

# Advisory Committee of Council Staff Report



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To Accessibility Advisory Committee  
Date Tuesday, April 16, 2024  
Subject **Introduction to Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Study**

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## Recommendation

1. That the Accessibility Advisory Committee receive the staff report titled "Introduction to Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Study" dated April 16, 2024
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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

To provide an overview and update of the Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Study, including the recommended boundary, and next steps in the project.

### Key Findings

The purpose of the Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Study is to evaluate Downtown Guelph for designation under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act and to recommend a district boundary to Council.

### Strategic Plan Alignment

The Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Study aligns with the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan priority 6.1.4, to implement the Cultural Heritage Action Plan to conserve our cultural heritage resources.

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## Report

On November 28, 2022 the Government of Ontario passed Bill 23, the More Homes Built Faster Act, which made significant changes to the Ontario Heritage Act. Specifically, Bill 23 stipulated that all non-designated properties must be removed from the Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties on January 1, 2025. In Guelph, approximately 80% of built heritage resources are protected by listing on the Municipal Register, which will all be vulnerable to demolition after January 1, 2025 unless designated under Part IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Heritage staff have been evaluating non-designated properties listed on the Municipal Register for designation under Part IV (individual designation) and Part V (district designation) of the Ontario Heritage Act to ensure that Guelph's significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes are conserved.

Designation is intended to conserve Guelph's cultural heritage resources, but it does not stop changes to buildings. The primary purpose of designation is to prevent demolition of significant buildings and landscapes, not freeze buildings and landscapes in a certain time-period. Heritage conservation is intended to protect

our shared history in ways that are inclusive and meaningful to all citizens of Guelph. It is the intent of heritage staff at the City of Guelph to ensure that heritage planning works cooperatively with accessibility to make Guelph more inclusive.

The Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Study was initiated in March 2023 to evaluate Guelph's historic commercial core for designation under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act. A heritage conservation district will ensure that Downtown Guelph's significant built heritage resources and cultural heritage landscapes will be conserved. This process includes extensive historical research, the identification of significant cultural heritage resources in the downtown core, and consultation with the public, property owners, business owners, First Nations, and other stakeholders. The primary deliverable of the Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Study is a recommended district boundary, which will be presented to Council in July 2024.

Pending Council's approval of the District Study and recommended boundary, the Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation project will proceed to the second phase: development of a plan and guideline. The purpose of a district plan and guideline is to provide a basis for the management and conservation of the area's heritage resources, including guidelines for alteration, demolition, and new development. A district plan and guideline will not prevent the alteration of buildings and would only apply to the exterior of buildings within the district.

If the Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Project proceeds to the development of a plan and guideline, the Accessibility Advisory Committee will be consulted in Q3 or Q4 2024 to ensure that the plan and guideline adequately considers accessibility in the management of the downtown's heritage resources. Heritage staff are committed to ensuring that the Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District is not a barrier to improving accessibility in the City of Guelph.

## **Consultations**

Heritage Guelph Workshop 1: September 18, 2024

Public Open House 1: October 18, 2023

Heritage Guelph Workshop 2: January 29, 2024

Public Open House 2: February 20, 2024

Have Your Say Survey: February 21, 2024 – March 17, 2024

Accessibility Advisory Committee: Q3 or Q4 2024

## **Attachments**

Attachment-1 Staff Presentation

## **Departmental Approval**

Krista Walkey, General Manager, Policy Planning

## **Report Author**

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## **This report was approved by:**

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