



DOWNTOWN OAKVILLE HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT REVIEW

November 2025





Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District Review

Data Analysis Assessment

2025

CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----|--|----|
| 1 | Key Facts..... | 2 |
| 2 | Project Background | 3 |
| 3 | Data Analysis Methodology | 7 |
| 4 | Results: Heritage Permits and Grants | 11 |
| 4.1 | Heritage Permits | 11 |
| 4.2 | Heritage Grants | 14 |
| 5 | Results: Survey Data..... | 17 |
| 6 | Results: Site Visits | 23 |
| 7 | Results: Public engagement meetings | 28 |
| 8 | Results: Written in Comments..... | 29 |
| 9 | Scorecard Analysis by Plan and Guideline Objective | 30 |
| 10. | Discussion | 44 |
| 11. | Conclusion and Recommendations..... | 47 |

1 KEY FACTS

The purpose of this document is to analyze and summarize the data collected during the 2025 Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Review. The goal of the review was to evaluate and revise, if needed, the District Plan and Guidelines to ensure they remain effective, align with current legislation, and reflect community input gathered through public engagement and data analysis. This marks the first in a series of regular reviews moving forward.

The review found that between 2013—when the HCD was designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* and the Plan and Guidelines implemented—and 2024, the HCD has **partially achieved** the Plan’s 15 stated objectives. Specifically, it has **fully achieved** nine objectives, while **partially achieving** five, and **not achieving** one.

These conclusions are based on a scorecard developed to assess the 15 objectives against data collected on the HCD’s performance over the last 12 years.

These findings have informed recommended revisions to the Plan and Guidelines (see Appendix B of the report).

Key Strengths of the Downtown Oakville HCD Plan and Guidelines:

- Flexibility for additions and new developments
- Creation of the HCD led to the development of the successful Heritage Grant Program
- Clear understandability of the Plan and Guidelines for users
- Flexibility for when heritage permits are needed, taking the needs of business owners into consideration
- Focus on the public realm and landscaping
 - Guidelines created the framework for the 2019 downtown streetscape project
- Retention of the heritage character of Downtown Oakville

Key Challenges of the Downtown Oakville HCD Plan and Guidelines:

- Lack of public awareness for when heritage permits are needed
- Low number of applications for heritage grants

- Lack of clarity around some exemptions and explanations in the Plan and Guidelines
- No installation yet of the gateway feature outlined in the Plan's the 'gateway' objective

From this data analysis assessment, suggested revision recommendations for the Plan and Guidelines are:

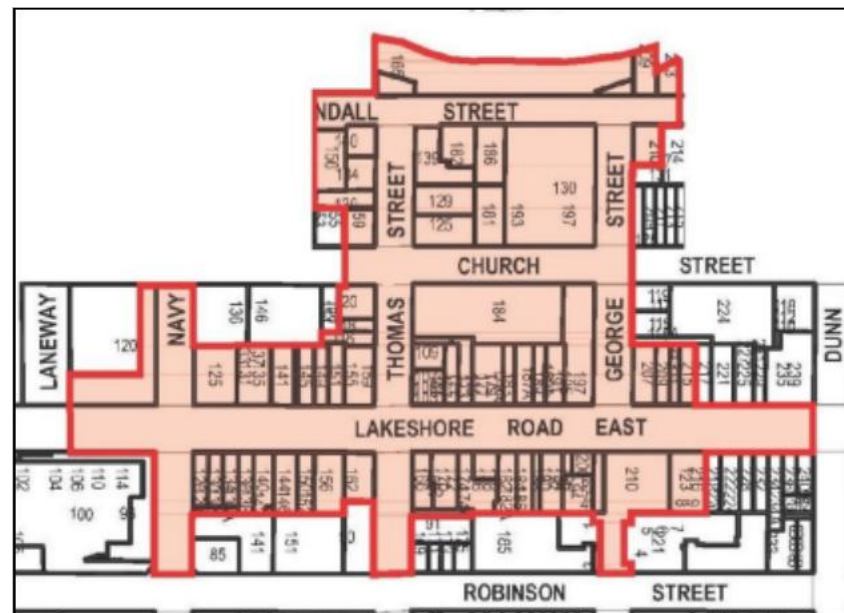
- Policy amendments
 - Update the Plan and Guidelines with the most recent federal, provincial, and municipal legislation, policies, and by-laws
 - This includes updating the District Study's (2012) inventory sheets to be in line with recent legislative changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act*
- Guideline revisions
 - Include a 'how-to use' chart
 - Clarify what heritage permits are, when they are needed, and enforceability
 - Clarify specific guidelines regarding some aspects of heritage conservation and revise for consistency
 - Update terminology to be in line with Oakville's other updated HCDs, remove redundancies
 - Reference inventory sheets for public use
 - Reference the downtown streetscape project
- Operational improvements (for staff)
 - Promote grant program to property owners to increase participation
 - Promote awareness to property owners and tenants of their heritage property status and what it means, particularly regarding heritage permits
 - A 'heritage awareness' campaign
 - Work with groups such as the BIA (Business Improvement Association) to share and promote information (website, newsletter, etc.)

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Staff conducted the Downtown Oakville HCD review in 2025. The review ensures that the Plan continues to meet legislation, reflects best heritage practices, and meets community needs. For the purposes of this assessment, the community is defined as tenants, residents, property owners, and residents of the HCD, as well as residents of Oakville.

In 2012, a Heritage Conservation District Study was undertaken to assess downtown Oakville's cultural heritage value, identify character-defining and contributing properties, and determine the appropriateness of district designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Based on its findings, the Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District (HCD) was then formally established in 2013 as Oakville's only commercial heritage conservation district.

The HCD has an irregular boundary as shown below. The character of the area is defined by its wealth of 19th and 20th century building stock, the commercial streetscape of Lakeshore Road East, and its proximity to the Sixteen Mile Creek and Oakville Harbour.



When an HCD is designated, a Plan and Guidelines document is created to guide property alterations, support the District's cultural heritage character, and ensure consistent decision-making through defined conservation principles and objectives.

Section 6 of the [Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines](#) outlines a review process to ensure the Plan remains effective and reflects best practices in heritage conservation. This data analysis assessment makes up a portion of the 2025 review.

The tools to conduct the review come from Section 6, which states the review process should be formed by:

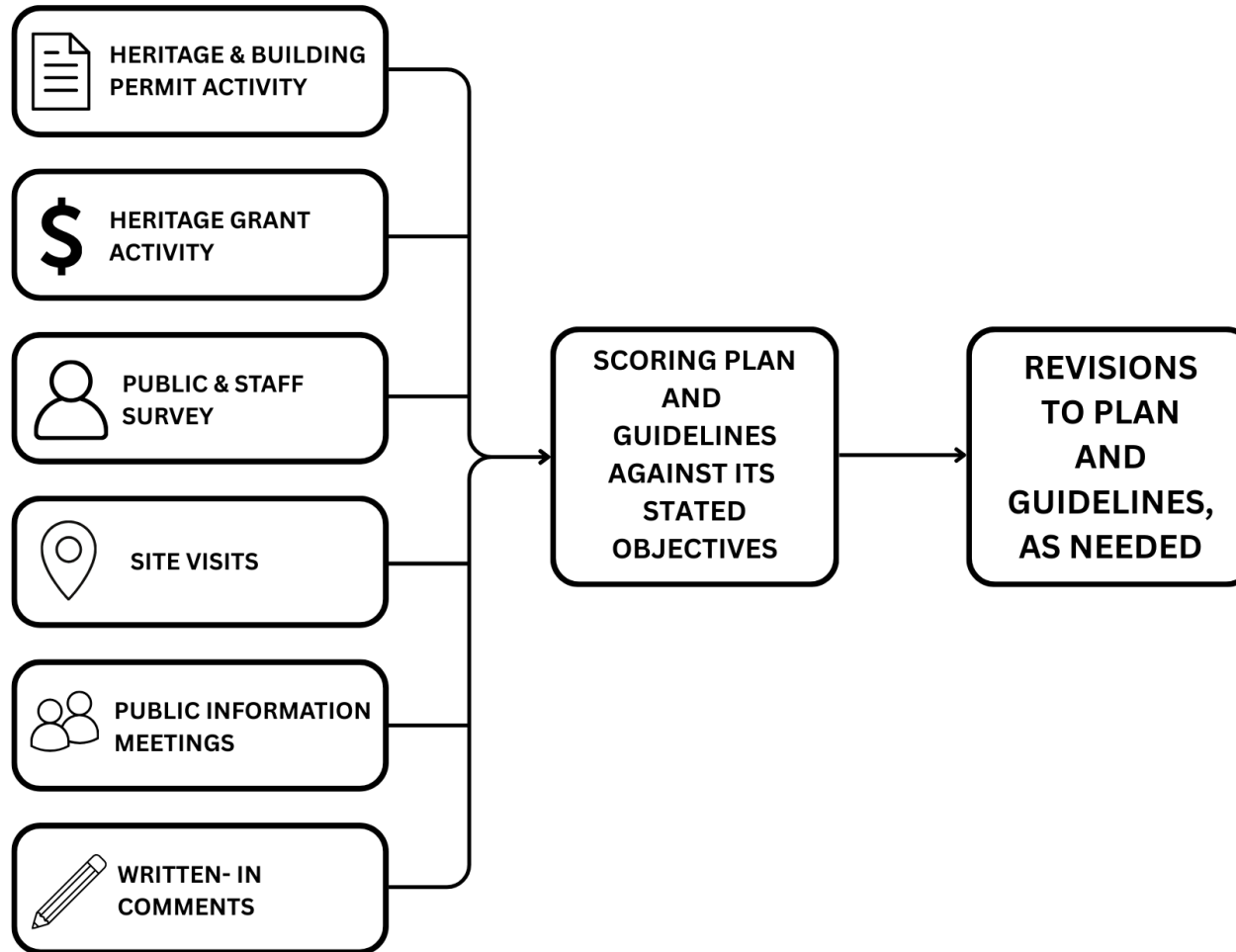
- Formal engagement and dialogue with property owners, community, and all interested parties
- Number of heritage permits submitted, approved, and types of alterations
- Number, type, and value of heritage grants
- Development of scorecard to check which Plan objectives have been achieved (Section 1.3 of the Plan)
- Recommendations for potential revisions to the Plan and Guidelines

Staff have done this by conducting:

- Surveys with the public and staff (June 2025)
- Public information session (August 27, 2025) and meetings with interested parties
- Analysis of heritage permits and grants
- Site visits to assess conditions
- Scoring of Plan objectives
- Updating inventory sheets to meet provincial legislation (O. Reg 569/22), with no changes to heritage status
- Minor revisions to the Plan and Guidelines document to improve clarity and respond to public feedback

Below is a graphic summarizing the review data analysis process:

2013-2024 Data Flow for HCD Review



3 DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

Data Sources

To ensure a thorough evaluation, both quantitative and qualitative evidence was collected from between 2013 and 2024:

- Heritage and building permits: number issued and types of alterations
- Heritage grant data: number of applications and approvals and types of work funded
- Surveys: targeted at property owners, tenants, public, and Town staff to assess awareness, satisfaction, and revisions
- Site visits: in-person observation of property conditions and streetscape elements
- Public engagement meetings: feedback from interested parties on HCD strengths and challenges
- Written comments: email submissions and formal correspondence regarding the HCD's operation

This data is being presented and analyzed not only on its own, but also as a source for scoring the Plan and Guidelines objectives.

Permits, Grants, and Public Engagement Data Rationale

The collection of quantitative and qualitative data from heritage and building permits and grants in the HCD, a public survey, and public meetings, provides a comprehensive review of how the Downtown Oakville HCD is performing against its stated objectives, as well as how it is operating for the community. Numbers of heritage permits issued and grant numbers offer trackable results that can demonstrate trends over time. Qualitative data, such as feedback from surveys and meetings, as well as staff observations from site visits, add nuanced context that can be missing from records. When analyzed together, this shows the relationships between findings and ensures the review reflects both policy compliance and community values. This then strengthens the reliability of the final scorecard evaluation of the Plan and Guidelines objectives. Resulting recommendations are therefore responsive, targeted, and evidence based.

Scorecard Evaluation Rationale

No scorecard methodology existed prior to this 2025 review. As part of this assessment, a new scorecard framework was developed to provide a structured and repeatable method for evaluating the performance of the HCD against the objectives outlined in the Plan and Guidelines. This framework is designed to be adaptable for future HCD reviews.

To support this, both qualitative and quantitative data sources were translated into a standardized numerical scoring system. This approach enables consistent comparisons across objectives and over time.

The scoring scale, achievement thresholds, and objective-specific data sources are directly tied to the Plan and Guideline's policy goals. This ensures that the evaluation reflects on-the-ground conditions, community perspectives, and formal heritage planning processes, resulting in informed recommendations for potential revisions and operational adjustments. The scorecard framework is outlined below:

| Objective | Measure (Data Source) | Scoring Criteria | Achieved Threshold | Score (0-5) |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Maintain and conserve the vibrant heritage character of Lakeshore Road corridor, and adjacent George and Thomas Streets | % of facades retaining original character; conformity to height/massing; photographic comparisons | >90% retention = 5; some inconsistencies = 3; frequent loss = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 4 |
| Protect and enhance heritage property in public and private realm, including heritage buildings, institutional structures, Sixteen-Mile Creek views, streetscapes | Public realm conditions; streetscape and viewsheds study | Full protection/enhancement evident = 5; some impacts = 3; significant loss = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 4 |
| Avoid loss/removal of heritage fabric; ensure changes are reversible | # of irreversible alterations; demolitions | All changes reversible/respectful = 5; some irreversible = 3; frequent irreversible = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 4 |
| Encourage property owners to make continuing repairs and undertake maintenance | # of voluntary repairs; grant uptake | High level of voluntary maintenance = 5; moderate = 3; minimal = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 3 |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|---|
| Support continuing care, conservation, and maintenance via guidance and funding | # of guidance docs distributed; funding applications & approvals | Widespread uptake = 5; some use = 3; very limited = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 3 |
| Encourage maintenance & protection of public realm; minimize adverse effects of public works | Review capital projects; heritage impact assessments (HIAs) | All projects mitigated impacts = 5; some impacts = 3; frequent adverse = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 4 |
| Manage trees, treelines, and grass boulevards contributing to heritage value | Tree inventory; removals vs plantings; canopy analysis | Net canopy growth/maintenance = 5; some loss = 3; significant loss = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 3 |
| Encourage low-profile building forms in commercial environment | % of buildings matching height/massing guidelines | >90% compliance = 5; some inconsistencies = 3; frequent non-conforming = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 5 |
| Support existing uses & adaptive re-uses in heritage fabric | # of adaptive re-use projects; quality of outcomes | Common & sensitive reuse = 5; mixed outcomes = 3; rare/damaging = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 5 |
| Prevent incompatible land uses & built forms | # of incompatible developments; ZBA/OPA conditions; zoning reviews | No major incompatibilities = 5; minor issues = 3; frequent conflicts = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 5 |
| Avoid demolition of heritage buildings & incompatible replacements | # of demolitions approved; compliance with policy | No unjustified demolitions = 5; few questionable = 3; frequent demolitions = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 5 |
| Permit new development/infill only if it complements heritage character | Design review; compliance with HCD guidelines | Fully compatible infill = 5; some mismatches = 3; frequent incompatible = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 5 |
| Encourage public realm improvements that respect heritage and enhance pedestrian environment | # of compatible improvement projects | All improvements compatible = 5; some mismatches = 3; frequent conflicts = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 5 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Promote gateway feature at Lakeshore/Navy respecting heritage | Gateway project presence; design quality | Gateway present & heritage-respectful = 5; partial compliance = 3; absent/incompatible = 0 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 0 |
| Examine/adopt funding sources/programs to support owners | # of funding programs implemented; uptake | Multiple programs active = 5; some programs = 3; none = 1 | Achieved: Score ≥ 4 | 3 |
| Total Possible Score | | | | 75 |
| District's Score | | | | 58 |
| Percentage (District Score / Possible x 100) | | | | 77.3 |
| Performance Assessment (based on %) | | | | Achieved |

- Objectives and data sources: The 15 objectives are drawn directly from Section 1.3 of the HCD Plan and Guidelines. For each objective, specific measurements were identified (e.g., % of facades retaining character, heritage impact assessments that confirm structures fit within the HCD guidelines, canopy coverage).
- Scoring System: A 0–5 scoring scale was then applied to each objective:
 - 0 = Not Addressed
 - 1–2 = Limited effort or negative outcomes
 - 3 = Moderate success
 - 4–5 = Strong evidence of success
- Thresholds for Achievement:
 - Achieved: Score ≥ 4
 - Partially Achieved: Score of 3
 - Not Achieved: Score ≤ 2
- Overall Performance: the total possible score is 75 (15×5). Achievement categories:

- 60-75 points (80–100%) = Achieved
- 38-59 (50–79%) = Partially Achieved
- Below 38 points (49% or less) = Not Achieved

The 0-5 scoring scale offers enough range to capture variations, while the threshold percentages help demonstrate if objectives are being met. This allows for year-to-year comparisons, helps identify trends or concerns within the HCD, and supports informed decision-making for policy revisions to ensure the HCD continues to meet its stated objectives.

This assessment is based on available data sources from 2013 to 2024. Limitations related to data completeness, interpretation, and representativeness are expanded on in the Discussion section of the report.

4 RESULTS: HERITAGE PERMITS AND GRANTS

4.1 HERITAGE PERMITS

From 2013 to 2024, there were a total of 53 heritage permits from 29 individual properties. The HCD has a total of **64** properties, so **45%** of the HCD properties have applied for a heritage permit.

All the protected properties in the Downtown Oakville HCD are designated either under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* as a property in a Heritage Conservation District, or as a Part IV/V property, which means they were individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* before becoming a part of the HCD and now retain both types of heritage designation.

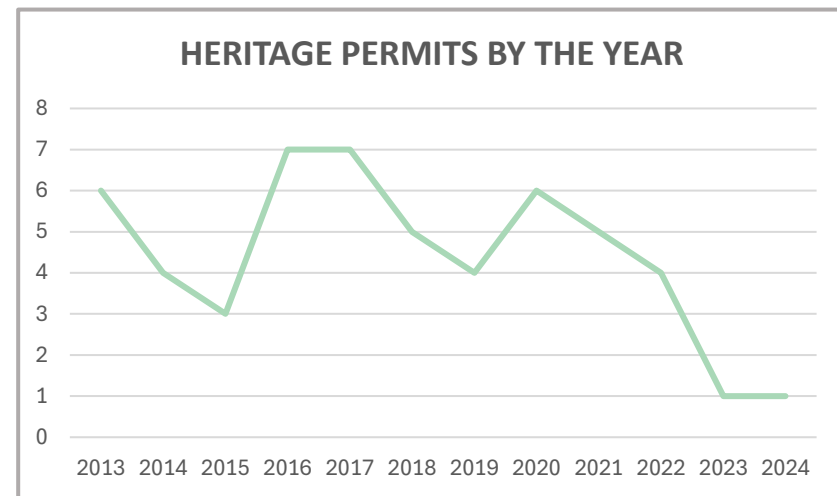
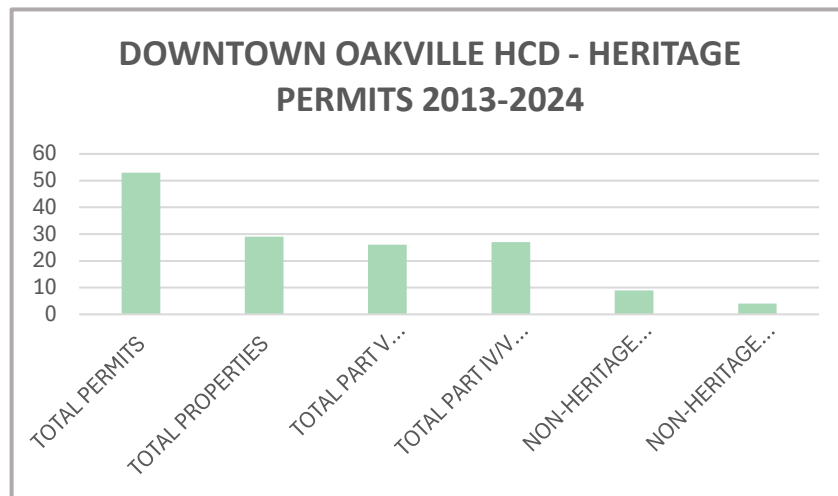
There were a total of 26 Part V permits, and 27 Part IV/V permits. Most of the buildings were on Lakeshore Road East.

Heritage permits are required in the HCD for:

- All new construction, including new additions to existing structures and new independent structures
- Alteration, addition, removal, or replacement of windows, doors, porches, verandahs, chimneys, cladding, roofing material, trim, and other exterior details of a heritage structure
- Demolition of a structure or part of a structure

- New signage
- Hard landscaping such as the alteration, addition, removal, or replacement of patios, fences, gates, trellises, arbours, gazebos, retaining walls, and walkways

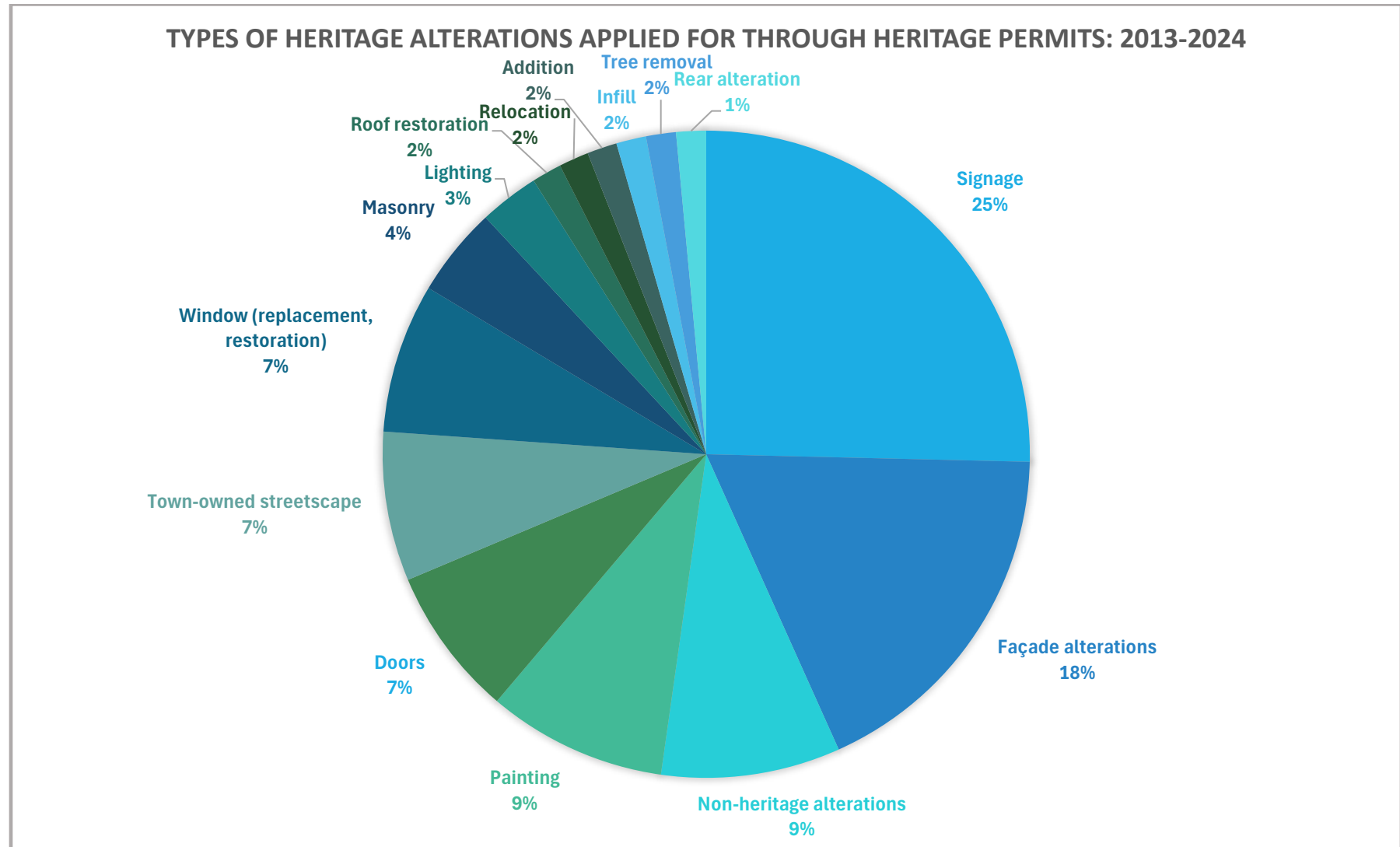
Following public consultation in 2013, the Downtown Oakville HCD was designed with greater flexibility than other Oakville HCDs regarding heritage permits. Section 5 of the Plan outlines specific exemptions—such as painting exterior millwork or window surrounds—that typically require permits elsewhere but are excluded here. This tailored approach may contribute to the lower number of heritage permit applications observed in the district.



The most heritage permits in the Downtown Oakville HCD were issued in 2016 and 2017. Since then, permit numbers have declined. This drop may be partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, staff observed that some property changes between 2020 and 2024 were made without applying for heritage permits, which may also explain the lower application numbers. Section 11 of this report recommends improved communication to address this issue.

Between 2013 and 2024, 74 building permits were issued in the Downtown Oakville HCD, with 23% related to signage. This suggests tenant turnover and sign updates are key drivers of heritage permit applications. A separate sign permit process triggers heritage permit requirements, which may explain the number of signage-related heritage permits. During this period, only one demolition permit was issued, for a non-contributing building, to relocate a designated heritage property.

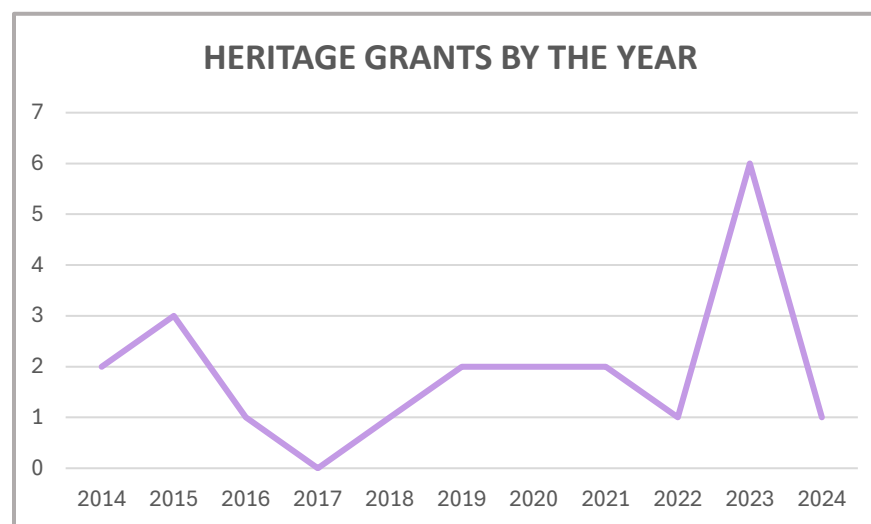
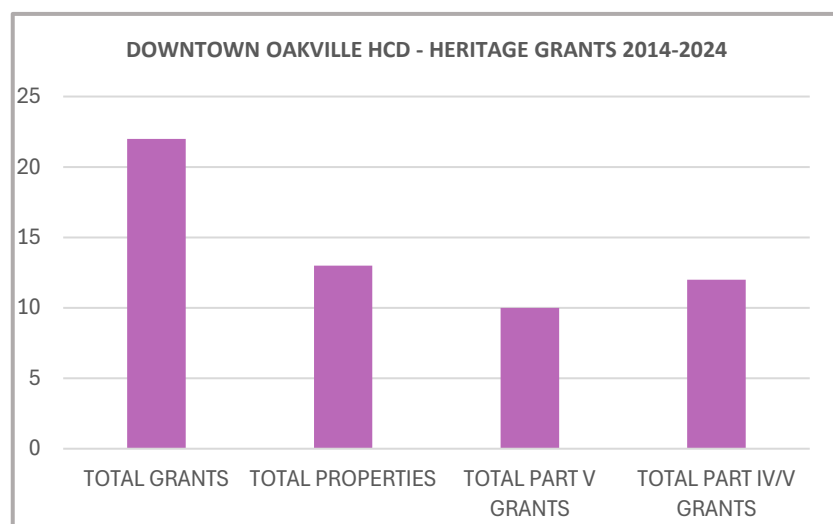
The types of heritage alterations are visualized in the chart below. A total of 25% of heritage permits were for signage, which is tied to the commercial nature of the HCD. Exterior alterations make up 18% of heritage permits, and include things like rebuilding front porches, railings, or installations or removals of canopies.



4.2 HERITAGE GRANTS

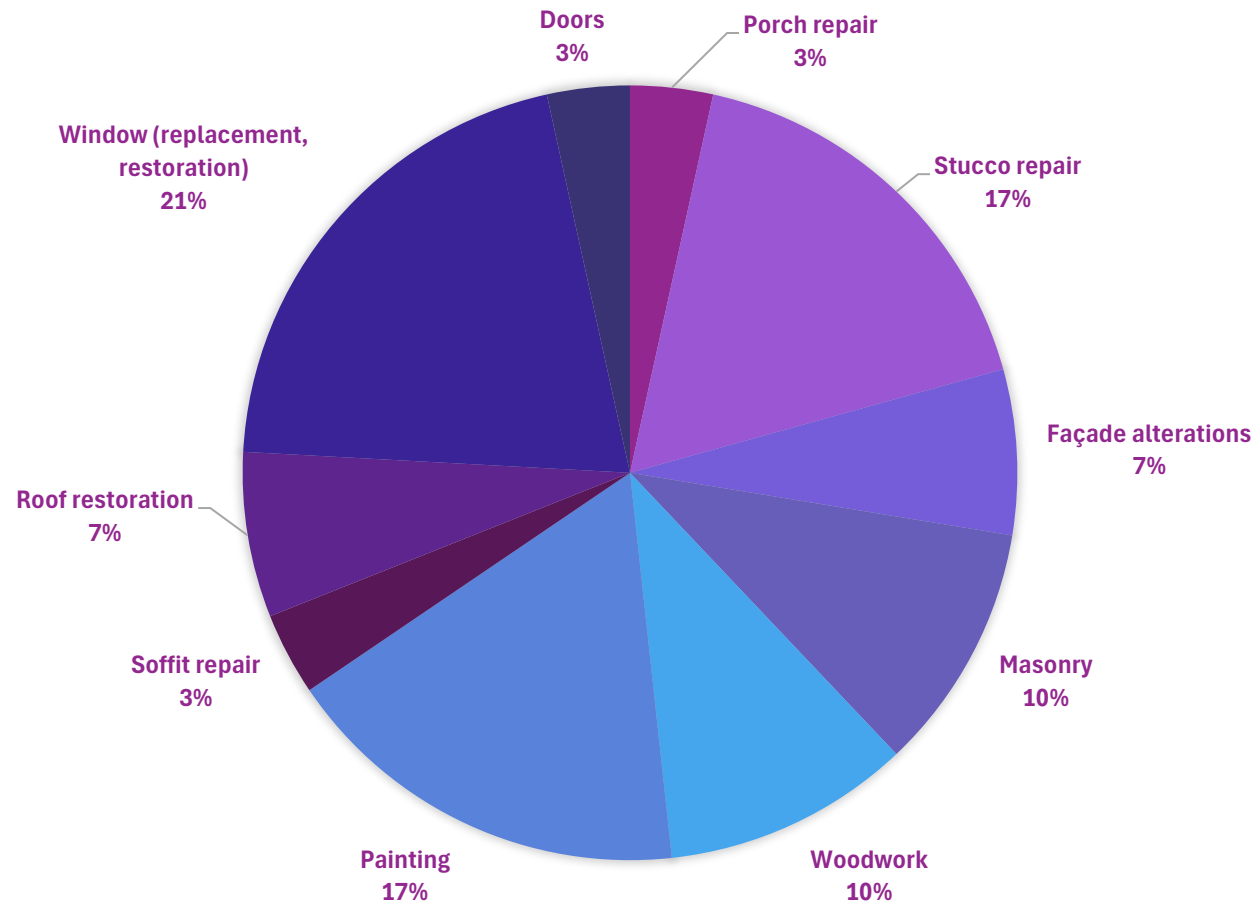
The Heritage Grant Program was introduced in 2014, one year after the Downtown Oakville HCD was established, as a direct outcome of the HCD's creation and its supporting Plan and Guidelines. From 2014 to 2024, there were a total of 22 heritage grants from 13 individual properties. The HCD has a total of **64 separate** properties. Therefore, **20%** of the HCD properties have applied for a heritage grant. There was a total of 10 Part V permits, and 12 Part IV/V permits.

Heritage grant numbers remain consistently low in the HCD, with a spike in 2023, as seen in the chart below.



Most of the work applied for through the grant program was for window work, such as restoration or replacement (21%), followed by stucco repair and exterior painting (both at 17%), with other exterior work such as woodwork and masonry next (10%). The results can be seen in the chart below. Over the decade, 19% (4) applications were rejected over 2014-2024, based on lack of funds.

TYPES OF WORK APPLIED FOR THROUGH HERITAGE GRANTS: 2014-2024

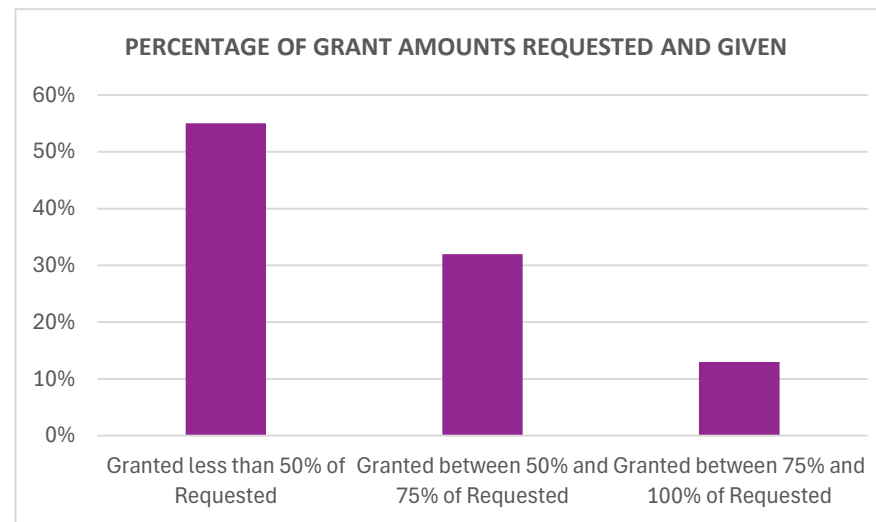


The following chart provides Heritage Grant Program statistics to date:

| Program Year | Number of Projects | Requested Funding | Funding Available | Value of Projects |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| 2014 (pilot) | 28 | \$235,000 | \$80,000 | \$500,000 |
| 2015 (pilot) | 26 | \$172,000 | \$80,000 | \$466,000 |
| 2016 (pilot) | 23 | \$138,000 | \$80,000 | \$370,000 |
| 2017 | 25 | \$181,000 | \$90,000 | \$402,000 |
| 2018 | 19 | \$164,000 | \$90,000 + \$5,000 | \$478,000 |
| 2019 | 51 | \$379,000 | \$90,000 + \$25,175 | \$1,000,000 |
| 2020 | 25 | \$207,000 | \$90,000 | \$510,000 |
| 2021 | 39 | \$253,000 | \$90,000 + \$53,275 | \$740,000 |
| 2022 | 32 | \$244,000 | \$120,000 + \$26,834 | \$827,000 |
| 2023 | 55 | \$485,000 | \$120,000 + \$17,965 | \$2.1 million |
| 2024 | 42 | \$287,000 | \$120,000 + \$35,340 | \$717,000 |
| 2025 | 38 | \$286,798 | \$180,000 + \$24,200 | \$1 million |

Since the Heritage Grant Program started in 2014, funding has steadily increased. Analysis shows that most Downtown Oakville HCD applicants received less than 50% of their requested grant amounts (55%), while 32% received between 50% and 75%, and only 13% received between 75% and 100%. These results should be taken in context with funding being distributed town-wide.

2025 chart of Heritage Grant program statistics since its pilot years. *Source: Town of Oakville*



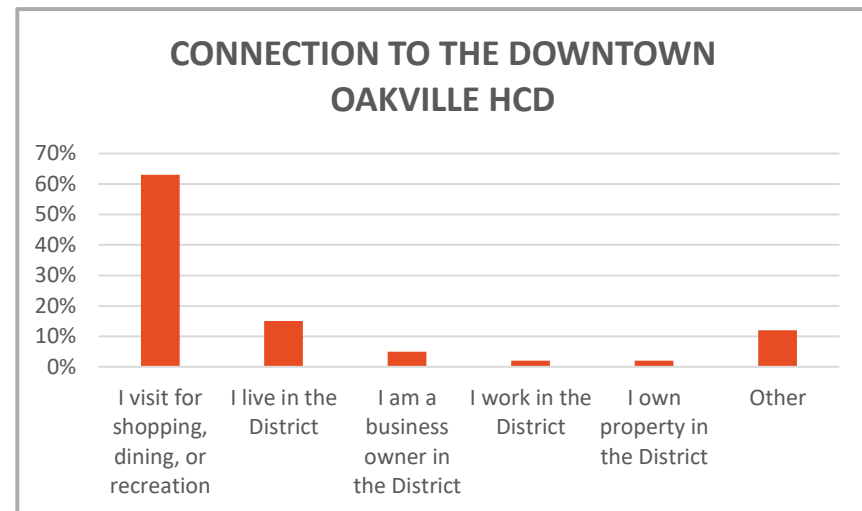
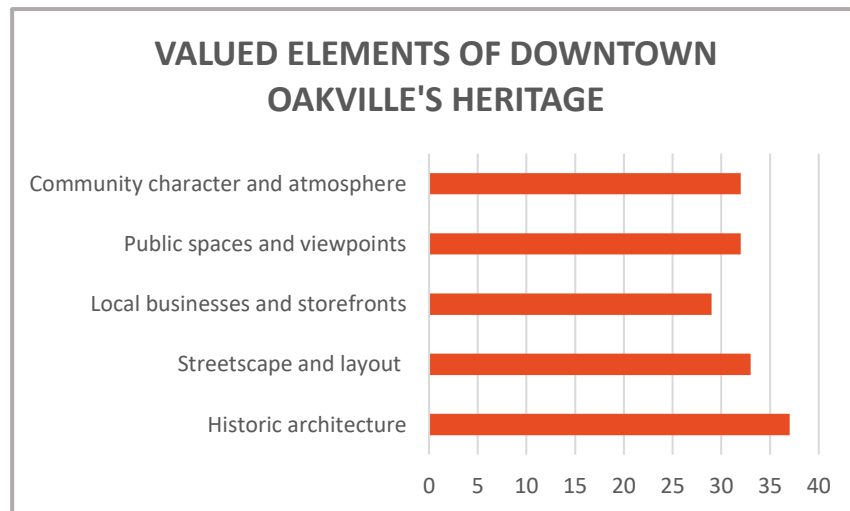
5 RESULTS: SURVEY DATA

A public survey focused on the HCD and its Plan and Guidelines conducted in June 2025 received 41 responses from the public and 7 from Town staff.

Public

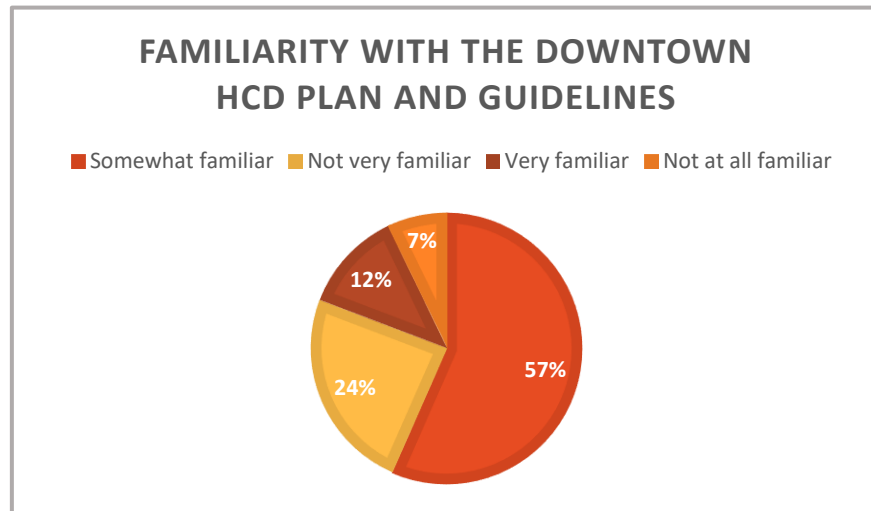
Suggested policy revisions to the document for clarity and enforceability, as refined by data synthesis, can be found in Appendix B of the Public Meeting Report.

Most public respondents were regular visitors to the Downtown Oakville HCD for shopping, dining, or recreation, while others lived, worked, or owned property in the area. Respondents valued the district's heritage architecture, streetscape, community atmosphere, and public spaces, noting its walkability and historical character.



Most respondents (73%) have been connected to the Downtown Oakville HCD for over 10 years, showing long-term interest. Nearly half (49%) visit weekly, and 37% visit daily.

Almost all respondents (93%) knew the area is a Heritage Conservation District.



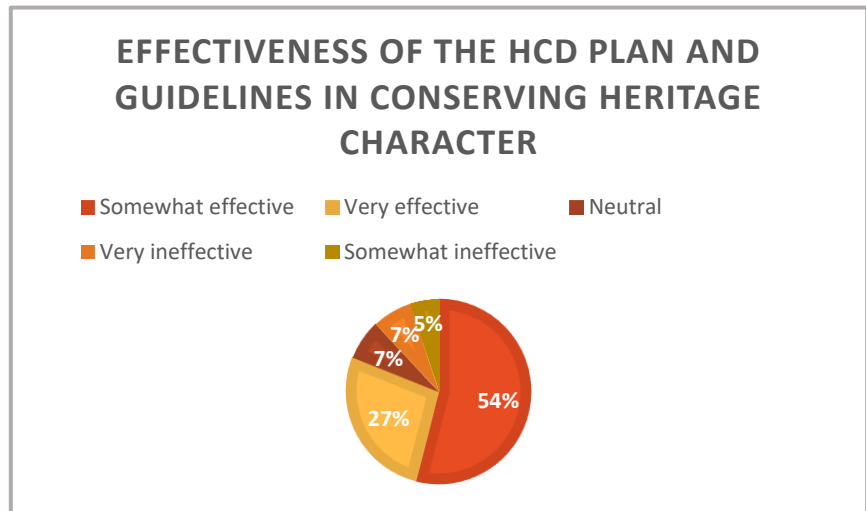
From the chart above (on the left), most respondents were somewhat familiar with the Plan and Guidelines, but few were very familiar.

A large majority (83%) felt the Plan and Guidelines are important for conserving Downtown Oakville's heritage. A small number were neutral (10%), somewhat supportive (5%), or not supportive (2%).

Most felt the Plan and Guidelines were only "somewhat effective," while 27% said they were "very effective" and 7% said they were not effective.

When asked to explain, many said new buildings (infill) don't necessarily match the heritage character. Others wanted more flexibility for development. Some felt the Plan and Guidelines were doing a good job preserving heritage.

Some comments from the questions are below:



"The character of the town has been maintained"

"I am happy with what it is now"

"Many historic homes and buildings, or those that fit in with that character, are already gone."

"It [The Plan and Guidelines] enables clear communication . . . that the historical integrity of the area must be maintained . . . Many investors come into the area . . . laws are essential to preserve and conserve the historical landscape and charm of what Oakville stands for."

"Downtown Oakville has been stagnant in growth for years now and that goes against the Town's goal to accommodate more housing, mixed use[d] neighborhoods, and livable spaces. We should build upon downtown more and update its surrounding areas while preserving the historic district and its character."

"I think that the plan has an effective way of trying to conserve Oakville's historical district while still attempting to introduce new elements to it when possible. Though I do believe the plan could try a little harder to build more in the area and try to update more of the downtown . . . especially since the building height limits are not being taken advantage of."

Property Owners and Tenants

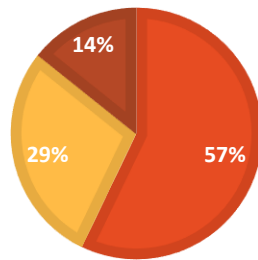
Only 20% of survey respondents completed the section related to property ownership. Of those, 86% were aware that their property is located within an HCD.

A majority (63%) purchased their property before the HCD was established in 2013, while 37% purchased after designation.

25% indicated that the HCD designation influenced their decision to purchase. Notably, 57% responded that the question did not apply—suggesting either a lack of awareness at the time of purchase or that the designation did not impact their decision.

HAVE YOU REFERRED TO THE PLAN AND GUIDELINES WHEN DOING WORK

■ Yes ■ Not applicable - no work done ■ No



PLAN AND GUIDELINES SECTIONS TO POTENTIALLY REVISE



57% of property owners and tenants said they referred to the Plan and Guidelines when doing work on their property. Another 29% did not refer to it, but only because no work had been needed. This may suggest that buildings are in stable condition or that the HCD's flexibility around minor work means small projects often don't require reference to the document.

When asked about how understandable the Plan and Guidelines are, most respondents were neutral. The next most common responses were that the document was "very easy" or "somewhat easy" to understand. No respondents found it difficult.

Most property owners (71%) reported no challenges related to heritage conservation (e.g., permits, renovations, defining attributes, etc.), while 29% did. Issues raised included demolition requests, neighbouring properties bypassing the Plan and Guidelines, and difficulties accessing financial benefits for non-contributing properties. However, no specific concerns were shared about the Plan and Guidelines themselves or their impact on property maintenance.

Opinions were evenly split (50/50) on whether the Plan and Guidelines strike a good balance between heritage conservation and modern needs like accessibility and energy efficiency.

When asked if they had experienced benefits from the Plan and Guidelines:

- 43% said yes

- 43% had not used them
- 14% said no

Positive feedback included access to heritage grants and appreciation for the guidance provided. Some respondents suggested clearer definitions of heritage character would be helpful.

Regarding negative impacts:

- 43% said no
- 43% had not used the Plan and Guidelines
- 14% said yes

Most respondents supported revisions to the Plan and Guidelines, especially to the sections on *Guidelines for Managing Change* and *Exempt Alterations and Classes of Alterations*. One comment suggested adding clear consequences for non-compliance.

No survey responses were received about the heritage permit or grant processes. This may reflect low awareness or usage, consistent with the low number of applications.

Staff

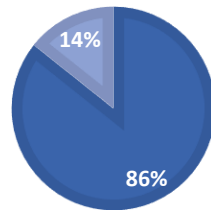
The survey was also shared with Town departments that regularly work within the Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District (HCD) and are required to apply for heritage permits. These departments included:

- Planning and Development
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Roads and Works
- Right of Way
- Facilities
- Transportation and Engineering

Among staff respondents, 86% were aware of the Downtown Oakville HCD. However, none reported being very familiar with the Plan and Guidelines, and most indicated they were either not very familiar or unfamiliar.

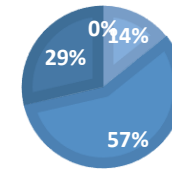
STAFF AWARE OF DOWNTOWN OAKVILLE HCD

■ Yes ■ No



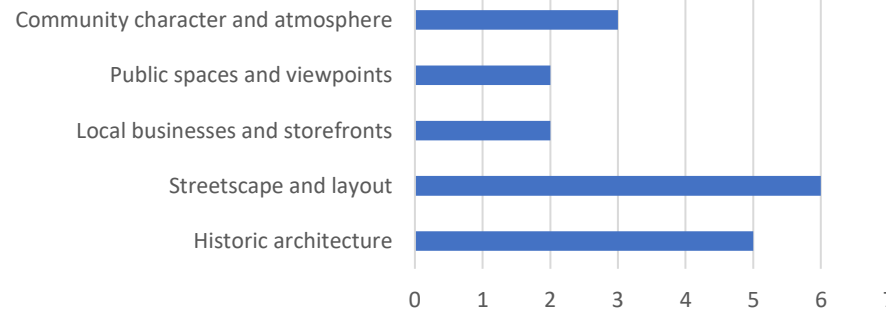
STAFF FAMILIAR WITH THE HCD OBJECTIVES

■ Very familiar ■ Somewhat familiar
■ Not very familiar ■ Not at all familiar



Most staff respondents felt the Plan and Guidelines are effective in conserving Downtown Oakville's built heritage. Several noted seeing the guidelines applied successfully in projects. Among the heritage elements, the streetscape was identified as one of the most valued features of the Downtown HCD.

WHAT ELEMENTS OF DOWNTOWN'S HERITAGE CHARACTER DO YOU VALUE MOST?



From the survey, a process comment was left when asked what revisions in the Plan and Guidelines they would like to see for public realm projects:

“A clear step-by-step process in the plan and a designated contact for HCD would've made the initiation process clearer. I had interactions with two planners and then finally assigned to one which made for a less than efficient process. Once sorted, everything went quite smoothly. It would've been also beneficial to know in advance that the presentation to Heritage Advisory Committee is delivered by the Heritage Planner and not the department the project is led by.”

This concern could be alleviated through a clear ‘how-to’ guide for the heritage permit process in the Plan and Guidelines, as was done in the 2025 update to the Old Oakville Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines.

6 RESULTS: SITE VISITS

In 2025, staff conducted site visits across the Downtown Oakville Heritage Conservation District (HCD) to observe the condition of buildings, streetscapes, and landscapes. These visits helped identify changes not captured through permit or grant records and provided context for the overall assessment. This observation ensures the assessment is contextually informed, bridging the gap between permits and grants and outcomes on the ground.

To conduct these site visits, a block analysis was created, as seen on the map below. Staff walked these routes and made notes on the following:

- Heritage attribute conditions
- Streetscape integrity
- Condition and presence of greenery/trees
- Evidence of recent changes
- Maintenance issues or deterioration
- Visible impact from public works projects



| BLOCK 1 | |
|---|--|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, facades, signs, exteriors in good shape • Most windows are updated (not historic) • Masonic block shows signs of brick and millwork deterioration |
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heights consistent with Plan and Guidelines • “Street wall” for commercial district in place, no gaps, setback consistent • Cladding materials consistent with Plan and Guidelines |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees are small- to medium-sized as part of 2019 streetscape project • Contributes to the outdoor patio/pedestrian feel |
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some recent changes to cladding, signage and storefronts |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 streetscape project: new curbs, street furnishings, use of granite along sidewalks, and lights |

| BLOCK 2 | |
|---|--|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facades: some have been painted but are in good shape • Claddings of contributing buildings generally good: Radial Station and 156 (now 158) Randall updated as part of development • Masonic Hall brick in good shape, but some wooden windows on façade are deteriorated |
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New developments at north end on Randall on east and west sides • Heights consistent with zoning by-law, visible due to Thomas and Randall Street’s lower elevations • The residential history of Thomas Street evident, with homes converted to commercial |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees at northeast corner, not many anywhere else on the block |
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some painted exteriors • New buildings on east and west sides of Thomas; west is on Randall but visible from Thomas |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking lots • Lights updated as part of streetscape project |

| BLOCK 2.5 | |
|---|--|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on east updated well and consistent with Plan and Guidelines • West building rear portion has had some painting done |
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fits Plan and Guidelines (no changes since 2013) • Commercial setbacks |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a lot of trees on this block; grass boulevard • Trees could frame view to Old Oakville |
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting to rear businesses on east side done since 2021 |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lights updated with 2019 streetscape project |

| BLOCK 3 | |
|---|---|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good exteriors in general • Scout Hall needs maintenance (exterior painting) • As noted, Radial Station restored as part of development • Rear of Post Office has some exterior maintenance ongoing • Some stucco work on some older buildings; historic windows when present are in good condition |
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still a generally low-elevation street (1.5 storeys in the Plan and Guidelines) aside from development at 158 Randall |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View of Sixteen Mile Creek still present, with trees in the river valley • Large trees on north residential lots • North side has more vegetation |
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New development at 158 Randall; 133-135 Thomas Street |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No visible impact • Parking lots present for an extended period of time |

| BLOCK 4 | |
|---|---|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some work needed on post office exterior (missing stone, glass in windows and doors) • Stone wall at the parking lot needs some repair at the rear |

| | |
|---|---|
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with what was present in 2013 • Residential turned into commercial, banks and post office for low-elevation buildings |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most trees that are present are small • Some grass boulevards |
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to signage and storefront of Scotiabank |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street light update from streetscape project |

| BLOCK 4.5 | |
|---|---|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly consists of Towne Square and the non-contributing buildings and path to the south • Towne Square to be updated through Parks and Open Space • Crosswalk paint on cobblestones appears to deteriorate over time |
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brick cladding consistent with the style of the HCD |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some trees replaced • Planters south of the park • Some trees in the park looked somewhat unhealthy |
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor changes to storefronts and amenity areas |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscape project: lowered curbs for pedestrian events, cobblestones in front of Towne Square, street furnishings updated |

| BLOCK 5 | |
|---|--|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exteriors in good condition • North side: empty building • Some buildings have some millwork/brickwork that could be looked at |
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial wall present, no gaps, setbacks in line with Plan and Guidelines • Heights consistent with Plan and Guidelines |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees still small on south side (streetscape project) • A few larger ones on north side |

| | |
|--|--|
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025 changes in some building exteriors, not a part of this study • Some repairs made on building exteriors |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscape project: cobblestones, street furnishings update, light updates |

| BLOCK 6 | |
|---|---|
| Condition of exterior (facades, signage, windows and doors), maintenance or deterioration noted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Office: some work needed to be done on stone façade and windows • Masonic Hall: wood windows somewhat deteriorated, some covered (but historic pieces still present) • Fire Hall: some window and stucco work needed |
| Streetscape integrity (height consistency, rhythm of buildings, setbacks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South side all parking lot • North side: three historic buildings that maintain their historic heights, setbacks, and rhythm |
| Condition and presence of vegetation/trees contributing to character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a lot of trees, since south is all parking lot |
| Evidence of recent changes (repairs, alterations, demos, new builds) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some temporary measures on Post Office |
| Visible impacts from public work projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lights updated as part of streetscape project |

7 RESULTS: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

A virtual public engagement meeting was held August 27, 2025, with approximately 40 attendees. The presentation shared findings from the review and invited feedback on potential revisions to the Plan and Guidelines.

Themes from public feedback:

- Gateway features and connectivity:
 - More visible signage needed to identify the HCD
 - Expanded signage beyond district boundaries was suggested
 - Visual connections between Oakville's four HCDs would be beneficial

- Business community engagement:
 - Limited awareness of the HCD among businesses, partly due to tenant turnover
 - Suggestions included working more closely with the BIA and Chamber of Commerce to improve outreach and education

A meeting was also held with the Downtown BIA in August of 2025. Key themes and concerns raised were:

- General concerns:
 - Few direct concerns were raised by businesses
 - Businesses are not actively contacting staff about the HCD
- Permits and grants:
 - Recommendation to display heritage permits in windows for visibility, similar to a building permit
 - Uncertainty around whether work is being done with proper permits
 - High turnover among owners and tenants makes education and outreach essential
 - Clarification of the heritage permit process is needed
 - Heritage grants are underused and could be better promoted
- Streetscape feedback:
 - Some businesses prefer uniform tree types for a more traditional look

8 RESULTS: WRITTEN IN COMMENTS

Letters submitted by the public highlighted a range of concerns and ideas for the future of the Downtown Oakville HCD. While some comments fell outside the scope of the Plan and Guidelines—touching on areas managed by other departments such as Transportation, Parks, and Right of Way—the feedback revealed six key themes:

- **Mobility, transportation, and accessibility**
 - Support for more pedestrian space, patios, and cycling infrastructure
 - Concerns about bike infrastructure being secondary to vehicular

- Calls for improved transit service and safer pedestrian zones, including street closures for events
- **Heritage Conservation District boundaries**
 - Suggestions to expand the HCD eastward to Allan Street (outside the scope of this review)
 - Emphasis on protecting views of the lake, creek, and historic street grid
 - Requests to reassess the designation of buildings east of Dunn Street (outside the scope of this review)
- **Streetscape, public realm, and visual identity**
 - Desire for heritage signage and gateway features at key entrances (Allan, Trafalgar, Navy)
 - Preference for uniform street trees
 - Beautification ideas such as murals and improved landscaping
 - Concerns about unattractive buildings affecting the district's character
- **Business community and economic viability**
 - Recognition of downtown's active atmosphere as essential
 - Concerns about vacant lots and stalled developments
 - Suggestions to activate public spaces (e.g., pedestrian plaza on George Street, markets)
 - Heritage grants seen as valuable but underused
- **Policy, guidelines, and governance**
 - General support for the 2013 objectives
 - Requests for clearer permit processes
 - Questions about balancing heritage conservation with energy efficiency upgrades
 - Calls for stronger education and communication for property owners and tenants
- **Cultural and community identity**
 - Downtown viewed as a "complete community" with walkable, mixed-use character
 - Importance of cultural anchors like churches and theatres
 - Interest in heritage interpretation through signage and storytelling

9 SCORECARD ANALYSIS BY PLAN AND GUIDELINE OBJECTIVE

Section 6 of the Plan and Guidelines requires a scorecard to be developed at the end of each review to assess whether its 15 objectives in Section 1.3 are being met.

The objectives of the Downtown Oakville HCD are:

- To maintain and conserve the vibrant heritage character of Lakeshore Road corridor, and adjacent George and Thomas Streets
- To protect and enhance heritage property in both the public and private realm including existing heritage commercial buildings, institutional structures, views of Sixteen-Mile Creek and streetscapes
- To avoid the loss or removal of heritage buildings, structures and landscape fabric and encourage only those changes that are undertaken in a manner that if such alterations were removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the heritage property, materials and fabric would remain unimpaired
- To encourage property owners to make continuing repairs and undertake maintenance of property in order to conserve the overall character and appearance of the
- To support the continuing care, conservation and maintenance of heritage properties wherever appropriate by providing guidance on sound conservation practice and directing owners to available funding sources for eligible work
- To encourage the maintenance and protection of the public realm of the District, as well as avoiding or minimizing adverse effects of public undertakings
- To manage trees, treelines and grass boulevards that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the District
- To encourage the maintenance of building forms that are low-profile within the commercial environment of the Downtown Oakville District
- To support existing uses and adaptive re-uses within the existing building stock and heritage fabric
- To prevent the establishment of those land uses and associated built forms and features, through the complementary provisions of the Planning Act, which would be out of keeping with or have detrimental effects upon the commercial character of the District
- To avoid the demolition of existing heritage buildings or structures and their replacement with incompatible new development
- To permit new development and infill only when such change complements the prevailing character of the existing heritage buildings and streetscapes within the District, based on the District Plan and Guidelines
- To encourage public realm improvements within the Lakeshore Road corridor that respect the historical attributes and associations of this early transportation route as well as promote a pedestrian friendly environment that links Downtown Oakville to adjacent residential, institutional and recreational amenity areas including the harbour area, lakeshore and Sixteen Mile Creek

- To promote an appropriate gateway feature, such as a landscaped open space, public art or other device at the intersection of Lakeshore Road and Navy Street intersection that respects the heritage character of this important entranceway to and from the District
- To examine funding sources and adopt appropriate funding programs within the Town of Oakville's capability to provide ongoing support to District property owners

According to the scorecard framework detailed in Section 3 of this report, from 2013 to 2024, the District HCD has **partially achieved** its 15 stated objectives. Specifically, it has fully achieved nine objectives, while partially achieving five, and not achieving one. The findings are summarized in the chart below.

| Plan and Guidelines Objective | Scores | Results |
|---|--------|---------------------------|
| Maintain and conserve the vibrant heritage character of Lakeshore Road corridor, and adjacent George and Thomas Streets | 4 | Achieved |
| Protect and enhance heritage property in public and private realm, including heritage buildings, institutional structures, Sixteen-Mile Creek views, streetscapes | 4 | Achieved |
| Avoid loss/removal of heritage fabric; ensure changes are reversible | 3 | Achieved |
| Encourage property owners to make continuing repairs and undertake maintenance | 3 | Partially Achieved |
| Support continuing care, conservation, and maintenance via guidance and funding | 3 | Partially Achieved |
| Encourage maintenance & protection of public realm; minimize adverse effects of public works | 4 | Achieved |
| Manage trees, treelines, and grass boulevards contributing to heritage value | 3 | Partially Achieved |
| Encourage low-profile building forms in commercial environment | 5 | Achieved |
| Support existing uses & adaptive re-uses in heritage fabric | 5 | Achieved |
| Prevent incompatible land uses & built forms | 5 | Achieved |
| Avoid demolition of heritage buildings & incompatible replacements | 5 | Achieved |
| Permit new development/infill only if it complements heritage character | 5 | Achieved |
| Encourage public realm improvements that respect heritage and enhance pedestrian environment | 5 | Achieved |
| Promote gateway feature at Lakeshore/Navy respecting heritage | 0 | Not Achieved |
| Examine/adopt funding sources/programs to support owners | 3 | Partially Achieved |
| | | |
| Overall Performance Assessment | | Partially Achieved |

Based on the scorecard framework, an overall status of “fully achieved” would require at least an 80% success rate. Currently, the overall performance assessment of the Plan and Guidelines sits at 77% for a high-end “partially achieved” score. Detailed data synthesis for each objective can be found below.

Objective 1: To maintain and conserve the vibrant heritage character of Lakeshore Road corridor, and adjacent George and Thomas Streets

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.3.2 (c-d): maintain two-storey streetscape and upper story setbacks Section 4.2-4.3: alterations to commercial heritage buildings (storefronts, facades, windows, roofs, design of additions) |
| Evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38/46 contributing properties retain heritage character – 82.5% • 15/18 non-contributing properties retain heritage character – 85% • Heights and massing consistent with zoning; little change since 2013 |
| Analysis | Strong alignment with HCD target, but slightly below the scorecard >90% threshold for a perfect score. |
| Assessment | Score of 4/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Majority of contributing and non-contributing properties retain their character, falling in the 80%-90% range of character retention. |

Objective 2: To protect and enhance heritage property in both the public and private realm including existing heritage commercial buildings, institutional structures, views of Sixteen Mile Creek and streetscapes.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.3.2 (c-d): maintain two-storey streetscape and upper story setbacks Section 4: guidelines for private and public properties Section 4.11 and 4.12: landscape and viewshed conservation |
| Evidence | Visual streetscape study (2013 vs. 2024) |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block analysis (same as Section 6), determining impact on streetscape (out of a score of 5, with 1 being heavily impacted and 5 being non-impacted) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block 1 - 4 Block 2 - 4 Block 2.5 - 5 Block 3 - 3 Block 4 - 4 Block 4.5 - 4 Block 5 - 3 Block 6 - 3 <p>Score: 30/40 = 75% protection and enhancement of character</p> |
| Analysis | Most heritage features maintained, but impacts noted (loss of trees on Lakeshore Road East; new 4-storey Randall St. building potentially affecting creek views). |
| Assessment | Score of 4/5 Achieved |
| Summary | The majority of heritage attributes remain intact (75%), though some natural and view-related impacts prevent a top score. |

Objective 3: To avoid the loss or removal of heritage buildings, structures and landscape fabric and encourage only those changes that are undertaken in a manner that if such alterations were removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the heritage property, materials and fabric would remain unimpaired.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|---|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.2 (c, f): presumption against removal/demolition of heritage attributes Section 4.2.8 and 4.5.7: focus on reversible work Section 4.10: directives on heritage building removal |
| Evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 demolition in 12 years (not a heritage building; done to relocate a designated structure) 53 heritage permits issued (2013–2024): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60% reversible (31 properties) 34% irreversible (18 properties) 6% neutral (3 properties) |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Analysis | Best practice is 100% reversible changes (score = 5). While some irreversible work has occurred, most alterations remain reversible, warranting a strong score. |
| Assessment | Score of 4/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Minimal demolitions and most alterations reversible. Integrity of heritage properties generally preserved. |

Objective 4: To encourage property owners to make continuing repairs and undertake maintenance of property in order to conserve the overall character and appearance of the HCD.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.3.2 (a-b): encourages maintenance, repair, and funding for conservation Section 4.1: proactive maintenance as best strategy; neglect contrary to designation |
| Evidence | <p>Supportive measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage grant program (covers up to 50% of costs, max \$15,000) • Sharing of HCD Plan and Guidelines with applicants (materials/design guidance) • Heritage Planning staff assistance (streamlined permits and heritage trade referrals) • No-cost heritage permits • Heritage Oakville Advisory Committee oversight <p>Permit activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town-wide: 9% annual applications; 61% apply over a decade • HCD: 8% annual applications; 45% of properties apply over a decade <p>Grant activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town-wide: 5% annual applications; ~43% apply over a decade • HCD: 3% annual applications; 20% of properties apply over a decade |
| Analysis | HCD permit and grant uptake is lower than Town-wide averages. Permit activity is close to broader trends, but grant applications lag significantly. |
| Assessment | Score of 3/5 Partially Achieved |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Summary | Conservation is supported through grants, permits, and staff resources, but uptake in the HCD is lower than across the Town, resulting in a mid-level score. |
|----------------|--|

Objective 5: To support the continuing care, conservation and maintenance of heritage properties wherever appropriate by providing guidance on sound conservation practice and directing owners to available funding sources for eligible work.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|---|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.3.2 (b): encouragement to utilize funding sources Section 4: detailed guidance for repairs and alterations Section 5: exemptions and heritage permit processes that enable conservation |
| Evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage Planning staff: technical advice, guidance on best practices, and direction to grant program • HCD Plan and Guidelines: clear standards on materials, methods, scale, design, landscape/tree protection • Town resources: “Guide to Heritage Specialists”, step-by-step heritage permit guides • Heritage Oakville Advisory Committee: advice to Council • Public resources available on the Town’s website |
| Analysis | The HCD has a strong set of conservation resources, but not all property owners make use of them. Some projects proceed without tapping into the permit process or grant program. |
| Assessment | Score of 3/5 Partially Achieved |
| Summary | Robust conservation resources exist but uptake is uneven, resulting in a mid-level score. |

Objective 6: To encourage the maintenance and protection of the public realm of the HCD, as well as avoiding or minimizing adverse effects of public undertakings.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|---|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.3.2 (f): minimizing adverse effects from public actions Section 4.12: public realm guidelines (sidewalks, lighting, furniture, views, traffic calming) |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Evidence | <p>Adverse effect criteria (Ontario Heritage Toolkit, 2025):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destruction of heritage features • Unsympathetic alterations • Shadowing impacts • Isolation of features • Obstructed views • Land use changes and disturbances erasing meaning <p>HCD Plan public realm emphasis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect historic patterns and materials • Reinforce pedestrian character • Preserve heritage views • Ensure reversibility of interventions <p>Capital Projects (2013–2024):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few public projects; most notable would be the 2019 Lakeshore Road East streetscape work a part of the Downtown Oakville Streetscape Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Potential Adverse Impacts:</i> modern materials, traffic calming/furnishings affecting fabric – <i>Mitigation:</i> Downtown HCD Study used as evidence, commemorative design elements applied (acorn lights updated and maintained) – <i>Gap:</i> No formal HIA conducted but HCD Study was used in its place – <i>Result:</i> Most impacts mitigated, but full street tree replacement altered canopy heritage feature |
| Analysis | Heritage considerations were integrated into the 2019 project, and most potential adverse effects were mitigated. However, the loss of the historic tree canopy is a negative impact. |
| Assessment | Score of 3/5 Partially Achieved |
| Summary | Public realm interventions along Lakeshore Road East generally respected heritage character. Mitigation was effective, though tree canopy loss reduced the overall score. |

Objective 7: To manage trees, treelines, and grass boulevards that contribute to the cultural heritage value of the HCD.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|---|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 4.11: private landscaping Section 4.12.7: public realm and street trees; mature trees identified as heritage-defining elements |
| Evidence | <p>Tree inventory and changes (Parks & Open Space Data):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 137 existing street trees • 83 removed (2010–2023) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 31 removals linked to 2019–20 streetscape project – 12 removals by Forestry (2010–2015) • 47 new trees planted during 2019–20 project • 7 additional trees replanted by Forestry (2023) <p>Tree and canopy trends in the HCD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2010 → 140 trees; 3,748 m² canopy • 2022 → 129 trees; 3,154 m² canopy <p>Context: Draft 2025 Urban Forestry Study: commercial canopy in Oakville increased from 5.3% (2015) to 7.6% (2025).</p> |
| Analysis | Streetscape project replanted more trees than were removed, using updated best-practice species. While canopy coverage temporarily reduced due to younger plantings, guidelines allow removals with replacement. Grass boulevards remain intact. Long-term canopy recovery expected, but current coverage is lower than 2010. |
| Assessment | Score of 3/5 Partially Achieved |
| Summary | Replacement planting offsets removals, but temporary loss of canopy reduces heritage character in the short term. Score = 3/5. |

Objective 8: To encourage the maintenance of building forms that are low-profile within the commercial environment of the Downtown Oakville HCD.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.3.2 (c, d): maintain low-profile streetscape, upper additions stepped back Section 4.3.3: maximum height in line with zoning, encourages setbacks Section 4.6.3: guidance on heights and massing |
| Evidence | <p>Two-storey streetscapes (Lakeshore Rd, Thomas St, George St):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 of 57 properties slightly exceeded recommended height (139 Thomas): 2% deviation • 98% of properties comply with HCD Plan and Guidelines • Heights still in line with Official Plan and Zoning By-law <p>One-and-a-half-storey streetscape (Randall St):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 of 7 properties exceeded recommended height: 14% deviation • 86% of properties comply • Heights still in line with Official Plan and Zoning By-law |
| Analysis | Average of properties meeting encouraged low-profile heights: 98% . This exceeds the 90% threshold, qualifying for top achievement. |
| Assessment | Score of 5/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Streetscapes largely maintain low-profile character, aligned with HCD guidance. Minor deviations do not affect overall compliance. |

Objective 9: To support existing uses and adaptive re-uses within the existing building stock and heritage fabric.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 3.3.2 (h): encourages adaptive re-use of heritage properties Section 4.2.9 and 4.3.11: guidance on adapting residential buildings to new uses Section 4.8: institutional re-use guidance |
| Evidence | <p>Adaptive re-use projects in the HCD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infill projects at 158 Randall Street and 133-135 Thomas Street adaptively re-used heritage buildings |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both projects comply with Official Plan & Zoning By-law (heights, massing, setbacks) and follow HCD guidelines (compatible materials, design) <p>Adaptive re-use is common throughout the HCD: residential structures often serve commercial purposes, reflecting the HCD character</p> |
| Analysis | Sensitive and compatible adaptive re-use is occurring consistently, both in new developments and as part of the HCD's existing character, fulfilling the HCD's objective. |
| Assessment | Score of 5/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Adaptive re-use is widespread and aligns with HCD guidance, supporting both new development and ongoing HCD character. |

Objective 10: To prevent the establishment of those land uses and associated built forms and features, through the complementary provisions of the Planning Act, which would be out of keeping with or have detrimental effects upon the commercial character of the HCD.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|---|
| HCD Plan Reference | <p>Section 3.3.2 (f): land use policy context, connection to land use controls</p> <p>Section 4.2 and 4.3: alterations to commercial heritage buildings (retain storefront patterns and detailing)</p> <p>Section 4.9: infill/new construction compatibility (height, massing, setbacks, materials)</p> <p>Section 4.12: public realm, sustaining pedestrian-friendly heritage character</p> |
| Evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detrimental land uses: none observed (no incompatible uses observed, such as warehouses) HCD remains vibrant: ground-floor retail, restaurants, cultural and small-scale office mix present Zoning By-Law updated 2014 led to CBD zoning; more permitted uses than previous by-law (1984-063), but no substantial changes No associated built forms violating streetscape, height, or heritage character |
| Analysis | Land uses and built forms remain compatible with HCD guidance. No detrimental effects on streetscape, pedestrian activity, or heritage character observed. |
| Assessment | Score of 5/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Land use and associated built forms support heritage and pedestrian-oriented objectives. |

Objective 11: To avoid the demolition of existing heritage buildings or structures and their replacement with incompatible new development.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 4.10.1: demolition control; prohibits demolition of heritage resources except in extraordinary cases; replacement buildings must be compatible if approved |
| Evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 demolition since 2013 (non-contributing property) • Demolition allowed to relocate a Part IV designated property and enable adaptive re-use as residential • Compliance with HCD policy and relevant legislation confirmed |
| Analysis | No unjustified demolitions occurred; policy and legislative requirements were followed. |
| Assessment | Score of 5/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Demolition controls were fully respected, and replacement/adaptive re-use maintains heritage integrity. |

Objective 12: To permit new development and infill only when such change complements the prevailing character of the existing heritage buildings and streetscapes within the HCD, based on the HCD Plan and Guidelines.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 4.3-4.8: additions (scale, rhythm, materials, façade articulation, setbacks) Section 4.9: new infill design must be compatible with prevailing character without mimicry |
| Evidence | Reviews of HCD Infill <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 158 Randall Street HIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located at HCD edge, adjacent to contemporary properties • Compatible contemporary design using natural materials (brick) • Height: 4 storeys (zoning-compliant; above 1.5-storey HCD guideline) • Upper storeys stepped back; massing, rhythm, and materials in keeping with HCD principles • Slight obstruction of creek views noted • 133–135 Thomas Street HIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-storey design with mezzanine setback from street |

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masonry façade complements heritage context; articulated for pedestrian interest • Height above two-storey HCD guideline but within zoning • Scale, massing, materials, and contextual fit generally align with HCD guidance |
| Analysis | Both properties comply fully with Zoning By-law and integrate HCD principles where possible. Height recommendations of 1.5–2 storeys are challenging for modern building needs, but designs maintain compatibility with HCD character. No unjustified demolitions; policy and legislative requirements followed. |
| Assessment | Score of 5/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Additions and new infill are compatible with heritage character, balancing HCD guidance and contemporary development needs. |

Objective 13: To encourage public realm improvements within the Lakeshore Road corridor that respect the historical attributes and associations of this early transportation route as well as promote a pedestrian friendly environment that links Downtown Oakville to adjacent residential, institutional and recreational amenity areas including the harbour area, lakeshore and Sixteen Mile Creek.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|---|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 4.12.4-4.12.8: public realm guidelines: street furniture, lighting, public art, gateway features, traffic |
| Evidence | 2019 Lakeshore Road East Streetscape work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streetscape and 1830s grid pattern retained • Sidewalk textures added at intersections; neutral materials maintain focus on heritage buildings • Street furniture chosen via public consultation in accordance with HCD Plan and Guidelines • Traffic calming: center lane removed, side parking retained, shared lanes for bikes • Street lighting: acorn-style fixtures maintained for continuity throughout HCD • Street trees and boulevards: tree replacement planned; soil improvements included; grass boulevards maintained • Public art: no installations, but guidelines recommend careful planning and durable materials |
| Analysis | Streetscape project fully compatible with HCD Plan and Guidelines. Minor reduction in canopy coverage lowers overall score slightly, though expected to recover as trees mature. |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Assessment | Score of 4/5 Achieved |
| Summary | Public realm enhancements align with heritage and pedestrian-focused objectives; temporary canopy reduction prevents a perfect score. |

Objective 14: To promote an appropriate gateway feature, such as a landscaped open space, public art or other device at the intersection of Lakeshore Road and Navy Street intersection that respects the heritage character of this important entranceway to and from the HCD.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|---|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 4.12.8: gateway features and views; landscaping and public art to reinforce heritage arrival points |
| Evidence | No gateway feature has been established at this intersection or elsewhere in the HCD. |
| Analysis | This objective has not been met. According to staff, it was originally part of larger downtown cultural project that has since changed. Future projects, especially at the southeast corner of Centennial Square, should incorporate a gateway feature to enhance the HCD. This is currently under discussion with appropriate staff. |
| Assessment | Score of 0/5 Not Achieved |
| Summary | No gateway features exist in the HCD; future initiatives should address this gap. |

Objective 15: To examine funding sources and adopt appropriate funding programs within the Town of Oakville's capability to provide ongoing support to HCD property owners.

| Category | Details |
|---------------------------|--|
| HCD Plan Reference | Section 2.1: encourages the Town to consider grant programs and other financial support mechanisms |
| Evidence | Heritage Grant Program created in 2014 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently used by heritage property owners annually • Funding increased in 2025, but still insufficient to fully cover all applicants' requests, demonstrating demand |

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Analysis | Uptake in the HCD is lower than the Town-wide average. Program effectiveness is evident, but greater promotion and potentially higher funding are needed, especially for commercial projects. |
| Assessment | Score of 3/5 Partially Achieved |
| Summary | Heritage Grant Program is successful but underutilized in the HCD; additional promotion and funding could improve impact. |

10. DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of the Plan and Guidelines

Based on this data analysis, from 2013 to 2024, the Downtown Oakville HCD has largely maintained its heritage character. The Plan and Guidelines have helped support this, but there are areas that could use improvement based on permit records, site visits, and public feedback.

Findings

Records (permits, grants)

- Heritage and building permits mostly involved small changes like signage or minor alterations
- Only one demolition and two major redevelopments occurred, which shows strong preservation of building character
- Some changes were made without permits, which suggests gaps in awareness or enforcement, and highlights limitation of relying solely on administrative data
- Heritage grants have helped with restoration projects, but few property owners have used them—likely due to low awareness or limited need due to flexibility of the Plan and Guidelines

Community experience and perceptions (surveys, comments, public meetings)

- Most survey respondents are proud of the HCD's heritage and feel the Plan and Guidelines are important
- Some felt the guidelines were too flexible for new development, while others wanted more flexibility
- Feedback focused on the need for a gateway feature and stronger pedestrian and cycling infrastructure

Site visits

- The streetscape remains cohesive and consistent with the original character
- However, unpermitted exterior changes were observed, which could slowly erode the district's heritage if not addressed

Overall

- The Plan and Guidelines have generally succeeded in preserving the district's heritage character
- 10 out of 15 objectives were fully achieved, 4 were partially achieved, and 1 was not achieved (the gateway feature)
- Operational improvements are needed in awareness, enforcement, and promotion, especially around heritage permits and grants

The chart below highlights which sections of the Plan and Guidelines were looked at for potential revisions based on the data and evidence collected and analyzed during the review.

Potential Policy Revisions in the Plan and Guidelines

| Objective | Plan and Guidelines Policy | Evidence meets, partially meets, or falls short of policy | Reason for not meeting (funding gaps, awareness issues, policy ambiguity, enforcement limits) |
|---|---|--|---|
| Maintain and conserve the vibrant heritage character of Lakeshore Road corridor, and adjacent George and Thomas Streets | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Section 3.3.2 (c-d)▪ Section 4.2-4.3 | Meets | N/A |
| Protect and enhance heritage property in public and private realm, including heritage buildings, institutional structures, Sixteen-Mile Creek views, streetscapes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Section 3.3.2 (c-d)▪ Section 4 (various)▪ Section 4.11 and 4.12 | Meets | N/A |
| Avoid loss/removal of heritage fabric; ensure changes are reversible | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Section 3.2 (c, f)▪ Section 4.2.8 and 4.5.7▪ Section 4.10 | Meets | N/A |

| | | | |
|--|--|------------------------|---|
| Encourage property owners to make continuing repairs and undertake maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 3.3.2 (a, b) ▪ Section 4.1 | Partially meets | Awareness issues Funding gaps |
| Support continuing care, conservation, and maintenance via guidance and funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 3.3.2 (b) ▪ Section 4 (various) ▪ Section 5 | Partially meets | Awareness issues Funding gaps |
| Encourage maintenance & protection of public realm; minimize adverse effects of public works | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 3.3.2 (f) ▪ Section 4.12 | Meets | N/A |
| Manage trees, treelines, and grass boulevards contributing to heritage value | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 4.11 ▪ Section 4.12.7 | Partially meets | No negative reason. Canopy coverage change from one-time major streetscape project. |
| Encourage low-profile building forms in commercial environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 3.3.2 (c, d) ▪ Section 4.3.3 ▪ Section 4.6.3 | Meets | N/A |
| Support existing uses and adaptive re-use in heritage fabric | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 3.3.2 (h) ▪ Section 4.2.9 ▪ Section 4.3.11 ▪ Section 4.8 | Meets | N/A |
| Prevent incompatible land uses and built forms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 3.3.2 (f) ▪ Section 4.2 ▪ Section 4.3 ▪ Section 4.9 ▪ Section 4.12 | Meets | N/A |
| Avoid demolition of heritage buildings and incompatible replacements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 4.10.1 | Meets | N/A |
| Permit new development/infill only if it complements heritage character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 4.3-4.8 ▪ Section 4.9 | Meets | N/A |
| Encourage public realm improvements that respect heritage and enhance pedestrian environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 4.12.4-4.12.8 | Meets | N/A |
| Promote gateway feature at Lakeshore/Navy respecting heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 4.12.8 | Does not meet | Policy was not prioritized by staff or streetscape projects. Funding gaps |
| Examine/adopt funding sources/programs to support owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section 2.1 | Partially meets | Awareness issues Funding gaps |

The chart shows that while most objectives in the Plan and Guidelines match the existing policies, some areas—especially funding and public awareness—could use stronger implementation. Revising and clarifying related policies and improving outreach about heritage permits and grants can help close those gaps.

Limitations of the Data Assessment

- Partial participation: not all property owners or community members responded to surveys or attended engagement sessions
- Response bias: feedback may reflect the views of more engaged individuals, rather than the larger community
- Snapshot observations: site visits provide a moment-in-time view and may not capture ongoing or future changes
- Unrecorded alterations: some property changes occurred without heritage permits and are not reflected in official records
- Data interpretation: qualitative feedback (comments, survey responses) is subject to interpretation, even when cross-referenced with quantitative data
- Partial-year data: Because 2025 is not yet complete, no data from this year was included in the review. It will serve as the starting point for future reviews

11. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment was guided by Section 6 of the Downtown Oakville HCD Plan and Guidelines, which requires a data-driven review to evaluate whether the Plan’s 15 objectives are being met, and to adjust and revise associated documents, if necessary. Using a structured scorecard and cross-analysis of permits, grants, surveys, site visits, and public feedback, the review found:

- 10 objectives fully achieved
- 4 partially achieved
- 1 not achieved (gateway feature)

When considered against the HCD’s objectives, the Plan and Guidelines have achieved a higher end ‘Partially Achieved’ score of 77%. The Plan and Guidelines scored high in preserving built form, maintaining streetscape character, and preventing

incompatible development. However, it underperforms in areas related to ongoing maintenance, conservation support, and public awareness, particularly around heritage grants and permit processes.

The analysis was essential to uncover these gaps. For example, it demonstrates low grant uptake (objective 15) directly impacts maintenance-related objectives (2, 3, and 4), showing how operational issues affect policy outcomes.

Despite some challenges, the HCD remains stable and well-preserved, with consistent permit compliance when utilized and strong streetscape and built form retention.

The project goal set out by Section 6 was to determine if the Plan and Guidelines are working effectively for the community using best heritage conservation practices. Based on the evidence, the Downtown Oakville HCD Plan and Guidelines can be considered a success in heritage conservation while also being generally respected by the community and allowing for flexible growth.

Operational Recommendations

While not officially part of the review process, this project has demonstrated operational adjustments can be made to help the Plan and Guidelines better meet some of the objectives it is not currently fully achieving:

- Launch annual heritage maintenance awareness campaign (letters, postcards, or site visits for owners and tenants)
- Promote heritage permits (clarify when they are needed and how to apply)
- Promote the heritage grant program (increase visibility and uptake)
- Standardize site visits (ensures proper use of the permit process)
- Explore visible permit signage (e.g. placing permits in windows during work)
- Collaborate with local groups (share HCD requirements via website and newsletters)

Policy and Review Recommendations

- Implement suggested policy revisions to the Plan and Guidelines (see Appendix B of the Public Meeting Report).
- Conduct small-scale HCD reviews every 5 years, with the next scheduled for 2030, which allows for data to accumulate and demonstrate trends
- Phase in operational improvements over the next several years