



March 8, 2022

TO: Chairs Gower and Moffat and members of Planning Committee

**RE: City of Ottawa's Response to the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force Report
Recommendations ACS2022-PIE-EDP-0008**

Doug Ford's Affordability Task Force purports to make construction of affordable housing easier by streamlining the planning process. It is nothing of the sort. It is a blatant grab for taking the powers of decision-making away from municipalities and putting power into the hands of our already largely unfettered development community. This has nothing to do with our current housing crisis.

Heritage in particular is portrayed as an impediment to realizing the true economic value of a property, as though economic value is the only determinant of what matters in our built environment. Social value, cultural value: these all matter in a humane society.

Heritage Ottawa notes a deep lack of understanding, even hostility in the report, about the purpose and impact of heritage designation. Some of these recommendations would appear to require amendments to the *Ontario Heritage Act* not to mention the Provincial Policy Statement.

Heritage Ottawa heartily endorses the staff responses to recommendations 12, 16 and 17.

Recommendation 12 a: “Repeal or override municipal policies, zoning or plans that prioritize the preservation of physical character of neighbourhoods”.

We share the staff concern that this recommendation could be used to repeal or override Heritage Conservation District Plans. Most of Ottawa's 21 Heritage Conservation Districts have guideline documents that recognize the cultural heritage value and attributes of these areas and provide guidance for alterations and new construction.

Recommendation 16: “Prevent abuse of the heritage preservation and designation process ... ” by
a. Prohibiting the use of bulk listing on municipal heritage registers; and
b. Prohibiting reactive heritage designations after a Planning Act development application has been filed.

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It has been our experience that the lack of a publicly accessible heritage register led to frequent misunderstandings about the potential heritage significance of a property acquired for redevelopment, leading to a perception that a proposed heritage designation was “reactive”. Heritage Ottawa actively lobbied for the creation an accessible heritage register in order to remedy this situation.

We agree with the staff comment that “a robust heritage register creates more certainty for property owners and limits the number of reactive designations undertaken in the municipality”. The identification of property that may have cultural value ensures property owners are aware of the potential cultural heritage value of their property at the pre-consultation stage, and hopefully at the purchase stage.

Recommenstion 17: “Requiring municipalities to compensate property owners for loss of property values as a result of heritage designations, based on the principle of the best economic use of land.”

Staff have very effectively countered the ‘false information’ that designation results in loss of property value.

Heritage Ottawa participated in two research studies of Ontario Heritage Conservation Districts led by the Heritage Resources Centre at the University of Waterloo which reported that “**Heritage Districts Work**”. The research included interviews with owners and with municipal staff, sales history trends from GeoWarehouse™, and statistics on requests for alterations. Results were published in 2009 and 2012.

The Key Findings included the following:

Satisfaction with living and owning property in districts is overwhelming

It is not difficult or time consuming to make appropriate alterations to properties in districts

Real estate values in Heritage Conservation Districts generally rise more consistently than surrounding areas

Strong real estate performance and resident satisfaction are most pronounced where district guidelines are enforced

Heritage Ottawa has been working for over fifty years to “champion the protection and stewardship of Ottawa’s built heritage and cultural places, celebrating their value in enriching our shared environment.” Heritage Ottawa has long recognized the economic, social and environmental benefits of heritage conservation.

In conclusion, we urge you to support the recommendations in the staff report.

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Advocacy Committee

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