**Essa Township Official Plan**

**Cultural Resources**

Section 13.1

**Introduction**

**Cultural heritage resources form an important linkage to our past and, as such, the Township of Essa recognizes their importance and will encourage the identification, conservation, protection, restoration, maintenance and enhancement of cultural heritage resources. All development shall have regard to the cultural heritage resources of the Township and where possible provide appropriate protection to these resources.**

The 26-acre site of the Ontario Tree Seed Facility meets a number of the criteria listed in Section 13.2.2:

**Cultural Heritage Resources include but are not necessarily restricted to:**

1. **A property or an area of historic value or interest, possessing one or more of the following attributes:**
2. **An example of the Township’s past social, cultural, political, technological, physical development;**

Boom, Bust and Renewal

The establishment of the Ontario Tree Seed Plant in 1923 is directly connected to the lumber boom of the 19th century that defined the early years of Angus and surrounding area and turned the village into a thriving centre for harvesting, processing and shipping the vast stands of pine native to this region.

Once the trees were gone, Angus and area faced an economic downturn and an environmental crisis that exacerbated its declining prosperity. Blowsands, failed water sources, floods and erosion became common and interfered with the productivity of farms.

To remedy the crisis, Edmund Zavitz, provincial forester of Ontario, and many of his colleagues embarked on an ambitious afforestation plan that included the creation of the Ontario Tree Seed Plant. Once again, Angus became an important centre—this time for the collection, processing and distribution of seed that became the new forests of Ontario.

1. **A property associated with a person who has made a significant contribution to the social, cultural, political, economic, technological or physical development of the Township, County, Province or Country;**

Zavitz, Drury and Richardson

Edmund Zavitz was the long-term, leading architect of the conservation movement that renewed the forests of Ontario. One of his many talents was attracting colleagues and friends who shared his goals and contributed immensely to achieving them. Among the most influential was E. C. Drury, a lifelong friend and Premier of Ontario from 1919 to 1923. Together they initiated the Agreement Forests Program, provincial nurseries and the Tree Seed Plant in Angus. For more than a year, Drury and Zavitz would meet in the lunchroom at the plant on Friday nights to discuss further afforestation plans.

Zavitz hired Arthur Herbert Richardson, a professional forester and skilled writer who helped publicize forestry projects in the province as well as supervising the building of the Tree Seed Plant and becoming its first superintendent. When the Boy Scouts asked to be involved in tree planting projects, Richardson started the Boy Scout Forestry Camp and wrote the program for the camp himself. For a few years, the camp was held on the grounds of the Ontario Tree Seed Plant. Many of the forests in the Angus area, including the Rippon Forest, were planted by Scouts from the camp. Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Cubs and Brownies continue to be involved in tree planting in Ontario.

The forests planted in Simcoe County under the Agreement Forests Program are still growing today as Simcoe County Forests, and continue to provide ecological benefits to the county as well as revenue to expand lands for afforestation.

Both Zavitz and Richardson were key players in the creation of conservation authorities based on watersheds rather than municipal boundaries, which was an innovative idea at the time.

Because of technical expertise developed at the Tree Seed Plant in processing tree seeds and maintaining chain of custody in seed distribution, the plant was considered a world-class facility. Forestry practices developed in the county forests became a learning base for forests across Ontario.

1. **A property which makes an important contribution to the area composition or streetscape of which it forms a part.**

With mature trees, green spaces and matching stone pillars, the site of the Tree Seed Plant complements the Angus Community Park across the street. Their similarities are not a coincidence. In 1929, land formerly part of the Tree Seed Plant was donated to the municipality by the provincial government for use as a community park. Located next to the Nottawasaga River, near the former site of the railway station and down the road from the original town centre, this is the historic heart of Angus.

**e. An area exhibiting landscape features such as woodlots, hedgerows, trees, fields, roadways, bridges and fences of historical or cultural significance to the Township.**

The trees planted on the site of the Tree Seed Plant include many conifers typical of the commercially valuable trees that sparked the lumber boom as well as mature species of native hardwoods: red oak, silver maple, Freeman maple, black walnut and the endangered butternut. A few specimen trees, out of their usual range, include a cucumber magnolia, honey locust and a redbud. The diversity of trees reflects the interests of the foresters who worked here for 94 years.

Sources:

*Herbert Richardson*, Paul Masterson. Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1992

*Two Billion Trees and Counting, The Legacy of Edmund Zavitz*, John Bacher. Dundurn Press, 2011.

*The Village of Angus, An Historical Sketch*, A. H. Richardson. 1929

History of Forestry video, Simcoe County Forestry website.