Heritage Districts Work!

Heritage Conservation District Study
Minto Park - City of Ottawa
2009
Heritage Conservation District Study 2009

Prepared By

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(North Waterloo and Hamilton Branches)

With the Assistance of

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The project was undertaken in support of the volunteer efforts of ACO branch presidents and members, Heritage Ottawa, members of the local Municipal Heritage Committees and interested citizens across Ontario. These dedicated volunteers surveyed residences in the Heritage Conservation Districts and provided energy and purpose to the project.

The efforts of the volunteers were assisted and coordinated through cooperation between the ACO and the Heritage Resources Centre (HRC) at the University of Waterloo. Professor Robert Shipley is the Director of the HRC. The Project Coordinator, report manager and principal volunteer facilitator was Kayla Jonas. Additional data collection and research analysis was conducted by Jason Kovacs, Beatrice Tam and Martha Fallis. Administration and help was also provided by Marg Rowell, Chelsey Tyers, Paul Dubniak and Kirsten Pries.

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A special thanks is owed to Bill Price for providing photographs for this report.

Thanks!
Minto Park Executive Summary

Introduction

- 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.
- 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.
- 32 districts designated in or before 1992 were examined.

Background of Minto Park Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Ottawa.
- Consists of 24 residential properties.
- The district was designated in 1988.

Study Approach

- Resident surveys were conducted door to door by volunteers from Heritage Ottawa.
- Land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation were conducted.
- Sales history trends were collected from GeoWarehouse™ and analyzed.
- Key stakeholders were interviewed.
- Data on requests for alterations was collected.

Analysis of Key Findings

- The district does not have clearly stated objectives.
- The assumed objective to conserve historic buildings has been met.
- 85% of the people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district.
- All of the properties in the district had average or above sales history trajectories.
- Properties in the district showed resistance to real estate market downturns.
- The district’s park has a community function and a clear purpose.
- Overall, the Minto Park Heritage Conservation District has been a successful planning initiative.

Recommendations

- Track alteration requests in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner.
- Implement a study to produce a Heritage Conservation District Plan that includes clear goals and 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

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 92 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.

With funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, volunteers from branches of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) and Historical Societies were assisted by the Heritage Resources Centre (HRC) at the University of Waterloo to undertake 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?

Since it takes a period of time for the impacts of district designation to manifest this study concentrated on examining districts that are well established. Applying the criterion of residential, commercial or mixed use areas designated in 1992 or before there were 32 HCDs that the study examined. These districts are found in or near the following areas: Cobourg, Hamilton, Kingston, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Huron County, Brampton, Toronto, Ottawa, the Region of Waterloo and Thunder Bay.

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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 which are part of the study are also evident.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical Distribution</th>
<th>Community Size</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Small Community</td>
<td>9 ~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>Medium Sized</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Large City</td>
<td>12 ~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Western</td>
<td>8 ~</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 5 of these districts make up the HCD known as Sandy Hill
~ 2 of these districts make up the HCD known as Goderich Square

**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 Minto Park Heritage Conservation District

2.1 Description of the District

The Minto Park Heritage Conservation District is found along Gilmour and Lewis Streets between Cartier and Elgin Streets in the City of Ottawa. The district consists of 24 residential properties and a park.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

According to the City of Ottawa, the cultural heritage value of the Minto Park Heritage Conservation District is:

"Minto Park was created following a petition from residents of Lewis and Gilmour Street to the City of Ottawa Board of Park Management. The City purchased the vacant land in 1898 from J.R. Booth and created Minto Square named after the newly arrived Governor General Lord Minto. Minto Square was designed as an ornamental park with interlacing half circles, trees and planting beds, to be enjoyed for its visual appeal rather than for active recreation. The buildings facing Minto Park, constructed between 1892 and 1906, comprise a coherent streetscape representing the changing architectural styles and building craftsmanship popular in Ottawa at the turn of the century. Alexander Garvock, a builder, was one of the first residents of Minto Park. He built two of the houses facing the park. The Church of Our Father, now Eglise Unie St-Marc, at the southwest corner of the park, was designed in 1900 for the Unitarian church by the architectural firm of Arnoldi and Ewart. Minto Park’s significant grouping of low scale residential buildings, exhibiting compatible stylistic attributes and surrounding a planned square, form a special place in the historic development of Ottawa."
2.3 Location of the District

Figure 2: Map of Minto Park Heritage Conservation District

2.3 Designation of the District

The designation of Minto Park was initiated by interested local citizens, who also carried out most of the research about the area. The Minto Park Heritage Conservation District is protected by By-law 142-88 which was passed on June 15, 1988 by the City of Ottawa.
3.0 Study Approach

3.1 Resident Surveys
Residents of the Minto 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 volunteers from Heritage Ottawa. Thirteen of 24 residents answered surveys, representing a 54.17% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Townscape Survey
A Townscape Survey of Minto Park was not conducted due to lack of resources.

3.3 Real Estate Data
Sales history trends for properties within each Heritage Conservation District 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 range were identified for individual district properties using GeoWarehouse™, an online subscription database commonly used by estate professionals.

Properties with more than one record of sale were plotted on graphs and compared with the average sales figures for non-designated properties. A number of sales property averages were obtained for each “non-designated area” within a 1 km radius from the district. The mean selling price for these property averages, which were also obtained through GeoWarehouse™, were calculated and plotted against each district unit sales record (see Appendix F). It was expected that the use of average sales prices from the immediate vicinity of a district as opposed to the use of city-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 an 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, etc.).

3.4 Key Stakeholder Interviews
People of who 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 Minto Park Heritage Conservation District. These interviews were conducted over the phone. Those interviewed included the current Heritage Planner, as well a past President of Heritage Ottawa. A summary of the responses is included in Appendix C. Interviewees are not identified in accordance with the University of Waterloo policy on research ethics.

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5The method for obtaining the average sales price for non-designated areas within the 1 km radius was adjusted according to the number of properties within a Heritage Conservation District. For example, to obtain figures on non-designated areas, average sales histories within a 1 km radius from the largest districts (201-600 properties) were obtained using every fiftieth district property as a basis for calculating each area sales record. The mean average of these sales records were subsequently calculated and used as the comparative sales history trend on each graph. Every fifth, tenth, and twenty-fifth property were used to find the immediate average sales histories within a 1 km radius for smaller districts with 1-10, 11-100 and 101-200 properties respectively.
3.5 Requests for Alterations

With respect to the requests for alterations within the Heritage Conservation Districts, 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 Minto Park Heritage Conservation District, the information about the number of applications for alterations and their time for approval was not available due to the fact that there have been no recent applications.
4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

The Minto Park Heritage Conservation District does not have a Plan with clearly stated goals or objectives to measure the progress of the site over time.

It can be assumed that the goal of the district was to conserve the historic buildings within its boundaries. Responses in the resident surveys mention sympathetic infill and long term gain in relation to the assets in the district. There were no negative comments about the attractiveness of the district (see Figure 3). The stakeholders also expressed that the district is well accepted and did not mention any issues with the character of the area. The implied objective to conserve the area’s historic buildings seems to have been met.

4.2 Are people content?

Two questions in the resident survey addressed people’s contentment with living in the district. Of the three people surveyed who lived in the area before the designation, all three felt positive about the implementation of the district. Now, 11 of 13 (85%) of people are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district. Two people are ambivalent about living in the district, but no one expressed dissatisfaction. Two people commented that they “love the street”. Clearly people are positively inclined to living in the district.

4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

Of the residents surveyed five people said they had made requests for alterations. Of these two were approved within one to three months. Three applications were denied. The records from the City of Ottawa showed no recent applications from the Minto Park Heritage Conservation District.

4.4 Have property values been impacted?

According to the resident surveys ten of 13 people, or 91%, surveyed though that the designation had positively affected the value of their property. No one thought that the designation would lower their values.

The data from GeoWarehouse™ indicated that six of 24 properties had sales histories. Of these six properties two had above average sales value increases (see Figure 4). The remaining four properties had average sales history trajectories. None of the properties performed below average.

Two 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.
4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

a) Community Park

The Minto Park Heritage Conservation District is organized around a community Park (see Figure 5). According to one of the stakeholders, this park has been given new purpose by the introduction of a memorial to women who lost their lives as a result of domestic abuse. This memorial was a City of Ottawa initiative. Other districts in this study which contains parks have some conflict over the use of the park by various groups. However, this is not the case in Minto Park. There are no issues with the use of the park which might be a result of the fact that it is a community park that does not attract people, and that it has a clear purpose in the form of the memorial.

Figure 4: Above Average Sale History Trajectory

Figure 5: Centrally located park in Minto Park district
5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

- The district does not have clearly stated objectives
- The assumed objective to conserve historic buildings has been met
- 85% of the people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- All of the properties in the district had average or above sales history trajectories
- Properties in the district showed resistance to real estate market downturns
- The district’s park has a community function and a clear purpose

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

5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district are areas for improvement:

- Track alteration requests in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Implement a study to produce a Heritage Conservation District Plan that includes clear goals and objectives
Appendices
Appendix A

Tabular Results of Resident Surveys
1. Are you the owner or tenant of this property?

Responses 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Tenant-Commercial</th>
<th>Tenant – Residential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>61.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Responses 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Responses 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Mixed Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Responses 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. What is your understanding of how the HCD works?

Responses: 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preserve</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrict</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streetscape manage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Residents could provide more than one answer to question 6*

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

Responses: 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>77.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Responses: 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.00%</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Responses: 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over 5 months</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 5 months</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 3 months</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 month</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not long</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Overall, how satisfied are you with living in a HCD?

Responses 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Score out of 5</th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Do not Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>46.15</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Responses 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Score out of 5</th>
<th>Increased a Lot</th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>No Impact</th>
<th>Lowered</th>
<th>Lowered a lot</th>
<th>Do not Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counts</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>90.91</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Responses 13

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, easier</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, harder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Comments

**Additional Comments:** sympathetic infill was done before the owner bought the property (1), designation is a double edged sword (1), changes increase costs (1), long term asset it is an advantage but short term it is a pain (1), positively inclined to the idea (1), love the neighbourhood (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Rate</td>
<td>54.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Real Estate Data
Ottawa - Minto Park - Property 1

Ottawa - Minto Park - Property 2

Ottawa - Minto Park - Property 3
Ottawa - Minto Park - Property 4

Price ($) vs. Year

Sale Price
Average Sale Price within 1 km
Year of Designation

Ottawa - Minto Park - Property 5

Price ($) vs. Year

Sale Price
Average Sale Price within 1 km
Year of Designation

Ottawa - Minto Park - Property 6

Price ($) vs. Year

Sale Price
Average Sale Price within 1 km
Year of Designation
Appendix

Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Summary of Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. How are you involved in the HCD? | - Past President of Heritage Ottawa – advocate for heritage and make sure guidelines are met by city, politicians and developers (1)  
- Heritage Planner (1) |
| 2. How did the HCD come about? | - Combination of both city and citizens (1)  
- Shortly after the passing of the Ontario Heritage Act there was a lot of enthusiasm because of losses prior to the OHA (1)  
- Research by the community (1) |
| 3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted? | - Individual homeowner awareness – people are proud of doing good things with buildings (1)  
- People who do not know about HCDs are the ones that feel threatened (1)  
- Some people think “big brother” city is telling you what to do (1)  
- Taken as a given (1) |
| 4. In your experience what are the HCD management processes in place and how do they work? | - Works (1)  
- Applications for alterations (1)  
- Grant program – restoration of original elements (2)  
  - Carrots are important to get good work  
  - 30 properties a year in the City  
- Zoning by-law – heritage overlay (1)  
- Culture within the department – city wide database, as well – things that are suppose to go to LACAC do (1)  
- Heritage Ottawa has set up a network of neighbourhood heritage keepers (10-12) to be the eyes and ears in the community – will go to workshops (1)  
- Community buy in works exceedingly well (1)  
- Communities aware of what they want and increasing knowledge of the processes have resulted in successfully fighting development (2) |
| 5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations? | - LACAC or City staff approves (2)  
- A lot goes on behind the scenes – outrageous things do not see the light of day (2)  
- Approve more than are not approved (2)  
- Building permit are taken to city wide Client Service Centre’s where a database flags heritage (Part IV, V or heritage interest) (1)  
- If the change is significant it goes to the Municipal Heritage Committee for review, with a report prepared by staff (2)  
- If the change is not significant then the staff approve and provide advice (2)  
- Deal a lot less with regulations, than with discussions (2) |
| 6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD? | - Mostly through the media (1)  
- Plaques and websites (1) |
7. **In your opinion, what are the issues that are unique to the HCD and how have they been managed?**

- 3 blocks with park (1)
  - City put in a memorial to fallen women in the corner of the park (City initiative)
  - This memorial has given a new purpose
- No tax relief program – Politicians have indicated this will not happen due to the distribution of the HCDs in the downtown area – outlying areas would be upset (1)
- City only has two heritage planners, they can barely react to things (1)

8. **What are similar non designated areas?**

- Minto Park is surrounded by HCDs (2)
- Area west (Cartier, Catherine Street) (1)

9. **Other comments**

- Worried about intensification because there are not a lot of champions – what type of intensification is appropriate? (1)