

Heritage Conservation District Study

Yates Street Heritage Conservation District City of St. Catharines



Heritage Conservation District Study

Prepared for
The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

By

Author: Kayla Jonas Galvin

Editor: Dr. Robert Shipley

Series Editor: Lindsay Benjamin

Data Collection: Christopher Sanderson

GIS Specialist: Beatrice Tam

Of the
Heritage Resources Centre
University of Waterloo

Generous support provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation

December 2012



Acknowledgements

This project was carried out under the direction of Professor Robert Shipley, Chair of the Heritage Resources Centre (HRC) at the University of Waterloo. The Project Coordinator was Kayla Jonas Galvin. Data collection and research was conducted by Lindsay Benjamin, a Master's student from the School of Planning, Christopher Sanderson, a PhD student in Planning, and Beatrice Tam, a recent graduate of the University of Waterloo's School of Planning.

This research endeavour represented a joint project between the Heritage Resources Centre and the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO). The HRC Staff members are particularly grateful to the ACO Manager Rollo Myers, President Susan Ratcliffe and ACO board member Richard Longley for their time, effort and guidance.

The ACO is indebted to Dr. Robert Shipley and Kayla Jonas Galvin for their assistance with the preparation of the *Ontario Trillium Foundation* grant application.

The project was undertaken in support of the volunteer efforts of ACO branch presidents and members, Heritage Ottawa, members of the local heritage committees and interested citizens across Ontario. These dedicated volunteers surveyed residences in the Heritage Conservation District and provided energy and purpose to the project.

We would like to thank staff at the Ministry of Culture for providing information and advice about the project: Paul King, Chris Mahood and Bert Duclos.

We would also like to thank the staff at the Heritage Resources Centre who are involved in other endeavours, yet provided support and helped with the fieldwork and administrative tasks during this project: Marg Rowell, Melissa Davis and Kristy May.

Recognition is deserved as well for Professor Rob Feick and Scott McFarlane at the University of Waterloo for their help obtaining and formatting the GIS maps. Thanks are extended to Dr. Susan Sykes at the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo for the thorough and timely approval of our research design.

We would also like to thank the following local volunteers and municipal staff for their time and effort surveying residents, answering interview questions and helping to gather other vital information. Thank you to volunteers: Robin McPherson, Brian Narhi, Chris Loat, Marty Mako and Heather Foss.

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 Yates Street Heritage Conservation District

- Located in the City of St. Catharines
- Consists of 114 properties, most are residential with mixed uses along Ontario Street
- District was designated in 1995
- Plan was written by the City of St. Catharines Planning Department

Study Approach

- Resident surveys were conducted door-to-door by local volunteers
- Land use mapping and a streetscape evaluation was conducted
- Sales history trends were collected from GeoWarehouse and analyzed
- Key stakeholders were interviewed
- Data on requests for alterations were collected

Analysis of Key Findings

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - Promote the on-going maintenance and repair of heritage buildings by providing guidelines on sound conservation practice and on possible sources of funding
 - Ensure that the City's land use policies and regulations maintain the residential character of the area AND minimize land use conflicts
 - Allow for flexibility for those properties located on or near Ontario Street
 - Support the maintenance and production of the urban landscape character of Yates Street as well as ensuring that public undertakings are consistent with this objective
 - Introduce features that will enhance the character of the area including landscaping, street lights, street signage and pedestrian amenities
 - Maintain and preserve individual trees, tree lines and grassed boulevards
 - Provide guidelines for new development that preserves and enhances the identified heritage character of the district AND support new development only where it is demonstrated that it respects the prevailing character of the district
- Eighty-seven percent of the people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Twenty-seven of 34 properties in the district had average or above average sales history trajectories
- Application for alterations process is working
- Overall, the Yates Street Heritage Conservation District has been a successful planning initiative

Recommendations

The following aspects of the district are areas for improvement:

- Enhance public spaces by repairing roads

- Provide a grant program

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 Yates Street 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- Requests 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 HCD were examined. These districts are found in or near the following areas: Cambridge, 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 the various community sizes. The various 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 Yates Street Heritage Conservation District

2.1 Description of the District

The Yates Street Heritage Conservation District runs along Yates Street from St. Paul Street West to just past College Street. It includes parts of Trafalgar Street and Salina Street between Highway 406 and Cherry Street, as well as Norris Place and College Street between Highway 406 and Ontario Street. Some properties along Ontario Street between Salina Street and Adams Street are also included. The district consists of 114 properties that are primarily residential with mixed uses along Ontario Street.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Value of the District

The Heritage Conservation District Plan outlines three main reasons for district designation:

- “Historical associations with the Welland Canal, Merritt Family, and many other prominent citizens of early St. Catharines” (p. 2-3).
- “Excellent examples of nineteenth and early twentieth century domestic architecture executed in a number of pure styles and vernacular stylistic interpretations” (p. 2-3).
- “A particularly scenic streetscape along Yates Street and immediate environs north to part of Ontario Street which is the result of a number of elements including tree canopies, grass boulevards, relation of the buildings to the street, views, paths and focal points” (p. 2-4).

2.3 Location of the District



Figure 2: Map of Yates Street Heritage Conservation District.

2.4 Designation of the District

The designation of Yates Street was initiated by local residents. The Yates Street Heritage Conservation District Plan was prepared by the City of St. Catharines Planning Department. The Yates Street Heritage Conservation District is protected by By-law 95-301 that was passed in 1995.

The Heritage Conservation District Plan contains the following sections: heritage conservation district designation, district planning conservation policies and guidelines, planning policies, guidelines for additions, new construction and other outbuildings and demolition, guidelines for the conservation of landscapes, pedestrian amenities and streetscapes, funding as well as implementation

3.0 Study Approach

3.1 Resident Surveys

Residents of the Yates Street Heritage Conservation District were asked a series of questions relating to their experiences and satisfaction living in the district. These surveys were conducted door-to-door by local members of the Municipal Heritage Committee. Thirty-five of 127 residents answered surveys, representing a 29% response rate. The tabulated findings of the survey are presented in Appendix A.

3.2 Townscape Survey

A Townscape Survey of Yates Street was conducted in August 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 Yates Street (see Appendix B). The streetscape evaluation involves the use of a view assessment pro forma that generates scores between one and five for 25 factors in a view. A total of 12 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

People that had special knowledge of each district were interviewed to gather 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 Yates Street Heritage Conservation District. Both interviews were conducted over the phone. Those interviewed included the current Heritage Planner, as well as a local Heritage Committee member. 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 Yates Street Heritage Conservation District, the information regarding the number of applications for alterations was provided, however, their timeline for approvals was not available. A summary of this information is presented in Appendix H.

4.0 Analysis of Key Findings

4.1 Have the goals or objectives been met?

Section 3 of the District Plan lists nine goals in four broad categories: heritage properties, land used, streetscape/landscape, new development.

a) Promote the on-going maintenance and repair of heritage buildings by providing guidelines on sound conservation practice and on possible sources of funding.

The objective to maintain and conserve buildings appears to have been met. Drawing on measures collected in the Townscape Survey, conserved elements evident, quality of conservation work, and few neglected historic features all scored well. This means that visually the area is well maintained and historic elements and buildings have been conserved (see Figure 3). By extension this means the guidelines are working. However, no funding options were expressed by residents or interviewees.

b) Ensure that the City's Land use policies and regulations maintain the residential character of the area AND minimize land use conflicts.

The goals to maintain the residential character of the area and minimize land use conflicts have been met. The land-use map produced for the Townscape Survey indicates that the majority of the district is residential.

c) To allow for flexibility for those properties located on or near Ontario Street.

The goal to allow for flexibility in uses for the properties along Ontario Street has been met. The land-use survey indicates that properties along this stretch of the district are used as offices, services and public buildings.

d) Support the maintenance and production of the urban landscape character of Yates Street as well as ensuring that public undertakings are consistent with this objective.

The goal to maintain the urban landscape character and ensure consistent public works projects has been met. Public planning scored well, though the floor space quality (e.g. roads) is lacking. However, cleanliness and traffic safety, indicators of residential character, scored well.



Figure 3: An example of well maintained buildings and landscape.

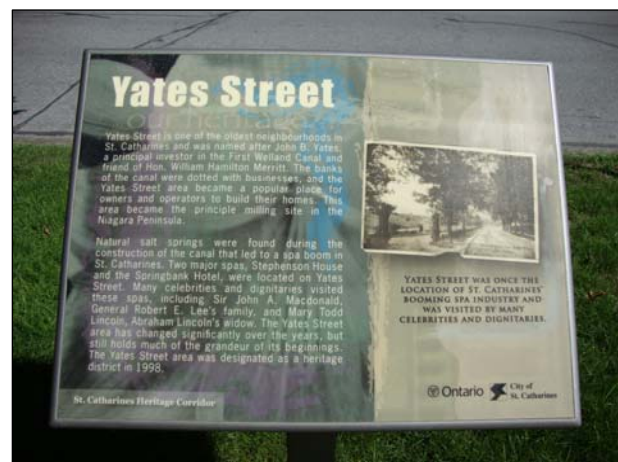


Figure 4: The interruptive signage in the district

e) *Introduce features that will enhance the character of the area including landscaping, street lights, street signage and pedestrian amenities.*

The goal to introduce features that will enhance the character of the area has been met. Street signage, place reference and historic reference all scored fairly well. Interpretive and street sign markers have been installed in the district (see Figure 4). In addition, street furniture scored well.

f) *Maintain and preserve individual trees, tree lines and grassed boulevards.*

The goal to maintain and preserve individual trees, tree lines and grassed boulevards has been met. The Townscape Survey indicates high scores for public planting, private planting and edge quality. It is also clear from the views that the grass boulevards have been maintained and that there is a significant amount of tree cover in the district.

g) *Provide guidelines for new development that preserves and enhances the identified heritage character of the district AND support new development only where it is demonstrated that it respects the prevailing character of the district.*

The goal to support compatible new development has been met. The quality of new development in the Townscape Survey is moderate, indicating that new infill and additions have been somewhat successful (see Figure 5). However, coherence and façade quality scored well, signifying that the overall appearance and character of the district has been maintained.



Figure 5: An example of an addition that is compatible with the character of the district.

4.2 Are people content?

Two questions in the resident survey addressed people's contentment with living in the district. Residents were asked if they lived in the district before or after it was designated. About half of the respondents indicated they lived there before. Of those people who lived there before, 10 of 12 indicated they felt positive at the time of designation, while only two felt neutral and no one was opposed.

Currently there is overwhelming satisfaction among residents with living in the district (see Figure 6 below). Twenty-five of 33 respondents indicated they were very satisfied with living in the district, and another five were satisfied. Overall that represents an 87% satisfaction rate. Only three people were neutral about the designation and one person expressed dissatisfaction. Given that one-third of resident's knowledge of the district is based on restrictions, this is a high satisfaction rate.

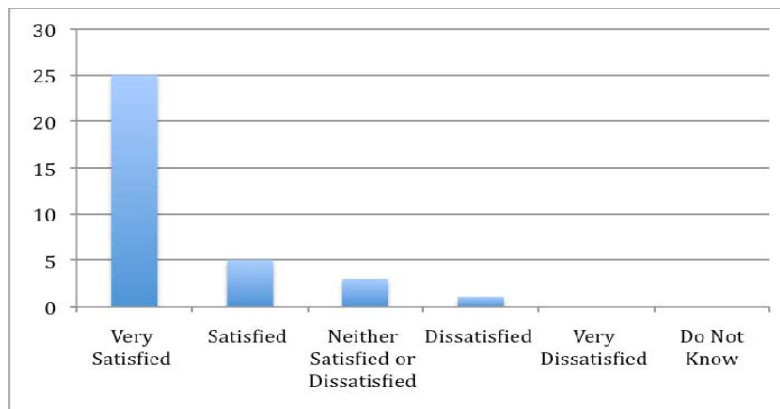


Figure 6: Number of People Satisfied in the Yates Street Heritage Conservation District.

4.3 Is it difficult to make alterations?

Of the residents surveyed, six people said they made applications for alterations. All of these applications were approved. One person indicated it took less than a month for the application to be approved, three people reported one to three months, and two people said it took over five months.

The records from the City of St. Catharines show that there have been 39 applications since 1996. There were a high number of additions (16). These records indicate that there is a lot of activity in the neighbourhood, which many explain the sharp rises in property values.

Clearly, the process for making building alterations in Yates Street appears to be working. There were no complaints even amidst a significant amount of action, and new development scored moderately well in the Townscape Survey.

4.4 Have property values been impacted?

According to the resident surveys, over half the respondents believed that the designation increased their property values, 10 people believed it had no impact, but no one believed it negatively effected property values. Furthermore, two-thirds of respondents believe that the designation will have no impact on their ability to sell their property in the future.

The data from GeoWarehouse indicated that 24 of 127 properties had sales histories. Of these 24 properties, 20 had above average sales value increases. Seven properties had average sales history trajectories and seven of the properties performed below average. A large proportion of properties had an above average sale price, indicating the district is performing better than other neighbourhoods in the immediate surroundings. It is also evident that residents perceptions about property values and the sales records are closely mirrored.

4.5 What are the key issues in the district?

a) Blog

One interviewee indicated that the Municipal Heritage Committee is working on a blog highlighting their activities. This is a unique and approachable way for the Committee to disseminate information to the local community.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

- The following objectives of the district plan have been met:
 - Promote the on-going maintenance and repair of heritage buildings by providing guidelines on sound conservation practice and on possible sources of funding
 - Ensure that the City's land use policies and regulations maintain the residential character of the area AND minimize land use conflicts
 - Allow for flexibility for those properties located on or near Ontario Street
 - Support the maintenance and production of the urban landscape character of Yates Street as well as ensuring that public undertakings are consistent with this objective
 - Introduce features that will enhance the character of the area including landscaping, street lights, street signage and pedestrian amenities
 - Maintain and preserve individual trees, tree lines and grassed boulevards
 - Provide guidelines for new development that preserves and enhances the identified heritage character of the district AND support new development only where it is demonstrated that it respects the prevailing character of the district
- Eighty-Seven percent of the people surveyed are very satisfied or satisfied with living in the district
- Twenty-seven of 34 properties in the district had average or above sales history trajectories
- The application for alterations process is working

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

5.2 Recommendations

The following aspects of the district are areas for improvement:

- Enhance public spaces by repairing roads
- Provide a grant program

Appendices

Appendix A

Tabular Results of Resident Surveys

Heritage Conservation District Name: Yates Street

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

Responses

	Owner	Tenant-Commercial	Tenant - Residential
Counts	33	0	2
Percentage	94.29	0.00	5.71

2. Are you aware you live within a HCD?

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	34	0
Percentage	100.00	0.00

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

Responses

	Before	After
Counts	16	17
Percentage	48.48	51.52

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

Responses

Positive	10
Negative	0
Neutral	2
Mixed Feelings	0

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

Responses

	Yes	No
Counts	3	14
Percentage	17.65	82.35

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

Responses

Preservation	10
Restrictions	8
Little understanding	6
No understanding	9

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

Responses 31

No	21
Yes	2
Yes, easier	2
Yes, harder	3
Don't know	2
Maybe	1

13. Comments

Responses 10

Positive	6
Negative	2

Additional Comments: Real estate people should be better educated about the façade rules and that there aren't limitations about inside (1); Students (1);

Total Population	120
Participants	35
Participation Rate	29.17

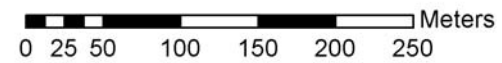
Appendix B
Land Use Maps

Ground Level Land Use in Yates Street Heritage Conservation District, St. Catharines



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 23, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_17N

Upper Level Land Use in Yates Street Heritage Conservation District, St. Catharines



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 23, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_17N






Appendix C

Map of Views

Views in Yates Street Heritage Conservation District, St. Catharines



Legend

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



Heritage Resources Centre
 August 23, 2011
 Data provider: Teranet Inc.
 Coordinate system: NAD_1983_UTM_Zone_17N

Appendix D
Photographs of Views

