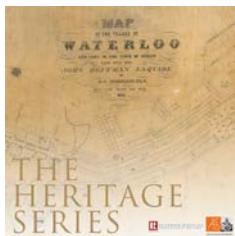




14 Common Heritage Myths Debunked

Plus a review of the Heritage Real Estate Series and links to important resources!

March, 2015



This past fall, the [Kitchener-Waterloo Association of REALTORS®](#) hosted a series of [3 Heritage Real Estate workshops](#) over the course of three weeks in cooperation with the [Architectural Conservancy Ontario North Waterloo Region](#).

The series was extremely well received by the approximately 30 REALTORS® who took advantage of these unique field trips, where they heard from a variety of speakers, covering a full range of topics related to Heritage Real Estate. Many who attended clearly had an existing interest and appreciation for the value of heritage homes. Others left with a new found appreciation, and can now better recognize and uncover the potential of this niche market.

Each workshop was followed by a street side walking tour of a historical neighborhood in [Waterloo](#), [Kitchener](#), and [Galt](#).

The Speakers

At the first workshop, **Jim Leonard**, Provincial Heritage Registrar, Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT), dispelled many of the myths and half-truths that surround the heritage designation process.

DEBUNKING COMMON HERITAGE MYTHS

1. MYTH: Decisions are made by a “committee”...Someone else will tell you what you can and cannot do with your property.

TRUTH:

- Heritage decisions are made by a [municipal council](#); they consult with a municipal heritage committee (MHC) if one exists.
- Council is empowered to identify heritage properties and have tools under Ontario Heritage Act (OHA) to ensure protection, manage change and foster public awareness.
- Role in Land Use Planning includes: owners, public, council, MHC, planning committees, clerk, legal staff, planners, heritage staff, building departments, consultants, developers, conservation authorities, media, contractors, architects, heritage organizations...

2. MYTH: Only buildings over 100 years old can be designated

TRUTH:

- Not all heritage buildings are old...and not all old buildings are heritage!
- Properties may take on cultural heritage value with the passing of time.
- OHA Register is tracking about 900 post-1900 designations; 32 are post-1950.

3. MYTH: I won’t be able to remove wallpaper or change light fixtures because my house is designated.

TRUTH:

- [Most](#) designations do not include interior features. Approximately 125 do (Under 2%).
- Difficult to monitor interior designations if in private hands so tend to be rare (plus issue of privacy).
- Rare and unique interior elements (e.g. mantelpieces, trim, ceiling medallions).
- If “fixed” to real property [and](#) has cultural heritage value it can be designated.

4. MYTH: Designations only focus on front facades or properties the public can see from the street.

TRUTH:

- Typically cultural heritage value is not narrowed to just a front facades or properties that are visible from the public realm.
- Properties with deep setbacks or hidden from public view can be designated.

5. MYTH: Designated properties are more expensive to maintain

TRUTH:

- Neglect is expensive – not old buildings.
- Heritage conservation focuses on minimal intervention.
- Good maintenance means never having to “restore.”
- Regular maintenance and repair over replacement (typically less expensive).
- Recognize the natural aged “patina” and resilience of an older building.

6. MYTH: Designation means I will have to restore my property.

TRUTH:

- Designation does not require an owner to restore the property.
- Maintain the property as any prudent property owner would.
- Pay attention to heritage features and character elements.
- Property standards apply to all building owners regardless of age or heritage status of a property.
- Designation focuses on the “as is” heritage value.
- Grants, incentives, tax rebates are available in some communities.

7. MYTH: Only ‘landmarks’ should be designated.

TRUTH:

- Not just about Victorian landmarks.
- Any real property exhibiting “cultural heritage value or interest.”
- Includes: cemeteries, factories, houses, parks, laneways, trees, mills, commercial buildings, neighborhoods...
- Districts include “non-contributing”, modest buildings too.

8. MYTH: Designated properties cannot be changed.

TRUTH:

- 97% of all heritage permits sent to the Trust since 2010 were either consents or consents with conditions (using sample of 500 heritage permits from 28 different municipalities).
- Queen West HCD in Toronto: 51 heritage permits approved in 2013; 0 denied; 41% of these permits were approved within one week; another 25% approved between 15-30 days.
- Designation is about “change management” – ‘HOW’ more than ‘IF’.

Role of REALTORS®, Owners and Buyers

- Ask about incentives – tax rebates, matching grants.
- Confirm heritage status as soon as you become interested in a property.
- Talk to municipal staff and heritage committees.
- Become familiar with review and approvals process (heritage permit system).
- Check online resources (i.e. Ontario Heritage Toolkit).
- Look for qualified contractors, architects and engineers (e.g. CAHP).
- Outline heritage status in sales literature.

Source: Ontario Heritage Trust –Jim Leonard presentation to KWAR Oct 22, 2014. Printed with permission.

9. MYTH: Designation adds too much “red tape”.

TRUTH:

- Queen Street West HCD (Toronto): 41% of heritage permits were approved within one week; another 25% approved within 15-30 days.
- Many municipalities have passed bylaws delegating heritage alteration approvals to staff.
- Ontario Heritage Act stipulates no more than a 90-day turn around on heritage approvals; extension possible if owner agrees.

10. MYTH: Buildings in Canada are not significant compared to Europe so why bother protecting them here?

TRUTH:

- Just 34% of all *listed* buildings in England were built before 1800.
- Most date to 19th / early 20th century – comparable to Canada.

11. MYTH: New additions to heritage buildings must have that “ye olde” look or they won’t get approved.

TRUTH:

- New work should be distinguishable from the old (but respectful).
- Compatible in form, massing, height, placement, connections, materials.
- Contrasting, modernist treatments can be approved too.
- Decisions are case-by-case; factoring: character and style, context, adjacent properties, lot constraints, needs of owner, zoning regulations.
- Careful planning and qualified contractors and architects is key.

12. MYTH: Designation prevents or is used to block redevelopment.

TRUTH:

- Countless examples of adaptive reuse, integration of heritage resources into new developments, heritage lots in residential subdivisions, condo developments across Ontario and Canada.
- Brownfield sites, farmsteads, commercial buildings, houses....
- Process usually requires: buffers, contextual elements (not just the building), heritage lot, site security plan, conservation plan, letters of credit, heritage conditions tied to approvals.

13. MYTH: There is no criteria – anything can be designated.

TRUTH:

- Minimum criteria has been in place since 2006 (Ontario regulation 9/06)
- Must be able to demonstrate cultural heritage value or interest.
- Designation bylaws must be carefully drafted, comprehensive, accurate.

Respect the efforts of property owners. They have invested a great deal of money, emotion and ‘sweat equity.’

From Jim Leonard, Ontario Heritage Trust presentation to KWAR – Oct 21, 2014

Most people want to preserve Ontario’s heritage – they just need information and guidance.

From Jim Leonard, Ontario Heritage Trust presentation to KWAR – Oct 21, 2014

- Proposed bylaws can be appealed to Conservation Review Board for a second opinion.
- Municipalities must articulate cultural heritage value and specify the features and attributes to be protected.

14. MYTH: Designation erodes property values.

TRUTH:

- [Heritage Resources Centre \(UW\)](#) studied 3000 heritage designated properties in 24 communities across Ontario (in 2000). A summary of his key findings:
 - Designated properties tend to sell **on par or better** than non-designated properties (74%).
 - They tend to **resist downturns** in the real estate market more than non-designated (79% performed on par or better).
 - Appears the market is ‘rewarding’ owners of heritage designated properties with stable property value.



Local Historian and Curator, **Susan M. Burke**, introduced us to the [architectural styles](#) found throughout Waterloo region, delivered both through her slideshow presentation and streetside tours of the heritage conservation districts of [Victoria Park](#) in Kitchener, and [Dickson Hill](#) in Galt. **Philippe Elsworthy**, a member of Waterloo’s Municipal Heritage Committee and **Kae Elgie**, president of the ACO North Waterloo Branch lead the tours of the [MacGregor-Albert](#) conservation district in Waterloo.

Christopher Borgal, Heritage Architect and Consultant showed us that there are many fine examples of heritage buildings throughout Ontario, and taught us that designated heritage properties actually perform [better than average](#) in the real estate market. This is according to the University of Waterloo study: [Heritage Designation and Property Values: Is there an Effect?](#)

Pete Karageorgos, Director of Consumer & Industry Relations with the Insurance Bureau of Canada talked about insuring heritage properties and the difference between replacement cost versus reproduction cost and the importance of insuring to value. He advises that consumers shop around for an agent who understands (or is willing to learn) about heritage properties. When insuring a heritage home it is important to reduce risk, document unique characteristics and buy sufficient insurance. For more information about Home Insurance, the [IBC.ca](#) website is a great resource.

A series about heritage real estate would not have been complete without hearing from a REALTOR®. **Betty Lou Clark**, a member of the Guelph & District Real Estate Board shared her experiences as a real estate salesperson working in the Royal City. A past member of Heritage Guelph advisory committee and a member of Guelph’s ACO, and past president of Guelph Historical Society, Betty had lots of tips and engaged the audience in a great Q&A about listing and selling heritage homes.

“Selling” Heritage

- Focus on character, patina, history, the strengths and attributes.
- Heritage is unique; its special.
- Find way to sell value of heritage on emotional level – not just about cornices, view sheds, built form typology and Flemish bond brick.
- Worth the investment – quality construction in most cases – resilient.

Source: Ontario Heritage Trust –Jim Leonard presentation to KWAR Oct 22, 2014. Reprinted with permission.

Incentives, Grants, and other Resources

A panel of Heritage planners from Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge reviewed the incentives and other programs available for designated heritage properties.

Cambridge

Valerie Spring, a Senior Planner with the City of Cambridge explained her city's [Heritage Grant Program](#) which provides matching funds for conservation work, up to \$5000 per calendar year. Eligible projects include, window repair or replication, re-roofing using cedar shingles, painting using historic colour, and repoint using historic masonry. The City of Cambridge also has a Technical Consulting program which helps a designated property owner to offset the cost of hiring a professional engineer, hydrogeologist, or heritage architect. Other programs of note include the [Core Area Incentive Program](#) and a Building Revitalization program. Loan amounts are increased if a property is designed under the Ontario Heritage Act or listed on the City of Cambridge Registry.

Kitchener

The City of Kitchener also provides heritage funding through their designated heritage property grant program (50% of eligible conservation work up to a maximum of \$3000) and a heritage tax refund program (eligible properties may receive up to a 40% refund of the taxes for municipal and school purposes). Kitchener Heritage planner, **Michelle Drake** gave an excellent overview of the [heritage resources available](#) in Kitchener and showed us some beautiful examples of restoration work that has been completed under the program.



Waterloo

While the City of Waterloo does not currently provide any heritage funding, (a [Heritage Strategy](#) is currently underway), **Michelle Lee**, Heritage Planner with the City did offer some useful tips. She suggests that you check the Municipal



Heritage Register to determine which properties are listed or designated before buying a property. Properties can be designated for architectural, historic or contextual reasons. Because of this, designated properties aren't always obvious. Be

aware of "Listed", non-designated properties. Property owners seeking redevelopment opportunities should be aware of those properties that are listed as the list can have implications for demolition and redevelopment.

Check the Municipal Heritage Register to determine which properties are listed or designated before listing or selling a property.

Be aware that alterations to designated property will require a heritage permit. This doesn't mean that changes can't be made, but rather that there is a process in place to review proposed changes to ensure they conserve heritage features. Details can be found online or by calling heritage staff.

Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation



Capital and Property Grants are also available through the Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation. **Stephanie Massel**, a volunteer Director with the Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation, explained the criteria and application process. Stephanie shared an example of a local REALTOR® who had proactively contacted the Foundation for a grant application on a heritage property that they had listed (See Case Study on final page). The Foundation approved the grant which helped to preserve and maintain a valuable historic home. Stephanie's message to the audience was "Bring us applications!" For more information visit <http://www.wrf.org/>

Did you Know?

The [Ontario Heritage Act](#) requires municipalities to keep a register of property that is of cultural heritage value or interest. The register is commonly known as the Municipal Heritage Register (MHR) and includes:

Property that has been designated under Part IV (individual) or Part V (heritage conservation districts) of the Ontario Heritage Act; and, Property that has been listed as a non-designated property of cultural heritage value or interest.

Heritage & Property Values

- Galvin, Kayla Jonas & Shipley, Robert. [Heritage Districts Work – More Stories of Success](#). Heritage Conservation District Study Phase 2, Summary Report. Heritage Resources Centre, University of Waterloo, 2012.
- Shipley, Robert. [Heritage Designation and Property Values: is there an effect?](#) International Journal of Heritage Studies, Vol. 6, Number 1, 2000.
- Singbeil, Kelsey. [Study of the Comparative Value of Heritage and Non-heritage Houses in Vancouver](#). Vancouver Heritage Foundation, 2005.
- Centre for Community Study. [The Economic Value of Heritage Districts: how assessment growth in Heritage Conservation Districts compares with non-designated area in Hamilton](#). *Urban Insights*, 2012.

List to additional Online Resources:



A Comprehensive list of online resources has been developed by the ACO North Waterloo Region branch and can be found here: <http://www.aconwr.ca/heritage-resources/>

REALTOR® initiates process that results in \$30,000 Grant to replace Cedar Roof

The property, 147 Avondale Ave S, Waterloo is a heritage home, designated by the City of Waterloo By-Law 92-39 because of its historic and architectural value and interest pursuant to Section 29 of The Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1980, c.337. Under the City of Waterloo By-Law, the home is known as "The Reitzel-Grierson House." The home was built in 1925, designed by C.P. Mueller.

From the City of Waterloo: "Ed Reitzel was a member of a family that began a construction business in the early 1900s and later established the Reitzel Furniture Factory on Allen Street West. Mr. Reitzel was himself a house builder and used his skills to build his own home on Avondale Avenue West in 1925.

The 1.5 storey bungalow is designed in the craftsman style. That style originated in England with the arts and crafts movement, and was based upon structural clarity and composition linked with natural forms of decoration. To display the structure's parts clearly and express their organic harmony, the designer of the Reitzel house used such visible architectural details as wide overhangs of the roof, extended fascia boards, projecting corbels under the front gable end, gable ends and walls constructed of pink granite from the Bruce peninsula with their outer joints free of mortar. Likewise, heavy wooden posts in the front porch and pseudo rafter-ends on the front and side porches contribute to the craftsman style in the Reitzel house."

The Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation was first contacted by the owner's real estate agent, Suzanne Ethier. The home had been listed for some time, but hadn't sold. The cedar roof had reached the end of its useful life and would cost about \$60,000 to replace. Even though this impending expense had been worked into the price of the home, potential buyers were still put off by the potential cost and by the fact that it was a heritage home and there would be "hoops to jump through."

Mrs. Ethier contacted the City of Waterloo to get information on what could and could not be done with the roof. They suggested she contact the Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation to see about a grant.

A couple of months after speaking to Mrs. Ethier, the WRHF received a grant application requesting \$15,373 which represented 50% of the cost of replacing the cedar shakes with a coated steel shingle that mimicked the cedar shakes. The City of Waterloo recommended replacing the roof with a sympathetic shingle material such as cedar, but because the heritage designation by-law did not specifically mention the roof materials, the choice of materials was left up to the property owner. The owner decided to go with the coated steel because it was less expensive, would last longer and would not be susceptible to moss.

The Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation discussed the application and did not want to see the cedar roof replaced by a steel roof. So, it granted the homeowner a maximum of \$30,000 plus HST for replacement of the roof provided that the existing roof was replaced with a historically accurate cedar roof. This grant of \$30,000, double the amount requested, represented 50% of the cost of a cedar roof.

The homeowner agreed to replace the roof with cedar and the work was completed within a couple of months.

This quote from the homeowner adds some valuable insight...

"My house was listed for over a year. I had well over 1300 people through it. The interest was there but potential buyers were afraid of the Heritage designation. Many potential buyers came through because of the location and curb appeal but wanted to see a 'media room' and an ensuite...sigh. Finally, valuation... I was there for 20 years and constantly fought with appraisers and real estate agents over valuation. A Heritage home does not fit their cookie-cutter methods of valuing based on comparables in the neighbourhood. You have to push back on them, challenge them to see the uniqueness and truly search out comparables."

This story has a happy conclusion. The home finally did sell and closed in January of 2015. It illustrates the important role the REALTOR® played in the sale of the home, and that a Heritage property is a worthwhile investment not only in real estate, but also in our community's history...and it requires our collective stewardship.