

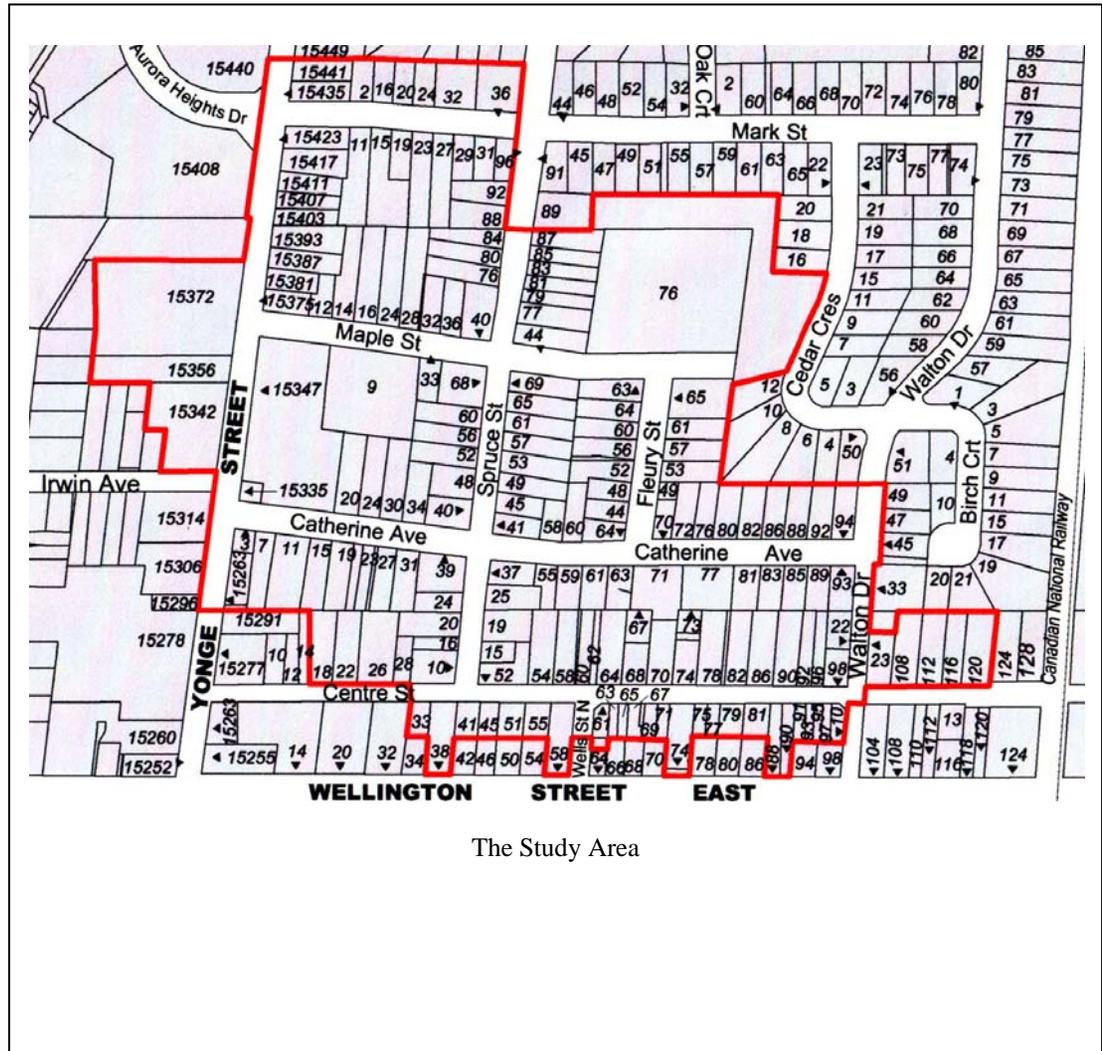
3.0 District Criteria

3.1 A Heritage Conservation District: Why and Where

3.1.1 Official Basis

Subsection 41(1) of the Ontario Heritage Act requires that prior to designating a heritage conservation district by by-law a municipality must have an official plan that contains provisions relating to the establishment of districts. The Act doesn't specify the nature of those provisions, but the Ministry suggests in its Guidelines that reference to the Act and its requirements, and a statement of intent to designate one or more areas be included in the Official Plan.

The Town of Aurora meets the requirements under the Act as stated above. As noted in Section 1.3, above, Official Plan Policy 3.8,c (i) refers specifically to the Historic Core Community Commercial Centre and the adjacent neighbourhoods, (which includes the current Study Area) and states that it "shall be considered for designation as a Heritage Conservation District based on an appropriate plan. Policy 3.8, e (ii) calls on Council to achieve the heritage goals and objectives of the Official Plan through the use of the Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act to evaluate an area for designation as a Heritage Conservation District. Under this authority, Council delineated an area for examination, shown on the map below, and authorized the terms of reference for a study on June 28, 2005.



3.0 District Criteria

3.2 Criteria for Establishing District Boundaries

3.2.1 Guidance from the Ministry

The Ontario Heritage Act empowers municipalities to define areas “to be examined for future designation” as Heritage Conservation Districts. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture provides guidance for Heritage Conservation Districts in *Ontario’s Heritage Conservation District Guidelines*. Section 3.5, Ingredients of a District, is quoted in its entirety, below:

3.5 Ingredients of a district. The Act does not define “heritage” or “heritage conservation district as such; neither does it describe how the “examination” is to be carried out. Nevertheless, the experience gathered to date in heritage conservation district planning and designation provides a sound basis upon which to address these matters more fully. There are three prime ingredients needed for a successful district—evaluation, delineation and participation.

EVALUATION:

Defining heritage. In general, properties of heritage value should be able, with suitable examination, to reveal some of the broad architectural, cultural, social, political, economic or military patterns of our history, or should have some association with specific events or people that have shaped the details of that history. What each community thinks appropriate to its heritage will vary, but the key to its protection is to understand the distinction of a place or area in its large context.

Describing area character. A heritage conservation district is an aggregate of buildings, streets and open spaces that, as a group, is a collective asset to a community in precisely the same way than an individual property is valuable to that community.

A district may comprise a few buildings, or an entire municipality. It may have architectural, scenic, or archaeological aspects worth conserving. Above all else, a heritage conservation district has a special character or association that distinguishes it from its surroundings. Potential districts can be found in both urban and

3.0 District Criteria

rural environments and may comprise residential, commercial and industrial areas, established rural landscapes or entire villages or hamlets.

Successful area examination has always included an evaluation of each property from a variety of perspectives. The following criteria suggest the basic questions that ought to be addressed.

Historical associations. A building, structure, or property may have been associated with the life of a well known historic personage or group, or have played some role in an important historical event or episode.

Architectural value. A building or structure may be exemplary for the study of the architecture of construction of a specific period or area, or the work of an important builder, designer, or architect.

Vernacular design. A modest, well-crafted building or structure may be no less important to the community's heritage than an architectural gem such as a mansion or public building.

Integrity. A building, or structure, together with its site, should retain a large part of its integrity its relation to its earlier state(s) in the maintenance of its original or early materials and craftsmanship.

Architectural details. Specific architectural consideration should include style, plan, and the sequence of spaces; use of materials and details, including windows, doors, signs, ornaments, and so on; colours, textures, and lighting; and the relationships of all these to neighbouring buildings.

Landmark status or group value. Where a building or structure is an integral part of a distinctive area of a community, or is considered to be a landmark, its contribution to the neighbourhood character may be of special value.

Open spaces. Examination of a potential district should also include public spaces such as sidewalks, roads and streets, and public parks or gardens. These features often play roles as conspicuous as those of buildings in the environment. Open spaces provide setting for buildings as well as places to view them

3.0 District Criteria

and the landscapes in which they sit. These spaces are often features of the original plan or survey of a settled community and have intrinsic value in ordering and organizing the location of buildings and structures.

Vacant land and contemporary structures.

Vacant, undeveloped or underdeveloped land or contemporary buildings and structures should not be summarily dismissed from either examination or inclusion within the proposed district. Municipalities may wish to include these types of property where it is likely that incongruous development or unsympathetic construction on these sites will adversely affect the character of the proposed district. It may well be such sites that enable the distinction of the district to be enhanced, or damaged, in the future.

DELINEATION:

Establishing a boundary that will encompass the proposed district is a crucial task. Its principal objective is to ensure that the special character identified through study of the proposed district will be adequately protected by the measures available to the municipality in Part V of the Act. The district boundary should be established according to the unique characteristics of the area. Examples of potentially successful districts include:

areas that have changed little since first developed and that contain buildings, structures and spaces with linkages and settings as originally planned still substantially intact—a group of civic and institutional buildings located around a public square, or a waterfront area with its marine related structures are good examples.

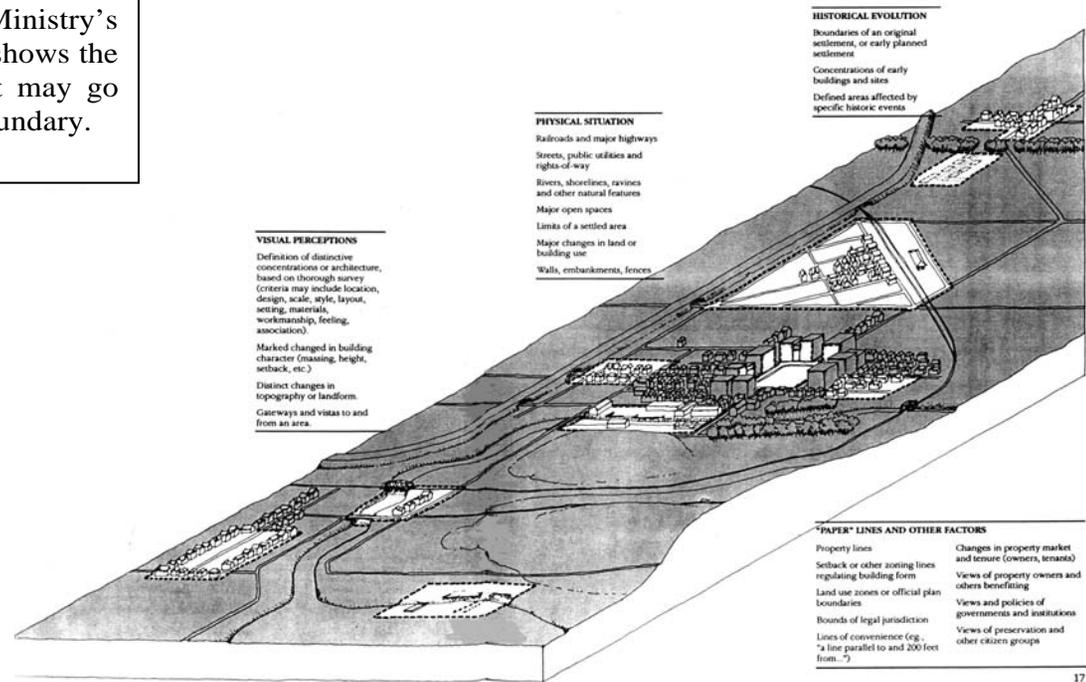
areas of buildings or structures of perhaps similar or perhaps different architectural style and detailing which, through the use of materials, height, scale, massing, colours, and texture, comprise cohesive harmonious streetscapes having a definite sense of place distinct from their surroundings.

3.0 District Criteria

areas of buildings and structures that have acquired a definite sense of time and place through historical associations with activities, events and individuals.

Boundaries should be drawn to include not only the buildings or structures of interest but also the whole property on which they are located. Vacant land, infill sites, public open space and contemporary buildings may also be contained within the district where it is desirable to ensure that their future development is in keeping with the character of the area. Boundaries may follow distinctive topographical features such as rivers, roads, walls, fences, treelines and slopes. Less visible elements such as property or lot lines, land use designations in official plans or boundaries for particular uses or densities in the zoning by-law may also influence the delineation of the boundary, especially as they may effect its eventual legal description in by-law form.

This drawing from the Ministry's guidelines on the delineation shows the variety of considerations that may go into determining a District Boundary.



3.0 District Criteria

PARTICIPATION.

The Act does not require any form of public participation other than municipal consultation with its Municipal Heritage Committee prior to enacting a by-law for a study under Section 40; the OMB may make its own requirements for notifying people as it sees fit.

Public participation and consultation in the designation of districts is nevertheless very desirable. Public meetings during the examination process, individual notification to property owners within a study area, and notices or articles in local newspapers advertising municipal proposals are all valuable for both informing the public and enabling the public to respond to proposals for designation.

In some cases it has become a practice during the process of district designation to eliminate possible objectors to designation by excluding their properties from the proposed district. This is not generally advisable. While it may seem expedient in the short term to take such action, the overriding objective of a district should be to protect and enhance all buildings and structures of heritage value within its boundaries. Any objectors to district designation will be able to voice their concerns and present supporting or objecting arguments at the mandatory OMB meeting.

Note that amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act require two changes in the guidelines regarding PARTICIPATION, above:

- 1) Section 41.1(6)(b) of the Act now requires at least one public meeting be held with respect to a proposed heritage district plan (the plan, not the study).
- 2) review of District boundaries by the OMB is no longer mandatory, although any person may appeal a by-law designating a Heritage Conservation District to the OMB.

3.0 District Analysis

The Ontario Heritage Act also embodies The Ontario Heritage Trust (formerly the Ontario Heritage Foundation), and entrusts it with several objectives related to the conservation, protection, and preservation of the Province's heritage. *Well Preserved, The Ontario Heritage Foundation's Manual of Principles and Practice for Architectural Conservation* offers additional guidance, under the headings of Neighbourhood and District Character, and Heritage and Planning Policies, parts of which are quoted below:

Much of the motivation for heritage conservation comes from a general concern that future construction will not fit as well into a neighbourhood as existing structures. The public has a growing sense that conservation is essential to neighbourhood or district planning beyond preservation of single buildings. The character of an area, with its buildings, landscapes and streets, has become of considerable value, even though no single person owns or controls this amenity— and even though its boundaries may be difficult to determine.

A district of particular heritage importance may be a collection of pleasant residential streets with solid Victorian houses [or] a main street lined with commercial blocks of many different eras, a collection of mill and factory buildings along a waterfront, or even a rural landscape of scenic interest. Such areas are more than the sum of their parts and are demonstrably unique. They may be amenities for local people as well as attractions to visitors from near and far. They serve as a tangible focus for community pride.

Provide for diversity as well as consistency in assessing and planning districts. Include vacant lands within district boundaries where their development offers opportunities that may either enhance or damage the character of the district, and make explicit criteria for the quality of development on such lands, especially on frontages facing heritage properties.

Boundaries are based on a combination of factors, including physical situation, visual perceptions, patterns of historical evolution, and various definitions of property and land use regulations.

3.0 District Criteria

2.2.2 Additional Guidance from the Official Plan

This Study and Plan relies on The Town of Aurora Official to provide its context, and it will reflect and respect policies found therein. Relevant portions are quoted in Sections

2.2.3 Site-Specific Evaluation

In recognition of the above, a series of goals specific to the Northeast Old Aurora area in the Town of Aurora has been identified as providing appropriate criteria for setting the boundaries of a Northeast Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District:

- 1) To establish a sense of continuity and to make the District readily identifiable, the boundaries should encompass a contiguous area.
- 2) Principal entries into the District should have the quality of “gateways”, and principal travel routes should have a sense of enclosure on both sides of the route.
- 3) The District boundary should include areas that are significant to the neighbourhood in terms of architectural heritage, historical development, character, and quality of landscapes and vistas.
- 4) Recognizing that the District Plan will be a guide for future development, the District boundary should encompass sufficient areas to ensure that new development or redevelopment will maintain and enhance the heritage character that the District Plan seeks to preserve.
- 5) Individual properties designated under Part IV of the Heritage Act as having historical or architectural value or interest, can be included in the Heritage Conservation District. The interior remains subject to Part IV, and other aspects of the property are subject to Part V.

