Heritage Conservation District Study 2009

Prepared By

The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario
(North Waterloo and Hamilton Branches)

With the Assistance of

Heritage Ottawa, Huron County MHCs,
St. Catharines MHC, Thunder Bay MHC

and

Robert Shipley
Kayla Jonas
Jason Kovacs
Beatrice Tam
Martha Fallis

of the
Heritage Resources Centre

Generous support provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation

May 2009
Heritage Conservation Districts Examined in this Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>District Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Kingston</td>
<td>Barriefield Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality of Bluewater</td>
<td>Bayfield</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of Brantford</td>
<td>Brant Avenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of Ottawa</td>
<td>Byward Market</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of Brampton</td>
<td>Churchville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Hamilton</td>
<td>Cross-Melville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Oakville</td>
<td>First and Second Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Cambridge</td>
<td>Galt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Goderich</td>
<td>Goderich (Two districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Cobourg</td>
<td>King Street East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Hamilton</td>
<td>MacNab-Charles</td>
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<tr>
<td>City of Kingston</td>
<td>Market Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Markham</td>
<td>Markham Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Mississauga</td>
<td>Meadowvale Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Ottawa</td>
<td>Minto Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilmot Twp</td>
<td>New Hamburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Oakville</td>
<td>Old Oakville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niagara-on-the-Lake</td>
<td>Queen and Picton Streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of St.Catharines</td>
<td>Queen Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Ottawa</td>
<td>Sandy Hill (Five districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality of Huron East</td>
<td>Seaforth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Markham</td>
<td>Thornhill (east of Yonge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Vaughan</td>
<td>Thornhill (west of Yonge)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalist Township</td>
<td>Town of Bath Main Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Thunder Bay</td>
<td>Waverly Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of Pickering</td>
<td>Whitevale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Toronto</td>
<td>Wychwood Park</td>
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Residential

Commercial

Mixed
Acknowledgements

This project was carried out by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) on behalf of the hundreds of volunteers in communities across Ontario who work hard to maintain the built culture of our province. The ACO partnered with several other volunteer groups including Heritage Ottawa and Community Heritage Ontario. The project was directed by a steering committee made up of representatives from these organizations. Particular thanks go to ACO Manager Rollo Myers, President Catherine Nasmith and ACO board member Richard Longley for their time, effort and guidance.

We would like to thank staff at the Ministry of Culture for providing information and advice about the project: Paul King, Chris Mahood and Bert Duclos. Gratitude is also owed to Paul King, President of Community Heritage Ontario for providing technical services.

The project was undertaken in support of the volunteer efforts of ACO branch presidents and members, Heritage Ottawa, members of the local Municipal Heritage Committees and interested citizens across Ontario. These dedicated volunteers surveyed residences in the Heritage Conservation Districts and provided energy and purpose to the project.

The efforts of the volunteers were assisted and coordinated through cooperation between the ACO and the Heritage Resources Centre (HRC) at the University of Waterloo. Professor Robert Shipley is the Director of the HRC. The Project Coordinator, report manager and principal volunteer facilitator was Kayla Jonas. Additional data collection and research analysis was conducted by Jason Kovacs, Beatrice Tam and Martha Fallis. Administration and help was also provided by Marg Rowell, Chelsey Tyers, Paul Dubniak and Kirsten Pries.

Recognition is deserved as well for Professor Rob Feick, Richard Pinnell and Scott MacFarlane at the University of Waterloo for their help obtaining and formatting the GIS maps and to Philip Carter and Paul Oberst for their advice. Thanks are extended to Dr. Susan Sykes at the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo for the thorough and timely approval of our research design.

Thanks!
Executive Summary

Introduction

- This study of Heritage Conservation Districts has been funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and is a joint effort among volunteers of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, the Heritage Resources Centre and volunteer historical societies across the province.
- The *Ontario Heritage Act* enables municipalities to designate Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs).
- Heritage Conservation Districts allow municipalities to guide future changes in these areas of special character.
- 32 districts designated in or before 1992 were examined.

Study Approach

- 681 resident surveys were conducted door to door by local volunteers from Municipal Heritage Committees, historical societies, ACO branches and members of the Heritage Resources Centre.
- Land use mapping and streetscape evaluations were conducted.
- Sales history trends for 431 properties were collected from GeoWarehouse™ and analyzed.
- 67 key stakeholders were interviewed.
- Data on requests for alterations was collected.
- Districts were evaluated based on their performance.

Key Findings

- By-in-large the goals set for individual Heritage Conservation Districts have been achieved.
- Satisfaction with living and owning property in districts is overwhelming.
- It is not difficult or time consuming to make appropriate alterations to properties in districts but municipalities should keep better records.
- Real estate values in Heritage Conservation Districts generally rise more consistently than surrounding areas.
- Strong real estate performance and resident satisfaction are most pronounced where district guidelines are enforced.
- There are issues in many districts such as the possibility for expansion and the need for clearer goals which provide the opportunity for improvements.

Recommendations

* a) General

- Create more districts because they are successful planning initiatives.
- Continue monitoring and evaluating districts using this study as a baseline.
- Publicize the confirmed OMB ruling that pre-2005 Heritage District Plans are valid and that District Plans take precedence over other municipal by-laws (OMB Decision PL060606 Feb 18, 2009).
b) Plans and Goals

- Districts should have plans – some older districts do not
- The Province should set up a special fund to assist municipalities to update Heritage Conservation District Plans but in the meantime the intent of district designation should be respected
- District Plans should have clear goals – some older district plans may need to be amended to add these goals

c) Resident Satisfaction

- Municipalities should recognize that there is strong support among residents for districts and expand their use
- Public relations efforts should be made to better inform residents of the benefits of District Designation and to ensure new residents understand district procedures
- Create a sub-committee for each district, or have a district representative on the Municipal Heritage Committee to address policy issues and provide education
- Clarify roles of the Municipal Heritage Committee and Heritage Staff

d) Requests for Alterations

- Track alteration requests in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Delegate more authority to Heritage Staff to provide consistency and knowledge to the day-to-day operations of the district
- Municipal Heritage Committees should set policies not administer them

e) Real Estate

- Inform the public about the strength of real estate values in Heritage Conservation Districts
- Educate the Real Estate industry about the existence of districts and their market performance
- Ensure Real Estate Agents inform buyers about the existence of Heritage Conservation Districts and their procedures

f) Issues

- Strategic effort should be made to educate residents both inside and outside of the district, as well as councils about the benefits of districts
- Use examples for compatible development (Meadowvale Village, Mississauga and Queen Street, St. Catharines)
- Ministry of Culture should provide an updated and accurate list of Heritage Conservation Districts
- Municipalities should provide information about the district, including the district plan, a list of address and a map online
- Consider the expansion of districts to manage development pressure
- Ensure parks and open spaces are protected as part of districts
- Erect entrance signs or coordinated street signs to create place reference
Heritage Districts Work!

Heritage Conservation District Study
Markham Village - City of Markham
2009
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Markham Village Executive Summary

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Background of Markham Village Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Markham
- Consists 548 residential and commercial buildings
- The district was designated in 1990
- Plan was written by Project Planning Limited

Study Approach

- Resident surveys were conducted through a mail out
- Land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation were conducted
- Sales history trends were collected from GeoWarehouse™ and analyzed
- Key stakeholders were interviewed
- Data on requests for alterations was collected

Analysis of Key Findings

- The district plan does not have clearly stated objectives
- The implied objective of the Heritage Conservation District Plan to maintain and conserve buildings has been met
- 60% of the people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- All requests for alterations were approved within six weeks
- The designation is not a factor in the real estate values of the area
- The Heritage Conservation District approach has been successful in maintaining the distinct areas of the district, as well as the overall heritage character
- Overall, the Markham Village Heritage Conservation District has been a successful planning initiative

Recommendations

- Track alteration requests in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Create a policy to manage future traffic in the area
Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction
   1.1 Heritage Act and Designation
   1.2 Rationale for Heritage Conservation District Study

2.0 Background of Markham Village Heritage Conservation District
   2.1 Description of the District
   2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District
   2.3 Location of the District
   2.4 Designation of the District

3.0 Study Approach
   3.1 Resident Surveys
   3.2 Townscape Survey
   3.3 Real Estate Data
   3.4 Key Stakeholder Interviews
   3.5 Requests for Alterations

4.0 Analysis of Key Findings
   4.1 Have the goals been met?
   4.2 Are people content?
   4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?
   4.4 Have property values been impacted?
   4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

5.0 Conclusions
   5.1 Conclusions
   5.2 Recommendations

Appendices
A- Tabular Results of Resident Surveys
B- Land Use Maps
C- Map of Views
D- Photographs of Views
E- Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma
F- Real Estate Data
G- Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews
H- Requests for Alterations