

Heritage Conservation District Study

Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District Town of Cobourg



The Architectural
Conservancy
of Ontario



Heritage Resources Centre
Centre des ressources du patrimoine

UNIVERSITY OF
Waterloo



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Heritage Conservation District Study

Prepared for
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Of the
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Executive Summary

Introduction

- 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
- 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
- 32 districts designated in or before 2002 were examined

Background of Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the Town of Cobourg
- Consists of 96 residential properties
- District was designated in 1990

Study Approach

- Resident surveys were conducted door-to-door by HRC staff and volunteers
- Land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation was conducted
- Sales history trends were collected from GeoWarehouse and analyzed
- Key stakeholders were interviewed
- Applications for alterations were examined

Analysis of Key Findings

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - To preserve heritage buildings
 - To preserve original features
- 87% of people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Information about applications for alterations indicate most applications are approved in less than three months
- Sales histories indicate that there are other factors aside from designation having more influence on values
- Overall, the Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District has been a successful planning initiative

Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Consider providing more financial incentives to property owners or make them aware of existing programs they are eligible for
- Ensure the diversity of housing stock is considered in applications for alterations
- Resolve the issue of vacant property in the district

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Heritage Act and Designation

The Ontario Heritage Act (Subsection 41. (1)) enables municipalities to designate Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs). A Heritage Conservation District is an area with “a concentration of heritage resources with special character or historical association that distinguishes it from its surroundings.”¹ Districts can be areas that are residential, commercial, rural, industrial, institutional or mixed use. According to the Ministry of Culture, “the significance of a HCD often extends beyond its built heritage, structures, streets, landscape and other physical and special elements to include important vistas and views between buildings and spaces within the district.”²

The designation of a Heritage Conservation District allows municipalities to protect the special character of an area by guiding future changes. The policies for guiding changes are outlined in a Heritage Conservation District Plan that can be prepared by city staff, local residents or heritage consultants. A Heritage Conservation District Plan must also include a statement of objectives and guidelines that outline how to achieve these objectives³.

1.2 Rationale for Heritage Conservation District Study

With funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, volunteers from branches of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) and Historical Societies partnered with the Heritage Resources Centre (HRC) at the University of Waterloo to undertake Phase 2 of a province-wide research program to answer the question: have Heritage Conservation Districts in Ontario been successful heritage planning initiatives over a period of time?

Many people now consider the Heritage Conservation District to be one of the most effective tools not only for historic conservation but for good urban design and sound planning. At least 102 HCDs are already in existence in Ontario with the earliest designations dating back to 1980. While more are being planned and proposed all the time there is also a residual resistance to HCDs from some members of the public. Typically this resistance centres on concerns about loss of control over one’s property, impact on property values and bureaucratic processes. On the other hand, the benefits of HCDs, establishing high standards of maintenance and design, allowing the development of and compliance with shared community values and the potential for increasing property values, are not as widely perceived as might be the case.

Since it takes a period of time for the impacts of district designation to manifest, Phase 1 of the study concentrated on examining the oldest districts, those designated in or before 1992. Phase 2 continued to look at well-established districts. Applying the criterion of residential, commercial or mixed-use areas designated in 2002 or before, 32 HCDs were examined. These districts are found in or near the following areas: Cobourg, Hamilton, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Markham, Toronto, Centre Wellington, Orangeville, London, Stratford, and the Region of Waterloo.

¹ Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

² Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

³ Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 12

Figure 1 shows that the 32 districts have a wide geographic distribution and represent various community sizes. The types of districts that are part of the study are also evident.

Geographical Distribution		Community Size		Type	
Northern	0	Small Community	11	Commercial	6
Eastern	7	Medium Sized	10	Residential	20
Central	19	Large City	11	Mixed	6
South Western	6				
	32		32		32

Figure 1: Distribution of Heritage Conservation Districts under examination.

The study sought to answer the following specific questions in each of the 32 Heritage Conservation Districts:

- Have the goals or objectives set out in the District Plan been met?
- Are residents content living in the Heritage Conservation District?
- Is it difficult to make alterations to buildings in the Heritage Conservation District?
- Have property values been impacted by the designation of the district?
- What are the key issues in the district?

These questions were answered through the contributions of local volunteers from the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario branches, Historical Societies and local heritage committees as well as through communication with local municipal officials.

2.0 Background of Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District

2.1 Description of the District

The Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District is located in the Town of Cobourg. It runs along Durham and Bagot Streets between King Street and Lake Ontario. The District consists of 96 residential buildings.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Heritage Conservation District Plan does not describe the heritage character.

2.3 Location of the District



Figure 2: Map of Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District.

2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of the Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District was initiated by the Town of Cobourg. Initially Cobourg staff intended to designate the whole town, but it was found to be too large of an area to study.. The Cobourg West District was one of the smaller areas identified. The Heritage Conservation District was designated in 1990.

3.0 Study Approach

3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District were asked a series of questions relating to their experiences and satisfaction living in the district. These surveys were conducted door-to-door by HRC staff and volunteers. Forty-three of the 96 residents answered surveys, representing a 44.7% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Cobourg West was conducted in September 2011. The purpose of this survey is to provide an objective way to evaluate streetscapes. There are two elements to the survey; land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation. Land use maps, which represent the current use of buildings in the district, were produced for Cobourg West (see Appendix B). The streetscape evaluation involves the use of a view assessment pro forma that generates scores between one and five for 25 factors in a view. A total of 16 views were photographed and evaluated (see Appendices C and D). The summary of the scores is included as Appendix E.

3.3 Real Estate Data

Sales history trends for properties within each Heritage Conservation District (HCD) under study were calculated and compared against non-designated properties in the immediate vicinity of each district. Sales records spanning an average 30 year period were identified for individual district properties using GeoWarehouse™, an online subscription database commonly used by real estate professionals.

To measure the market performance of properties within a given HCD the designated properties were compared with surrounding real estate. Properties within the HCD that had more than one record of sale were plotted on graphs and compared with the average sales figures for properties outside the HCD and within a 1 km radius. This comparison was done using three factors: first the line of best fit (a trend line derived from regression analysis) was compared to establish which was rising or falling at the greater rate, second the period between designated property sales was compared with that segment of the longer line that coincided with it and third the gap between the designated property sale value and the average for that year was noted. From this the judgement was made whether the designated property performed above, at, or below the average.

It is expected that the use of average sales prices from the immediate vicinity of a district as opposed to the use of municipality-wide sales trends would provide a more accurate comparative record to show how the district designation status itself affects property values. Aside from the locational factor (i.e. properties located within a district), it must be recognized that this study did not take into account a variety of other issues that can also affect sales prices (e.g. architecture, lot size, zoning etc.). This comparison simply looks at the single variable of designation. A total of 872 properties sales histories were calculated as part of this study.

3.4 Key Stakeholder Interviews

Individuals that had special knowledge of each district were interviewed for their experiences and opinions. These stakeholders often included the local planner, the chair or a member of the Municipal Heritage Committee and members of the community association or BIA. Two people were interviewed for the Heritage Conservation District. Both interviews were conducted over the phone. Those interviewed included a Planner for the Town of Cobourg, and a former member of the LACAC committee. A summary of the responses is included in Appendix G. Interviewees are not identified in accordance with the University of Waterloo policy on research ethics.

3.5 Requests for Alterations

With respect to the requests for alterations within the Heritage Conservation District, the study wished to answer these questions in each district:

- How many applications for building alterations have been made?
- How many applications have been approved or rejected?
- How long did the application process take for individual properties?
- What type of changes were the applications for?

For the Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District, the information regarding the number of applications for alterations was available from the Town of Cobourg, however information regarding the time it took to receive approvals was unavailable.

4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

The district has two goals:

a) To preserve heritage buildings.

The objective to preserve heritage buildings has been met. The Townscape Survey shows that conserved elements, detailed maintenance and quality of conservation work all scored well. This means that visually the area is well maintained while historic elements and buildings have been conserved (Figure 3).

b) To preserve original features.

The objective to preserve original features has been met. The Townscape Survey shows that there is no dereliction and few neglected historic features. Quality of conservation work also scored well, indicating that original features are being restored to a high standard.



Figure 3: Well maintained and preserved building in Cobourg West.

4.2 Are people content?

Two questions in the resident survey addressed people's contentment with living in the district. Seventeen respondents lived in the area before it was designated. Ten of 15 people felt positive about the district at the time of designation, four were neutral and only one felt negatively. Twenty-three people moved to the area after it was designated. Of the 21 people that responded, 20 stated that the designation did not effect their decision to move to the area.

Currently, 22 of 42 respondents, over half, are very satisfied with living in the district. An additional 15 people are satisfied. This represents an 87% satisfaction rate. Four respondents indicated they felt neutral about the district, and only one person was dissatisfied.

The satisfaction rates indicate that people were happy with the district when it was implemented and that level of satisfaction has been maintained.

4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

Only 13 respondents indicated they had made applications for alterations. Twelve of the 13 applications were approved. Two people indicated the application took over five months, three people said it took one to three months, and seven people said it took less than a month.

The records from the Town of Cobourg only indicated how many applications were submitted each year. It appears that changes in the Cobourg West district are happening slowly as there are only one to two applications for change most years.

4.4 Have property values been impacted?

According to the resident surveys, 16 of 43 respondents believed that the designation has increased their property values. Sixteen people believed there was no impact and only one person thought the designation had a negative impact on the value of their home. Another ten people did not know how the designation would impact their value. Furthermore, 21 of 43 respondents did not believe that the designation would effect their ability to sell their property in the future.

The data from GeoWarehouse indicated that only 23 properties had sales histories. Of these properties nine performed above average, three at average and 11 below average.

There is a fairly even split between prices moving up well and those not keeping up with the trend. However, all of the properties rising well are doing so in a dramatic fashion while only two of the properties performing below average actually declined in absolute value, the other being only slightly below the trend.

The properties performing well against the trend are typically well above the market average in terms of absolute dollar value while those doing less well tend to be below the ambient average. What we may be seeing is the larger, more elaborate residential properties selling for a premium and the smaller homes doing less well. We can conclude that there are other factors aside from designation having more influence on values.

4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

a) Grants

Three residents in the door-to-door survey mentioned the need for grants to support restoration and maintenance.

b) Mixed Housing

According to the Townscape Survey, the district lacks coherence. This is supported by the interviews that indicate the district has a wide range of housing stock. According to the interviews this diversity can be viewed negatively as it is hard to apply consistent guidelines, but it can also be seen as a positive as it is part of what makes the area unique. One resident indicated that the rules might be too rigid in some situations. Special attention should be given to the diversity of housing stock.

c) Vacant House

One house in the district has been damaged by fire and is sitting vacant. Based on comments from the resident surveys, the district appears to be divided on whether to save the structure or demolish it. It is clearly a point of contention and needs to be resolved.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - To preserve heritage buildings
 - To preserve original features
- 87% people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Information about applications for alterations indicate most applications are approved in less than three months
- Sales histories indicate that there are other factors aside from designation having more influence on property values

Overall, the Cobourg West Heritage Conservation District has been a successful planning initiative.

5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Consider providing more financial incentives to property owners or make them aware of existing programs they are eligible for
- Ensure the diversity of housing stock is considered in applications for alterations
- Resolve the issue of the vacant property in the district

Appendices

Appendix A

Tabular Results of Resident Surveys

Heritage Conservation District Name: Cobourg West

1. Are you the owner or tenant of this property?

Responses

	Owner	Tenant-Commercial	Tenant - Residential
Counts	35	1	7
Percentage	81.40	2.33	16.28

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	41	2
Percentage	95.35	4.65

3. Did you move here before or after the area was designated?

Responses

	Before	After
Counts	17	23
Percentage	42.50	57.50

4. If you lived here before designation, how did you feel about it at the time?

Responses

Positive	10
Negative	1
Neutral	4
Mixed Feelings	0

5. If you came after the designation did the designation affect your decision to move here?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	1	20
Percentage	4.76	95.24

6. What is your understanding of how the HCD works?

Responses

Preservation	16
Restrictions	16
None/Little	7
Good knowledge	2

7. Have you made application(s) for building alterations?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	13	27
Percentage	32.50	67.50

8. If so, were your applications for alterations approved?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	12	1
Percentage	92.31	7.69

9. On average, how long did the application take?

Responses

Over 5 months	2
4 to 5 months	0
1 to 3 months	3
Less than 1 month	7
Not long	0

10. Overall, how satisfied are you with living in a HCD?

Responses

	Mean Score out of 5	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Do not Know
Counts	4.38	22	15	4	1	0	0
Percentage		52.38	35.71	9.52	2.38	0.00	0.00

11. How do you think the HCD designation has affected the value of your property compared to similar non-designated districts?

Responses

	Mean Score out of 5	Increased a Lot	Increased	No Impact	Lowered	Lowered a lot	Do not Know
Counts	3.45	1	15	16	1	0	10
Percentage		2.33	45.45	48.48	3.03	0.00	23.26

12. Do you think the HCD designation will affect your ability to sell your property?

Responses

No	21
Yes	0
Yes, easier	7
Yes, harder	6
Don't know	5
Maybe	4

13. Comments

Additional Comments: City should help owners with repairs w/ grants (2) Too few grants to support requirements of keeping heritage value (1) The district has done a good job of marketing/promoting heritage (1) Caters to Toronto/out of towners, a pain for locals (1) Refused to have his house designated (1) wish the laws were tougher (1) burned house an eyesore, rule won't let it be demolished (1) should go further west(1) in certain situations regulations should be reviewed, nothing should be black and white (1) rules might be too rigid in some situations (1) I want vacant/burnt house saved (1)

Total Population	96
Participants	43
Participation Rate	44.79166667

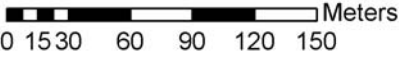
Appendix B
Land Use Maps

Ground Level Land Use in West Heritage Conservation District, Cobourg



Legend

- HCD Boundary
- Not in HCD
- Eating / Drinking Places
- Industrial
- Land use not assigned
- Leisure
- Office / Commercial
- Parking
- Public buildings
- Residential
- Retail (low end - CS)
- Retail
- Services
- Soft or hard landscaping
- Under development
- Vacant
- Warehouse / Storage



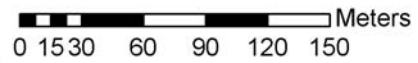
Heritage Resources Centre
 July 11, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_18N

Upper Level Land Use in West Heritage Conservation District, Cobourg



Legend

HCD Boundary	Office / Commercial	Services
Not in HCD	Parking	Soft or hard landscaping
Eating / Drinking Places	Public buildings	Under development
Industrial	Residential	Vacant
Land use not assigned	Retail (low end - CS)	Warehouse / Storage
Leisure	Retail	

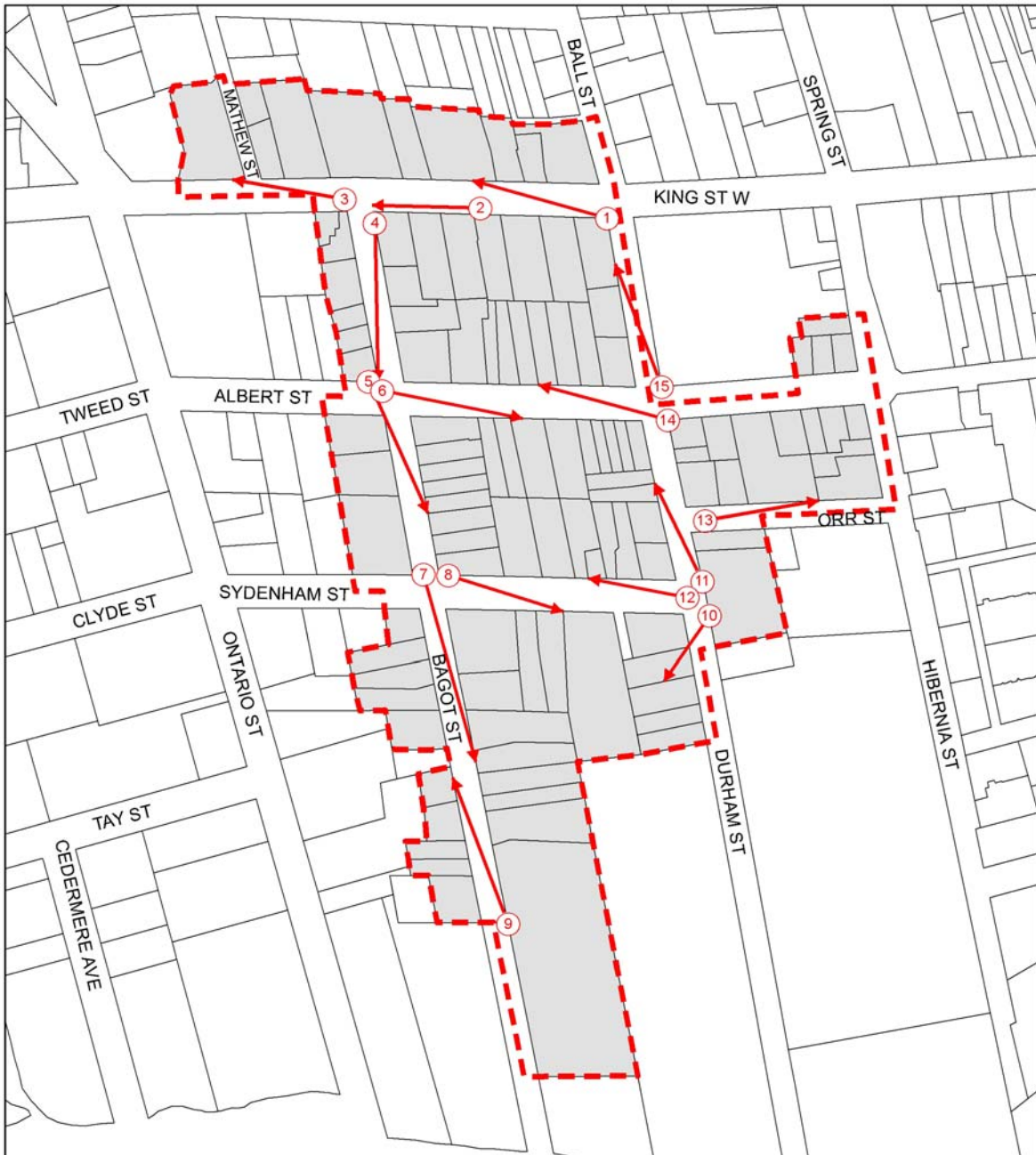


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



Appendix C

Map of Views

Views in West Heritage Conservation District, Cobourg



Legend

-  HCD Boundary
-  Not in HCD
-  Viewpoints
-  In HCD
-  Viewlines



Heritage Resources Centre
 July 11, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_18N

Appendix D
Photographs of Views



View 1



View 2



View 3



View 4



View 5



View 6



View 7



View 8



View 9



View 10



View 11



View 12



View 13



View 14



View 15



View 16

Appendix E

Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

A. Streetscape Quality				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
A1-Pedestrian friendly	47.5	80	59.38	3.0
A2-Cleanliness	54.5	80	68.13	3.4
A3-Coherence	46.5	80	58.13	2.9
A4-Edgefeature Quality	58.5	80	73.13	3.7
A5-Floorscape Quality	44	80	55.00	2.8
A6-Legibility	63	80	78.75	3.9
A7-Sense of Threat	56.5	80	70.63	3.5
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	61.5	80	76.88	3.8
A9-Planting: Public	45	55	81.82	4.1
A10-Vitality	41	80	51.25	2.6
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	48.5	80	60.63	3.0
A12-Signage	61	75	81.33	4.1
A13-Street Furniture Quality	48.5	80	60.63	3.0
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	60	80	75.00	3.8
SUM A	736	1090	67.52	3.4

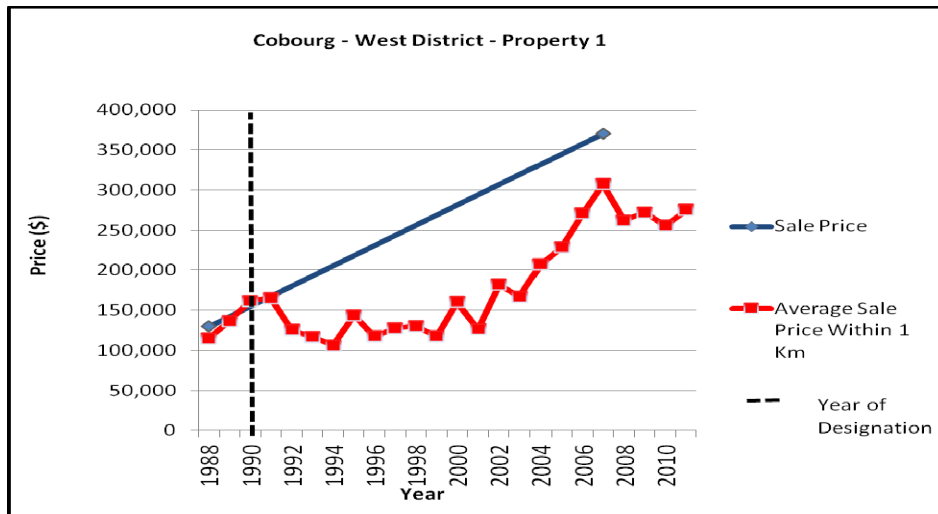
B. Private Space in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	15	30	50.00	2.5
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	63	80	78.75	3.9
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	64.5	80	80.63	4.0
B18-Facade Quality	51	80	63.75	3.2
B19-Planting Private	56	75	74.67	3.7
SUM B	249.5	345	72.32	3.6

C. Heritage in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	61	80	76.25	3.8
C21-Historic Reference Seen	23	75	30.67	1.5
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	27	75	36.00	1.8
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	57	75	76.00	3.8
C24-Quality of New Development	19.5	45	43.33	2.2
C25-Neglected Historic Features	55.5	80	69.38	3.5
SUM C	243	430	56.51	2.8

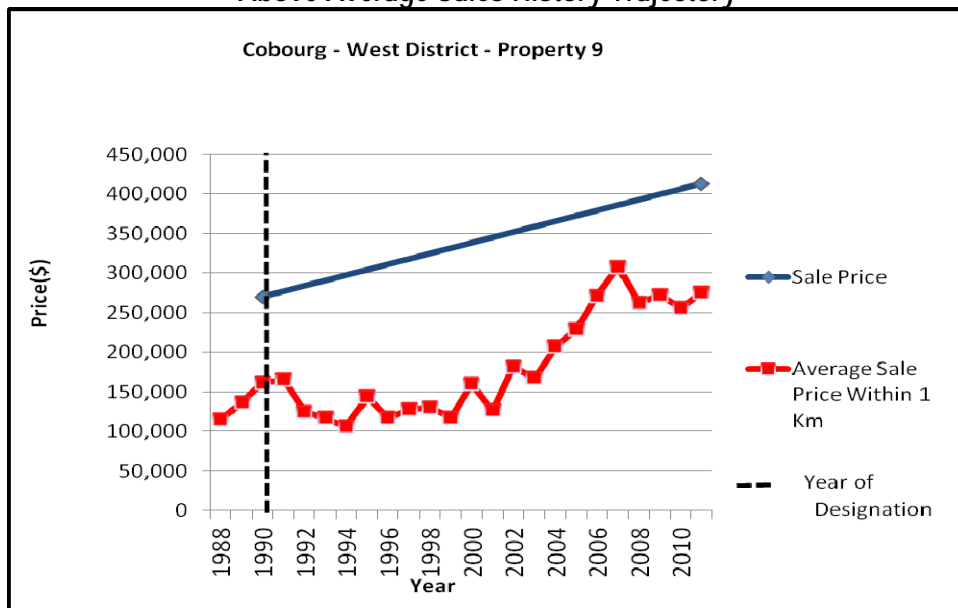
Impression Score				
Aggregate Score	1228.5	1865	65.45113476	3.3

Appendix F

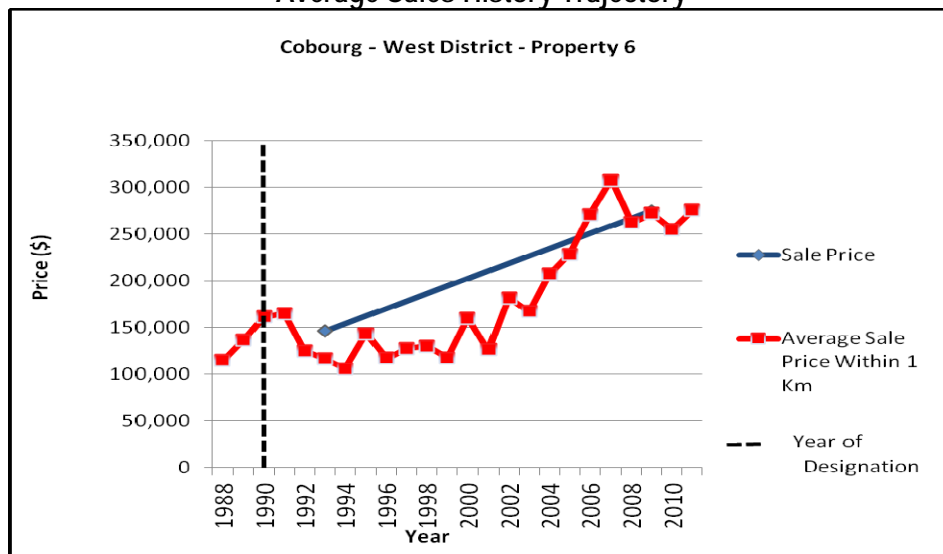
Real Estate Data



Above Average Sales History Trajectory



Average Sales History Trajectory



Below Average Sales History Trajectory

Appendix G

Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

Heritage Conservation District Name: West District
 Month(s) of Interviews: November and December 2011
 Number of People Interviewed: 2

Question	Summary of Answer
1. How are you involved in the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planner, provides heritage approvals • Wrote district study, plan and guidelines • Former member of Cobourg LACAC
2. How did the HCD come about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District study was completed of the whole town but found it was too large and expensive of an area to study • The district was divided from a much larger district that was found not to meet the intentions of the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> • Study was refocused on smaller districts (2)
3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people accept and adhere (2) • Response was not very passionate one way or another • Some contention as residents occasionally have different visions for the district
4. In your experience what are the HCD management processes in place and how do they work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications for alterations (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staff review or referral to Municipal Heritage Committee and/or Council depending on scope of proposed alterations • New developments adhere to urban design guidelines • Emphasis on neighbourhood planning and design
5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor repairs are delegated to staff authority • Major alterations (additions, demolitions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - application process - pre-consultation with staff and property owner - report prepared - Municipal Heritage Committee makes recommendations - Council approves/rejects
6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only communication between districts is through the Town of Cobourg
7. In your opinion, what are the issues that are unique to the HCD and how have they been managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demolition of the Factory Creek and resultant empty lot • Importance of streetscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the road widths and tree planting (has improved over the years) • Minor unsympathetic alterations/replacements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - doors, windows, siding • Range of housing stock leads to inconsistencies in application of guidelines • Window replacements

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no comprehensive guidelines in place
8. What are similar non designated areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corktown area (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - south of Queen St. to include Perry St., Bay St. and Water St. - former Irish settlement area of small homes on large lots
9. Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Cobourg is different in that the districts don't necessarily follow social economic divisions and housing costs are significantly lower than in GTA area. Therefore it is not a practical solution to demand full restoration - or expect an architect - so to achieve conservation is much more of a challenge. I think there are opportunities in that these heritage areas represent 'real neighbourhoods' and not giving the appearance of the rich and famous. I think that looking at mixed neighbourhoods likely represents the biggest opportunity for heritage conservation. The challenge is how to address homes of people with limited financial means."

Appendix H

Applications for Alterations

Cobourg West

Year	Number of Applications
1996	0
1997	0
1998	5
1999	1
2000	1
2001	1
2002	2
2003	3
2004	3
2005	2
2006	1
2007	1
2008	2
2009	1
2010	1
2011	n/a