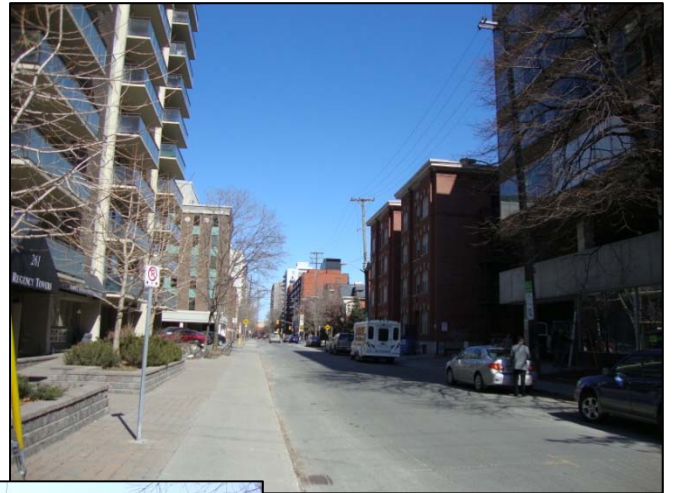


# Heritage Conservation District Study

## Centretown 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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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 Centretown West Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Ottawa
- Consists of approximately 1370 residential, institutional and commercial properties
- District was designated in 1997
- Plan was written by Julian Smith & Associates, Margaret Carter, Joann Latremouille, Mary Fought, Jane Ironside and Kevin Deevey

## Study Approach

- Resident surveys were conducted by local volunteers
- Land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation was conducted
- Sales history trends were not collected from GeoWarehouse and analyzed
- Key stakeholders were interviewed
- Applications for alterations were not collected

## Analysis of Key Findings

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
  - Encourage the conservation and maintenance of existing historic fabric
- The following objectives of the district plan have been less successful:
  - Encouragement of new development that is complementary
- Resident surveys were inconclusive regarding satisfaction in the district
- Information on the property values and applications for alterations was not available
- Overall, it is difficult to determine the success of the Centretown Heritage Conservation District

## Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Produce a list of addresses for the district that is easily accessible
- Boundaries should be re-examined to determine if community perception still acknowledges the area as a whole or if smaller districts would be more effective



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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 Centretown Heritage Conservation District

### 2.1 Description of the District

The Centretown Heritage Conservation District is bounded by Elgin Street, Kent Street, Lisgar Street and Argyle Street. It consists of approximately 1370 residential, commercial and institutional buildings.

### 2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Canadian Register at [www.historicplaces.ca](http://www.historicplaces.ca) describes the heritage character as follows:

The Centretown Heritage Conservation District has close associations with the governmental character of Uppertown to the north and developed as a desirable neighbourhood for the transient population of government workers and ministers. Centretown still contains a large variety of relatively intact historic streetscapes, reflecting the diverse nature of development that occurred in the area in order to serve the varied population. Throughout its development, the area reflected national politics and priorities of the time.

The majority of buildings within the Centretown Heritage Conservation District date from the 1890-1914 period. This was a period of mature design and craftsmanship in the Ottawa area, related to the new prosperity of the expanding national capital and the availability of excellent building materials such as smooth face brick of Rideau red clay, a good selection of sandstones and limestones, a full range of milled architectural wood products, and decorative components in terra cotta, wrought iron and pressed metal.

The dominant character of Centretown remains heritage residential. While most buildings retain their residential use, many others have been converted for use as professional offices, or small retail or commercial establishments. The most common residential building type is the hip-roofed single family home, with a projecting gabled bay on an asymmetrical façade. Flat roofed, medium density apartment buildings also play a strong role in defining the character of the District. Also, a few commercial corridors, most notably Bank street, run through the area while still reflecting the low scale and architectural character of the rest of the district.

Centretown's landscape is unified by historical circumstance. Both Stewarton and the By Estate opened for development in the mid 1870s and developed under consistent pressures. Together they constituted the entire area within the boundaries of Centretown. The idea of a separate residential neighbourhood close to downtown was relatively rare, although the concept became increasingly popular in Canadian cities as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Along with residential Uppertown, Centretown has provided walk-to-work accommodation for Parliament Hill and nearby government offices. As part of the residential quarter of official Ottawa, Centretown was a sensitive mirror of national politics.

Centretown is the surviving residential community and informal meeting ground associated with Parliament Hill. Its residents have had an immense impact upon the development of Canada as a nation. While Canada's official business was conducted around Parliament Hill, its Members of Parliament and civil service lived and met in the area immediately south. Centretown is ripe with evidence of behind-the-scenes politics, of the dedication, talent and character that have formed Canada.

### 2.3 Location of the District

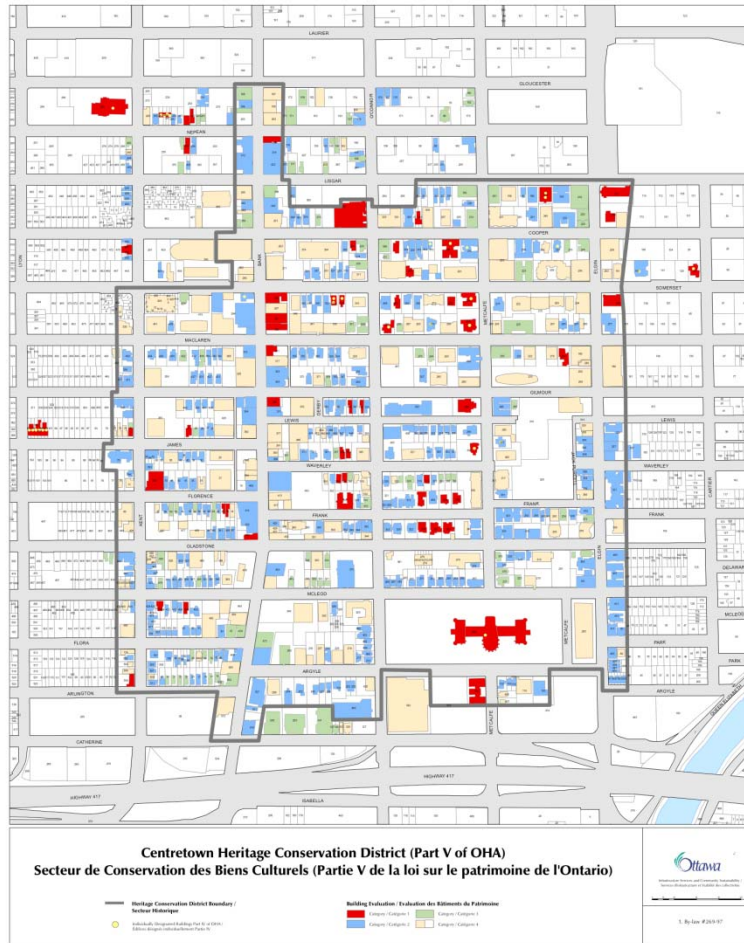


Figure 2: Map of Centretown Heritage Conservation District.

### 2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of Centretown Heritage Conservation District resulted from a planning exercise carried out by heritage planners at the City of Ottawa.

The Centretown Heritage Conservation District Study was completed in 1996-1997 by Julian Smith & Associates, Margaret Carter, Joann Latremouille, Mary Faught, Jane Ironside and Kevin Deevey. The Centretown Heritage Conservation District is protected by Bylaw 269-97, which was passed in 1997 by the City of Ottawa.

# Study Approach

## 3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Centretown 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 local volunteers. Due to the large size of the district a sample of the addresses were surveyed. Only 37 of 240 residents answered surveys, representing a 15.4% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A..

## 3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Centretown 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 Centretown (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 56 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 Centretown 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 F. 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?

Information regarding the number of applications for alterations received and the time it took to issue approvals was not available for the Centretown Heritage Conservation District.

## 3.0 Analysis of Key Findings

### 4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

The district plan does not outline specific objectives. However, as a district, the assumed objective is to conserve the existing historic fabric.

#### *a) Encourage the conservation and maintenance of existing historic fabric.*

The objective to preserve and maintain the existing historic fabric has been met. The Townscape Survey shows that conserved elements and quality of conservation work scored high. There is also few neglected historic features. This means that visually the area is being well maintained and historic elements and buildings are being conserved. However, the quality of new development, façade quality and coherence all scored low. So although the existing historic fabric is being maintained, new building construction is not consistent with the existing character.

### 4.2 Are people content?

Residents were asked two questions related to satisfaction. First respondents were asked if they lived in the area when it was designated. Only four people lived in the area at the time of designation. Of these, three of the four respondents felt positive about the designation.

Currently, seven of 25 respondents feel very satisfied with living in the district. Another eight people are satisfied with living in the district, three people are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and only one person is dissatisfied. Six people stated they did not know how they felt about living in the district

Although it appears most people feel positive and are satisfied with the district, the low response rate leads to inconclusive results.

### 4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

During the door-to-door survey only seven people indicated they had applied for applications for alterations. Six of seven applications were approved. Three of these people did not know long the applications took to be approved. One person indicated it took four-to-five months, and one more stated it took over five months. The records from the City of Ottawa were not available. Due to the lack of data the results are inconclusive.

### 4.4 Have property values been impacted?

The data from GeoWarehouse was not available as the list of property addresses was not provided in time for analysis.

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

#### *a) Development*

According to the interviews, the district is very large and is a patchwork of heritage areas and new development. This also comes across in the Townscape survey as factors such as coherence and quality of new development scored very low. The character of the area is not being clearly conveyed to residents as 11 of 20 respondents did not know they lived in a district, and the

Townscape survey shows virtually no historic reference or place name. It appears the large and mixed nature of the district is compromising the acknowledgment of the existing heritage. This issue might be addressed through stronger controls, as suggested in the interviews, or the splitting of this district into several smaller areas with clearer heritage character. This was one of the options suggested in the district study, although it was dismissed due to the community's perception of the area as a whole. However, the interviews and limited surveys suggest that this perception might be changing and could be re-examined.

# 5.0 Conclusions

## 5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
  - Encourage the conservation and maintenance of existing historic fabric
- The following objectives of the district plan have been less successful:
  - Encouragement of new development that is complementary
- Resident surveys were inconclusive regarding satisfaction in the district
- Information on the property values and applications for alterations were not available
- Overall, it is difficult to determine the success of the Centertown Heritage Conservation District

## 5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district represent areas for improvement:

- Track applications for alterations in a comprehensive and easily accessible manner
- Produce a list of addresses for the district that is easily accessible
- Boundaries should be re-examined to determine if community perception still acknowledges the area as a whole or if smaller districts would be more effective

# Appendices

# Appendix A

## Resident Surveys



Heritage Conservation District Name: Centretown

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

Responses

	Owner	Tenant-Commercial	Tenant - Residential
Counts	9	21	7
Percentage	24.32	56.76	18.92

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	9	11
Percentage	45.00	55.00

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

Responses

	Before	After
Counts	6	9
Percentage	40.00	60.00

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

Responses

Positive	3
Negative	0
Neutral	0
Don't Know	1

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	1	7
Percentage	12.50	87.50

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

Responses

Preservation	11
Restriction	3
No understanding	14
Good understanding	4

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	7	10
Percentage	41.18	58.82

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	6	1
Percentage	85.71	14.29

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

Responses

Over 5 months	1
4 to 5 months	1
1 to 3 months	0
Less than 1 month	0
Don't Know	3

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	3.12	7	8	3	1	0	6
Percentage		28.00	32.00	12.00	4.00	0.00	24.00

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	1.70	1	4	3	1	2	9
Percentage		5.00	20.00	15.00	5.00	10.00	45.00

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

Responses

No	6
Yes	0
Yes, easier	2
Yes, harder	0
Don't know	6
Maybe	3

13. Comments

Seedy around this area (1); doesn't want bike lane (1); really likes old houses (1); enforcement compliance an issue (1); unfair to those who apply for permits (1); building a draw for business, trendy area (2); higher taxes (2); expensive area (1); don't own building, office prepares plans (2)

Total Population	240
Participants	37
Participation Rate	15.41666667

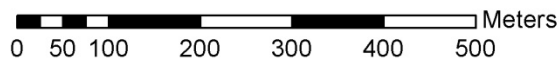
**Appendix B**  
**Land Use Map**

# Ground Level Land Use in Centretown Heritage Conservation District, 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 - DS) | Warehouse / Storage      |
| Leisure                  | Retail                |                          |



Heritage Resources Centre  
June 23, 2011  
Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone18N



## Upper Level Land Use in Centretown Heritage Conservation District, 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	



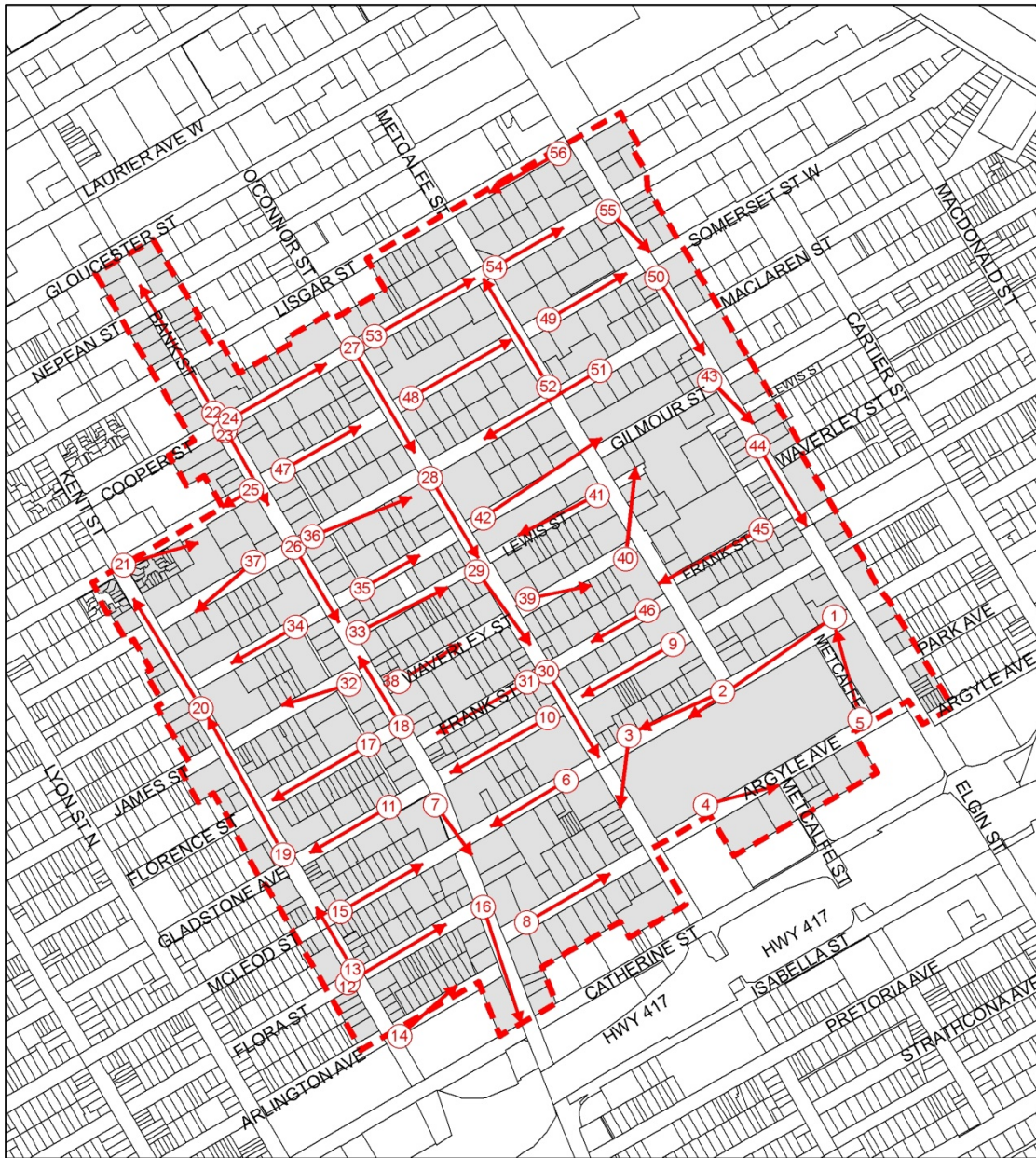
Heritage Resources Centre  
June 23, 2011  
Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone18N



# Appendix C

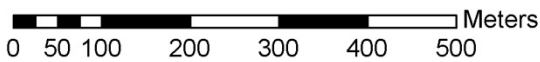
## Map of Views

# Views in Centretown Heritage Conservation District, Ottawa



## Legend

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



Heritage Resources Centre  
 June 23, 2011  
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.  
 Coordinate system: NAD\_1983\_UTM\_Zone18N

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



View 28



View 29



View 30





View 31



View 32



View 33



View 34



View 35



View 36





View 37



View 38



View 39



View 40



View 41



View 42





View 43



View 44



View 45



View 46



View 47



View 48





View 49



View 50



View 51



View 52



View 53



View 54



View 55



View 56

## Appendix E

### Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

<b>A. Streetscape Quality</b>				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
A1-Pedestrian friendly	151.5	275	55.09	2.8
A2-Cleanliness	151.5	280	54.11	2.7
A3-Coherence	151.5	280	54.11	2.7
A4-Edgefeature Quality	175.5	280	62.68	3.1
A5-Floorscape Quality	153	280	54.64	2.7
A6-Legibility	183	280	65.36	3.3
A7-Sense of Threat	135.5	265	51.13	2.6
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	158	280	56.43	2.8
A9-Planting: Public	73.5	130	56.54	2.8
A10-Vitality	158	280	56.43	2.8
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	167	280	59.64	3.0
A12-Signage	180	255	70.59	3.5
A13-Street Furniture Quality	169.5	275	61.64	3.1
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	162	270	60.00	3.0
<b>SUM A</b>	2169.5	3710	58.48	2.9

<b>B. Private Space in View</b>				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	84.5	205	41.22	2.1
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	201.5	275	73.27	3.7
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	185	280	66.07	3.3
B18-Facade Quality	161.5	280	57.68	2.9
B19-Planting Private	109.5	195	56.15	2.8
<b>SUM B</b>	742	1235	60.08	3.0

<b>C. Heritage in View</b>				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	192.5	250	77.00	3.9
C21-Historic Reference Seen	60	280	21.43	1.1
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	56	280	20.00	1.0
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	179.5	245	73.27	3.7
C24-Quality of New Development	93	235	39.57	2.0
C25-Neglected Historic Features	182.5	250	73.00	3.7
<b>SUM C</b>	763.5	1540	49.58	2.5

<b>Impression Score</b>				
<b>Aggregate Score</b>	<b>3675</b>	<b>6485</b>	<b>56.05</b>	<b>2.4</b>

## Appendix F

### Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews



Heritage Conservation District Name: Centretown

Month(s) of Interviews: 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"><li>• Past Chair of Ottawa's Built Heritage Advisory Committee (OBHAC)</li><li>• Board member of Heritage Ottawa, a non-profit advocacy group</li><li>• Coordinator of Heritage Planning</li></ul>
2. How did the HCD come about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initial impetus came from a planning exercise (offshoot of the Centretown Community Plan)</li><li>• Recommendation started in the late 1970s with a neighbourhood plan and led to a desire to do a comprehensive study of the area</li><li>• Strong community desire for designation</li></ul>
3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Not well accepted</li><li>• Seen a great deal of insensitive development as developers impose their will on the area</li><li>• Accepted by the general public but some push back from owners wanting to develop their properties in a manner inconsistent with the intentions of the district designation</li></ul>
4. In your experience what are the HCD management processes in place and how do they work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Heritage planning staff and OBHAC review applications</li><li>• Staff has a lot of discretion in making approvals due to limited resources and abundance of protected properties in the City</li><li>• Applications for alterations are required and dealt with through the Building Permit process (2)</li><li>• Some management undertaken through the City's Heritage Grant Program</li></ul>
5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building Permit process utilized</li><li>• All designated and listed properties are flagged in a database and tiered based on level of protection, when an application comes in staff know how to address the scope of work</li><li>• Small scale (minor) alterations are dealt with by staff (2)</li><li>• Larger scale heritage applications are addressed through pre-consultation (2)</li><li>• City staff prepare a report that is sent on to the Built Heritage Advisory Committee, Planning Committee and finally Council who accepts/rejects application (2)</li></ul>
6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City circulates notification letters to districts, surrounding communities and Heritage Ottawa when applications and designation requests are received</li><li>• Communication through the local heritage sub-committee (2)</li></ul>
7. In your opinion, what are the issues that are unique to the HCD and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Very large patchwork district</li><li>• Many of the properties are not heritage worthy</li><li>• Great deal of new development included in the district</li><li>• Attempts to de-designate parts of the district are anticipated</li><li>• Represents a transitional area in the city</li></ul>

<p>how have they been managed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City has not taken a firm stand on controlling development in the area and enforcing zoning to preserve lower scale buildings</li> </ul>
<p>8. What are similar non designated areas?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hintonburg (west of Centretown, across the train tracks)</li> <li>• Old Ottawa South</li> <li>• Parts of the Glebe</li> </ul>
<p>9. Other comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to designation before the amendments to the 2005 <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> guidelines are unclear as no formal plan was created</li> </ul>