



Figure 3: Map of Minto Park HCD

### 3.3 Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Statement 41.1 5 (b) of the *Ontario Heritage Act* requires that a heritage conservation district plan include a “Statement of Cultural Heritage Value.” These statements and their accompanying list of [heritage attributes](#) are the foundation of heritage conservation district plans.

#### Statement of Cultural Heritage Value

Both Centretown and Minto Park, as part of the City of Ottawa are built on un-ceded Algonquin Anishinabe territory. The peoples of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation have lived on this territory for millennia. Their culture and presence have nurtured and continue to nurture this land.

The cultural heritage value of the Centretown and Minto Park Heritage Conservation Districts lies in their role as early residential neighbourhoods within the larger area of Centretown with a mix of housing types including large architect-designed houses for the wealthy, primarily located along Metcalfe Street leading to the Victoria Memorial Museum (now known as the Canadian Museum of Nature), high style and vernacular detached dwellings, row houses, and apartment buildings constructed for the middle class, and small working class dwellings. In addition, its value is derived from its associated commercial corridors and institutions.

The development of the Districts, primarily built from the 1870s until 1914, are closely linked to Parliament Hill and its functions. Their proximity to Parliament Hill and pleasant neighbourhood character resulted in them being the home of a number of prominent Canadians throughout their long history.

Figure 4: Historic commercial buildings on Bank Street



The development of Centretown began in the 1870s with the extension of streets south from Upper Town. The subdivision and sale of the By and Stewart Estates (the site of the Museum of Nature) prompted much residential construction in the area, including a number of larger houses for leaders of Ottawa society. In the 1880s, horse drawn street cars ran along Bank Street and in 1891 the electric street railway was extended along Bank Street as far south as Lansdowne Park, increasing ease of access to the growing area. Services followed and by the 1880s, there were a number of commercial buildings lining Bank Street south of Laurier Avenue, although for many years these were interspersed with single detached dwellings. Eventually Bank Street was the area's main commercial street and was lined by flat-roofed commercial structures, typically with retail uses at grade and with apartments or offices above. To a lesser extent parts of Elgin Street also developed as a commercial thoroughfare.

For many years, a large proportion of the Districts' inhabitants worked either on Parliament Hill or in shops and offices nearby, establishing strong links between the areas that are evident today in the street layout and land uses.

Figure 5: Historic commercial buildings on Elgin Street



As a neighbourhood with a wide range of housing types, Centretown has been the home of a cross-section of Ottawa society, including prominent politicians, and lumber barons, as well as diplomats, civil servants, students, labourers and small business owners. Noted for its transitory population, Centretown has traditionally been the Ottawa neighbourhood of choice for members of Parliament. Among them former prime ministers William Lyon MacKenzie King, Joe Clark and Kim Campbell. The neighbourhood was also home to lumber baron J.R. Booth, hardware merchant Thomas Birkett, ethnologist and folklorist Marius Barbeau and author Timothy Findley.

Prominent 19th and 20th century residents included Sir Clifford Sifton, whose policies led to the settling of the West and Duncan Campbell Scott, a poet and civil servant. Both men were involved in the establishment of the residential school system that removed First Nations children from their homes and families and sent them to boarding schools where they were forbidden from speaking their language and were the victims of abuse and neglect. Generations of First Nations children were sent to residential schools, the difficult legacy of which continues today.

The houses around Minto Park were particularly desirable as they faced the park, with its attractive pathways and amenities. They demonstrate a wide range of styles and types, typical of the larger Centretown area.



**Figure 6:** Historic photo of the former Imperial Theatre, ca. 1938, where Barrymore's Music Hall exists today at 323 Bank Street. Credit: Archives of Ontario/ RG 56-11-0-179-5.



**Figure 7:** The Shefford housing co-op, a historic apartment building in Centretown.

As an early Ottawa neighbourhood, Centretown was also the home of a number of local institutions that served the neighbourhood and the city as a whole. These included, the Protestant Orphan's Home (demolished 1935) which was replaced by the Elgin Theatre in 1937, many churches, and Elgin Street Public School. Other clubs and institutions were also located in the HCDs. The City's Central Library, a Carnegie Library was located to the north of the Centretown HCD at the corner of Metcalfe Street and Laurier Avenue, across the street from the YMCA. The area was also the site of four theatres, the Phoenix (originally Rialto), the Elgin, the Somerset, and the Imperial theatres (the former occupant of Barrymore's) theatres.

Throughout its history, new arrivals have gravitated to Centretown, as a downtown neighbourhood with a range of housing options. By the end of the 19th century, there was an established Chinese community in Centretown, with Dominion Chalmers Church, 355 Cooper Street, offering Christian instruction in Chinese as early as 1893. There was also a significant Jewish community in Centretown in the early 20th century, with many members of the community operating small businesses such as fruit stores and tailor shops on Bank and Elgin Streets.

A significant population of single women also lived in Centretown starting in the early 20th century. Many young women moved to the area when the civil service expanded to respond to the crisis of the First World War, often working in positions previously occupied by men. Others left farms in the Ottawa Valley where there were no opportunities for young women, often becoming domestic servants or working in shops. Many of these women remained in Centretown, living in boarding houses, single rooms or in the modern apartment buildings found throughout Centretown.

In addition to its links to Ottawa's role as the national capital, Centretown has heritage value for its association with important themes in local history. The neighbourhood has a long association with early community activism and affordable housing. Minto Park itself was created following a petition from residents of Lewis and Gilmour Streets to the City of Ottawa Board of Park Management. The City purchased the land from J.R Booth and created Minto Square. In the 1960s and 70s rapid change and development occurred in Centretown with low rise residential buildings being replaced with concrete slab high rises or office buildings. The Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC) was formed in 1974 as an off-shoot of the Centretown Citizens Community Association, with the goal of maintaining Centretown's residential character by creating affordable stable rental housing. The CCOC now owns almost 1600 units. There are also several examples of housing co-ops including the Shefford, 300 Cooper Street, an early 20th century apartment building, and the Abiwin Co-op, 299 Somerset Street West, which incorporates several historic buildings.



Figure 8: Public Service Alliance of Canada Building (PSAC), a modernist office building constructed as PSAC's headquarters.



Figure 9: Ottawa Women's Monument in Minto Park

Over time, many residents chose to stay in the area because of its mixed character and eventually Centretown became associated with a diverse range of people. Ottawa's Gay Village was established here and many early events in the city's gay rights movement happened in the neighbourhood. Centretown continues to be the site of many of Ottawa's LGBTQ2S activities.

Minto Park has played a role for many years as a rallying point for protests and marches on Parliament Hill because its central location and open spaces made it relatively simple to organize large numbers of people prior to marching on Parliament Hill. The politicization of the space increased when it became the site of the City's memorial to the École Polytechnique shootings and has remained a place to protest violence against women and hold vigils.

Centretown's cultural heritage value is also associated with national institutions and headquarters and foreign legations that reflect Ottawa's role as the nation's capital. Some of these include the Nigerian High Commission, the Hungarian Embassy, the Ukrainian Embassy, the Museum of Nature, the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) Headquarters and the Royal Society of Canada. Other smaller organizations and lobby groups have offices throughout Centretown, and even when they have no street presence, they contribute to the character of Centretown as a neighbourhood influenced by the proximity of Parliament Hill.

The Museum of Nature plays a special role in the Centretown area and the Centretown HCD in particular, as a beloved and much-visited landmark. The green spaces around it are a valuable urban amenity and feature outside displays associated with the Museum. Originally the site of the Stewart Estate, the Museum remains a focal point of the south end of the neighbourhood. Currently flanked by structures built as single detached dwellings, the low rise character of McLeod and O'Connor Streets provides an attractive setting for the Museum that enhances its status as a landmark in the neighbourhood.

### 3.4 Description of Heritage Attributes

**Heritage attributes** are the elements within a district that express its cultural heritage value and that should be conserved. They include buildings, streets and open spaces that contribute to the character of the district. **Heritage attributes** can range from physical features, such as building materials or architectural features, to overall spatial patterns, such as street layout and topography.

#### List of Attributes of the Districts

The attributes that reflect the cultural heritage value of the Centretown and Minto Park Heritage Conservation Districts as neighbourhoods for all, the growth of which was influenced by Parliament Hill and the functions of the federal government, include:

- Their proximity to Parliament Hill and the traditional downtown core;