

## Heritage Ottawa - Strategic Plan 2026-28

*Heritage Ottawa is the foremost non-governmental voice for understanding and conserving built heritage and landscapes in the nation's capital.*

### VISION

Heritage Ottawa envisions a city that values its heritage resources, integrates them into all planning decisions and ensures their contribution to Ottawa's liveability. We see a future where investment in the conservation of heritage buildings, historic neighbourhoods, cultural landscapes and other places that matter to communities is embraced as the smart cultural and sustainable choice for the city.

### WHO WE ARE

#### Our Enduring Purpose

Heritage Ottawa is an award-winning, volunteer driven, not-for-profit organization that champions the protection and stewardship of Ottawa's built heritage and cultural places, celebrating their value in enriching our shared environment.

Heritage Ottawa is a federally incorporated [Registered Charity](#) and the largest not-for-profit organization in Ottawa devoted exclusively to this cause.

### WHAT WE DO

#### Our Mandate is Twofold

Through advocacy and awareness-building activities, Heritage Ottawa promotes public engagement and investment in the protection, continued use and enhancement of our city's heritage for the benefit of present and future generations.

Heritage Ottawa advocates for the protection, continued use and enhancement of Ottawa's distinctive built heritage and cultural landscapes, including federal designated properties. We speak out for and defend worthy heritage properties that are at risk of inappropriate intervention or loss. The Aberdeen Pavilion, the Billings Estate, the East Block of Parliament Hill, the Château Laurier Hotel, and the Central Experimental Farm, are just some of the properties that have benefited from Heritage Ottawa's advocacy efforts.

Heritage Ottawa promotes the awareness, understanding and appreciation of Ottawa's wonderful built heritage and distinctive cultural places. Our popular [Lecture Series](#), [Walking Tours](#), and [Workshops](#) are a great way to learn more about Ottawa's local history and heritage while meeting people who share similar interests.

Our quarterly [Heritage Ottawa Newsletter](#) presents interesting articles about local heritage structures and related matters.

Our book publications provide in-depth insight into Ottawa's special places.

Heritage Ottawa provides support for heritage research and publication through the [Gordon Cullingham Research and Publication Grant](#).

Our website presents details of ongoing Heritage Ottawa events including our annual [Lecture](#) and [Walking Tour](#) programs, current [Advocacy](#) activities, heritage-related [News](#), and links to [municipal](#) and other heritage resources. We encourage you to explore our website and to join us soon at a Heritage Ottawa event.

Members [Stay Connected](#) by receiving periodic notices and news alerts, and by following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and LinkedIn.

## Our Key Areas of Focus

We focus our efforts on the heritage buildings, historic neighbourhoods, commercial districts, main streets, infrastructure and engineering works, cultural landscapes, urban parks, and rural areas, and related legislation, primarily within the boundaries of the City of Ottawa.

We do that by:



**Saving Places**  
We intervene on behalf of hundreds of heritage properties — both the municipal and federal levels — to defend worthy places at risk of destruction or inappropriate intervention.



**Staying Connected**  
We reach tens of thousands of people through our Newsletters, E-Bulletins, bilingual website and social media tools, sharing heritage-related news and opportunities for preservation action.



**Raising Awareness**  
We connect with hundreds who participate in our walking tours, lectures, field trips and forums, raising awareness about the heritage and ecological values of our city's historic assets.



**Organizational Sustainability**  
We prioritize good governance, long-term financial health, and engaging members/supporters, ensuring our ongoing integrity and resiliency.

# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## Current Challenges - External pressures

- The focus on "intensification" in the City's new Official Plan, and lack of a completed Heritage Management Plan, leaves the City's commitment to the protection of heritage assets as integral to its growth management strategy unclear.
- The drive to address the affordable housing crisis is putting considerable pressure on historic built heritage assets and intervention guidelines and regulations. An example is Bill 23 (More Homes Built Faster Act 2022) described as a "developer-friendly grab-bag of changes" includes amendments to the Ontario Heritage Act and the revisions to the zoning bylaws.
- Demolition by neglect continues to be a challenge as the City has insufficient tools to compel an owner to maintain their property.
- The lack of legislation to protect federally-owned historic places and lack of effective regulatory protection for Canada's nationally-significant sites (Bill C-23 Heritage Act).
- Every four years the political scene changes which can affect our strategic plan.
- According to CanadaHelps, Heritage Ottawa will be facing a steady decline in the number of donors due to generational trends and uncertainties about the future due to, for example, inflation and healthcare.

## Current Challenges - Internal pressures

- Like many volunteer-based organizations, Heritage Ottawa experiences the challenges of running the organization with limited financial resources and staff, in the face of an aging demographic and the complexities of remaining relevant and dynamic in a connected world. Succession planning and business continuity are a challenge.
- Heritage Ottawa's membership lacks a younger demographic, although this represents the group that will have to live with decisions being made now around heritage issues.
- Connecting with the many growing diverse communities in Ottawa.
- While the legal challenge to stop the inappropriate addition to the Château Laurier was very successful - boosting Heritage Ottawa's credibility in the community - it was a huge amount of work, wearing for the Board, and a financial burden.

- Adapting successfully to an increasingly digitally enabled world.
- Heritage Ottawa does not yet have a sufficient and active member base to:
  - maintain its position as the lead voice for built heritage and landscapes in this city;
  - train communities to help with advocacy;
  - generate adequate financial resources going forward to ensure its sustainability and to respond to emerging opportunities.

## Emerging opportunities

- Investment in heritage places is now recognized as an environmentally sustainable development option.
- Recent coalitions with partner organizations have strengthened our advocacy activities, such as with the Alexandra Bridge Coalition, Ottawa's Official Plan, Bill C-23, Bill 23, and updating of Heritage Conservation District (HCD) plans. There are opportunities for Heritage Ottawa to build on this experience in future initiatives.
- Heritage Ottawa can realize a stronger advocacy impact in the broader community by sharing our expertise with neighbourhood and community associations, and others.
- The scale and nature of the Château Laurier Addition project enabled us to learn lessons that can assist us with future projects.
- The extent and diversity of the broader cultural landscape(s) in Ottawa presents an opportunity for Heritage Ottawa to increasingly expand our sphere of interest beyond the Greenbelt to suburban and rural areas.
- With the election of every new City Council there are opportunities to engage support on specific issues ~~eg. Bill 23~~. There may be similar opportunities leading into future federal general elections.
- The pandemic pushed us to reimagine the way we offer some of our programming, such as providing lectures on Zoom. Some changes that resulted from the pandemic were very well received by our membership and have been added permanently to our program offerings.
- Members and non-members have responded very well to our fundraising initiatives enabling us to meet and exceed our targets. Diverse sources of funding and growing revenues allow us to mitigate the impacts of

inflation and provide us with opportunities to invest in our advocacy, our programming and supporting our organization.

- The Heritage Ottawa Endowment Fund managed by the Ottawa Community Foundation offers members the opportunity to make bequests to strengthen the longer term sustainability of the organization.
- There are still many opportunities to grow revenues by expanding memberships, securing additional sponsorships, seeking project grants and offering revenue generating programs .
- There is an ongoing opportunity to recruit new volunteers.
- In a city of one million people, there remain many opportunities to connect with the community to grow the membership and support across all generations. Younger members in particular can expand Heritage Ottawa's capacity to broaden its reach via social media platforms.

## ROADMAP

Keeping in mind our Key Areas of Focus, as well as our Challenges and Opportunities, Heritage Ottawa will undertake the following one-time and ongoing activities.

### SAVING PLACES

- Facilitate public engagement in the interpretation, *mise en valeur*, protection and enhancement of the City's built heritage. (Ongoing)
- Continue to speak out for and defend heritage properties and landscapes at risk of inappropriate intervention or loss. (Ongoing)
- Encourage continued use and repurposing of heritage resources, rather than seeing them demolished. (Ongoing)
- Champion City grants to support renovations to heritage buildings and municipal tax incentives. (One-time and ongoing)
- Use elections (municipal, provincial and federal) to advocate for our priorities. (Ongoing)
- Help build awareness/understanding and guide the informed implementation of the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* (endorsed by City Council). (Ongoing)

- Promote the enacting of federal legislation to join other G7 countries in properly protecting designated heritage sites. For example, Bill C-23 Historic Places of Canada Act. (One-time and ongoing)
- Participate in the development of a Heritage Management Plan for the City.
- Participate in the development of a broad Culture Plan for the City where heritage is clearly embraced as a community priority.
- Continue to host Ottawa Heritage Gatherings with community association representatives and others to solidify alliances and share experiences in our efforts to protect and enhance the built heritage of our neighbourhoods.

## STAYING CONNECTED

- Continue to operate and enhance a bilingual website. (Ongoing)
- Improve contact with community heritage groups.
- Continue to operate social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. (Ongoing)
- Formalize social media calendar with Communications Working Group. (One-time and ongoing)
- Continue delivering monthly bilingual E-Bulletin, and E-Messages and Media Releases on an as needed basis. (Ongoing)
- Maintain Zoom account for virtual meetings and webinars and SurveyMonkey as an engagement tool. (Ongoing)
- Continue to produce quarterly Newsletter.
- Include French content across all platforms. (Ongoing)
- Implement and develop strategies to reach out to equity seeking communities.
- Identify opportunities to promote HO programs in community newspapers, community TV and Radio. (Re-activate)
- Continue to ensure HO programs are included in city-wide community organization calendars, e.g., Capital Heritage Connexion, Rogers TV Events Calendar. (Ongoing)
- Do market analysis to identify gaps within our reach, for example surveys and analyses

## RAISING AWARENESS

- Walking Tours.
- Lectures Series.
- Bus Tours.
- Communications (Newsletter, E-Bulletin, Website, Social Media) See Staying Connected.
- Publications.
- The Gordon Cullingham and Publication Grant Fund.
- Workshops.

## ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Maintain a strategic plan and supporting implementation work plan.
- Retain and grow the membership.
- Diversify and grow revenue streams.
- Encourage bequests for the Heritage Ottawa Endowment Fund to support longer term sustainability.
- Accelerate the organization's digital transformation.
- Work on connecting with Ottawa's diverse communities.
- Consider developing indicators and expected outcomes.
- Maintain and update relevant by-laws.
- Recognize and recruit more volunteers.
- Fund and create additional staff positions or secure more service contracts where needed not to replace but to complement volunteer labour.