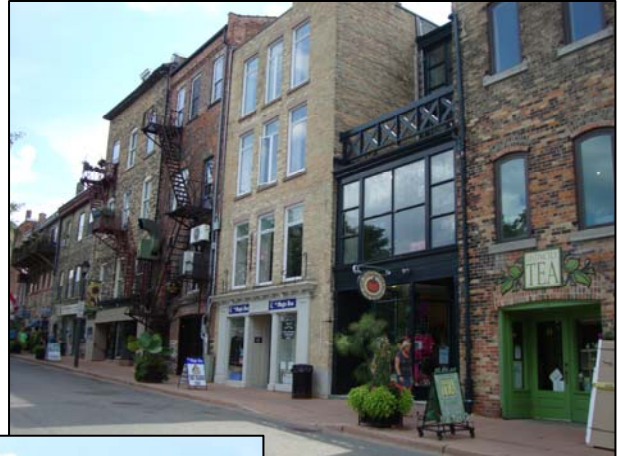


# Heritage Conservation District Study

## Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District Town of Stratford



# Heritage Conservation District Study

Prepared for  
The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

By

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Of the  
Heritage Resources Centre  
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We would also like to thank the local volunteers and municipal staff for their time and effort surveying residents, answering interview questions and helping to gather other vital information.

Thank you!

# 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 Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the Town of Stratford
- Consists of 190 commercial and institutional properties
- District was designated in 1997

## 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 and analyzed
- Key stakeholders were interviewed

## Analysis of Key Findings

- The implied goal to preserve existing buildings and streetscapes has been met
- Overall, the Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District lacks data, therefore cannot be thoroughly analyzed

## Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Provide the plan online with a detailed address list
- Educational information regarding old and new windows should be shared with property owners

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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 Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District

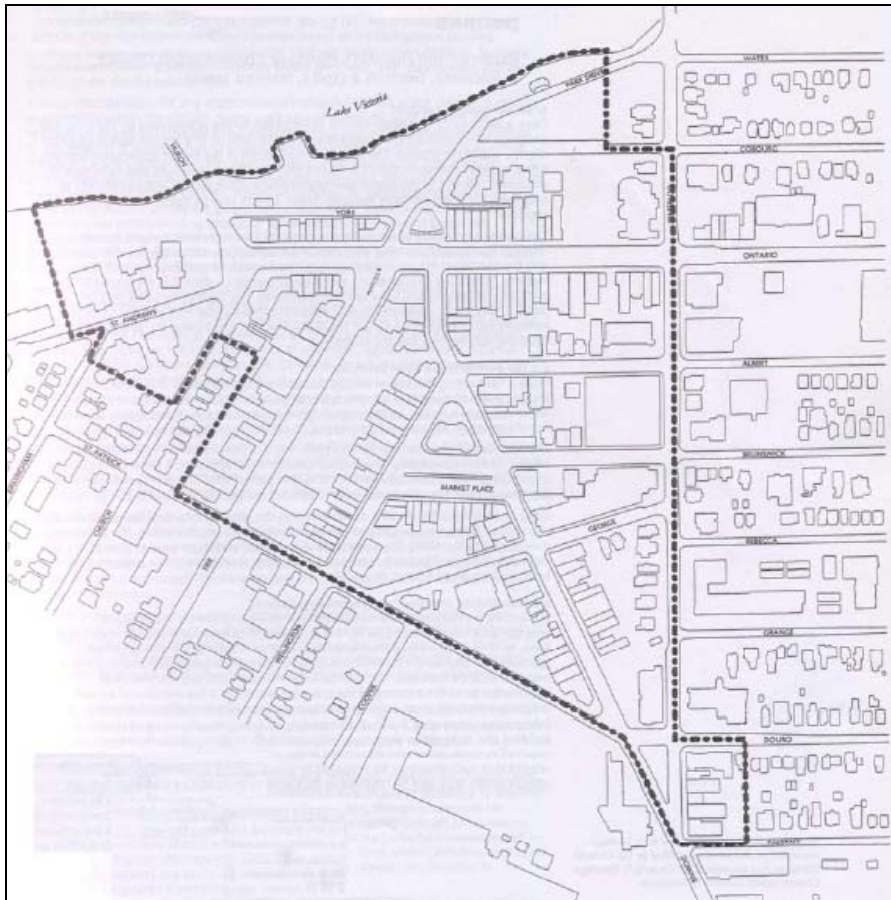
### 2.1 Description of the District

The Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District is located in the Town of Stratford. It is situated in a triangle of land between St. Patrick Street, Downie Street and Lake Victoria. The District consists of 190 commercial buildings.

### 2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Heritage Conservation District Plan was not available, therefore the designated heritage character cannot be described.

### 2.3 Location of the District



*Figure 2: Map of the Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District.*

### 2.4 Designation of the District

Details regarding the designation of this Heritage Conservation District were not available. All that is known is that the district was designated in 1997.



## 3.0 Study Approach

### 3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District were not asked a series of questions. Surveys were not conducted due to a lack of volunteer support.

### 3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of the Downtown Core 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 the Downtown Core (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.

### 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.

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

### 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 Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District including a Building Official and prior planning technician. A summary of responses can be found in Appendix E.

### 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 Stratford Downtown Core 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 Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District does not list any goals. However, as a district the implied goal is the conservation of buildings and streetscapes.

The objective to maintain and conserve buildings appears to have been met. Drawing on measures collected in the Townscape 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.

### 4.2 Are people content?

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

### 4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

The records regarding applications for alterations were not available.

### 4.4 Have property values been impacted?

No data from GeoWarehouse was collected.

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

#### *a) Windows*

Interviewees identified the replacement of windows as an issue in the district. An effort should be made to provide owners with information regarding old and new windows in an attempt to educate them on their options.

# 5.0 Conclusions

## 5.1 Conclusions

- The implied goal of conserving and maintaining buildings appears to have been met

Overall, the Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District lacks data, therefore cannot be analyzed.

## 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 the plan online with a detailed address list
- Educational information regarding old and new windows should be shared with property owners

# Appendices

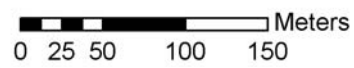
Appendix A  
Land Use Map

# Ground Level Land Use in Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District



**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                |                          |



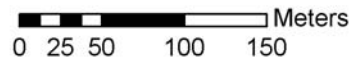
Heritage Resources Centre  
 August 29, 2011  
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
 Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_17N

# Upper Level Land Use in Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District



**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 29, 2011  
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
 Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_17N



# Appendix B

## Map of Views

# Views in Stratford Downtown Core Heritage Conservation District



**Legend**

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

0 25 50 100 150 Meters



Heritage Resources Centre  
 August 29, 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

## Appendix D

### Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

<b>A. Streetscape Quality</b>				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
A1-Pedestrian friendly	48	75	64.00	3.2
A2-Cleanliness	51.5	75	68.67	3.4
A3-Coherence	37.5	75	50.00	2.5
A4-Edgefeature Quality	59.5	75	79.33	4.0
A5-Floorscape Quality	41.5	75	55.33	2.8
A6-Legibility	48	75	64.00	3.2
A7-Sense of Threat	48	75	64.00	3.2
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	30	75	40.00	2.0
A9-Planting: Public	46.5	60	77.50	3.9
A10-Vitality	59	75	78.67	3.9
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	57.5	75	76.67	3.8
A12-Signage	54.5	75	72.67	3.6
A13-Street Furniture Quality	62	75	82.67	4.1
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	47	75	62.67	3.1
<b>SUM A</b>	690.5	1035	66.71	3.3

<b>B. Private Space in View</b>				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	51	65	78.46	3.9
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	68.5	75	91.33	4.6
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	60	75	80.00	4.0
B18-Facade Quality	58	75	77.33	3.9
B19-Planting Private	21	30	70.00	3.5
<b>SUM B</b>	258.5	320	80.78	4.0

<b>C. Heritage in View</b>				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	70	75	93.33	4.7
C21-Historic Reference Seen	19	75	25.33	1.3
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	57	75	76.00	3.8
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	60.5	75	80.67	4.0
C24-Quality of New Development	24	50	48.00	2.4
C25-Neglected Historic Features	55.5	70	79.29	4.0
<b>SUM C</b>	286	420	68.10	3.4

<b>Impression Score</b>				
<b>Aggregate Score</b>	<b>1235</b>	<b>1775</b>	<b>71.86</b>	<b>3.6</b>



# Appendix E

## Stakeholder Interviews

Heritage Conservation District Name: Downtown Core  
 Month(s) of Interviews: February 2012  
 Number of People Interviewed: 2

Question	Summary of Answer
1. How are you involved in the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous Building &amp; Planning Technician for the City of Stratford</li> <li>• Municipal Building Official I               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for receiving heritage permit applications</li> <li>- Liaises with Heritage Stratford</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Municipal Building Official II</li> </ul>
2. How did the HCD come about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From the efforts of the Building &amp; Planning Department, LACAC (now Heritage Stratford), Mayor, Council and a committee of property owners and tenants (2)</li> <li>• A company was hired to compile a report on the district</li> </ul>
3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-accepted</li> <li>• Rarely get resistance from property owners</li> <li>• Some people unaware the district is designated, some are resistant to the controls on their property, and some are content as the district creates viability within the downtown</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>• Control work done to the exterior of buildings (front façade) through the heritage permit application process (2)</li> <li>• Use AMANDA system to track applications and permits</li> </ul>
5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage permit applications are received by staff, if proposed alterations are minor, staff can approve (2)</li> <li>• Information on the application is forwarded to Heritage Stratford for review</li> <li>• If Heritage Stratford agrees with the application they have approval authority (2)</li> <li>• If Heritage Stratford cannot reach a decision that pleases all parties the application moves to the Planning &amp; Heritage Committee of Council who will approve/reject the application (rare) (2)</li> </ul>
6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not formally</li> <li>• City Centre Committee, a group of downtown property owners/tenants, provides a means of communication within the district</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>• Window replacements               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- most windows are still original wood frames but owners want to replace with vinyl as they perceive cost savings with the new material rather than repairing the original wood</li> <li>- municipality encourages owners to maintain the original fabric</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Upkeep is financially challenging</li> <li>• Maintaining viable tenants</li> </ul>
8. What are similar non designated areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>

9. Other comments

- n/a