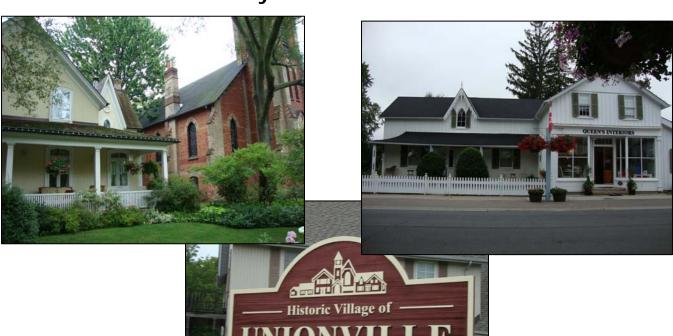
Heritage Conservation District Study

Unionville Heritage Conservation District City of Markham













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Prepared for The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

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Of the
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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 Unionville Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Markham
- Consists of 262 properties including residential properties and a commercial core
- District was designated in 1997
- Plan was written by the Heritage Planning Section of Development Services at the City of Markham

Study Approach

- Resident surveys were mailed out by a University of Waterloo Master's student
- Land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation was conducted
- Sales history trends were collected from GeoWarehouse and analyzed
- Key stakeholders were interviewed

Analysis of Key Findings

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - o Retain and conserve heritage buildings
 - o Maintain and introduce sympathetic landscape features in the private and public realm
 - Encourage sympathetic new development that adds to the character of the district and avoid demolition
 - Foster community support
 - o Maintain a progressive and competitive business environment
- Eighty-two percent of the people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Thirty-five of 60 properties in the district had above average sales history trajectories, 17 preformed at average
- Properties in the district showed resistance to real estate downturns
- Overall, the Unionville Heritage Conservation District has been a successful planning initiative

Recommendations

The following aspects of the district are areas for improvement:

• Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner

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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." 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."

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 HCD were examined. These districts are found in or near the following areas: Cambridge, 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 the various community sizes. The various types of districts that are part of the study are also evident.

Geographical Dis	Geographical Distribution		Community Size		
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 Unionville Heritage Conservation District

2.1 Description of the District

The Unionville Heritage Conservation District runs along Main Street in Unionville in the City of Markham. The district consists of 262 residential and commercial properties in the core of the Village of Unionville.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

Section 2.1 of the Heritage Conservation District Plan outlines the significance of the district:

"The Unionville Heritage Conservation District retains many aspects of a nineteenth century rural Ontario village.

Most buildings date from the latter half of the nineteenth century. There are also some Georgian, Regency, and early twentieth century buildings and some more recent structures. Historically and architecturally significant buildings of both wood and brick construction survive. The southern portion of the District is predominantly residential. The northern portion contains the typical nineteenth century village features of a blacksmith shop, hotel, train station, a number of stores and three churches.

The crooked main street – a rarity among Ontario's straight line surveys – is lined with a compact arrangement of detached, well-preserved houses and other buildings on deep lots. Many of the houses north of Victoria Avenue have been converted to commercial uses. On the east side of Main Street, the properties slope down to the Rouge River flood plain.

Even with conversions and intensification, the commercial section of Main Street retains its former residential scale and ambience which lends much to its attractiveness and character. This is further intensified by the delicate relationship between the buildings and the open space between, behind and particularly in front of the structures.

The flood plain, an important natural resource in the region, is abundantly treed as are some of the District's residential streets. Well-tended gardens and flowering shrubs accent the area's historical architecture. An absence of curbs and gutters along a number of streets, reinforces the village appearance" (pg. 5).

2.3 Location of the District



Figure 2: Map of Unionville Heritage Conservation District.

2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of Unionville was initiated by the local community. The Heritage Conservation District Plan was prepared by the Heritage Section, Development Services Commission, City of Markham. The Unionville Heritage Conservation District is protected by By-law 251-97, which was passed in 1997. The designation was approved by the Ontario Municipal Board under the Ontario Heritage Act on January 6, 1998.

The Heritage Conservation District Plan contains the following sections: Heritage District Designation, Heritage Conservation District Principles, Building Policies, Streetscape and Open Space Policies, Policies for Special Sites and Projects, Planning and Development Policies, Implementation, and Guidelines for Buildings and their Surroundings.

3.0 Study Approach

3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Unionville Heritage Conservation District were asked a series of questions relating to their experiences and satisfaction living in the district. These surveys were conducted as part of a Master's Thesis completed by Marcie Snyder. The surveys were delivered to a random sample of properties. They were hand delivered to mailboxes with return postage. Fifty-one of 126 people answered surveys, representing a 40.5% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Unionville 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 Unionville (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 19 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

People 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. Three people were interviewed for the Unionville Heritage Conservation District. All three interviews were conducted over the phone. Those interviewed included Heritage Planners for the City, a local resident, as well as a local Heritage Committee member. 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 Unionville Heritage Conservation District, information regarding the number of applications for alterations received and how long it took to process approvals was not available.

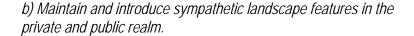
4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

The goals for the district are found in section 3.0 of the Heritage Conservation District Plan. They fall into five broad categories:

a)Retain and Conserve Heritage Buildings.

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, maintenance and coherence all scored well. There are also few neglected historic features and no dereliction. This means that visually the area is well maintained and historic elements and buildings have been conserved (Figure 3).



The goal to maintain and introduce sympathetic landscape features in the private and public realms have been met. Private and public planting both scored well. In addition, resting places, edge quality and street furniture preformed well. This indicated landscape features in the private and public realms are consistent with the area's character and that the distinction between private and public spaces are well defined.

c) To encourage sympathetic new development that adds to the character of the district and avoid demolition.

The goal to encourage sympathetic new development that adds to the character of the district has been met. The Townscape score for new development is modestly good, while the façade quality and coherence scored well.

d) Foster community support.

The goal to foster community support has been met. According to the interviews there is a semi-annual newsletter sent to residents. In addition, place and historic reference scored well in the Townscape Survey (Figure 4). The strong satisfaction level also indicated a high level of support.



Figure 3: An example of well maintained residential building in the district.

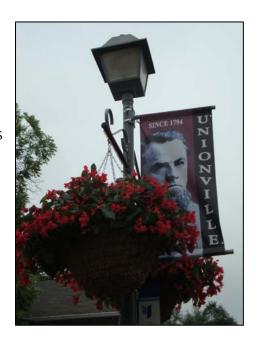


Figure 4: An example of historic place reference signage in the commercial core.

e) To maintain a progressive and competitive business environment.

The goal to maintain a progressive and competitive business environment has been met. A recent article by Graduate student Marcie Snyder and Dr. Robert Shipley on their research on the district and corresponding Business Improvement area showed a positive link between the two.

4.2 Are people content?

Two questions in the resident survey addressed people's contentment with living in the district. When asked if they lived in the district before it was designated, 19 people responded they did. Of those respondents, over half (10) felt positively about the designation, while four felt negatively and five were neutral.

Currently, almost half (24 of 50) of respondents are very satisfied with living in the district. Another 17 people are satisfied, representing an 82% satisfaction rate. Six people are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and only three people expressed dissatisfaction.

This represents a movement from fair contentment at the time of designation to strong contentment now with the district's designation in place.

4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

Residents in the survey were only asked one question related to applications for alterations; have they ever applied for an alteration? Seventeen of 50 respondents indicated they had made an application for alterations. There was no data available on the number of permits issued or how long they took to be approved. Therefore, we are unable to draw conclusions about the permit application process and timeline.

However, the interviewees did outline the existing process, which included delegated authority, and site plan approval in addition to heritage permits. As well, any controversial applications are referred to Council. This indicates there are strong conditions that need to be met within the district when alterations are considered. However, the high satisfaction figures indicate that the process is working.

4.4 Have property values been impacted?

According to the resident surveys, over half of the respondents (32 of 50) believe the designation will increase their property values. Only two people believed it would have a negative impact and eight believed designation had no impact on property values.

The data from GeoWarehouse indicated that 60 of 262 properties had sales histories. Of these 60 properties, 35 had above average sales value increases. Eighteen properties had average sales history trajectories. Only seven of the properties performed below average. The majority of properties had an above average sale price, which indicates the district is performing better than other neighbourhoods in the immediate surroundings.

Five of the properties show an interesting trend. They resisted real estate market downturns. While other properties in the city were losing value, the properties in the district maintained their value.

Some of the properties also saw dramatic increases in value over a short period of time. This might point to dramatic changes in use and density. Interviewees indicated that 1940s-1960s buildings in the district were

permitted to be demolished and rebuilt. Perhaps these sharp increases in property values are the result of rebuilding.

4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

a) Commercial Uses

The interviews indicated that the downtown was attracting many restaurants and the district was becoming a "restaurant campus." In order to encourage more retail, Council removed zoning permission for restaurants. Existing restaurants were grandfathered in.

b) Zoning and Secondary Plan

The above issue of commercial uses makes it clear that zoning and secondary plans need to be supportive of the district's objectives. In fact one of the interviewees stated that these supportive planning documents are key to ensure the objectives are met.

c) Development Pressure

All three interviewees cited concern over development pressure in the district. Many residents are purchasing more modest homes with the intention of demolishing them to rebuilt much larger structures.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - Retain and conserve heritage buildings
 - o Maintain and introduce sympathetic landscape features in the private and public realm
 - Encourage sympathetic new development that adds to the character of the district and avoid demolition
 - Foster community support
 - Maintain a progressive and competitive business environment
- Eighty-two percent of the people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Thirty-five of 60 properties in the district had above average sales history trajectories, 17 preformed at average
- Properties in the district showed resistance to real estate downturns

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

5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district are areas for improvement:

• Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner

Appendices

Appendix A Tabular Results of Resident Surveys

Heritage Conservation District Name: Unionville

Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses 50

	Yes	No
Counts	50	0
Percentage	100.00	0.00

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

Responses 49

	Before	After
Counts	17	32
Percentage	34.69	65.31

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

Responses 19

Positive	10
Negative	4
Neutral	5
Mixed Feelings	0

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

Responses 29

	Yes	No
Counts	Ç	20
Percentage	31.03	68.97

What is your understanding of how the HCD works?

Responses 44

Preservation	17
Restrictions	23
No understanding	4

Have you made application(s) for building alterations?

Responses 50

	Yes	No
Counts	17	33
Percentage	34.00	66.00

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

Responses 50

	Mean Score out of 5	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Do not Know
Counts	4.22	24	17	6	2	1	0
Percentage		48.00	34.00	12.00	4.00	2.00	0.00

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

Responses 50

	Mean Score out of 5	Increased a Lot	Increased	No Impact	Lowered	Lowered a lot	Do not Know
Counts	3.95	10	22	8	2	0	8
Percentage		23.81	52.38	19.05	4.76	0.00	16.00

Comments

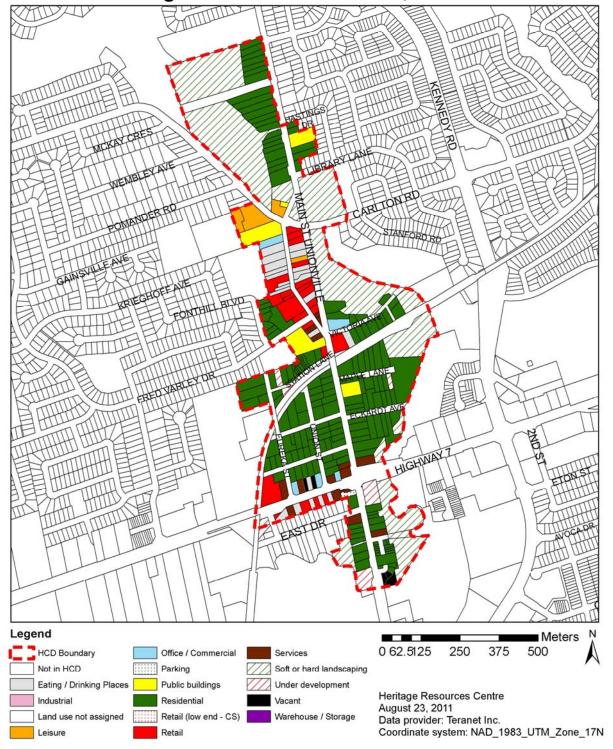
Responses 17

Positive	4
Negative	5
Unrealistic Demands	5
Highway 7	3

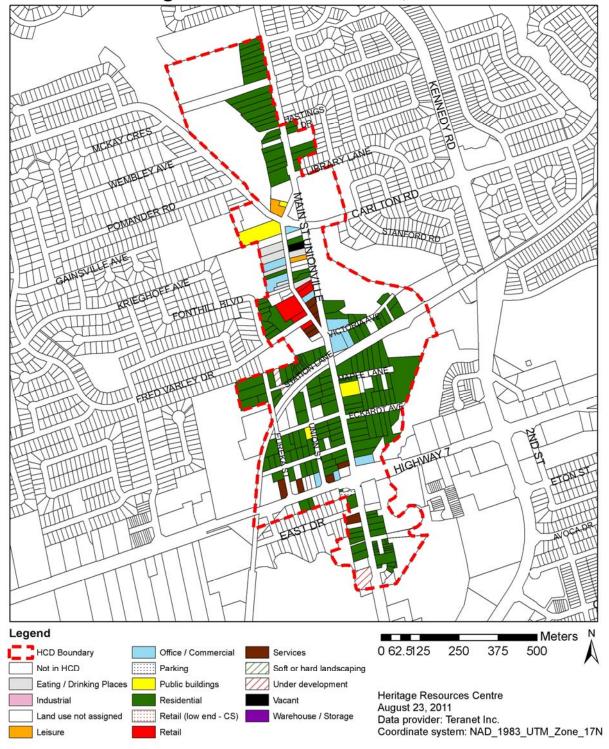
Total Population	126
Participants	50
Participation Rate	40.48

Appendix B Land Use Maps

Ground Level Land Use in Unionville Heritage Conservation District, Markham

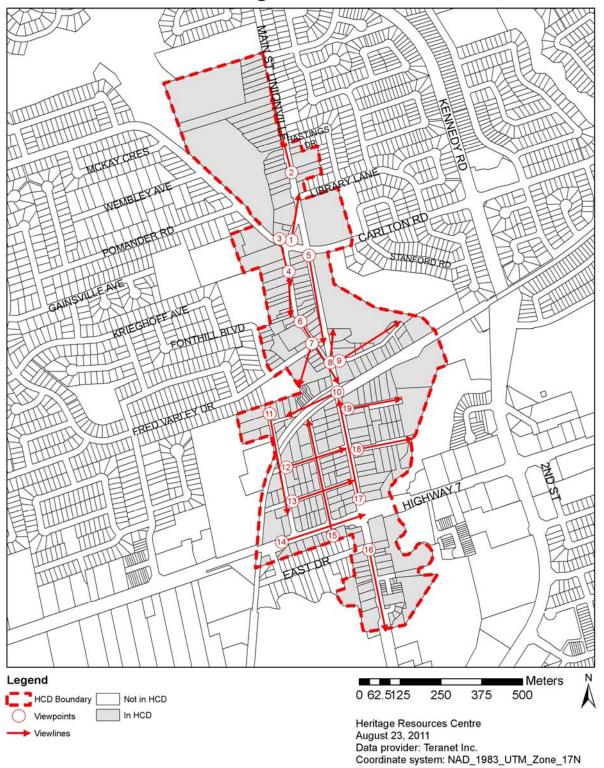


Upper Level Land Use in Unionville Heritage Conservation District, Markham



Appendix C Map of Views

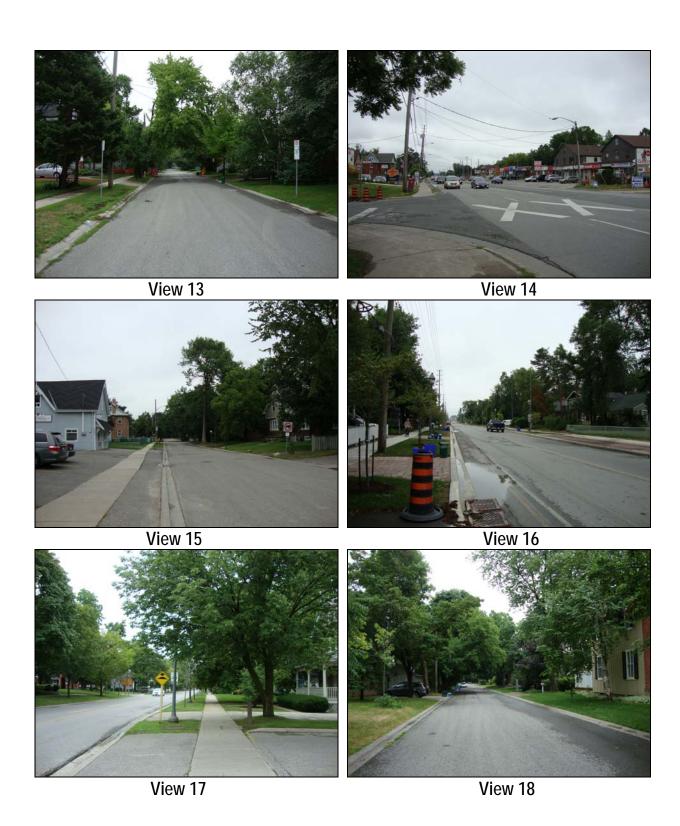
Views in Unionville Heritage Conservation District, Markham



Appendix D Photographs of Views









View 19

Appendix E Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

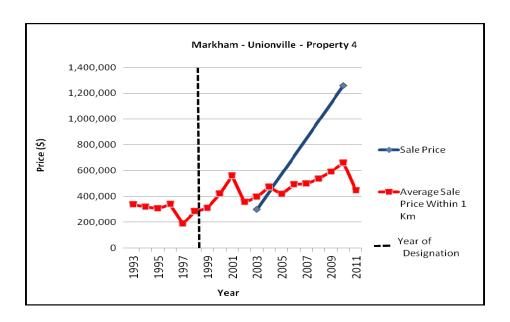
A. Streetscape Quality						
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5		
A1-Pedestrian friendly	53.5	95	56.32	2.8		
A2-Cleanliness	66	95	69.47	3.5		
A3-Coherence	62	95	65.26	3.3		
A4-Edgefeature Quality	68.5	95	72.11	3.6		
A5-Floorscape Quality	54.5	95	57.37	2.9		
A6-Legibility	59	95	62.11	3.1		
A7-Sense of Threat	64.5	95	67.89	3.4		
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	68	95	71.58	3.6		
A9-Planting: Public	39.5	50	79.00	4.0		
A10-Vitality	50	95	52.63	2.6		
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	58	95	61.05	3.1		
A12-Signage	71	95	74.74	3.7		
A13-Street Furniture Quality	74	95	77.89	3.9		
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	71.5	90	79.44	4.0		
SUM A	860	1280	67.19	3.4		

Impression Score				
Aggregate Score	1619.5	2220	76.42020036	3.8

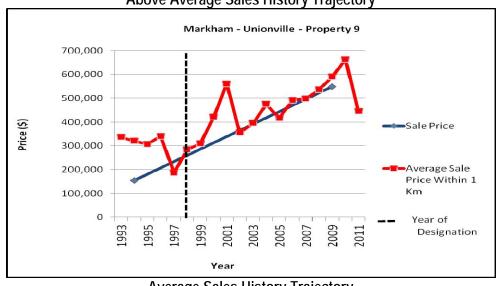
B. Private Space in View				
		Out		Out of
	Score	of	%	5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	45	55	81.82	4.1
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	91	95	95.79	4.8
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	82	95	86.32	4.3
B18-Facade Quality	74	95	77.89	3.9
B19-Planting Private	63	85	74.12	3.7
SUM B	355	425	83.53	4.2

C. Heritage in View				
		Out		Out of
	Score	of	%	5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	85	95	89.47	4.5
C21-Historic Reference Seen	58	95	61.05	3.1
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	64	95	67.37	3.4
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	82.5	90	91.67	4.6
C24-Quality of New Development	32.5	50	65.00	3.3
C25-Neglected Historic Features	82.5	90	91.67	4.6
SUM C	404.5	515	78.54	3.9

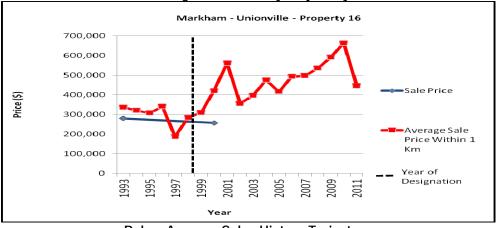
Appendix F Real Estate Data



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: Unionville Month(s) of Interviews: December 2011 and January 2012 Number of People Interviewed: 3

Question	Summary of Answer
1. How are you	Local property owner and resident
involved in the	Municipal Heritage Committee (MHC) member
HCD?	Manager of Heritage Planning, responsible for all planning and new
	development in this area; responsible for implementation of the Heritage District
	Plan
O Have did the	Senior Heritage Planner
2. How did the HCD come	 Community effort to protect Unionville from development pressure, specifically routing of Kennedy Rd. through the community (2)
about?	Through the efforts of the municipality and interest from the local community
3. In your	Very well accepted (2)
opinion how	 Embraced by residents and business owners that are very protective of the
has the HCD	unique qualities of the district
designation	Unionville was a study area for 20 years before it was designated, therefore
been	residents were accepting
accepted?	The district draws many people to walk it streets, both residents and visitors
4. In your	Heritage Permit process
experience what are the	Heritage Conservation District Plan used to guide decisions regarding Applications for alternations (2)
HCD	applications for alterations (2)
management	 Heritage District is a Site Plan Control Area under the Planning Act using the powers of the Planning Act and Heritage Act, all development
processes in	(minor to major) is reviewed by either the Heritage Markham Committee
place and how	(municipal heritage committee) or Heritage Section staff
do they work?	There is not a separate heritage committee for the district - all
	recommendations come from the MHC or staff
E.L.	•
5. In your	Heritage Permit process (2) Minor alterations, exterior alterations require Heritage Permits
experience what is the	 Minor alterations: exterior alterations require Heritage Permits Building Permits (Heritage) are required for structural changes
process for	o Major alterations: Heritage Site Plan Approval process used for
applications	additions or construction of new buildings (Site Plan Approval)
for alterations?	Delegation Bylaw in place allowing staff to grant approvals if request is
	compliant with approved policies (leads to faster approval times)
	Plans are submitted to the MHC for approval/amendment
	Architectural Subcommittee reviews the site/plans and reports back to the MHC
/ lo there s	Demolition and controversial applications referred to Council Carrie argued by a the property of the all argued the all argued the district.
6. Is there a communication	Semi-annual heritage newsletter delivered to all properties in the district, includes information on available funding sources, calebrates good restoration.
process set up	includes information on available funding sources, celebrates good restoration projects, general interest, reminds residents of the resources available to them
for the HCD?	(2)
	District Plan available on Town of Markham's website (2)
	District residents represented on the MHC

	Not aware of any communication process in place (1)
7. In your opinion, what are the issues that are unique to the HCD and how have they been managed?	 Not aware of any continuation process in place (1) Due to high property values, some residents want to construct substantial additions to their homes or new homes that are often inconsistent with the streetscape (sq ft; scale; height) and backyards of neighbouring homes (3) Some residents/owners find it easier to disregard district guidelines and then ask forgiveness rather than permission (2) some indicate that they are not aware of the district so heritage entrance signs were added and all street name signs indicated it is a heritage conservation district Preservation of buildings historic architectural details (desire to replace heritage materials with modern materials- windows and siding) Town now permits more modern materials on non-heritage buildings and additions if the material gives a traditional appearance Desire to demolish buildings from the late 1940s-1960s Many see no value in post-war construction, Council has been supporting demolition and allowing new construction Commercial area older buildings are no longer large enough to meet the current standards for retail and suffer development pressure to enlarge available floor space signage not in keeping with the district guidelines are being installed on commercial buildings without permits becoming a restaurant campus rather than a traditional retail area so in 2003, Council removed the zoning permission for restaurants to encourage retail to return to at least 50% of gross ground floor area existing restaurants were grandfathered high rents for existing store space has resulted in increased vacancy Town of Markham staff are very diligent when it comes to enforcing district quidelines
8. What are similar non designated areas?	 Kleinburg, Vaughan Outside of Markham, Port Perry would be a similar situation to Unionville (commercial core area that attracts tourists with a residential community around it)
9. Other comments	Heritage Districts are a good planning tool but need to ensure the zoning by-law or secondary plans are supportive of the district's objectives