

# Heritage Conservation District Study

## Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District City of St. Catharines



Heritage Resources Centre  
Centre des ressources du patrimoine



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# Heritage Conservation District Study

Prepared for  
The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

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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 the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of St. Catharines
- Consists of 615 commercial and residential properties
- District was designated in 2001

## Study Approach

- Resident surveys were not conducted door-to-door
- Land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation was conducted
- Sales history trends were not collected from GeoWarehouse
- Key stakeholders were interviewed

## Analysis of Key Findings

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
  - Maintain a low profile in the residential area
  - Maintenance of the landscape features has been met
- The following objectives of the district plan have been less successful:
  - Encourage the current vitality of the commercial area by promoting its unique architecture and contemporary commercial adaptive reuse as well as continuing to protect its distinctive heritage fabric
  - Encourage new development, construction and any public works where it is clearly demonstrated that such changes will have no adverse effects upon the heritage attributes of the district and will positively contribute to the character of the area
- Overall, the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District is not 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
- Provide a detailed street address list

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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.”<sup>1</sup> 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.”<sup>2</sup>

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 objectives<sup>3</sup>.

## 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. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

<sup>3</sup> Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 12

| 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 the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District

### 2.1 Description of the District

The Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District is located in the City of St. Catharines. It is situated on the point of land that runs from Lakeside Park to Shelley Avenue and Verdun Avenue. The district consists of 615 residential and commercial buildings.

### 2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

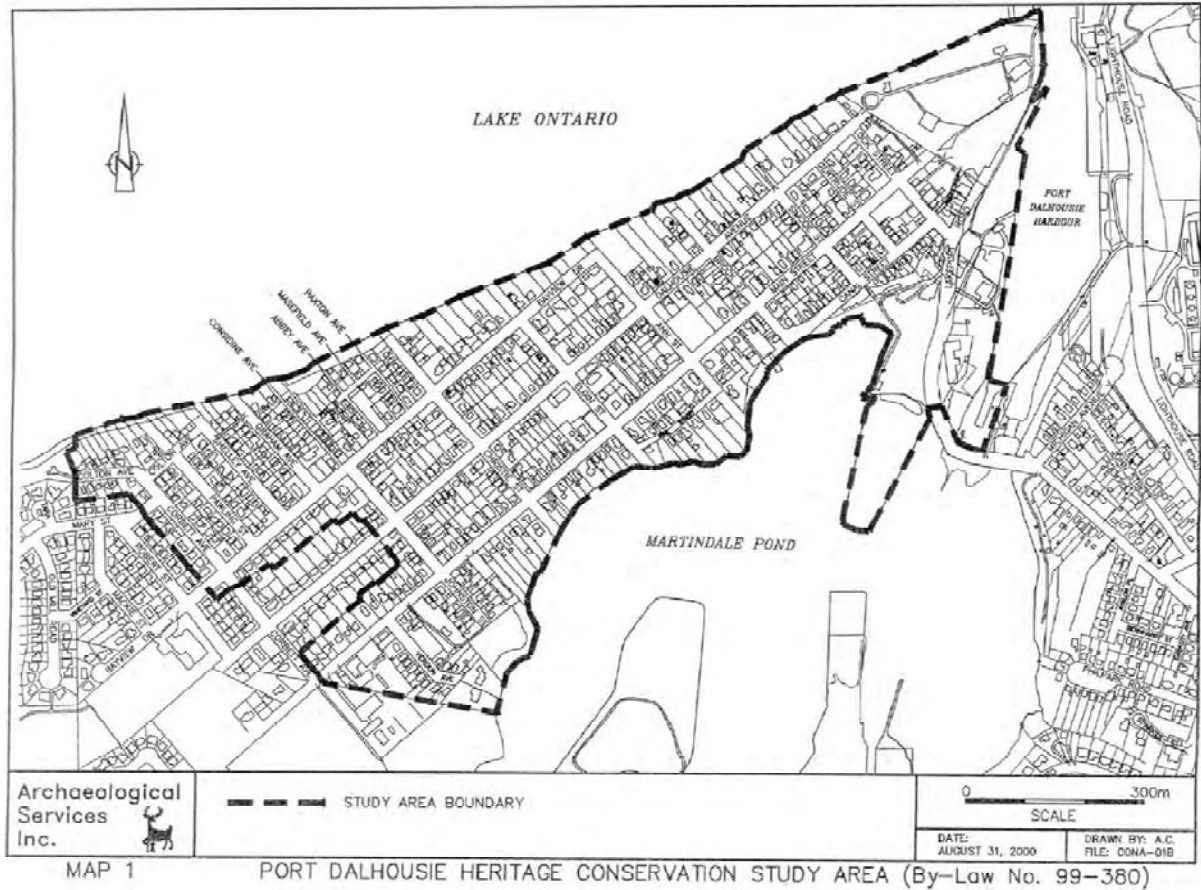
The Heritage Conservation District Plan describes the heritage character as follows:

“Port Dalhousie, located in the City of St. Catharines, is a compact settlement perched on the table lands of a small peninsula that separates Lake Ontario, to the north, from Martindale Pond to the south. The Martindale Pond is located at the mouth of the Twelve Mile Creek which, prior to Euro-Canadian settlement flowed unobstructed northwards from the Niagara Escarpment to the lake. Subsequent construction of the First Welland Canal in 1829, the Second Canal in 1851 and the Third Canal in 1881 together with dramatic changes to land form and natural water channels resulted in a unique pocket of human settlement in the Niagara Peninsula.

Port Dalhousie’s historical growth and development around an elongated road grid - as the name suggests - is intimately associated with nineteenth century port activities of canal development, commerce, industry and Great Lakes shipping. Largely as a result of opening the Fourth Welland Canal and developing Port Weller at the expense of Port Dalhousie, fortunes changed in the twentieth century. A residual reliance on recreational activity and light industry eventually declined. Yet, towards the end of the twentieth century increased awareness of cultural heritage and the increasing amenity value seen in pleasant, diverse, living environments spurred an interest in the long term future and careful management of Port Dalhousie’s sensitive heritage surroundings” (p. 2-1).



## 2.3 Location of the District



*Figure 2: Map of Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District.*

## 2.4 Designation of the District

The Heritage Conservation District was a resident-led initiative. An extensive amount of work was undertaken to research structures in the district, which was subsequently used as part of the Heritage Conservation District Study completed in August 2000 by Archeological Services Inc., Wendy Shearer Landscape Architects Limited and Unterman McPhail Associates.

The same team, joined by L. Alan Grinham Architect Inc., created the guidelines for conservation and change in March 2001. This Plan was adopted by the City of St. Catharines in 2001.

A large condo was proposed in the downtown area of the district that would involve the demolition of several buildings. The case went before the Ontario Municipal Board in 2009 and it was ultimately approved. At the time of writing, demolition on buildings in the downtown core had begun.

## 3.0 Study Approach

### 3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District were not asked a series of questions. Due to the controversial nature of the recent development approved in the area, surveys were not conducted.

### 3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Port Dalhousie was conducted in August 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 Port Dalhousie (see Appendix A). 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. Views were photographed and evaluated (see Appendices B and C). The summary of the scores is included as Appendix D.

Please note that the Townscape Survey and its results were completed before any buildings were demolished in the district.

### 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.

A list of addresses for this district was not provided, therefore real estate data could not be collected and analyzed.

### 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. Only one person was interviewed for the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District. This interview was conducted over the phone. A summary of the responses is included in Appendix G. The Interviewee was 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 Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District, the information regarding the number of applications for alterations and the time it took to receive approvals was not available.

## 4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

### 4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

The Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District Plan lists several goals that can be examined:

*a) Encouraging the current vitality of the commercial area by promoting its unique architecture and contemporary commercial adaptive reuse as well as continuing to protect its distinctive heritage fabric.*

*and*

*b) Encouraging new development, construction and any public works where it is clearly demonstrated that such changes will have no adverse effects upon the heritage attributes of the district and will positively contribute to the character of the area.*

The Townscape Survey objective to maintain and conserve buildings and encourage compatible new development appears to have been met. Drawing on measures collected in this survey, conserved elements evident, quality of conservation work, façade quality and maintenance all scored well. In addition, there are few neglected historic features and no dereliction. In short, the area is well maintained and historic elements, buildings and the streetscape have been conserved.

However, since the completion of the Townscape Survey several buildings have been demolished to make way for a high-rise condominium development. Thus, these goals have been disregarded.

*c) Maintaining the low profile, compact building forms of the cottage and residential areas.*

The goal to maintain a low profile in the residential areas has been met. The pictures taken for the Townscape Survey show that the buildings in the residential area are no more than three stories high.

*d) Ensuring that supporting and contextual landscape features such as grass boulevards, street trees, hedgerows, front yard plantings and many mature boundary plantings such as trees, mixed shrub borders and hedges are conserved and managed.*

The goal to maintain the landscape features has been met. The Townscape Survey characteristics of public and private planting scored well.

### 4.2 Are people content?

Residents were not surveyed, therefore satisfaction levels cannot be determined.

### 4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

The applications for alterations records were not available.

### 4.4 Have property values been impacted?

Data from GeoWarehouse was not collected.

#### 4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

##### *a) Development Pressure*

The district is currently in a state of turmoil as a large development that could demolish several buildings in the core was approved through an Ontario Municipal Board hearing. Demolition began in November 2012.

# 5.0 Conclusions

## 5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
  - Maintain a low profile in the residential area
  - Maintenance of the landscape features has been met
- The following objectives of the district plan have been less successful:
  - Encourage the current vitality of the commercial area by promoting its unique architecture and contemporary commercial adaptive reuse as well as continuing to protect its distinctive heritage fabric
  - Encourage new development, construction and any public works where it is clearly demonstrated that such changes will have no adverse effects upon the heritage attributes of the district and will positively contribute to the character of the area

Overall, the Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District is not a successful planning initiative.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

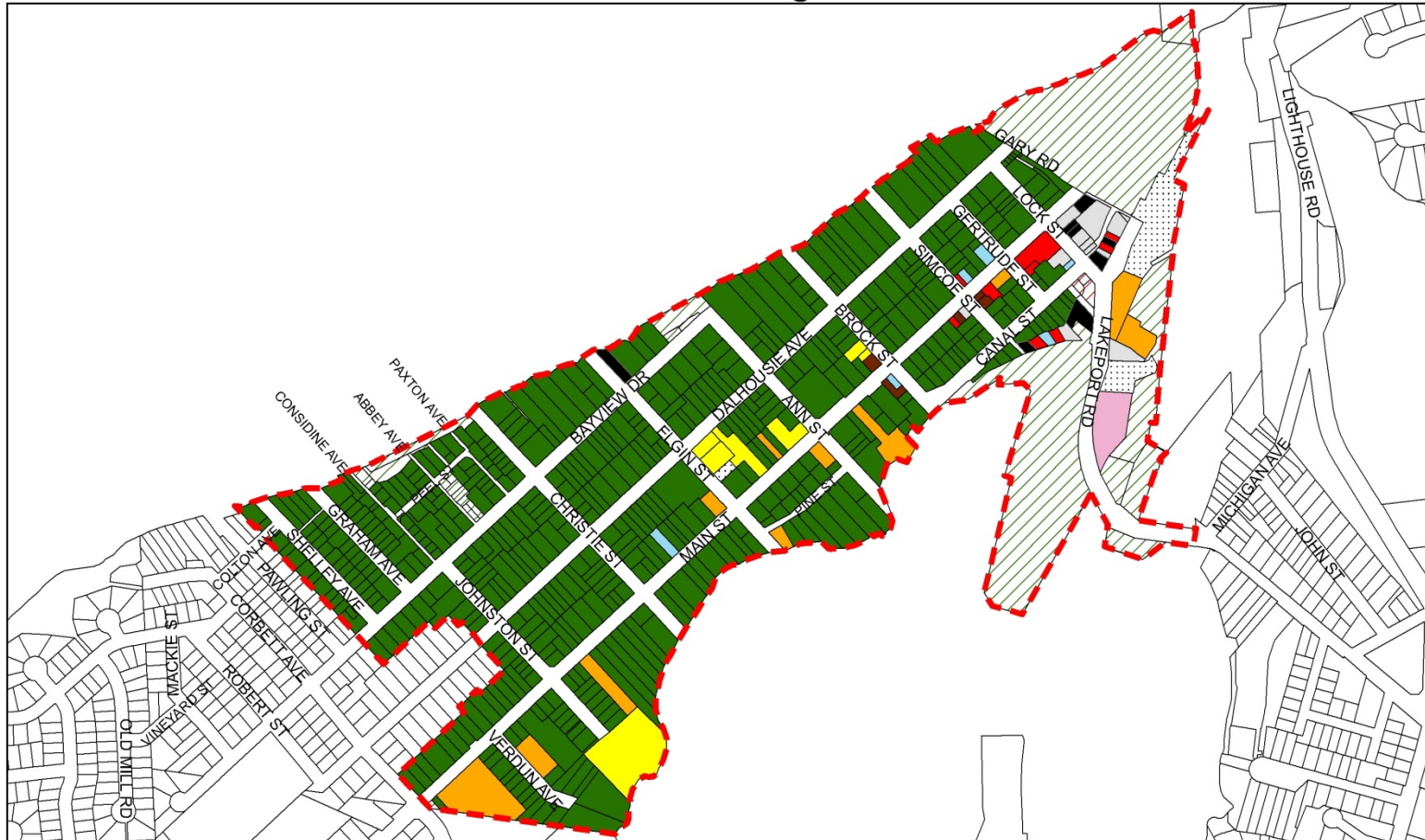
- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Provide a detailed street address list

# Appendices

Appendix A  
Land Use Map

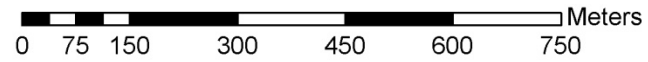


# Ground Level Land Use in Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District, St. Catharines



## 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                |                          |



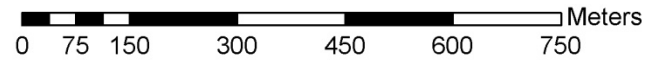
Heritage Resources Centre  
 August 26, 2011  
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
 Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_17N

# Upper Level Land Use in Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District, St. Catharines



## 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                |                          |

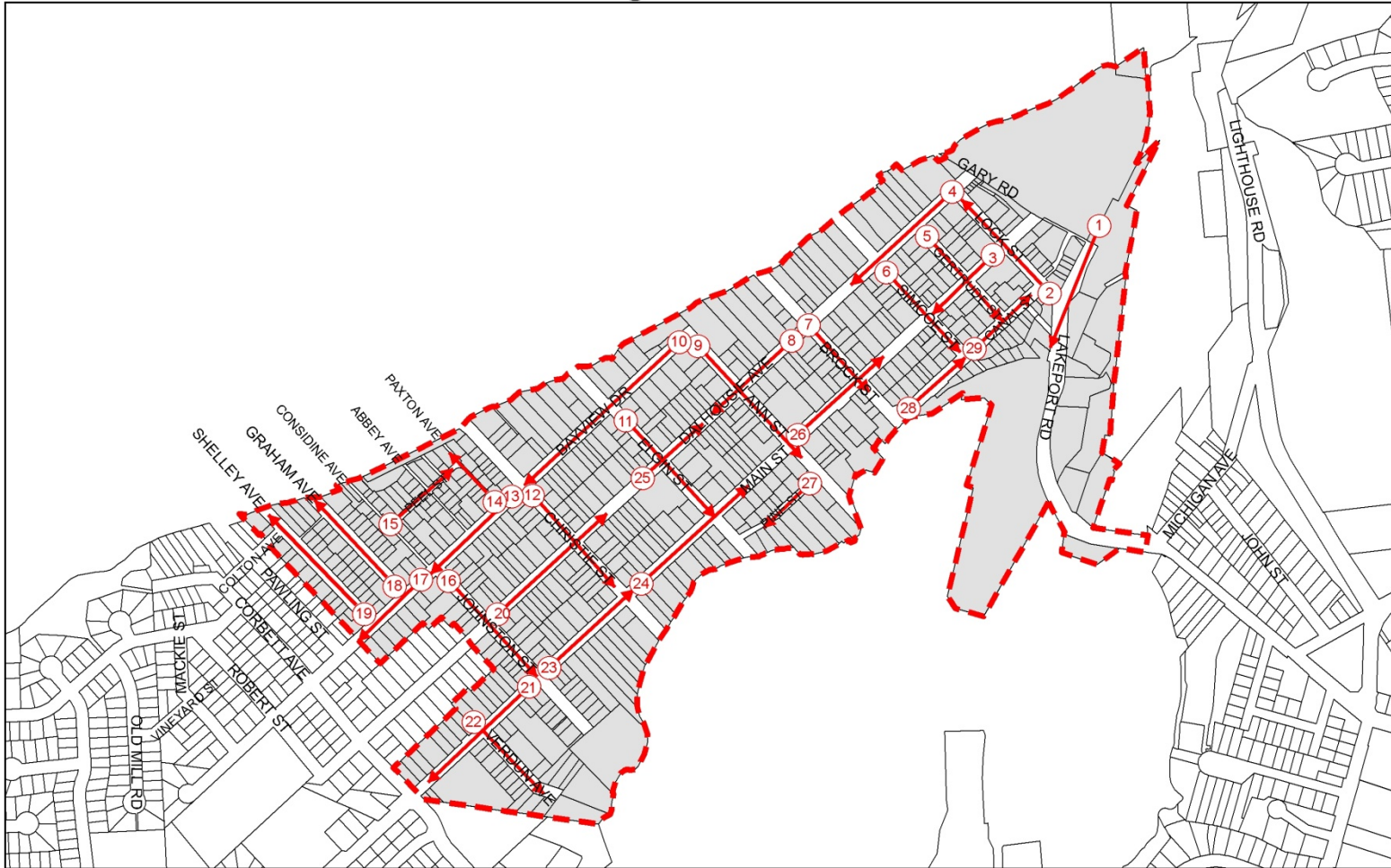


Heritage Resources Centre  
 August 26, 2011  
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
 Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_17N






# Appendix B

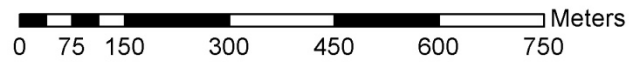
## Map of Views

# Views in Port Dalhousie Heritage Conservation District, St. Catharines



## Legend

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



Heritage Resources Centre  
 August 26, 2011  
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
 Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_17N

Appendix C  
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



View 17



View 18





View 19



View 20



View 21



View 22



View 23



View 24



View 25



View 26



View 27



View 28



View 29

## Appendix D

### Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

| <b>A. Streetscape Quality</b>     |       |        |       |          |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|----------|
|                                   | Score | Out of | %     | Out of 5 |
| A1-Pedestrian friendly            | 81.5  | 145    | 56.21 | 2.8      |
| A2-Cleanliness                    | 108   | 145    | 74.48 | 3.7      |
| A3-Coherence                      | 81.5  | 145    | 56.21 | 2.8      |
| A4-Edgefeature Quality            | 105   | 145    | 72.41 | 3.6      |
| A5-Floorscape Quality             | 83    | 145    | 57.24 | 2.9      |
| A6-Legibility                     | 103   | 145    | 71.03 | 3.6      |
| A7-Sense of Threat                | 101   | 145    | 69.66 | 3.5      |
| A8-Personal Safety: Traffic       | 110   | 145    | 75.86 | 3.8      |
| A9-Planting: Public               | 78    | 105    | 74.29 | 3.7      |
| A10-Vitality                      | 86.5  | 145    | 59.66 | 3.0      |
| A 11- Appropriate Resting Places  | 95.5  | 145    | 65.86 | 3.3      |
| A12-Signage                       | 107   | 145    | 73.79 | 3.7      |
| A13-Street Furniture Quality      | 81    | 135    | 60.00 | 3.0      |
| A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness | 115   | 140    | 82.14 | 4.1      |
| <b>SUM A</b>                      | 1336  | 1975   | 67.65 | 3.4      |

| <b>B. Private Space in View</b> |       |        |       |          |
|---------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|----------|
|                                 | Score | Out of | %     | Out of 5 |
| B15-Advertising, in keeping     | 31    | 40     | 77.50 | 3.9      |
| B16-Dereliction, Absence of     | 143   | 145    | 98.62 | 4.9      |
| B17-Detailing, Maintenance      | 129   | 145    | 88.97 | 4.4      |
| B18-Facade Quality              | 100   | 145    | 68.97 | 3.4      |
| B19-Planting Private            | 91.5  | 130    | 70.38 | 3.5      |
| <b>SUM B</b>                    | 494.5 | 605    | 81.74 | 4.1      |

| <b>C. Heritage in View</b>       |       |        |       |          |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------|-------|----------|
|                                  | Score | Out of | %     | Out of 5 |
| C20-Conserved Elements Evident   | 125   | 135    | 92.59 | 4.6      |
| C21-Historic Reference Seen      | 100   | 140    | 71.43 | 3.6      |
| C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference | 98    | 140    | 70.00 | 3.5      |
| C23-Quality of Conservation Work | 108.5 | 135    | 80.37 | 4.0      |
| C24-Quality of New Development   | 63    | 110    | 57.27 | 2.9      |
| C25-Neglected Historic Features  | 111   | 130    | 85.38 | 4.3      |
| <b>SUM C</b>                     | 605.5 | 790    | 76.65 | 3.8      |

|                         |             |             |              |            |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| <b>Impression Score</b> |             |             |              |            |
| <b>Aggregate Score</b>  | <b>2436</b> | <b>3370</b> | <b>75.34</b> | <b>3.8</b> |



## Appendix E

### Summary of Key Stakeholder Interview

Heritage Conservation District Name: Port Dalhousie

Month(s) of Interviews: February 2012

Number of People Interviewed: 1

| Question   | Summary of Answer   |
|--|---|
| 1. How are you involved in the HCD?  |   |
| 2. How did the HCD come about?   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A resident sought designation</li><li>• PROUD (Port Realizes Our Unique Distinction) community group did extensive survey work in support of designation and took results to council</li></ul>  |
| 3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted?                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Originally well-accepted but recent development proposal in the area has polarized resident opinions</li></ul>  |
| 4. In your experience what are the HCD management processes in place and how do they work?         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Management is guided by Official Plan policies and HCD plan</li><li>• Heritage Permit system controls change</li><li>• Heritage District Advisory Committee acts as a sounding board for area residents</li></ul>   |
| 5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations?                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff have delegated approval authority<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- staff process most applications with the exception of demolitions (referred to Council)</li></ul></li><li>• Applications for alterations are submitted to the Heritage Services department, circulated to the Heritage Committee and approved by Council</li></ul> |
| 6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working on creating a blog centered around the activities and role of the Port Dalhousie Heritage Committee</li></ul>   |
| 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"><li>• Management of development pressures (how much development to allow and where?)</li><li>• Residents are very engaged, either for or against development</li></ul>  |
| 8. What are similar non designated areas?  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None</li></ul>  |
| 9. Other comments  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• n/a</li></ul>   |