

Heritage Conservation District Study

Lowertown Heritage Conservation District City of Ottawa



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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 Lowertown Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Ottawa
- Consists of approximately 220 residential, institutional and commercial properties
- District was designated in 1994
- Plan was written by Michael McClelland, A.J. Donald Schmitt and Company, Anne M de Fort Menares, Edwin J. Rowse and Gilberto Prioste

Study Approach

- Resident surveys were not conducted
- 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:
 - Preserve and maintain the existing historic fabric
- Although the existing historic fabric is being maintained, new additions and/or development is not in keeping with the character of the area
- Information on satisfaction, real estate values and applications for alterations was inconclusive
- Overall, it is difficult to determine the success of the Lowertown 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
- All correspondence about the district and signage within the district should be bilingual

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Heritage Act and Designation

The *Ontario Heritage Act* (Subsection 41. (1)) enables municipalities to designate Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs). A Heritage Conservation District is an area with “a concentration of heritage resources with special character or historical association that distinguishes it from its surroundings.”¹ Districts can be areas that are residential, commercial, rural, industrial, institutional or mixed use. According to the Ministry of Culture, “the significance of a HCD often extends beyond its built heritage, structures, streets, landscape and other physical and special elements to include important vistas and views between buildings and spaces within the district.”²

The designation of a Heritage Conservation District allows municipalities to protect the special character of an area by guiding future changes. The policies for guiding changes are outlined in a Heritage Conservation District Plan that can be prepared by city staff, local residents or heritage consultants. A Heritage Conservation District Plan must also include a statement of objectives and guidelines that outline how to achieve these objectives³.

1.2 Rationale for Heritage Conservation District Study

With funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, volunteers from branches of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) and Historical Societies partnered with the Heritage Resources Centre (HRC) at the University of Waterloo to undertake Phase 2 of a province-wide research program to answer the question: have Heritage Conservation Districts in Ontario been successful heritage planning initiatives over a period of time?

Many people now consider the Heritage Conservation District to be one of the most effective tools not only for historic conservation but for good urban design and sound planning. At least 102 HCDs are already in existence in Ontario with the earliest designations dating back to 1980. While more are being planned and proposed all the time there is also a residual resistance to HCDs from some members of the public. Typically this resistance centres on concerns about loss of control over one’s property, impact on property values and bureaucratic processes. On the other hand, the benefits of HCDs, establishing high standards of maintenance and design, allowing the development of and compliance with shared community values and the potential for increasing property values, are not as widely perceived as might be the case.

Since it takes a period of time for the impacts of district designation to manifest, Phase 1 of the study concentrated on examining the oldest districts, those designated in or before 1992. Phase 2 continued to look at well-established districts. Applying the criterion of residential, commercial or mixed-use areas designated in 2002 or before, 32 HCDs were examined. These districts are found in or near the following areas: Cobourg, Hamilton, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Markham, Toronto, Centre Wellington, Orangeville, London, Stratford, and the Region of Waterloo.

¹ Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

² Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

³ Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 12

Figure 1 shows that the 32 districts have a wide geographic distribution and represent various community sizes. The types of districts that are part of the study are also evident.

Geographical Distribution		Community Size		Type	
Northern	0	Small Community	11	Commercial	6
Eastern	7	Medium Sized	10	Residential	20
Central	19	Large City	11	Mixed	6
South Western	6				
	32		32		32

Figure 1: Distribution of Heritage Conservation Districts under examination.

The study sought to answer the following specific questions in each of the 32 Heritage Conservation Districts:

- Have the goals or objectives set out in the District Plan been met?
- Are residents content living in the Heritage Conservation District?
- Is it difficult to make alterations to buildings in the Heritage Conservation District?
- Have property values been impacted by the designation of the district?
- What are the key issues in the district?

These questions were answered through the contributions of local volunteers from the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario branches, Historical Societies and local heritage committees as well as through communication with local municipal officials.

2.0 Background of the Lowertown Heritage Conservation District

2.1 Description of the District

The Lowertown Heritage Conservation District is bounded by Sussex Drive, King Edward Avenue, Murray Street and Bold Street. It consists of approximately 220 residential, commercial and institutional buildings.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Canadian Register at www.historicplaces.ca describes the heritage character as follows:

Lowertown West is associated with the early settlement of Bytown (later Ottawa) and exhibits a unique architectural character. Lowertown's general form derives from the distribution of land in 1827 when Colonel John By laid out Bytown as an Upper and Lower Town. Streets were principally east-west between the Rideau Canal and the Rideau River, with north-south connectors as needed. This original street grid is primarily intact today, although some of the names have changed to commemorate prominent figures in the development of the area. After the Vesting Act in 1843, land was finally granted with deeds of ownership and institutions gained a greater prominence in Lowertown, most notably the Roman Catholic Church. The ensuing development of Lowertown was largely speculative, driven in part by the coming of the railway in 1854, and by the expansion of the city after the announcement of the choice of the national capital in 1857. Lowertown experienced another boom period starting in the 1870s, despite a crushing depression that greatly affected its working class inhabitants. During this period, Sussex drive was built up and the Catholic institutions expanded. The boom period was abruptly stopped at the outbreak of World War I and little further development took place until the urban renewal projects starting in the 1960s.

The heritage value of Lowertown West is also derived from its associations with the histories of the working class Irish and French settlers of Ottawa. Most inhabitants of Lowertown were itinerant labourers, working on the canal in the earliest years, or connected with the squared timber trade. The early population of Lowertown was more than half Irish Catholic, with the remainder being French Canadian. However, toward the end of the 19th century, the French presence in Lowertown grew as the Irish Catholics moved to other parts of the city. While overall ethnic and religious profiles remained fairly stable in Ottawa, occupational profiles shifted strongly as the Civil Service tripled its employees between 1900 and 1910 and Lowertown quickly evolved from a labourer's neighbourhood to one which served government employees.

Lowertown West exhibits variety, scale, coherence, sense of place and landmarks within its architectural composition. The age, style, or architectural attractiveness of individual buildings is less important to the urban character than the aggregate urban quality that results. The range of building materials, proportions, setbacks, and profiles varies considerably along each street, but an overall similarity emerges from the diversity that dignifies the older buildings and embraces the newer ones.

Most of the buildings are vernacular in character and cannot be clearly identified stylistically. The richness of the heritage character of Lowertown West is strongly related to the variety of these buildings, their various materials, scale and form, and the layering of additions and alterations that have occurred over time. The effect is one of generally small-scale buildings, with patterns of lot occupation, building forms and styles that have evolved but do not differ dramatically in urban effect from their historic precedents. These qualities are distinctive to the area, are representative of the earliest phases of settlement, and are a unique part of the city's heritage.

2.3 Location of the District

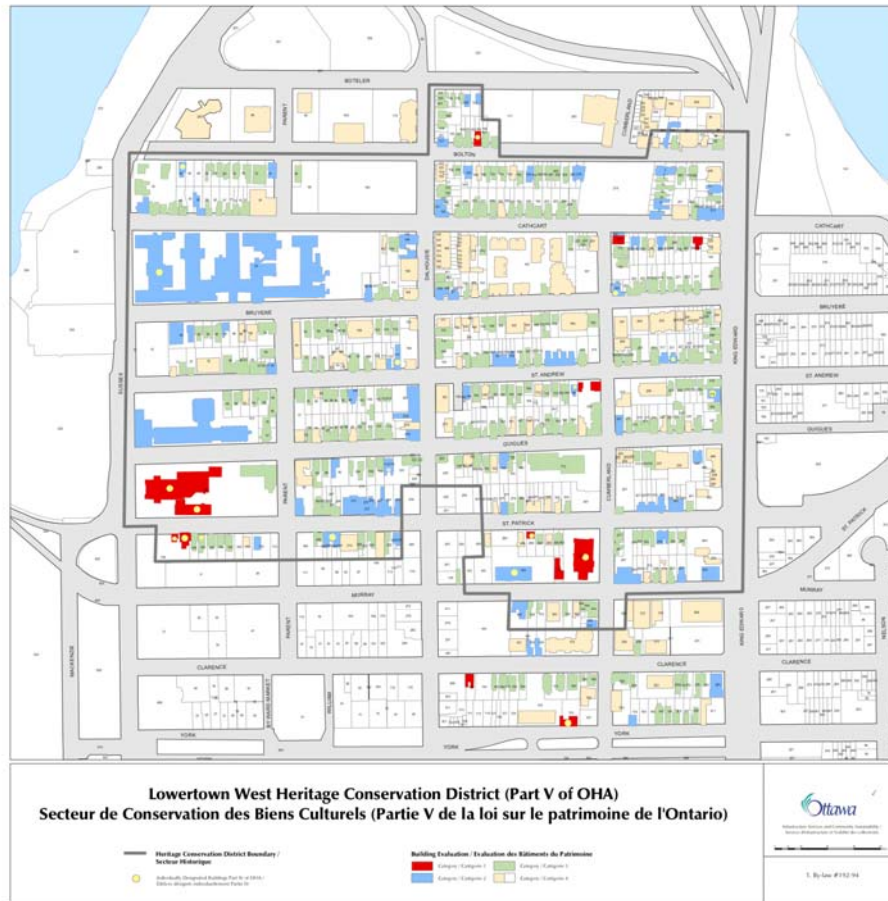


Figure 2: Map of Lowertown Heritage Conservation District.

2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of Lowertown Heritage Conservation District came about as a result of a planning exercise carried out by heritage planners at the City of Ottawa.

The Lowertown Heritage Conservation District Study was completed in 1993 by Michael McClelland, A.J. Donald Schmitt and Company, Anne M,de Fort Menares, Edwin J. Rowse and Gilberto Prioste. The Lowertown Heritage Conservation District is protected by Bylaw 192-94, which was passed in 1994 by the City of Ottawa.

3.0 Study Approach

3.1 Resident Surveys

Due to a lack of volunteers, residents of the Lowertown Heritage Conservation District were not asked a series of questions relating to their experiences and satisfaction with living in the district.

3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Lowertown 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 Lowertown (see Appendix A). 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 36 views were photographed and evaluated (see Appendices B and C). The summary of the scores is included as Appendix D.

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 Lowertown 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 are included in Appendix E. 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 Lowertown 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 district plan does not outline specific objectives. However, as a Heritage Conservation District the assumed goal is to preserve the historic building fabric in the area.

The objective to preserve and maintain the existing historic fabric has been met. The Townscape Survey shows that conserved elements, detailed maintenance and quality of conservation work all scored moderately well. This means that visually the area is being maintained and historic elements and buildings are being conserved. However, façade quality, coherence and quality of new development scored low. This indicates that although the existing historic fabric is being maintained, new additions and/or development are not in keeping with the character of the area.

4.2 Are people content?

Residents and owners were not surveyed in the district. However, the two key stakeholders that were interviewed indicated that the area is generally well accepted. Based on this data it is difficult to determine satisfaction levels.

4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

The records from the City of Ottawa and anecdotal evidence were not available. 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 pressure

Due to its proximity to the ByWard Market, a popular commercial area in Ottawa that borders Lowertown, the area experiences a lot of development pressure.

b) Language

Although the study did not secure any volunteers to survey the area, it was brought to our attention that the area has a large number of French residents. According to the study and plan, the initial consultation carried out when the district was being established was done in both French and English. Consequently, all correspondence about the district and signage within the district should be bilingual.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - Preserve and maintain the existing historic fabric
- Although the existing historic fabric is being maintained, new additions and/or development are not in keeping with the character of the area
- Information on satisfaction, real estate values and applications for alterations were inconclusive

Overall, it is difficult to determine the success of the Lowertown 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
- All correspondence about the district and signage within the district should be bilingual

Appendices

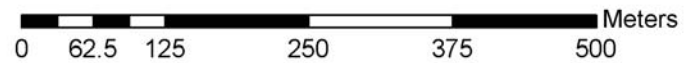
Appendix A
Land Use Map

Ground Level Land Use in Lowertown West 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	



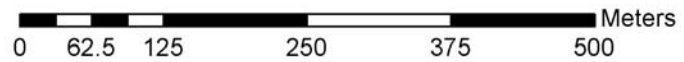
Heritage Resources Centre
 July 5, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone18N

Upper Level Land Use in Lowertown West 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
 July 5, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone18N






Appendix B

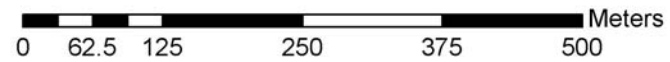
Map of Views

Views in Lowertown West Heritage Conservation District, Ottawa



Legend

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



Heritage Resources Centre
 July 5, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone18N

Appendix C

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

Appendix D

Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

A. Streetscape Quality				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
A1-Pedestrian friendly	96	185	51.89	2.6
A2-Cleanliness	95	185	51.35	2.6
A3-Coherence	98	185	52.97	2.6
A4-Edgefeature Quality	119.5	185	64.59	3.2
A5-Floorscape Quality	97	185	52.43	2.6
A6-Legibility	105	185	56.76	2.8
A7-Sense of Threat	88	185	47.57	2.4
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	115	185	62.16	3.1
A9-Planting: Public	20	35	57.14	2.9
A10-Vitality	85	185	45.95	2.3
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	96	185	51.89	2.6
A12-Signage	140	185	75.68	3.8
A13-Street Furniture Quality	108.5	165	65.76	3.3
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	125	185	67.57	3.4
SUM A	1388	2420	57.36	2.9

Impression Score				
Aggregate Score	2367.5	4225	55.87518025	2.8

B. Private Space in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	40.5	85	47.65	2.4
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	131.5	185	71.08	3.6
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	120	185	64.86	3.2
B18-Facade Quality	106	185	57.30	2.9
B19-Planting Private	82	140	58.57	2.9
SUM B	480	780	61.54	3.1

C. Heritage in View				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	125	180	69.44	3.5
C21-Historic Reference Seen	39	185	21.08	1.1
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	37.5	185	20.27	1.0
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	110.5	150	73.67	3.7
C24-Quality of New Development	66	145	45.52	2.3
C25-Neglected Historic Features	121.5	180	67.50	3.4
SUM C	499.5	1025	48.73	2.4

Appendix E

Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

Heritage Conservation District Name: Lowertown West

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"> • Past Chair of Ottawa's Built Heritage Advisory Committee (OBHAC) • Board member of Heritage Ottawa, a non-profit advocacy group • Coordinator of Heritage Planning
2. How did the HCD come about?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City planning exercise carried out by heritage planners at the City of Ottawa (2)
3. In your opinion how has the HCD designation been accepted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally well accepted by most residents and has resulted in good restoration projects • Receives less development pressure • Suffers from a few residents that neglect their property • More accepted by the general public than by planning staff and local politicians
4. In your experience what are the HCD management processes in place and how do they work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage planning staff and OBHAC review applications • Staff has a lot of discretion in making approvals due to limited resources and abundance of protected properties in the City • Applications for alterations are required and dealt with through the Building Permit process (2) • Some management undertaken through the City's Heritage Grant Program
5. In your experience what is the process for applications for alterations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Permit process utilized • 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 • Small scale (minor) alterations are dealt with by staff (2) • Larger scale heritage applications are addressed through pre-consultation (2) • 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)
6. Is there a communication process set up for the HCD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City circulates notification letters to districts, surrounding communities and Heritage Ottawa when applications and designation requests are received • Communication through the Community Associations heritage group (2)
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"> • Absentee land owners • Receiving some good quality infill due to the work of small scale entrepreneurs • Commercial pressure due to close proximity to the ByWard Market (2) • Occurrence of demolition by neglect

8. What are similar non designated areas?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-designated areas above the ByWard Market, the neighbouring Lowertown area and parts of Centretown • Residential neighbourhood north of Rideau St., east of Cobourg St., south of St. Patrick St. and west of Wurtemberg St. - located north of the Wallace House condos and MacDonald Gardens
9. Other comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to designation before the amendments to the 2005 <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> guidelines are unclear as no formal plan was created