



Heritage Conservation Areas in Victoria Fact Sheet

1. What is a Heritage Conservation Area?

A Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) is a type of heritage designation for an historically significant group of properties. The designation is embedded in the Official Community Plan through a City bylaw. A Heritage Conservation Area includes a large number of properties that share historically significant features in common. These features are officially identified in the Official Community Plan and are the “character defining elements” of the Heritage Conservation Area. Alterations to character defining elements and new construction visible from the street would require a heritage alteration permit.

2. How are Heritage Conservation Area boundaries determined? How do I know if my property is “historic”?

Heritage Conservation Area Boundaries are determined based on a set of historic criteria that a large number of properties meet. A Heritage Conservation Area is an area in which a majority of properties share a common set of historic criteria. Criteria can include unique architecture, unique landscaping or a unique street layout. Often, a combination of criteria are applied.

3. How difficult will it be to make changes or upgrades to my property as a result?

The Heritage Conservation Area permit process is not intended to discourage homeowners from upgrading their properties. Many improvements, including the following, are not regulated:

- All interior renovations
- Exterior painting of single detached homes unless identified as a character defining element
- Roof replacement using similar materials
- Rear deck construction
- Additions under 100m² (1000ft²) not visible from the street
- Most landscaping changes, including non-historic fences and other structures
- Sustainability upgrades that do not affect the appearance of buildings from the street
- Replacement of eaves troughs, downspouts and exterior lighting
- Weather stripping or mechanical system upgrades
- A garden suite located behind the rear wall of the house

4. What work requires a permit?

Land subdivision, constructing a new building or addition, and altering protected heritage features will require a heritage alteration permit (HAP). Staff have the authority to approve HAPs for single detached homes provided there are no variances from the zoning

by-law. Review would take place concurrently with reviews of building and other required permits and could be issued in under 2 months. A heritage alteration permit with variances from the zoning by-law requires City Council approval and could take between 3 and 4 months to approve.

5. Why should I support a Heritage Conservation Area?

Unlike a zoning by-law, Heritage Conservation Area guidelines can establish guidelines for the architectural style of new buildings, which can help ensure that they have a similar form, scale and appearance to existing buildings. Every neighbourhood has a unique story to tell about the people, buildings and events that have shaped it over the years. A Heritage Conservation Area helps protect the unique characteristics and sense of place of an area for people today and for future generations.