

## Heritage grant will help rehabilitate historic Bunker House?

An unassuming-looking local home from 1875 which could have played a pivotal role in Ontario history in a worst-case-scenario will soon see preservation efforts supported by the Town of Aurora.

The Bunker House, which was purchased by Metropolitan Toronto in 1962 and retrofitted with a concrete bunker to serve as an alternative seat of municipal operations, if necessary, during the Cold War, will receive a \$10,000 Heritage Grant, following Council approval last week.

Located at 220 Old Yonge Street, The Cold War Bunker is seeing significant weather damage as the result of failed sealing and waterproofing and a roof leak. The homeowners' application for a Heritage Grant was supported in December by the Town's Heritage Advisory Committee.

Aurora's Heritage Grant program was established in April of 2025 to help owners of heritage properties maintain them for years to come.

There is an annual cap of \$30,000 for the fund, and money can be used to maintain heritage features, remove graffiti, repair original windows, doors, and other elements, reconstruct lost architectural features, and façade restoration.

Applicants are required to provide two contractor quotes.

220 Old Yonge Street is individually designated under Bylaw 5905-16 and was originally built circa 1875, says Heritage Planner Adam Robb in his recommendation to Council. Purchased by Metro Toronto in 1962, a concrete bunker was then added to the main building, which also features an emergency escape port. The bunker contains several relics from the Cold War, including an illuminated map of Metro Toronto evacuation routes and telecommunications lines.

Historically, the house is associated with the Parteger and Cosford families, who farmed the property and the surrounding lands. After the purchase by Metro Toronto, the property became a significant readiness centre in case of a nuclear attack on Toronto. The property continued to serve as a training centre until the early 1990s. The designation bylaw specifically lists the underground bunker and associated relics, such as the illuminated map and emergency water tanks as heritage attributes.

The grant was formally approved by Council on February 24, with Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner praising current and former property owners for keeping the property up as well as they have.

The owners of the property are here tonight [and] I thank them for coming and taking such good care of this heritage property, said Councillor Gaertner at the approval stage, noting the previous owners' work to receive heritage designation for their property. They actually designated this house just before they sold it and people don't do that because it reduces the value of the property, or it would have in this case. They felt it was a significant heritage property and designated. [and] I wish more people would do things like that.

By Brock Weir  
Editor  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter