this page).

The character defining elements are summarized as “Almonte” style stone construction highlighted by contrasting stone quoins and the lighter stone used in the top two stories of the building. A full description of the defining elements may be found in the attached Statement of Significance (from Mississippi Mills web site). Two photographs illustrating the character defining elements (from the Mississippi Mills web site) are shown below.

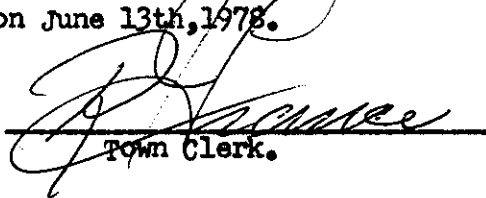


View of Victoria Woolen Mills Building
(From Mississippi Mills Web Site)



View of Victoria Woolen Mills Building
(From Mississippi Mills Web Site)

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY OF BY-LAW NUMBER
16-1978 of the Town of Almonte passed
on June 13th, 1978.


Town Clerk.

CORPORATION OF THE TOWN
OF ALMONTE
BY-LAW NUMBER 16 -1978

A BY-LAW TO DESIGNATE THE
PROPERTY KNOWN MUNICIPALLY
AS 7 Mill Street, Pinecraft
Building, AS BEING OF ARCHITECTURAL
AND HISTORICAL VALUE OR INTEREST.

WHEREAS section 29 of The Ontario Heritage Act, 1974
authorizes the Council of a municipality to enact by-laws
to designate real property, including all buildings and
structures thereon, to be of architectural or historic
value or interest; and

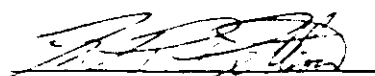
WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Town of
Almonte has caused to be served on the owners of the
lands and premises known as the Pinecraft Building at
7 Mill Street in the Town of Almonte and upon the Ontario
Heritage Foundation, notice of intention to so designate
the aforesaid real property and has caused such notice of
intention to be published in the same newspaper having
general circulation in the municipality once for each of
three consecutive weeks; and

WHEREAS no notice of objection to the proposed designation
has been served on the clerk of the municipality;

THEREFORE the Council of the Corporation of the Town of
Almonte enacts as follows:

- 1) There is designated as being of architectural and
historical value or interest the real property known as
the Pinecraft Building at 7 Mill Street in the Town of
Almonte; and being Parts of Lots 22 and 23 on Mill Street
and Part of Mill Street, Plan 6262, as described in
Instrument No. 23550.
- 2) The municipal solicitor is hereby authorized to cause
a copy of this by-law to be registered against the property
described in the proper land registry office.
- 3) The Clerk is hereby authorized to cause a copy of
this by-law to be served on the owner of the aforesaid
property and on the Ontario Heritage Foundation and to
cause notice of the passing of this by-law to be published
in the same newspaper having general circulation in the
municipality once for each of three consecutive weeks.

READ A FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD TIME AND PASSED THIS 13th
day of June, 1978.


MAYOR


CLERK

Location: 7 Mill Street, Almonte, Lanark County, Ontario,
part of Town Lot 22, Shipman Survey

Present Owner: John C. Cook & wife

Present Occupant: Pinecraft Ltd.

Present Use: Furniture factory

Statement of Significance: The importance of this building lies both in its unusual visual features and in its historical connections. In many respects it is a true

'survivor' of Almonte's past.

It was built as part of the original Rosamond mill complex and as such is one of Almonte's earliest woollen mills. Additionally, it has remained in operation as a manufacturing centre almost continually up to the present day.

Architecturally, it represents the so-called 'Almonte' style with its lighter stone quoins in contrast with the darker stone of the walls; moreover, the five-sided plan coupled with the 'two-tone' effect produced by the lighter stone of the top two floors makes it a particularly unusual structure.

Finally, it is a key tall building on Almonte's main thoroughfare, drawing the street together as it is reflected in the Old Post Office building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The property was purchased by the Ramsay Woollen Cloth Manufacturing Co. in 1851 from Daniel Shipman for the sum of £100 and was described as a "mill site in Ramsayville". Both the aforementioned Shipman and James Rosamond were shareholders in the company. A frame manufacturing building was erected but was consumed by fire within the next two years. In 1853 the business was sold to Rosamond for \$700. He built a large 3½ storey stone building to the east of the present Pinecraft Mill in or about 1855. "In 1863 the capacity of the mill was doubled to meet the increasing demand for their goods"*. This was accomplished by the addition of the Pinecraft Building which was joined to the earlier structure by a third storey walk-way. Its five-sided plan is probably an adaption to the timber slide which once divided the property. The complex was sold to the B.&W. Rosamond

Woollen Co. (James' sons, Bennett and William, and George Stephen) in 1866 for \$24,000. In 1869, reg. 1870, the Rosamonds had built another larger mill on Coleman's Island and the #2 Mill was sold to Elliott, Routh and Sheard, which company had become Elliott, Sheriffs Co. by 1882. Both companies produced woollen materials. In 1892 the "Victoria Woollen Mills", by which name the mills had been known since their erection, were listed for sale and were not in operation. It was described as a large '5 set' mill. In 1902 the Pinecraft Building alone was sold to Richard Lee and Hirst Taylor, 5315 sq. ft. for \$5000, with the stipulation that the connecting passageways be sealed off. Circa. 1910 the older stone building was destroyed by fire. The Yorkshire Wool Stock Mills Co. bought the property for \$26,500 in 1919. In 1968 it was sold to the present owner, Mr. John C. Cook, for \$11,950.

2. Date of erection: c. 1862

3. Architect: unknown

4. Alterations and additions: An 1863 drawing of the B. & W. Rosamond Mill #2 would suggest that the building was original only 3 storeys tall and that an additional 2 storeys were added sometime before 1879 when another depiction shows a five storey building on the site; however, these early drawings and photographs do not illustrate the 'two-tone' effect seen today. Charred sections of the structural timbers on the fourth and fifth floors are evidence that the building was at one time touched by fire and may indicate that these top two floors are basically reconstructions. A stone shed extension on the south side was added in the latter part of the 19th C. and with the raising of the street level basement windows have been blocked in. Upon the individual sale of the complex in 1902, third floor windows and doors were blocked in as well. The original casement windows, shown in early photographs, have been replaced. The main door was once on the single-bay wall.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The 'Victoria Woollen Mills', as the complex was known throughout the 19th C. was one of Almonte's earliest and most important woollen mills. Its original owner and builder, James Rosamond, was a driving force in the burgeoning community particularly with regard to the Anglican Church. His son and subsequent owner of the mill, Bennett Rosamond, held the office of Reeve in 1884, the year of Almonte's incorporation as a Town. With the acquisition of the mill by Bennett and his brother William, a third historical

entity was introduced in the form of the third shareholder, George Stephen. Stephen was later to become Lord Mountstephen through his involvement in and success with the C.P.R..

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views:

North Lanark Historical Society Photograph Collection

- i) The first Rosamond Mill, c. 1860
- ii) Lower Mill St., Marching Band, c. 1910
- iii) Ruins of fire of 1906, from Farm St.
- iv) Old View of Bay, c. 1900
- v) Shoddy Mill, c. 1935

Public Archives of Ontario

- i) Almonte knitting and woollen mills, timber slide, Ref. S15195

2. Bibliography:

Books:

Belden, H. & Co.. Illustrated Atlas of Lanark County. Toronto, 1880. reprint edition, Ross Cumming, 1972.

Periodicals:

"Almonte Illustrated", Canadian Illustrated News. Vol. XIX, #1 (Sat. Jan. 4, 1879). 7-10.

*"Almonte", The Saturday Globe. Vol. XLVIII (Sat. Sept. 24, 1892). 1-4.

Directories:

Ontario Business and Professional Directory, 1871
Lovell's Business and Professional Directory of Ontario, 1882

Plans:

North Lanark Registry Office-

- Plan #189 by Josiah Richey, Coleman's Island, 1861
- Plan #208 by Andrew Bell, Coleman's Island, 1867
- Plan attached to Instrument #7391 (1902)

Public Archives of Canada-

"Plan of part of the town of Almonte shewing the subdivision into Town and Park Lots of the west half lot 16, 9th concession Ramsay. Surveyed and drawn by Andrew Bell P.L.S., Almonte, 13th Dec. 1869."

Deeds, etc.:

North Lanark Registry Office, Almonte, Ontario

PART III. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

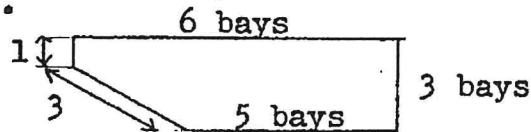
A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The building is a good example of the so-called 'Almonte' style - contrasting stone quoins. As well, the lighter stone used in the top two floors and the five-sided plan make it a very unusual specimen of its kind. It retains a functional integrity in its continued use as a manufactory.

2. Condition: good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building is approx. 100' deep by 30' wide.
bays:



This free-standing stone structure is 5 storeys tall with basement. There is a one storey stone extension on the south side and a two storey frame and stone extension to the rear of the building on the river side.

2. Foundations: The foundations are rubble stone.

3. Wall construction, finish and colour: The walls are squared rubble stone, sandy brown in colour. The corners are finished with dressed stone quoins of a darker gray colour.

4. Structural system and framing: masonry load-bearing walls

5. Porches: None.

6. Chimneys: There is a large brick chimney stack to the rear of the building rising from the roof.

7. Openings:

a) Doors and doorways: The main doorway is in the central bay of the angled south-west wall. It is recessed by about three feet and the recess walls are vertically panelled. The door itself is a plain vertical plank. There are also loading bays out of the southern stone extension.

b) Windows and shutters: The windows of the upper four floors are four-over-four light double-hung sash; however, the height of the windows on the uppermost two floors is approx. one foot greater than those on the other upper floors, reflecting the greater ceiling height on those floors.

On the ground floor, the windows are comparable in height to those on the 4th and 5th floors but are a fixed, six light sash divided centrally by a heavy wooden muntin. With the exception of the angled wall on which the two ground floor windows are both nine light fixed sash.

8. Roof:

- a) Shape, covering: The present roof is a flat, tar and gravel covered, type.

C. Description of Interior:

Ceiling height varies considerably from floor to floor. Ground floor, fourth and fifth floors being from 12-15 feet in height while second and third floors are approx. 8 feet high.

Also, depth of wall as measured on window sills decreases somewhat from the base to the top storey, from about 28" at the basement level to only 20" on the fifth floor.

The interior has been renovated to meet the needs of a furniture factory.

D. Site:

- a) General setting and orientation: The mill is situated on the banks of the Mississippi River at the intersection of Mill and Almonte (Highway 44) on the north-west corner. The main facade faces south, south-west across Mill Street.
- b) Outbuildings: None.

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

Compiled by M. Christine Castle, architectural researcher, under the auspices of the Almonte Local Architectural Advisory Committee and the Ontario Heritage Foundation, July, 1976.

Appended material:

- i) modern photographs
- ii) photocopy of 1863 Walling Survey, taken from Ross Cumming reprint of Illustrated Atlas of Lanark County, 1972
- iii) photocopy of Plan attached to Instrument #7391 (Almonte), 1902.
- iv) photocopies of rough sketches of Plans #189 and #208

Legend

- Subject Property
- Easement - Riverwalk Viewing Platform & Trail
- Easement - Riverwalk Trail
- Proposed Fence Line

