

# Heritage Conservation Area

Perhaps the time is ripe for the community to unite in doing something to preserve the beauty and history of a neighbourhood that helps make Oak Bay unique and appealing to all of Victoria—citizens and visitors alike.

## *Time for Oak Bay's first HCA?*

Our area of Oak Bay has remained undisturbed by developers for many years, but times are changing. Low borrowing rates and high property values mean that undeveloped—and even developed—tracts of land in our neighbourhood are attracting the attention of those who develop land for a living. Our concern is that large, contemporary box-style structures will be built by people with little regard for how these structures will disrupt the historic fabric of our neighbourhood or impact neighbors in other negative ways, like supplanting green spaces and historic view corridors.

Perhaps the time is ripe for the community to unite in doing something to preserve the beauty and history of a neighbourhood that helps make Oak Bay unique and appealing to all of Victoria—citizens and visitors alike. The government has offered us a tool which has many benefits.

The fact that most of us live in vintage homes with historic value gives us the tool we need. The objective would be to work together with Oak Bay's Council and staff to protect our neighbourhood by making it a Historic Conservation Area (HCA). We would probably have a good shot of gaining this status, since our neighborhood is rich in historic homes designed by many of Victoria's most famous architects: Rattenbury, Samuel McClure, K. B. Spurgin, the James Brothers, and others. The beauty of this tool is that all proposed new construction and demolitions in locally designated historic districts require review by neighborhood advisory groups and historical commissions, thereby ensuring community involvement in neighborhood planning.

**Here are some of the many benefits** of becoming a Heritage Conservation Area:

- Studies show that Historic Conservation Area designation typically increases residential property values by 5–35% per decade over values in similar, undesignated neighborhoods.

- The values of newer properties within designated historic districts increase along with those of older properties.

- Local historic area designation decreases investor uncertainty and insulates property values from wild swings in the housing market.

- Historic district designation leads to increased levels of home ownership and longer residence by both home owners and renters.

- Designated historic districts tend to have higher rates of participation in neighborhood associations and improvement projects, which protects shared spaces from decline.

- Proposed exterior renovations, demolitions, and new construction in locally designated historic districts are reviewed by neighborhood advisory groups and historical commissions, thereby ensuring community involvement in neighborhood planning.

- With the preservation of homes of historic value, cultural tourism is enhanced.

- Municipality may help bury cables and restore historic view corridors

*Source: "Benefits of Residential Historic District Designations for Property Owners" by Jonathan Mabry, Ph.D., Historic Preservation Officer; distributed by Oak Bay Municipality*

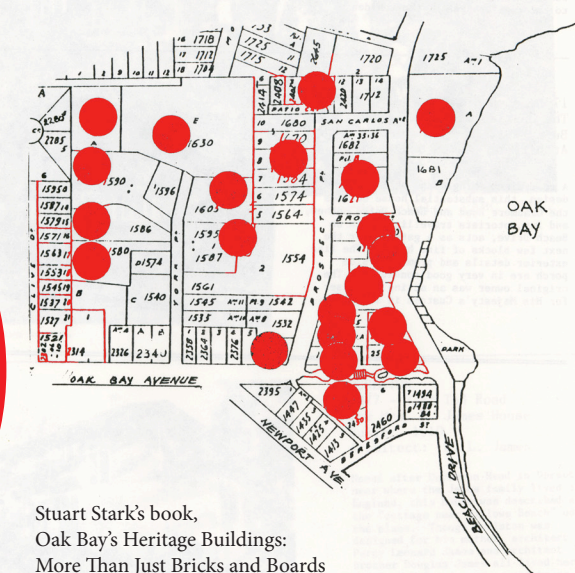
Oak Bay has a rich architectural heritage that deserves to be preserved. Once gone, it is gone forever.

## YOU DECIDE:

What would the UK look like today had its citizens not protected its valuable architectural legacy?

*Neighbourhoods with beautiful heritage buildings rise in value and are desirable. Historic buildings lend richness and culture to a society and communicate strength, beauty, and history.*

## York Place, Prospect Place, Beach Drive Cluster



Stuart Stark's book, Oak Bay's Heritage Buildings: More Than Just Bricks and Boards



Photo c. 1913. PABC 94386

**Note:** Recently, Oak Bay Council easily allowed the owner of a heritage designated property at 1512 Beach Drive (in our neighbourhood), to do a

fabulous balcony addition, proving that renovations are allowed, as long as the design is in keeping with the style of the house and neighbourhood.

And . . . just because your house is included in a Heritage Conservation Area, doesn't mean that your house will be designated automatically.