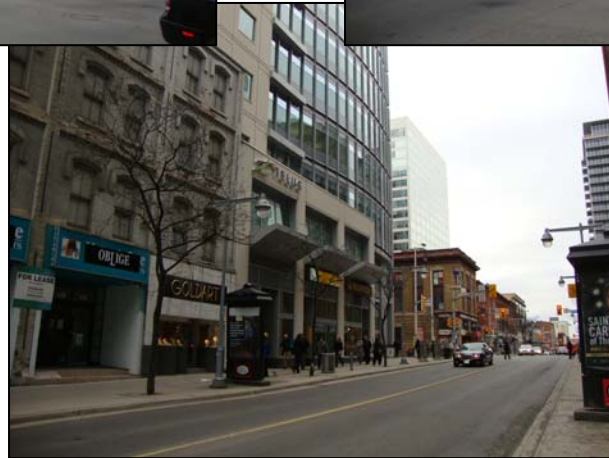


# Heritage Conservation District Study

## Bank Street Heritage Conservation District City of Ottawa



# 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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DE L'ONTARIO

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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 Bank Street Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Ottawa
- Consists of 22 commercial properties
- District was designated in 2000
- Plan was written by Polymath Planning and Design as well as Baird/Sampson/Neuert Architects

## Study Approach

- Resident surveys were conducted door-to-door by HRC staff
- 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:
  - Improvement and maintenance of the pedestrian environment
- The following objectives of the district plan have been less successful:
  - Preservation and maintenance of architecture with historic and artistic value
  - Encouragement of new development that fits and suits its settings
- 75% of people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with having business in the district
- There is one above average sales history in the district
- Information on applications for alterations were inconclusive
- Overall, the Bank Street Heritage Conservation District has been a successful planning initiative

## Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Educate tenants and Council about the district

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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.

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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

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 Bank Street Heritage Conservation District

### 2.1 Description of the District

The Bank Street Heritage Conservation District is located in downtown Ottawa. It runs along Bank Street between Albert Street and Gloucester Street. It consists of 22 commercial buildings.

### 2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Heritage Precincts portion of the Plan describes the heritage character as follows:

Bank Street is the commercial spine of central Ottawa, linking Uppertown and the Hill to the historic residential neighbourhoods dozens of blocks southwards, and remains an important local transit and pedestrian route. The City has already recognized its heritage value as the spine of the heritage conservation district in Centretown, immediately to the south" (p. 155).

### 2.3 Location of the District

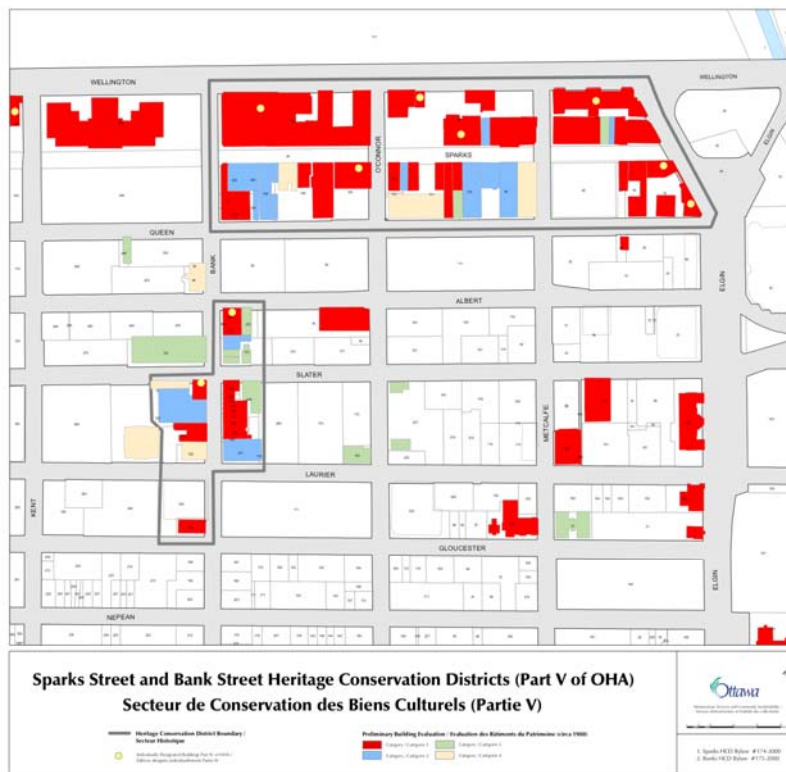


Figure 2: Map of Bank Street Heritage Conservation District.



## 2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of Bank Street Heritage Conservation District was initiated by the City, who had a longstanding desire to establish districts in the downtown core.

The Central Area West Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan was completed in 1999 by Polymath Planning & Design as well as Baird/Sampson/Neuert Architects. In this plan they recommended the designation of two districts, Sparks Street and Bank Street. The Bank Street Heritage Conservation District is protected by By-law 174-2000, which was passed in 2000 by the City of Ottawa.

## 3.0 Study Approach

### 3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Bank Street 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 HRC staff. Eight of 22 residents answered surveys, representing a 36.3% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

### 3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Bank Street was conducted in March 2012. 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 Bank Street (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 four 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 Bank Street Heritage Conservation District. Both interviews were conducted over the phone. Those interviewed included a Heritage Planner for the City of Ottawa, and a past member of the Heritage Advisory Committee. 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 Bank Street 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 goals of the district are:

*a) The preservation and maintenance of architecture with historic and artistic value*

The objective to preserve and maintain heritage buildings and structures has not been met. The Townscape Survey shows that conserved elements, detailed maintenance and quality of conservation work all scored low. There is also dereliction and neglected historic features. This means that visually the area is not being well maintained and historic elements and buildings are not being conserved.

*b) Encouragement of new development that fits and suits its settings*

The goal to ensure compatible infill and alterations has not been successful. The score for façade quality, quality of new development and coherence in the Townscape Survey are all very low. These scores indicate new development in the district is not compatible with the existing historic streetscape, and that the storefronts are out of place.

*c) Improvement and maintenance of the pedestrian environment*

The goal to improve and maintain a pedestrian environment has been met. In the Townscape Survey, pedestrian friendliness, floorscape quality, legality, street furniture and resting places, all signs of a good pedestrian environment, scored moderately well.

### 4.2 Are people content?

Currently, most people are commercial tenants, with only one third having some understanding of the heritage district. However, six of eight people are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district. This represents a 75% satisfaction rate. Two people stated they were dissatisfied with the district.

### 4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

Most of the respondents were tenants and as such have not applied for building alterations themselves. The records from the City of Ottawa were not available.

### 4.4 Have property values been impacted?

The data from GeoWarehouse indicated that there was only one sale in the district. The one property that was sold performed above average compared to the surrounding area.

This sales history correlates with the beliefs of the commercial tenants, of which three of four respondents believed the designation would increase the value of the properties.

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

*a) Education*

According to one of the interviewees, the district is not taken seriously by the Planning Department or Council. The lack of knowledge about the district by the tenants is also a sign that the city, and local tenants need to be educated about the district.

# 5.0 Conclusions

## 5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
  - Improvement and maintenance of the pedestrian environment
- The following objectives of the district plan have been less successful:
  - Preservation and maintenance of architecture with historic and artistic value
  - Encouragement of new development that fits and suits its settings
- 75% of people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with having business in the district
- There are one above average sales histories in the district
- Information on applications for alterations were inconclusive

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

## 5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Educate tenants and Council about the district

# Appendices

# Appendix A

## Tabular Results of Resident Surveys



Heritage Conservation District Name: Bank Street

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

Responses

	Owner	Tenant-Commercial	Tenant - Residential
Counts	1	7	0
Percentage	12.50	87.50	0.00

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	3	5
Percentage	37.50	62.50

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

Responses

	Before	After
Counts	2	0
Percentage	100.00	0.00

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

Responses

Positive	0
Negative	0
Neutral	0
Mixed Feelings	0

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	0	0
Percentage	0.00	0.00

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

Responses

Can't Demolish	1
No knowledge	3
Heard of, but no specific knowledge	1
Regulation	0
Preserve Buildings	2
Approval needed for changes	1

**Additional Comments:**

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	0	5
Percentage	0.00	100.00

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	0	0
Percentage	0.00	0.00

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

Responses

Over 5 months	0
4 to 5 months	0
1 to 3 months	0
Less than 1 month	0
Not long	0

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	3.75	3	3	0	1	1	0
Percentage		37.50	37.50	0.00	12.50	12.50	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	2.13	2	1	1	0	0	4
Percentage		25.00	12.50	12.50	0.00	0.00	50.00

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

Responses

No	1
Yes	1
Yes, easier	3
Yes, harder	0
Don't know	2
Maybe	1

13. Comments

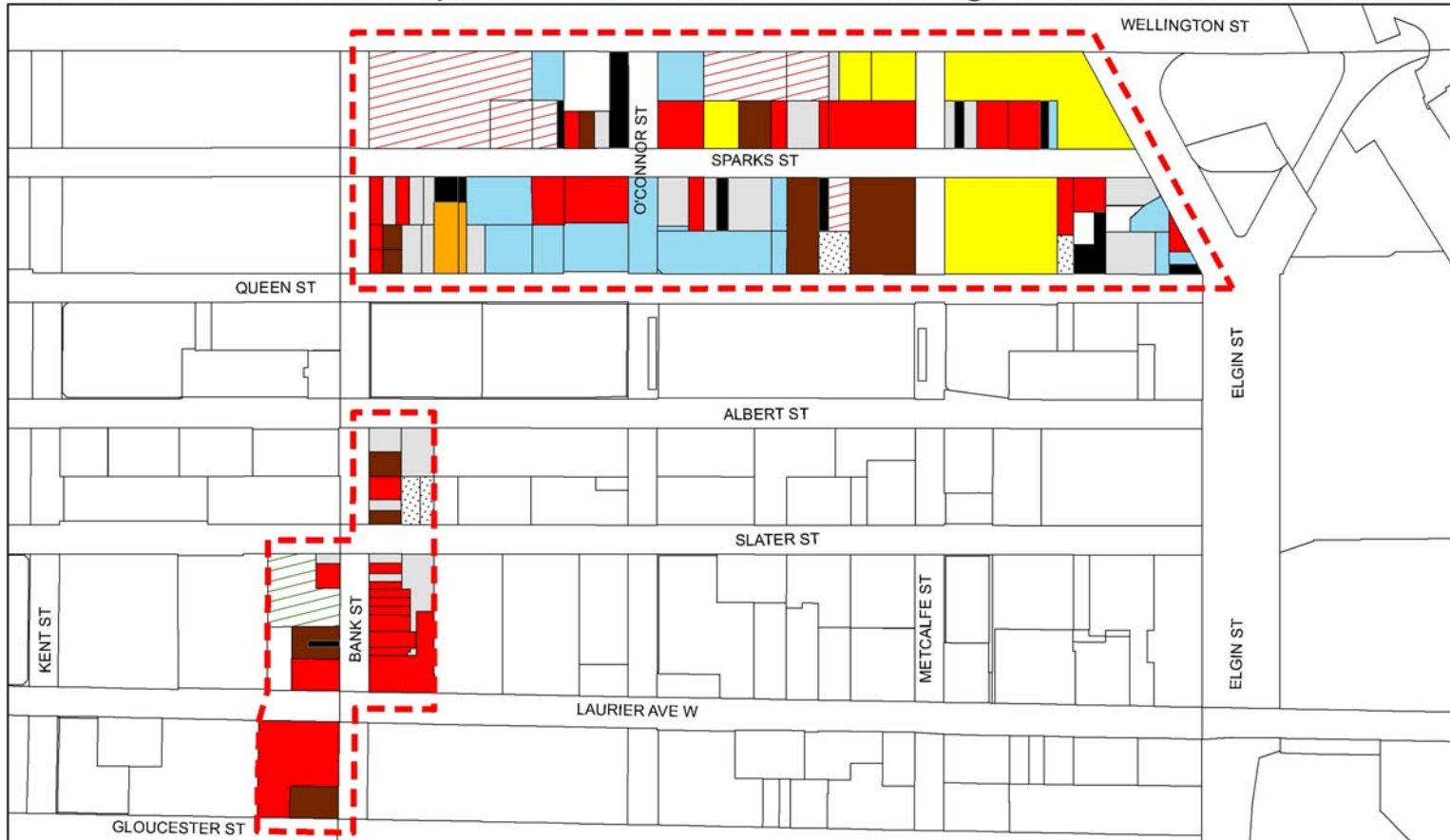
**Additional Comments:** Will likely make window restoration in the future, buildings in the area are rundown and not as nice a Montreal, don't feel safe, can't see why the area is designated as its not an attractive area

Total Population	22
Participants	8
Participation Rate	36.36363636

# Appendix B

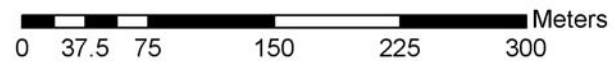
## Land Use Maps

# Ground Level Land Use in Sparks Street and Bank Street Heritage Conservation Districts, Ottawa



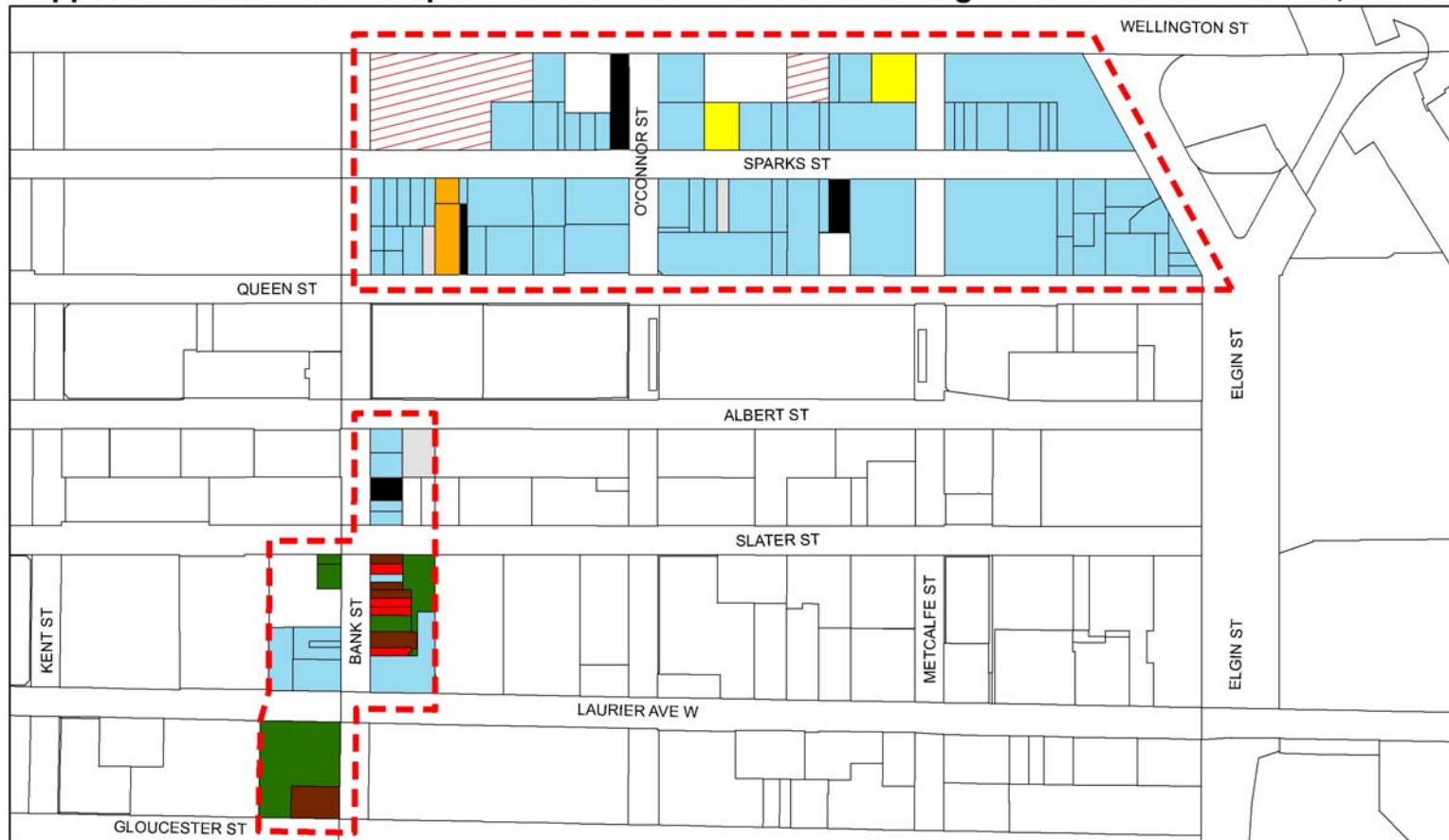
## Legend

- |                          |                       |                          |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 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                |                          |



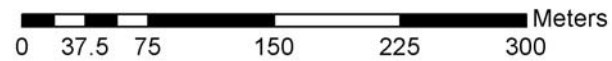
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 August 10, 2011  
 Data provider: Teranet Inc., modification by the HRC  
 Coordinate system NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone\_18N

# Upper Level Land Use in Sparks Street and Bank Street Heritage Conservation Districts, Ottawa



## 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\_18N

# Appendix C

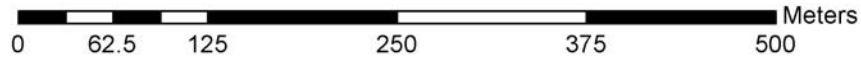
## Map of Views

## Views in Sparks Street and Bank Street Heritage Conservation Districts, Ottawa



### Legend

- Viewpoints**
- HCD Boundary
  - Bank Street
  - Sparks Street
  - Not in HCD
  - In HCD
- Viewlines**
- Bank Street
  - Sparks Street



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Appendix D  
Photographs of Views



View 1



View 2

