



# Misconceptions of Heritage Conservation Districts

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# Introduction

- MHBC staff: more than a dozen HCDs over last 20 years.
- Currently working on HCDs for Town of Oakville and City of Guelph.
- Common misconceptions that seem to come up.



# What is a Heritage Conservation District?

- Valuable tool to recognize an important area, preserve character and guide future development.
- Provides valuable insight and guidance to direct restoration, additions, new construction, infill.
- Over 100 HCDs in Ontario, and more underway.



# Misconception # 1: Freezing in Time

- Common reaction is that implementing an HCD will not allow changes to an area.
- Public sometimes thinks that area will become a museum.
- In fact, HCDs do not prohibit change, but seek to manage it.



## Misconception # 2: New Design is Restricted

- Often hear the fear is that any new buildings must look like old buildings.
- Reality is that new design is encouraged, and guidelines typically set out specifics related to contemporary buildings so that they support the character of the area.

## **Misconception # 3: Infringement of Property Rights**

- Concern from property owners is that an HCD will take away rights to do what people want to on their properties.
- Instead, HCD seeks to work in conjunction with other rules and regulations.

## Misconception # 4: Lower Property Values

- Commonly, people are concerned that heritage designation will negatively impact property values and reduce interest.
- Studies conducted recently (including work by the University of Waterloo HRC) demonstrate that values are either increased or stabilized.

## Misconception # 5: Increased Costs

- People often feel that there will be increased costs associated with permits and applications, or from doing work to properties.
- Generally not significant increased costs, as permits and applications do not generally have application fees. Can be additional time involved, or cost if higher construction standard.



## Misconception # 6: Increased Red Tape

- Typical reaction is that an HCD will dramatically increase the amount of bureaucracy required to get any work done to buildings.
- However, Heritage Permits often run concurrent with other processes, and often do not lengthen process dramatically.
- Delegated approval authority, and exemptions also assist in reducing processing time.

# Solutions

- No ‘be-all, end-all’ solution to misconceptions.
- However, communication and effective community engagement are very important.
- With recent projects, have attempted to cover off common questions in reports and presentations.
- Heritage Committees play an important role too.





# Thank you

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