

*Potential*

**PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF 5 HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS**



*photo: T. B. MUSEUM COLLECTION*

# **FIVE POTENTIAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS**

## **- A PRELIMINARY REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The City of Thunder Bay has undertaken a review and update of its Official Plan. Among the general land development policies is a section on heritage conservation. This section includes references to the review of areas to consider for designation as a heritage conservation district. Candidate areas have been identified through consultation with LACAC, the Thunder Bay Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee.

This report presents a preliminary review of five of these candidate areas. The purpose is to provide a basis for further detailed discussion and heritage consideration, and to provide a starting point for any of the Heritage Conservation District Studies which required for heritage area designation.

The locations of candidate areas, including nearby Heritage designated properties, is illustrated. The heritage character of the areas is discussed. The physical heritage features and other elements, which are key to area identity, are identified. A list of types of development controls and guidelines, that might be considered to protect area heritage character, is provided.

The appendix includes a brief description of four other areas which may also warrant further consideration as heritage areas. In these areas it may be appropriate to adopt some development guidelines rather than proceed to full status as designated heritage conservation districts.

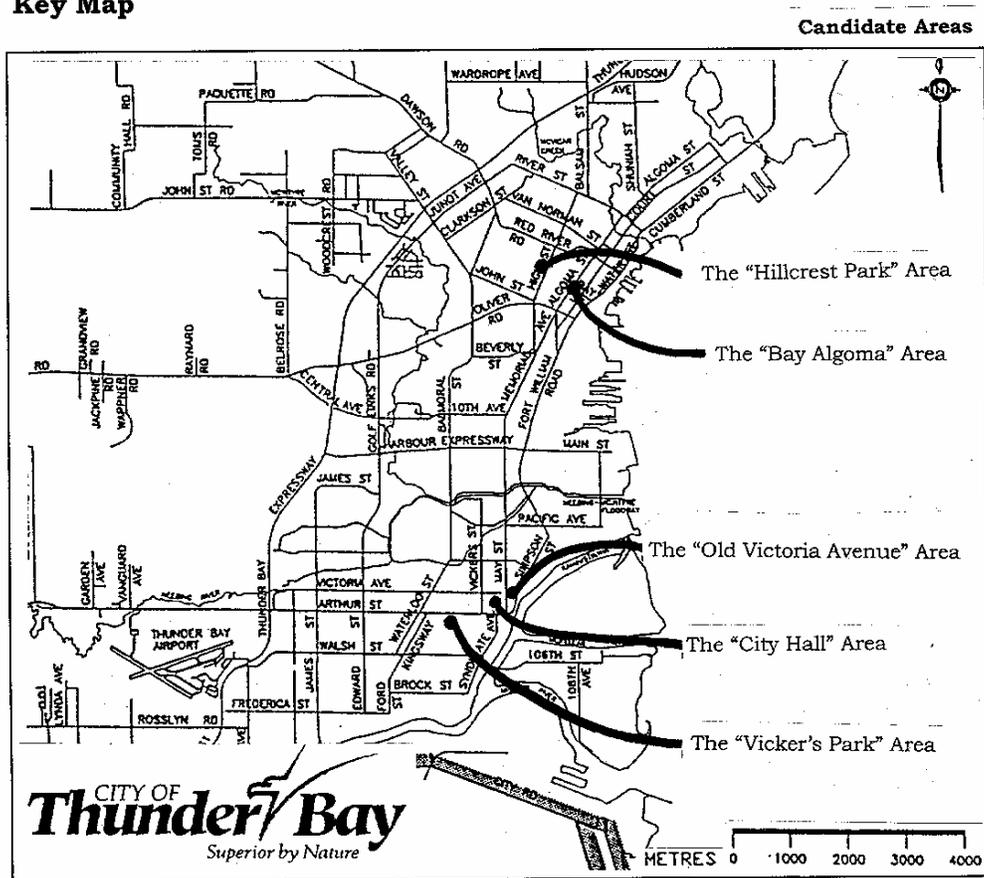
Stefan Huzan,  
Long Range Planning

## Preliminary Review of 5 Heritage Conservation Areas

### Candidate Areas

- 1) The “Old Victoria Avenue” Area
- 2) The “Bay Algoma” Area
- 3) The “Vicker’s Park” Area
- 4) The “Hillcrest Park” Area
- 5) The “City Hall” Area

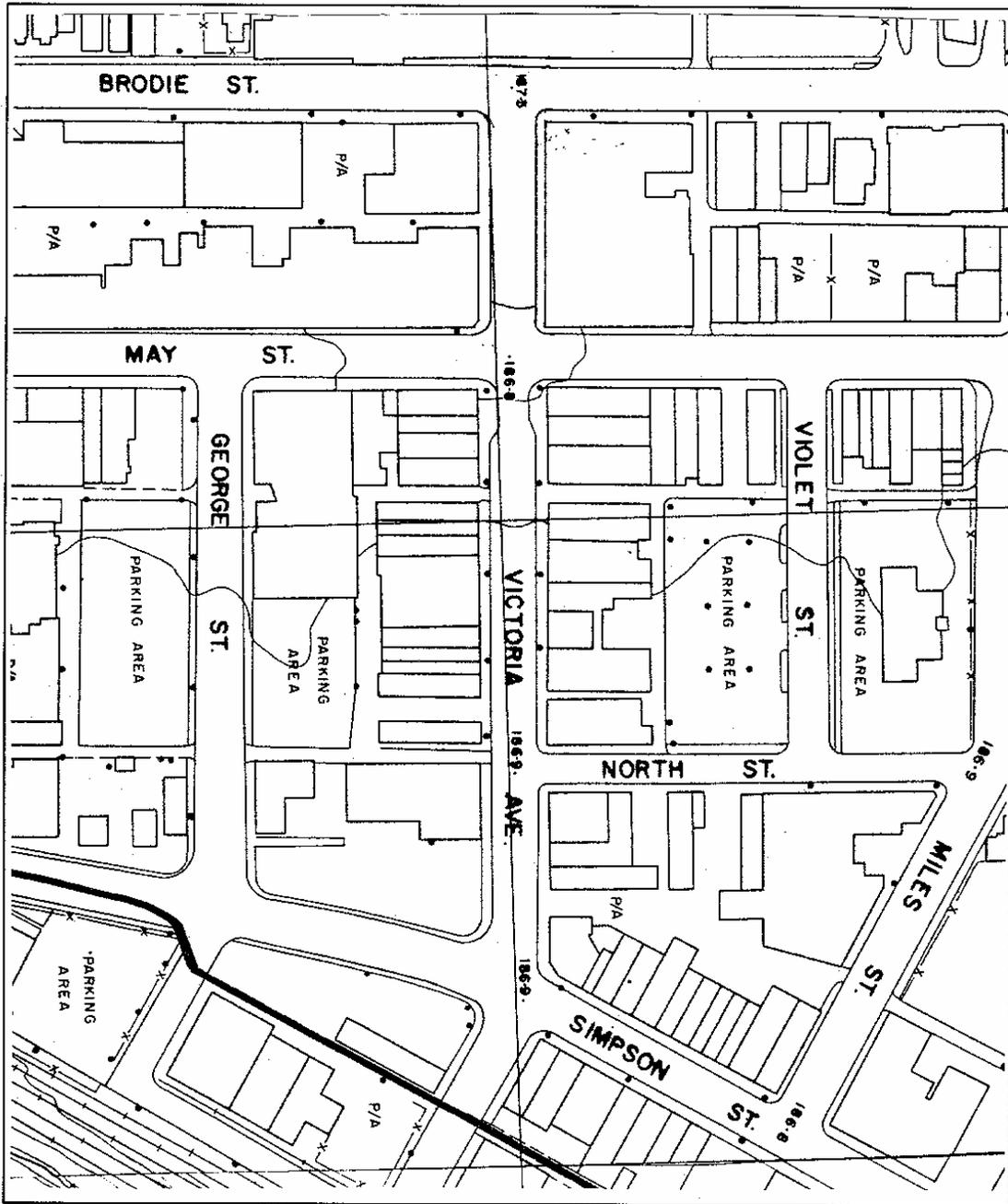
### Key Map



# PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF 5 HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS

## 1. The "Old Victoria Avenue" Area

This area is centered on Victoria Avenue from Simpson to May Streets, and could extend from Brodie (Victoriaville Mall) to Hardisty Street.



## **General Heritage Significance of this Area**

This block contains a significant concentration of commercial buildings from the turn of the century development boom. They are notable individually, and for the special character area which they create.

## **Heritage Resource Elements of this Area**

The structures are similar in their relation to the street, being:

- typically 3 and four story buildings,
- typically on 25 foot frontage, and
- abutting the front lot line and each other

The architecture of these buildings is noteworthy, being:

- building facades of materials range from stone, carved stone, glazed tile, brick to stucco.
- facades range from simple to ornate in design and detail
- the hardware and lighting materials and finishes are consistent of the period and complement the building construction.
- several buildings have been designated noted for historical reasons (Bank of Commerce, Bank of Montreal, St. Louis Hotel).

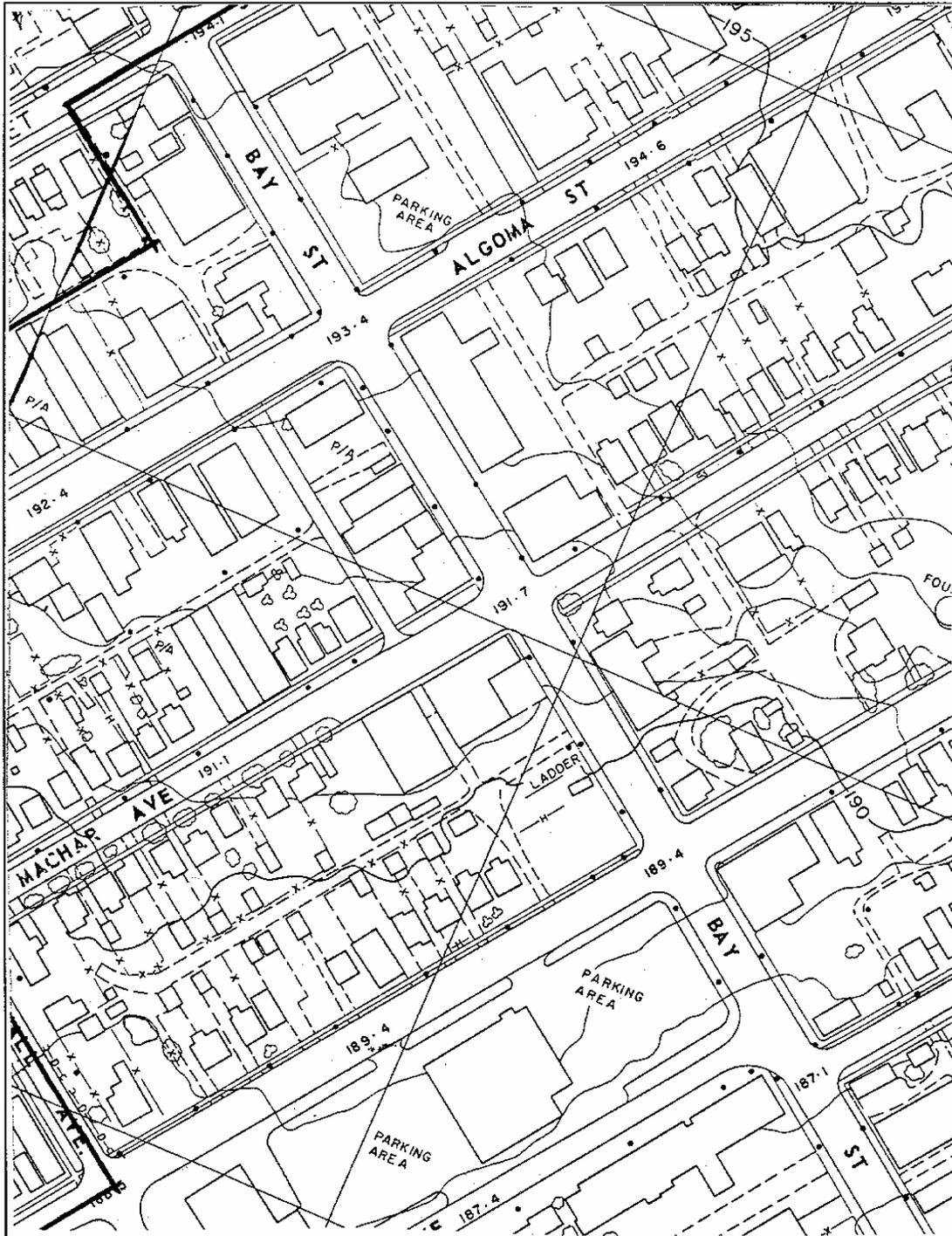
All of these building were constructed within a few years of each other. Together the buildings create a unified urban presence, a kind-of New York skyscraper canyon, except that it is far reduced in scale. This may be the only street in Thunder Bay which also has the associated sound and micro climate environments.

## **Development Controls Which May Ensure Commonality of Theme**

- Zoning regulations which require that the street face be maintained by specifying 0' front and side yards and a minimum 3 storey facade height, or other measures to ensure continuity of building height and street profile.
- Design guidelines which outline the typical massing, and forming that is desired in this area.
- Design guidelines which suggest the typical window style, facade materials, finishes and colours which would be consistent with the area.

## 2. The "Bay Algoma" Area

This area is centered on the Hoito Restaurant/Finlandia Club and includes Bay Street toward the Lake. It could extend on Algoma Street.



## **General Heritage Significance of Area**

The Labour Centre and surrounding Bay/Algoma Street area has historically been the social and economic focus for the Finish community in Thunder Bay. The buildings, shops, goods, signs and language contribute to the visual character and diversity of the city.

## **Noteworthy Heritage Resource Elements Located in this Area**

There are few structures of any architectural significance besides the designated Labour Centre. Most buildings are 1 or 2 stories in height..

In this locale, the outdoor public street spaces are well used. Low store heights allow light. Orientation provides positive microclimate and the road alignment offers a vista. Design details which support use include:

- 12' wide south west facing sidewalk on Bay Street
- 10' wide south east facing sidewalk on Algoma Street
- pedestrian scale trees on north west facing side of Algoma
- narrow 5' sidewalk with zero front yard Bay Street storefronts

The storefront architectural elements which facilitate pedestrian street life include:

- at grade access
- large windows
- use of awnings on south facing fronts
- inset entrances

Additional features contributing to commonality of theme include;

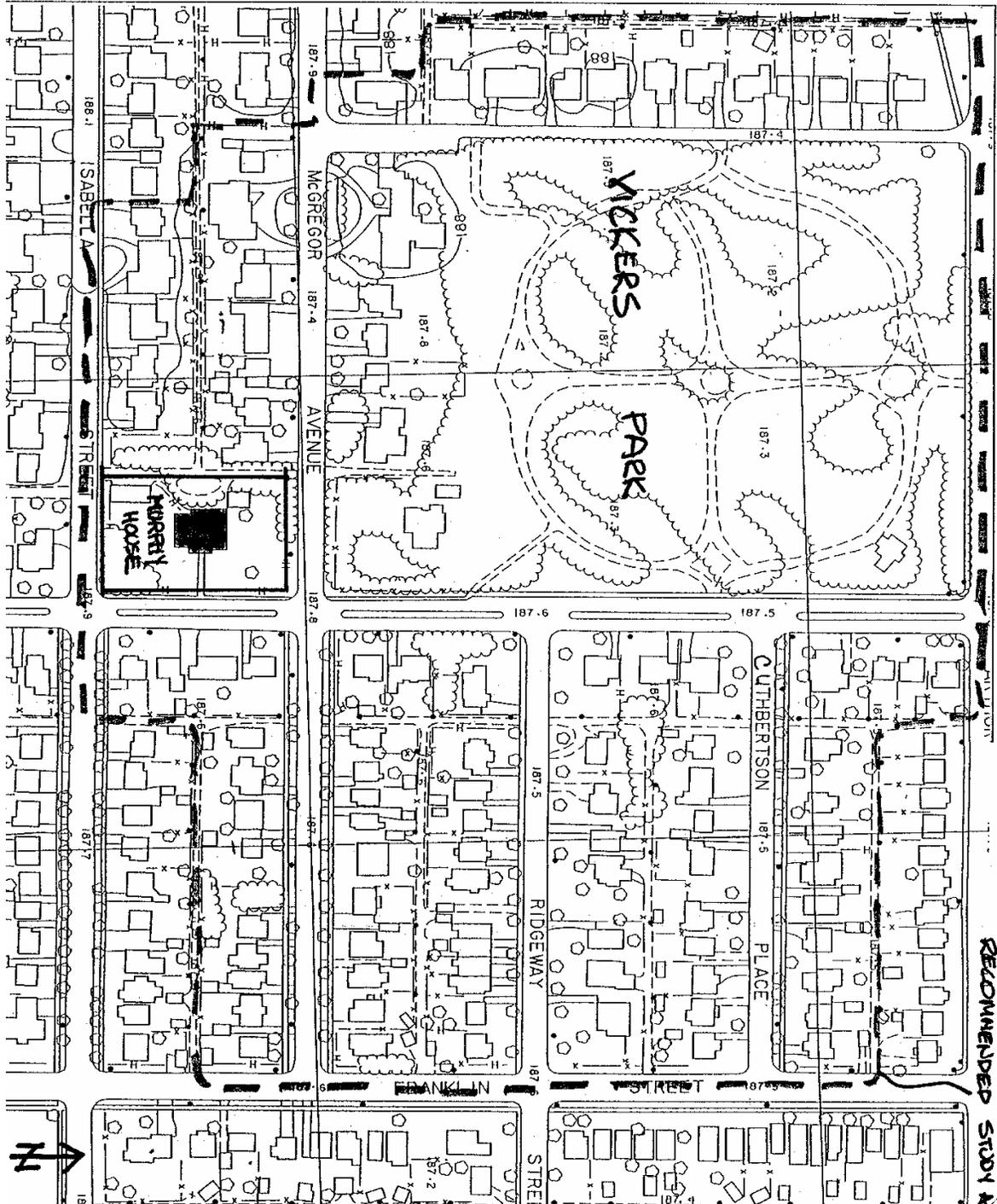
- presence of Finnish language signs
- characteristic use of primary colours and natural wood
- emphasis on health and outdoor products

## **Development Controls Which May Ensure Commonality of Theme**

- Zoning for 0' front and side yards and low building height, or other measures to ensure continuity of building height and street profile.
- Streetscape guidelines for wide treed sidewalk areas facing the sun.
- Storefront guidelines which ensure easy access, and suggest typical materials, finishes and colours which would be consistent with the area.
- Area specific sign by-law
- Area marketing plan which seeks compatible product outlets.

### 3. The "Vicker's Park" Area

This area is centered on Vicker's Park. It could include the homes on the five adjacent streets between Selkirk and Franklin Streets.



## **General Heritage Significance of Area**

The area is characterized by large single detached dwellings constructed mainly between 1915 and 1925. The buildings have been well maintained and represent the peak in quality and detail for construction at the time. The buildings, together with their typical arrangement and ample vegetation create a special character area.

## **Noteworthy Heritage Resource Elements Located in this Area**

The residential buildings are primarily two and one half or three storey wood frame structure with brick veneer. There are characterized by large double hung windows, the presence of wood porches in a variety of forms and significant decorative wood detailing.

The dwellings are typically set back 20 feet from the sidewalk and separated from each other by 10 feet. The typical use of red brick and dark wood colours creates a uniform backdrop or street setting. The mature trees and plentiful yard vegetation contribute to a pastoral type atmosphere in the area.

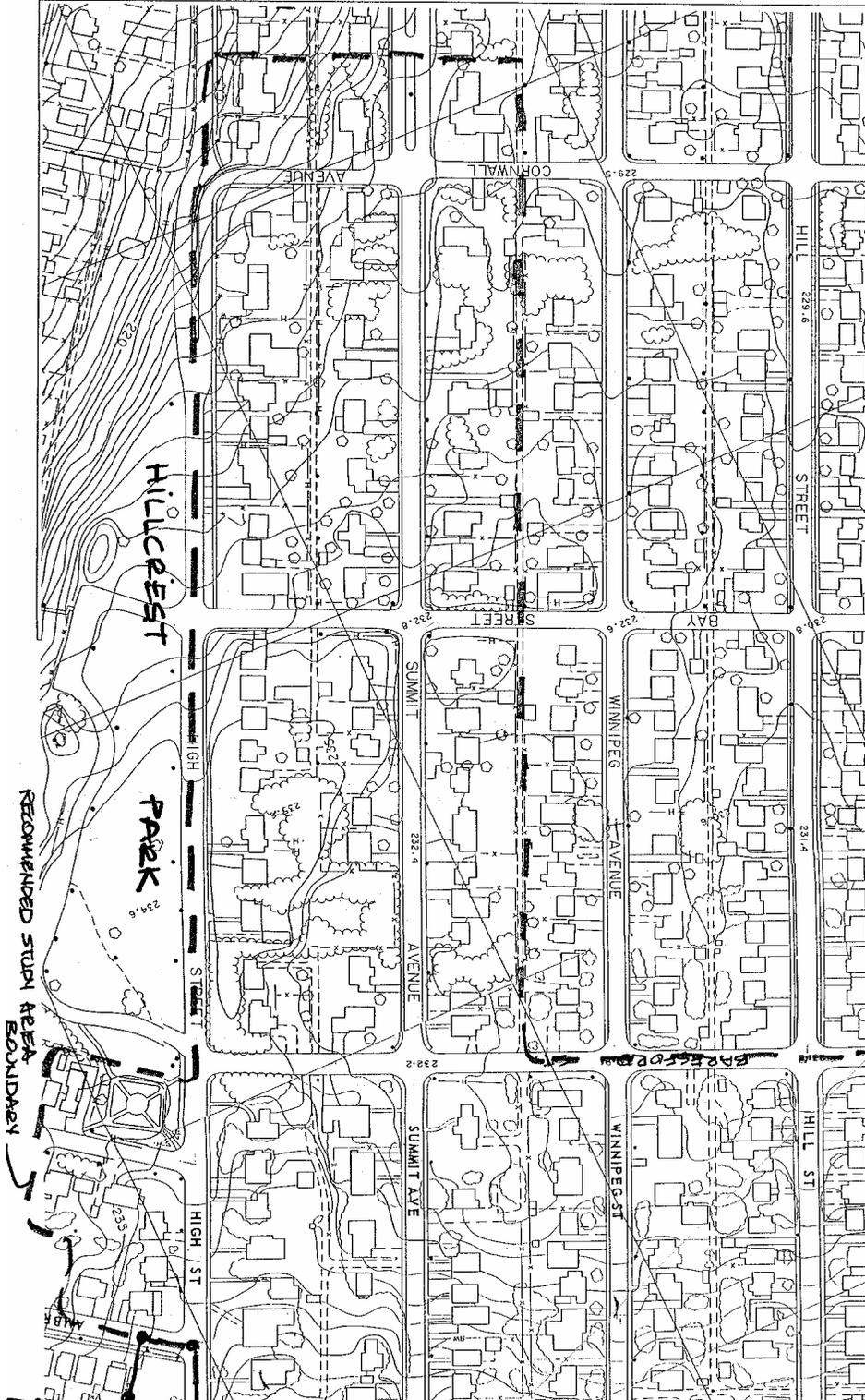
The boulevard on Selkirk Avenue, the unique facades of the homes fronting on Vicker's Park and the similar but larger stately homes on Selkirk, all contribute to the sense of private dwellings contributing their individual details to create a public front to a public open space.

## **Development Controls Which May Ensure Commonality of Theme**

- The residents of this area had already recognized their own special area character, when they collectively ensured that the area remained rezoned R-1 (single detached) rather than the proposed R-2 Zone.
- Given the well maintained state of the buildings, little new development is anticipated, therefore renovation activity and site development are the main concerns.
- Development guidelines could be prepared to identify typical site use patterns, appropriate development options and characteristically compatible lot landscaping .
- There would be value in a tree replacement plan, to ensure area character as mature trees deteriorate and require removal.
- Special consideration could be given to the maintenance, design and landscaping of the Selkirk Street boulevard.

#### 4. The "Hillcrest Park" Area

This area is centered on High Street, between Red River Road and Cornwall Avenue. It could extend back to Hill and John Streets.



## **General Heritage Significance of Area**

The area is characterized by large single detached dwellings constructed mainly between 1915 and 1925. The buildings have been well maintained and represent the peak in quality and detail for construction at the time. The buildings, together with their typical arrangement and ample vegetation create a special character area.

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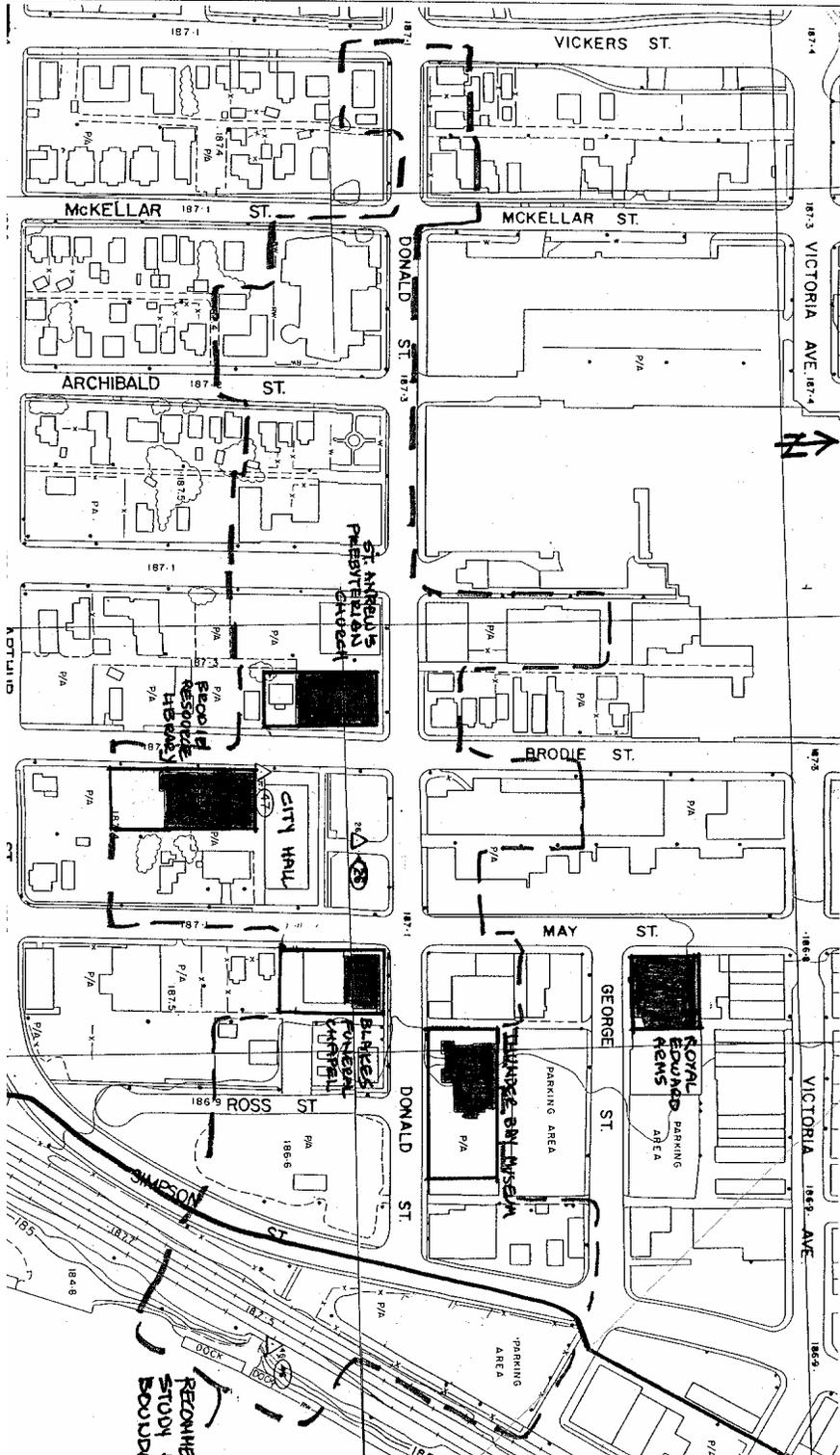
The large homes on High Street, fronting Hillcrest Park with a view of Lake Superior, strongly contribute to the special character of the area. The private dwellings are rich in their individual detail and help to create a public front to a public open space.

## **Development Controls Which May Ensure Commonality of Theme**

- Although the homes are well maintained, this location has maintained strong market appeal. As a result there are a number of multiple unit structures, and some significant renovation activity and site development activities have occurred.
- Development guidelines could be prepared to identify typical site use patterns, appropriate development options, in particular for new driveways, and guidelines for compatible lot landscaping.
- There would be value in a tree replacement plan, to ensure area character as mature trees deteriorate and require removal.
- Special consideration could be given to the maintenance, design and landscaping of Hillcrest Park.

## 5. The "City Hall" Area

This area is centered on City Hall. It could extend along Donald Street from Archibald Street to the Kaministiquia River.



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## **General Heritage Significance of Area**

The City Hall area has historically been the political, economic and cultural focus for the former City of Fort William. As a result the community has made significant investment into unique and highly decorative public buildings and public spaces.

## **Noteworthy Heritage Resource Elements Located in this Area**

There are several designated heritage structures in or adjacent to this area. In addition, there are several plaques which explain the particular historical significance of various sites in this immediate area.

St. Andrews Church, the Brodie Street Library and the Museum (former Donald Street Police Station) are designated heritage structures. They help set public use tone of the area and the design character of the public buildings.

City Hall square is the largest and most significant outdoor public space in this area. Although there is significant pedestrian traffic on area sidewalks, the alignment of roads and buildings means that Donald Street is the only street which offers a clear vista from the downtown to the Kaministiquia River.

Additional area features which contribute to commonality of heritage theme include;

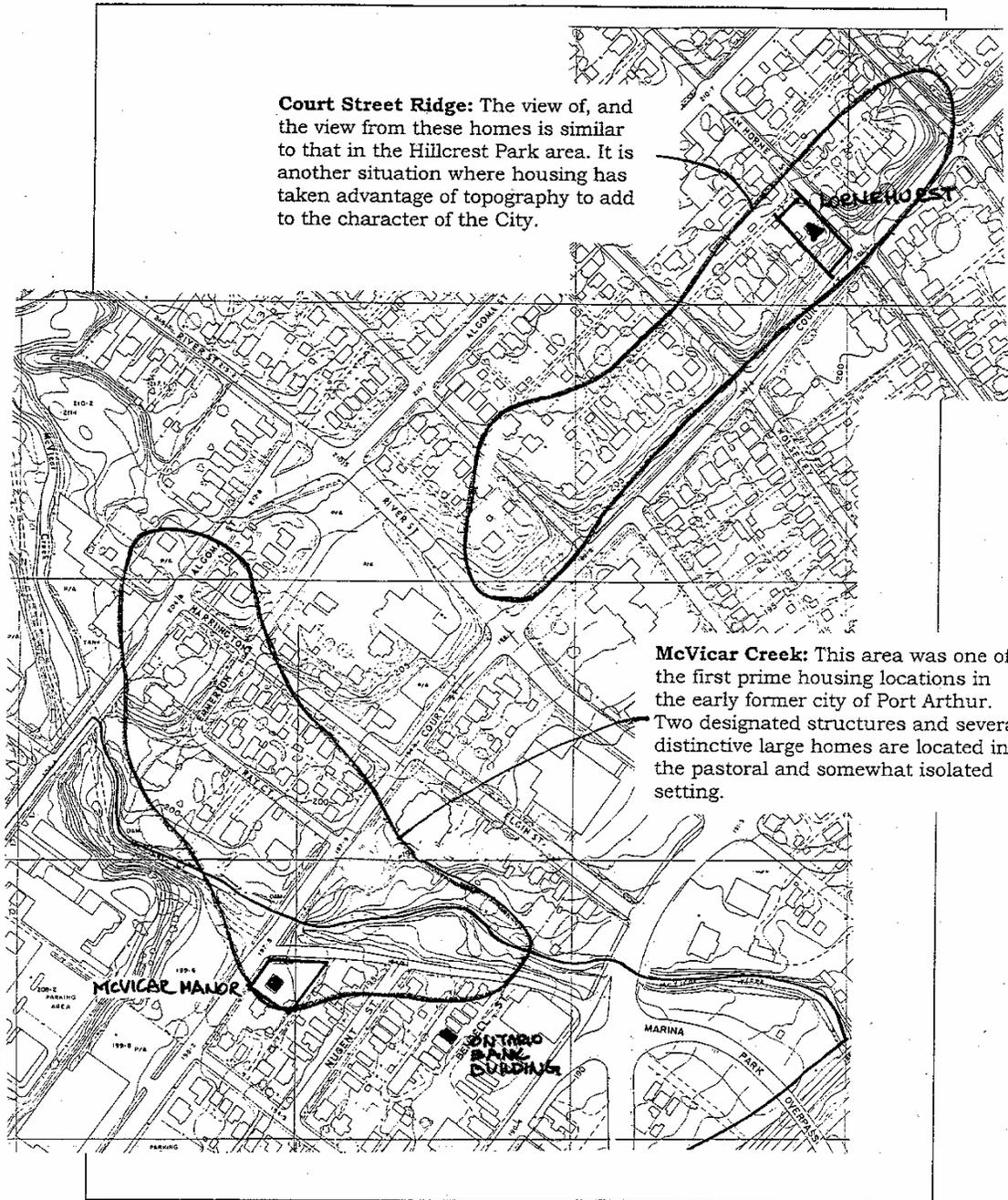
- design of building stone facades
- type of street furniture, lighting, seasonal banners and planting, particularly on the renewed portion of Donald Street.
- commemorative statues, markers, lighting and planting elements in City Hall square.

## **Development Controls Which May Ensure Commonality of Theme**

- Commercial and institutional changes continue, however, guidelines could encourage easy public access, and suggest typical materials, finishes and colours which would be consistent with the area.
- Design guidelines could focus on the public aspects of sidewalks, street furniture and lighting, as was done on lower Donald Street..
- Parking area, park facility and signage guidelines are needed.
- A Donald Street development plan could encourage a ceremonial area character, as envisioned earlier in the CAUSE study .

# APPENDIX - OTHER AREAS IN THE CITY OF HERITAGE INTEREST

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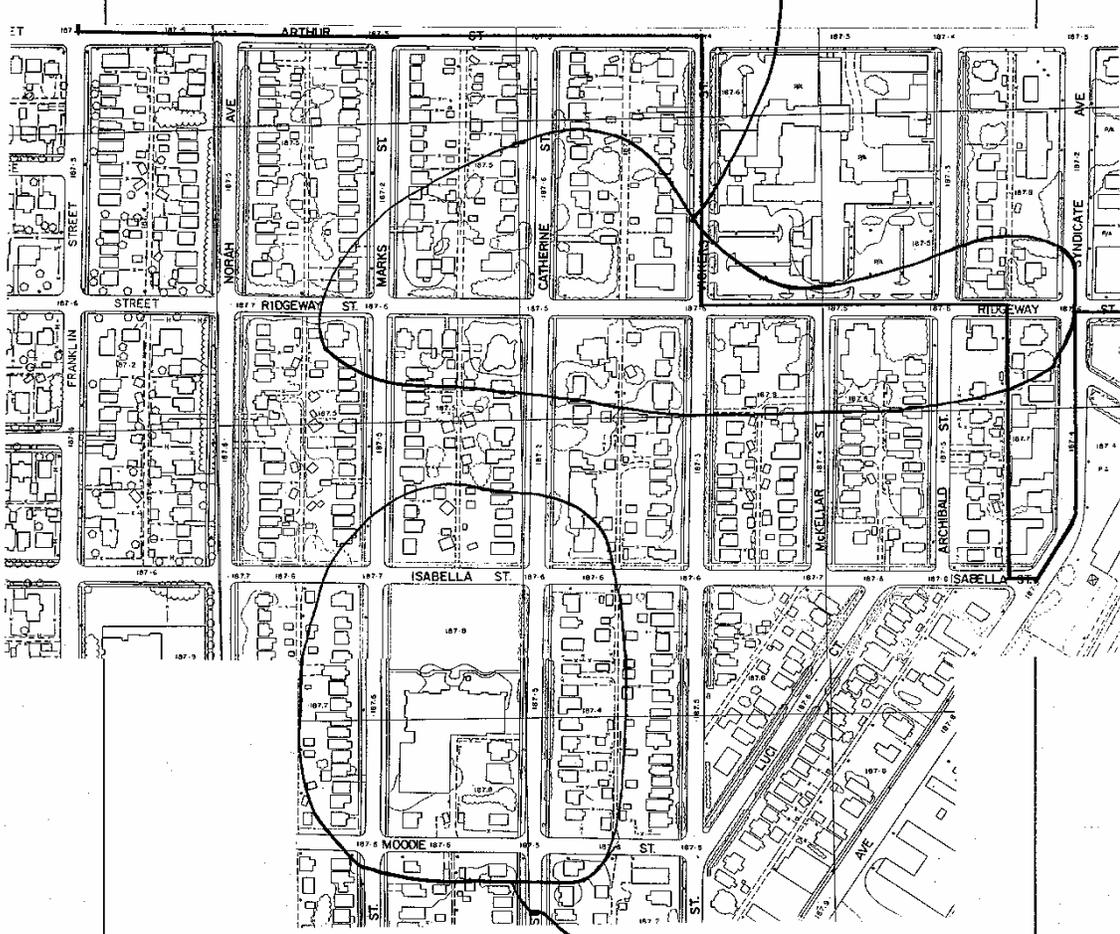


**Court Street Ridge:** The view of, and the view from these homes is similar to that in the Hillcrest Park area. It is another situation where housing has taken advantage of topography to add to the character of the City.

**McVicar Creek:** This area was one of the first prime housing locations in the early former city of Port Arthur. Two designated structures and several distinctive large homes are located in the pastoral and somewhat isolated setting.

**APPENDIX - OTHER AREAS IN THE CITY OF HERITAGE INTEREST**

**Ridgeway Street:** Noted for large homes, particularly on corner lots, near McKellar Hospital and on Catherine Street.



**Fort William Collegiate:** This school is a designated heritage structure and several notable homes are located nearby, including the original McKellar house, which is the oldest home in the City (1870).