

Heritage Conservation District Study

Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District City of Kitchener



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
The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

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Of the
Heritage Resources Centre
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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 the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Kitchener
- Consists of 202 residential properties
- District was designated in 1996
- Plan was written by Nicholas Hill, Architect

Study Approach

- Resident surveys were conducted by University of Waterloo students
- 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 collected

Analysis of Key Findings

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - Encourage the retention and conservation of historic buildings
 - Guiding the design of new work to be compatible with the historic
 - Achieving a cohesive, well designed and identifiable area
 - Fostering community support
- 89% of people are satisfied or very satisfied with living in the district
- Property sales are very strong in the district, and the market is stable
- The majority of applications for alterations are approved within three months
- Overall, the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District appears to be a successful planning initiative

Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track alternations in a more comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Incorporate place and historic reference into the design
- Continue to use visuals to communicate design objectives

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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 the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District

2.1 Description of the District

The Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District is bounded by Joseph Street, Victoria Street, Benton Street and the Canadian Pacific Railway. It consists of 202 residential buildings around a central park.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Heritage Conservation District study describes the core heritage character as an excellent example of late-19th and early-20th century residential architecture, set around an historic park.

2.3 Location of the District

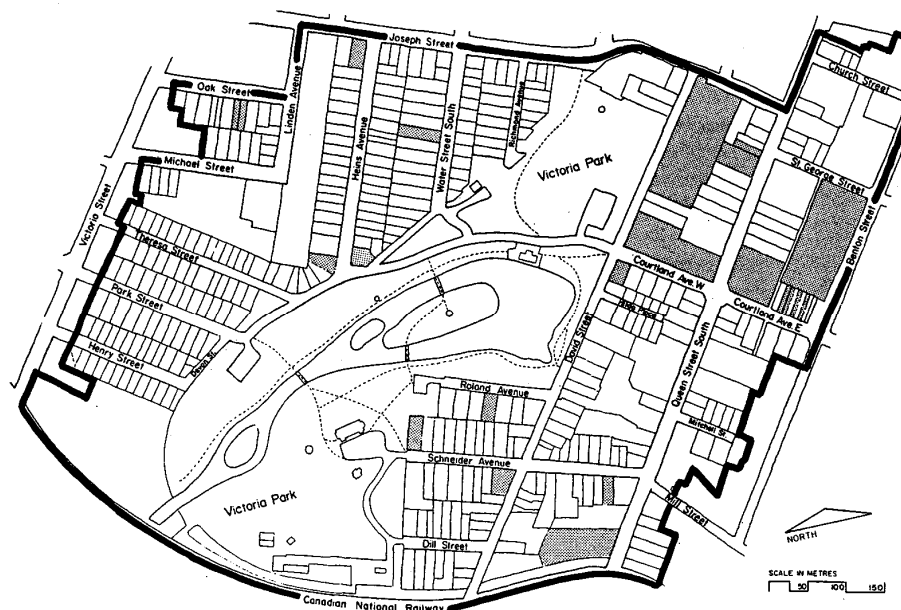


Figure 2: Map of Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District.

2.4 Designation of the District

The Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District Study began in 1981 with a neighbourhood Secondary Plan. In 1994 community meetings were conducted and the district designation was spurred on by centennial celebrations in Victoria Park in 1996, at which time the district was designated. The study and plan were completed by Architect, Nicholas Hill. The Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District is protected by Bylaw 96-91, which was passed in June 1996 by the City of Kitchener.

3.0 Study Approach

3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Victoria Park 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 University of Waterloo Students. Half of the 202 residents were randomly selected to be surveyed. Thirty-nine of 100 residents answered surveys, representing a 39% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Victoria Park was conducted in the Fall of 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 Victoria Park (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. 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 Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District. Both interviews were conducted over the phone. Those interviewed included a Heritage Planner for the City of Kitchener, and a current resident. 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 Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District, the information regarding the number of applications for alterations was available from the City of Kitchener. However, the time it took for each application to be approved was not available.

4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

The district plans outlines physical, social and economic goals. The goals fall within the following categories:

a) Encourage the retention and conservation of historic buildings

The objective to preserve and maintain the existing historic fabric has been met. The Townscape Survey shows that conserved elements, detailed maintenance and quality of conservation work all scored well. There is no dereliction and few neglected historic features. Coherence and façade quality also scored well. This means that visually the area is being well maintained and historic elements and buildings are being conserved.

b) Guiding the design of new work to be compatible with the historic

The objective for new work to be compatible with the historic seems to have been met. Façade quality and coherence scored moderately well. However, new development scored lower. This indicated that there might be unsympathetic additions being added, but that larger infill is generally compatible.

c) Achieving a cohesive, well designed and identifiable area

The goal to achieve a cohesive and well designed, identifiable area has been met. The elements of coherence, legibility, street furniture and traffic flow, all elements of cohesiveness and design, scored well. However, the areas of historic reference and nomenclature scored very low, indicating an area for improvement. The district could be better recognized through signage with historic reference.

d) Fostering community support

The goal to foster community support appears to have been met. First, the Municipal Heritage Committee includes a local representative from the district. Furthermore, of those surveyed, almost all respondents had a high level of understanding of the district and its processes. Only four people indicated they had poor knowledge of the district.

4.2 Are people content?

Two questions were asked regarding people's contentment with the district. First, participants were asked if they lived in the area before or after it was designated. Fourteen of 39 people lived in the area before it was designated. Of the twelve respondents to the follow-up question regarding contentment, ten felt positive about the designation at the time, one person had mixed feelings and one person had negative feelings.

Twenty-five people stated they moved to the area after designation. Twenty-three of those people responded to the follow-up question: "Did the designation affect your decision to move here?" Of those respondents, 16 people indicated it did not impact their decision, while only seven indicated it did. Clearly, the district designation is not deterring people from moving to the area.

Currently, 19 of the 38 respondents are very satisfied with owning or renting property in the district. Another 15 people are satisfied. This represents an 89% satisfaction rate. Two people were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and two people were very dissatisfied.

4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

Only 14 of the 39 respondents had applied for building alterations. Of these, twelve of 16 were approved. Fourteen people responded to the question regarding the length of time required to process applications. Of these 24 people, one person indicated that the alteration process took less than a month, six people said it took one-to-three months and two people said “not long.” Only three people indicated the application process took over four months. Two people did not know how long it took. In short, residents do not believe that the alteration request process takes a long time.

The records from the City of Kitchener do not indicate the length of time for approvals, but do indicate that since 2002 the number of approvals per year has increased from two to an average of 10 a year starting in 2006. Clearly, the amount of activity in the district is increasing.

4.4 Have property values been impacted?

The data from GeoWarehouse indicates there are 88 properties with sales histories. Of those properties, 37 performed above average, 33 at average and 17 below average when compared to the surrounding area.

This is a neighbourhood with strong property values where almost half of the houses performed above average. A few of the strong performers appear to have been renovation resale's but most properties just rose steadily in value. There were only a few cases where the prices varied dramatically. For the most part the market had been very stable.

4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

a) Visual Building Guidelines

The guidelines for building alternations in the Heritage Conservation District Plan are visual, with stylized pictures of the different architectural components clearly indicated (Figure 3). This visual representation is a best practice for communicating building standards to the general public.

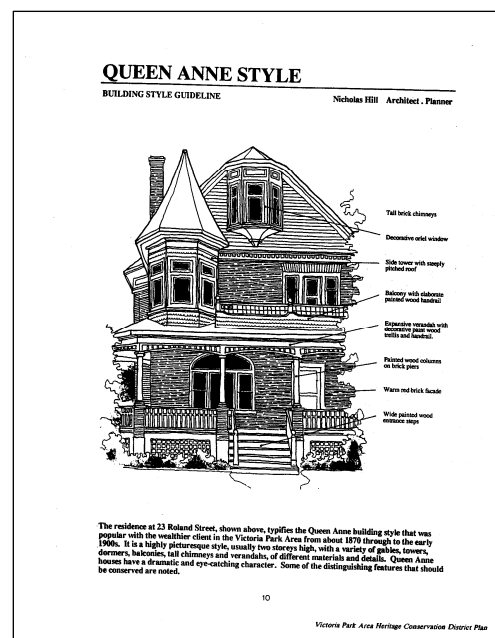


Figure 3: Example Visual Building Guidelines for a Queen Anne Structure

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - Encourage the retention and conservation of historic buildings
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- 89% of people are satisfied or very satisfied with living in the district
- Property sales are very strong in the district, and the market is stable
- The majority of applications for alterations are approved within three months

Overall, the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District appears to be a successful planning initiative.

5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track alterations in a more comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Incorporate place and historic reference into the design
- Continue to use visuals to communicate design objectives

Appendices

Appendix A

Resident Surveys

Heritage Conservation District Name: Victoria Park

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

Responses

	Owner	Tenant-Commercial	Tenant - Residential
Counts	29	1	9
Percentage	74.36	2.56	23.08

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	38	1
Percentage	97.44	2.56

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

Responses

	Before	After
Counts	14	25
Percentage	35.90	64.10

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

Responses

Positive	10
Negative	1
Neutral	0
Mixed Feelings	1

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	7	16
Percentage	30.43	69.57

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

Responses

No idea	4
management of facade & exteriors	24
high level of understanding the process	9

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	14	25
Percentage	35.90	64.10

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	12	3
Percentage	75.00	18.75

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

Responses

Over 5 months	2
4 to 5 months	1
1 to 3 months	6
Less than 1 month	1
Not long	2
Unknown	2

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	4.29	19	15	2	0	2	0
Percentage		50.00	39.47	5.26	0.00	5.26	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	3.52	1	18	12	2	0	6
Percentage		2.56	54.55	36.36	6.06	0.00	15.38

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

Responses

No	24
Yes	3
Yes, easier	4
Yes, harder	0
Don't know	4
Maybe	2

13. Comments

Additional Comments: happy with leisure district do something with the park (1); smallest house on the street went for most (1); believe it will help in long run (1); It is a desirable place (1); heritage rules not enforced well (1); hope to maintain the area the way they do, likes heritage day (1); lovely district (1); displeased with tall buildings recently built close to residents' property, disconnect between homeowner and city (1); resident is concerned with municipal upkeep of neighbourhood (sewers and lighting). (1); Doesn't think municipality should control exterior improvements just because it is heritage (1); it is good KW is making an effort to preserve neighbourhoods (1); photo needed to apply for changes; missed the deadline (1) still issues with unmaintained houses, should be limited to single family dwellings (1); we should conserve other homes that are not just Victorian (1); more "teeth" for the enforcement of the district would be appropriate (1); understand keeping heritage in tact (1); positive experience in Victoria Heritage District (1); I think HCD shouldn't be mandatory (1)

Total Population	100
Participants	39
Participation Rate	39

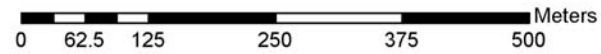
Appendix B
Land Use Map

Ground Level Land Use in Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District, Kitchener



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	



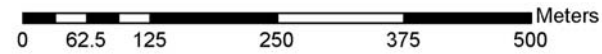
Heritage Resources Centre
 August 1, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_17N

Upper Level Land Use in Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District, Kitchener



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	

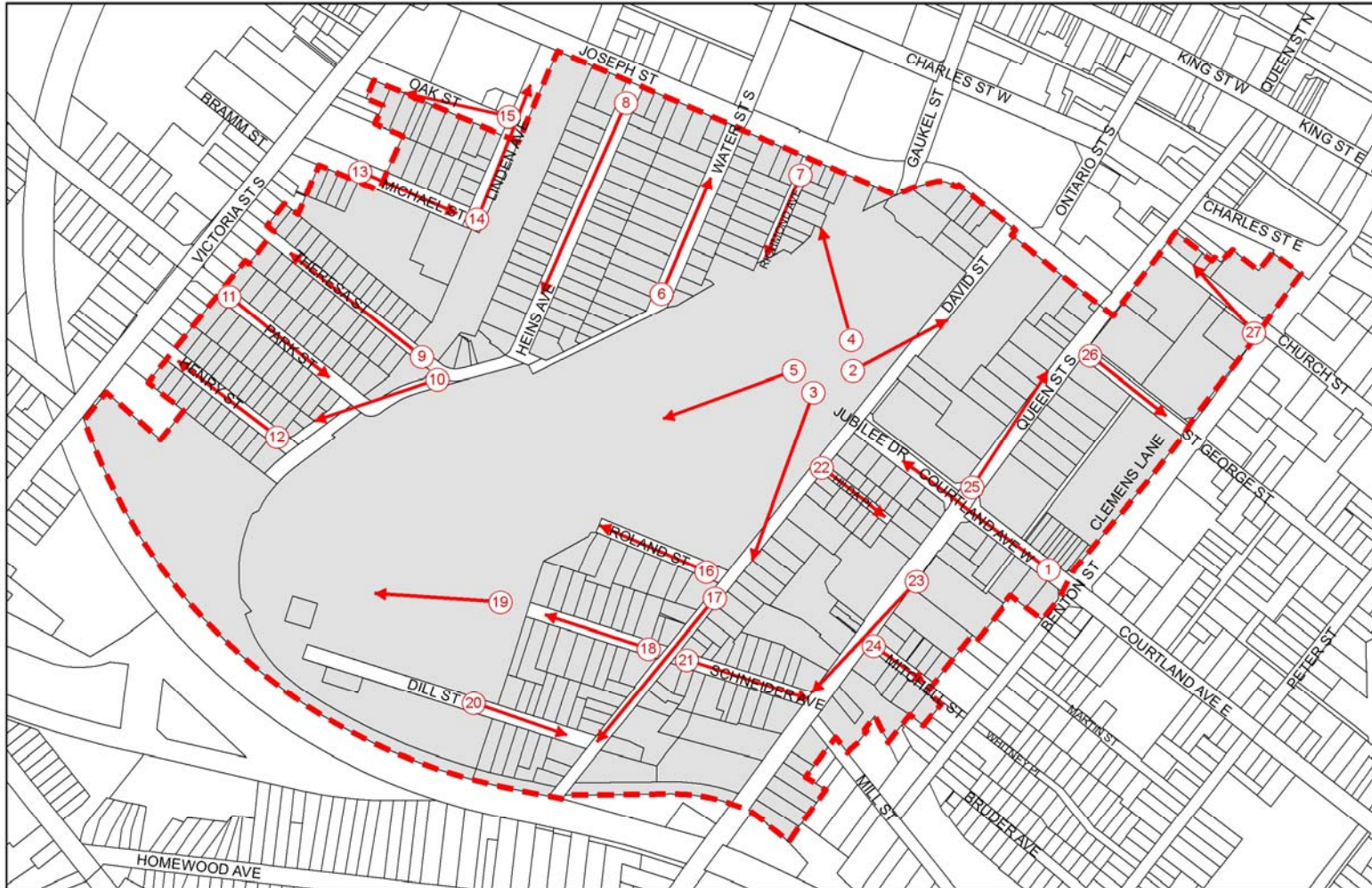


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 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_17N






Appendix C

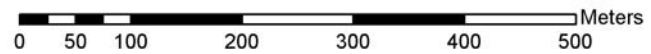
Map of Views

Views in Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District, Kitchener



Legend

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



Heritage Resources Centre
 August 1, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_17N



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



View 17



View 18



View 19



View 20



View 21



View 22



View 23



View 24



View 25



View 26



View 27

Appendix E

Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

A. Streetscape Quality				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
A1-Pedestrian friendly	82	135	60.74	3.0
A2-Cleanliness	89.5	130	68.85	3.4
A3-Coherence	89.5	135	66.30	3.3
A4-Edgefeature Quality	102	135	75.56	3.8
A5-Floorscape Quality	81.5	135	60.37	3.0
A6-Legibility	99	135	73.33	3.7
A7-Sense of Threat	77.5	135	57.41	2.9
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	88	130	67.69	3.4
A9-Planting: Public	88.5	110	80.45	4.0
A10-Vitality	62.5	135	46.30	2.3
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	81	135	60.00	3.0
A12-Signage	100.5	135	74.44	3.7
A13-Street Furniture Quality	87.5	135	64.81	3.2
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	95	130	73.08	3.7
SUM A	1224	1850	66.16	3.3

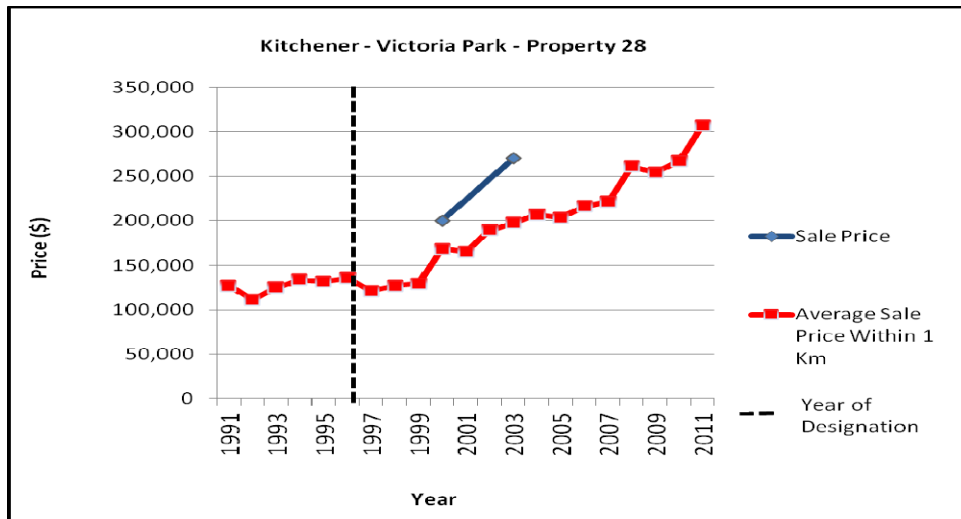
B. Private Space in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	26	45	57.78	2.9
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	115.5	135	85.56	4.3
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	111.5	135	82.59	4.1
B18-Facade Quality	94.5	130	72.69	3.6
B19-Planting Private	96.5	130	74.23	3.7
SUM B	444	575	77.22	3.9

C. Heritage in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	101.5	120	84.58	4.2
C21-Historic Reference Seen	26	130	20.00	1.0
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	26	130	20.00	1.0
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	101.5	120	84.58	4.2
C24-Quality of New Development	32	70	45.71	2.3
C25-Neglected Historic Features	101	120	84.17	4.2
SUM C	388	690	56.23	2.8

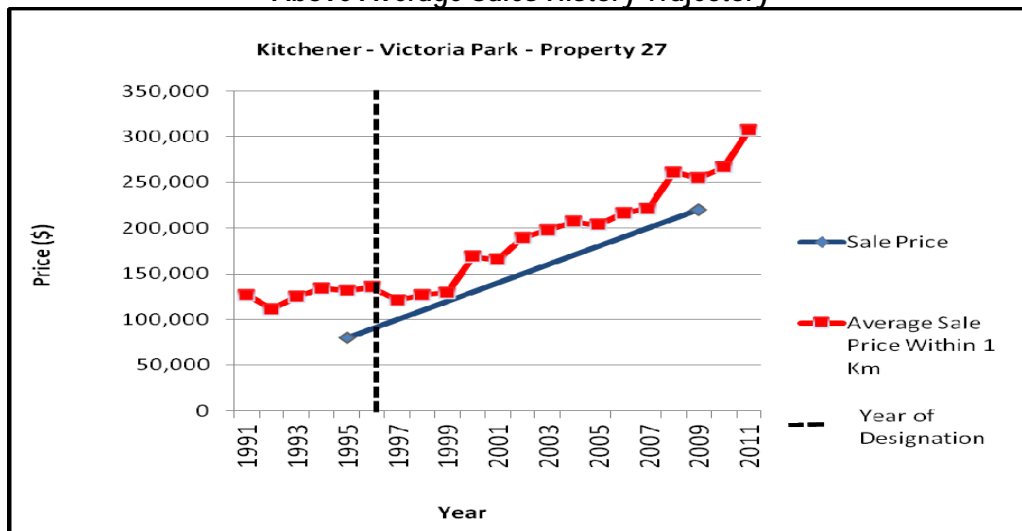
Impression Score				
Aggregate Score	2056	3115	66.53714584	3.3

Appendix F

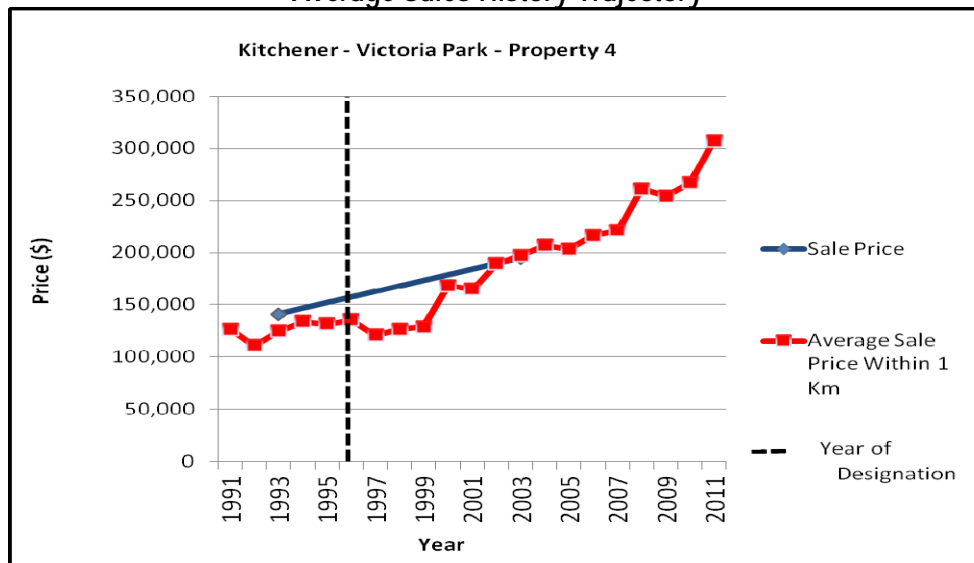
Real Estate Charts



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: Victoria Park
 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"> • Heritage Planner, handles alteration requests and inquiries • Coordinator, Cultural Heritage Planning • District resident
2. How did the HCD come about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated by the City, in part in response to the Centennial celebration of Victoria Park in 1996 • There was a push from the residents to designate the district
3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people accept and adhere (2) • Have active neighbourhood association and pride in neighbourhood due to beauty of housing stock and Victoria Park
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 (staff have delegated bylaw approval or Municipal Heritage Committee and/or Council reviews depending on scope of proposed alterations) (2) • Planning Applications (comment on planning applications in the area to ensure compatible with HCD)
5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications for alterations (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - application received by heritage planning staff - staff report prepared and recommendations made to Heritage Kitchener • Minor work is delegated to staff authority (2) • Major alterations (demolitions) (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - application process - report prepared - Heritage Kitchener makes recommendations - residents can protest Heritage Kitchener's decisions to Council • Council approves/rejects
6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual mail-out for City of Kitchener's grant program but relevant information to HCD residents can be added • Representative for each HCD sits on the Municipal Heritage Committee (typically a resident or property owner from the HCD) • Information on the district on the City's website
7. In your opinion, what are the issues that are unique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past concerns regarding length of time required for approving alteration requests has been improved with staff now having delegated bylaw approval • Work conducted on houses without permits are easy to identify as the district is located in close proximity to City Hall

<p>to the HCD and how have they been managed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge in managing the Park as a heritage attribute is in reinforcing its significance as a cultural heritage landscape and the significance of the Romantic Landscape style (every few years there are pressures to add a feature or make changes to the park) • Staff need to be diligent in defending the Plan as it is not overly restrictive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - requires united support from several municipal divisions including Planning, Community Services (Parks), etc. • Balancing higher density development with the conservation of existing lower rise buildings is a challenge
<p>8. What are similar non designated areas?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjacent neighbourhood to Victoria Park, east of Queen St. • Central Fredrick neighbourhood (east of Civic Centre HCD bounded by Fredrick St., Lancaster St. and Krug St.) have similar Victorian architecture and tree-lined streets (2)
<p>9. Other comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasingly getting calls from property owners advising they are having difficulty getting property insurance because their property is designated (Part IV and V) • Beginning to deal more with installation of solar panels on roof slopes. The VPHCD Plan is silent on the matter. Consequently, we are developing guidelines to assist in addressing this type of alteration.

