



## Infill and Preservation

In the last thirty years, Westmount has witnessed firsthand the tug-of-war between new development and the preservation of its past. While there are several examples of infill construction and conservation of existing buildings, two of these provide some insight into the challenges and debates that are bound to occur when two worlds collide in an established neighbourhood.

The construction of a modern home at 10345 Villa Avenue for Kathryn Chase Merrett and her husband Robert in the mid-1980s was one such controversy. The infill development neighbored the residence of David and Kathy McCalla and the design offered a stark contrast to the established dwellings in Groat Estates. Prior to moving there, the Merretts had lived in another sector of Westmount at 10715 123 Street. The development of low-rise retail strip-mall type property along 107 Avenue in the early 1980s caused them to seek a quieter part of the neighbourhood. They found the ideal setting in Groat Estates. However, Kathryn noted that several local residents expressed concern that a 'modern looking house' would not fit in with the pre-1930s architecture that predominated in that area. In order to quell fears and educate neighbours about their plans, they (along with their developer) hosted an open house at the McCalla residence to discuss the design and its impact on the community. They made the argument that a single family house was more preferable to an increased density development as it would solidify the area.

While there were still some voices of local dissent, most of their future neighbours were eventually convinced that the house would not be the architectural eyesore that some had feared. After beginning the planning process in early 1984, construction of the building went ahead, with slight modifications to preserve the streetscape, and the project that was completed in July 1986 stood in stark contrast to the neighbouring McCalla residence and nearby Chapelle mansion. Ironically, that mansion was subsequently sold and razed to the ground to make way for a new condominium development that was constructed at the east end of Villa Road only a few years later.

On the other end of the preservation-development spectrum was the renovation of the Chandler Barn-Carriage House at 10828 125 Street in 2009. The building was one of Edmonton's few remaining examples that demonstrated the transition from equestrian to automobile transportation and was deemed to be of considerable heritage value. The original residence and carriage house had been built in 1912. The former was a typical design of the era with shiplap siding, a verandah, boxed eaves, and rectangular porch supports. The latter had a single west-facing door to admit a horse and carriage, combined with a large hay loft door in the half-storey above. Although automobiles arrived in Edmonton in 1904, the Chandler Barn was not converted to a garage until the 1930s when a door and double opening were added on the north side.

In the summer of 2008, owners Karen and James Yukes successfully applied to the City of Edmonton for the Chandler Barn to be designated as a Municipal Historic Resource. The City allocated \$50,000 from its Heritage Reserve Fund to assist with the estimated \$150,000 costs associated with the restoration of the foundation, roof, exterior, and windows. The grant was not without its critics, though. Councillor Bryan Anderson called the budget "totally ridiculous," claiming that he "could hand blow the glass and pour it" more cheaply. His council colleague, Ron Hayter suggested that "it's history, but it's pretty dilapidated history." However, city heritage planner Lesley Collins successfully argued that it was an extremely rare example of a barn in an urban setting and that "it's something we just don't have any more in the middle of the city." Councillors eventually approved the funding and bylaw change to prevent future alterations after the completion of the renovation.