

Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District

Presentation to Council

January 20, 2026

Purpose of Today's Presentation

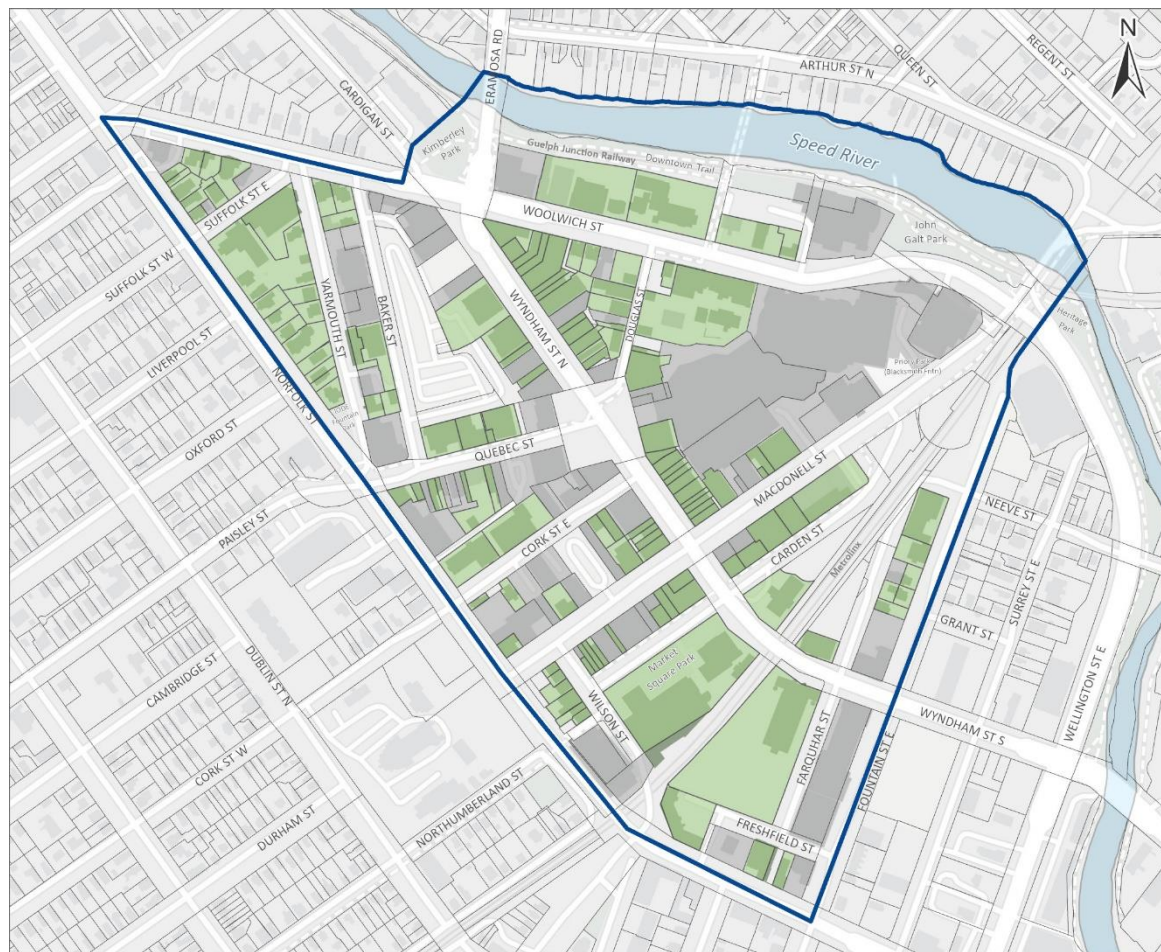
Final step in the Downtown Guelph **Heritage Conservation District (H.C.D.)** process that started in 2023.

All work required as part of establishing an **H.C.D.** has been completed, including research, analysis, and engagement with the public, Indigenous communities, stakeholders, and property owners.

A recommendation is being made to Council to proceed to designate the recommended area as an **H.C.D.**



Proposed Downtown Guelph HCD





0 100
Metres

H.C.D. BOUNDARY

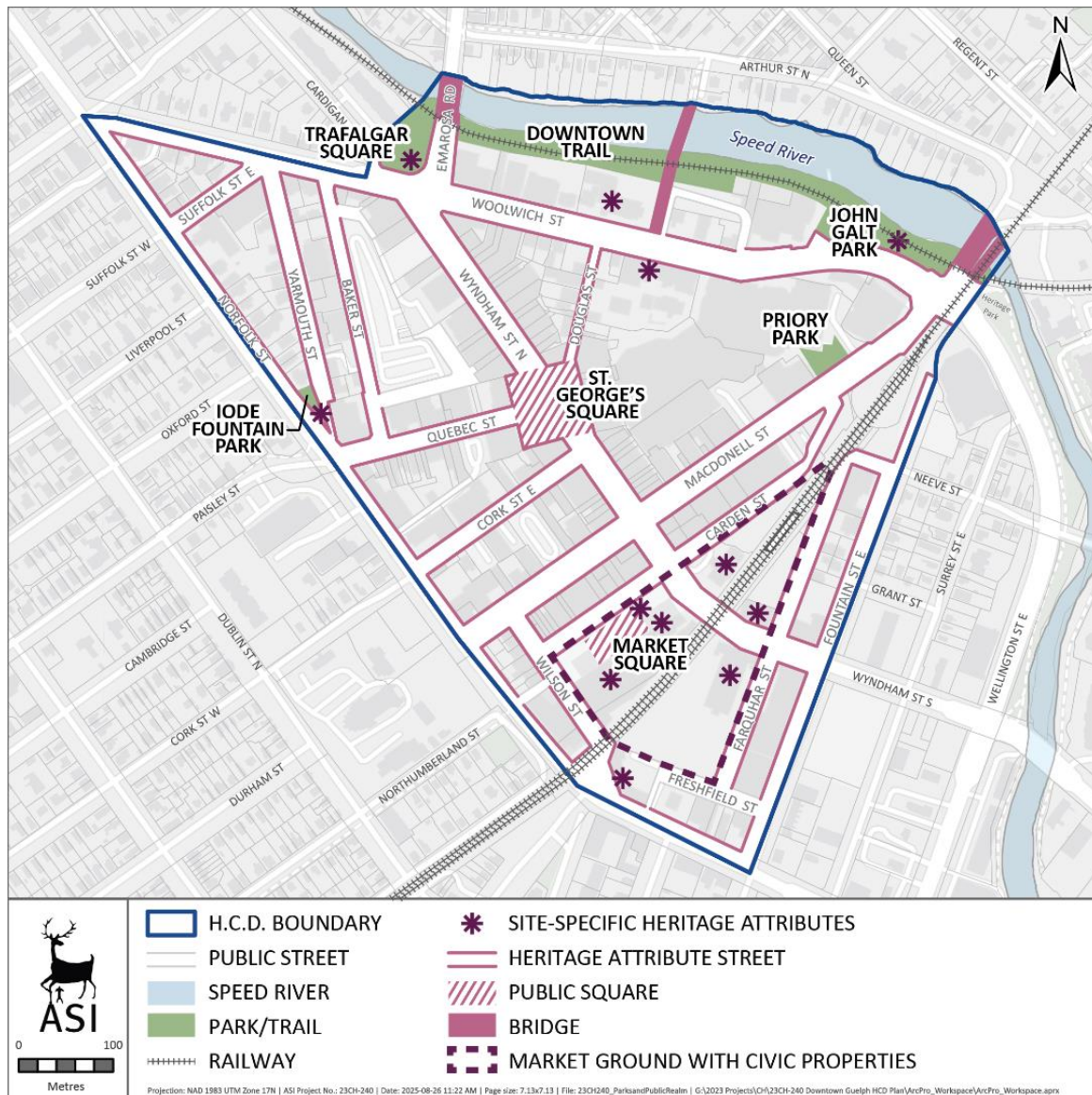
CONTRIBUTING PROPERTY

NON-CONTRIBUTING PROPERTY

BUILDING FOOTPRINT

Projection: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 17N | ASI Project No.: 23CH-240 | Date: 9/10/2025 11:31 AM | Page size: 7.13x7.13 | File: 23CH240_ContributingProperties | G:\2023 Projects\CH\23CH-240 Downtown Guelph HCD Plan\AsPro_Workspace\AsPro_Workspace.aprx

Proposed Downtown Guelph HCD (continued)



Summary of Findings



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.

Study Phase Engagement

Public Engagement Event	Date
Heritage Guelph Meeting #1	September 18, 2023
Public Open House and Walking Tour	October 8, 2023
Focus Group Meeting #1	November 6, 2023
Mississauga of the Credit First Nation	November 27, 2023
Heritage Guelph Meeting #2	January 29, 2024
Focus Group Meeting #2	February 5, 2024
Public Meeting	February 20, 2024
Downtown Guelph Business Association	February 28, 2024

Plan Phase Engagement

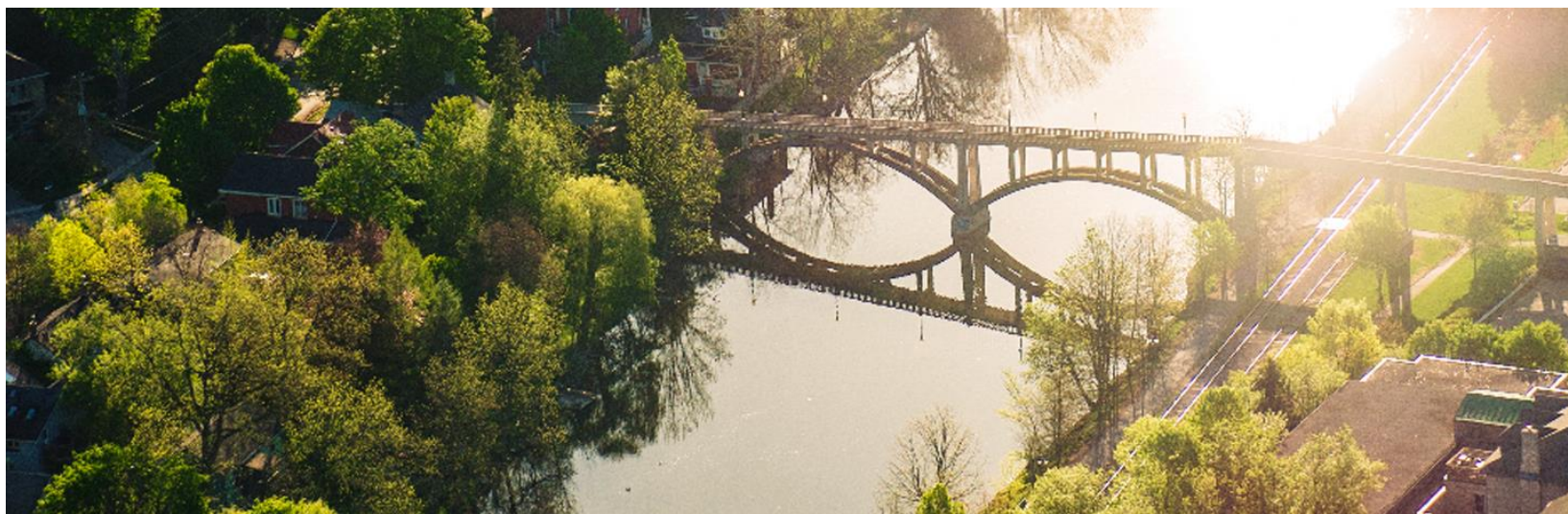
Engagement Event	Date
Public Open House	January 29, 2025
Heritage Advisory Committee Meeting #3	February 20, 2025
Focus Group Meeting #3	February 27, 2025
Focus Group Meeting #3 - Reschedule	April 28, 2025
Downtown Guelph Business Association #2	April 30, 2025
Public Open House	May 7, 2025
Heritage Advisory Committee Meeting #4	September 4, 2025
Focus Group Meeting #4	September 16, 2025
Downtown Guelph Business Association #3	September 24, 2025
Statutory Public Meeting	October 15, 2025

What are the key elements of the Downtown H.C.D. that we want to celebrate and steward as it changes?

Purpose of a Statement of District Significance

- Centers why this place matters and merits a specialized planning framework.
- Supports implementation and application of the policies and guidelines within the H.C.D. Plan.

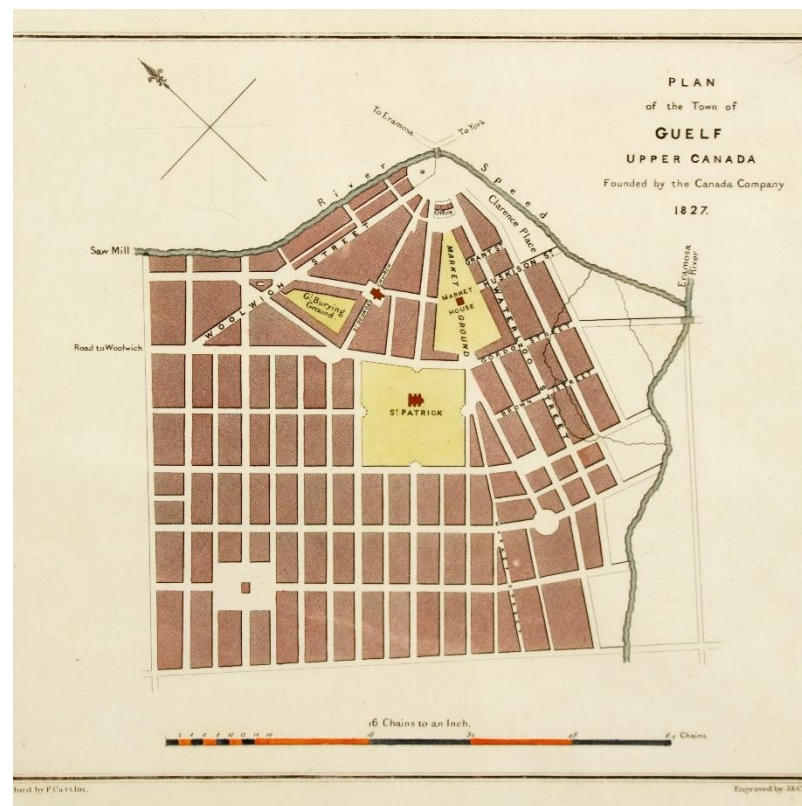
Location on the Speed River



- 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.

Well-Preserved Collection

- The Downtown Guelph H.C.D. retains a well-preserved collection of street layouts, lotting patterns, buildings, streetscapes, views, and landscape features.



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.



What is the vision and objectives for the Downtown Guelph Heritage Conservation District?

Conservation and Growth



Objective for the Downtown District 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.

Objectives

- Maintain, celebrate and conserve the *District's cultural heritage values*, while recognizing that its heritage attributes can support ongoing growth, evolution, and dynamism in the downtown.
- Reinforce the physical, visual, and historical relationships formed by the radial plan in the downtown
- Ensure *compatible*, sympathetic, and respectful additions, *alterations*, and *new development* in the *District* that enhances its *cultural heritage values* while supporting planned density targets and recommended building heights in the Downtown Secondary Plan
- Review existing and encourage the development of new incentives, tools, and programs for *property* owners to support implementation of the *District's* objectives. Encourage active participation from the City in the promotion of and implementation of the H.C.D., including development of a streamlined and proactive heritage permitting process to ensure that requirements of *property* owners are understood early in the process and revisions to project plans are mitigated and reduced

Objectives continued

- Support the ongoing use, adaptive reuse, sustainability improvements to, and accessibility of existing buildings in a manner that balances intensification and *conservation* objectives so that the *District* retains its *cultural heritage value* while encouraging growth, strengthening the *public realm* as a pedestrian experience with ease of access for the public, and animating streets and spaces.
- Promote opportunities for revitalizing the *District's* parks and *public realm* network and features, such as historical squares and open spaces, as well as the protection and naturalization of the Speed River, to serve as focal points in the downtown and as part of *new developments*, reflecting design excellence and integration and celebration of heritage fabric, features, and the history of the area from thousands of years ago to today.
- Encourage creation of gateways and open spaces at the edges of the *District*, reinforcing the pattern of parks and open spaces as transition points between the *surrounding* residential neighbourhoods and the commercial downtown

How the Plan Is Responding to Feedback Received

Heritage Permits:

- No application fee

Permit Turnaround Times:

- Minor Permit: 10-15 business days
- Major Permit: 15-45 business days
- New Construction and/or Demolition Permit: Must be reviewed within 90 days

Clarity For Insurance Providers:

- The plan does not require the replacement of heritage attributes in the event of total loss due to unintentional fire, flood, natural disaster, or other insured peril. The Plan does not impose additional obligations on insurers.

How the Plan Is Responding to Feedback Received continued

Policies and Guidelines:

- Policies avoid blanket and prescribed restrictions.
- Permitting processes are structured to focus review of the most substantive changes in the District.
- Clarity that the policies and guidelines support sustainability and accessibility improvements.
- Confirmation that the District Plan builds on the updated heights for the Downtown (2025).
- Illustrations and examples that visualize the types of changes that are anticipated in the Downtown H.C.D.

Next Steps



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

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If Council votes to designate the recommended area as a Heritage Conservation District:

- Passing the designation by-law and adoption of the HCD Plan
- Registration of by-law on title
- Implementation of the HCD Plan



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THE **landplan**
STUDIO INC

Questions and Comments