



Heritage Designation Strategy
Kawartha Lakes Economic Development
2026



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Land Acknowledgement

The City of Kawartha Lakes respectfully acknowledges that we are situated on Mississauga lands and the traditional territory covered by the Williams Treaties.

We are grateful for the opportunity to work here and we thank all the generations of people who have taken care of this land – for thousands of years. We recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place. We also recognize the contributions of Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples, both in shaping and strengthening this community and country as a whole. This recognition is connected to our collective commitment to make the promise and the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation real in our community.



Heritage Designation Strategy

Kawartha Lakes possesses a wealth of historic properties that tell the story of the City's development and the people who lived here. From rural agricultural landscapes to historic downtowns, these historic resources are diverse in their size, type, age and form but are integral to providing a sense of history and place to our rural and urban communities. These properties are unique to their locations and communities and provide vibrant and interesting locations for our residents and visitors to experience. Heritage buildings not only tell stories about our communities and preserve our history for future generations, they are also vital community assets. They support place-making initiatives in communities as distinctive and unique local spaces, as well as supporting tourism by preserving and showcasing historic assets and investment opportunities on-going and adaptive reuse.

Municipalities in Ontario use a variety of tools to protect and support the long-term preservation of local heritage resources. The most common mechanism that municipalities use to protect properties is individual designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. This mechanism allows municipalities to identify, evaluate and protect heritage properties on a property-by-property basis and is an effective tool for heritage property conservation.

Ideally, the designation of heritage properties, as well as their long-term maintenance, is a collaborative effort between local municipalities and property owner, through joint participation in the designation process and support to the property owner after designation through municipal resources, heritage permitting and grants and incentives. However, the Ontario Heritage Act allows for the designation of properties without a property owner's consent, although there is a formal objection process, and municipalities may choose to pursue this route where it is within the public interest to designate a heritage property.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a high-level framework for identifying, evaluating and protecting heritage properties in the City through individual designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. Significant cultural heritage resources contribute to local identity and place-making initiatives and their conservation is required to comply with provincial land use planning policy. Properties with the potential to be heritage designated exist throughout the City in both urban and rural settings and require evaluation and protection to both comply with provincial and municipal legislation and policies and to ensure that the places which are important to and share our local communities are retained and enhanced for future generations.

Types of Individual Heritage Resources

Individual heritage resources can encompass a wide range of real property. Real property refers to land and anything affixed to it, such as buildings, structures and landscape features. It does not refer to moveable objects such as art, artifacts or furniture. To designate a heritage resource under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, it must be real property.

Real property that could be considered for designated as individual heritage resources include:

- Residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and institutional buildings
- Monuments, such as a cenotaph, public art or a statue
- Structures and engineering works, such as water towers, fences or bridges
- Natural features, such as trees, that have cultural heritage value
- Cemeteries
- Landscapes such as parks or battlefields
- Spiritual and sacred sites

Archaeological sites may also be designated under Part IV of the Act, although archaeology is also protected and regulated through Part VI of the Act. In Kawartha Lakes, archaeological sites are managed through the City's Archaeological Management Plan.

Current Heritage Designation Program

The City's current heritage designation program have evolved patchwork from its predecessor municipalities through to the City's present heritage planning program. The City's pre-amalgamation municipalities undertook different levels of designations at different times: some municipalities, with active municipal heritage committees, undertook substantial numbers of designations from 1975 onwards while other designated few or no properties prior to amalgamation.

Post-amalgamation, City designated properties, primarily at the request of heritage property owners, and advanced its designation program through its municipal heritage committee. Most years saw one to four designations processed without a specific strategy as the direction at that time was to respond to owner requests. A dedicated staff position for heritage planning was added in 2019.

The City's approach to heritage designated changed drastically in 2023 with the passage of Bill 23 by the provincial government at the end of 2022 and the removal of listing on the municipal Heritage Register as an option for long-term heritage protection. At this time, the City began a review of its listed properties and Council-approved strategy for designating them, prioritizing landmark, commercial and institutional buildings. The intention of this goal was to designate important listed properties as quickly as possible to respond to the evolving direction received from the provincial government. The direction from Bill 23 has resulted in a substantial uptick in the number of designations that the City has pursued, but the ad hoc strategy adopted to address the challenges resulting from this legislative change does not address the City's long-term goals or the designation of properties that were not already listed on the Heritage Register.

Working with the Community

While municipalities are responsible for designating heritage properties, community members are important contributor to the understanding and long-term preservation of our heritage properties, although this is not fully articulated through legislation, case law or policy. The Ontario Heritage Act



legislates a specific role for property owners in the formal designation process, by stipulating when a property owner must be notified of a proposed designation and how they may object. Similarly, case law, specifically the 2003 decision *Tremblay vs. Lakeshore (Town)*, holds that a municipality may not ask a property owner for their consent as a condition of designating a property. The purpose of this legal framework is to allow municipalities to make decisions in the best interest of the community as a whole, particularly when a property is at risk of demolition. However, while important to the technical aspect of how designations are undertaken, they do not reflect the role that community members can and should play in identifying, promoting and protecting local heritage.

Community involvement helps ensure that preservation reflects lived, local experience, alongside formal evaluation and the legislated processes under the Ontario Heritage Act. When residents, cultural groups, and local organizations participate in identifying and protecting historic places, they bring forward stories, traditions, and values that might otherwise be overlooked. This inclusive process strengthens the legitimacy of designation decisions, builds public trust, and fosters a shared sense of ownership over cultural assets. Engaged communities are also more likely to support long-term stewardship, advocacy, and sustainable use of heritage sites. In Kawartha Lakes, the size and structure of the municipality means that our many distinct communities each have their own



important properties that tell the story of these communities and support their local economies and identities, and community members are the ones who know and understand these sites the best.

At present, the City has informal processes for working directly with property owners on the designation process and for encouraging property owners to come forward to request designation for their properties, but there is a significant lack of awareness in the community about heritage designation and how it works. Better communication and outreach is needed to encourage the owners of historic buildings to become engaged with this process. The City also works at different levels of engagement with local organizations to identify properties in the community with heritage value. While there are some organizations that are actively engaged and work closely with the City to identify, research and protect properties, there is significant scope to expand these relationships to allow community organizations with in-depth knowledge of their community and its important historic assets to participate in the designation process and support the protection of heritage buildings across the City.

Legislative and Policy Framework

The protection of cultural heritage landscapes in Ontario is guided by provincial and municipal legislation and policy which speak to the identification and conservation of these types of heritage resources. Municipalities across Ontario are required to conserve significant cultural heritage resources and have a range of tools available to do so. The primary pieces of policy and legislation providing direction regarding to the protection of cultural heritage landscapes within the Ontario and Kawartha Lakes contexts are outlined below.

Ontario Heritage Act

The Ontario Heritage Act is the enabling legislation for heritage preservation in Ontario. The Act provides tools for the conservation of individual properties, heritage conservation districts, and archaeological sites. Individual properties can be designated under Part IV of the Act and are evaluated for their cultural heritage value through Ontario Regulation 9/06. The Act also allows for the protection of individual resources through different mechanisms, including listing on a heritage register and the entering into of heritage easement agreements. Individual designation under Part IV of the Act, however, remains the most common and, in many cases, the most effective mechanism for protecting heritage resources contained on a single property.

Under the Act, Ontario Regulation 9/06 provides the criteria for evaluating individual cultural heritage resources and is used as the criteria for determining if a property is eligible for individual designation under Part IV of the Act. The criteria are:

- The property has design value or physical value because it:
 - Is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method,
 - Displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit, or
 - Demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement
- The property has historical value or associative value because it:
 - Has direct associations with a theme, event, believe, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community,
 - Yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to the understanding of a community or culture, or
 - Demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder or theorist who is significant to a community.
- The property has contextual value because it:
 - Is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area,
 - If physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings, or
 - Is a landmark.

These criteria form the benchmark for the evaluation of cultural heritage resources across Ontario and ensure consistent evaluation in municipalities throughout the province.

Planning Act

The Planning Act recognizes cultural heritage resources as considerations in the land use planning decision-making process. Section 2 of the Act establishes a number of matters to which a decision-making body, including a municipality, must have regard for a number of matters of provincial interest, including “the conservation of features of significant architectural, cultural, historical, archaeological or scientific interest.”

While the Planning Act does not address individually designated heritage properties specifically, it does provide direction for their protection as part of the land use planning process, as well as mechanisms which can be used to do so, including policies through municipal Official Plans. While these tools are not specific to heritage conservation, they may be used to support and promote the conservation of heritage properties and their heritage attributes.

Provincial Planning Statement (2024)

Section 4.6 of the Provincial Planning Statement (PPS) addresses the management of cultural heritage resources as part of the land use planning process. The PPS requires that municipalities protect significant cultural heritage resources as part of their broader approach to land use planning and ensure that new development does not negatively impact cultural heritage resources. This include the protecting of cultural heritage resources themselves as well as regard for cultural heritage resources when development occurs on adjacent lands.

Significant cultural heritage resources are designed as “resources that have been determined to have cultural heritage value or interest. Processes and criteria for determining cultural heritage value or interest are established by the Province under the authority of the Ontario Heritage Act.” Designated property under Part IV of the Act is, through the evaluation and designation process, a significant cultural heritage resource through its adherence to the criteria established under Ontario Regulation 9/06.

The PPS also includes a recommendation to municipalities to create strategies for prioritizing heritage properties for evaluation and protection. This strategy is intended to fulfil that policy direction.

City of Kawartha Lakes Official Plan (2012)

Section 10 of the Kawartha Lakes Official Plan establishes goals and policies related to the conservation of cultural heritage resources. This section was amended in 2017 by Official Plan Amendment 27 to update these policies and to enable the designation of heritage conservation districts in the municipality.

The Official Plan discusses the identification, evaluation and protection of cultural heritage resources, which include built heritage resources, natural heritage resources, cultural heritage landscapes and archaeological resources, more generally. The City is directed to identify, evaluate and preserve these resources through the various tools available to it under the Ontario Heritage Act, Planning Act, Environmental Assessment Act, and other relevant legislation. The Official Plan also speaks to requirements for development on or adjacent to cultural heritage resources and provides direction for conserving these resources while also promoting and supporting new development.

Priorities and Actions

1: Priorities for Designation

In order to undertake an effective and measured heritage designation program, the City must identify priorities for its designation program to maximize the impact of heritage designation to support placemaking, community pride, local identity, and economic development. Working within its existing resources and capacity, the City should focus on properties that best represent that the municipality's history and identity and reflect community priorities that were identified as part of the public engagement for this strategy.

Strategic prioritization helps manage long-term responsibilities under the Ontario Heritage Act and will assist the City in directing resources and capacity where there will be the strongest preservation outcomes in a manner that is realistic and sustainable. In order to do so,

Action 1.1: Identify and protect properties that reflect key community priorities including: landmark community buildings, commercial buildings and downtowns, churches and community spaces, agricultural properties, and important historic homes.

Action 1.2: Work with community organizations to identify natural heritage and cemeteries that are a priority to the community for heritage designation.

Action 1.3: Ensure that designations span the scope of Kawartha Lakes communities, histories and geographies by identifying priorities to individual communities through community engagement and data collection.

Action 1.4: Work with Planning staff to identify and protect historic properties under threat of demolition through redevelopment and encourage adaptive reuse.

Action 1.5: Continue to collect data regarding historic properties across the City eligible for designation through the Heritage Inventory program.



2: Public Engagement and Education

The involvement of local community members is vital to the identification and designation of properties in the City. The Ontario Heritage Act sets out a formal process for consultation with the owners of heritage properties during the designation process, which the City must follow, but does not prescribe engagement activities beyond notification and objection requirements. Case law stipulates that municipalities may not ask permission from owners to designate their properties, as it would be in contravention of the intent of the Act, but best practice remains early and in-depth engagement with property owners to create a collaborative relationship through the designation process.

The community at large is also integral to promoting and preserving heritage through the knowledge and experiences of community members and organization. Community members know the history of a place, can identify what resources are important and what their story is.

Action 2.1: Engage with local organizations, such as historical societies, local museums and services clubs, to identify and protect heritage resources.

Action 2.2: Provide opportunities for community members to learn about heritage designation and participate in heritage initiatives, such as the Heritage Inventory project.

Action 2.3: Work directly with property owners to support the heritage designation process.



3: Capacity

The City's approach to designation must work within its existing staff and volunteer capacity. At present, the City has one full-time permanent staff position and a Council-appointed Municipal Heritage Committee that is comprised of a maximum of eleven citizen members and one Councillor. Staff support has also expanded in recent years through grant programs, such as Young Canada Works, to hire students or recent graduates for set periods of time, although grant programs are not reliable sources for long-term staffing. This capacity limits how many designations can be pursued and, more broadly, support programming for designated property owners.

To meet its goals regarding the preservation of heritage properties, the City should focus on capacity building within its existing resources, specifically through building up the Municipal Heritage Committee and through exploration of opportunities for students and recent graduates to gain career experience while also supporting permanent City staff.

Action 3.1: Support capacity building for the Municipal Heritage Committee through professional development activities and training.

Action 3.2: Continue to pursue funding opportunities, internships, and co-op programs to support heritage planning activities.



4: Funding

The majority of heritage buildings in Kawartha Lakes are privately-owned, by local residents, businesses or institutions. Heritage property owners typically have a high degree of pride in their properties and work to maintain and restore them to a high standard. However, property owners can be faced with challenges around costs, whether it is for restoration projects that require specialized skills and craftsmanship or with increased insurance costs which have become a challenge for many heritage property owners in recent years.

At present, the City provides grant support to heritage property owners through its existing Community Improvement Plan. This includes grants that are specifically targeted to heritage designated properties as well as grants for improvements to commercial properties that indirectly support heritage preservation when they are received by heritage designated commercial properties. While these grants, which are project specific, have been well-subscribed and well-received by heritage property owners, there have been several major gaps that have been identified both by City staff and heritage property owners.

One of the core gaps in existing City programs are the lack of grants for properties that are zoned neither residential nor commercial. This includes properties with community facility zoning, spaces which are typically used by non-profits, community organizations, historical societies/museums, and faith groups. Similarly, property owners have also identified challenges regarding the amount of grant funding available and its contingency on completing restoration projects which do not address financial challenges such as insurance. Property owners have consistently identified the development of a heritage property tax relief program, which have been successfully implemented in many Ontario municipalities, as a program which the City could use to support long-term building upkeep and preservation.

Action 4.1: Continue to offer heritage conservation grants to designated properties through the Community Improvement Plan and other available funding streams.

Action 4.2: Identify funding opportunities to support buildings occupied by non-profits, museums/historical societies, community organizations, and faith groups.

Action 4.3: Explore the development of a heritage property tax relief program.



Appendix A: What We Heard

Public consultation for the Strategy took place throughout winter 2026 through in-person sessions and Jump In surveys. 2 in-person introductory sessions were scheduled for January 2026, although one was cancelled due to inclement weather. A third session was scheduled in March 2026 to review the draft strategy and gather feedback from members of the public.

A Jump In page was launched at the beginning of January with information regarding the strategy development as well as a survey to gather public input on what community priorities were and their vision for heritage preservation in the community. The survey which included both long-form and multiple-choice questions, received 138 responses.

What We Asked

The survey, available both in hard copy and through Jump In, consisted of five structured questions with multiple choice answers, and a free form box for final thoughts and reflections on the heritage designation program in Kawartha Lakes. The questions were as follows:

1. For you, what is the most important type of site in Kawartha Lakes to be heritage designated?
2. What do you think are the most important historic themes that have shaped the history of Kawartha lakes and that we should commemorate through designation?
3. What do you think are the primary goals of heritage designation?
4. The City has a fixed capacity to designate properties each year. How should we prioritize properties for designation?
5. How can we best gather input from the public to identify and nominate properties for designation?
6. Where would you like to see heritage preservation in the community in 10 years? (Free form question).

The in-person community engagement sessions consisted of a presentation from staff and free-form discussion regarding heritage designation in the municipality, as well as an opportunity to fill out a survey.

What the Community Said

In general, the community was broadly supportive of the heritage designation program and its expansion in the City, although some respondents were not supportive of heritage preservation in general. Some specific key points were raised throughout the community consultation:

- Community members placed a priority for designation on historic houses, churches, commercial buildings and downtowns, natural heritage and sites associated with important community members. There was also strong support for the preservation and protection of the City's agricultural heritage, as well as sites associated with early settlement, transportation, Indigenous history, and local waterways.
- Community members saw the role of heritage preservation as celebrating local history, educating residents and visitors about our past, and preventing undesirable change to historic buildings.



- Community members wanted the City to prioritize buildings under threat of demolition, as well as local landmarks and sites that could attract visitors to Kawartha Lakes, for designation.
- There was strong support for increased community involvement in identifying properties for heritage designation, including working directly with local historical societies to identify and designate buildings.
- There was a general consensus that growth was an inevitable part of the current municipal landscape and that it should respond and respect the City's heritage as opposed to being prevented on heritage-related grounds.
- Community members were concerned about the potential financial impact of heritage designation on private property owners who might be interested in designation but might struggle with costs associated with restoration and insurance. There was strong support for continued grant programs as well as the development of a heritage property tax relief program.
- Community members generally wanted a proactive heritage designation program that identified properties for designation in advance of adverse effects being proposed, such as designations responding to proposed demolitions. They also identified a heritage designation

program that was practical and permissive enough to support owners' needs with regards to renovations, restoration, and additions.

The answers to the multiple-choice questions have been collated in graphs at the end of this report. Participants offered some of the following insights:

"Heritage designation is about honouring the past when planning for the future. We want to attract both visitors and new residents to a welcoming community that clearly honours its roots."

"I would like to see the City focus on developing a positive approach to designation, with less focus on preventing change, and more on supporting growth with the community's heritage in mind."

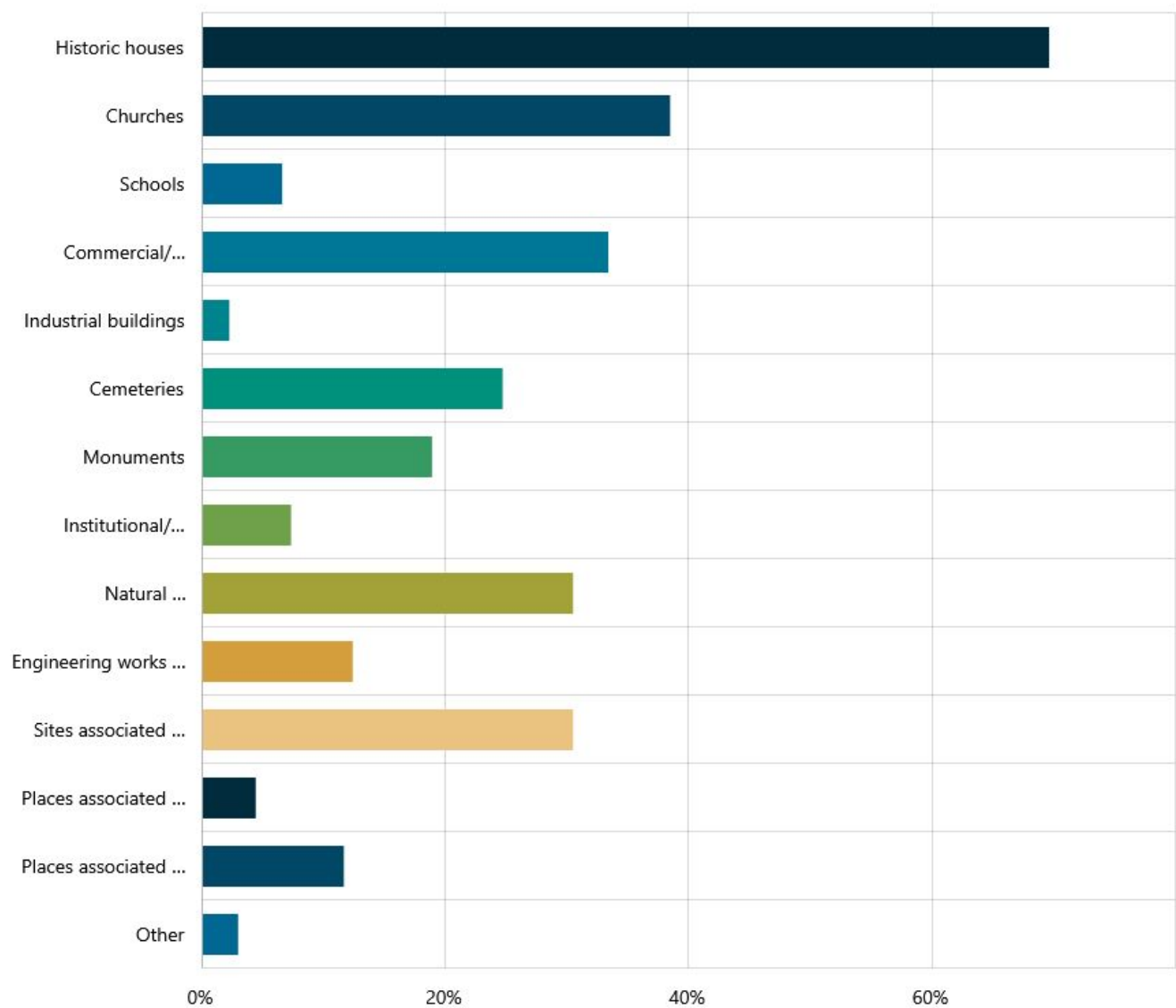
"I would like to see heritage preservation in the City positioned as a collaborative partnership rather than a regulatory burden – one that protects cultural value while supporting long-term economic viability for property owners."

Overall, the community is supportive of a Heritage Designation Strategy that is proactive in its approach to identifying important historic landmarks across Kawartha Lakes, respects local community knowledge and sites of importance, and identifies areas for the City to support private property owners looking to designate and protect their properties through programs and financial incentives.

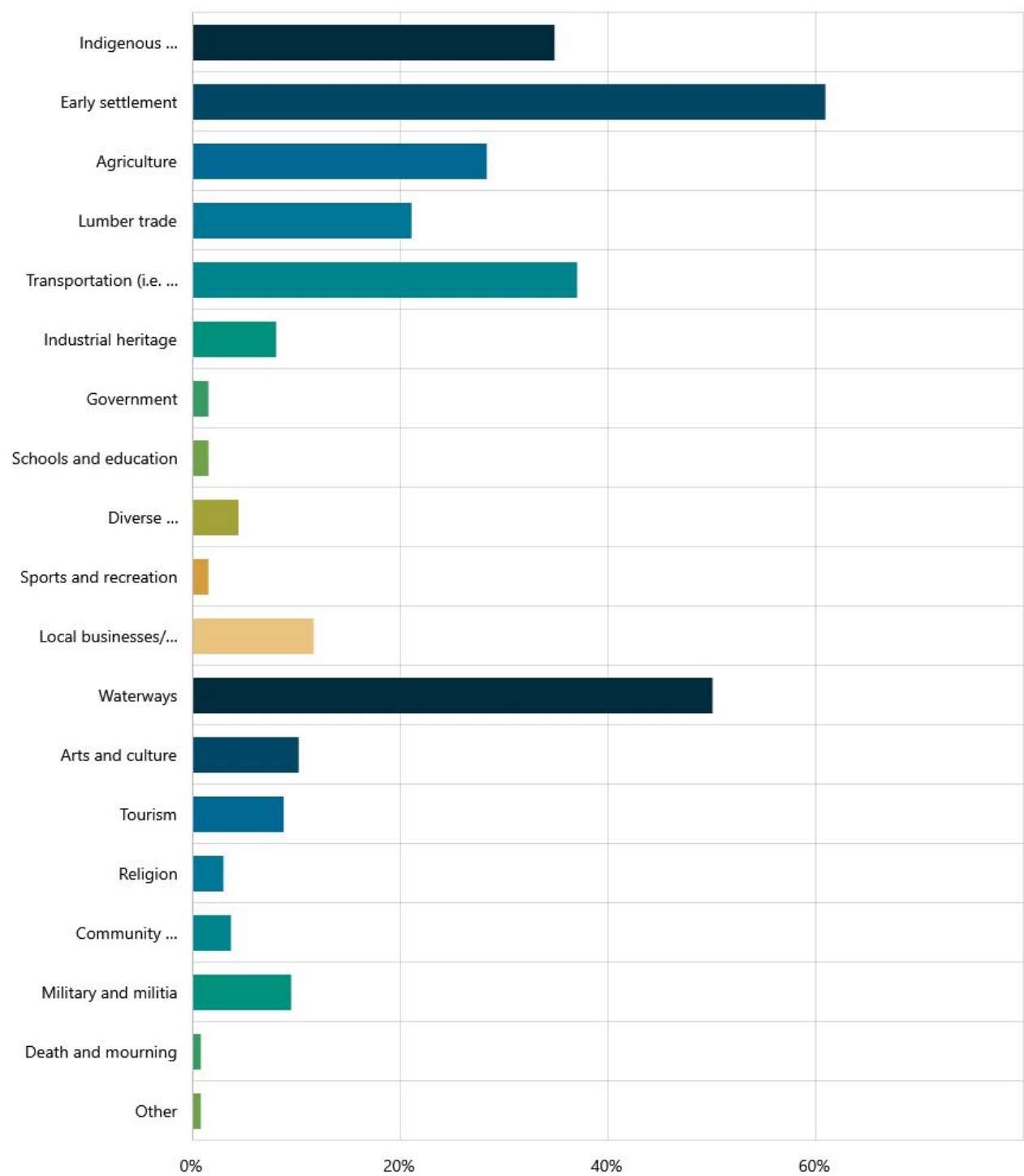


Survey Results Summary

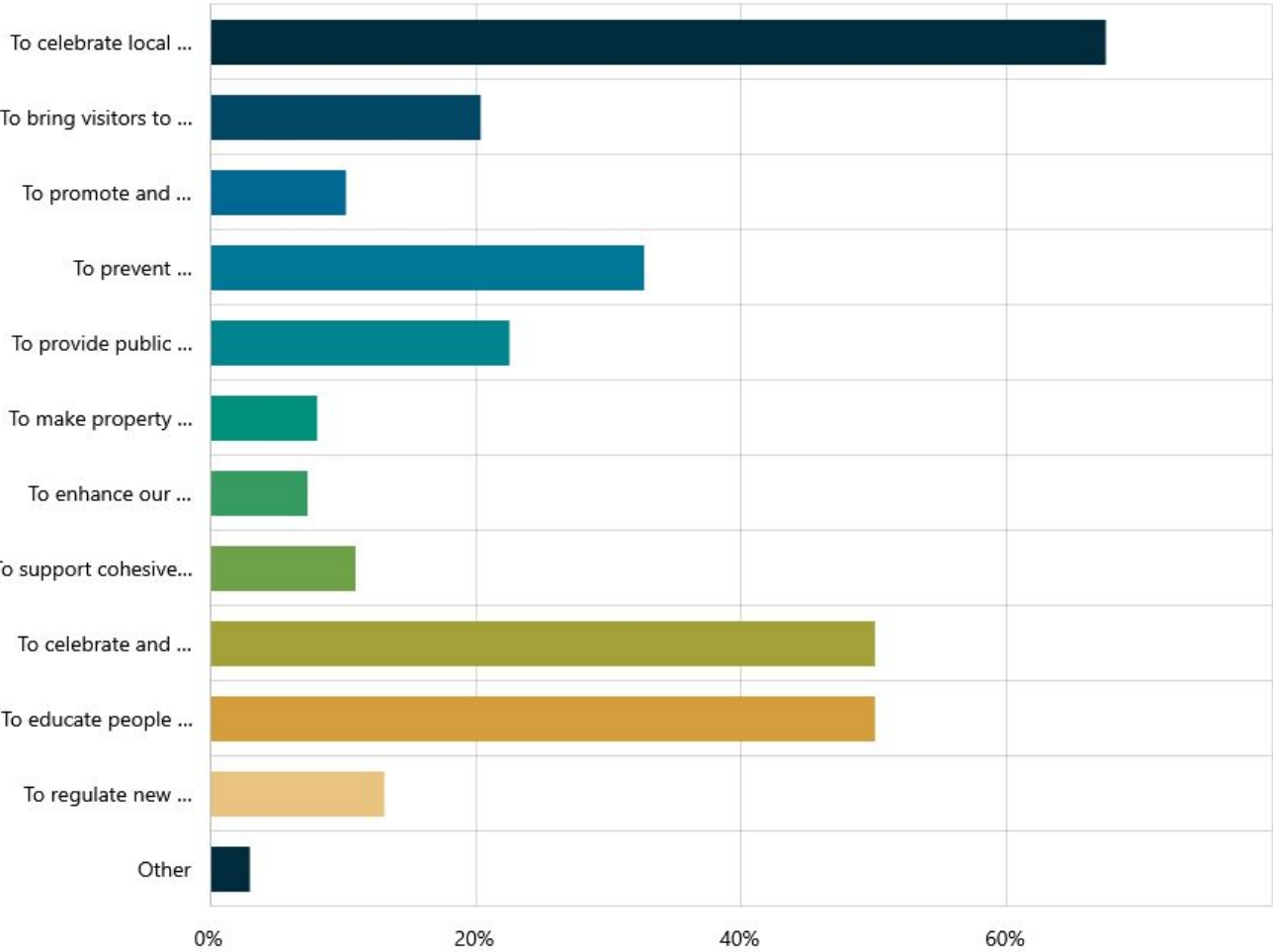
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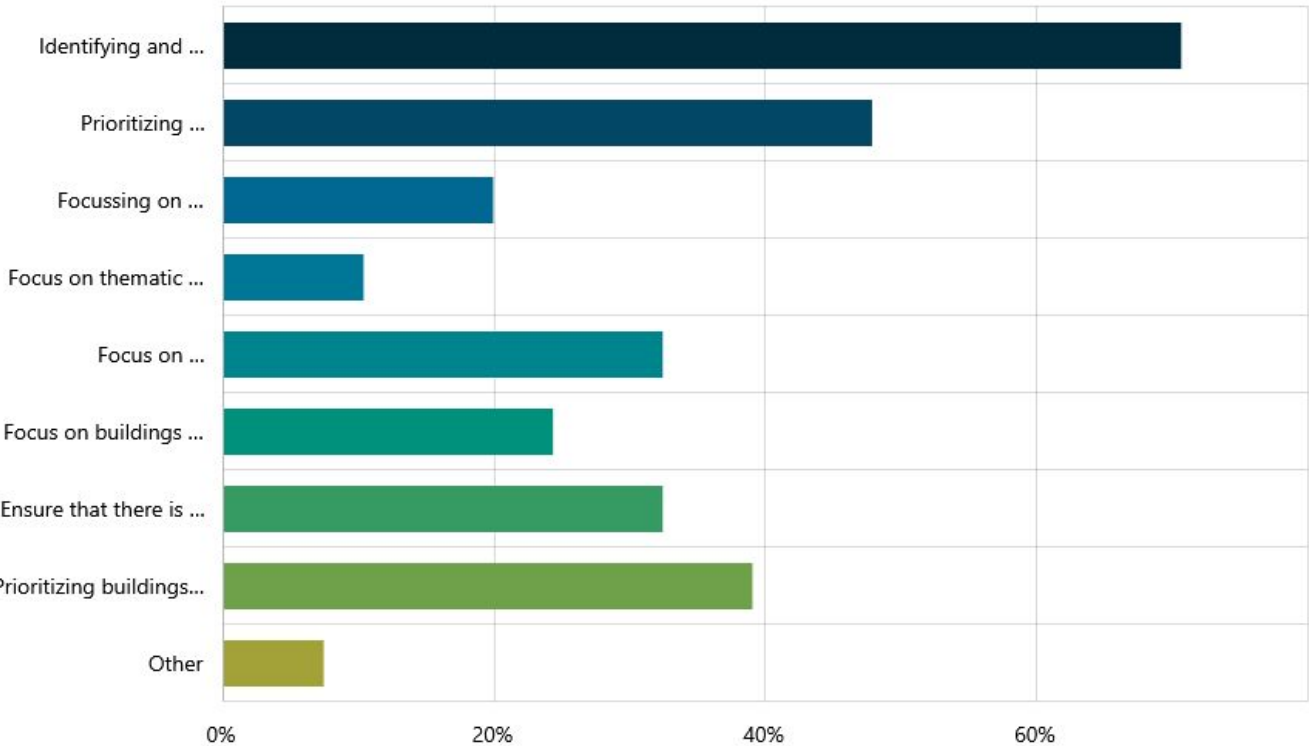
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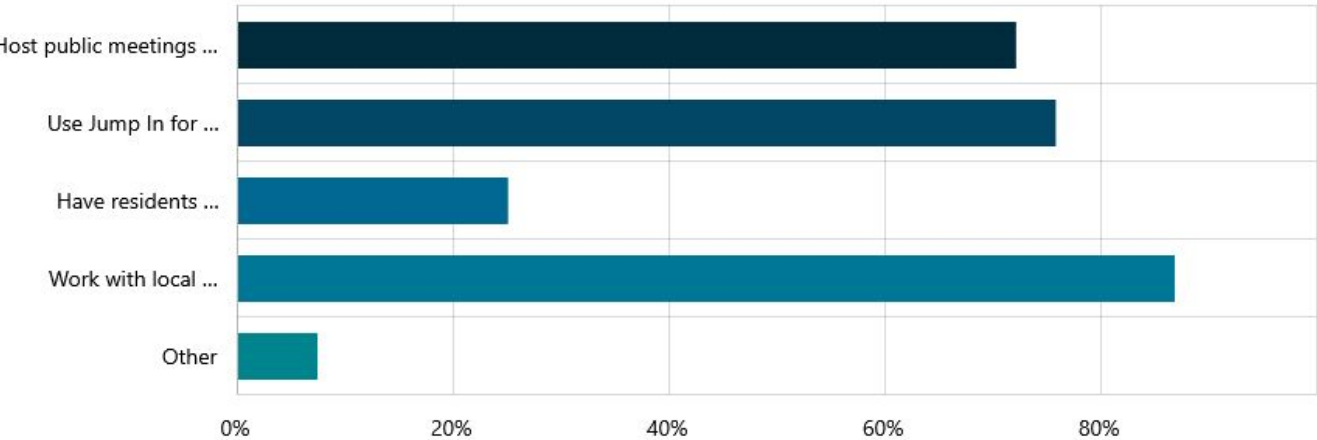
3. What do you think are the primary goals of heritage designation?



4. The City has fixed capacity to designate properties each year. How should we prioritize properties for designation?



5. How can we best gather input from the public to identify and nominate properties for designation?





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