

MEMO

TO: Mayor Kogon and Members of Council

FROM: Andrew Fisher, Director of Planning & Strategic Initiatives

DATE: March 20, 2023

RE: **Request to Establish Heritage District**

Attached is a letter staff received on February 24, 2023 from Christine Johanneson expressing opposition to the apartment building proposed for 155 East Victoria Street. The letter also expressed a need for a 'heritage district'. The purpose of this memo is to briefly describe what a Heritage Conservation District (HCD) is and provide some background on past efforts to establish one in Amherst.

A heritage conservation district (HCD) is an area of properties (collectively) deemed to have heritage values. HDCs are developed by the community and for the community with a conservation plan and by-law that identify the heritage values of the district and how those values are to be preserved. All properties contained within the district's boundaries, registered and non-registered, may become affected by the plan and By-law. Typically, HDCs have design guidelines, demolition controls, municipal grants, permit fee waivers, and property tax credits.

Under the Provincial *Heritage Conservation District Regulations*, the preparation of a HCD must include studies that, among other things, provides a rationale and justification for the HCD measures and boundaries of the district. There must also be an analysis of the social and economic implications of establishing the district. The town's planning documents (MPS & LUB) must also be aligned with the HCD.

For further context, in 2011 the town went through an exercise to establish a HCD (aka. Architectural Heritage Area) that included properties fronting on East Victoria between the Downtown Core and town limits. It also included Rupert Street properties from East Victoria to Clifford Street. The goal of this effort was to ensure new developments were sensitive to, and did not reduce, the historical streetscape character through design standards. Although the original intent of this exercise was to only apply to new development and not impact existing buildings, through the course of two public information sessions, there was a lack of interest in establishing an HCD.

Through informal discussions with members of the Amherst and Area Heritage Trust and others, staff have expressed the opinion that another attempt to establish an HCD in the East Victoria Street area should be instigated and led by owners of property within the area(s) to be designated who will be the most directly impacted.