

# Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District Project Update

Heritage Guelph

February 20, 2025

# What We're Doing

The City is completing a **Heritage Conservation District Plan** to develop policies and guidelines for a district in the commercial core of downtown Guelph.



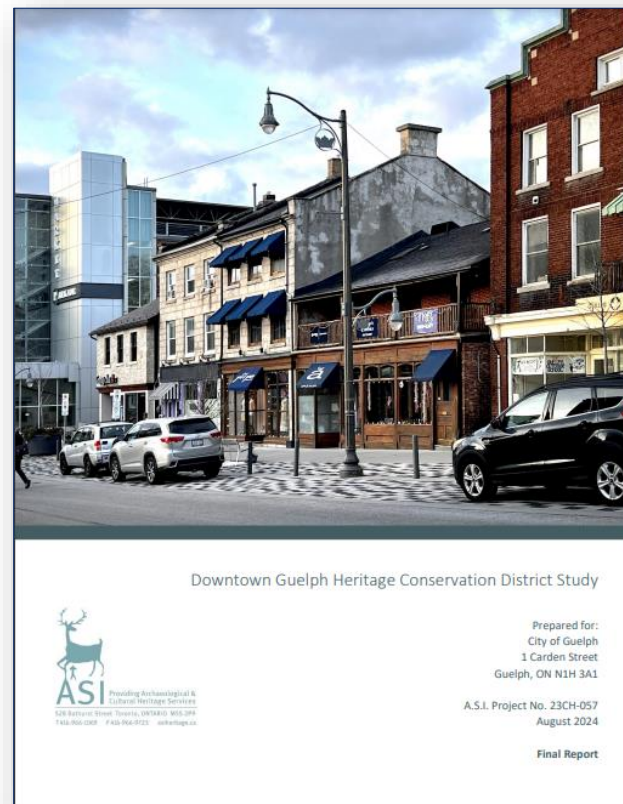
# What is a Heritage Conservation District?

A **Heritage Conservation District (H.C.D.)** would protect significant buildings and landscape features and create a heritage-sensitive plan to guide future development in the area.



# Study Phase

- Completed between June 2023 and September 2024
- Concluded that the downtown area meets the criteria for designation as an H.C.D.
- Recommended a boundary for the H.C.D.
- Study available online at [Guelph.ca](http://Guelph.ca)



# Study Phase Public Open Houses

Held on:

- Wednesday, October 18, 2023
- Tuesday, February 20, 2024

Information posted on the City's "Have Your Say" page, including online surveys.



Public notices are mailed to all addresses and property owners in the H.C.D. boundary.



Notices are posted on Guelph.ca and on the City's social media.

# Study Phase Small Group Meetings

Heritage Guelph (two meetings)

Focus Group (two meetings)

Downtown Guelph Business Association  
(one meeting)



The Focus Group is made up of community members with a mandate to provide feedback at key points.

# Study Phase Indigenous Engagement

Separate engagement with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the Six Nations of the Grand River resulted in Indigenous Nations providing their own histories to include in the Study and feedback on the H.C.D. boundary.

# Study Phase Public Open House Feedback

- Participants liked that the heritage values and attributes tell a story and give Guelph a distinct and unique sense of place.
- Participants affirmed several character-defining qualities in the downtown district.



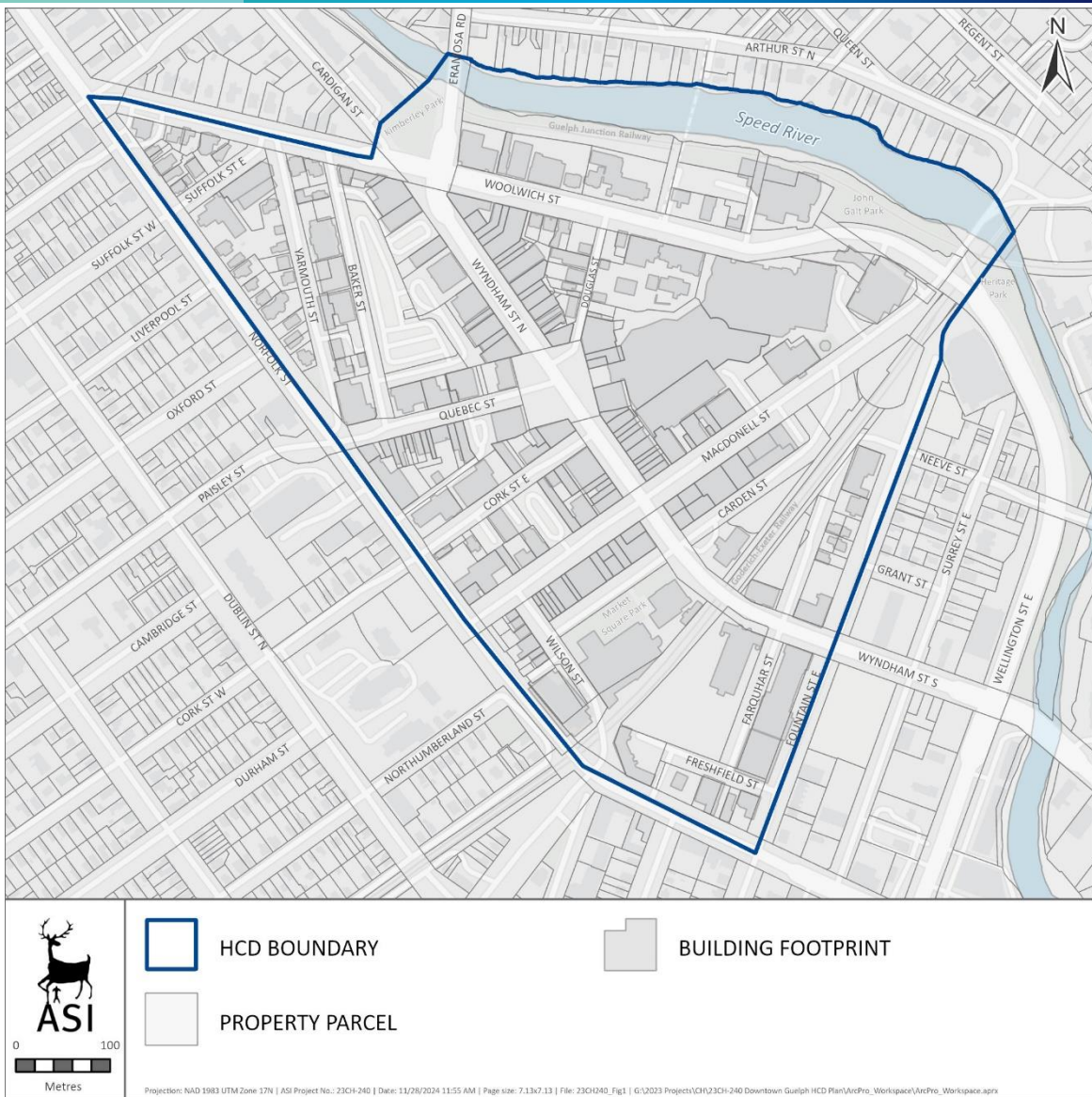
# Study Phase Public Open House Actions

Based on feedback:

- The boundary was extended north and south to include key features like the five points intersection and the Farmers' Market.
- The Speed River was included in the District for its relationship to downtown.
- The cultural heritage values and heritage attributes were refined to include specific significant places.

# Study Results

On September 4, 2024, Council endorsed Study recommendations and directed the City to proceed with an H.C.D. Plan.



# Parts of an HCD Plan

## Statement of District Significance

Describes what is valued about the district

## Objectives

Describes a vision for change in the district

## Heritage Permit System

Provides direction for what changes require a heritage permit

## Policies

Direct the management of the district. Policies typically use "shall" and are mandatory.

## Guidelines

Provide practical guidance and recommendations of how to achieve the Policies. Guidelines typically use "should" and are not mandatory.

# The H.C.D. Plan will:

- Describe the cultural heritage values of the downtown core.
- Define objectives that will describe a vision for change in the district.
- Provide policies and guidelines for different categories of properties.
- Provide direction for what changes require a heritage permit.

# Plan Phase Engagement



Engagement Event	Date
Public Open House	January 29, 2025
Heritage Guelph Meeting #3	February 20, 2025
Focus Group Meeting #3	February 27, 2025
Downtown Guelph Business Association #2	February 27, 2025
Public Open House	April 2025
Heritage Guelph Meeting #4	June 2025
Focus Group Meeting #4	June 2025
Downtown Guelph Business Association #3	June 2025
Statutory Public Meeting	June 2025

# Plan Phase Public Open House

Participants asked questions about:

- The decision-making process for H.C.D.s
- Financial incentives
- How the C.P.P.S. and Heritage Permit Process can work together

Participants identified advantages and challenges with a potential H.C.D. in downtown Guelph.

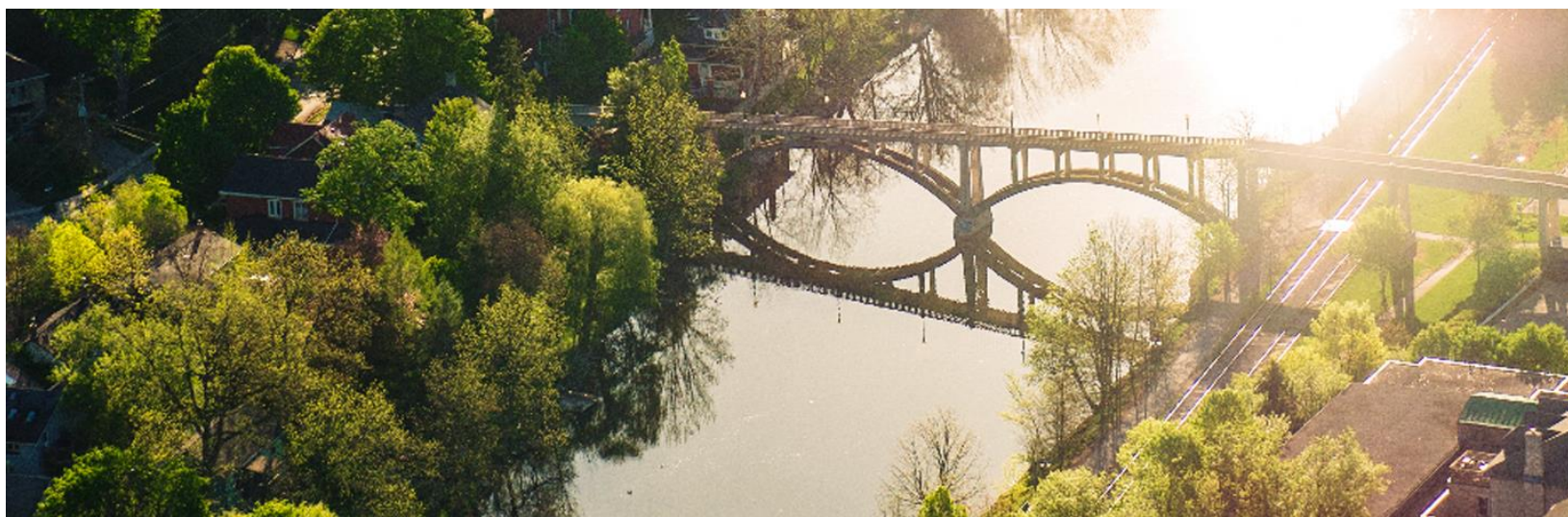


# Statement of Significance Highlights

# Purpose of a Statement of District Significance

- Helps property owners, council, Heritage Guelph, and municipal staff make informed decisions about alterations to the District.
- Supports the policies and guidelines within the H.C.D. Plan.

# Location on the Speed River



- The District is valued for its location along the Speed River. The River has meaning to Indigenous peoples and is a distinguishing feature of the downtown.



# Scale and Quality of Historical Fabric

- The scale and quality of historical fabric in the downtown reflects how the area grew and evolved, through the coming of the railway in 1856 to approximately 1935 when the last cut limestone building, the Dominion Public Building, was constructed.



# Design, Historical and Contextual Values

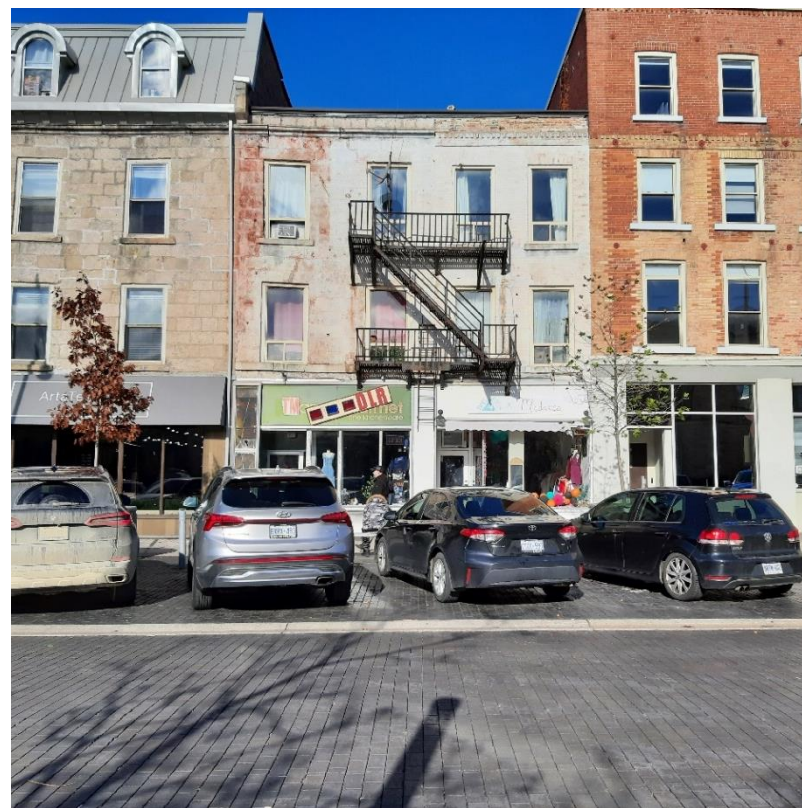
- The District's impressive collection and concentration of nineteenth and early twentieth-century features nestled in the elbow-shaped bend of the Speed River express design, historical and contextual values.



# Statement of Objectives

# Community's Goals

The H.C.D. Plan includes a Statement of Objectives which describes the community's goals and hopes for the future of the District.



# Conservation and Growth



District objectives address balancing conservation of existing buildings, streetscapes, parks and public spaces with the anticipated growth which will bring new development in the downtown in the coming years.

Growth has the potential to reinvigorate and enhance the downtown and its heritage fabric. The downtown's heritage fabric presents opportunities to anchor new developments and maintain the area's ambience as a historical destination.

# Study Phase Public Open House Feedback on Objectives

- Participants agreed that an H.C.D. in downtown Guelph should protect and enhance heritage properties in the public realm and private realm including adaptive reuse of buildings.
- Participants would like to see the District draw people downtown and attract tourism.
- Participants raised a desire for programs such as funding incentives, no additional taxes, making insurance easier for owners, and having District information easy to find.



# Overall Objective

The Downtown Guelph H.C.D. aims to protect, conserve, and manage its heritage attributes and contributing properties in the context of prescribed and anticipated future growth of the area so that the District's cultural heritage value is protected in the long-term.

# Objectives

- Celebrate and maintain the physical, visual, and historical relationships formed by the radial plan in the Downtown.
- Reinforce and conserve the District's significant built forms, streetscapes, public squares, materiality, and character.
- Develop guidelines for compatible new development and infill in the District.
- Review existing and encourage the development of new incentives, tools, and programs.
- Encourage active participation from the City in the promotion and implementation of the H.C.D.
- Ensure that the H.C.D. Plan supports the ongoing use, adaptive reuse, and accessibility of existing buildings.
- Promote opportunities for revitalizing historical squares and open spaces.

# Contributing and Non-Contributing Properties

# Contributing Properties vs Non-Contributing Properties

## **Contributing Properties**

capture those historical features that are important to conserve.

A District Plan expects that these properties will be stewarded as the area grows and changes.

These properties have specific conservation policies and guidelines.

**Non-Contributing Properties** are those sites that do not envision conservation of extant features.

For example, these might be parking lots or recently constructed buildings that do not contribute to the heritage qualities of the district.

A District Plan expects that these properties will be redeveloped and provides policies and guidance for introducing new development on these sites so that they compliment the District.

# Contributing Properties

A **Contributing Property** was built during the period of significance (1827 to 1935) and/or contains sufficient evidence to effectively express the District's cultural heritage value.

Conservation policies and guidelines apply when making alterations and/or additions to Contributing Properties.



# Non-Contributing Properties



A **Non-Contributing Property** was developed outside the period of significance and/or does not contain sufficient evidence to effectively express the District's cultural heritage value.

Policies and guidelines for Non-Contributing Properties address additions, alterations, or demolition including new development and infill.

# Heritage Permit System

# Requirements

The Ontario Heritage Act requires heritage permits for specific major changes such as:

- Construction of new buildings or structures
- Demolition or removal of heritage attributes that relate to the District's cultural heritage value
- Demolition or removal of buildings or structures

## **AND**

Municipalities can define what types of minor alterations on a property would not require a permit or which may have a simplified permitting process.

# Exempt and Minor Permits

Type of Change	Heritage Permit Application Type
<b>Repairs</b> to exterior building elements in the same style, materials, size, shape and detailing.	Exempt
<b>Replacement and addition</b> of exterior building elements in the same style, materials, size, shape and detailing.	Exempt
<b>Replacement and addition</b> of exterior building elements with new or different materials.*	Minor

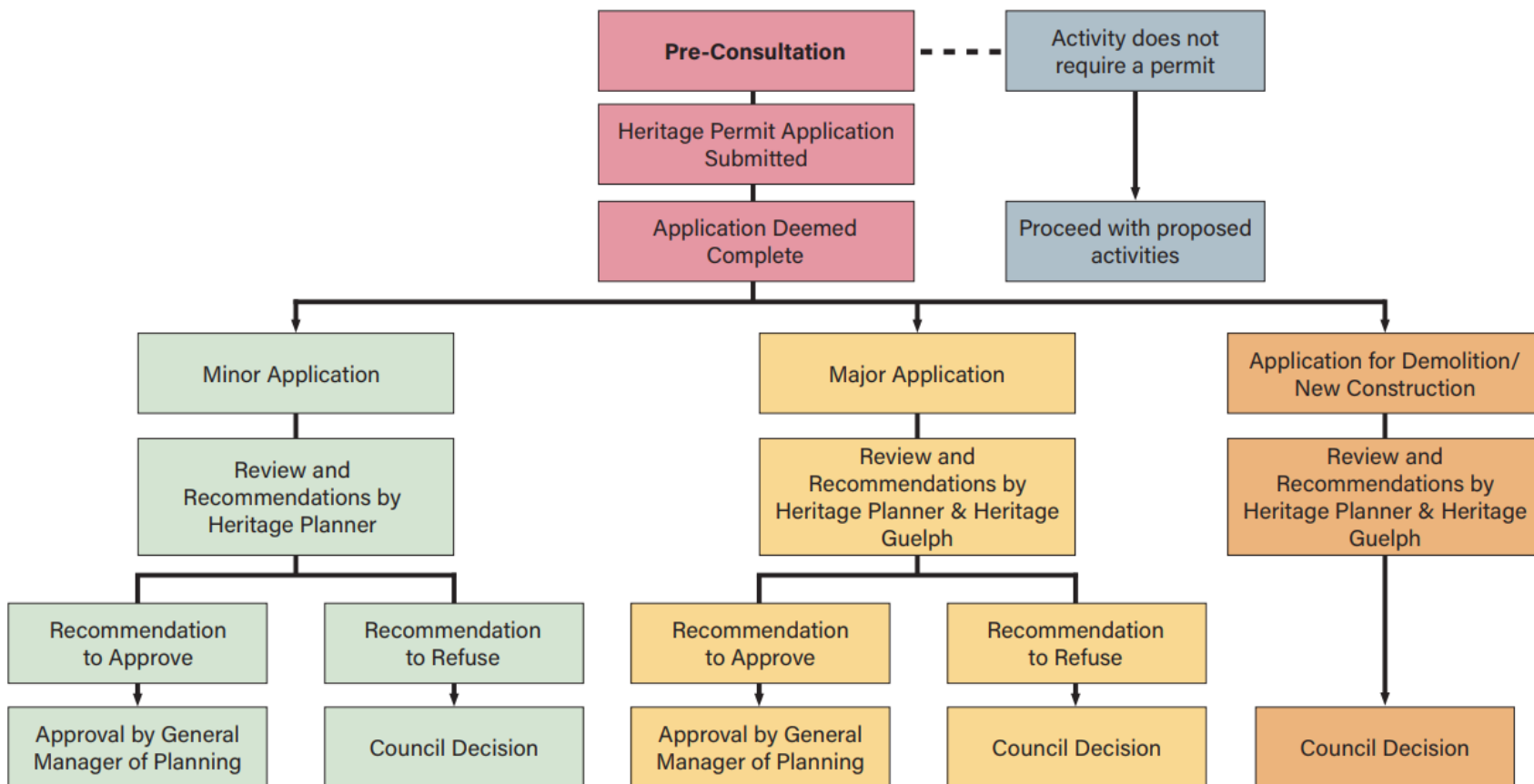
\*Contributing properties only

# Major and Demo Permits

Type of Change	Heritage Permit Application Type
<b>Altering</b> exterior building elements.*	Major
<b>Relocating</b> a building or structure.*	Major
<b>Demolishing</b> a building or structure on the property.	Application for Demolition/New Construction
<b>Constructing</b> a new building or structure.	Application for Demolition/New Construction

\*Contributing properties only

# Application Process

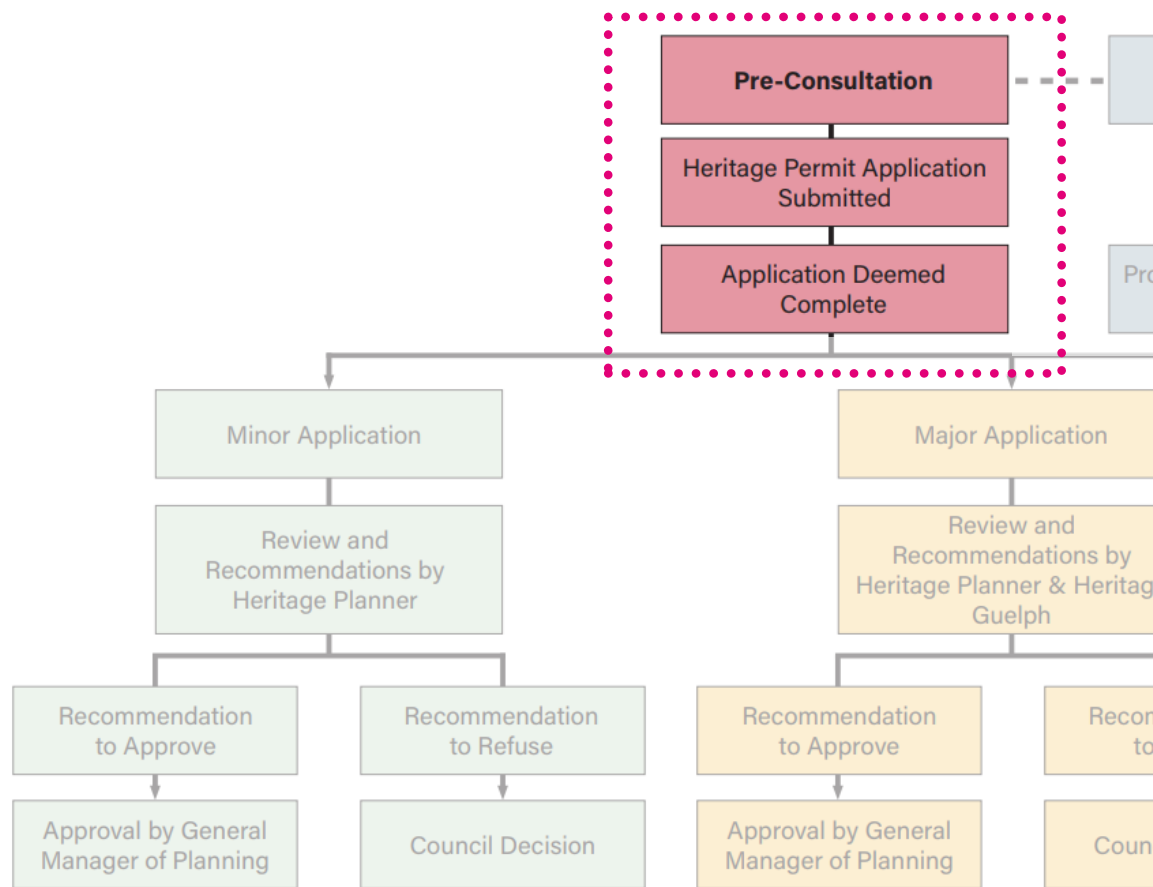


# Heritage Permit FAQs

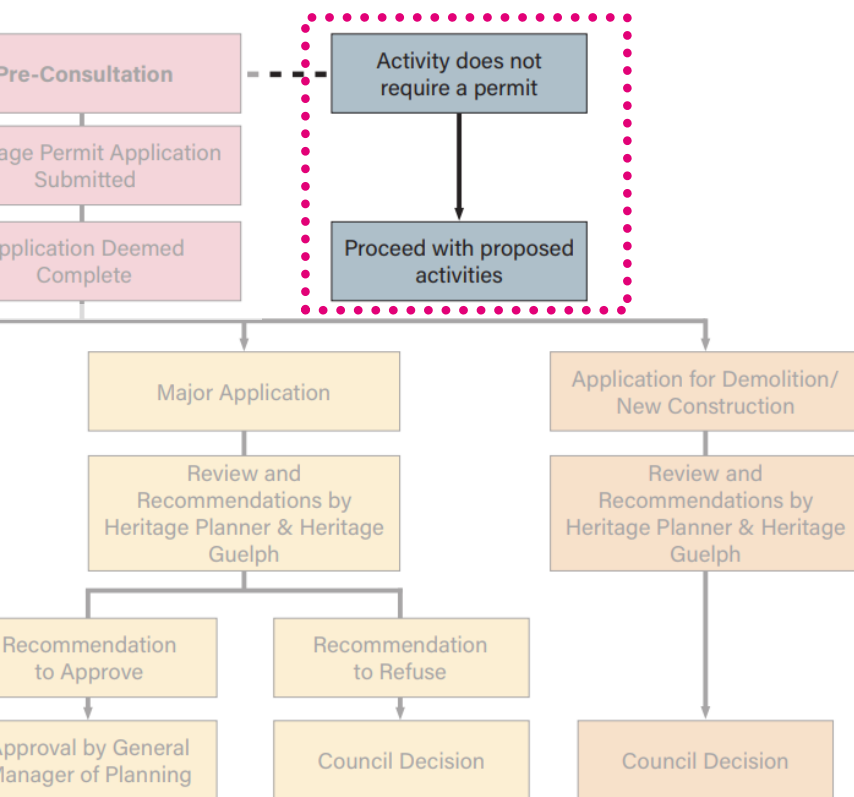
# What is pre-consultation?

A call or email to Heritage Planning staff.

Staff will identify what needs to be submitted as part of the Heritage Permit application.



# When is a heritage permit not required?



A heritage permit is not required for changes to the interior or the property's use, minor repairs or routine maintenance.

# What is required for a heritage permit?

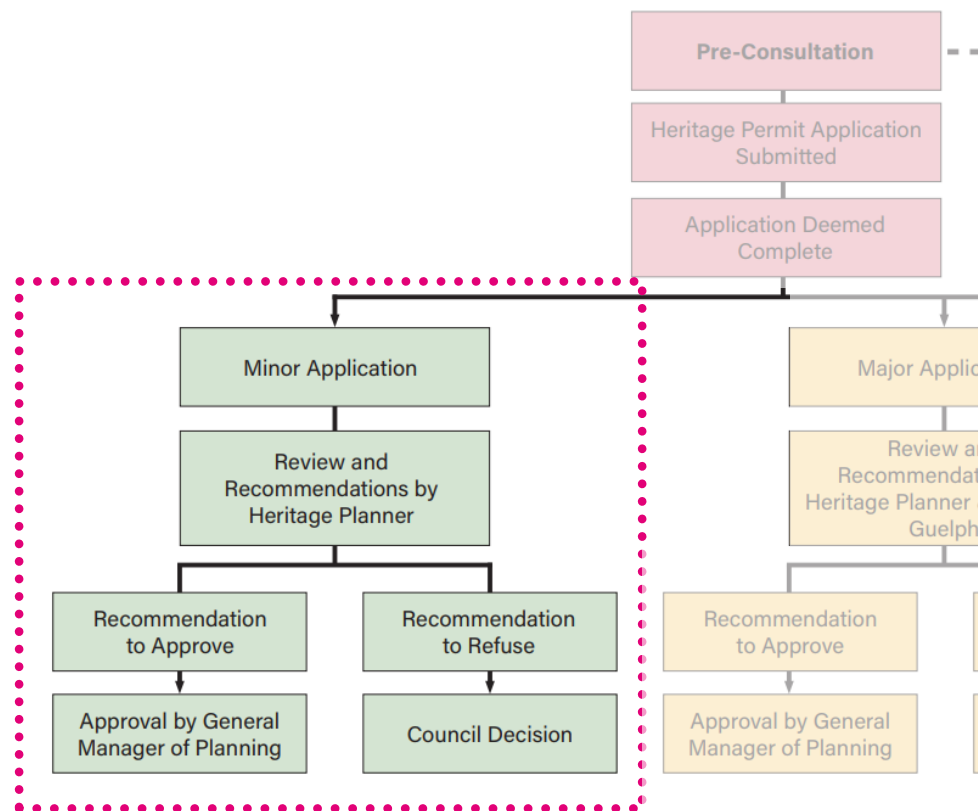
- Similar to building permit contents
- Pre-consultation with staff – to identify the permit stream and submission requirements
- Complete Heritage Permit Application form
- Written description of proposed work
- Construction and elevation drawings
- Photographs of the structure and property

# Does a heritage permit cost money?

There is no cost to submit a heritage permit application.

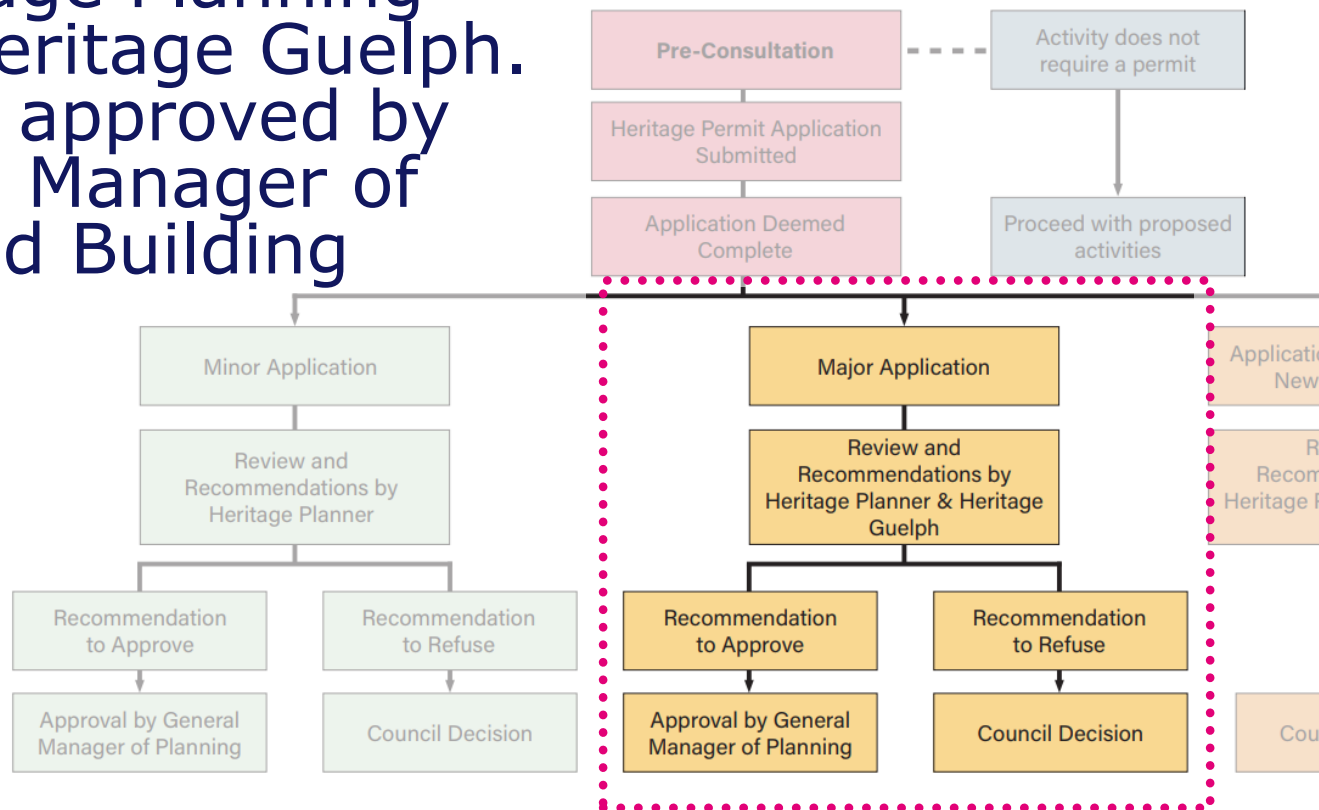
# Who approves minor permits?

**Minor:** recommendations are made by the City's Heritage Planning Staff, permits are approved by the General Manager of Planning and Building Services

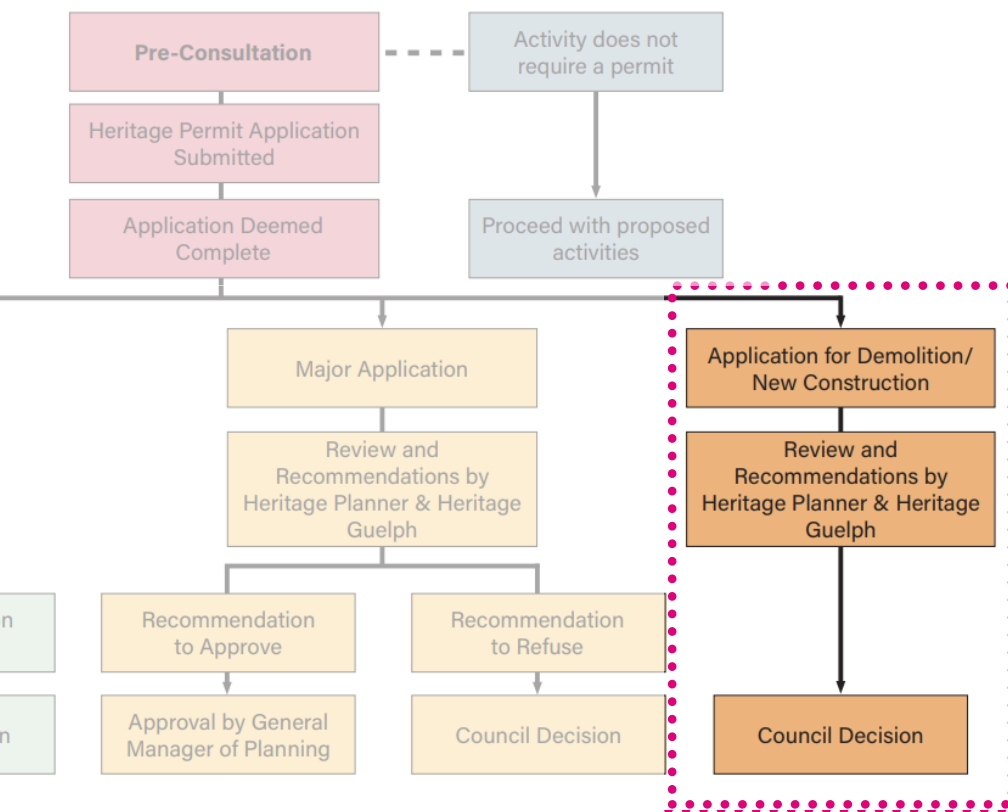


# Who approves majors permits?

**Major:** reviewed by the City's Heritage Planning Staff and Heritage Guelph. Permits are approved by the General Manager of Planning and Building Services



# Who approves new/demo permits?



## **New / Demo:**

reviewed by the City's Heritage Planning Staff and Heritage Guelph. Permit decisions are made by Council

# What are the timelines?

According to the City of Guelph's Heritage Permit application guide, the timelines for each type of application are:

- Minor – 10 to 15 business days
- Major – 45-90 business days
- New/Demo – must be done within 90 days

The average turnaround time for major permits in 2023/2024 was 18 days.

There has been an average of 6 heritage permit applications per year since 2021 with 3 being minor and 20 being major or new construction/demolition.

# Workshop

# Workshop Questions

**Advantages** From what you have learned today, what do you find positive about the idea of a Heritage Conservation District in downtown Guelph?

**Challenges** Do you see any challenges with a potential Heritage Conservation District in downtown Guelph from what you have learned today?

**Questions** Do you have any questions or uncertainties about a potential Heritage Conservation District in Downtown Guelph?

# Thank you for participating!

Next steps:

- **April 2025** Public Open House
- **May 2025** H.C.D. Plan made publicly available
- **June 2025** Statutory Public Meeting
- **Fall 2025** If Council decides to proceed with designation, a by-law will be prepared

**Further questions or comments?  
Please reach out:**

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