

To: COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 2/24/2026

Subject: **Galt Core Heritage Conservation District – Response to Comments on the District Boundary**

Submitted By: Brynn Nheiley – Director of Planning

Prepared By: Nick Borcescu – Supervisor of Heritage Planning

Report No.: 26-013-PG

Wards Affected: Ward 4

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT the refined Galt Core Heritage Conservation District Boundary as shown in Appendix A to Report 26-013-PG be incorporated into the final Galt Core Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

- To respond to comments about the heritage conservation district boundary received at the Statutory Public Meeting for the Galt Core Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines.
- To present a recommendation for refinements to the boundary for the Galt Core Heritage Conservation District

Key Findings

- An updated draft HCD Plan was released and presented in November 2025 for final consultation. Comments were received that the boundary should be refined, with some comments seeking a larger boundary and some suggesting that the district was too large.
- Staff continue to recommend the district boundary as shown in the November 2025 draft plan and guidelines with minor refinements in response to comments received through consultation and the Statutory Public Meeting, specifically to include Cambridge Street within the district.

- The Galt Core Heritage Conservation District Plan identifies the HCD’s character-defining elements and outlines how these should be conserved and enhanced. It provides a framework for assessing alterations, new development, and public realm improvements to ensure they are compatible with the HCD’s heritage character. It balances the need to accommodate growth with the need to preserve downtown Galt’s unique identity.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategic Action

Objective(s): PLACEMAKING - Promote and create a wide range of destinations and activities that capitalize on the beauty of the rivers and heritage buildings

Strategic Action: Enhance opportunities to enjoy built and natural heritage

OR

Core Service

Program: Not Applicable

Core Service: Not Applicable

BACKGROUND:

The Galt Core Heritage Conservation District (HCD) project includes a Study Phase and a Plan Phase.

- The purpose of the Study Phase was to evaluate and determine whether the Study Area should be designated as an HCD and to recommend a district boundary.
- The Plan Phase involves preparing a draft plan with policies and guidelines to help manage change and guide development in the district.

The timeline for the Galt Core Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Project is as follows:

- July 28, 2020 – Council direction to initiate the Galt Core Heritage Conservation District (HCD) Project (Report 20-191-CD)
- October 5, 2021 - Council endorsement of Study Phase (Report 21-184-CD)
- January 2023 Draft Plan and Guidelines released to the public
- Fall, 2025 Updated HCD Plan and boundary presented at MHAC

- November 25, 2025 – Statutory Public Meeting
- December 8, 2025 – Public Open House
- November 25, 2025 – Council meeting, Council passed the following resolution: “THAT [Report 25-026-PG](#): Galt Core Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines be deferred to permit additional refinement of the district boundaries based on the feedback provided by Council at the Statutory Public Meeting of November 25, 2025”.

The following comments about the boundary were received at the statutory public meeting and through consultation:

- boundary should be extended west of the river into Dickson Hill area
- boundary should be expanded to include properties on Cambridge Street
- boundary is too large.

ANALYSIS:

Extending the boundary west of the Grand River

One of the comments that was raised at the Public Meeting was about expanding the heritage conservation district to the west of the Grand River to bring part of the Dickson Hill area into the district. If Council would like to expand the Galt HCD to the west side of the river, it is recommended Council first:

- a) Complete the Galt HCD as planned to provide interim protection for the east side; and
- b) Have staff report back on how best to add additional protections to the west side.

Given the current workplan of heritage staff, it is further suggested that this work be part of the upcoming Heritage Master Plan update scheduled to start the end of 2026 so the work can be prioritized with other Council initiatives.

Expanding the Boundary to include Cambridge Street Area

At the public meeting of Council, comments were raised about the inclusion of the Cambridge Street area into the district boundary because it is an entryway to the Civic Campus. The Cambridge Street area was initially excluded from the recommended boundary because it is primarily a historically residential area with residential built form. As such, it differs from the significant pattern of downtown development and Galt’s earliest and most prolific period of city building in the river valley. The downtown character, with its role as a regional hub, is reflected in the City’s industrial, institutional, and civic development patterns and qualities.

The Ontario Heritage Toolkit notes that an HCD may comprise a concentration of heritage resources with special character or historical association that distinguishes it from its surroundings. While the Cambridge Street area, as shown in Appendix A of Report 26-013-PG (comprising properties fronting onto Cambridge Street and Ainslie Street between Thorne Street and Park Hill Road East), is distinct in built form and land use pattern from the adjacent civic and commercial areas, they are also physically disconnected from the residential neighbourhood to the west by a ridge.

Within the Cambridge Street area, there is a total of 49 properties of which 8 properties are listed on the Heritage Register and 3 properties are designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*. A full evaluation of the properties within this area to assess them against the criteria of Ontario Regulation 9/06 will be completed and presented to Council with the final recommendation report on designation of the district.

To warrant the designation of an HCD, more than 25% of the properties must meet at least two of nine criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06. ASI has identified that over 60% of the properties within the refined HCD boundary as presented in Report 25-026-PG meet at least two of the nine criteria under Ontario Regulation 9/06. Even if none of the properties within the Cambridge Street area were considered to be contributing, the inclusion of Cambridge Street within the boundary would still meet the threshold to warrant designation. While these properties do not contribute to the commercial, civic, institutional and industrial associations of the Galt Core as a whole, they serve an important function as an adjacent residential area that is closely connected with the civic heart of Galt. Many of these properties have converted to commercial and institutional uses while maintaining their residential form.

This divergence from the previous recommendation is worthy of consideration for inclusion within the district because properties within this area showcase the craft of skilled labourers (in particular the stone masons) but also the diversity in massing, form, and articulation of the architectural vocabulary that create the aesthetic quality of the former City of Galt.

The boundary of the HCD is too large

In a letter submitted to Council for the Public Meeting, the author raised concerns that “the proposed boundary is far too broad and risks undermining the future of the downtown core”. They also expressed concern about potential negative effects of the proposed Galt Core HCD Plan in respect to “the importance of balancing heritage protection with the practical realities of encouraging reinvestment, housing, and ongoing improvement within downtown areas.”

The designation of a heritage conservation district is intended to guide change rather than to preserve an area at a specific time in history. The Galt Core HCD is one tool in

the City's policy framework to guide growth and change within the downtown. The future update to the City's Official Plan will provide a policy framework for land use change that will allow for investment and redevelopment while conserving the heritage resources that make Galt a special place in our city.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

The *Ontario Heritage Act* provides the legislative framework for the [Designation of Heritage Conservations Districts in Part V, Section 41](#).

The City of Cambridge Official Plan provides policy direction for the conservation of cultural heritage resources and the [Designation of Heritage Conservation Districts in Chapter 4](#).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The Galt Core Heritage Conservation District Study and Plan project (A/00739-20) has an approved budget funded through the Capital Works Reserve Fund. An additional approved \$61,078 was allocated to research the additional properties, revise the HCD Plan, and undertake more consultation with the public, Council's Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC) and Council.

A total budget of \$161,078 has been allocated for project costs covering the Study Phase plus the revisions and additional public consultation during the Plan Phase.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Council is required under the *Ontario Heritage Act* to consult with MHAC as part of the HCD process. MHAC was consulted on April 15, 2021, and July 15, 2021 during the Study Phase. MHAC was consulted on November 20, 2025 during the Plan Phase. MHAC will be further consulted in the Spring of 2026.

Feedback received during these sessions has informed the recommendations of both the Study and the Plan. MHAC has supported the project since its inception.

PUBLIC INPUT:

The following opportunities for public input were held as part of the Plan phase of the project.

Past Meetings

- January 26, 2022: Public Information Centre (Virtual)
- April 7, 2022: Community Workshop (Virtual)
- February 15, 2023: Statutory Public Information Centre (Virtual)
- March 8, 2023: Statutory Public Information Centre (In Person)

- November 20, 2025: MHAC Meeting
- November 25, 2025: Council Statutory Public Meeting
- December 8, 2025: Community Open House

Future Meetings

- Spring 2026: MHAC Meeting to Endorse the HCD Plan
- Spring 2026: Council Meeting to Endorse the HCD Plan

Public consultation has continued throughout the project. Engagement included public information centres, open houses, Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee (MHAC) meetings, and Council meetings. Public consultation has also involved engagement through the project website, virtual comments, and online surveys.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

Heritage Planning staff have notified the following community groups and agencies as part of the project's consultation process:

- Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Cambridge and North Dumfries Branch;
- Galt Sportsmens' Club;
- Galt Sculpture Garden Committee;
- Grand River Conservation Area (GRCA);
- GrandBridge Energy;
- Galt Business Improvement Association;
- School of Architecture;
- Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation;
- Ontario Ministry of Transportation;
- Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation;
- Regional Municipality of Waterloo;
- Waterloo Region District School Board; and
- Waterloo Catholic District School Board.

Internal consultation has also taken place with staff from Operations, Infrastructure Services, Economic Development, and Recreation and Culture (Parks).

CONCLUSION:

Through the Study phase in 2021, a recommended boundary for the Galt Core HCD was endorsed by City Council. In November 2025, staff and our consultants recommended adding nine (9) properties and landscape features along Water Street North and Park Hill Road East and along Main Street east of Wellington Street, including Centennial Park. Staff further recommend that the Cambridge Street area be included within the district boundary.

Staff recommend that Council endorse the refined Galt Core HCD boundary as described in this report and shown in Appendix A for inclusion in the final HCD Plan and Guidelines.

Next Steps

Staff will consult with affected property owners within the Cambridge Street boundary expansion area. Further, an evaluation of the properties will be completed to assess the properties against the criteria in Ontario Regulation 9/06 to determine which properties are contributing/non-contributing. Consultation with the MHAC will be conducted, and a final staff recommendation report will be presented to Council that outlines any amendments to the policies and guidelines of the Draft Galt Core HCD Plan. Should Council adopt the Plan, a designation by-law would be enacted.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **No**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

General Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

26-013-PG Appendix A – Expanded Boundary Map (Jan.2026)