

Heritage Conservation District Study

Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District Town of Cobourg



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Prepared for
The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

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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 Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the Town of Cobourg
- Consists of 67, mostly residential, properties
- District was designated in 1990

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
- Applications for alterations were examined

Analysis of Key Findings

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - To preserve heritage buildings
 - To preserve original features
- 95% people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Information about applications for alterations indicate most applications are approved in less than three months
- Sales histories indicate there is no affect from designation
- Overall, the Cobourg East 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
- Ensure that housing stock diversity is considered in applications for alterations

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Heritage Act and Designation
- 1.2 Rationale for Heritage Conservation District Study

2.0 Background of Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District

- 2.1 Description of the District
- 2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District
- 2.3 Location of the District
- 2.4 Designation of the District

3.0 Study Approach

- 3.1 Resident Surveys
- 3.2 Townscape Survey
- 3.3 Real Estate Data
- 3.4 Key Stakeholder Interviews
- 3.5 Requests for Alterations

4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

- 4.1 Have the goals been met?
- 4.2 Are people content?
- 4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?
- 4.4 Have property values been impacted?
- 4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 Conclusions
- 5.2 Recommendations

Appendices

- A- Tabular Results of Resident Surveys
- B- Land Use Maps
- C- Map of Views
- D- Photographs of Views
- E- Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma
- F- Real Estate Data
- G- Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews
- H- Applications for Alterations

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 Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District

2.1 Description of the District

The Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District is located in the Town of Cobourg. It runs along College and Church Streets between Perry Street and Monroe Street. The District consists of 67 buildings, most are residential but also include a public building and recreational areas.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Heritage Conservation District Plan does not describe the heritage character.

2.3 Location of the District

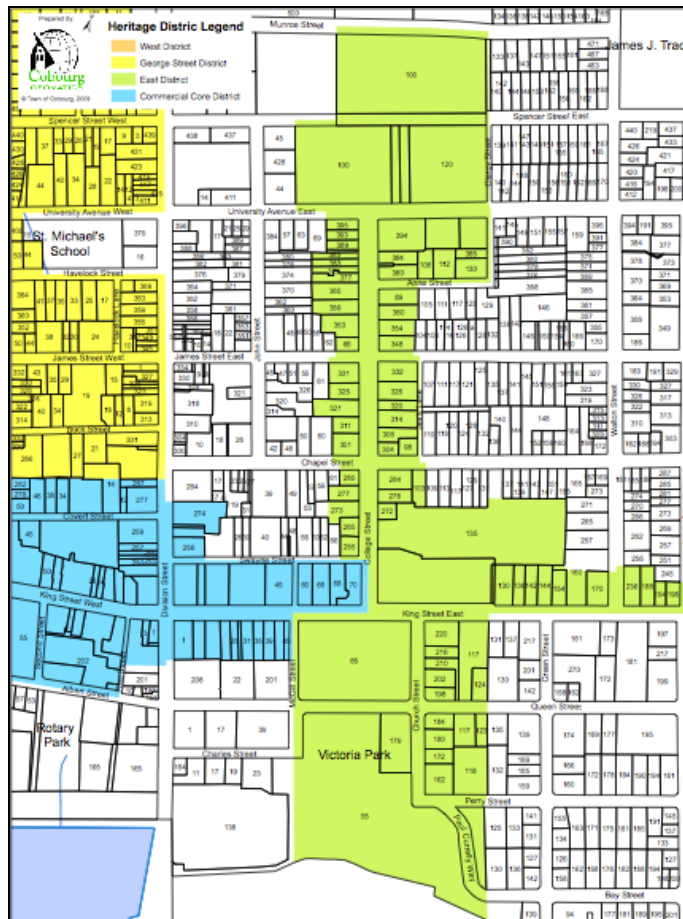


Figure 2: Map of Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District.

2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District was initiated by the Town of Cobourg. Initially Cobourg staff intended to designate the whole town, but it was found to be too large of an area to study. The Cobourg East district was one of the smaller areas identified. The Heritage Conservation District was designated in 1990.

3.0 Study Approach

3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Cobourg West 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. Twenty-two of the 67 residents answered surveys, representing a 32.8% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Cobourg East was conducted in September 2011. The purpose of this survey is to provide an objective way to evaluate streetscapes. There are two elements to the survey; land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation. Land use maps, which represent the current use of buildings in the district, were produced for Cobourg East (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 13 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 Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District. Both interviews were conducted over the phone. Those interviewed included a Planner for the Town of Cobourg, and a former member of the LACAC 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 Cobourg East Heritage Conservation District, the information regarding the number of applications for alterations was available from the Town of Cobourg, however no information about the time it took to receive approvals was available.

4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

The district has two goals:

a) To preserve heritage buildings.

The objective to preserve heritage buildings has been met. The Townscape Survey shows that conserved elements, detailed maintenance and quality of conservation work all scored well. This means that visually the area is well maintained and historic elements and buildings have been conserved (Figure 3).

b) To preserve original features.

The objective to preserve original features has been met. The Townscape Survey shows that there is no dereliction and few neglected historic features. Quality of conservation work also scored well, indicating that original features are being restored to a high standard.



Figure 3: Well maintained and preserved buildings in Cobourg East.

4.2 Are people content?

Two questions in the resident survey addressed people's contentment with living in the district. Ten respondents lived in the area before it was designated. Only four people felt positive about the district at the time of designation, four were neutral, one felt negative and one person expressed mixed feelings. The feeling in the district at the time of designation was mixed. Thirteen people moved to the area after it was designated. Of the ten people who responded all of them stated that the designation did not effect their decision to move to the area.

Currently, 16 of 23 respondents, 69%, are very satisfied with living in the district. An additional six people (26%) are satisfied with living in the district. This represents a 95% satisfaction rate. The remaining respondent indicated they felt neutral about the district, and no residents responded that they were dissatisfied.

4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

Only five respondents indicated they had made applications for alterations. All of the applications were approved. One person said it took one to three months, and three people said it took less than a month, and one person said it was "not long."

The records from the Town of Cobourg only indicated how many applications were submitted each year. The number of applications per year ranges from one to six, indicating steady change in the district.

4.4 Have property values been impacted?

According to the resident surveys, eight of 22 respondents believed that the designation has increased their property values. Seven people believed there was no impact and only three people thought the designation had a negative impact on the value of their home. Another four people did not know how the designation would impact their value.

The data from GeoWarehouse indicated that only 16 of the 67 properties had sales histories. Of these 16 properties, four performed above average, eight at average and four below average.

The sales histories in Cobourg East show exactly what one would expect from a random sample. In other words, there is no effect on sales values from designation. As with Cobourg West, the properties with better performance are those with a higher absolute value indicating that buyers are paying a premium to acquire them. These are most likely to be the "fancier" houses of the diverse housing stock found in the district.

4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

a) *Mixed Housing*

According to the Townscape Survey, the district lacks coherence. This is supported by the interviews that indicate the district has a wide range of housing stock. According to the interviews, this diversity can be viewed negatively because it is hard to apply consistent guidelines, but it can also be seen positively as it is part of what makes the area unique. This also came across in the sales histories, where the larger, more elaborate properties are performing well in the market. Special attention should be given to the diversity of housing stock.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - To preserve heritage buildings
 - To preserve original features
- 95% people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Information about applications for alterations indicate most applications are approved in less than three months
- Sales histories indicate there is no effect from designation
- Overall, the Cobourg East 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
- Ensure the diversity of housing stock is considered in applications for alterations

Appendices

Appendix A

Tabular Results of Resident Surveys

Heritage Conservation District Name: Cobourg East

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

Responses

	Owner	Tenant-Commercial	Tenant - Residential
Counts	16	2	4
Percentage	72.73	9.09	18.18

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	23	0
Percentage	100.00	0.00

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

Responses

	Before	After
Counts	10	13
Percentage	43.48	56.52

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

Responses

Positive	4
Negative	1
Neutral	4
Mixed Feelings	1

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	0	10
Percentage	0.00	100.00

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

Responses

Preservation	11
Restrictions	7
No understanding	4

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	5	18
Percentage	21.74	78.26

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	5	0
Percentage	100.00	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	1
Less than 1 month	3
Not long	1

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	4.65	16	6	1	0	0	0
Percentage		69.57	26.09	4.35	0.00	0.00	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	3.22	0	8	7	2	1	4
Percentage		0.00	44.44	38.89	11.11	5.56	18.18

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

Responses

No	13
Yes	5
Yes, easier	3
Yes, harder	0
Don't know	0
Maybe	0

Total Population	67
Participants	23
Participation Rate	32.8358209

Appendix B

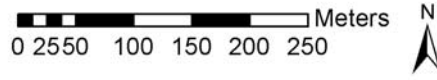
Land Use Maps

Ground Level Land Use in East Heritage Conservation District, Cobourg



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	



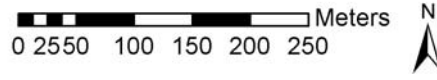
Heritage Resources Centre
 August 29, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_18N

Upper Level Land Use in East Heritage Conservation District, Cobourg



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	

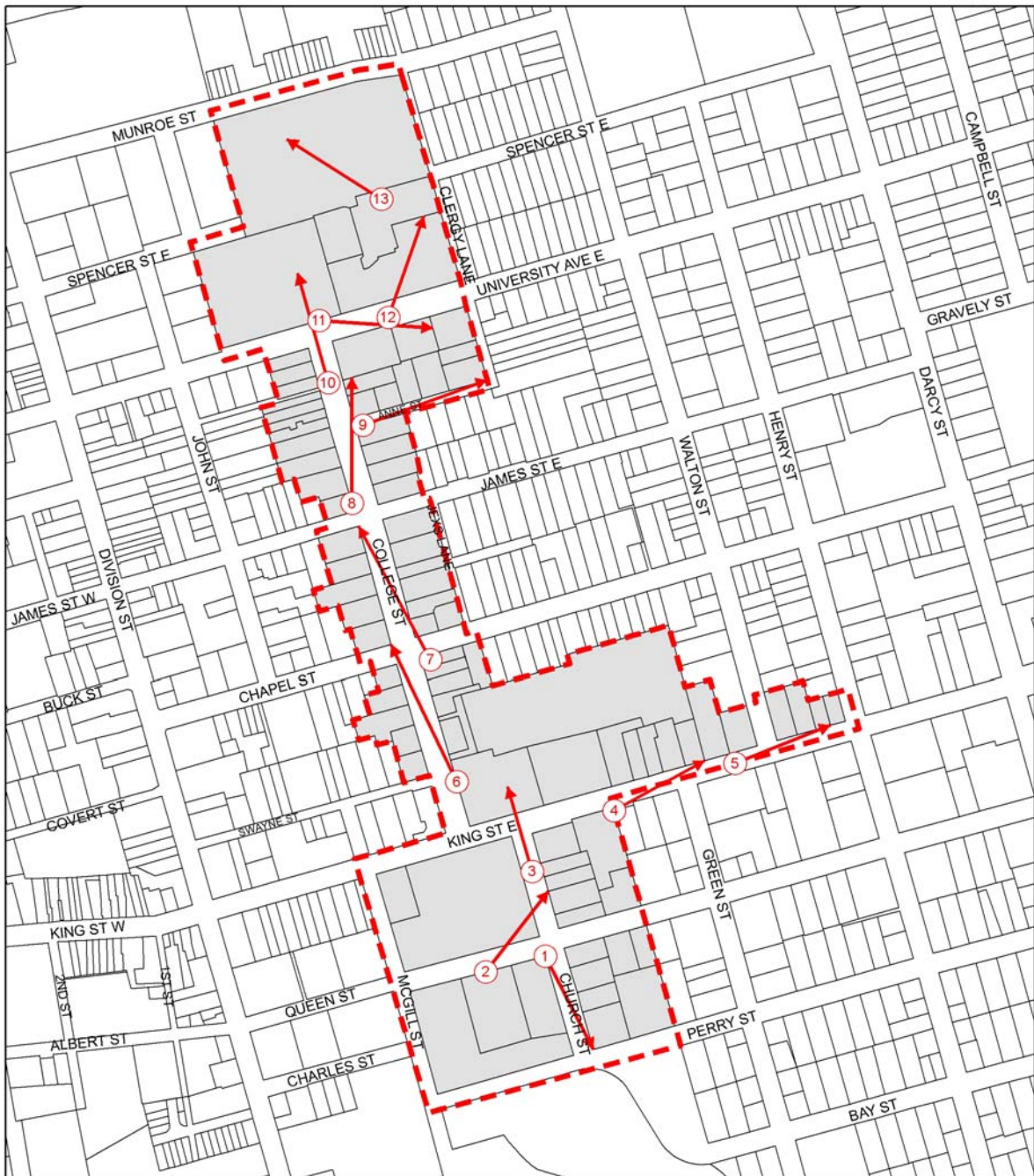


Heritage Resources Centre
 August 29, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_18N

Appendix C

Map of Views

Views in East Heritage Conservation District, Cobourg



Legend

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

0 25 50 100 150 200 250 Meters



Heritage Resources Centre
 August 29, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_18N

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

Appendix E

Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

A. Streetscape Quality				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
A1-Pedestrian friendly	36.5	65	56.15	2.8
A2-Cleanliness	45	60	75.00	3.8
A3-Coherence	43	65	66.15	3.3
A4-Edgefeature Quality	50	65	76.92	3.8
A5-Floorscape Quality	36	65	55.38	2.8
A6-Legibility	46	65	70.77	3.5
A7-Sense of Threat	41	60	68.33	3.4
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	42.5	65	65.38	3.3
A9-Planting: Public	38	50	76.00	3.8
A10-Vitality	35	65	53.85	2.7
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	45	65	69.23	3.5
A12-Signage	50	65	76.92	3.8
A13-Street Furniture Quality	43	65	66.15	3.3
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	51	65	78.46	3.9
SUM A	602	885	68.02	3.4

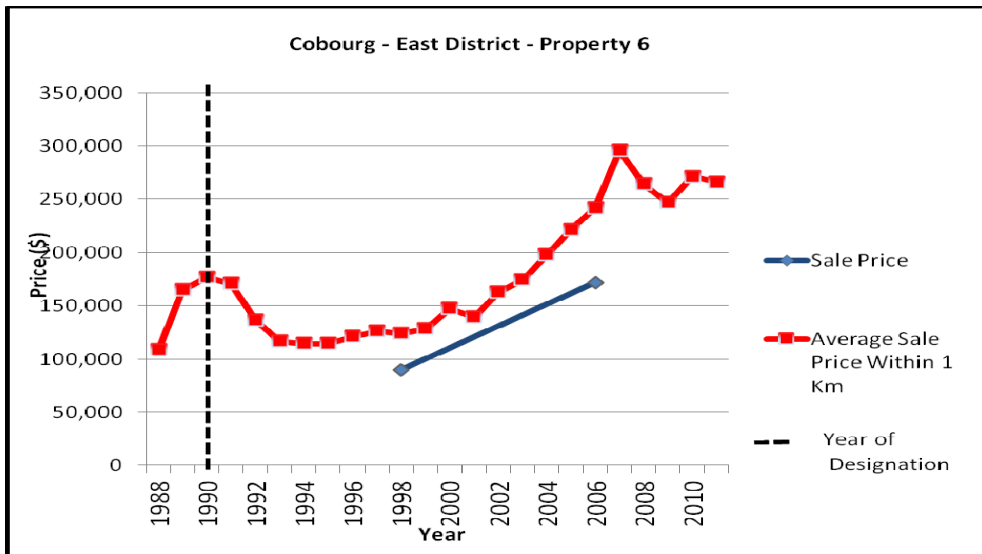
B. Private Space in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	7	10	70.00	3.5
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	60	65	92.31	4.6
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	54	65	83.08	4.2
B18-Facade Quality	54	65	83.08	4.2
B19-Planting Private	48	65	73.85	3.7
SUM B	223	270	82.59	4.1

C. Heritage in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	54.5	55	99.09	5.0
C21-Historic Reference Seen	21	65	32.31	1.6
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	21	65	32.31	1.6
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	47	55	85.45	4.3
C24-Quality of New Development	21.5	35	61.43	3.1
C25-Neglected Historic Features	50.5	55	91.82	4.6
SUM C	215.5	330	65.30	3.3

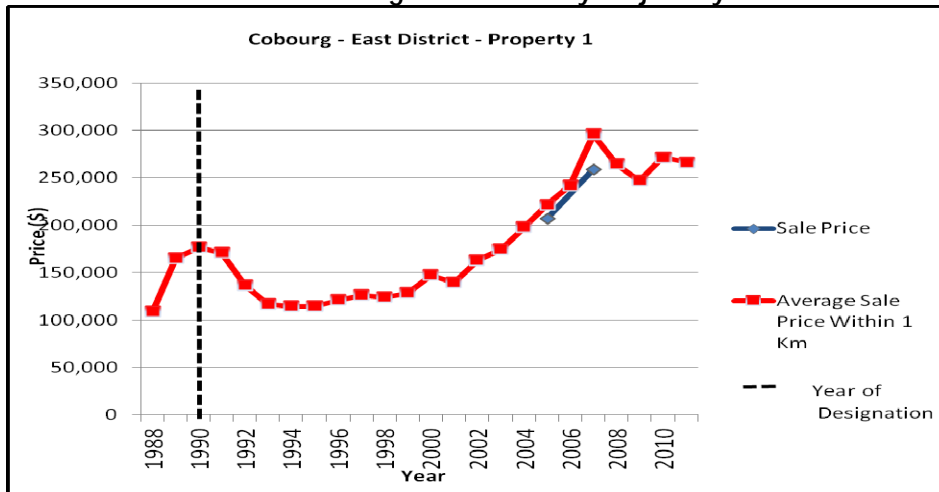
Impression Score				
Aggregate Score	1041	1485	71.97	3.6

Appendix F

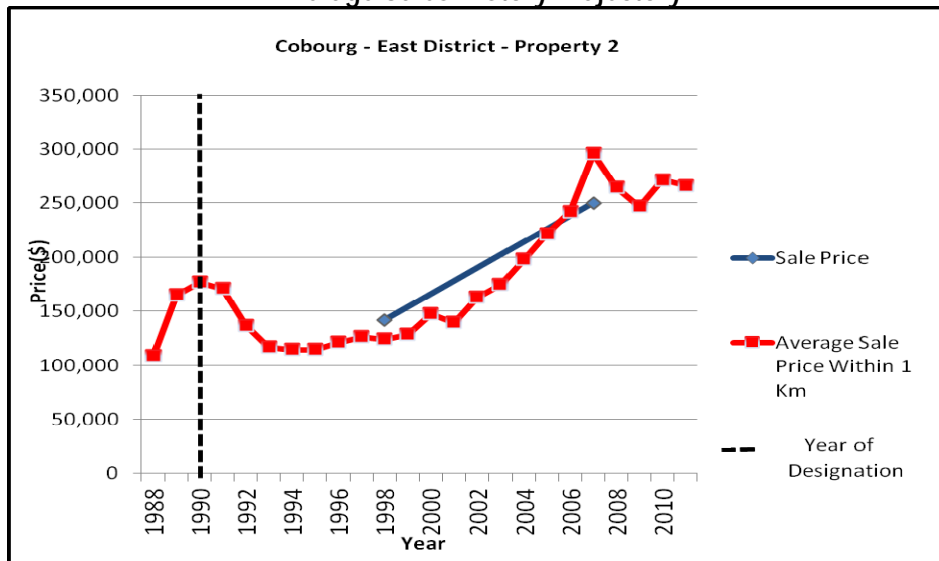
Real Estate Data



Above Average Sales History Trajectory



Average Sales History Trajectory



Below Average Sales History Trajectory

Appendix G

Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

Heritage Conservation District Name: East District
 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"> • Former member of Cobourg LACAC • Wrote district study, plan and guidelines • Planner, provides heritage approvals
2. How did the HCD come about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district was divided from a much larger district that was found not to meet the intentions of the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> • District study was completed of the whole town but found it was too large and expensive of an area to study • Study was refocused on smaller districts (2)
3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General acceptance • Response was not very passionate one way or another • Most people accept and adhere • Some contention as residents occasionally have different visions for the district
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 (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staff review or referral to Municipal Heritage Committee and/or Council depending on scope of proposed alterations • New developments adhere to urban design guidelines • Emphasis on neighbourhood planning and design
5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor repairs are delegated to staff authority • Major alterations (additions, demolitions) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - application process - pre-consultation with staff and property owner - report prepared - Municipal Heritage Committee makes recommendations - Council approves/rejects
6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only communication between districts is through the Town of Cobourg
7. In your opinion, what are the issues that are unique to the HCD and how have they been managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger lots and zoning for high densities results in increased development pressure and subdivision of land • Importance of streetscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the road widths and tree planting (has improved over the years) • Minor unsympathetic alterations/replacements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doors, windows, siding • Range of housing stock leads to inconsistencies in application of guidelines

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Window replacements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no comprehensive guidelines in place
8. What are similar non designated areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corktown area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bounded by Church St., Darcy St., King St. and the waterfront • Neighbourhood between University St., Chapel St., Henry St. and the edge of the East District HCD (2)
9. Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Cobourg is different in that the districts do not necessarily follow social economic divisions and housing costs are significantly lower than in GTA area. Therefore it is not a practical solution to demand full restoration - or expect an architect - so to achieve conservation is much more of a challenge. I think there are opportunities in that these heritage areas represent 'real neighbourhoods' and not giving the appearance of the rich and famous. I think that looking at mixed neighbourhoods likely represents the biggest opportunity for heritage conservation. The challenge is how to address homes of people with limited financial means."

Appendix H

Applications for Alterations

Cobourg East	
Year	Number of Applications
1996	0
1997	0
1998	1
1999	2
2000	2
2001	2
2002	4
2003	6
2004	1
2005	2
2006	3
2007	0
2008	5
2009	6
2010	2
2011	1