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Exploring The Nexus Between Heritage And Sustainability: How Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) Can Contribute To The Process

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EXPLORING THE NEXUS BETWEEN HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABILITY: HOW
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREAS (BIAs) CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROCESS

by

Matthew Zambri, BA, University of Toronto, 2010

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Planning
in
Urban Development

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ABSTRACT

Toronto has been undergoing rapid growth and development, dramatically changing the skyline of this city. Although this growth is exciting, it plays a hand in the threat against some of Toronto's oldest buildings, sitting on prime real estate seen as ripe for redevelopment. Toronto needs to be more assertive when protecting its heritage assets, but has become largely reactive rather than proactive due to an overburdened Heritage Preservation Service department. The system needs to provide for more vigilance over threats to heritage and increase public awareness regarding the many benefits to protecting heritage properties. This paper explores how Business Improvement Associations can take on this role and stimulate the conversation of heritage conservation with property owners, developers, and other stakeholders, providing the support and vision over alternatives to demolition. This report also looks at the potential role the private sector has in heritage conservation, seeing it not as a barrier to development but something that needs to be commemorated because it is what makes Toronto unique.

Key words: Heritage Conservation, Sustainability, Business Improvement Areas, Heritage Conservation Districts

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INTRODUCTION

Toronto is growing, despite the recent rough global economic climate resulting from the 2008 Global Credit Crisis and the 2011 USA and European Union Debt Crisis, and is considered Canada's "where-to-be-market" and one of North America's "primary gateways" for business (City of Toronto, 2011, p.3; Urban Land Institute, 2010, p.61). In 2011, Toronto was even ranked the fourth most liveable city in the world by the *Economic Intelligence Unit* (*ibid.*, p.7). In addition, Toronto ranked second, only to New York City, as the best city globally in the *Cities of Opportunities Report*, as well as tenth as a global financial centre by the *Z/Yen Group* (*ibid.*). This favourable economic environment within Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is reflected in the city's ever changing urban fabric. As of September 2011, Toronto boasts a remarkable 132 high-rise construction projects, with Mexico City in second position, trailing behind with 88 high-rise construction projects (*ibid.*, p.14).

Figure 1: Toronto Skyline, 2010 (Gould, 2010)

Figure 2 Anticipated Toronto Skyline 2014 (Gould, 2010)

Although the steady investment is good for the local economy and will dramatically change Toronto's skyline within the next few years, we should approach with caution with regards to the integration of these new developments into the already existing urban fabric. The demand for residential and commercial space in downtown Toronto puts development pressure on properties that do not utilize their potential profit reaching densities. Thus, there becomes an incentive for property owners within these areas of a development boom to sell their properties. This demand inevitably puts heritage-designated buildings and other buildings of vintage at risk of demolition. Therefore, it is important to make property owners and developers see the many economic, social, and sustainability benefits of maintaining existing older buildings.

In Canada, the government primarily performs the role of protecting heritage buildings. At the federal level, heritage conservation efforts are undertaken by Parks

Canada through the recognition of national historic sites (Parks Canada, 2011). They also provide guidance and recommendations on how to treat heritage properties (Parks Canada, 2011a). In Ontario, the Ministry of Culture's *Ontario Heritage Act* is the primary legislation that gives both the province and municipalities the power to designate properties of historic value (Ministry of Culture, 2011).

The planning framework in Ontario has been criticized for lacking the necessary integration of heritage in order to make it have more relevance and consideration when reviewed in development applications (Heritage Toronto & Toronto Historical Association, 2011, p.5). Heritage considerations are still not a fundamental part of Toronto's municipal planning process (*ibid.*). Toronto Heritage Preservation Services [HPS] is often "excluded from broader planning and development decisions" despite their placement in the Planning Department at City Hall (*ibid.*). In addition, HPS is often overburdened, resulting in a more reactive rather than proactive approach when it comes to municipal heritage matters (*ibid.*). This issue persists up into the provincial planning process, especially in regards to the concept of the municipality as a "creature" of the province, which is perceived to result in a weak legislative structure (*ibid.*). The Ontario Municipal Board [OMB] is also perceived as another barrier to heritage conservation efforts in the City due to their reputation of siding with the developer and property owners who do not want to keep their heritage buildings (*ibid.*). In addition to the lack of strong legislative support for heritage, financial support is always an important issue. On the provincial and federal level this support dwindles, and municipalities tend to be left to pay for heritage conservation efforts (Shipley, Jonas and Kovacs, 2011). There are

no financial incentives available from the province and any federal grants have long been defunct. These levels of government have only provided policies that have proven to be very limited in their efforts to protect heritage. The reality is that in Canada, heritage buildings are under constant threat and within the last 30 years, Canada has lost more than 20% of its pre-1920 heritage buildings (Heritage Canada Foundation, 2007, p.1).

The notion of Canada as a “young” country provides a challenge for heritage supporters, for this concept insinuates that there are few buildings worth preservation in this country (Shipley, 2011). Furthermore, the idea of “building anew is a sign of progress and prosperity” only provides more of an argument to discount the heritage value of older buildings (Allison & Peters, 2011, p.85). According to Allison and Peters (2011), heritage conservation “has become associated in the public mind with antiquarian interests and is often seen as peripheral to the greater needs of society, viewing it more as “a luxury rather than a necessity” (p.53). This may explain some of the reasons why heritage conservation is often viewed as opposing progress and economic development, while economic development is defined as “new construction” (*ibid.*, p.88). This leads to the misconception that “preservationists are only concerned with old buildings rather than the healthy growth and maintenance of the city or town” (*ibid.*). This simply is not true and pins heritage conservation as “seeking to prevent change” and urban planning seen as “enabling change” – resulting in a rift in the planning profession and undermines heritage conservation as a form of economic revitalization (*ibid.*, p.89). Therefore, with limited public funding, political will, and lack of integration in

the planning system there is a real urgency to find alternative ways to entice property owners to conserve heritage buildings.

In the United States, the National Trust for Historic Preservation [NTHP] has tied the concept of heritage conservation with sustainability (National Trust for Historic Preservation [NTHP], 2012). The most common definition of sustainability is from the *Brundtland Report* published in 1987, stating, “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” this holistic approach includes economic, social and environmental factors (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987). The NTHP makes the argument that heritage buildings tend to be located in dense, walkable and well serviced urban communities and are therefore already within a more sustainable environment (NTHP, 2012). Although careful not to devalue green building, the NTHP suggests using these technologies to already existing buildings on the idea that no matter how green a newly constructed building is it will still result in the use of energy and national resources, generating construction waste that “clogs landfills” (*ibid.*). This forward thinking by the NTHP aligns closely with many private corporations looking on how to become more sustainable. Therefore one such avenue for encouraging historic conservation is to leverage the private sector’s corporate citizenship values and financial resources to help participate in historic conservation process. Some private companies have capitalized on this concept placing their stores in historic buildings and upgrading them to *LEED* [*Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design*] building standards, thus setting an example for other companies.

At the community level, Business Improvement Areas [BIA] can utilize this momentum of the private sector to be more sustainable for the preservation of their communities. A BIA is an organization, approved by city council, involving all businesses within a delineated boundary (Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas [TABIA], 2010). These businesses are then able to pool resources and finances to maintain and attract businesses, customers, and tourists into the community, serving as an “economic and social anchor, helping to stabilize and revitalize the local community” (*ibid.*). BIAs capitalize on community assets to market themselves, assets such as historic buildings, which according to Richard Florida “provide the authenticity, the creditability, the sense of community, the sense of history that bind people in a fast-moving, 24/7 ever-changing world” and “provide a sense of self, a sense of identity in this creative age” (as cited in Allison & Peters, 2011, p.10). Given the existing conditions regarding heritage conservation within Ontario, what potential do BIAs have to contribute in heritage conservation? Are Heritage Conservation Districts a viable option for heritage protection for BIAs? Further exploration is needed of what role BIAs can play in maintaining their heritage assets and informing their members of the benefits of heritage conservation, while still creating an attractive environment for future investment.

METHODOLOGY

Research for this major research paper will focus on four major areas: heritage conservation, sustainability, private corporations (corporate citizens) and the role BIAs play in facilitating and promoting this process. This research will predominately be gathered from secondary sources such as – academic journals and

thesis', textbooks, government documents, and news articles. In addition, some primary data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with professionals in the related fields pertaining to the research questions. These interviews are meant to fill in the gaps or strengthen the research found in secondary sources.

The research will require interviews with key informants from a selected group of BIAs within the City of Toronto. These BIAs include Church Wellesley Village BIA, Downtown Yonge BIA, Queen St. West BIA, and the St. Lawrence Market BIA. These BIAs were selected based on the following criteria: urban atmosphere, and older building stock of commercial buildings. A selected BIA is also located within Heritage Conservation District, which can be cross-referenced with the BIAs not located in one. Due to ethics review requirements and the wishes of some participants, BIA member's names are going to be anonymous and referred to as 'BIA Member' when quoted.

This research will also include a segment that selected a private retail corporation, *Starbucks Coffee Company*, and showcasing their achievements as a 'best practice' with regards to store selection and how this often incorporates rehabilitating older, sometimes historic buildings, and retrofitting them with green building technologies. An interview was conducted with David Martin, Construction Manager for *Starbucks Coffee Canada* who provided insight on how heritage conservation and sustainability has become a successful business model for the company's stores.

POLICY CONTEXT

The planning framework in Ontario is predominately lead by the provincial government. Municipalities are empowered by provincial statute and municipalities must adhere to legislation created by the province, which impacts decision making at the local level. This section will provide an overview of the policies that impact heritage conservation and BIAs within Ontario, but more specifically City of Toronto:

Ontario Heritage Act [OHA]:

The *Ontario Heritage Act* is the most important piece of legislation relating to the governance and protection of the province's heritage resources. The *OHA* gives both the province and municipal governments more power with regards to designating properties that are considered to have cultural heritage value. Moreover, municipalities can pass bylaws that recognize the value of heritage properties to the community through designation and adding the property to the municipal and provincial heritage registries. Once, designated a heritage property is also eligible to be listed in the Canadian Registry of Historic Places. It is important to note that these designations are not limited to buildings, but rather the property, and the heritage attributes of the property are to be identified in the designation by-law.

The *OHA* approaches heritage at different scales: *Part IV* looks at the conservation of individual properties, *Part V* looks at the implementation of heritage conservation districts, and *Part VI* looks at the conservation of archeological

resources. A 2005 revision strengthened the *OHA* and provided the provincial and municipal governments greater powers and a clearer process to better protect designated heritage properties from threats such as demolition (Ministry of Culture, 2006). In addition, *Section 35.3* of the *OHA* allows municipalities who enabled existing bylaw under *Section 15.1* of the *Building Code Act* to “prescribe and enforce minimum standards for the maintenance of designated propert[ies]” (City of London, 2007).

Ontario Building Code Act and the Ontario Building Code:

The *Ontario Building Code Act* provides the regulation necessary to lay the foundation for the *Ontario Building Code*. The building code outlines the minimum requirements to ensure construction safety for construction and renovation that pertain to a building’s structural integrity, fire standards, and public health considerations (Building Code Act, 1992). The *Ontario Building Code* prescribes some leniency for designated heritage properties. This gives municipalities more flexibility when it comes to approving permits for heritage buildings when certain aspects of the building code would otherwise be detrimental to maintaining certain heritage features (City of London, 2007).

Ontario Planning Act:

At the core of land-use planning in Ontario is the *Planning Act*. It essentially looks at how land-uses are controlled and whom they should be controlled by (MMAH, 2010a). The *Planning Act* can be utilized for the advantage of managing

Ontario's built heritage, providing tools for protection as well as providing incentives for conservation, such as:

- **Provincial Interests (s.2)** - giving the minister absolute power regarding provincial interests. **(d)** "the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological, or scientific interest"
- **Demolition Control (s.33)** - allows city council to designate any area within the city under "demolition control", where nothing can be demolished without an approved permit.
- **Increased Density/ "bonuses" (s.37)** - allowing zoning by-law provisions that permit the increase of height and density of a development in return for a public benefit. For example: protection of a heritage property in order to approve a taller building.
- **Interim Control By-Law (s.38)** - gives municipality the ability to review/study in an area. Allows for one year to freeze development for the outcome of the study/review.
- **Site Plan Control (s.41)** - Once an Official Plan proposes site control a municipality may use this to force all development to get approved by council after seeing plans/drawings (City of Toronto, 2007a).

Provincial Policy Statement [PPS]:

Through the legislative power of the *Planning Act*, the province is able to create the *Provincial Policy Statement*. The most recent *PPS* came into effect in 2005. The *PPS* provides the groundwork that helps guide land-use and development with the intentions of improving the quality of life for Ontarians (MMAH, 2010b).

Included in the *PPS* is a section that pertains to Ontario's heritage resources, where *section 2.6* states, "significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved" (Provincial Policy Statement, 2005). The *PPS* also requires that development of lands surrounding heritage properties be sensitive to not disrupt the historic attributes of a heritage building or place (*ibid.*).

Municipal Act:

The *Municipal Act, 2001* is a mutual agreement between the province and its municipalities, which "recognizes municipalities as responsible and accountable levels of government and provides for the establishment of integrity officer functions at the local level" (MMAH, 2011). With the exception of Toronto, The *Municipal Act* provides municipal governments the capacity to better determine the delivery of local services to their constituents pertaining to BIAs and heritage properties (*ibid.*). *Section 204 to 215* allows the creation and management of BIAs and *section 365.2* also allows municipalities to provide tax relief for eligible heritage properties. The City of Toronto's provisions for the powers stated above are specified in the *City of Toronto Act*.

City of Toronto Act:

Toronto is a single-tier municipality, meaning that the city is responsible for all "local services" for its citizens (Ontario Government, 2012). Due to Toronto's prominence and size, the city was granted more powers through the *City of Toronto Act* (2006), but balances both the interest of the city and the province. It provides a legislative framework that grants the city more tools that correspond to its size,

responsibilities and significance in terms of addressing issues of health, safety, environmental and social well being, and the economy. The *City of Toronto Act* also provides some power to the municipality in regards to protecting the City's built heritage. It allows Toronto to create grants and loans, as well as implement tax-increment financing to encourage the conservation of historic buildings. The *Toronto Act* also gives the City the power to create and dissolve BIAs (considered local management boards). The powers given to BIAs are elaborated more within the *Toronto Municipal Code*.

Toronto Municipal Code:

Upon release of the *City of Toronto Act*, a revised version of *Chapter 19* of the *Toronto Municipal Code* was updated to be in compliance with the act. *Chapter 19* outlines the provisions for the creation, responsibilities, budgeting, management, and boundary changes for Business Improvement Areas within the city (City of Toronto, 2010). The *City of Toronto Act* gave the city more power, such as City Council's ability to establish local boards, like BIAs, as suited to fit city needs. Moreover, in comparison to the *Municipal Act*, *Chapter 19* of *Toronto's Municipal Code* allowed the city to create more clarified operating framework for BIAs, while also making them more transparent and accountable. The City of Toronto is also able to expand the roles and responsibilities of BIAs through the *Municipal Code* granted through the *City of Toronto Act*.

Chapter 103 of the *Toronto Municipal Code* pertains to heritage. *Articles I, II*, and *III* looks at the creation and management of Toronto's heritage and community

museum boards, Heritage Toronto, the Toronto Preservation Board, and Community Preservation Panels, respectively. *Chapter 103* also outlines the details of permits within Heritage Conservation Districts (*Article IV*) and individual designated properties (*Article V*), as well as the appointment of inspectors for heritage properties (*Article VI*). *Article VII* outlines the details of Toronto's Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program, where *Article VIII* looks at the process when applying to demolish a listed property.

City of Toronto Official Plan:

An official plan helps a municipal government direct the long-term growth of the city. This high-level document is strategic and outlines a clear vision for the creation of an atmosphere that would stimulate the best possible social, environmental, and economic conditions for the city (Toronto Official Plan, 2010).

The *Toronto Official Plan* includes heritage conservation within its long-term planning vision for the city and a sound investment for the future. The plan recognizes heritage's contributions to the economy, such as through tourism or the film industry, the social benefits of "place-making" and contributing to the "desirability and value" of the city's neighbourhoods (Toronto Official Plan, 2010). Furthermore, the City commits to maintaining the inventory of listed and designated historic properties, providing public forms of incentives to ensure in the longevity of these treasures, while also supporting adaptive re-use over demolition (*ibid.*).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical Conservation in the Canadian Context:

The Historic Places Initiative is a joint project between the federal, provincial, and territorial governments recognizing the contribution heritage has on our communities (Ministry of Culture, 2006). The initiative resulted in the development of two major heritage conservation tools:

- 1) **The Canadian Register of Historic Places [CRHP]:** A public online register of recognized heritage properties from across the country. This register does not place any additional controls on a property and is not a requirement of the *Ontario Heritage Act*, but it is aimed toward building public awareness and education about Canada's historic places (Ministry of Culture, 2006).
- 2) **The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada:** This guide provides the language and information required to participate in the conservation of heritage resources in Canada, providing benchmarks on which practices to follow and which ones to avoid (Parks Canada, 2011a).

The Canadian definition of historic conservation is “all actions or processes aimed at safeguarding the character-defining elements of a historic place to retain its heritage value and extend its physical life” (Park Canada, 2010, p.15). According to *The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*

(2010) this may involve **preservation, rehabilitation, restoration**, or a combination of all three (see definitions below):

Conservation: All actions or processes that are aimed at safeguarding the character-defining elements of a historic place so as to retain its heritage value and extend its physical life. This may involve *Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration*, or a combination of these actions or processes (Park Canada, 2010, p.15).

Preservation: the action or process of protecting, maintaining, and/or stabilizing the existing materials, form, and integrity of a *historic place*, or of an individual component, while protecting its *heritage value* (Park Canada, 2010, p.15 – 16).

Rehabilitation: the action or process of making possible a continuing or compatible contemporary use of a *historic place*, or an individual component, while protecting its *heritage value* (Park Canada, 2010, p.16).

Restoration: the action or process of accurately revealing recovering, or representing the state of a *historic place*, or of an individual component, as it appeared at a particular period in its history, while protecting its *heritage value* (Park Canada, 2010, p.16 – 17).

Heritage Conservation – Current Status:

The management of our collective heritage is considered a public good and it is in this inherit justification where manifestations of commitments are made by the various stakeholders in the historical preservation process to protect this heritage (Allison & Peters, 2011; Lowenthal, 2003; Mason, 2005). Heritage buildings are essentially pieces of art that embody the unique identity of a place, building

community in this increasingly globalized world (Allison & Peters, 2011). There are many reasons to preserve historic buildings, the most popular being cultural and educational (i.e. – location of a historic event), economic (i.e. – heritage tourism, job creation, or revitalization), and environmental (i.e. – reusing buildings rather than new construction, curbing urban sprawl) (Allison & Peters, 2011; Cunningham & Storm, 2008; Frey, 2007; Mason, 2005; Mason, 2008; Milligan, 2007; Nasser, 2003; Shipley, 2007; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). One of the largest obstacles to heritage conservation is getting stakeholders engaged in the process, and to see their return on investment. Measuring the impacts of heritage conservation can be challenging due to the many indirect or intangible benefits (Chakrapani & Hernandez, 2010; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). One of the most enticing ways to engage stakeholders is through a market-based incentive approach where a return on investment can be seen (Mason, 2005; Mason, 2008; McCleary, 2005; Nasser, 2003). Along with proper governance and legislation, financial incentives are viewed as the most useful approach to overcome some of the challenges of preserving historic architecture, making it more justifiable to engage in preservation projects merely because of governmental persuasion (Allison & Peters, 2011; Anthony, 2002; McCleary, 2005). In other words, give individuals who undertake historical preservation some sort of incentive above and beyond the fact it is a public good.

If the notion of protecting heritage buildings is for the betterment of communities then a community's input is vital and ultimately makes it a more proactive process. (Spennemann, 2006). Historical preservation projects are often contributed to shaping the way a community is perceived to those living in the

community and those living outside of it (Greenbaum, 1990). There are many examples of how getting a community involved in historic preservation has been attributed to community building and empowerment, where community groups assemble to protect heritage sites by lobbying against the demolition of certain historic buildings (Allison & Peters, 2011; Greenbaum, 1982; Spennemann, 2006). The demolition of a heritage building can rally community support for better heritage management and protection legislation (Allison & Peters, 2011; City of Toronto, 2007). This is an example of how heritage is recognized for its various benefits and its formation in community identity (Frey, 2007; Kenny, 2004; Lowenthal, 2003; Mason, 2005; Milligan, 2007; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007).

Heritage buildings manifest an innate sense of history and their meaning to an individual can vary (Allison & Peters, 2011; Lowenthal, 2003; Pannekoek, 2009; Spennemann, 2006). Therefore, it can be a challenging task to determine whose interpretation of the past is worth preserving. Historical preservation is a contentious issue in the sense that it is so easy for us to judge previous generations on their choices of which buildings were worth preservation and which were not (Allison & Peters, 2011). This is relevant because future generations will bestow this judgment on how we managed our heritage resources and any decisions we make in the present will have implications on their future (Milligan, 2007; Spennemann, 2006). Thus, when it comes to historical preservation the challenge is what buildings to save and which ones to let go.

Historical conservation has traditionally been entrenched in a top-down political process (Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). Whereby, many historical preservation efforts are done on a piecemeal basis, such as reacting to a demolition threat. Moreover, heritage is often denoted on a site through the explicit labeling (such as plaques) by experts who have officially recognized its historic significance (Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). For the most part, the general public tends to entrust politicians and planners with making the decisions of which building are worth saving and which we can demolish for new construction (Baer, 1995). More specifically, urban planners, politicians, and others involved in historical preservation are entrusted with acting within the public interest to make these decisions (Leung, 2003).

Quite often, historic conservation is considered more of a luxury than a necessity, and is often not given the prominence it deserves on government agendas (Allison & Peters, 2011). The legacy of heritage conservation in Canada is not as proficient as other countries, lacking the support and political will to strengthen the existing political framework (Anthony, 2002; Pannekoek, 2009). The system of historic conservation is fragmented, with some provinces and municipalities having outstanding heritage programs and others with little or no support for built heritage (Pannekoek, 2009; Shipley, 2011). The Federal government support for heritage is limited, where this support is often in the form of grants rather than implementation of a national tax policy that would provide much needed financial support for historic conservation efforts (Anthony, 2002; Pannekoek, 2009). There is a need to provide a uniform national legislative and planning framework for

heritage that would better serve to protect Canada's built heritage (Bull & Seaman, 2008; Pannekoek, 2009). This would require better coordination between the three levels of government, which would better foster relationships between historians, planners, and the wider community and elevate the issue of heritage out of a niche and into the larger public debate (Allison & Peters, 2011; Pannekoek, 2009).

This need to integrate heritage planning within the wider urban planning context would require a good heritage governance system that would allow for a more creative and active protection process. This is important because protection and funding are allotted for more popular landmarks or favored architectural styles, which may result in an uneven distribution of heritage conservation (Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). This may also result in some buildings being preserved and others not. Even when they contribute to the urban character of the city, they provide the context in which more obvious heritage buildings reside, and inherently these buildings therefore have value too (Nasser, 2003; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). This phenomenon can put these less recognized heritage buildings at risk of neglect and the possibility of falling into disrepair, which can ultimately result in their demolition (Nasser, 2003). In addition, some property owners 'moderniz[e]' and renovate buildings which further degrades the historic merit of a structure merely because these architectural features are unrecognized or undervalued (Chakrapani & Hernandez, 2010). Therefore there is a need to ensure that these other buildings are still maintained in order to prolong their life and one way this can be achieved is by changing the definition of heritage to include less obvious examples (Nasser, 2003; Tweed & Sutherland, 2007). Therefore, conservation plays a very important

role in extending the use of a building, even when the use changes (Nasser, 2003). Moreover, the restoration of just one heritage building is enough to start the momentum for revitalization of a whole community and spur the conservation of neighbouring buildings (Allison & Peters, 2011).

More recently there has been research that integrates historical conservation with sustainability, whether explicitly through the adaptation of heritage buildings with green technologies or by reinvesting in heritage neighborhoods instead of building new ones (Allison & Peters, 2011; Buddenborg, 2006; Cunningham & Storm, 2008; Frey, 2007; Shipley, 2007). This movement has been gaining momentum and the meshing of these two concepts is becoming more mainstream and is recognized by many large heritage organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States and the Heritage Canada Foundation (Heritage Canada Foundation, 2012; NTHP, 2012).

Within the private sector, the global shift towards more sustainable practices has found its way into the corporate citizenship values of an increasing amount of companies across different industries (Eichholtz, Kok, & Quigley, 2010; Hyllegard, Ogle, Dunbar, Fink, & Volk, 2003; Millett, 2009). Moreover, many of these companies who pledge more sustainable practices usually want to locate within green buildings (CoreNET Global & Jones Lang LaSalle, 2011). Companies who secure space within a green building potentially increase their appeal to employees, give them a competitive edge in the industry, and save them money in the long term due to energy savings (Carpenter, 2011; Eichholtz, Kok, & Quigley, 2010; Jantzi-

Sustainalytics & Realpac, 2010; Millett, 2009; Persram, Lucuik, & Larsson, 2007; Zimmerman, 2008). This has driven up the demand for green certified buildings (Dermisi, 2009; Jantzi-Sustainalytics & Realpac, 2010; Persram, Lucuik, & Larsson, 2007). Many firms are willing to pay higher rents to obtain green building space, which makes their construction a more lucrative endeavor (Eichholtz, Kok, & Quigley, 2010; Fuerst, 2009; Fuerst & McAllister, 2011).

Figure 3 The heritage designated Toronto-Dominion Centre is LEED Gold EB: O&M certified, recently adding a green roof on the bank pavilion (Cadillac Fairview Corporation Limited, 2010; 2012).

Trends are changing and many of the big-box retailers who predominantly located in the suburbs are starting to rethink this form of development (Allison & Peters, 2011; McMahon, 2011). There are a growing number of factors that are slowly making suburban-style strip malls obsolete, such as the economy, demographic shifts, changing customer preferences, rising gas prices, and the growth of internet shopping (McMahon, 2011). Many big-box retailers are experimenting in urban environments with infill projects and more dense building

envelops, some projects even resulting in the restoration of historic buildings (Allison & Peters, 2011; McMahon, 2011). Currently, within the private sector, the opportunity to link heritage and sustainability has only been realized by a limited amount of companies, but one thing is for sure, this is slowly changing (Allison & Peters, 2011; McMahon, 2011).

Eco-Rating Systems for Buildings:

Recent trends in real estate forecast green buildings to become “standard in next-generation projects” and existing buildings will need to be retrofitted to a green standard in order to compete (Urban Land Institute [ULI], 2010). Since the 2008 restoration of Wychwood Barns, which was Canada’s first designated heritage building to achieve *LEED* certification, there have been a growing number of projects that include *LEED* certification for heritage buildings (Artscape, 2011). In Canada, this green standard is usually certified by a third party program like *LEED* and *BOMA BEST* who legitimize the process of green buildings and provide consumers the ability to recognize specific building features and attributes that work together to give the building a specific rating. This section will elaborate on these green building rating systems.

LEED [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design]:

Modeled after the US Green Building Council [USGBC], Canada’s *LEED* certification is “tailored specifically for Canadian climates, construction practices and regulations” (Canada Green Building Council [CGBC], 2012). *LEED* is internationally recognized benchmark for “design, construction and operation of

high performance green buildings” that provides a measure of the impacts of a building’s performance that building owners and operators can understand (*ibid.*). Administered by the Canada Green Building Council [CGBC], these rating systems are “adapted to the Canadian market” and are intended to engage “stakeholders and experts representing the various sectors of the Canadian industry” (*ibid.*). The benefits of getting *LEED* certified provide various benefits such as getting the building recognized for its green building qualities through a third party process, which may further qualify the building for government incentives, and essentially branding the building for its contribution within the expanding “green building knowledge base” (*ibid.*).

The *LEED* certification program takes a “whole-building approach” to sustainability, which include, “sustainable site development, water and energy efficiency, material selection, and indoor environmental quality” (CGBC, 2012). These factors are intended to consider both human and environmental health, recognizing that a green building is not solely focused on saving the environment, but promoting a better atmosphere for building tenants (*ibid.*). *LEED* certification has six categories that are intended to capture a variety of scales regarding green building, whether it be new construction (*LEED NC*), core and shell (*LEED CS*), commercial interiors (*LEED CI*), existing buildings (*LEED EB:O&M*), homes (*LEED for homes*), or neighbourhoods (*LEED ND*) (*ibid.*). Within each category are a list of requirements, the higher the building or neighbourhood score the better the *LEED* certification they are awarded – these awards are *LEED Certified*, *Silver*, *Gold*, or *Platinum*, listed from the lowest possible rating to the highest (*ibid.*). A *LEED*

Platinum building is the highest attainable score with the most points and therefore recognized for its green building features and contributions to environmental and human health.

BOMA BESt [Building Environmental Standards]:

Launched in 2005 by the Building Owners and Managers Association [BOMA] of Canada, considered the “voice of the Canadian commercial real estate industry,” is the *BOMA BESt* program (Building Owners and Managers Association [BOMA], 2011; BOMA, 2012). The goal of this national program is to provide a benchmark of industry standards for “energy and environmental performance of existing buildings based on accurate, independently verified information” (BOMA, 2011). The program is open to a wide range of building types such as office, open air retail, light industrial, shopping centres, and recently, multi-unit residential buildings, tailoring the assessment modules to each building type (*ibid.*). The program was also revised, and *BOMA BESt version 2* was introduced January 2012, which updated the performance benchmarks on the existing categories as well as adding questions on “existing building commissioning, site enhancement, innovative practices and technologies, commuting, and effluent management” (BOMA, 2012a).

BOMA BESt’s consistent framework makes it easier for participants to follow, which critically assesses both the environmental performance and management of a building through six key areas, energy, water, waste reduction and site, emissions and effluents, indoor environment, and environmental management systems (BOMA, 2011). There are four levels of certification – BOMA BESt Level 1, Level 2,

Level 3, and Level 4 – with Level 1 being the highest BOMA BESt rating, where the building satisfies all 14 best practices (*ibid.*). The program consists of three components. First the building must meet the minimum requirements for certification, complete a BOMA BESt assessment module, and have the building assessed by a “highly qualified independent verifier” that would ensure the building meets the BOMA BESt requirements (*ibid.*).

Benefits of Heritage Conservation:

The Canadian government at all three levels recognizes that there are multiple benefits of heritage conservation. This section will explore some of the social and economic benefits of heritage conservation in order to provide some insight in the important role heritage buildings play in building our communities and how utilizing these assets can provide further benefit.

Socio-Cultural Benefits of Heritage Conservation:

The preservation of heritage allows for society to have a link to its past. Different aspects of history have different value to different individuals, but what we see worthy of preserving for future generations is based on a prescribed value (Spennemann, 2006). These artifacts and places of the past do not have any intrinsic value; it is society that projects this value onto these objects or places. There are many reasons why we preserve our heritage, such as evidence of technical achievements, style and aesthetic beauty, past meaningful events, nostalgia, or nationalism (*ibid.*). Conservation of our heritage buildings say more than just “the state of health of the built environment but also crucial to community and cultural

identity and helps ‘to define the character of a place’” (as cited in Tweed & Sutherland, 2007, p.62).

Place-Making:

What makes Toronto’s neighbourhoods unique is their character, which contributes to their sense of place. This concept is intangible and hard to measure, but place-making is defined as “the process by which a “space becomes a ‘place’ – a physical area that is seen by its users and others as distinct from other areas” (Pollak, 2011, p.1). Place-making encompasses a variety of qualities and characteristics such as, “visual, cultural, social, and

Figure 4 Toronto's Flat Iron building is one of Toronto's most iconic heritage buildings and prominent landmark in the St. Lawrence Market community

environmental” that “provides meaning to a location” (McMahon, 2010, p.16). It is derived from “the place’s history, combination of uses, and the feelings it evokes” (Pollak, 2011, p.1). Where heritage buildings “represent layers of evolving traditional forms of architecture and city building” that converge to create this “sense of place” (Nasser, 2003, p.468). It is important for urban planners to recognize how the historic context of space plays out in place and how this

contributes to “sustainable places, strengthening local identity, contribut[es] to investment, and retain[s] communities” (as cited in Nasser, 2003, p.468). According to Nasser (2003), a sustainable future for historic contexts “must be intrinsically linked to its past, not just in the continuity of the built heritage and urban spaces but also in the living culture that created, and is still shaping, the distinct townscape, or genius loci, that characterizes heritage places” (p.468).

Globalization has presented a challenge for place-making, due to the mass-homogenization that is perpetuated by technologies such as the Internet, telecommunications and other forms of mass media (Frey, 2007, p.20). Although there are many benefits that have resulted from these technologies it has also resulted in the erosion of our cultural distinctions and therefore the stewardship of our inherited built heritage as one way to stimulate cultural identity. Neighborhoods that contain old buildings contribute to the “intimate” feeling and “sense of history and security” in the place-making of a community, and therefore solidifying their position as an intricate and vital piece of the puzzle (Vancouver Heritage Foundation, n.d., p.13). Therefore conservation of the older building stock “creates spaces and opportunities for cultural activities that encourage active neighbourhoods with rich personalities” (*ibid.*). Historic buildings present the opportunity to bring communities together in civic engagement acting as a focus for a community to rally for its protection.

Historic Preservation does not necessarily mean to oppose progress and new development and it is more than simply preserving historic events. Many people

tend to restore for architectural value and simply to respect the built characteristics of their neighbourhoods (Milligan, 2007). McMahon (2010) claims that some urban planners have underestimated the importance of place-making and have “spent too much time focusing on numbers: the number of units per acre, the number of cars per hour, the number of floors per building, and not enough time on the values, customs, characteristics, and quirks that make a place worth caring about” (p.16). As a result, many communities are “suffering the social, economic, and environmental consequences of being places that simply aren’t worth caring about” (*ibid.*). The more a place starts to look like every other place, is a failure for the urban planning community, and which is why planning needs to incorporate a communities heritage, and one tangible way of doing this is through the protection and maintenance of historic buildings.

Economic Benefits of Heritage Conservation:

Heritage conservation can have a significant effect on local economies. The rehabilitation of older buildings can yield a return on investment for both the property owner and their tenants, with regards to income generation from tourism, cost savings through increased building energy efficiency, and the opportunity to attract tenants.

Tourism:

Tourism is vital to Canada’s economy, employing over 617,300 people and contributing approximately 2% of Canada’s Gross Domestic Product (Canadian Tourism Commission [CTC], 2011). In 2010, approximately 15.9 million

international visitors made overnight trips to Canada (*ibid.*). In the same year, Toronto welcomed 9.9 million over-night visitors (Morrow, 2011). Domestic tourists make up the bulk of Toronto's visits, accounting for over 2/3 of all visitors, and Americans making up 1/5 (*ibid.*). International tourists have also been on the rise, especially from developing powerhouses like China, India and Brazil, who represented 13.4% of Toronto's tourists (*ibid.*). The immense growth of the tourism industry across the globe has resulted in "uniformity" within the industry, which has become evident in "standardized hotel architecture, restaurant chains, and street furniture" (Nasser, 2003, p.467).

One way in which a community can maintain a competitive position within the tourism industry is to provide a unique tourist experience. Therefore, heritage tourism has become a popular way to increase local economic development, whereby a community can leverage its local resources and assets as a means of providing this unique tourist experience (Madden & Shipley, 2011). Heritage tourism is considered a "subset" within the tourism industry (Madden & Shipley, 2011, p.2). The Canadian Tourism Commission [CTC] defines heritage tourism as tourists who are interested in "heritage-oriented activities when they travel" (CTC, 2003). According to the Canadian Tourism Commission as of 2000, 34 million Americans identify themselves as being heritage enthusiasts (Research Resolutions and Consulting, 2003, p.3). Of the 34 million, approximately 8.3 million have visited the Canada recently, leaving ample opportunity for growth in this sector, which is already considered the "largest individual special interest group visiting Canada" (Research Resolutions and Consulting, 2003, p.3; Madden & Shipley, 2011, p.2).

Although major heritage sites and landmarks attract tourists to a city, these places only receive between 3% and 7% of tourism money (PlaceEconomics, 2010). The majority of tourists spend 93 – 97% of their expenditures on restaurants, hotels, shops, and transportation (*ibid.*). In addition, heritage tourists have been found to stay approximately 4.7 nights longer and spend 78% more in restaurants than the average tourist (Mason, 2005, p.9). In order to maintain a strong tourism industry, there is strong incentive to “conserve the local built environment and heritage traditions” (Madden & Shipley, 2011, p.2). Nasser (2003) claims that, tourism presents a challenge for urban planners to minimize the “adverse impacts” yet maximize the “gains” (p.478). Moreover, the management of cultural resources, the integration of “quality” new development, building usage and activities, and integrating these factors with the “socio-cultural needs of the local community” are important issues urban planners will have to address (*ibid.*). Therefore, the local BIA can be useful source of knowledge of the local community that planners can utilize when creating a strategy for tourism.

Building Operating Efficiency:

The operating efficiency of a building is defined as the required amount of energy needed to operate heating, cooling, electricity, and water usage throughout a building’s life span (National Trust for Historic Preservation [NTHP], 2011, p.16). The growing body of literature on sustainability and heritage conservation has presented a case against the misconception that historic buildings are “energy hogs” (Frey, 2007, p.11). Moreover, this assumption has worked in the favour of

demolition of old buildings for new buildings perceived to be more energy efficient (NTHP, 2011, p.18). Quite often the greenest building is one that already exists. Many buildings from the early 20th century are inherently more sustainable (*ibid.*). For example, the U.S. Energy Information Administration found that commercial buildings built pre-1920s, “use less energy, per square foot, than buildings from any other decade of construction” – even the newest green construction interventions only provide a marginal improvement to energy performance (*ibid.*). This advantage of older buildings may be explained because they were built with environmental conditions in mind, such as thicker stone or brick walls, natural ventilation, high ceilings, large operable windows, window shutters and porches (Allison & Peters, 2011). Where “their durability gives them almost unlimited ‘renewability’” (as cited in Allison & Peters, 2011, p.169).

A comprehensive study conducted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation (2011) found that “building reuse almost always yields fewer environmental impacts than new construction when comparing buildings of similar size and functionality” (p.vi). Since approximately 85% of a building’s energy consumption is due to operations throughout time, it would make sense that a property owner would benefit from cost savings of providing a more efficient building (Frey, 2007, p.11). Existing buildings provide opportunity to be reused and retrofitted with green technologies in a way that would be sensitive to the “historic fabric” of a community (*ibid.*).

Attracting Tenants:

Heritage features of a building, whether architectural significance, historic story or significant event that took place on the property can add value to a property for prospective tenants (Alderton, 2010). This is especially true when coupled with green technologies that help make the building more sustainable (Frey, 2007). Frey (2007) states, “historic resources can increase economic competitiveness by helping create a dynamic environment that draws highly skilled workers” – the “Creative Class” (p.17)

Coined by University of Toronto professor, Richard Florida who authored, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, the creative class is a rising group of professionals in our changing economy. The creative class has risen as a result of a changing economy – one that is more knowledgeable and information based and relies on human creativity (Florida, 2002). Florida (2002) defines class as “a cluster of people who have common interests and tend to think, feel and behave similarly, but these similarities are fundamentally determined by economic function – by the kind of work they do for a living” (p.8). These are people who tend to have a high level of education or human capital. The “core” creative industries are science and engineering, architecture and design, education, art, music, and entertainment, whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or new creative content. It also includes a broader group of “creative professionals” who work in business and finance, law, health care, and related fields (Florida, 2002, p.7). What is unique about the creative class is that they prefer to cluster in cities that allow them to both live and work in creative and culturally rich cities.

Toronto is noted as one of these cities that attract the creative class, who seek out distinctive urban communities (Florida, 2002). The older buildings and warehouses that line the arterial streets of many BIAs hold the potential to become prime studio and office spaces for creative industries who tend to favour such accommodations, especially when they have been rehabilitated with green features. Companies who locate within such buildings not only elevate their reputation, it also gives a competitive edge for attracting and retaining “the best people” (Zimmerman, 2008). According to Persram, Lucuik, and Larsson (2007), “employees are increasingly making professional decisions based on corporate ethics and social responsibility” and may choose a green building to work in rather than for a company not located in such a building (p.4). The allure of heritage buildings is due to their inherent character of contributing to the “richness and diversity of the built environment” (Frey, 2007, p.17). Ironically, the same inherent features which make heritage buildings more sustainable such as thick stone or brick walls, natural ventilation, high ceilings, large operable windows, window shutters and porches can also contribute to a more creative work atmosphere for potential tenants (Allison & Peters, 2011).

Historic buildings provide companies the ability to show they have “roots” in the community (Florida, 2002). Moreover, historic preservation tends to favour small business, a significant source of employment in Canada – “the configuration of historic buildings (often 2500 – 3500 square feet per floor) are a good match for the space needs of small businesses, which typically employ 12-20 people” (Frey, 2007, p.17; Industry Canada, 2011). There are many examples in Canada of ‘heritage

related' neighbourhoods that have become magnets of development and popularity such as Gastown in Vancouver, the Forks in Winnipeg, the Historic Waterfront in Halifax, Old Montreal, and the St. Lawrence Market, Liberty Village and Distillery District in Toronto. These historic attributes provide a competitive "edge" in attracting businesses to the area (City of Edmonton, 2012).

Heritage conservation projects have been attributed to spurring new life into downtown neighbourhoods and small towns (Allison & Peters, 2011). A study conducted by Lea T. et al. (2004) found that in Vancouver, B.C. the restoration of Stanley Theatre resulted in a increase in pedestrian traffic, "21% increase in restaurants, cafes, and bars in the nearby area," a "9% increase in cultural establishments, such as the design sector" as well as attracting large retailers such as "Chapters in 1997, Restoration Hardware in 1998, and Pottery Barn in 2003" (p.10). Moreover, heritage properties themselves tend to be more stable in the real estate market. According to Shipley's (2000) comprehensive study that looked at the impacts of heritage designation on property values in 24 Ontario communities, found that "59% of designated heritage properties had higher property values than the average when compared to surrounding market trends within the community" (p.92). He also found that "47% of designated heritage properties increased in values despite the downward trend of the market" (p.93).

Surprisingly, one of the largest obstacles in attracting tenants is actually the property owner themselves, often resulting in the hindrance of their tenants ability to operate efficiently (The Business Link, 2009). Proper upkeep and maintenance is

important in both luring and keeping tenants (*ibid.*). Therefore restoration, rehabilitation, or conservation of an historic building can be an opportunity for property owners to invest in their property to attract new tenants. The necessary upgrades and renovations of a historic property are likely to yield a return on investment for the property owner especially when they include sustainable and operating efficiency features. The global 2010 CoreNET Global and Jones Lang LaSalle Sustainability Report found that “sustainability is a critical business issue” for 64% of their respondents, of which 92% would factor sustainability when scouting a location to do business (CoreNET Global & Jones Lang LaSalle, 2011, p.2). Therefore, potential tenants are reassured by third party certification, the higher the *LEED* and/or *BOMA BEST* certification the more desirable the office space would be for potential tenants.

Historic buildings appeal to a wide range of large retailers who have adopted various values of corporate citizenship/responsibility. Hyllegard, Ogle, Dunbar, Fink, and Volk (2003) define corporate citizenship as “the responsibility of business to enrich the society in which it operates, and it has been conceptualized broadly to include social causes such as animal rights, child welfare, education, environmentalism/pollution, historic preservation, homelessness, medical advances, poverty, and sustainability “ (p.2 – 3). Some examples of businesses that have been recognized for their efforts to be outstanding corporate citizens and environmental commitment are *Avon*, *Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI)*, *Starbucks*, *Target*, *Aveda*, *B & Q*, *The Body Shop*, and *Patagonia* (*ibid.*). Therefore, revitalizing a historic building may attract companies to become a tenant because of corporate

ideals that value historic conservation.

Benefits of Heritage Conservation: Case Study: Starbucks Coffee Canada:

Since the first *Starbucks'* location open in 1971 at the historic Pike Place Market in Seattle, Washington, the company has prided itself on the ability to provide exceptional high-quality coffee, tea, and other products that invite customers into the 'third place' atmosphere in *Starbucks* stores (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2011). The company takes pride in its heritage and has a long legacy of providing legendary service to its customers, and *Starbucks'* mission statement is "to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time" (*ibid.*). *Starbucks* has certainly grown from its original Pike Place location, having over 17,000 locations worldwide, becoming a neighbourhood gathering place and a part of daily routines for customers all of the world (*ibid.*). Furthermore, *Starbucks* is committed to its corporate values that include every aspect of the company's core business, which includes: ethical sourcing, environmental stewardship, and community involvement (*ibid.*). One way in which *Starbucks* has worked to reduce its environmental footprint is by integrating green construction in their stores, legitimizing the claim, "sustainable design and build methodologies are part of our DNA" (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2011a).

Starbucks' commitment for creating more sustainable stores started over a decade ago. In 2000, Starbucks joined the U.S. Green Building Council [USGBC], opening their first *LEED certified* store in Hillsboro, Oregon, in 2005 (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2011b). *Starbucks* has been on the forefront of adopting green

construction concepts for their stores, being one of the first companies to sign on the *LEED* for Retail pilot program, which looked at adapting *LEED New Construction* [*LEED NC*] and *LEED Commercial Interiors* [*LEED CI*] for restaurant's and retailers (*ibid.*). In 2009, *Starbucks* was one of the first retailers to participate in the *LEED Volume* pilot program (*ibid.*). The *LEED Volume* program is intended for "organizations planning to certify a large number of design and construction projects or existing buildings" – yet another indicator of *Starbucks* strong commitment to sustainable stores (U.S. Green Building Council, 2011). Participation in the *LEED Volume* pilot program was a huge initiative for *Starbucks*, who opened 10 stores in different countries across the globe within varying climate zones, with green building techniques. With great success, these stores were "audited and accepted" by the USGBC, bringing *Starbucks* closer to their *LEED* goals (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2011b). By the end of 2010, *Starbucks* has been working toward having all company-owned new stores to have *LEED* certification (*ibid.*).

It is the strong leadership from the company's Chairman & CEO, Howard Schultz and the Senior Leadership Team that has really pushed the *LEED* certification stores to fruition. These efforts of *Starbucks* have resulted in the restoration of older (and sometimes historic) buildings in cities all over the world in which their shops are situated. An interview with David Martin, Construction Manager for *Starbucks Coffee Canada* provided some insight on how Starbucks design and construct their stores. As *Starbucks* continues to achieve *LEED certification* for their stores under the *LEED CI* program, they are discovering that *LEED* is not that difficult or expensive over conventional construction (D. Martin,

personal communication, March 23, 2012). Although there are certain aspects of the green construction process that are expensive, it tends to roughly balance out to the cost of building without sustainability in mind (*ibid.*).

The commitment to *LEED* certification and green construction has dramatically changed how *Starbucks* constructs its stores, approaching each store individually and looking at the neighbourhoods they open in. Starbucks is one of the few multinational corporations who integrate sustainable practices with the reuse of older buildings, making them an ideal tenant for urban communities where there is an older building stock. One of the major reasons for this is because the requirements for *Starbucks* shops are malleable to any building (D. Martin, *personal communication*, March 23, 2012). That being the case, whenever possible, *Starbucks* prefers to locate within an existing building (*ibid.*). According to David Martin, the character of an old building is unparalleled to new construction – “that’s the beauty of it, we love old buildings it speaks to the brand” (*ibid.*). Although *Starbucks* has been involved in the reuse of old buildings for their stores for many years, their newest commitment to *LEED* construction only makes old buildings more lucrative. *Starbucks* follows the USGBC’s requirements (even in Canada) and 21 points would get stores the *LEED certified* rating, and on this rating system *Starbucks* gets extra points for reusing existing building materials (*ibid.*). Below are two examples of *Starbucks* locations in Toronto that are sensitive to the history of the building:

Figure 5 The Starbucks at 765 Yonge St. is located in the former Britnel Bookstore, re-using many notable heritage features (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2011c; Wood, 2007).

Yonge St. & Bloor St. [765 Yonge Street]: Considered one of *Starbucks'* “most cherished stores in Canada,” this store is situated in the Britnel Bookstore, a Toronto landmark (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2011c). The storefront is identical to the original and much of the inside renovations are sensitive to the history of the building, such as: keeping the original front door, bookshelves (modified for seating), and the community table is the original “cash-wrap” for the store (*ibid.*). Moreover, this store location showcases original photographs and documents from the Britnel Bookstore archives as artwork (*ibid.*). This location also utilizes reclaimed materials like a 200 year old wharf floor found during the construction of the *Air Canada Centre* (*ibid.*).

Figure 6 The Starbucks at 66 Gerrard St. E. commemorates the building's history. The exposed masonry walls, vintage ladder, and photo documentation of old architectural detailing contribute to the character of this store's location.

Church St. & Gerrard St. [66 Gerrard Street East]: This store is *LEED certified*, and has many energy saving features like reduced water flow and lighting. The interior of the store has many notable features that are true to the building's age, such as exposing original masonry, keeping the original wooden floor, reusing the marble mantle fireplace, even going as far as showcasing original plaster work in a shadowbox (D. Martin, *personal communication*, March 23, 2012). This location also

reuses materials such as a ladder from Britnel Bookstore and the wood of the community table comes out of a butcher shop in rural New York (*ibid.*).

Starbucks is an example of a large corporation who understands the benefits of reusing older buildings, demonstrating how these buildings can be readapted into a retail use without causing detrimental changes, while also updating the building with many green construction features. Since the majority of *Starbucks* store locations are leased, they also work with property owners, partnering with those who also see the value in *LEED* certification. Furthermore, when opening in a new store, *Starbucks* has increasingly found the benefits with creating relationships with local community organizations like BIAs, especially in terms of understanding the community the store is opening in (D. Martin, *personal communication*, March 23, 2012).

Business Improvement Areas [BIAs] in Toronto:

Business Improvement Areas [BIAs] (also known as Business Improvement Districts [BIDs] in the United States) play a vital role in their communities. The concept of Business Improvement Areas finds its roots in Toronto. In 1970, local businesses in Bloor Street West area banded together to try and come up with a solution to attract customers against the increased competition with the growth of the suburban shopping centres (Hernandez & Jones, 2005). The Provincial government listened, and the world's first BIA was created – the Bloor West Village BIA (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing [MMAH], 2010). This formal recognition was a huge milestone for local business owners who could now

successfully improve the economic vitality of their community. Currently, the City of Toronto boasts 72 BIAs, which range in size from 50 to over 2000 members (City of Toronto, 2012; Hernandez & Jones, 2005). A BIA's boundaries are usually defined by a main arterial road, a collection of streets or several city blocks (*ibid.*). In total, Toronto's BIAs involve approximately 32,000 local businesses, which also includes a non-profit umbrella organization TABIA [Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas] (City of Toronto, 2012; TABIA, 2010).

Once a BIA is approved by city council, the businesses within the delineated BIA are considered members and pay the annual BIA levy with their property taxes (MMAH, 2010). This provides the financial security needed to help the BIA budget for long and short-term projects (*ibid.*). BIAs are also able to raise additional funds from public and private sources, some municipalities offer grants that would match a BIA's budget for eligible capital improvement projects (Hernandez & Jones, 2005; MMAH, 2010). BIAs are essentially sub-governing bodies under the municipality that "organize, finance,

Chapter 19 of Toronto Municipal Code BIA responsibilities:

- A.** To oversee the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally-owned land, buildings and structures in the business improvement area beyond City standard levels provided at the expense of the municipality generally;
- B.** To maintain business improvement area-initiated streetscaping capital assets within the business improvement area;
- C.** To promote the business improvement area as a business, employment, tourist or shopping area;
- D.** To offer graffiti and poster removal services respecting building facades visible from the street, to all member property owners who provide written consent, upon approval of the program by the general membership of the business improvement area;
- E.** To undertake safety and security initiatives within the business improvement area;
- F.** To undertake strategic planning necessary to address business improvement area issues; and
- G.** To advocate on behalf of the interests of the business improvement area

(City of Toronto, 2010).

carry out physical improvements and promote economic development” within their community, as mandated by the *Municipal Code* and the *Toronto Act* (MMAH, 2010, p.2). Decisions made by the BIA are subject to the approval of a BIA Management Board (made up of local businesses, and city councilors) (Hernandez & Jones, 2005). Within Toronto, *Chapter 19* of the *Municipal Code* outlines the main powers and responsibilities of BIAs.

Some BIAs have also become large enough entities to include improving community security, social services, policy advocacy, and public space regulation (Catungal, Leslie & Hii, 2009; Giraldi, 2009). Some BIAs seek to market themselves with a particular identity, such as Greek Town or another ethnic identity, heritage or business type – essentially branding the community (Giraldi, 2009; Catungal, Leslie & Hii, 2009). This branding helps to both promote tourism and attach a desirability label to these communities (Giraldi, 2009; Catungal, Leslie & Hii, 2009). Although BIAs play a pivotal role in the communities they represent, they are sub-governance bodies, and therefore lack many authorities granted to other urban institutions (Giraldi, 2009; Lippert & Sleiman, 2011). This lack of authoritative power presents a variety of challenges for BIAs. It is vital to the operation of BIAs to know their members, but quite often BIAs run into obstacles that inhibit their ability to identify their members, such as privacy laws (Lippert & Sleiman, 2011). Furthermore, aside from payment of the levy, property owners are not legally obligated to listen to a BIA (*ibid.*). Therefore, BIAs mainly have to rely on co-operation and persuade its members, where communication becomes one of the largest tasks undertaken by a BIA to ensure to promote awareness and present their vision for the community

(*ibid.*). Creating ties and partnerships within the community and other stakeholders is a BIAs greatest strategy to see their visions through (Hernandez & Jones, 2005).

Figure 7 Geographical context map of the participating BIAs (Modified from BIXI Toronto, 2011).

It is important to explore how BIAs view the heritage properties within their communities, what challenges arise, and what potential role can they play in the

future. Of the 72 existing BIAs within Toronto, the following BIAs are to be used as case studies:

Church Wellesley Village BIA:

Located in one of Toronto's main LGBTQ communities, this area has a variety of specialty shops, bars, and restaurants, and hosting large city-wide events like Pride, the Church Street Fetish Fair and Halloween make this neighbourhood "one of Canada's most vibrant communities" (City of Toronto, 2012a). This neighbourhood has many historic buildings that line both Church Street and the residential side streets.

BIA Established: 2002 (ibid.).

Boundaries: The BIA's boundaries are along Church Street from Wood Street to the south and Gloucester Street to the north. (City of Toronto, 2012a).

Reported Membership: This BIA has a membership of 122 businesses distributed on 49 properties (H. Byres, *personal communication*, March 23, 2012; D. Wootton, *personal communication*, March 26, 2012).

Staff: Volunteer Management Board and One full-time staff member.

Downtown Yonge BIA:

Often referred to as the "heart of Toronto" this BIA is situated on the city's most famous street (City of Toronto, 2012b). This area is popular amongst tourists and nearby many notable Toronto landmarks like Old City Hall. Having many public spaces such as Dundas Square and Bell Trinity Square, theatres like Massey Hall, Ed

Mirvish Theatre, Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre. There are over 600 retail stores, 150 bars and restaurants, and 8 hotels within this BIA, as well as many offices within large buildings such as the Toronto Eaton Centre, Atrium on Bay, 10 Dundas East, and College Park amongst several historic buildings (*ibid.*).

BIA Established: 2001 (*ibid.*).

Boundaries: This BIA's boundaries center around the segment of Yonge Street from Richmond Street to the south and Grosvenor and Alexander Streets to the north. The western boundary is Bay Street and on the east the boundaries are on portions of Victoria, Bond, and Church Streets (*ibid.*).

Reported Membership: This BIA consists of 467 properties and approximately 2,000 members (Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area, 2010; H. Byres, *personal communication*, March 23, 2012).

Staff: Volunteer Management Board and 5 full-time, and various part-time staff and consultants.

Queen St. West BIA:

A hub for arts and culture, the Queen West neighbourhood is home to many fashion shops, galleries, bars and restaurants, as well as attracting larger multi-national tenants becoming a major shopping destination in Toronto and is popular amongst the youth demographic (City of Toronto, 2012c). The Queen St West BIA is a part of Toronto's first commercial Heritage Conservation District, giving legitimacy to its mix of historic buildings of various vintages (Queen St. West BIA, n.d.).

BIA Established: 2008 (*ibid.*).

Boundaries: Queen Street West between Simcoe and Bathurst Streets (*ibid.*).

Reported Membership: There are 280 properties within the BIA's boundaries, consisting of 300 members (City of Toronto, 2012c ; Queen St. West BIA, n.d.).

Staff: Volunteer Management Board and One full-time staff member.

St. Lawrence Market BIA:

This BIA prides itself on its historical roots – “Old Town Toronto” – located within the original town of York, this neighbourhood has many beautifully restored heritage buildings and many notable Toronto landmarks like St. Lawrence Market, the Flatiron Building, St. James Cathedral, and St. Lawrence Hall (City of Toronto, 2012d). This BIA has numerous cafes, restaurants, pubs, clubs, and retailers that are located only a few blocks east of the Financial District, and popular amongst tourists. (*ibid.*).

BIA Established: 1994, and boundaries amended in 2004 (*ibid.*).

Boundaries: the St. Lawrence Market BIA has an expansive boundary, with the Lakeshore Boulevard to the South and Richmond Street to the north. The eastern boundaries are Yonge and Victoria Streets stretching to Parliament Street to the west (*ibid.*).

Reported Membership: There are 1,031 properties within the boundaries of this BIA, with approximately 700 members (H. Byres, *personal communication*, March 23, 2012; R. Posner, *personal communication*, March 26th, 2012).

Staff: Volunteer Management Board and four staff members (R. Posner, *personal communication*, March 26th, 2012).

Heritage Conservation Districts [HCD] and BIAs:

As prescribed by the *Ontario Heritage Act*, a Heritage Conservation District [HCD] provides municipalities the opportunity to protect beyond a single property, protecting “the special character of an area” (Shipley, Jonas & Kovacs, 2011, p.619). HCDs allow for a more holistic approach to heritage protection, extending “beyond its built heritage, structures, streets, landscape and other physical and special elements to include important vistas and views between buildings and spaces within the district” (Ministry of Culture, 2006a). Once a HCD is designated, municipalities are granted more power to guide future changes within the district’s boundaries (Shipley, Jonas & Kovacs, 2011). For example, “any alterations, additions and demolition to a property within a heritage conservation district requires a permit from the local municipality,” and this approval depends on the guidelines dictated in a HCD plan (Ministry of Culture, 2012). This HCD plan is prepared in collaboration with city staff, local residents, and heritage consultants, which includes a “statement of objectives and guidelines that outlines how to achieve these objectives” (Shipley, Jonas & Kovacs, 2011, p.619).

The creation of HCDs are not always well received, there are usually many obstacles from a variety of stakeholders who do not quite “understand *how* or *why* historic preservation allows a government agency to interfere with their ‘right’ to do as they please with their property” (Allison & Peters, 2011, p.23). According to

Shipley, Jonas and Kovacs (2011), the majority of this resistance is situated in “fear, rumour, and lack of understanding” (p.612). This push back tends to stem from the idea that HCDs freeze development in an area, which would in turn hurt property values (*ibid.*). This has lead to a process where the majority of the “initiative[s] to recognize historic areas generally comes from citizens or local heritage advisory groups” rather than an official government lead process (*ibid.*, p.616). Although this process has resulted in the protection of various historic areas, the reactive nature of the government has created as situation where many “historically significant” areas go unprotected due to a lack of local interest (*ibid.*).

In Ontario, there are approximately 104 HCDs, and the number is growing as more plans are in the process of approval or being proposed (Ministry of Culture, 2012a; Shipley, Jonas & Kovacs, 2011). Within Toronto, the majority of existing HCDs are residential areas, with an under representation in commercial districts. Currently, there are only three approved HCDs in Toronto that have a commercial component – Union Station HCD and Queen Street West HCD, and one mixed residential and commercial, Yorkville-Hazelton Ave HCD (Ministry of Culture, 2012a). When HCDs are predominately commercial in use, BIAs become an even more important stakeholder. As more commercial districts become designated HCDs, more BIAs will have to be able to understand the benefits this designation brings them and how they can use it to their benefit. For example, the *North Downtown Yonge Street Planning Framework* is exploring the possibility of creating a HCD on a portion of Yonge Street (from Bloor to College Streets) and Church Street (from Hayden to Alexander Streets) which would directly impact three surrounding

BIAs: Downtown Yonge BIA, Church Wellesley Village BIA, and the Bloor-Yorkville BIA (City of Toronto, 2012e).

BIAS AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Heritage buildings grace the streets within many of Toronto's BIAs, these structures, recognized for various reasons, stand out as important landmarks and contributing to the community's 'sense of place'. Unfortunately, older buildings are constantly under threat and are sometimes permanently erased from the urban landscape due to neglect, damage, demolition and development pressures. Within the last few years, Toronto has suffered notable losses, while also achieving heritage victories, some of these occurring within the boundaries of the featured BIAs: Church Wellesley Village BIA, Downtown Yonge BIA, Queen St. West BIA and the St. Lawrence Market BIA. Some of these heritage losses and victories are listed below; highlighting the impact they had on the community:

Notable Losses:

Figure 8 Queen St. West Fire, resulting in the loss of heritage buildings and local businesses

2008: Queen Street West Block

Fire – On February 20th, 2008, a fire broke out on a historic block on Queen Street West, just east of Bathurst Street. The fire spread to 8 low-rise properties, resulting in the

demolition of the burnt-out

buildings (Lostracco, 2008). The buildings were historically significant, some built in the 1880s, and home to many long time businesses such as *Duke's Cycle* and *National Sound*, among others (Vaughan, 2008). This fire prompted interest in the creation of a BIA for Toronto's first Commercial Heritage Conservation District, leading to the creation of the Queen St. West BIA (*ibid.*).

Figure 9 The Former Empress Hotel before structural damage and fire (Ng, 2011).

2011: Former Empress Hotel, Demolition by Neglect – Once standing at the corner of Yonge and Gould Streets, was the Empress Hotel. Built in 1888, this building was considered architecturally significant, and a local landmark in the community for over a century (Heritage

Toronto, 2011). The building was first added to the city's heritage registry in 1974, and was officially designated in 2010 in response to the owner's request for demolition (*ibid.*). The building fell into poor structural condition, and in April 2010 a wall collapsed, and eventually the building was a victim of arson in 2011, and the building could not be salvaged and was demolished (*ibid.*).

The only positive outcome of this situation was that this disaster stimulated a lot of debate over heritage management in the city. The loss of the Empress Hotel really affected the councilor of the area, Kristyn Wong-Tam, who became active in

the preservation of the natural and built heritage of her ward (Hood, 2012). She also began working on a community plan that would revitalize Yonge Street, called the *Yonge Street Planning Framework* (Ward 27 News, 2011).

Figure 10 The Odette House Prior to demolition (left), and after (right)

2012: Odette House Demolished – Catching the local community off guard, the historic mansion at 81 Wellesley Street was demolished by its new owners on January 19th, 2012 (Urback, 2012). The building was not officially designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, although there was a request to do so (*ibid.*). Due to a lack of communication between city departments, the owners were able to get a demolition permit despite the request for designation, and within a few hours another one of Toronto's heritage buildings were demolished (*ibid.*). The loss of this building is bittersweet, a building was lost, but it also brought focus of a serious urban planning loophole in the communication between municipal departments which could be tightened to ensure that this would never happen again.

Notable Victories:

Figure 11 Market Street revitalization involved the restoration of the historic fish market building.

2010: Market Street, St. Lawrence Market – This project was initiated by *Woodcliffe Properties*, by former CEO, Paul Oberman, and *Taylor Smyth Architects* (Bozikovic, 2012). The developers plan to restore the heritage properties that face the historic St. Lawrence Market, envisioning the expansion of the LCBO store on Front Street and new restaurant space on Market Street (*ibid.*). This plan also includes sidewalk extensions that would provide space for patios (*ibid.*). This project is going to contribute to the already pleasant pedestrian realm of the St. Lawrence Market neighbourhood, and is considered a victory for heritage because of the restoration of these buildings were seen as contributing factors to the community rather than obstacles for development and fits with *Woodcliffe's* legacy of restoring notable heritage properties in Toronto, such as the Flat Iron Building and the Summerhill

LCBO (*ibid.*). The project is scheduled for completion in Late Spring 2012 (Taylor Smyth Architects, 2012).

Figure 12 The opening of CB2 in a restored building on Queen St. West.

2011: 651 Queen Street West Restoration – At the corner of Queen and Bathurst Streets, the Canadian marketplace entry of furniture retailer CB2 opened in a historic building that was constructed in 1876 (Canadian Architect, 2012). Up until its closure in 2010, this building was known as the Big Bop Concert Hall and Nightclub, an important venue for Toronto’s music scene for over two decades (*ibid.*). Over the years this building has undergone some changes that have removed many of the heritage features that originally graced this building, but the restoration has restored many of these heritage features (Topping, 2012). CB2 also recognizes Big Bop contributions to the community and “promises to preserve that same vibe in the remembrance of their beloved venue” (Canadian Architect, 2012).

2012: Massey Towers Announced – A new development by MOD Developments Inc. has been announced for 197 - 201 Yonge Street (Starr, 2012). This development promises to revive the iconic derelict bank building that sit right across the street from the Toronto Eaton Centre. The development includes restoration of the Bank building and a 60-storey tower that sits behind the historic building, this new building will also provide space for Massey Hall (*ibid.*). This development is considered a heritage victory because this property has been vacant for over 25 years, and the new owners have taken the opportunity to celebrate the building's heritage rather than seeing it as an obstacle (*ibid.*).

Figure 13 Rendering of Massey Towers (Urban Toronto, 2012).

Financial Resources Available for Heritage Protection:

The City of Toronto offers financial assistance to the property owners of designated heritage properties. These incentives are offered to entice property owners to invest in the upkeep of their heritage properties and the costs associated with maintaining the heritage features of the property.

Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program:

This program provides a tax rebate of up to 40% on identified heritage portions of the designated property that are noted in the Heritage Easement Agreement which has to be approved for execution on or before September 30th, 2006 (City of Toronto, 2012f). In addition to the property owner satisfying all the terms of the contract, the property must be in adequate condition must not have any outstanding municipal fees, taxes, or orders (*ibid.*). The number of properties eligible for this program is very limited (Toronto Preservation Services, *personal communication*, April 3rd, 2011). Also, depending on the individual property and the Heritage Easement Agreement, which is based on MPAC [Municipal Property Assessment Corporation] assessment, the tax rebates that are given out tend to range from 18% to 30% (*ibid.*).

Toronto Heritage Grant Program:

Eligibility for this grant require the property be designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, and is to be used towards the heritage conservation work that restores significant heritage attributes (City of Toronto, 2012g). The grant covers up to 50% of the heritage conservation work for both residential house-form buildings (maximum of \$10,000) and commercial, institutional, multi-residential, and industrial form buildings (*ibid.*). The property owner must abide by further municipal requirements outlined in the eligibly requirements and work must be of high quality (*ibid.*).

Commercial Façade Improvement Program for BIAs:

This grant is not specifically for heritage properties, but it is an option for BIAs to use to entice property owners in their boundaries to invest in their building facades. This grant covers up to 50% of eligible costs for a maximum of \$10,000 for mid-block properties and \$12,500 for corner properties (City of Toronto, n.d.). There are a set of requirements the property owner must satisfy in order to get the grant. Furthermore, the BIA itself must be at least 5 years old for this grant to be available for their use, excluding newer BIAs from taking part (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 29, 2012). The *Commercial Façade Improvement Program for BIAs* comes with another set of challenges. According to the Toronto Heritage Management Plan (2007), there is no formal link between the *Commercial Façade Improvement Program for BIAs* and heritage grants (except to the buildings on the registry). This has lead to some 'façade improvements' resulting in destruction of unrecognized heritage attributes of buildings not on Toronto's heritage registry. There is a need to strengthen this relationship and BIAs become important facilitators in the grant process to ensure that heritage features are not lost during the façade improvements.

How BIAs are Vital to the Heritage Management Process:

BIAs have an interesting position in terms of heritage management, especially when considering the fact that they are entrusted with maintaining economic vitality of the area. They have to balance both the interests of stimulating business while also maintaining an attractive environment for customers and potential new business growth. This can be a challenge when considering that BIA boundaries

comprise of an eclectic mix of buildings, some of which may be designated as heritage.

The four BIAs interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about the many benefits of heritage conservation, but there is a varying degree to how deep the understanding of these benefits are. The most common response was that heritage buildings contribute to the community's

Figure 15 Example of human-scaled, fine-grain retail within heritage buildings in the St. Lawrence Market neighbourhood.

'sense of place' and providing roots for long-time community members. There was

Figure 14 BIA banners contribute to branding the neighbourhood, contributing to its 'sense of place'. Such as the Church Wellesley Village BIA banner shown here.

appreciation for the fact that heritage buildings tend to fit with the rhythm of commercial districts due to the human scale of the buildings and the fostering of a walkable retail environment (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 22, 2012). Some BIAs made reference to a wider understanding of what constitutes heritage value, where one BIA member said “when we refer to heritage buildings we often think of 18th and late 19th century time frame, but there is also value in heritage buildings in other eras and it helps us to see the progression in terms of the

built form” (*personal communication*, March 22, 2012). There was also this understanding for the Queen St. West BIA, which is a Heritage Conservation District, claiming that “heritage is the rhythm of the neighbourhood not the focus” and that the challenge is making the HCD work for everyone, even non-contributing buildings within the designated district (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 29, 2012).

The reality is that although heritage buildings are very important assets for a community, BIAs need to maintain focus on creating a vibrant retail atmosphere, as one BIA member put it “there is a balance between heritage conservation and the realities of the neighbourhood” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 22, 2012). Most of the BIAs spoke to the need for the importance of flexibility of heritage buildings, as one BIA member put it, “you protect the built form, not the use of the built form” (*personal communication*, March 29, 2012). One of the greatest challenges to BIAs is the ability to strike this balance and making heritage work for the individual businesses and property owners, rather than becoming an obstacle.

Central to the success of BIAs is maintaining a strong relationship with its members and property owners within its boundaries. This strong relationship creates an environment in which BIAs are able to provide suggestions and advice when a property owner is considering altering their building. The majority of the BIAs interviewed tend to meet with property owners frequently, and report that property owners tend to ask them for suggestions and resources when they are considering renovations or alterations to their property. The importance of relationships for BIAs also extends to developers, the private sector, the public, and

potential tenants and property owners. BIAs can foster alliances with these groups to create awareness of what the BIA envisions for the community.

The merit of a BIA's relationship with property owners creates a more intimate approach to the heritage process. BIAs become important in facilitating and educating property owners on which city departments to talk to, what benefits can be achieved when conserving heritage buildings and what financial incentives may be available. When approached for how to restore a property, the Downtown Yonge BIA [DYBIA] provided details on a rather in depth consultation process they would undertake with the property owner. This would include an overview of the regulatory guidelines for the area, showcasing local best practices, the economic benefits, financial incentives available and if warranted, a conceptual rendering of the property highlighting opportunities of the restoration and the importance of ground floor experience (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 22, 2012).

The DYBIA is fortunate to have an area specific program, *Bright Lights – Big City, A Signage Vision for the Downtown Yonge Strip*, that provides an added incentive for property owners to maintain their properties (Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area, 2009). This specialized district between

Figure 16 The Hard Rock Cafe, a heritage building within the signage district adorned with signage (Harris, 2009).

Gerrard and Queen Streets allows property owners to obtain extra revenue through the addition of third-party signage on their buildings (*ibid.*). This program is sensitive to heritage buildings, requiring that the signs added to heritage buildings not detract from heritage features. Moreover, in order to be approved for a sign or billboard, a property owner must undertake certain building improvements to bring up their heritage building to an adequate condition, and this must be approved by the DYBIA (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 22, 2012).

This section puts an emphasis on the importance of the relationship between BIAs and their members. These relationships put BIAs in a very strategic position of ensuring that the property owner makes the right considerations with their property as to further contribute to the community. These relationships become increasingly important when these alterations are to an older building that may have unrecognized heritage attributes or a property on Toronto's heritage registry.

Challenges and Obstacles for BIAs protecting Heritage:

It is important to recognize that BIAs come in all shapes and sizes and run by a various degree of individuals with different qualifications and backgrounds. The irregularity in the size of BIAs can present some challenges with respect to the degree of influence BIAs have in shaping their community and heritage stewardship. In direct relation to the size of the BIA is the amount of funding that can be leveraged from the property taxes of its members, and BIA's annual budgets tend to range from \$200,000 to over \$1,500,000. These budgetary restraints also impact the number of staff that a BIA can hire. Moreover, BIAs are consider sub-governing bodies that operate under the authority of the municipality, who hold the power

when it comes to regulating BIAs as mandated through the *Municipal Code* or the *Toronto Act*.

These realities place limitations on how a BIA can operate effectively when it comes to influencing the built form of their community, especially in terms of promoting heritage conservation. BIAs have no legal authority to tell property owners what to do, hence why their relationships are extremely important (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 20, 2012). Putting these legislative obstacles aside, BIAs work within the existing framework and make the most of the resources available to them, doing their best to provide property owners with the necessary information to make an informed decision in the management of properties. Despite the many benefits of heritage conservation, there are many obstacles that BIAs face when it comes to getting property owners to see these benefits for their individual property and the community as a whole.

Many BIAs spoke to the desire to have flexibility in terms of how property owners can use heritage buildings, because “commercial districts are always in flux” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 16, 2012). Therefore, these older buildings need to be adaptable to accommodate the “modern features that attract modern tenants” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 22, 2012). An example of these modern additions would be the installation of operable windows, which allows for a “pseudo-patio experience” and gives business an opportunity to interact with the street. Some heritage experts may feel that these sorts of additions would detract from the original integrity of the building (*ibid.*). The idea is to not make heritage conservation an obstacle; this BIA member went on to say, “with the

right level of review and proper materials, it can actually bring more people to see the benefits of reusing heritage buildings” (*ibid.*).

Flexibility also becomes important when you consider the market demand for large-format retail. According to one BIA member, “the idea of small-scale retail is seen as old school” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 16, 2012). These market pressures put strain on heritage communities that do not have the available space for such large-scale tenants, which can render the use of a heritage building obsolete and put it at risk of neglect or demolition if its use is not re-imagined to remain competitive in the market again. This issue with commercial floor space is crucial for maintaining the economic vitality of the community, if businesses are priced out or need to expand, they usually want find a new space within the community, but if it cannot accommodate them, they will be forced to leave (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 29, 2012).

This is where education of property owners becomes important. BIAs have found that in talking to their members, even when they are willing to restore or reuse heritage buildings, there is not a wide understanding of what the heritage designation means. Some BIAs have the resources to educate their members of the benefits of heritage conservation, but the capability for every BIA to take on this role is limited due to size and budgeting realities. Public awareness was found to be one of the biggest challenges, and there was often noted to be a divide between what the property owners want and what the tenants want. Property owners have been found to be their biggest obstacle, such as not maintaining their building so that it better accommodate current tenants or potentially attract new ones. There are

various reasons for this phenomenon; sometimes property owners just do not see the value in heritage conservation, while other property owners just do not have budget to maintain their facades.

One of the largest obstacles for BIAs is how to accommodate the needs of the business community with limited help from the municipal government. Although there are cost sharing programs available to BIAs such as the *Capital Cost-share Program*, *Commercial Façade Improvement Program*, and *Mural Program*, as well as heritage related grants like *Heritage Property Tax Rebate Program* and *Toronto Heritage Grant Program*, many BIAs felt that the city's role stops short at financial aid. Even when a BIA has a willingness to participate in heritage conservation, there is a demand for them to be able to utilize the resources and expertise at City Hall, but this support from the municipality is still viewed as scarce. With respect to heritage conservation, many BIAs felt that they were disconnected from the planning process at City Hall, especially with Toronto Preservation Services. Although it was understood that Toronto Preservation Services is an overburdened department of the municipality, their assistance has been limited to financial support. BIAs often felt that they were expected to be heritage experts, but the majority of them do not have this expertise. Moreover, it was reportedly more difficult to obtain this much desired heritage consultation and expertise, as well as set up meetings with Toronto Preservation Services to discuss heritage conservation.

Opportunities and Challenges with Heritage Conservation Districts and BIAs:

According to Shipley, Jonas and Kovacs (2011), “many civic officials now consider the HCD to be one of the most effective tools not only for historic conservation but also for good urban design and sound planning” (p.621). As Toronto continues to designate Heritage Conservation Districts, they will inevitably impact how BIAs operate, especially when HCDs are created within commercial areas or its boundaries are created so they overlap multiple BIAs, such as the case with Toronto’s exploration of creating a HCD as a part of the *North Downtown Yonge Street Planning Framework* (City of Toronto, 2012e).

Even though the BIAs interviewed were positive with regards to heritage management and stewardship, their opinions seemed to diverge in terms of creating a HCD – “there is a huge difference between designating a building and a whole neighbourhood” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 29, 2012). Half the BIAs had some concerns about HCDs, while the other half only spoke to the benefits of the creation of a HCD in their community – “the creation of a HCD creates a lot of questions” (*ibid.*). Moreover, the BIAs focused on different aspects of HCDs, some focusing on development and others focusing on building use.

The Queen St. West BIA is the only BIA in this study that is a part of a HCD, and has come with its own set of challenges. One BIA member said “it is going to take some time for our neighbourhood to grow into it” and that the benefits will be more evident in the long term (*personal communication*, March 29, 2012). Another BIA commented, “There is a fine balance between protection in the museum sense versus responsible development and redevelopment opportunities. It would be a

Figure 17 Example of old and new within the Queen St. West HCD.

miss to say that we would not allow new development and to stop and only work with what we have” – alluding that the designation of a HCD is not for every neighbourhood and that perhaps some communities can simply oversee development

conforms to neighbourhood character (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 22, 2012).

For the most part, the BIAs welcomed the added level of development review that is required in a HCD, seeing this as a way that any sort of development would have to conform to the neighbourhood’s character. The BIAs tended to react favourably with respect to development being more sensitive to the

Figure 18 Newer developments within the Queen St. West HCD choose building materials that are more suited to the neighbourhood, such as brick.

surrounding community and including natural materials (brick and stone) and urban-design principles (fine-grain retail rhythm) that pay homage to the historic fabric of the commercial district. However, the aspect of flexibility become evident again – “when adding a new layer of policy [in a HCD] it is important to maintain a degree of flexibility and creativity to ensure that the guidelines are not too

prescriptive and eliminate the opportunity to attract new businesses” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 22, 2012). Where the reality is that businesses need this aspect of flexibility to successfully work with heritage properties and changes to the building such as “adding new windows, doors, addressing accessibility, or even in some cases moving the building may be necessary to meet these needs” (*ibid.*).

HCDs were viewed by some BIAs as a means of not only protecting the architectural merit of a neighbourhood, but also the type of uses these buildings host. The designation of an HCD was seen as an opportunity to protect the interest of local property owners and supporting the fine grain retail feel of their neighbourhood – “HCDs preserve an area of unique economic character in a changing retail world” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 16, 2012). BIAs still saw their community in direct competition with malls, power-centres, and other modern retail formats. Therefore specialization such as ethnic group or business types in a HCD provides an environment that cannot be replicated. One BIA member claimed, “the only way we can compete is to provide a niche and heritage is a well understood niche. It implies cultural importance” (*personal communication*, March 16, 2012). Some BIAs also saw a HCD as a way to deter big-box stores from locating within their neighbourhood, for the fear that these companies would threaten the vibrancy of the community and force shops out of business. However, it was also mentioned that a HCD may in some ways prevent the conventional form of big-box, they cannot prevent use and these development restrictions may actually work against local businesses who are unable to find a suitable space to expand in their community or afford the increased value within a

HCD.

The Queen Street West BIA shared some of the challenges that have become evident since the creation of their HCD. Although this BIA was not directly involved in the creation of the HCD (which was designated in 2007), the BIA essentially inherited the HCD when it was established in 2009 (Ministry of Culture, 2012a; Queen St. West BIA, n.d.). One of the greatest challenges is the lack of public awareness. The severity of this lack of awareness is as extreme as property owners not knowing they are even within a HCD, let alone the responsibilities and opportunities that come with being a part of one. Despite the BIA's best efforts, property owners still tend to view HCD designations as limiting their ability to alter their property, and feel that the designation will hurt property values. Moreover, a HCD can create extra obstacles for a non-contributing property. When a permit for alternation is submitted to City Hall the extra development review process can delay a property owner if the alterations to their building are not approved by Toronto Preservation Services. Their project can be stuck in limbo because the property owner was unaware of the restrictions placed upon their property. Even if the property owner was sensitive to the heritage of the community, these sorts of delays and inefficiency in the system create a negative image for heritage conservation and act as a deterrent to property owners who may resist the designation. Therefore, a BIA's role in educating, facilitating and supporting property owners is extremely important when it comes to heritage conservation in their community.

Unfortunately, BIAs often feel they are unable to fully celebrate the benefits of a HCD. The lack of municipal support becomes even more evident when a BIA is

within a HCD. Although there is an understanding that HCDs do provide benefits for the community, “the city is not providing the mechanisms for this benefit, expecting BIAs to make it themselves. If there was a mechanism to have some resources to do that, the BIA would have a much stronger position in realizing these benefits” (BIA member, *personal communication*, March 29, 2012). Furthermore, there seems to be a disconnect between the municipality and BIAs in terms of the level of understanding regarding heritage conservation knowledge of the BIAs themselves – “the BIA cannot be looked at as the heritage expert, it is guidance we need” (*ibid.*).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this report should show beyond a doubt the important role heritage conservation plays within Toronto’s planning process, considering the many benefits heritage properties contribute to the urban landscape and our communities. Heritage conservation is not just architectural reminders of our past and their legacy is not intended to be immortalized in a plaque. Heritage buildings are pieces of art, providing a space for future generations to re-imagine as they become integrate part of the sustainability movement, and helping us to secure a better future. The following three recommendations were derived from the research:

1) BIAs have a significant role to play in heritage conservation management, and should continue being advocates for heritage within their communities.

BIAs have the potential to play multiple roles in heritage conservation. They are the voice of the business community and able to articulate the needs and

demands of property owners. BIAs are essentially on the front lines in terms of understanding how the community responds to its heritage assets. Due to this fact, they are ideal for acting as advocates, educators and facilitators of heritage management within their community. They can provide the city information such as identification of heritage resources, possible threats to heritage structures, enlighten BIA members of the many benefits of heritage conservation and sustainability, facilitate grant application process, and provide support for protecting heritage buildings to ensure their longevity. BIAs have the opportunity to become an arm-length city planning committee and asset for Toronto Heritage Preservation Services and help strengthen Toronto's relationship with heritage stewardship. It is up to the municipal government to provide the tools in which BIAs can strengthen this role.

2) The City of Toronto needs to fill in the gaps, providing adequate resources to BIAs so that they can take on a stronger role when it comes to assisting property owners.

The City of Toronto has a real opportunity to harness the energy of BIA enthusiasm for heritage stewardship and use it to their advantage. It is no secret that Toronto Preservation Services is an overburdened department within City Hall, which often results in reactive rather than proactive heritage management. Therefore, a closer alliance with BIAs can help alleviate some of the burden, especially with respect to heritage awareness and understanding of heritage regulations, as well as providing support to property owners.

Currently, there is an large disconnect between Toronto's BIAs and Toronto Preservation Services, and efforts should be made to try and tighten this gap and improve rapport. The City needs to take on more of a consultant and expertise role to BIAs. BIAs currently feel that the role of Toronto Preservation Services has been limited to providing heritage financial incentives and this perception needs to change. Although eager to do more, the research has shown that BIAs do not feel they are able to adequately equipped to be a heritage expert. Often the first resource for property owners when approached about heritage issues are BIAs, which are often limited with their assistance. If given the proper resources BIAs can answer many of the basic heritage questions of property owners and assist property owners until it is necessary for Toronto Preservation to intervene. Together, Toronto Preservation Services and BIAs can ensure that the conversation regarding heritage does not stop, assisting property owners to every avail possible, giving property owners a range of options that would prevent the neglect or destruction of Toronto's heritage assets.

The following two initiatives should be considered by the City of Toronto to support BIAs efforts to become stronger heritage stewards:

i) Either eliminating or shortening the 5-year period before BIAs can take advantage of the *Commercial Façade Improvement Program*. This becomes increasing important for BIAs within HCD because it hinders the ability for a BIA to offer financial incentives for their members to improve their buildings. Although there are heritage incentives available, this 5-year limit inhibits a BIAs ability to provide a

wider range of options to their members. The availability of financial incentives are crucial for a BIA to gather support for heritage conservation from their members.

ii) There is a need to provide more heritage grants and incentives, while also opening up the number of eligible properties for existing grants. The city has been increasing the number of HCDs but the budget allotted for funding has not grown in the same manner, which in turn can make the argument for the importance heritage conservation less convincing to property owners, since they would be more hesitant to take on the perceived extra costs of heritage conservation without adequate incentives.

3) Open up dialogue with the private sector.

BIAs can leverage the corporate responsibility desires of a company for the benefit of the local community, especially when these interests include heritage conservation and sustainability. BIAs should create synergy with tenants, corporations, and developers who see the investment value in the community. These alliances can be powerful for persuading unwilling or reluctant property owners, which could open up dialogue about heritage conservation and how to integrate more sustainable practices. Harnessing relationships with the private sector can also benefit the BIA with regards to sharing knowledge and expertise, which will also create more awareness about heritage conservation and potentially fill any voids that may not be available from the public sector. Finally, private investment in heritage buildings also increases the likelihood of innovative re-

imagining of these spaces, creating best practices that can potentially produce a spin-off point for spurring other heritage conservation projects.

CONCLUSION

As expressed by Shipley, Jonas and Kovacs (2011), the Canadian system regarding heritage conservation is “the least advantageous to property owners,” and still trailing behind other countries with it comes to providing programs and financial incentives that encourage the maintenance of heritage buildings (p.616). These issues coupled with limited public will, lack of integration in the planning system and Toronto’s development pressures place urgency for alternative ways to encourage heritage conservation. The evolution of the heritage conservation discourse to incorporate sustainability has made heritage conservation a more lucrative venture from a wide range of stakeholders from property owners to multi-national corporations.

This momentum has the potential to include BIAs, for they are a collective voice for the local business community and have a direct stake involved when it comes to protecting heritage assets in their community. There is an eagerness from BIAs to play a bigger role in heritage conservation and there is a real opportunity for them to act as advocates, educators and facilitators of heritage management within their community. As Heritage Conservation Districts become a more popular option for protecting heritage, BIAs need the ability to be able to take full advantage of this designation, continuing to promote their community and maintain its economic vitality. Without adequate programs and funding for BIAs to entice their members

to see heritage conservation as a valuable asset for the community and that ensuring the longevity of these structures does stimulate the economy.

The City of Toronto needs to open communication with BIAs, providing the tools and expertise to ensure their success to further define the role BIAs should take on with respect to heritage conservation. BIAs can help create a larger heritage conservation knowledge base for the public, ultimately easing the burden on Toronto Preservation Services and allowing for more vigilance over Toronto's heritage assets. Toronto needs to progress beyond the minutiae of restrictive heritage incentives, improving policies in which reevaluate how heritage conservation can be seen as a viable alternative for stimulating local economies rather than an obstacle to development. The reality is that once a historic building is demolished, it cannot be replaced, and it is forever erased from the Canadian landscape.

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