



Growing Together delegation to PSIC, January 26, 2024

The ACO is a provincial charity that advocates for the conservation of heritage buildings and places. We have been in existence for 90 years and have the expertise of a wide variety of members, including architects, historians and preservation experts. In the Waterloo region, we have been called on to provide knowledge of the local heritage buildings and landscapes. Several municipalities have asked us to identify significant built heritage for protection. We created a comprehensive, searchable database of the heritage properties in the region: [WaterlooBuilt](#). The City of Kitchener has asked us to provide the information on heritage buildings, which we are pleased to do.

The Growing Together proposals are complex and provide a roadmap for the city's obligation to intensify around transit stations or MTSA's. Of course, it is important to provide the areas of growth with the transits needs of people living in the area. However, within an 800-metre sphere of these MTSA's are two Heritage Conservation Districts (HCDs), key features of Kitchener's past that provincial policy has determined "shall be preserved". The need for increased density is further complicated by the existence of Victoria Park, which cannot be used for increasing density near transit stations.

Growing Together summarized its impact as having Four qualities:

- Balance
- Transition
- Vibrancy
- Affordability

It also states that the HCDs will be protected:

All of the existing heritage tools the city uses remain in effect, including Heritage Conservation Districts for both Victoria Park and Civic Centre. The policies in these plans remain and take precedence over the new land use and zoning anywhere there is a conflict, though we have also worked to minimize any potential for conflict (Community Guide to Land Use and Zoning, p. 66).

We think that the proposed zoning will create a very unstable environment for development of the downtown and harm the HCDs. We have seen that when proposals come forward that involve heritage buildings, that some rationale is put forward to demolish and build anew, in effect eating away at the very fabric of what makes Kitchener a vibrant place to live and work. In our brief to Heritage Kitchener, we describe in detail some of the actions taken over the years that have compromised the integrity of the Victoria Park HCD (Figure 1).

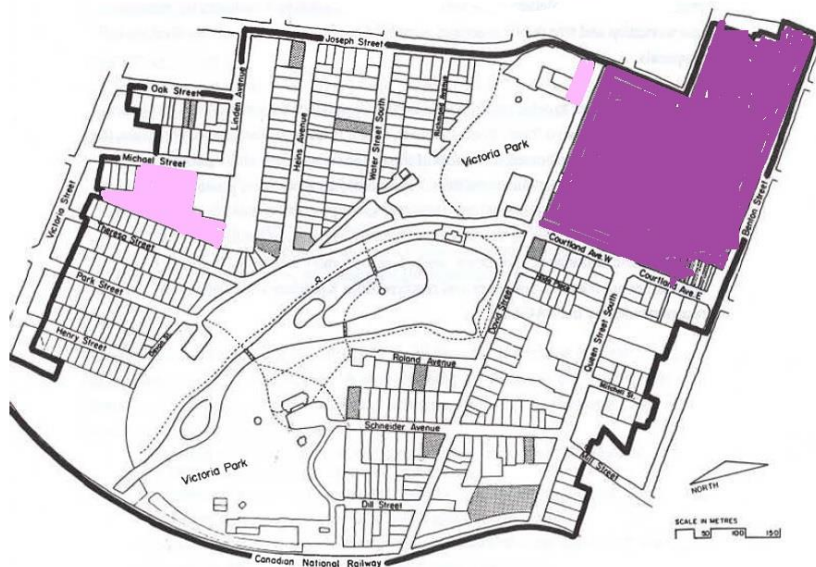


Figure 1: Victoria Park HCD showing area SGA2 (pink) and SGA3 (purple)

There are two proposals in zoning that we think should be changed. On the Western side of the Park, a significant part of the area is identified as SGA2, where buildings of 8 storeys or 27 metres would be permitted. Currently, the zoning in this area is 10.5 metres, or 3 storeys. The HCD plan would be compromised by such higher density and it would not be compatible with the low-rise buildings around it. The area of the western part of the HCD where 8 storey/27 metre tall buildings would be permitted is about 7%. Currently, there are no buildings higher than three storeys in this part of the HCD. is 3 storeys or 10.5 metres (see Figure 2).

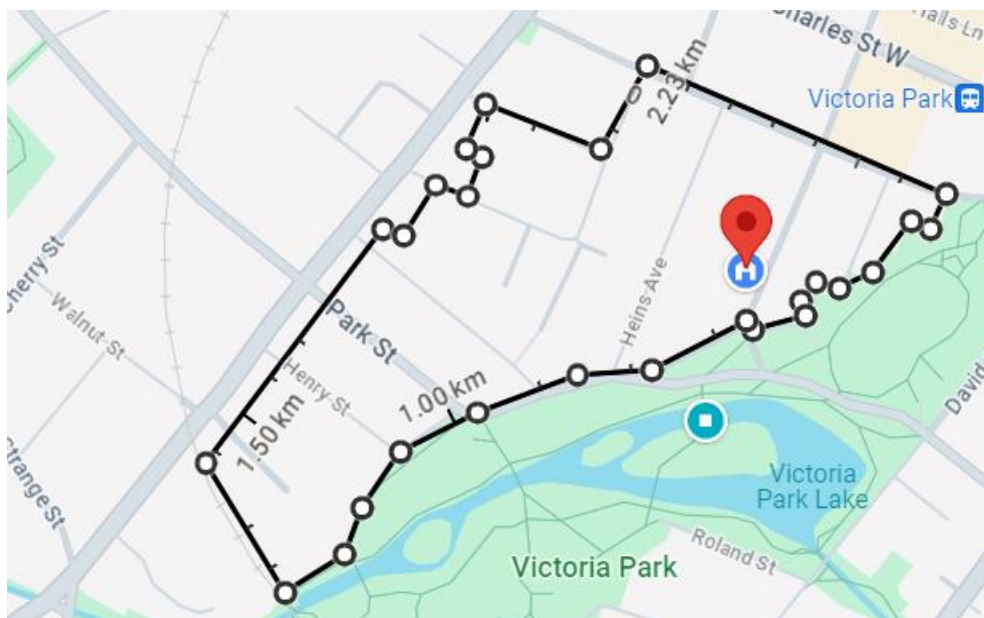


Figure 2: Western side of Victoria Park HCD

Total Area: 176,779.79 m²

SGA2 Area (Michael, Victoria and Linden): 12,860.92 m², or 7.3%

On the eastern part of the HCD along Queen and Benton, Growing Together proposes a designation of SGA3 (Figure 3). SGA3 zoning would allow buildings of up to 25 storeys

or 84 metres. Not only is the designation much taller than existing buildings in the HCD, the percent of SGA3 zoning in the eastern part of the HCD is much higher at 40%.

Designating SGA2 and SGA3 zones inside the HCDs will result in serious damage to the HCDs and to the fabric of our city, cause uncertainty and conflict in planning application, and reduce the economic benefits that heritage provides to our community and in the region.

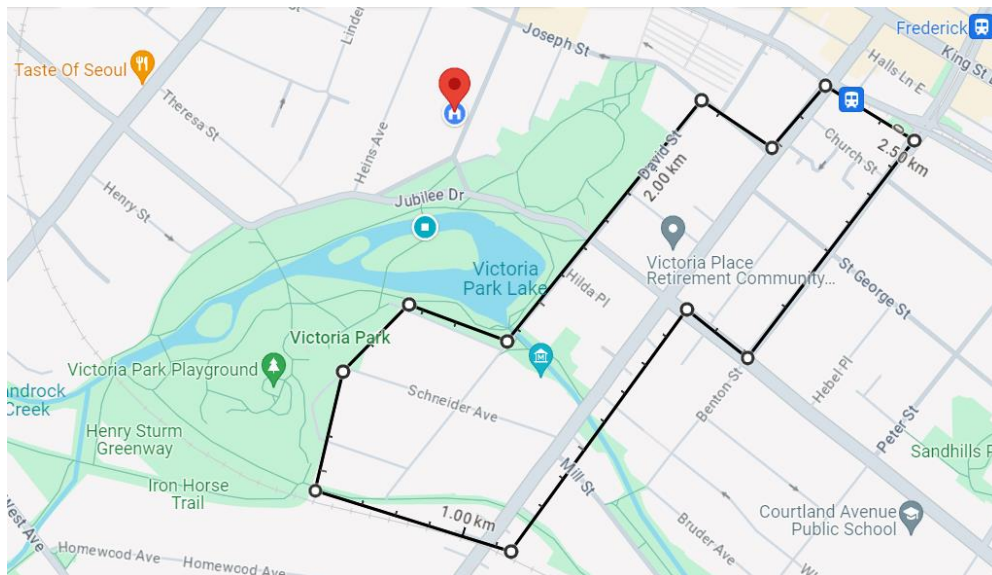


Figure 3: Eastern Part of the HCD

Total Area: 214,523.15 m²

SGA3 (Benton to David, Courtland to Charles) 86,905.25 m²

Percent classified as SGA3 is 40.4%

At the December Heritage Kitchener meeting, we predicted that developers would be encouraged to develop tall buildings inside the HCD. They have done so in the past. We encourage you to read the Growing Together document, Attachment J, pp.



211ff. There, you will find detailed plans by a developer for a building in the SGA3 zone. Not 25 storeys, as Growing Together would allow. The developer is not content with that limit. Instead, they propose a 52-storey building. If Kitchener allows HCDs to have such tall buildings, then what is the purpose of a Heritage Conservation District?

In our written brief to Heritage Kitchener, we describe in particular the policies of the Victoria Park HCD which will be violated by increased height limits. For example, at the corner of Joseph and David are a parking lot and three older residential low-rise houses, all of which are duplexed and provide affordable housing. As built, they are SGA1. If rezoned SGA2, they could be torn down and replaced with mid-rise buildings up to 8 storeys in height. That could be even taller if the developer applied for a zoning-bylaw or official plan amendment. This corner lot is also contiguous with Victoria Park; having a tall building is not compatible with parkland.

The HCD plan has specific guidelines as to how to integrate new building in the HCD, with low rise, heritage appropriate style and massing. The plan lists 14 criteria for ensuring the continued character of the HCD. We believe that Growing Together must remove the SGA2 and SGA3 designations inside the HCDs.

Growing Together suggests that the “policies in these plans remain and take precedence over the new land use and zoning anywhere there is a conflict.” Designating certain lands inside the HCDs as 8 and 25 storeys contradicts this assertion and will only promote future conflict between developers and staff and the general public.

In short, if we are to preserve heritage conservation districts, we cannot treat them as “places to build” but as “places to keep”. That would be consistent with municipal, regional and provincial policy.