# **Heritage Conservation District Study**

## Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District City of Ottawa















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Prepared for The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

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## **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 Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of Ottawa
- Consists of approximately 660 residential and institutional properties
- District was designated in 1997
- Plan was written by Julian Smith & Associates and Victoria Angel, in collaboration with the Village of Rockcliffe Park LACAC

#### 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 the existing historic fabric
  - Maintain the existing landscape
- 60% of residents surveyed are satisfied or very satisfied with living in the district
- Residents indicated that applications for alterations did not take long to be approved
- The majority of residents believe that the designation has increased their property value
- Overall, the Rockcliffe Park 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
- Produce a list of addresses for the district that is easily accessible
- Residents should be educated about the intention of the district
- Historic and place reference signage should be added to the area
- Guidelines should be reviewed and design guidelines for buildings should be added

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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." 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."

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.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Ontario Heritage Toolkit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture (2006), Page 5

<sup>&</sup>lt;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 the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District

#### 2.1 Description of the District

The Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District is bounded by Rockcliffe Park Road, Maple Lane, Beachwood Avenue, Sandridge Road and Birch Lane. It consists of approximately 66 residential and institutional (mostly embassy) buildings.

#### 2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

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

The heritage value of the Village of Rockcliffe Park lies in its historical associations and development as a community, but also as an excellent example of the English picturesque suburban planning traditions of the late nineteenth century.

Much of the land that lies within the current boundaries of the Village of Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District once formed part of Thomas McKay's large estate, which he acquired in the 1830s. A Scottish stonemason and an astute businessman, he was responsible for building the Rideau Canal's first eight connecting locks leading up from the Ottawa River. Its original layout, subdivided in 1864, was strongly influenced by British and American suburban trends of the nineteenth century. Borderland suburbs were, to a large extent, a visual phenomenon. Carefully designed to enhance the existing character of an area, early residential suburbs were intended to inspire the sense of living in an Arcadian environment.

Despite the beauty of the site, its proximity to New Edinburgh and Rideau Hall, and the lower taxes of Gloucester Township, much of the Estate remained unsold during the nineteenth century. Occupied primarily by cottages in the late 1800s, higher density development and crowding in downtown Ottawa during the early decades of the twentieth century resulted in a gradual flight of a number of families from Ottawa's downtown neighbourhoods to Rockcliffe Park. Improved transportation routes leading to the area in the early twentieth century, in addition to the existing streetcar service, made the Estate more accessible to those who worked in the city. Among the many prominent Ottawa residents who chose to relocate, Rockcliffe Park has been the home of former Prime Ministers, Lester B. Pearson and John Diefenbaker. Queen Juliana of the Netherlands also lived in the Village during the Second World War.

In the case of the Village of Rockcliffe Park, the architectural character of individual residential and institutional properties is secondary to their landscaped settings. A diverse collection of styles and period is represented, tied together by a shared approach to site development and a self-conscious development of village character. If there is a theme to the architectural diversity, it is the use of revival styles such as the Tudor, Georgian and Queen Anne. The country theme is

expressed in Rockcliffe Park by an architecture that uses careful siting, natural materials, and careful proportioning to create an informal elegance appropriate to the idea of rural ambience within a larger urban setting.

The character of the early homes reflects the mix of residents who settled in the area. Comfortable, red brick, stone or stucco homes, typical of the Edwardian period began to appear in the early 1900s. They were frequently inhabited by the civil servants and merchants who had initially built cottages in the area. Allan Keefer, the grandson of Thomas C. Keefer's (who initially planned and subdivided McKay's Rockcliffe property) designed some of the homes built in Rockcliffe during this period. Allan Keefer's varied interpretations of British styles serves to reinforce the picturesque character of this conservation district. Most of his large residences were eventually converted into diplomatic missions during the second half of the twentieth century. Other prominent architects who designed homes in the Village include W.E. Noffke and A.J. Hazelgrove.

#### 2.3 Location of the District

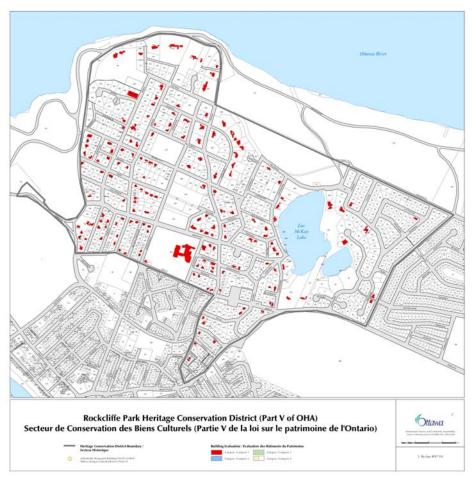


Figure 2: Map of Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District.

#### 2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District came about as a result of local residents pursing designation prior to amalgamation with the City of Ottawa.

The Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District Study was completed in 1997 by Jullian Smith & Associates and Victoria Angel. The Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District is protected by Bylaw 97-10, which was passed in 1997 by the City of Ottawa.

## 3.0 Study Approach

#### 3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District were asked a series of questions relating to their experiences and satisfaction living in the district. These surveys were conducted door-to-door by local volunteers. Due to the large size of the district a sample of addresses were surveyed. Only 40 of 240 residents answered surveys, representing a 16.67% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A..

#### 3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Rockcliffe Park 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 Rockcliffe Park (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 65 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 $^{\text{TM}}$ , 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 Rockcliffe Park 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?

For the Rockcliffe Park 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 not outlined specifically in the district study. However, as it is a heritage conservation district, the assumed goal is the conservation of the existing historic fabric. It is also clear from the district plan that the landscape is a core feature of Rockcliffe Park and should be maintained.

#### 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, detailed maintenance and quality of conservation work all scored high. There is also no dereliction and few neglected historic features. This means that visually the area is being well maintained and historic elements and buildings are being conserved.

#### b) Maintain the existing landscape

The goal to maintain the existing landscape has been met. In the Townscape survey, public and private planting scored well. Personal safety in traffic and traffic flow appropriateness also scored well, indicating that that village like atmosphere is being maintained.

#### 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. Respondents were equally split, with 20 living in the area before, and 20 moving to the area after designation. Of those who lived there before, 15 responded about how they felt when the designation was established. Eleven of 15 felt positive about the designation. Three people did not know and only one felt negative.

Currently, eleven of 40 respondents feel very satisfied with living in the district. Another 13 people are satisfied with living in the district, eight people are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and only two people expressed dissatisfaction. Another six people indicated they did not know how they felt. In total there is a 60% satisfaction rate. Consequently, the district can be said to have a moderate satisfaction score.

#### 4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

During the door-to-door survey only 12 people indicated that they had applied for applications for alterations. All of the applications were approved. Two people indicated it took one-to-three months, four people said approval took less than a month and six people stated the process was "not long." The records from the City of Ottawa were not available. The data provided by residents show that the application for alterations process is not perceived to be lengthy.

#### 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.

However, residents were asked their opinion on real estate values. Of the 38 people who responded, one person thought designation increased their property values a lot , and 17 thought their value had increased. In short, 47% of respondents believe that designation has had a positive impact on their property values. Only one person thought that the designation had lowered the value. The rest of the respondents were neutral, or did not know.

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

#### a) Education

In the resident surveys, eight of 35 respondents indicated they had no understanding of the district. An additional 10 indicated their understanding of the district was based on restrictions. Furthermore, one of the comments requested more information about the district, as they were not sure what impact it had. This is supported by the Townscape survey that shows there is little to no place or historic reference in the district. Clearly, there is a need for increased communication, including the education of residents and the addition of signage.

#### b) Landscape

According to the interviews, the district study and plan are very focused on the landscape of Rockcliffe Park, and its lack of guidelines for new buildings causes problems because it creates increased pressure for demolition and new construction. The lack of clearly defined guidelines for structures in the district create conflict. This is echoed in the Townscape Survey that indicates high scores for landscape features like public and private planting, but lower scores for coherence. Clearly, there is a need for a completed inventory of buildings and design guidelines that go beyond the landscape to address built assets.

### 5.0 Conclusions

#### 5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
  - o Encourage the conservation and maintenance of the existing historic fabric
  - Maintain the existing landscape
- 60% of residents surveyed are satisfied or very satisfied with living in the district
- Residents indicated that the application for alterations process did not take long
- The majority of residents believe that the designation has increased their property value

Overall, the Rockcliffe Park 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
- Produce a list of addresses for the district that is easily accessible
- Residents should be educated about the intention of the district
- Historic and place reference signage should be added to the area
- Guidelines should be reviewed and design guidelines for buildings should be added

# **Appendices**

# Appendix A Resident Surveys

Heritage Conservation District Name: Rockcliffe Park

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

Responses 39

	Owner	Tenant-Commercial	Tenant - Residential
Counts	37	0	2
Percentage	94.87	0.00	5.13

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses

40

	Yes	No
Counts	37	3
Percentage	92.50	7.50

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

Responses

40

	Before	After
Counts	20	20
Percentage	50.00	50.00

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

Responses

15

Positive	11
Negative	1
Neutral	0
Don't Know	3

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

Responses

21

	Yes	No
Counts	1	20
Percentage	4.76	95.24

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

Responses 35

Preservation	13
Restriction	10
No understanding	8
Good understanding	4

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

Responses 37

	Yes	No
Counts	12	25
Percentage	32.43	67.57

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

Responses 12

	Yes	No
Counts	12	0
Percentage	100.00	0.00

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

Responses 12

Over 5 months	0
4 to 5 months	0
1 to 3 months	2
Less than 1 month	4
Don't Know	0

10. Overall, how satisfied are you with living in a HCD?

Responses 40

	Mean Score out of 5	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Do not Know
Counts	3.35	11	13	8	1	1	6
Percentage		27.50	32.50	20.00	2.50	2.94	15.00

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

Responses 38

	Mean Score out of 5	Increased a Lot	Increased	No Impact	Lowered	Lowered a lot	Do not Know
Counts	2.61	1	17	8	1	0	11
Percentage		2.63	44.74	21.05	2.63	0.00	28.95

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

Responses 34

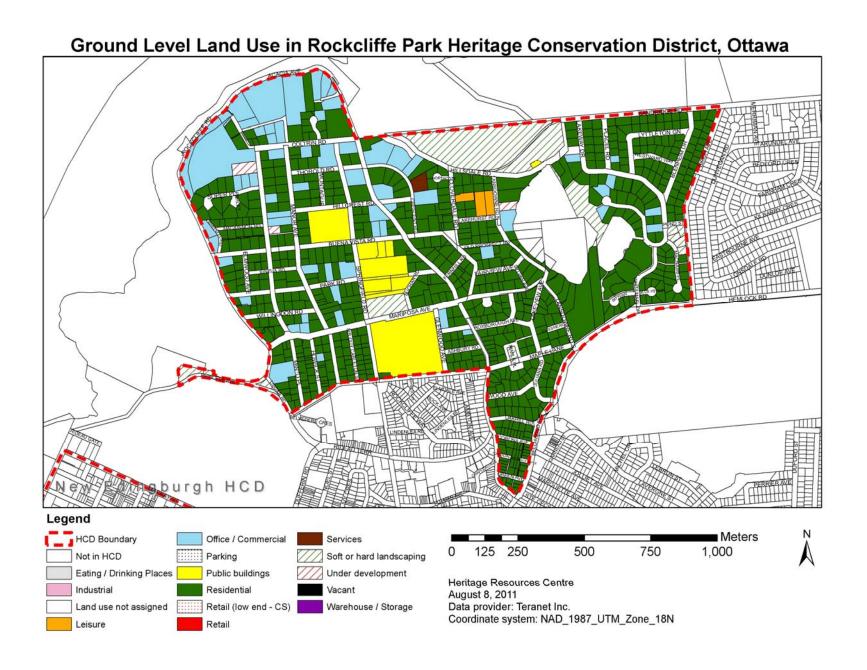
No	24
Yes	1
Yes, easier	5
Yes, harder	0
Don't know	2
Maybe	2

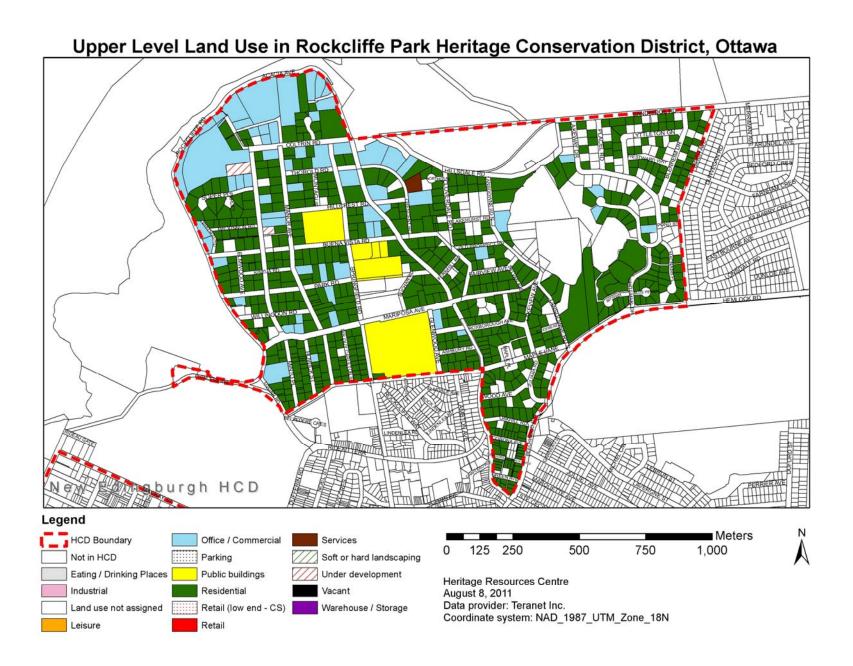
#### 13. Comments

Glad to have heritage conservation in our area (1); lovely community (1); good - try to hold values (1); does it effect anything? Need more information (1); should be done by building, not all homes in area are heritage (1); properties becomes more desirable in the area (1); not sure the building rules/permits are followed (1);

Total Population	240
Participants	40
Participation Rate	16.66666667

# Appendix B Land Use Map

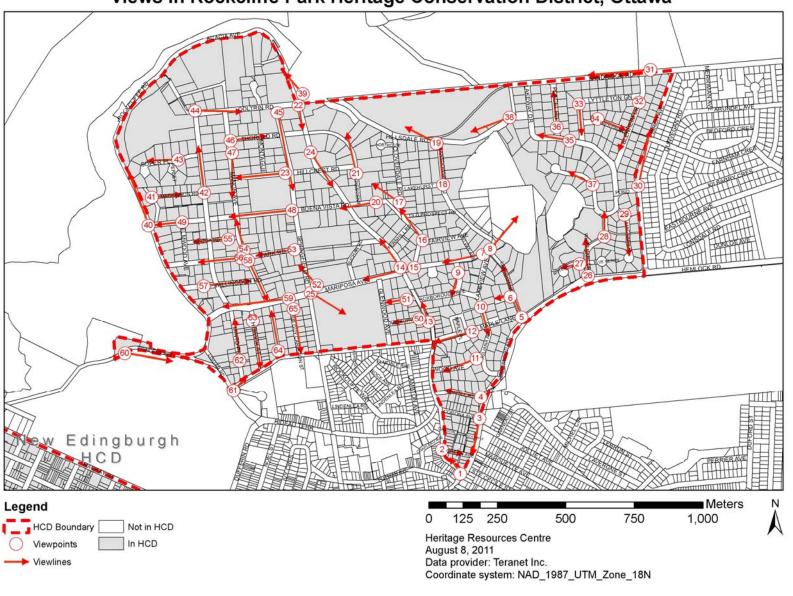




Appendix C

Map of Views

### Views in Rockcliffe Park Heritage Conservation District, Ottawa



# Appendix D Photographs of Views





View 11 View 12





View 23













View 29 View 30















View 61 View 62





View 63 View 64



View 65

# Appendix E Townscape Evaluation Pro Forma

A. Streetscape Quality				
	Score	Out of	%	Out of 5
A1-Pedestrian friendly	127	320	39.69	2.0
A2-Cleanliness	181	325	55.69	2.8
A3-Coherence	205.5	325	63.23	3.2
A4-Edgefeature Quality	224	325	68.92	3.4
A5-Floorscape Quality	136	325	41.85	2.1
A6-Legibility	213.3	325	65.63	3.3
A7-Sense of Threat	201.5	325	62.00	3.1
A8-Personal Safety: Traffic	249.5	325	76.77	3.8
A9-Planting: Public	151	190	79.47	4.0
A10-Vitality	140	325	43.08	2.2
A 11- Appropriate Resting Places	168	325	51.69	2.6
A12-Signage	110.5	170	65.00	3.3
A13-Street Furniture Quality	170.5	280	60.89	3.0
A14-Traffic Flow. Appropriateness	245.5	320	76.72	3.8
SUM A	2523.3	4205	60.01	3.0

Impression Score				
Aggregate Score	4417.3	7170	63.39	3.2

B. Private Space in View				
		Out		Out of
	Score	of	%	5
B15-Advertising, in keeping	27.5	45	61.11	3.1
B16-Dereliction, Absence of	271.5	325	83.54	4.2
B17-Detailing, Maintenance	271.5	325	83.54	4.2
B18-Facade Quality	209.5	315	66.51	3.3
B19-Planting Private	232	315	73.65	3.7
SUM B	1012	1325	76.38	3.8

C. Heritage in View				
		Out		Out of
	Score	of	%	5
C20-Conserved Elements Evident	198.5	255	77.84	3.9
C21-Historic Reference Seen	72	320	22.50	1.1
C22-Nomenclature/Place Reference	68	320	21.25	1.1
C23-Quality of Conservation Work	193	270	71.48	3.6
C24-Quality of New Development	131	215	60.93	3.0
C25-Neglected Historic Features	219.5	260	84.42	4.2
SUM C	882	1640	53.78	2.7

# Appendix F Summary of Key Stakeholder Interviews

Heritage Conservation District Name: Rockcliffe Park Month(s) of Interviews: December 2011 Number of People Interviewed: 2

Question	Summary of Answer
1. How are you	Past Chair of Ottawa's Built Heritage Advisory Committee (OBHAC)
involved in the	Board member of Heritage Ottawa, a non-profit advocacy group
HCD?	Coordinator of Heritage Planning
2. How did the	Designated by the former Village of Rockcliffe as the residents and heritage
HCD come	committee wanted to preserve the identity, character and architecture of the
about?	area before the City of Ottawa amalgamated and they would otherwise lose
2 10	control over the Village (2)
3. In your opinion how	Well accepted by most residents until they want to alter/demolish their properties and rebuild (2).
has the HCD	properties and rebuild (2)
designation	<ul> <li>Property owners pay a lot of money for their property and feel entitled to alter it as they please, leads to a battle to monitor the construction of monster homes</li> </ul>
been	as they please, leads to a battle to mornior the construction of morister nomes
accepted?	
4. In your	Heritage planning staff and OBHAC review applications
experience	Staff has a lot of discretion in making approvals due to limited resources and
what are the	abundance of protected properties in the City
HCD	Applications for alterations are required and dealt with through the Building
management	Permit process (2)
processes in	<ul> <li>Some management undertaken through the City's Heritage Grant Program</li> </ul>
place and how	
do they work? 5. In your	Building Permit process utilized
experience	<ul> <li>Building Permit process utilized</li> <li>All designated and listed properties are flagged in a database and tiered based</li> </ul>
what is the	on level of protection, when an application comes in staff know how to address
process for	the scope of work
applications	Small scale (minor) alterations are dealt with by staff (2)
for alterations?	<ul> <li>Larger scale heritage applications are addressed through pre-consultation (2)</li> </ul>
	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	<ul> <li>City circulates notification letters to districts, surrounding communities and</li> </ul>
communication	Heritage Ottawa when applications and designation requests are received
process set up	<ul> <li>Informal communication through community associations (2)</li> </ul>
for the HCD?	Bullet I was all a second and a second a second and a second a second and a second a second and a second and a second and a second a second and a second and a second and a second and a second a second a second and
7. In your opinion, what	District plan was written with an eye toward preserving the village character and focused on the landscape explicitly.
are the issues	focused on the landscape explicitly  To date an inventory of structures within the district has not been completed.
that are unique	<ul> <li>To date an inventory of structures within the district has not been completed, only the landscape character has been identified</li> </ul>
to the HCD and	· '
how have they	<ul> <li>No plans in place to guide the designs of new construction</li> <li>Very wealthy new owners do not have the same appreciation for the Village</li> </ul>
been	very wearing new owners do not have the same appreciation for the village

managed?	character that long time residents do  Results in increased pressure for demolition and new construction (2)
8. What are similar non designated areas?	Manor Park
9. Other comments	Due to designation before the amendments to the 2005 Ontario Heritage Act guidelines are unclear as no formal plan was created