

HERITAGE MATTERS IN SURREY

Protecting heritage sites in Surrey

What are protected heritage sites?

Heritage protection, often commonly known as “designation”, is a way of preserving buildings and other features of the community that have heritage value. It ensures that these buildings or features cannot be removed or destroyed.

Properties listed on Surrey’s Community Heritage Register may become protected heritage properties in one of two ways:

- On a voluntary basis through an agreement between an owner and the City; or
- On Council’s initiative.

Voluntary tools include **heritage revitalization agreement by-laws** and **heritage conservation covenants**.

Council may adopt a **heritage designation by-law** to protect a registered heritage site or amend the Official Community Plan (OCP) to declare a **heritage conservation area**. A notice goes on title for protected properties.

Heritage Revitalization Agreements (HRAs)

A heritage revitalization agreement (HRA) is a by-law in the form of an agreement between the City and the owner of a registered heritage site. It has the flexibility to specify how a building or feature is to be restored and maintained. It can also be used to vary requirements found in other by-laws, either by being more restrictive or by providing relaxations to by-law requirements.

An HRA can incorporate creative solutions, including incentives that make it more feasible to retain a heritage building, structure or feature. Often, an HRA accompanies a rezoning or subdivision application to achieve long term heritage protection and to accommodate the development proposal.

What is included in an HRA?

An HRA contains four parts:

1. A Council by-law that authorizes the City to enter into an agreement with a property owner;
2. An agreement respecting the obligations of the owner and the City;
3. A conservation plan which details how a building or feature will be maintained; and
4. Where necessary, variances to City by-laws and regulations necessary to accommodate the heritage building or feature.



A conservation plan specifies how a building or feature will be restored and maintained. It usually contains:

- The history and significance of the building or feature;
- A description of the character-defining elements; and
- Conservation and maintenance specifications.

What can be varied or supplemented?

An HRA can be used to vary and supplement a variety of by-laws and regulations. Examples of variances include lot size, setbacks, building height, use or density, parking, landscaping, park or open space requirements, or development cost charges. If an HRA varies use or density, Council must hold a Public Hearing. The Agreement may be altered, through a by-law amendment or in some cases by a heritage alteration permit, but only with the consent of both the property owner and the City. HRAs are registered on the title of the land.

What is a Heritage Conservation Covenant?

A heritage conservation covenant is an agreement that protects part or all of a heritage property. It is negotiated with property owners and registered on title of the land. A conservation covenant can apply to either a natural or built heritage feature. A heritage conservation covenant typically contains a conservation plan. The owner signs the covenant with either the City or another interested party such as a heritage society. However, unlike an HRA, a heritage conservation covenant cannot vary other City regulations such as zoning. It is usually used when an owner wishes to ensure the long-term protection of their heritage property.

A heritage conservation covenant can specify that certain alterations to buildings, features or lands require a heritage alteration permit. With the consent of the parties, a heritage conservation covenant can be amended.



What is a Heritage Designation By-law ?

A heritage designation by-law is placed on a property to protect a building, structure or other heritage feature, with or without the owner's consent. A heritage designation by-law may also protect specific interior features or a heritage landscape feature. A designation by-law can prohibit exterior alterations, including structural changes, the moving of a structure, excavation or other action that would damage the protected features. Alterations to a designated building, structure or feature cannot be made without the issuance of a heritage alteration permit.



Do you have additional questions about heritage protection?

Please contact us at heritage@surrey.ca