

Rationale for Request to Designate the Benvoulin Heritage Park (2279 Benvoulin Road) with a Municipal Heritage Designation Bylaw: (attached to form)

The Central Okanagan Heritage Society (COHS) is requesting that Benvoulin Heritage Park be designated in order to ensure that the whole site is protected and conserved for the community benefit today and for the future. Heritage Designation will ensure that this site remains as it is and that the park continues to provide context to the very significant Benvoulin Church and the McIver House.

In 2018, a *Heritage Conservation & Management Plan for the McIver House* was completed for COHS. The Plan includes why the house is significant and worthy of protection, as well as recommended updates to the current Statement of Significance (SOS) for the building. The Plan also recommends that the McIver House be designated in order to provide protection to the building. The COHS Board, decided that it makes the most sense to have the Benvoulin Heritage Park, along with the McIver House and the Benvoulin Church be designated together similar to the city owned Guisachan Heritage Park (1996 designated heritage).

The Benvoulin Heritage Park, with its historic Benvoulin Church and McIver House, and country gardens, is a significant and important heritage site in the City of Kelowna. This well-known site continues to be a link to this area's past and present.

The Gothic Revival church was built by prominent builder H.W. Raymer, who was also Kelowna's first mayor. The site was donated by real estate developer G.G. Mackay who laid out the original Benvoulin townsite in 1891. The church was built largely from funds donated by Lord and Lady Aberdeen in 1891. The Aberdeens had purchased the neighbouring McDougall Ranch, which they renamed Guisachan Farm.

The church also has value for the communities it served for seven decades, first as a Presbyterian Church and then as a United Church. The original Reid Hall, added in the 1950s, served as the Sunday School and was also used for meetings. After the church closed in 1964, its condition deteriorated until it was almost demolished in the early 1980s. The conservation of this site and buildings, undertaken by COHS as their first project in the 1980s, shows the amount of dedication by COHS volunteers and the community, and with city support for the project. The new Reid Hall (replaced the original hall in 2000), the church, and the grounds are used for numerous community, cultural, and private events each year.

The Reid Hall, while a relatively 'newer' building has value as a community hall that replaced the original hall, named after the Reid family who built it. The Reid family still lives and farms nearby on Bryns Road. The new Reid Hall was designed by Peter Chataway, local building designer and past president of COHS, and Gordon Hartley, well-known Kelowna architect and heritage advocate. The Hall, designed to be compatible with the Church, is set back to ensure that the Church remains the focus on the site.

The early farmhouse, while moved onto the site in 1995, is significant for its association with early agriculture in the Benvoulin area, its connection with the McIver Family along with the community's support in its move, restoration and reuse as the caretaker's residence at Benvoulin Heritage Park. The house's saltbox form, while fairly common in eastern Canada, is relatively uncommon and unique in B.C. and especially in Kelowna. The house was owned and lived in by the McIver family from 1927 until 1979, after which the family donated the building to COHS. The house replaced the manse (a similar farmhouse style) that was destroyed by fire in the 1960s. The McIver House, moved from its original site near the corner of KLO and Benvoulin, has regained new context as part of Benvoulin Heritage Park.

The park is the original 1.26-acre site that was created in 1891 by early real estate developer G.G. Mackay. Mackay donated the lot for the first Presbyterian Church, as part of his plan to create the new Benvoulin townsite. The site was turned into a park after COHS restored the historic church and Reid Hall. The early concrete sidewalk that leads from the driveway to the front door of the church is one of the only remaining elements in the park from the time that the building was used as a church. It should be noted that the sidewalk is in poor condition and is currently being assessed to determine if and how it can be repaired. Over the last four decades, the country gardens have continued to evolve and currently include a wedding garden, a pollinator garden, and a memorial garden.

The early significant features that should be included in the designation bylaw are:

- Benvoulin Heritage Church
- McIver House
- Mature landscaping- (i.e. trees, lawns, and flower gardens) specifically the Golden Rain Tree (in the Pollinator Garden) that was planted by Mayor Walter Gray planted in 1997 and the large Manitoba Maple in the south 'wedding' garden.

The Benvoulin Heritage Park with its significant buildings and features is a valuable community asset that should be protected with a designation bylaw to ensure the long-term conservation of this site.

Note: COHS is planning to undertake a Heritage Conservation Management Plan for the Benvoulin Church in the near future, which will include Reid Hall and the site itself. The **McIver House Conservation Management Plan** (completed in 2018) and the Benvoulin Church Plan will ensure that this important community heritage asset is well looked after for future generations.