

Town of Cobourg Heritage Master Plan



(FINAL DRAFT FOR PUBLIC REVIEW)

MHBC FILE 08109 D

Date:

March 2016

Prepared for:

Corporation of the Town of Cobourg

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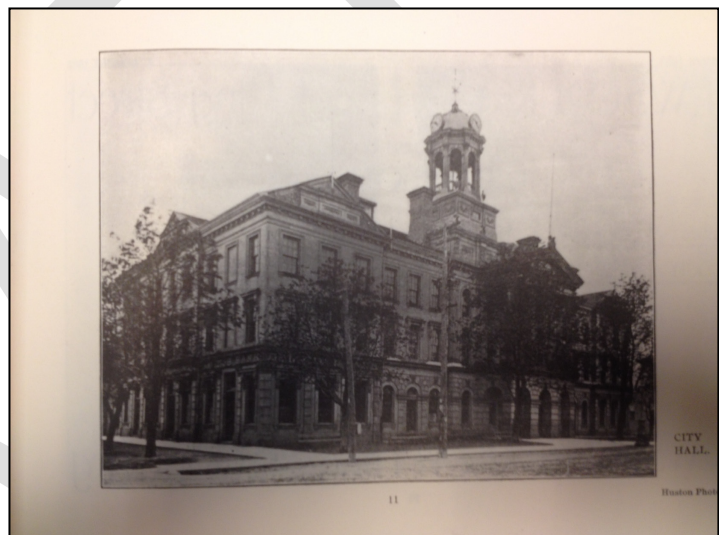
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1.0 Introduction

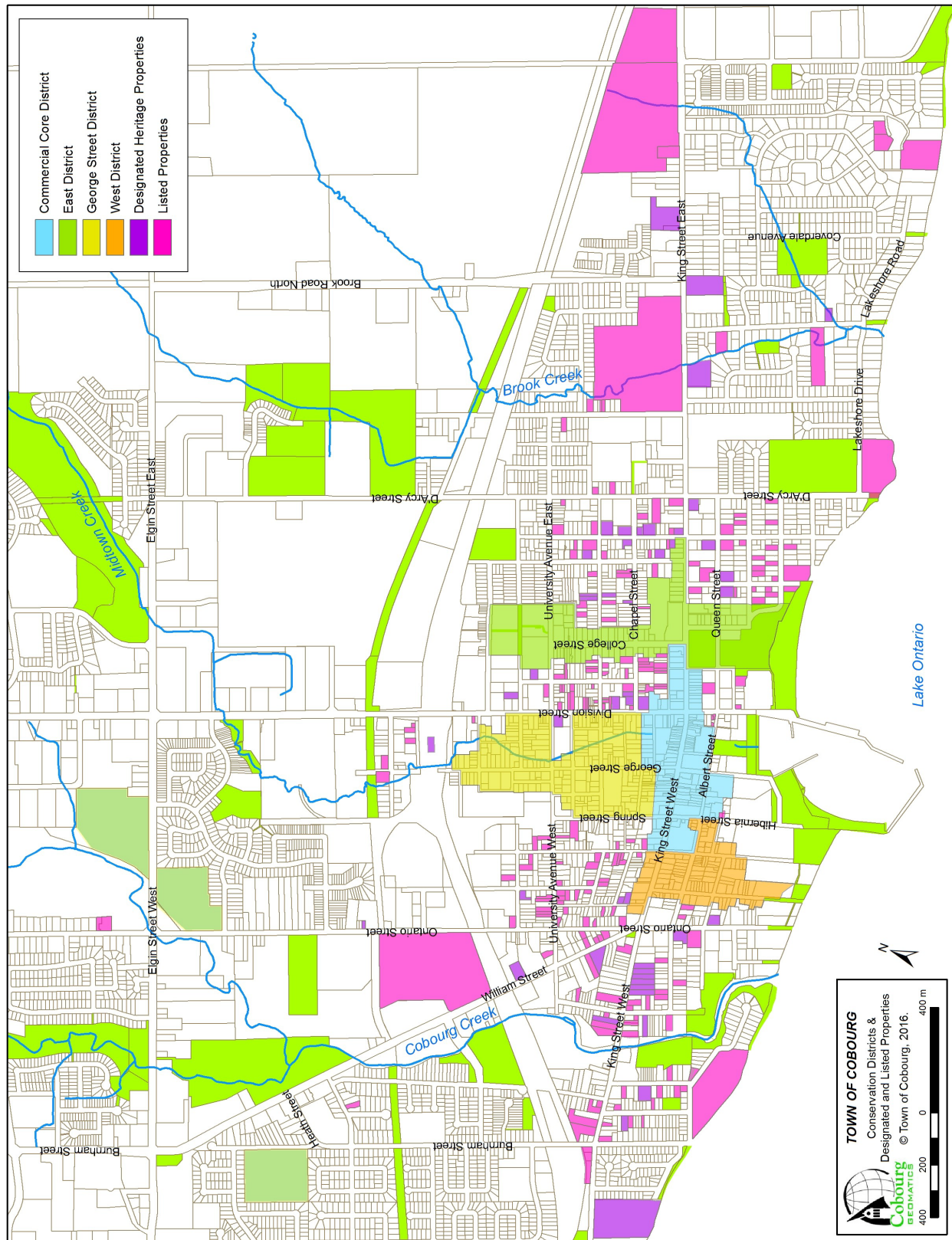
The Town of Cobourg has a wealth of cultural heritage resources that are a result of its rich history, dating from early aboriginal activities, through the late 18th century settlement, to the 20th century. Cobourg's heritage resources are an integral part of telling the story of the Town's unique historical development, and can be seen in the variety of cultural heritage resources that remain today. These include: impressive educational and civic buildings, such as the former college and Victoria Hall; fine 19th century residences of the Town's elite; vernacular residences of the working class that built the Town and worked its industries; the late 19th and early 20th century summer houses; and the cultural landscapes of the waterfront and rail corridors that spawned the Town's industries. A map of Cobourg's identified cultural heritage resources is found on the next page.

Many of the Town's heritage resources have survived and have been conserved over time by the various stewards of the properties. The wealth of heritage resources give Cobourg its distinct character and contribute to the attractiveness and vibrancy of the Town.

The Town of Cobourg is undertaking the preparation of a Heritage Master Plan, which provides an overall vision and goals for heritage conservation and management throughout the Town. In addition, the Heritage Master Plan updates the current Heritage Guidelines for Heritage Conservation Districts and provides a comprehensive set of policies and guidelines for managing change in Cobourg's Heritage Conservation Districts.



Victoria Hall in the late 1800s (source: Cobourg Illustrated).



2.0 Components of a heritage master plan

2.1 What is a Heritage Master Plan?

A Heritage Master Plan is a strategic document that will help to manage all heritage resources within the Town. This includes properties currently within the four Heritage Conservation Districts (designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*), individual properties designated by the *Ontario Heritage Act* (Part IV), archaeological resources and other potential heritage resources throughout the Town. Cultural heritage resources are defined in the Town of Cobourg Official Plan to include: *“buildings, structures, features or areas of architectural, historical or archaeological interest including cemeteries and unmarked burials and urban districts and cultural heritage landscapes”*.

The creation of a Heritage Master Plan is an important and exciting project that will achieve the following:

- Develop a vision for heritage conservation and stewardship within the Town;
- Update the existing Heritage Conservation District Plans to include guidelines that are consistent with current best practices;
- Provide a link between heritage and economic development;
- Provide clear direction for implementation of the Heritage Master Plan.



Downtown Cobourg streetscape

Through the various content and recommendations, the Heritage Master Plan will help to guide future decision-making regarding cultural heritage resources within the Town of Cobourg.

2.2 What does a Heritage Master Plan contain?

As part of the review of background materials, other heritage master plans and heritage management plans from Ontario, Canada and internationally were consulted to understand the various approaches undertaken in other locales. While there are certainly differences in the scope of work undertaken and the amount of background research completed, a common set of features was identified.

Most heritage master plans reviewed were found to contain an overview of the existing known heritage resources, an overview of the existing management approaches to heritage resources, an overview of applicable policies, an overall vision statement, and a number of strategic initiatives and directions for implementation consideration. Implementation items are often categorized and prioritized for easy reference.

2.3 What was the approach?

The Heritage Master Plan project is divided into three phases, as outlined below:

Phase 1 includes a review of background information about heritage conservation and management in Cobourg in order to understand the approach currently undertaken in the Town. A vision and themes for heritage conservation are identified through community consultation, and integrated into a Background Report outlining the findings of Phase 1. The Background Report included in **Appendix A** provided the foundation for Phase 2.

Phase 2 of the project involves the preparation of the draft Heritage Master Plan, taking into account input received from the community. The Heritage Master Plan provides an overall vision and goals for heritage conservation and management in Cobourg, and provides direction related to policies and approaches for built heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes, archaeological sites, and development in heritage-sensitive areas. The Heritage Master Plan also includes implementation recommendations, such as incentives for heritage-related initiatives, relating heritage to economic development and tourism, and integration with other planning policies and guidelines. An important component of the Heritage Master Plan is the preparation of a comprehensive set of guidelines to assist in the management of change within the Town's four existing Heritage Conservation Districts.

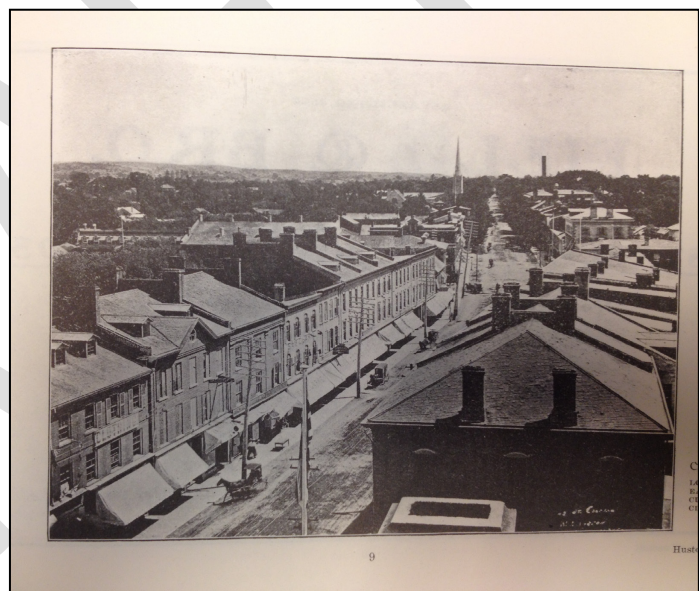
Phase 3 of the project involves the refinement and adoption of the Heritage Master Plan and related Heritage Conservation District Plan guidelines by Council.

2.4 Components of Cobourg's Heritage Master Plan

The Heritage Master Plan for Cobourg adopts an approach similar to other heritage master plan-type projects, in that a common set of topics were investigated and reported on. However, there are some key differences in the approach to the Cobourg Heritage Master Plan; first, the Background Report contained much of the policy overview and historic background about the Town; and second, the Cobourg Heritage Master Plan also contains a comprehensive set of updated guidelines for each of the Town of Cobourg's existing Heritage Conservation Districts.

As such, the various components of Cobourg's Heritage Master Plan project are as follows:

- Overview of Town history (Background Report);
- Overview of current heritage management approach and applicable policies (Background Report);
- Overview of currently protected heritage properties (Background Report and summarized in this report);
- Overview of recent policy and legislation changes (Background Report);
- Vision statement for heritage conservation (finalized through Background Report and included in this report);
- Themes for heritage conservation (finalized through Background Report and included in this report);
- Implementation recommendations and strategy (this report);
- Comprehensive policies and guidelines for Cobourg's Heritage Conservation Districts (this report and appendices);
- Recommendations regarding regular review of Heritage Conservation District Plans (this report);
- Implementation recommendations related to existing Heritage Conservation Districts (this report).



View of Downtown Cobourg in the late 1800s (source: Cobourg Illustrated).

Together, the above components form a comprehensive strategy with which the Town of Cobourg can move forward to ensure that existing heritage resources are appropriately managed, and that new heritage resources can be identified and planned for in a way that is compatible with the Town's heritage character.

3.0 Heritage Master Plan overall direction

3.1 Introduction

One of the key results from the preparation of the Background Report was the preparation of a vision statement and themes, or goals, for the Heritage Master Plan. The draft vision statement and themes were developed through the work completed during Phase 1 of the project, and were then refined for the final version of the Background Report. The Heritage Master Plan provides an effective, sustainable and realistic strategy related to heritage resources, and the vision and themes provide the basis.

3.2 Vision statement for heritage conservation

It is important to have an overall vision statement for heritage conservation, in order to help guide future decisions by the community as they relate to cultural heritage resources. Cobourg's vision statement for heritage conservation is:

To conserve and enhance cultural heritage resources and manage change so that the community can continue to grow in keeping with the heritage character of Cobourg while also preserving the vibrant small-town feel.

3.3 Themes / goals of the Heritage Master Plan

Based on the review of background material as well as the community consultation that occurred in the early stages of the project, the following important aspects were identified to address through the preparation of the Heritage Master Plan:

- 1. Protect and conserve significant cultural heritage resources over the long term.**
- 2. The small-town character of Cobourg (typified by the commercial core, low rise development, comfortable streetscapes, and a mix of land uses) is important to maintain and enhance.**
- 3. It is important to have the downtown as the economic and cultural hub of the Town to retain the small-town character.**
- 4. The waterfront is a significant defining feature of the community that provides a critical link to the downtown and an important recreational area.**

- 5. Retaining the broader character of the streetscape and neighbourhoods is equally important to conserving individual buildings.**
- 6. Investment and new development that is compatible with the character of the surrounding area should be encouraged and facilitated.**

The above themes form the basis for the later sections of this Strategic Direction report, and the various implementation recommendations for the consideration of Cobourg Council and Town staff.



Victoria Hall, a National Historic Site, in Downtown Cobourg (source: Town of Cobourg).

4.0 Implementation Strategy

4.1 Introduction

The success of any strategic exercise lies in the implementation framework and actions that are taken by a municipality to achieve desired outcomes. This section of the Strategic Direction report outlines the recommended implementation strategy for the Town of Cobourg in order to help ensure that the Town's heritage resources are appropriately conserved in the future.

This section is organized by the various themes that were identified through the community consultation process associated with Phase 1 of this project.

4.2 Theme 1: Protect and conserve significant cultural heritage resources over the long term.

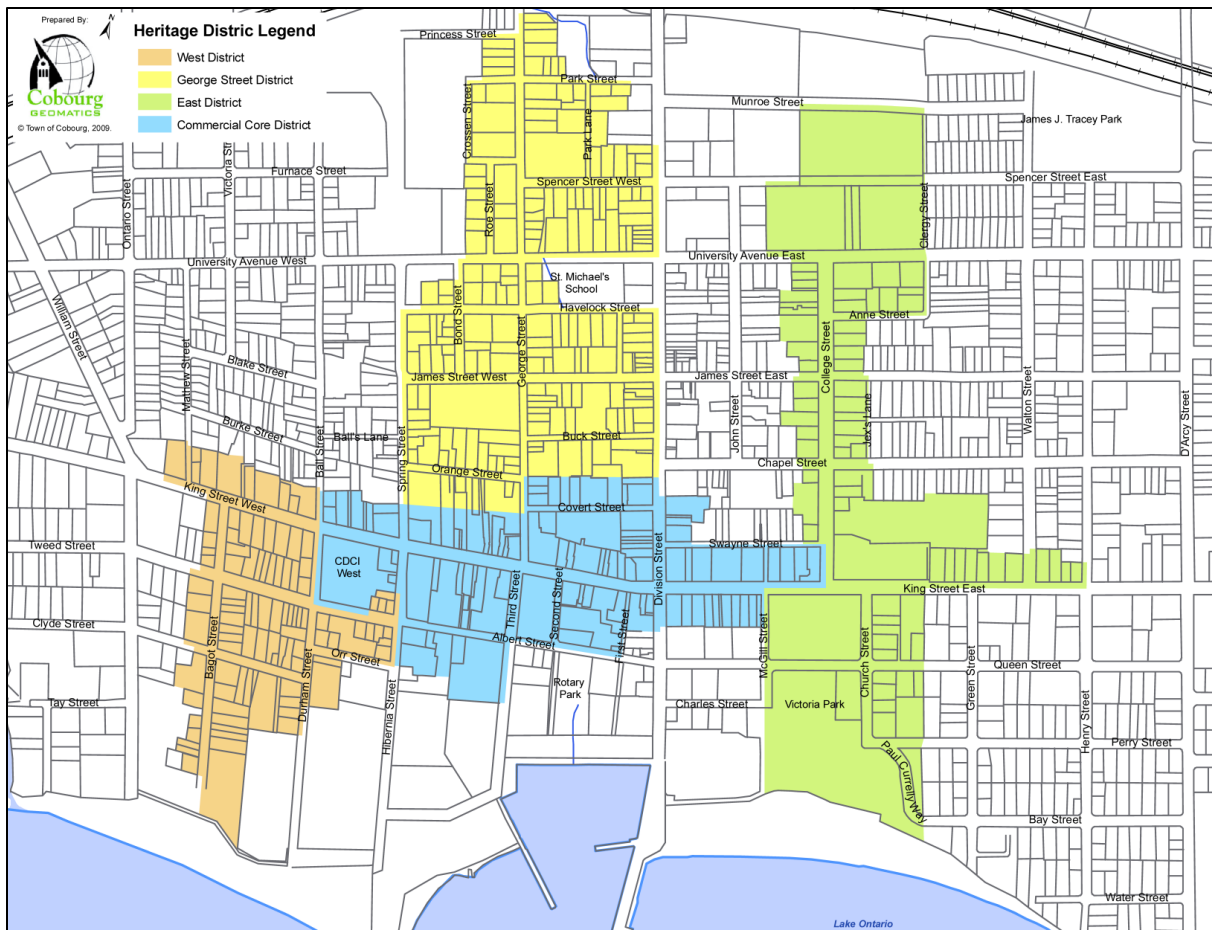
At present, the Town of Cobourg has in place mechanisms to protect, conserve and manage changes to its cultural heritage resources. These mechanisms are guided by the Official Plans for the Town of Cobourg and Northumberland County. The Town currently has four heritage conservation districts, as well as a Municipal Heritage Register containing the list of properties designated under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (heritage conservation district properties), Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* (individually designated properties) and non-designated properties of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest.

Heritage Conservation Districts

The Town of Cobourg currently has four Heritage Conservation Districts, known as: The Commercial Core District, the East District, the West District and the George Street District.

In 1990, The Town of Cobourg adopted Municipal By-Law #27-90 (dated February 19, 1990) which designated the historic commercial core along King Street and residential areas to the east and west of the downtown commercial area. The three areas were selected as a starting point from which Cobourg could build from by adding other areas as heritage conservation districts in the future. An amending by-law to No. 27-90 was adopted on November 25, 1991 (By-Law 118-91). The by-law separated the previously adopted Heritage Conservation District into three, now known as the Commercial Core Heritage Conservation District, the East Heritage Conservation District and the West Heritage Conservation District.

The George Street Heritage Conservation District was established in 2003 with the adoption of By-Law 7-2003. The by-law was adopted following a 2002 Study prepared by Paul Dilse.



Existing Heritage Conservation Districts in Cobourg (source: Town of Cobourg).

Heritage Conservation District updates

An important component of the Town's Heritage Master Plan project is to comprehensively update the various current guidelines for the Town's Heritage Conservation Districts. When the existing Districts were originally designated, the *Ontario Heritage Act* recommended, but did not require the preparation of a separate heritage conservation district plan document. Some design guidelines were included in the respective Heritage Conservation District Studies, and over the years the Town of Cobourg has developed additional guidelines to assist in guiding change within the Town's Heritage Conservation Districts. These guidelines and the heritage conservation districts themselves were adopted prior to the 2005 changes to the *Ontario Heritage Act* that provide specific guidance on what must be contained in Heritage Conservation District Plans.

The purpose of this component of the Heritage Master Plan is to update the existing guidelines and bring the District guidance into conformity with the current policy framework. A review of existing District boundaries was not conducted as part of this project. The approach in preparing the updated guidelines was to prepare a separate Heritage Conservation District Plan for each of the four existing Heritage Conservation Districts. This allows for each District to have an

enforceable document that will help to guide future conservation efforts and proposed development within the Districts. There is understandably some shared content and common guidelines between each of the Districts, which is reflective of the desire for a consistent approach in the management of the Districts, as well as there being common areas to address.

The revised Heritage Conservation District Plans for the Commercial Core, East, West, and George Street Heritage Conservation Districts are included as **Appendices B, C, D, and E**, respectively.

Heritage Conservation District review process

It is not unusual for municipal plans and guidelines to be reviewed from time to time. Some reviews are required by statute, while others are more informal and undertaken as good municipal housekeeping. The existing *Ontario Heritage Act* contains no specific requirements for formal review and update. For the Commercial Core Heritage Conservation District, East Heritage Conservation District, West Heritage Conservation District, and George Street Heritage Conservation District, it is considered appropriate that a formal review be undertaken from time to time in order to assess performance of the District Plans and make potential revisions.

It is anticipated that Town staff will continue to monitor activity within the Districts. In particular, the following should be subject to review:

- The number of heritage permit applications submitted and approved;
- The types of alterations that are occurring within the Districts; and
- The number, type and value of funding applications for eligible conservation work.

At reasonable intervals (perhaps every 7-10 years), the Town of Cobourg should embark on a review of the existing Heritage Conservation District Plans, related heritage permit activity and other associated incentives.

It is advised that the following activities should form part of the review:

- Formal engagement and dialogue with the community and all interested parties;
- Development of a “score card” to check on what objectives have been achieved and those that have not been fulfilled for each District Plan; and
- Recommendations for any potential revisions to the District Plans based on past activities and heritage conservation best practices.

Additional potential heritage conservation districts

Additional areas within the Town may be identified in the future for study to determine the merit in establishing additional heritage conservation districts. There are several steps recommended in order to assist in assessing and prioritizing areas of the Town for potential study as heritage conservation districts. These are:

- 1) Monitor: The first step is to monitor areas of the Town in order to determine which area(s) have the potential for study as additional heritage conservation districts.
- 2) Identify opportunities and/or threats: Through monitoring, it would become apparent whether or not change is occurring within the area(s) that would benefit from the guidance and oversight of a heritage conservation district. This change could be consistent with the character of the area or potentially detrimental to the area.
- 3) Community support: Community support is key to proceeding with a heritage conservation district, as there should be some level of community support for proceeding with the study and potential designation of an area as a heritage conservation district.
- 4) Study and designation: Following the above steps, the Town would proceed with the study and potential designation of an area in accordance with the requirements of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and the guidance published by MTCS.

Guidance regarding the process to evaluate areas as well as criteria for the consideration of designation have been published by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) as part of the Ontario Heritage Toolkit, and is meant to elaborate on the guidance contained within the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The MTCS publication guides all aspects of the study and designation process from start to finish and is a valuable tool. In general, the process involves: an examination of the heritage resources to determine merit, public participation, the formulation of policies and guidelines to manage change within an area, and adoption of a designating by-law.

Some areas (such as Corktown) have already been identified by Town staff and the Municipal Heritage Committee for consideration, and additional possible focus areas include the area between the East District and George Street District, as well as the area west of the West District. Other areas of the Town may also warrant consideration. It is recommended that Town staff and the Municipal Heritage Committee continue to monitor areas of the Town for potential study, and proceed accordingly as funds and community support allow.

Individually designated and listed properties

The Town of Cobourg has 46 properties that are designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* as individual properties of cultural heritage value or interest outside the four Heritage Conservation Districts. Most of the properties are located within the residential neighbourhoods

north and south of King Street while others are properties on King Street (both commercial and residential examples). The construction date of the properties ranges from 1850s - 1890s, with a few early 20th century buildings. The properties are designated for their architectural value, historic associations to notable persons, groups or events in Cobourg's history, or their contextual contribution to an area.

The Municipal Heritage Register of non-designated properties of cultural heritage value or interest contains 218 properties dating from the early 1800s to the early 1900s, though several properties do not have identified dates of construction.

All designated and listed properties have a level of protection through the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Given that some protection is currently in place regardless of whether the property is designated or listed, it would be appropriate for the Town of Cobourg to focus efforts on broader areas and resources, as recommended elsewhere in this report. It would however be beneficial for the Town to continue distribute information outlining the benefits of heritage designation and incentives to property owners on the Register, in order to determine if there is interest in moving properties towards designation under Part IV. Enhanced communication related to the benefits of being designated or listed would ideally lead to the creation of a situation where residents come forward to request their properties to be either designated or listed.



The Old Cobourg Public Library (previously the Trinity United / Methodist Church Sunday School), designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act ([source](#): Wendy McQueen).

Heritage resources and property standards

The conservation of heritage attributes is perhaps the most important aspect of ensuring that the heritage character of a property is maintained. The guidance contained within a heritage conservation district plan is aimed at conserving the heritage attributes of what makes an area special and unique. In addition, the information contained within the designating by-law for a property designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act* can be valuable in ensuring heritage attributes are conserved.

Generally, a well-kept property will ensure that heritage attributes and therefore heritage building fabric are conserved. Municipalities also have Property Standards By-laws that help ensure that all properties are kept up to a minimum standard. Some municipalities (including Cobourg) have also taken advantage of a provision that allows for an enhanced level of protection for heritage

properties. This enhanced level of control permits the Town to issue orders to ensure that heritage attributes of a property (as identified in the designation by-law) are being appropriately conserved and protected. With this enhanced language in the Property Standards By-law, the Town has the highest level of tools available to enforce property standards.

Cultural heritage landscapes

An emerging area of interest related to cultural heritage conservation is the identification and protection of cultural heritage landscapes. The Town of Cobourg currently recognizes the potential identification of cultural heritage landscapes in the Official Plan, but to date no significant cultural heritage landscapes have been identified within Town policy documents. While heritage conservation districts can be



The shore of Lake Ontario in Cobourg

considered a form of cultural heritage landscape, it would be beneficial for the Town to pursue the identification of other cultural heritage landscapes that may or may not be best protected through designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. Preliminary work related to this could be conducted as a component of the review and update of the Register.

Archaeological resources

The cultural heritage evaluation process should include not only built heritage and cultural landscapes, but also consider archaeological resources. There are two types of archaeological considerations, known archaeological sites and areas where there is the potential for archaeological resources to be present.

The appropriate identification, recording, and retention of cultural features both above and below ground contribute to the successful management of all heritage resources including archaeology. Accordingly, all applications for development, such as construction activities included under the *Planning Act*, *Conservation Authorities Act*, or the *Building Code Act*, as well as site-specific Zoning By-law and Official Plan Amendments within or around areas of archaeological potential must be reviewed for their possible impacts to archaeological resources that may be present. This should also apply to regional and municipal development, infrastructure projects involving land disturbance, and Environmental Assessments. All applications involving soil disturbance activities should be reviewed by Town staff and if not previously assessed an archaeological assessment may be required prior to any on-site work.

Development applicants must retain a licensed archaeologist to conduct a Stage 1-2 archaeological assessment prior to conducting any soil disturbing activities. At the completion of this assessment, the archaeological consultant will submit a report to the MTCS, who will review the report and determine if the assessment meets the current licensing and technical standards. If the assessment complies with current Ministry standards and did not result in the identification of any significant archaeological resources, MTCS will issue a letter indicating that all Provincial concerns regarding archaeological resource conservation have been met. The Town may then clear the planning application of any further archaeological concern.

If the assessment results in the identification and documentation of one or more significant archaeological resources, appropriate mitigation and/or preservation options must be recommended by a licensed archaeologist and approved by the MTCS. Upon full completion of the mitigation, the archaeological consultant will provide a detailed report of this work and its results to the MTCS, who will review the work and recommend to the consultant and the approval authority that there are no further archaeological concerns, or that additional mitigations be undertaken. In the event that the proponent chooses to not proceed with all necessary archaeological assessment and/or site mitigations prior to, and in support of development application, the completion of these activities to MTCS standards and approvals must be included as a condition of draft approval.

Some municipalities across Ontario have developed Archaeological Master / Management Plans in order to assess archaeological resources and plan for their conservation. The creation of such a plan involves inventorying areas in a municipality that have known archaeological sites or areas with the potential for archaeological resources, and preparing processes or procedures for managing resources within the municipality.

Cultural heritage resources and sustainability

There has been an interest in sustainability in recent years, and this has included sustainability related to heritage resources. Energy conservation and sustainability are often linked to each other. Energy conservation typically involves making buildings more efficient, and may also involve the installation of green energy projects. Energy conservation can also be thought of in the sense of sustainability, as retaining existing buildings and systems (e.g. windows and doors) saves the energy required to fabricate materials for new construction. Space is also saved in landfill sites in relation to construction debris if existing materials are maintained. It is often said that the most energy efficient building is the one that is already standing.

In order to help ensure that energy conservation and sustainability are taken into account related to cultural heritage resources, the Heritage Conservation District Plans include specific guidance related to this matter.

Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments

The preparation of a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (CHIA) is typically required in order to understand, assess and mitigate potential impacts to a heritage resource as a result of development activity. The Town of Cobourg Official Plan (Section 8.3.1.vii) requires the preparation of a CHIA where development is proposed within or adjacent to a site which contains a resource designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act* (Part IV of Part V). The CHIA is required to address the following items to the satisfaction of the Town:

- a) *“the proposal will not adversely impact the heritage significance of the property or the area in which it is located or to which it is adjacent; or,*
- b) *demonstrate that it is not physically feasible to maintain the cultural heritage building or structure, landscape or resource, where that building, structure, landscape or resource is not designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.”*

It is not uncommon for municipalities in Ontario to have a formal Terms of Reference to guide the preparation of a CHIA, in order to ensure a consistent approach to the report preparation. The Terms of Reference would cover all aspects of the CHIA process, and may include matters such as qualifications of the author, required report contents, process, possible peer review, and other matters that are deemed necessary. The Town of Cobourg does not presently have a Terms of Reference to guide CHIA preparation, and it would be beneficial to implement this in the future.

4.2.1 Recommendations

The Town of Cobourg is advanced in efforts that have been undertaken to conserve and protect heritage resources within the Town. These efforts include the designation of 4 Heritage Conservation Districts under Part V of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, the designation of 46 properties under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and the inclusion of 218 properties on the Municipal Heritage Register of Non-Designated Properties. There are also other broad cultural heritage resources within the Town that should be assessed and proper protection implemented where applicable. As such, the following recommendations are made with respect to Theme 1:

- 1a. That the Town of Cobourg adopt a dedicated heritage conservation district plan to conserve the character of and manage change within each of the Town’s Heritage Conservation Districts.
- 1b. That the Town of Cobourg implement a review process every 7-10 years related to all heritage conservation districts in order to help ensure that the documents remain up to date with current heritage planning best practices, and that they reflect the needs of the community.
- 1c. That the Town of Cobourg investigate other areas of the Town for potential study and designation as heritage conservation districts or cultural heritage landscapes, and put in

place appropriate protection measures for identified areas. Work has already been undertaken regarding a preliminary assessment of the Corktown area, so this would be a logical starting point. Other areas identified include the area west of the West District, and the area along Division Street between the George Street District and the East District.

- 1d. That the Town of Cobourg undertake a review of the properties currently within the Municipal Register of Non-Designated properties, and identify properties that are the highest priority to pursue for potential designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. The evaluation criteria utilized should follow Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) best practices. This should be completed as follow-up to the work in 1c related to the focus on broader areas.
- 1e. That the Town of Cobourg continue to provide information to property owners about the benefits of heritage designation under the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- 1f. That the Town of Cobourg Municipal Heritage Committee continue to review properties, and broader areas such as landscapes within the Town for potential inclusion on the heritage register. This can be undertaken as a follow-up of the work referenced in 1c.
- 1g. That the Town of Cobourg make archaeological acceptance by the MTCS a condition of draft approval to ensure that appropriate levels of archaeological assessment are conducted prior to any ground disturbance activities and that development activities do not violate the *Ontario Heritage Act*.
- 1h. That the Town of Cobourg consider creating an Archaeological Master/Management Plan for the Town. This plan would provide a useful tool for the Town to guide the implementation of management strategies related to archaeological resources.
- 1i. That the Town of Cobourg prepare a formal Terms of Reference to guide the completion of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments (CHIAs) for development proposals involving heritage properties.

4.3 Theme 2: The small-town character of Cobourg (typified by the commercial core, low rise development, comfortable streetscapes, and a mix of land uses) is important to maintain and enhance.

Through the community consultation process, the 'small-town' character of Cobourg was identified as an important feature to maintain and enhance. The character of Cobourg as a small town is typified by the following features:

- Commercial core, which acts as a gathering place for people to conduct business, socialize, partake in community events, and visit for institutional purposes (e.g. banks).
- Low rise development, typically in the form of single-detached, semi-detached, townhome developments, and apartments located above storefronts in the downtown area. Cobourg, being a larger town, also contains some apartment type dwellings and condominium projects in former institutional buildings.
- Comfortable streetscape, stemming from the low rise form of development within the Town and the abundance of street trees and other landscape features.
- Mix of land uses, providing for a range of activities and land uses throughout the Town of Cobourg. These include parks and open space, residential areas, commercial uses, industrial areas and the downtown mixed use area.
- Sense of community, feeling of inclusion and knowing one's neighbours, which could be referred to as the 'people element'.

All the above features combine to give Cobourg a distinct 'small-town' character that should be preserved and enhanced to help give the Town strength. The Town presently has various types of guidelines with the overall goal to maintain the small-town character of Cobourg. These are generally found within the Town's urban design guidelines and include various aspects of community design and streetscape design. It is important to continue to maintain current design standards that reflect the overall goal and vision of the Town of Cobourg.





Examples of some of the features that give Cobourg its small-town feel.

One way to help maintain and enhance the small-town character of Cobourg is to build support by working with other groups with a heritage focus (e.g. ACO, museums, Northumberland County) to get information to people about heritage events and programs, and also to help support conservation. The Town can play a key role here.

4.3.1 Recommendations

Many of the Town's current initiatives and policies in place are aimed at maintaining Cobourg's small-town character. Some additional matters have been identified that the Town could pursue related to the small-town character. Accordingly, the following recommendations are made with respect to Theme 2:

- 2a. That the Town of Cobourg continue to implement policies and guidelines, including the Town's urban design guidelines, to support new development that is compatible with the generally low-mid rise scale and small-town character of Cobourg.
- 2b. That the Town of Cobourg consider preparation of a Town-wide landscape strategy in order to focus on matters such as street trees and other landscaping initiatives.
- 2c. That the Town of Cobourg consider branding and marketing initiatives aimed at celebrating the small-town character of Cobourg. This could be done for the benefit of Town residents but also for tourism related purposes.
- 2d. That the Town of Cobourg continue to provide information to the community with respect to heritage matters, and explore possible partnerships with other like-minded groups within the community.

4.4 Theme 3: It is important to have the downtown as the economic and cultural hub of the Town to retain the small-town character.

The downtown area of Cobourg currently functions as the economic and cultural hub of the Town, and it is important that this function continues into the future. The Town currently has policies in place to help ensure that businesses with an important community draw, such as banks, remain within the downtown area. In addition, the Town has located municipal offices within the core, and there are other community facilities such as the library located near the downtown. While these policies and practices have helped to ensure people are coming downtown, it is also important to create other draws to encourage people to come downtown. If downtown remains an active place within Cobourg, businesses will want to locate there, residents and tourists will want to continue to visit, and people will also want to reside close to downtown.

Heritage tourism

An important way to help ensure that downtown remains the economic and cultural hub of Cobourg is through a tourism strategy focused on the features of downtown, but also on the heritage aspects of downtown. Cobourg has a comprehensive tourism website at present, focusing on the many attractions within and around the Cobourg area. One of the focus areas is heritage, and downtown is one of the places of interest that is highlighted.



King Street in Downtown Cobourg.

In order to assist with building a reputation of the Town as a heritage community, the Town could build on past awards received (e.g. Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Community) when creating tourism strategies for the Town. In addition, the Town could pursue recognition through various other means.

A way to build on the work completed to date related to tourism is to approach heritage tourism through the promotion of a network of conserved and enhanced cultural heritage assets. These

areas could be linked together by well-marked and welcoming routes through the downtown (and elsewhere), and would assist in providing enhanced variety in available visitor experiences.

Signage and wayfinding

Signage and wayfinding are important features of a streetscape that help people to navigate an area, and well-designed features are also welcoming for visitors and residents alike. Successful wayfinding is especially important to be able to guide tourists, visitors and local residents along safe and interesting pathways that showcase important places, heritage buildings, cultural features, streetscapes and parks. Successful wayfinding not only provides for pedestrian traffic, but also vehicular traffic (e.g. clear directions to municipal parking lots)

Another component related to signage and wayfinding is locations within the Town where residents and visitors can go to obtain community information. This information could relate to community events or tourism information. Current locations where this information is available include such community buildings as Victoria Hall and the Cobourg Library, as well as local businesses. It is important to maintain this access to community information and also look for opportunities to enhance access in the future.

Offices within heritage buildings

As is the case with many downtown areas in Ontario towns, Cobourg has a variety of buildings that would be quite suitable for office uses. Some buildings have underused areas in upper floors that could be adapted to office use or reused for other community purposes either by the Town or other tenants.

In order to help encourage the continued use of buildings within the core area for a variety of purposes, the Town could adopt a 'heritage first' policy to consider the use of older buildings when seeking office and institutional space. In addition, efforts could be undertaken to encourage other businesses to adopt a similar approach, either through Council resolution or through efforts undertaken by the Town's of Cobourg / Northumberland County economic development offices.



*Existing signage in Downtown
Cobourg.*

4.4.1 Recommendations

In order to help ensure that the downtown remains the economic and cultural hub of Cobourg, the following recommendations are made with respect to Theme 3:

- 3a. That the Town of Cobourg complete and implement the Downtown Master Plan to further strengthen the Downtown's role.
- 3b. That the Town of Cobourg consider the reuse of older buildings (especially near downtown) when seeking additional office and institutional space.
- 3c. That the Town of Cobourg encourage businesses and government agencies to adopt a 'heritage first' policy when seeking additional office and institutional space within the Town (especially near downtown).
- 3d. That the Town of Cobourg investigate opportunities for recognition as a heritage community, possibly through awards submissions.
- 3e. That the Town of Cobourg implement enhanced signage and wayfinding initiatives in the downtown area. Potential initiatives could include interpretative signage celebrating Cobourg's history, signage helping people get to important destinations within the downtown, and signage establishing linkages between the downtown and adjoining areas.
- 3f. That the Town of Cobourg consider the preparation of a tourism strategy that identifies Cobourg's heritage as a draw for people to visit, in order to assist with focusing efforts and provide a clear path for tourism initiatives particularly related to heritage.
- 3g. That the Town of Cobourg consider a Downtown location when considering the establishment of additional cultural facilities within the Town, in order to complement existing facilities and destinations.
- 3h. That the Town of Cobourg continue promote the Downtown as a place to host festivals, cultural events and other activities in Cobourg.

4.5 Theme 4: The waterfront is a significant defining feature of the community that provides a critical link to the downtown and an important recreational area.

A waterfront immediately adjacent to a downtown area is an enviable asset for any town, and a rare asset for Ontario small towns. Cobourg's beach and waterfront area are significant defining features of the Town and are also important for recreational activities, including boating, fishing, fitness, and beach activities. The close proximity of the waterfront and beach to downtown is an added asset that can and should be strengthened and celebrated.

Through the community consultation process associated with this project, there was an importance placed on the waterfront as a community asset. There was also great interest expressed in ensuring the waterfront remained as an important recreational area for the town. Various aspects of the waterfront were noted as important, including the marina, beach, campground and boardwalk / trails.



Cobourg Harbour looking towards Victoria Beach

The Town has recognized the importance of the waterfront area through various studies and policy directions in the past, including the creation of a community improvement area for the waterfront, as well as a Parks Master Plan with a specific detailed section addressing the waterfront. Specific to the Parks Master Plan, various components of the waterfront are investigated, and recommendations provided for enhancements to particular features.

Improvement to connections within and to / from the waterfront is a key focus, which supports the Heritage Master Plan goal of better linkages between the waterfront and the downtown. These initiatives have laid an important groundwork to ensure that the waterfront remains a key feature of Cobourg and an important destination within the Town. The area between the Downtown and the waterfront has potential for redevelopment in the future as the Town continues to grow. Any development permitted should function as a linkage between the waterfront and Downtown, not a barrier.

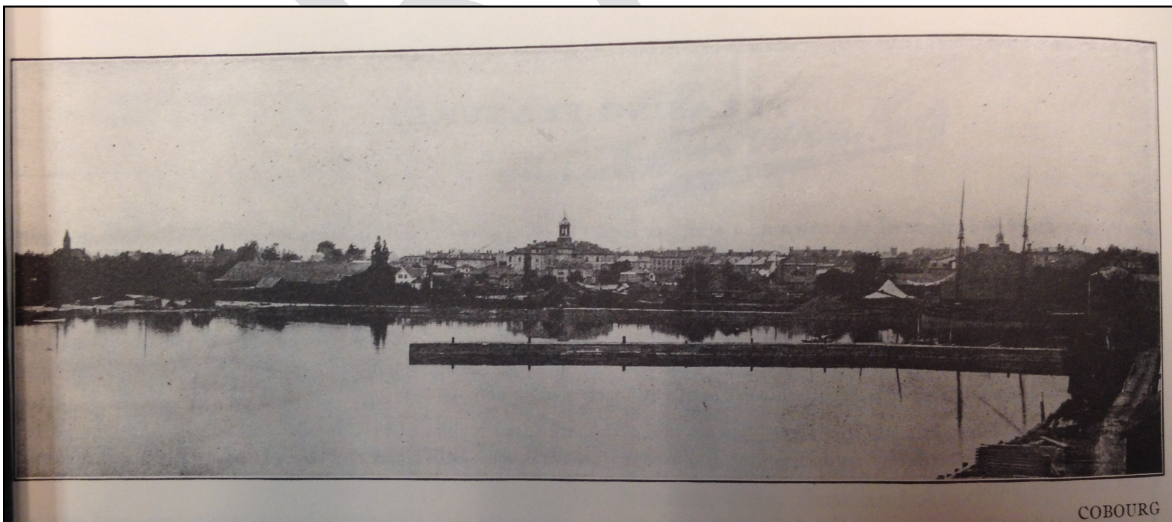
4.5.1 Recommendations

In order to help ensure that the waterfront remains an important community asset that is linked to the downtown, the following recommendations are made with respect to Theme 4:

- 4a. That the Town of Cobourg continue to implement the Parks Master Plan direction related to the waterfront as a way to ensure the importance of the recreational area is maintained.
- 4b. That the Town of Cobourg continue to ensure a coordinated planning approach between the waterfront and the Downtown through the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan.
- 4c. That the Town of Cobourg work on a coordinated strategy to improve linkages between the downtown and waterfront areas as a way to ensure that both areas remain vibrant and that visitors to one area also visit the other.



Victoria Beach



Cobourg's harbour and waterfront in the late 1800s. Victoria Hall is visible in the centre of the photo. (source: Cobourg Illustrated).

4.6 Theme 5: Retaining the broader character of the streetscape and neighbourhoods is equally important to conserving individual buildings.

Through the community consultation program, it was recognized that the character of Cobourg comes not only through the individual buildings and properties, but also the overall streetscape character of many of the older areas of the Town. While the streetscapes in some of these older areas are currently protected by the Town's existing Heritage Conservation Districts, there are other areas of the Town where the streetscape contributes greatly to the area's character. It is also important to continue to build the Town's street canopy through planting efforts in newer areas of the Town.

Cultural heritage landscapes

As noted under Theme 1, it is recommended that the Town initiate a cultural heritage landscape study to identify areas of the Town for potential protection as cultural heritage landscapes. It may be that many older areas of the Town (such as Corktown and areas adjacent to existing Districts) are identified through this process, and recommendations put in place to protect the character of these areas either through designation as additional heritage conservation districts, or the inclusion of specific policies in the Town's Official Plan related to these areas.

Streetscape management plans

Streetscape management plans can be used as a means of providing a broad design strategy and context for future physical, above-ground, improvements in the public realm. Usually management plans also contain urban design principles and guidance on design intent that together provide a bridge between the general policy provisions of the Official Plans and specific detailed design drawings and specifications necessary for implementation. The Town of Cobourg already has in place a set of fairly recent urban design guidelines, which also provide some direction regarding streetscape improvements. This information could be used as a basis for work on a specific streetscape management plan.

Depending on the type of streetscape and the goals, a variety of matters which fall within the public realm may be addressed including:

- road, sidewalk, and boulevard construction;
- light poles and luminaires;
- the planting of street trees;
- installation of traffic calming devices such as bump-outs or speed humps;

- installation of street furniture, such as planters, waste receptacles, and bike racks;
- street signage,
- kiosks,
- public art.

Should a full streetscape management plan not be prepared, individual components, such as lighting, wayfinding, and street tree plantings could be pursued as important enhancement programs.

4.6.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with respect to Theme 5:

- 5a. That the Town of Cobourg include a review of broader landscape features such as neighbourhoods, farms, schools and parks in the work undertaken as part of Recommendation 1c in order to identify potential cultural heritage landscapes, and put in place appropriate protection measures.
- 5b. That the Town of Cobourg investigate the possibility of implementing a streetscape management plan for key streets within the Town to ensure that activities undertaken within the public realm conserve the character of the various streetscapes.
- 5c. That the Town of Cobourg continue to implement a street tree maintenance and management program to ensure that street trees remain healthy and are replaced as needed.

4.7 Theme 6: Investment and new development that is compatible with the character of the surrounding area should be encouraged and facilitated.

It is anticipated that the Town of Cobourg will continue to evolve and grow as it has in the past. New investment and development is certainly encouraged, but this growth must be undertaken in a manner that is compatible with the character of the surrounding areas. The Town has in place guidelines to assist in directing new development, and additional work conducted through this project has resulted in the preparation of dedicated Heritage Conservation District Plans for each of the Heritage Conservation Districts. These documents will guide new development within portions of the Town, and the existing Town Official Plan policies will guide new development in other areas of the Town in the future.

Incentives

In the first phase of this project, the community expressed an interest in a review being undertaken of the existing financial incentives as a way to help encourage compatible new development and infill. The Town of Cobourg has in place several types of financial incentives, including:

- Heritage loan program: providing a loan for exterior restoration projects on buildings designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, up to a maximum of \$15,000.
- Heritage tax incentive program: providing a grant equal to the annual increase in the Town portion of the property taxes resulting from an increase in assessment as a direct result of work undertaken on a specific project. The grant may run for up to 10 years.
- Permit fee program: providing a rebate for fees related to restoration, renovation and reconstruction initiatives within the Commercial Core. Planning fees are waived, and permit fees are discounted by 50%.
- Development charges credit: providing credits for redevelopment projects utilizing existing buildings.

The concern expressed by the public and Town staff was that while the existing financial incentives are beneficial, they are not necessarily meeting the needs of the community and are therefore not being used to their full extent possible.

Related to heritage properties, the authority to provide financial incentives to heritage resource conservation is established under both the *Ontario Heritage Act* and the *Municipal Act*. Sections 39 and 45 of the *Ontario Heritage Act* provide that municipalities may establish by-laws to make

grants or loans to owners of designated heritage properties and Section 365.2 of the *Municipal Act* makes provisions for enabling municipal tax rebates to such properties.

Heritage grants are usually the most manageable of all financial incentives. Capital budget allocations are typically made in a municipality's budgeting process. Ideally a program commitment of at least three to five years is beneficial so that the local community and property owners can plan within a known framework. The start-up year is usually a slow year with the final year of the program typically witnessing a rush of applications and demand on funds. Municipal heritage grants can be focused either on particular building types (residential, commercial industrial and so on), building features (roofs, foundations, or windows) or specific areas within a municipality such as brownfields or heritage conservation districts. Total program commitments and grant amounts may vary depending on municipal priorities but they must be of a sufficient amount to make applying worthwhile and be of benefit to the property owner in addressing substantial conservation efforts such as a re-roofing project. Grants may be organized on a first come-first served basis or by way of an annual or semi-annual competition ideally synchronized with the relevant construction season.

Financial incentive programs provided in the form of a grant gives the municipality control in what type of work is "eligible" and that the actual work is completed (to the municipality's approval) and fully paid. Requiring the property owner to match (or be responsible for a percentage of the costs) also ensures the property owner's commitment. Heritage grants or loans specifically target restoration and conservation efforts and are not intended to provide financial assistance for routine maintenance of these properties or for costs incurred that are not directly tied to the heritage features. It should not be the intent of the municipality to provide financial assistance to property owners for generally maintaining their property – as all properties, heritage or not, should be maintained in accordance with property standards.

The Downtown Master Plan currently being prepared for the Town of Cobourg contains a Community Improvement Plan component, and is also expected to review various incentives that could be utilized within the Town. The review and implementation of incentives should be coordinated in order to ensure a comprehensive incentives package related to Downtown Cobourg.

Vacant areas within downtown buildings

Through the community consultation process, it was identified that a concern exists related to the upper floors of some downtown buildings being vacant. It was felt that the existing tax structure favours owners of buildings leaving upper floors vacant because of reduced property tax amounts. This problem is not unique to Cobourg, and in fact many towns across the Province

experience similar situations. Potential solutions could involve changes to the tax structure, or providing incentives to utilizing upper floors.

Zoning By-law regulations

Through the community consultation program associated with Phase 1 of the Heritage Master Plan project, it was pointed out by members of the local Architectural Conservancy of Ontario (ACO) branch that there are discrepancies between the existing zoning regulations for a number of properties in Cobourg and the scale of development that would be appropriate within certain areas. A summary document was prepared by the ACO outlining the various discrepancies, and provided for consideration.

A preliminary review of the zoning in question has been undertaken, and it appears that there are some refinements that could be made. It would be appropriate to undertake this work as part of a housekeeping amendment to the Zoning By-law in the future. In the meantime, the policies and guidelines contained within the Heritage Conservation District Plans for these areas will direct the appropriate built form of any proposed redevelopment that may occur.

4.7.1 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with respect to Theme 6:

- 6a. That the Town of Cobourg undertake a comprehensive review of existing incentives programs in order to understand where improvements can be made in order to help program up-take.
- 6b. That the Town of Cobourg complete the preparation and implementation of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan, including implementation of appropriate incentives.
- 6c. That the Town of Cobourg work with other municipalities and the Province in order to address concerns related to the benefit of reduced property taxes in upper floors of downtown buildings.
- 6d. That the Town of Cobourg complete the review of areas where there is a discrepancy between the existing zoning and the direction contained within the applicable Heritage Conservation District Plan, and undertake a housekeeping amendment to correct the discrepancy.

5.0 Prioritization of action items

5.1 Introduction

The previous section of this report developed various action items around the various themes identified during the initial stage of the Heritage Master Plan project. This section of the report breaks the action items into timeframes to assist Town staff and Council with the implementation direction of the Heritage Master Plan.

5.2 Immediate action items (<3 years)

The following action items are recommended for the Town to pursue in the immediate future:

1a:	That the Town of Cobourg adopt a dedicated heritage conservation district plan to conserve the character of and manage change within each of the Town's Heritage Conservation Districts.
1c:	That the Town of Cobourg investigate other areas of the Town for potential study and designation as heritage conservation districts or cultural heritage landscapes, and put in place appropriate protection measures for identified areas. Work has already been undertaken regarding a preliminary assessment of the Corktown area, so this would be a logical starting point. Other areas identified include the area west of the West District, and the area along Division Street between the George Street District and the East District.
1e:	That the Town of Cobourg continue to provide information to property owners about the benefits of heritage designation under the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> .
1g:	That the Town of Cobourg make archaeological acceptance by the MTCS a condition of draft approval to ensure that appropriate levels of archaeological assessment are conducted prior to any ground disturbance activities and that development activities do not violate the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> .
1i:	That the Town of Cobourg prepare a formal Terms of Reference to guide the completion of Cultural Heritage Impact Assessments (CHIAs) for development proposals involving heritage properties.
2a:	That the Town of Cobourg continue to implement policies and guidelines, including the Town's urban design guidelines, to support new development that is compatible with the generally low-mid rise scale and small-town character of Cobourg.
2c:	That the Town of Cobourg consider branding and marketing initiatives aimed at celebrating the small-town character of Cobourg. This could be done for the benefit of Town residents but also for tourism related purposes.

2d:	That the Town of Cobourg continue to provide information to the community with respect to heritage matters, and explore possible partnerships with other like-minded groups within the community.
3a:	That the Town of Cobourg complete and implement the Downtown Master Plan to further strengthen the Downtown's role.
3b:	That the Town of Cobourg consider the reuse of older buildings (especially near downtown) when seeking additional office and institutional space.
3c:	That the Town of Cobourg encourage businesses and government agencies to adopt a 'heritage first' policy when seeking additional office and institutional space within the Town (especially near downtown).
4a:	That the Town of Cobourg continue to work on implementation of the Parks Master Plan direction related to the waterfront as a way to ensure the importance of the recreational area is maintained.
6a:	That the Town of Cobourg undertake a comprehensive review of existing incentives programs in order to understand where improvements can be made in order to help program up-take.
6b:	That the Town of Cobourg complete the preparation and implementation of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan, including implementation of appropriate incentives.
6c:	That the Town of Cobourg work with other municipalities and the Province in order to address concerns related to the benefit of reduced property taxes in upper floors of downtown buildings.
6d:	That the Town of Cobourg complete the review of areas where there is a discrepancy between the existing zoning and the direction contained within the applicable Heritage Conservation District Plan, and undertake a housekeeping amendment to correct the discrepancy.

5.3 Short-term action items (3-5 years)

The following action items are recommended for the Town to pursue in the short-term:

1e (ongoing):	That the Town of Cobourg continue to provide information to property owners about the benefits of heritage designation under the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> .
2a (ongoing):	That the Town of Cobourg continue to implement policies and guidelines, including the Town's urban design guidelines, to support new development that is compatible with the generally low-mid rise scale and small-town character of Cobourg.

2b:	That the Town of Cobourg consider preparation of a Town-wide landscape strategy in order to focus on matters such as street trees and other landscaping initiatives.
3e:	That the Town of Cobourg implement enhanced signage and wayfinding initiatives in the downtown area. Potential initiatives could include interpretative signage celebrating Cobourg's history, signage helping people get to important destinations within the downtown, and signage establishing linkages between the downtown and adjoining areas.
4a (ongoing):	That the Town of Cobourg continue to work on implementation of the Parks Master Plan direction related to the waterfront as a way to ensure the importance of the recreational area is maintained
4b:	That the Town of Cobourg continue to ensure a coordinated planning approach between the waterfront and the Downtown through the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan.
4c:	That the Town of Cobourg work on a coordinated strategy to improve linkages between the downtown and waterfront areas as a way to ensure that both areas remain vibrant and that visitors to one area also visit the other.
5c:	That the Town of Cobourg continue to implement a street tree maintenance and management program to ensure that street trees remain healthy and are replaced as needed.

5.4 Medium-long term action items (5-10 years)

The following action items are recommended for the Town to pursue in the medium-long term:

1b:	That the Town of Cobourg implement a review process every 7-10 years related to all heritage conservation districts in order to help ensure that the documents remain up to date with current heritage planning best practices, and that they reflect the needs of the community.
1d:	That the Town of Cobourg undertake a review of the properties currently within the Municipal Register of Non-Designated properties, and identify properties that are the highest priority to pursue for potential designation under the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> . The evaluation criteria utilized should follow Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) best practices. This should be completed as follow-up to the work in 1c related to the focus on broader areas.
1e:	That the Town of Cobourg continue to provide information to property owners about the benefits of heritage designation under the <i>Ontario Heritage Act</i> .

1f:	That the Town of Cobourg Municipal Heritage Committee continue to review properties, and broader areas such as landscapes within the Town for potential inclusion on the heritage register. This can be undertaken as a follow-up of the work referenced in 1c.
1h:	That the Town of Cobourg consider creating an Archaeological Master/Management Plan for the Town. This plan would provide a useful tool for the Town to guide the implementation of management strategies related to archaeological resources.
2a (ongoing):	That the Town of Cobourg continue to implement policies and guidelines, including the Town's urban design guidelines, to support new development that is compatible with the generally low-mid rise scale and small-town character of Cobourg.
3d:	That the Town of Cobourg investigate opportunities for recognition as a heritage community, possibly through awards submissions.
3f:	That the Town of Cobourg consider the preparation of a tourism strategy that identifies Cobourg's heritage as a draw for people to visit, in order to assist with focusing efforts and provide a clear path for tourism initiatives particularly related to heritage.
3g:	That the Town of Cobourg consider a Downtown location when considering the establishment of additional cultural facilities within the Town, in order to complement existing facilities and destinations.
3h:	That the Town of Cobourg continue promote the Downtown as a place to host festivals, cultural events and other activities in Cobourg.
4a (ongoing):	That the Town of Cobourg continue to work on implementation of the Parks Master Plan direction related to the waterfront as a way to ensure the importance of the recreational area is maintained.
5a:	That the Town of Cobourg include a review of broader landscape features such as neighbourhoods, farms, schools and parks in the work undertaken as part of Recommendation 1c in order to identify potential cultural heritage landscapes, and put in place appropriate protection measures.
5b:	That the Town of Cobourg investigate the possibility of implementing a streetscape management plan for key streets within the Town to ensure that activities undertaken within the public realm conserve the character of the various streetscapes.

5.5 Annual review and assessment of implementation

It is recommended that the Municipal Heritage Committee, as part of their annual report to Council, include a summary of the status of the implementation of the various action items included within Section 5.0. This will allow for a periodic assessment of progress and success.



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