

Heritage Districts Work!

Heritage Conservation District Study Summary of Findings

Heritage Conservation District Study Background

Many people consider the Heritage Conservation District to be one of the most effective tools not only for historic conservation but for good urban design and planning. Since 1980 at least 92 districts have been designated. While more are being proposed there is some residual resistance to HCDs from some members of the public. Typically resistance centres on concerns about control over one's property and property values. 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.

With funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, volunteers from the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) and Historical Societies were assisted by the Heritage Resources Centre (HRC) at the University of Waterloo to undertake a province wide research program. The most well established HCDs were examined. These districts are found in: Cobourg, Hamilton, Kingston, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Huron County, Brampton, Toronto, Ottawa, the Region of Waterloo and Thunder Bay.

Key Findings

Across the province the study found the following:

- Have the goals or objectives set out in the District Plan been met? Yes in Most cases.
- Are residents content living in the Heritage Conservation District? Overwhelmingly, yes. 511 of 681 people (75%) are happy living or owning property in a district. Only 34 people were dissatisfied and nine people very dissatisfied.
- Is it difficult to make alterations to buildings in the Heritage Conservation District? No, the average time to have alterations approved was under a month.
- Have property values been impacted by the designation of the district? Property values in districts generally rise faster than surrounding areas and often resist downturns in the market.
- The study also identified key issues in individual districts where further improvements can be made.

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