



COMMONWEALTH

DAWSON CITY HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN



March 2008

COMMONWEALTH HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LIMITED

Procedures for Heritage Management

- The Zoning and Historic Control Bylaw will be revised, as described in Chapter 5 and Appendix 5, and will be renamed the Zoning and Heritage Management Bylaw.
- Two new bylaws will be enacted:
 - A Heritage Bylaw, which will provide the City of Dawson with the means to designate historic resources as Municipal Historic Sites; and
 - A Heritage Fund Bylaw, which will enable the City of Dawson to set aside and apply funds to heritage conservation.
- The Planning Board will be reconstituted as the Heritage Advisory Committee, as defined by the *Yukon Historic Resources Act*. Its primary responsibility will be the review of applications for development that are regulated by the new Zoning and Heritage Management Bylaw; i.e., applications for properties within the Heritage Management Areas. It will also be responsible for public awareness and education in heritage, and such other responsibilities as Council may delegate to it.
- Applications for development will be submitted to the Development Officer.
 - Applications for minor alterations will be considered by the Development Officer.
 - Applications for major alterations and new infill development (i.e., new buildings) will be referred by the Development Officer to the Heritage Advisory Committee.
 - External technical advice may be sought to help with consideration of proposed major new buildings or very large alterations.
 - Any disagreements between the Heritage Advisory Committee and staff will be referred to Council for a decision.

Heritage Incentives

An extensive program of heritage incentives is proposed to offset the constraints and costs of the heritage management program. These incentives, which are described in Section 4.3, include:

- Financial assistance
- Planning relaxations
- Building code equivalences
- Technical assistance
- Increasing technical capacity

Heritage Interpretation

A large and varied program of heritage interpretation is offered by government agencies, as well as some offerings from the private sector. Nevertheless, improvements can be made to the interpretation program to enhance the visitor experience. Section 4.5 makes a number of suggestions. It also recommends that a joint committee, representing tourism operators in the public, non-profit, and private sectors, be formed to address how interpretation and public programs can be enhanced, co-ordinated, and jointly marketed, as well as recommending appropriate pricing levels. An overall business plan for public programming would supplement this initiative.

Design Guidelines for Architectural Conservation and Infill

The Dawson Townsite presents six distinct building and development situations:

- Reconstruction of former Gold Rush-era buildings. Reconstruction is mandatory for new construction in the Downtown Heritage Management Area (with certain exemptions) and voluntary in the Residential Heritage Management Area. Work will generally follow the *Design Guidelines for Historic Dawson*.
- Infill in the Residential Heritage Management Area, which includes new buildings on vacant building lots and small-scaled infill on lots that are currently developed. Infill construction is not at present adequately addressed by existing guidelines. This Heritage Management Plan recommends that the dominant character of Dawson as a Gold Rush-era cultural landscape should be maintained with a contemporary interpretation of the Gold Rush style, which the guidelines call the 'Dawson Style.'
- Additions to existing historical buildings. Their treatment will also adopt the Dawson Style.
- Interventions to buildings within the Downtown Transition Character Area. The guidelines present an approach that allows large buildings whose form is respectful of traditional urban design.
- Interventions to buildings from the Gold Rush era (1896-1910). These buildings are already well served by the *Design Guidelines for Historic Dawson*, prepared by Parks Canada in the early 1980s; and by the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places*, published by Parks Canada in 2003.
- Interventions to buildings erected after the Gold Rush era. The *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* provides good guidelines for this situation.

Chapter 6 provides detailed guidelines for the Dawson Style, and supplements the *Design Guidelines for Historic Dawson* and the *Standards and Guidelines* where necessary for the other situations.

COMMONWEALTH HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LIMITED

308 - 2233 Burrard Street
Vancouver, B.C. V6J 3H9
Tel: (604) 734-7505
Fax: (604) 734-7991
E-mail: vancouver@chrml.com



53 Herriott Street
Perth, Ontario K7H 1T5
Tel: (613) 267-7040
Fax: (613) 267-1635
E-mail: perth@chrml.com

D1072

Cover photo: Third Avenue, with its Gold Rush-era buildings, looking north to the Slide.
(Photo: H. Kalman)

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	iii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 A New Framework for Heritage Management	1
1.2 A Vision for the Management of Dawson’s Heritage Resources	2
1.3 Study Process	4
1.4 Public Consultation and Community Values	4
2. Dawson City and the Conservation of its Heritage Resources	7
2.1 Overview History of Dawson	7
2.2 Heritage Conservation in Dawson	10
2.3 The Current Policy Framework	12
3. Cultural Landscapes, Character Areas, and Heritage Management Areas	15
3.1 Cultural Landscapes	15
3.2 Character Areas	19
3.3 Heritage Management Areas	36
4. Recommendations for Heritage Management	37
4.1 Recommendations for the Heritage Management Areas	37
4.2 Procedures for Heritage Management	41
4.3 Heritage Incentives	43
4.4 Additional Tools for Heritage Conservation	46
4.5 Heritage Interpretation	48
5. Heritage Management Bylaws	51
5.1 Revision of the Zoning and Historic Control Bylaw	51
5.2 Heritage Bylaw and Heritage Fund Bylaw	53
6. Design Guidelines for Architectural Conservation and Infill	55
6.1 Introduction	55
6.2 Guidelines for Infill: The Dawson Style	60
6.3 Additions to Existing Historic Buildings	66
6.4 Guidelines for the Downtown Transitional Character Area	69
6.5 Guidelines for Interventions to Buildings from the Gold Rush Era	71
6.6 Guidelines for Interventions to Buildings erected after the Gold Rush era	72
6.7 Guidelines for Reconstructions	72
7. Implementation Plan	77

Appendixes	79
Appendix 1: People Consulted	80
Appendix 2: Planning and Regulatory Documents	82
Appendix 3: Municipal Inventory of Heritage Sites	87
Appendix 4: Thematic Framework	91
Appendix 5: Draft Bylaws	102
Appendix 6: Comments from the Visitor Register	119
Appendix 7: Interpretation at other Historic Mining Towns	123
Appendix 8: Bibliography	129
Appendix 9: The Project Team	132

Executive Summary

Introduction

Dawson City is an extraordinary place. It is best known as ‘ground zero’ of the Klondike Gold Rush. In the late 1890s the population of this remote Yukon community reached about 30,000. Dawson also has a long history as the traditional hunting and fishing lands of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, and has recently been a leader in developing heritage tourism. Dawson remains a living town. It is now populated by only a few thousand permanent residents, whose economy is based on gold, tourism, the arts, and government services. Dawson also provides a model for co-operative leadership. It is jointly administered by the City of Dawson and the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, with involvement as well by the Yukon Government and the federal government’s Parks Canada.

The value of Dawson’s heritage resources is widely recognized. Many buildings and landscape features that supported the Gold Rush remain intact. Municipal heritage regulations have managed change since 1977, and the present *Zoning and Historical Control Bylaw* since 1997. The bylaws have worked to a considerable extent. Nevertheless, about 60 per cent of the community’s historic buildings have been lost in the past 25 years – not a reassuring statistic in terms of long-term stewardship. Another issue is that the *Design Guidelines* that help with alterations and new construction have caused confusion, and some outcomes have been questioned by the community.

In order to improve the present situation, the City of Dawson has contracted with Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited to produce the present Heritage Management Plan. Financial and technical assistance have been provided by the Cultural Services Branch of the Yukon Government. The consultants have held extensive interviews, meetings, and workshops among municipal elected officials and staff, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in staff, and a broad array of community stakeholders. The Dawson community has expressed broad support for the recommendations in this Heritage Management Plan.

Vision and Objectives

This plan proposes a Vision for the Management of Dawson’s Heritage Resources:

The built and natural heritage features of the Klondike Valley Cultural Landscape, of which the Dawson Townsite forms an important component, will be managed so as to improve the quality of life for residents of the City and the region and to provide an enhanced destination attraction for international tourism. The heritage management program will tell the stories of the entire human history of the Klondike Valley, with particular emphasis on the Gold Rush era of 1896-1910.

This plan proposes to achieve this Vision by means of the following broad heritage management objectives (as well as more detailed management recommendations made elsewhere in this document):

- Preserve and strengthen the visual character and design intent of a nationally and internationally significant cultural landscape;
- Conserve and interpret the full history of the cultural landscape – before, during, and after the Gold Rush;
- Retain the dominant character as a Gold Rush-era cultural landscape;
- Communicate that the Gold Rush was a short but highly significant era in the long course of natural and human history, and ensure that resources remain and stories are told from the other periods of history;
- Facilitate and support an interpretation program that communicates the diverse heritage and natural values of the region;
- Protect and enhance the health of the natural ecosystems;
- Maintain a high level of heritage management for the river valleys, the gold fields, and the Dawson Townsite;
- Identify distinct character areas and heritage management areas, with different management principles for the different areas;
- Balance conservation with the integration of new services and activities;
- Create a superior quality of life for Dawson’s residents; and
- Capitalize on the tourist potential of the region.

Cultural Landscapes, Character Areas, and Heritage Management Areas

This Heritage Management Plan proposes that Dawson City and its region be managed as a Cultural Landscape – as a broad geographical area that has been modified by human activity. The ‘Klondike Valley Cultural Landscape’ is the name that the plan gives to the overall area. It comprises the Lower Klondike River Valley, extending westward from Hunker Creek (just west of the airport) to the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers.

The plan divides the Klondike Valley Cultural Landscape into eight Character Areas, which are defined and mapped in Section 3.2:

Klondike Valley Cultural Landscape

The Dawson Townsite

- Downtown Character Area
- Downtown Transitional Character Area
- Government Reserve Character Area
- East Slope Character Area
- North End Character Area

Beyond the Townsite

- Klondike Valley Character Area
 - Confluence Character Area
 - Bowl Character Area
-

This plan further recommends that the eight Character Areas should be regulated as three Heritage Management Areas, and that the name 'Heritage Management Area' replace the present 'Historic Control District'.

1. Downtown Heritage Management Area

- Comprises three character areas:
 - Downtown Character Area
 - Downtown Transitional Character Area
 - Government Reserve Character Area

2. Residential Heritage Management Area

- Comprises two character areas:
 - East Slope Character Area
 - North End Character Area

3. Valley, Confluence and Bowl Heritage Management Area

- Comprises three character areas:
 - Klondike River Character Area
 - Confluence Character Area
 - Bowl Character Area

Recommendations for the Heritage Management Areas

Following are the principal management guidelines for the three Heritage Management Areas. Details are provided in Section 4.1:

1. Downtown Heritage Management Area

- *Protection:* All buildings and structures, including deteriorated and derelict structures, are protected by designation under the provisions of the *Yukon Historic Resources Act*.
- *Incentives:* Protection by designation will be accompanied by incentives for conservation.
- *Treatment of historic buildings:* Conservation work will follow the existing *Design Guidelines for Historic Dawson*, Parks Canada's *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, and the 'Design Guidelines for Infill and Conservation' prepared as part of this Heritage Management Plan and contained in Chapter 6. Post-Gold Rush buildings should not be altered to look like Gold Rush buildings; they should be respected for what they are, which helps to illustrate and interpret the full history of Dawson.
- *Treatment of new infill construction:* Buildings should replicate (reconstruct) the external design of the building that stood on that particular site during the Gold Rush era (ca. 1896-1910), when there is sound historic evidence as to the appearance of the former building. In certain instances, an alternative source for replication may be selected.
- When there is insufficient historic evidence concerning the appearance of the former building to enable good replication, then new infill construction will adopt the 'Dawson Style' (explained below with the Residential Heritage Management Area and in Section 6.2).
- Historic landscape features that are visible from the street are protected.
- New landscape features should follow historical design principles and are subject to design review in the development permit process.

Variations for individual Character Areas

- *Downtown Transitional Character Area:* Consideration may be given in exceptional circumstances to the construction of buildings that are larger than those that existed in the Gold Rush period, in which case the Dawson Style, rather than replication, should be adopted. This exception may be permitted when the building program proposed by the property owner is of a scale that is larger than historical precedent.
- *Downtown Character Area:* Corner lots at intersections are particularly important to re-establish the historical character of this area. The owners of vacant corner properties should be encouraged to build on them, with replications of the buildings that stood there during the Gold Rush.
- *Government Reserve Character Area:* Landscape features, both historic and new, are particularly highly valued and must follow historical design principles.

2. Residential Heritage Management Area

- All buildings and structures, including deteriorated and derelict structures, are protected by designation under the provisions of the *Yukon Historic Resources Act*, as in the Downtown Heritage Management Area.
- Protection will be accompanied by incentives for conservation, as Downtown.
- *Treatment of historic buildings:* Same as Downtown
- *Treatment of new infill construction:* Three optional approaches are permitted: replication of the former building on the site *or* replication of another historic residence in the vicinity *or* a new design in the 'Dawson Style'. The Dawson Style, which is preferred, is the term given for a contemporary manner of building that is highly respectful of the historic Gold Rush style without attempting to look old. Guidelines for the Dawson Style are provided in Section 6.2.
- *Historic and new landscape features:* Same as Downtown.

Variations in particular areas

- *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in settlement land:* With respect to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in settlement land in the North End, over which the TH has full jurisdiction, the TH may in time choose to institute a heritage management bylaw of its own. In the interim it is anticipated that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in may either agree to comply with the present recommendations, or else may propose modifications to the recommendations that meet the needs and vision of both themselves and the City of Dawson.
- *Dome Subdivision:* The Dome Subdivision lies outside the Residential Heritage Management Area, and replication of former Gold Rush era buildings is discouraged. Either the Dawson Style or good contemporary design would be acceptable for new construction.

3. Valley, Confluence and Bowl Heritage Management Area

- All natural and historic landscape features that are valued by the community are protected. This includes some dredge tailings and ponds.
- The principal historic structures and equipment (including moveable derelict equipment) that are remnants from gold extraction are protected.
- Protection will be accompanied by incentives for conservation.
- New development should represent good new architectural design and planning, and not reflect the Gold Rush style.