

**RETAINING THE HERITAGE
CHARACTER OF OLD TOWN: THE
OLD TOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES**



RETAINING THE HERITAGE CHARACTER OF OLD TOWN: THE OLD TOWN DESIGN GUIDELINES

SITUATION BRIEF # 18

Contributors: C. Gower, M. Segger

Victoria's Old Town is one of the largest historic areas in British Columbia.



The updated Old Town Design Guidelines (2019) support the City's review of development permits and heritage alteration permits related to the form and character of buildings such as building scale, massing, height, orientation and detailing. The design guidelines do not alter or affect existing zoning and development regulations such as building height, density, setbacks or off-street parking requirements. One crucial reference is the importance of preserving Old

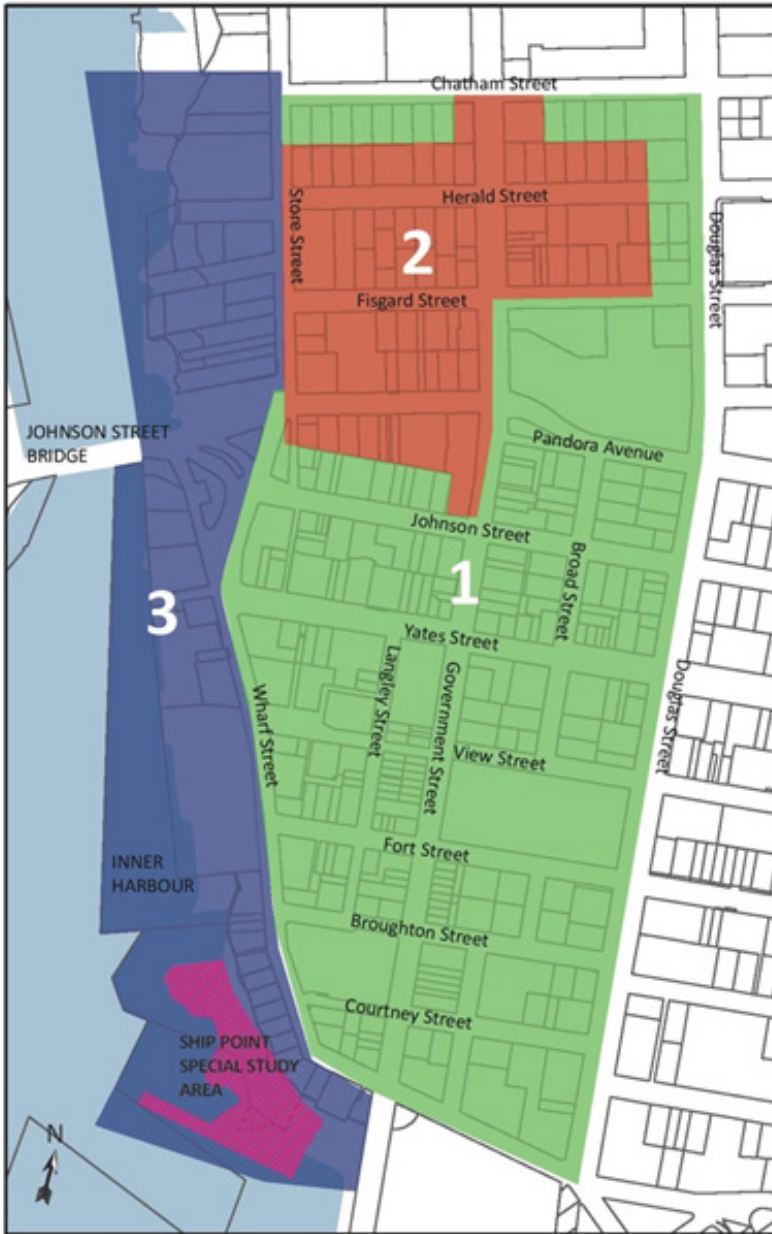
Town's urban form, in particular the amphitheatre sweep of the skyline up from the harbour front against the backdrop of modulated high-rise development serving as an eastern backdrop to the historic city-scape.



Old Town includes three areas of distinct character: the old commercial district with its collection of commercial heritage buildings constructed in the late 1800s, Canada's oldest surviving Chinatown, and the old warehouse buildings and hotels along the waterfront area that remind us of Victoria's role as a commercial seaport during the Gold Rush era.

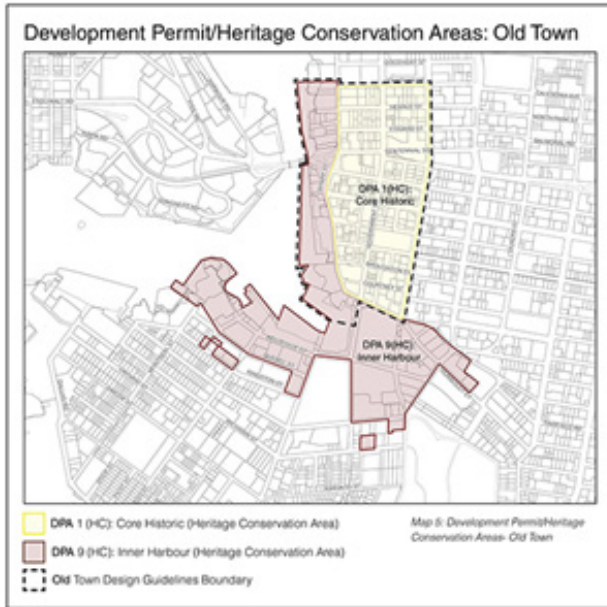
Maintaining the special character of Old Town for present and future generations requires the ongoing conservation and enhancement of its unique character. When new buildings are constructed or additions are made to existing buildings, it's important that they are designed to complement and enhance the heritage character and historical significance of this special area of downtown Victoria.

Old Town Sub Areas



Legend

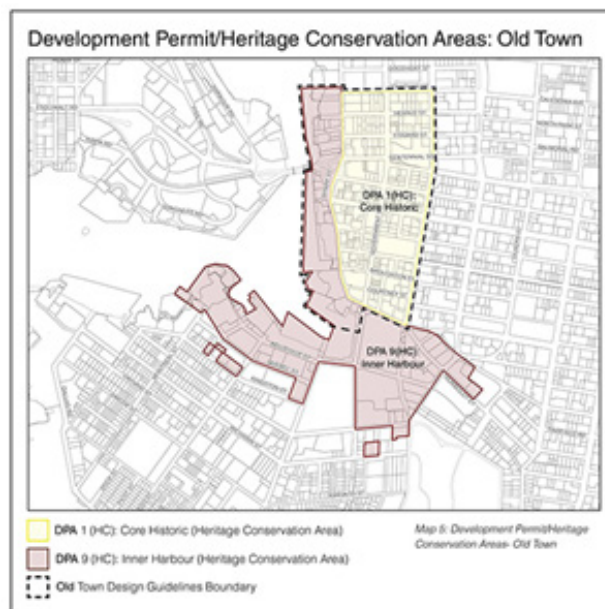
- 1 Old Commercial District
- 2 Chinatown
- 3 Waterfront

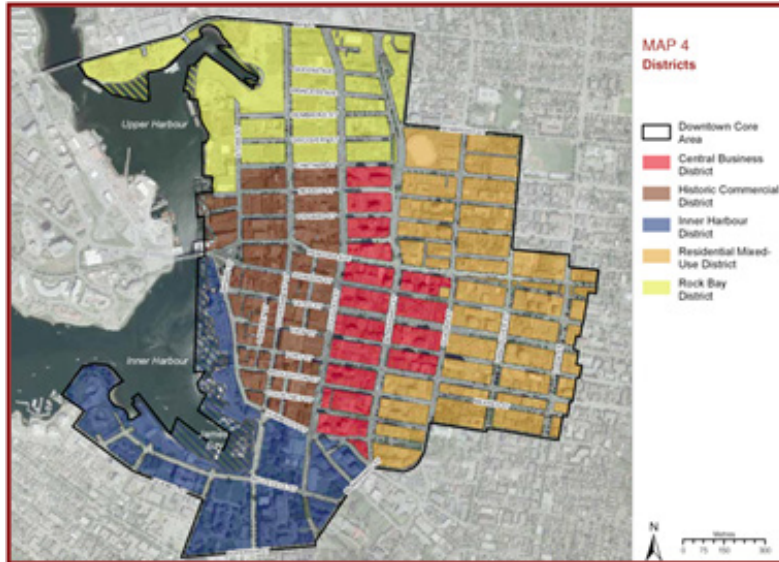


Project Update

On March 28, 2019, Council approved the updated Old Town Design Guidelines (2019) and incorporated them into the Official Community Plan by amending Development Permit Area 1 (HC): Core Historic and Development Permit Area 9: Inner Harbour, replacing reference of the Old Town Design Guidelines (2006) with the new updated Old Town Design Guidelines (2019).

Development Permit Area 1 (HC): Core Historic is also further amended by deleting reference to the Chinatown Guidelines for Buildings, Canopies, Landscaping, Colours & Signs (1983).





Observations

- The themed historic areas of Old Town, as already demonstrated in Chinatown, need a visual street level interpretive programme of commemorative plaques, markers, and directional signage to tie the City's intangible heritage (periodization themes, historical personalities and events, parades, public art) to the overall narrative of historic Victoria.
- Subset areas, the manufacturing district, a cluster of blocks in the vicinity Rock Bay, but focusing on Store Street, Herald, Pembroke and Discovery Streets, should be identified, themed and interpreted in a similar fashion, and the Inner Harbour area (or Institutional Portal to the City) focused on Belleville, Government, and Douglas, should be similarly treated.
- There is a need for pedestrian linkages which tie Old Town to its historic roots in its history as a port and trading hub point. The very highest priority is the completion of harbor-front walkway through to Rock Bay and ultimately linking to Gorge Waterway linear parks and Galloping Goose Trail.

References

Old Town Core Area Urban Design Guidelines, City of Victoria, 2018

<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/community-planning/heritage/old-town-design-guidelines.html>

Downtown Core Area Beautification Manual, City of Victoria, 2004

Downtown Core Area Plan, City of Victoria, City of Victoria, 2020 https://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Planning~Development/Community~Planning/Local~Area~Planning/Downtown~Core~Area~Plan/DTCP_book_web.pdf