

Questions and Answers about Heritage Conservation Districts

Q: What will a Heritage Conservation District do for my neighbourhood ?

- It helps maintain your neighbourhood property values.
- It protects your neighbourhood from unsympathetic development.
- It shows support for the preservation of historic properties and neighbourhoods.
- It sends a message that you care about the quality of your neighbourhood.

Q: Could my neighbourhood be a heritage area ?

- Many neighbourhoods have unique and special characteristics which combine to make them interesting places to live. Even a wide and individualistic range of architectural styles can constitute a heritage character.
- The District Study done as part of the HCD process will define the heritage character of the area.

Q: Will designation take away my property rights ?

- It will not keep you from selling your property to anyone you like.
- It will not keep you from remodeling or otherwise improving your property.
- It cannot prevent demolition of buildings although it does provide for a waiting period while alternative solutions are examined.

Q: May I repair or improve my house or is it “frozen” ?

- No approval under the HCD is needed for
 - repairs or painting, roof replacement, landscaping,
 - installation of eavestroughs or outdoor lights;
 - any interior work;
 - exterior work not visible from the street.
- Heritage Preservation Service staff are ready to work with you to find solutions that fit the Guidelines for work requiring a heritage permit.

Q: Doesn't zoning provide adequate control on the quality of development ?

- Zoning controls the height, massing, size, setbacks and use of a building or additions.
- Zoning also controls driveway size and placement.
- Zoning provides no control over the look or architecture of a building.
- A Heritage Conservation District provides this extra level of protection.
- Ravine By-laws, Tree Protection By-laws and other development controls also continue to apply.

Q: Is there a lot of paperwork and extra red tape ?

- No extra application is required when Heritage Preservation Services reviews your Building Permit or planning approval application.
- Heritage Preservation Services reviews your plans at the same time as the Planning or Buildings Departments so that no extra time is required if work Conforms to the guidelines.
- There are no fees for the heritage permit.
- Heritage Preservation Services staff can approve most applications.
- In case of disagreement, owners have a right of appeal.

Q: Will the HCD cost me money ?

- Although maintenance of property is encouraged, it is not a requirement of the HCD.
- The effect of inclusion in a Heritage Conservation District on property values is discussed on a separate fact sheet.

Q: What happens if someone wants to do some alterations on her/his home during the process of establishing an HCD ?

- If necessary to protect a structure under threat, in the interim period, council could be asked to designate that single home.

Q: How are the guidelines set ?

- The guidelines are not very restrictive and are usually very broad in their descriptions. They must reflect the community and there can be an advisory committee from the community set up to articulate the guidelines.

Q: Are there any property tax rebates for homeowners in designated areas ?

- A program has been designed but is not currently in effect. It requires the homeowner to sign an agreement with the city not to demolish his/her home.

Q: Are there controls over the trees and riverstone walls ?

- Landscaping is not covered by an HCD but guidelines for landscaping can be added to the study to encourage people to follow them.

Q: Are commercial properties included as well ?

- No.

Q: What happens if a large group on one street is strongly opposed ?

- Chances are it would not be included in the district. A Preservation area does not have to be contiguous.

Q: Have there been cases where despite studies having been conducted, there is no HCD ?

- Yes. This has happened in areas where they did not have community support.

Q: Are there some insurance companies that will not insure a house that is in a Conservation District ?

- This has happened to houses that have been designated on their own but not usually for houses in a Conservation District. The City of Toronto has a list of insurance companies that have no problem insuring homes within a Conservation District.

Q: What items are not covered by the Conservation District guidelines?

- Paint, eavestroughs, outdoor lighting and any maintenance being done that replaces items with the same type of item.