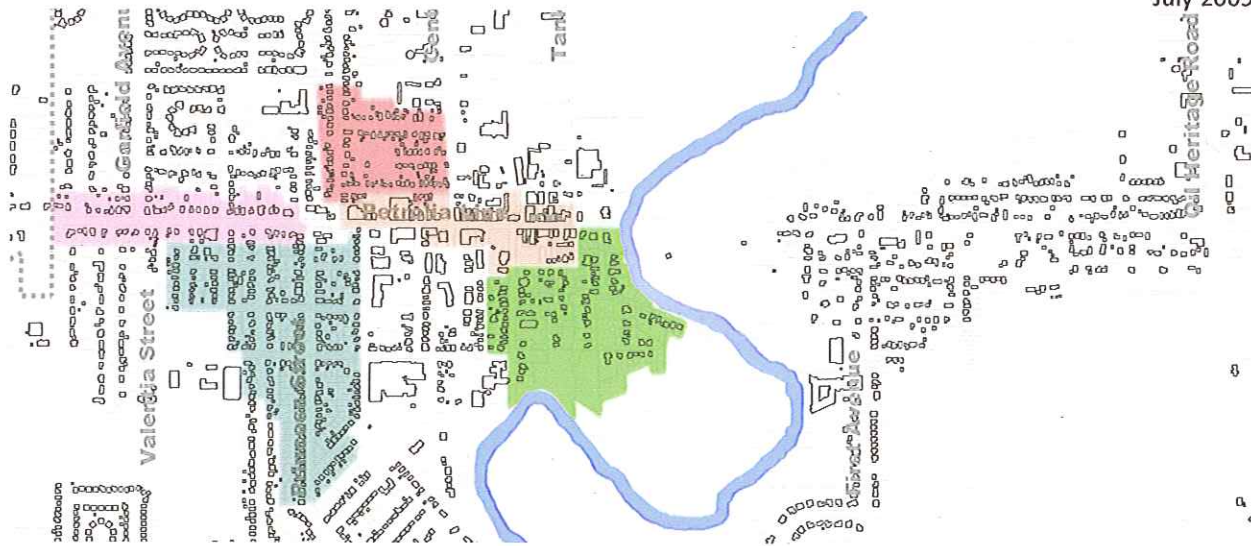


**DRAFT**

# Heritage Conservation District Feasibility Study for the Town of Petrolia, Lambton County

July 2009



Wendy Shearer Landscape Architect  
MHBC Planning Limited  
Golder Associates Ltd.  
George Robb Architect

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**1. Acknowledgements**  
To Be Included

**2. Background to Study**

This feasibility study to establish potential heritage conservation districts in Petrolia forms part of a larger study, entitled the Oil Heritage Conservation District Study, undertaken by the County of Lambton. In the fall of 2008, Lambton County retained Wendy Shearer Landscape Architect, a division of MHBC Planning Limited, to investigate heritage resources related to the oil industry in Lambton County.

The consultant team assembled by WSLA includes:

- Wendy Shearer, Wendy Shearer Landscape Architect, landscape architect
- Christopher Andreae, Golder Associates, industrial archaeologist
- Harry Shnider, MHBC Planning Limited, land use planner
- Peter Stewart, George Robb Architect, architect

The consultant team has, to date, met with the steering committee established by Lambton County on December 15/08, January 29/09, May 11/09, June 15/09. A Public Meeting was held in Oil Springs on May 11/09 to introduce the project to the community.

**3. Regulatory Framework & Land Use Policies**

**3.1. Ontario Heritage Act**

*Subsection 41.(1) of Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act enables the council of a municipality to designate the entire municipality or any defined area or areas of the municipality as a Heritage Conservation District.*

*District designation enables the council of a municipality to manage and guide future change in the district, through adoption of a district plan with policies and guidelines for conservation, protection and enhancement of the area's special character. (3)*

The Act goes on to explain the process in establishing a HCD Plan. This process is described in the Ministry's *Heritage Conservation Districts, A Guide to District Designation Under the Ontario Heritage Act*. (3) A copy of the flow chart illustrating the process is appended to this report.

**3.2. Provincial Policy Statement (2005)**

**2.6 Cultural Heritage and Archaeology**

**2.6.1 Significant built heritage resources and significant cultural heritage landscapes shall be conserved.**

**2.6.2 Development and site alteration shall only be permitted on lands containing archaeological resources or areas of archaeological potential if the significant archaeological resources have been conserved by removal and documentation, or by preservation on site. Where significant archaeological resources must be preserved on site, only development and site alteration which maintain the heritage integrity of the site may be permitted.**



2.6.3 *Development and site alteration* may be permitted on *adjacent lands to protected heritage property* where the proposed *development* and *site alteration* has been evaluated and it has been demonstrated that the *heritage attributes* of the *protected heritage property* will be *conserved*.

Mitigative measures and/or alternative development approaches may be required in order to conserve the *heritage attributes* of the *protected heritage property* affected by the adjacent *development* or *site alteration*.

Cultural heritage landscapes are defined as “*a defined geographical area of heritage significance which has been modified by human activities and is valued by a community. It involves a grouping(s) of individual heritage features such as structures, spaces, archaeological sites and natural elements, which together form a significant type of heritage form, distinctive from that of its constituent elements or parts. Examples may include, but are not limited to, heritage conservation districts designated under the Ontario Heritage Act; and villages, parks, gardens, battlefields, mainstreets and neighbourhoods, cemeteries, trailways and industrial complexes of cultural heritage value.*”

### 3.2 County of Lambton Official Plan

The Official Plan (OP) of the County of Lambton contains policies to protect heritage resources. The goal stated in **Article 2.2 Cultural Heritage and Archaeological Resources** states:

*“Goal: To emphasize the importance of cultural heritage and archaeological resources and to provide for their appropriate conservation.”*

The policies contained in Article 2.2 of the OP encourage municipalities to:

- Conserve significant cultural heritage features,
- Prepare comprehensive inventories of significant heritage resources,
- Design urban spaces to be in character with existing streetscapes identified as heritage resources,
- Establish and fund Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committees,
- Ensure that cultural heritage resources are evaluated and conserved in public works projects.

The goal found in **Article 6.2 Oil Heritage** states:

*“Goal: To promote Lambton County’s prominent role in the discovery of oil in Canada and the development of a petro-chemical industry.*

Policies in this Article support promotion, tourism, the Oil Discovery Museum and encourage the development of a Petrochemical Interpretive Centre.

### 3.3 Town of Petrolia Strategic Plan

The 2008 Strategic Plan of the Town of Petrolia (sub-titled “*Celebrating our Heritage. Investing in Our Future*”) states that “*Petrolia’s commitment to the preservation of its unique history while looking to the future has laid a foundation on which the town can build and foster a vigorous and sustainable community.*”

### 3.4 Other Municipal Initiatives

The Corporation of the Town of Petrolia has two other initiatives that recognize the importance of the preservation of their heritage properties. First is the *Petrolia Façade Grant Program* which offers a matching funds grant program for eligible projects to preserve and enhance the commercial

properties on Petrolia Line. The boundaries of this district extend from Eureka Street to Tank Street on the north side and from King Street to Oil Street on the south side of Petrolia Line.

Secondly, the Town has enacted, in 2004, a *“By-law to Provide for Tax Refunds in Respect of Eligible Heritage Property”*.

**4. Milestones in the Development of the Town of Petrolia**

The story of the discovery of oil in Lambton County is significant in Canadian history, but not widely known. It is, however, well documented by those intent on preserving this history. Two relatively recent works on the subject are *Hard Oiler*, Gary May, 1998 and *Canada’s Victorian Oil Town*, Christina Burr, 2006.

The brief outline below is intended to put into context the rapid growth of the oil industry in Petrolia for those unfamiliar with this history.

1858	First commercial oil well at Oil Springs (Black Creek)
1861	John Henry Fairbank arrives in Oil Springs
1862	Shaw brings in ‘gusher’ in Oil Springs
1865	King oil discovery in Petrolia
1865	J.H. Fairbank moves to Petrolia and opens grocery/liquor business with Van Tuyl
1867	Petrolia’s <i>Great Fire</i>
1869	Little Red Bank moved from Oil Springs to Petrolia by Fairbank & Vaughn
1871	Lambton Crude Oil Partnership formed
1872	Bradley develops nitro to fracture (torpedo) oil wells
1873	Home Oil Company establishes refinery in Petrolia
1873	Depression slows economy
1873	Experienced oil men hire out to other oil fields around the world; a phenomenon that continued into the twentieth century
1880	Depression eases
1880	Englehart forms Imperial Oil
1882	Fairbank & Englehart establish Crown Savings & Loan
1889	Victoria Hall opens
1898	Standard Oil acquires control of Imperial Oil
1901	Canada Oil Refining Company formed
1951	Canada Oil Refining moves its operations to Sarnia

From the time of the discovery of King’s well in 1862 to 1895, Petrolia had grown from humble beginnings to dominance in the Canadian oil industry.

*“By the spring of 1865, the settlement at Petrolia consisted of six log cabins. The collapse of the oil industry at Oil Springs in 1863, together with an increase in the price of oil on the market, caused the speculators to turn their attention once again to the Bear Creek wells.” (1)*

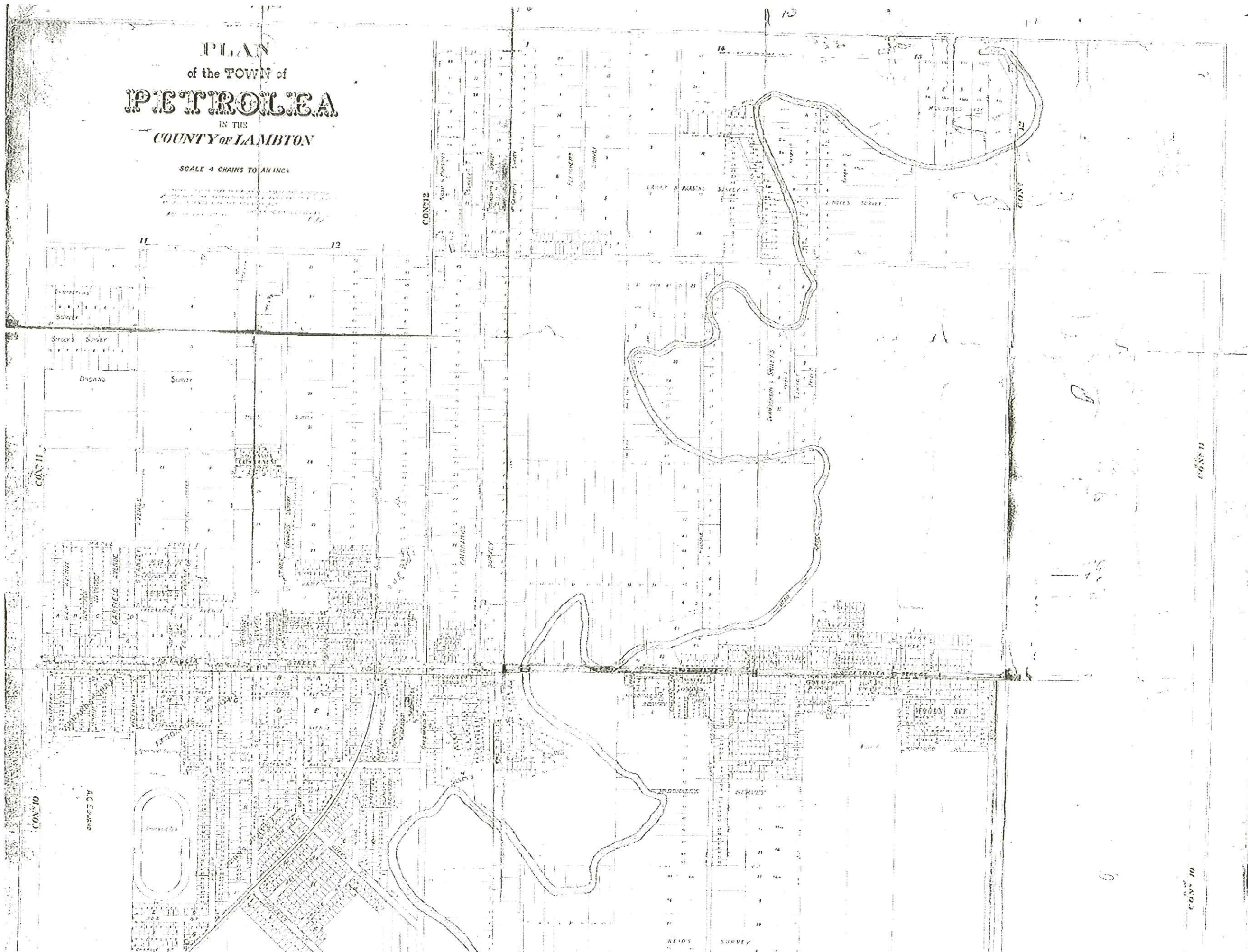
By 1891, *“a comparison of the manufacturing output of twenty Canadian towns and cities, on a per capita basis, placed Petrolia at the top.” (2)*



PLAN  
of the TOWN of  
**PIETROILEA**  
IN THE  
COUNTY of LAMBTON

SCALE 4 CHAINS TO AN INCH

THIS PLAN WAS MADE BY THE SURVEYOR GENERAL OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO IN THE YEAR 1877  
AND IS HEREBY CONFIRMED BY THE ACT OF PARLIAMENT IN THAT BEHALF PASSED IN THE YEAR 1878  
BY THE SURVEYOR GENERAL OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO  
G. B. S.



CON 11

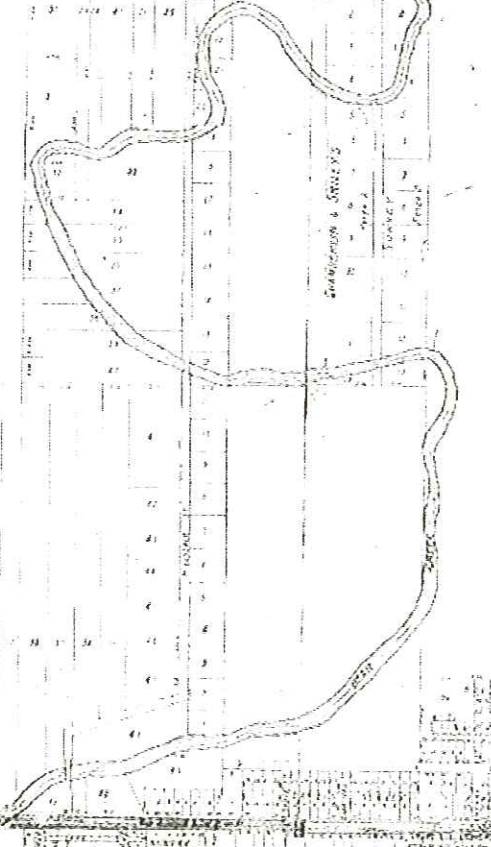
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A.C. Egan



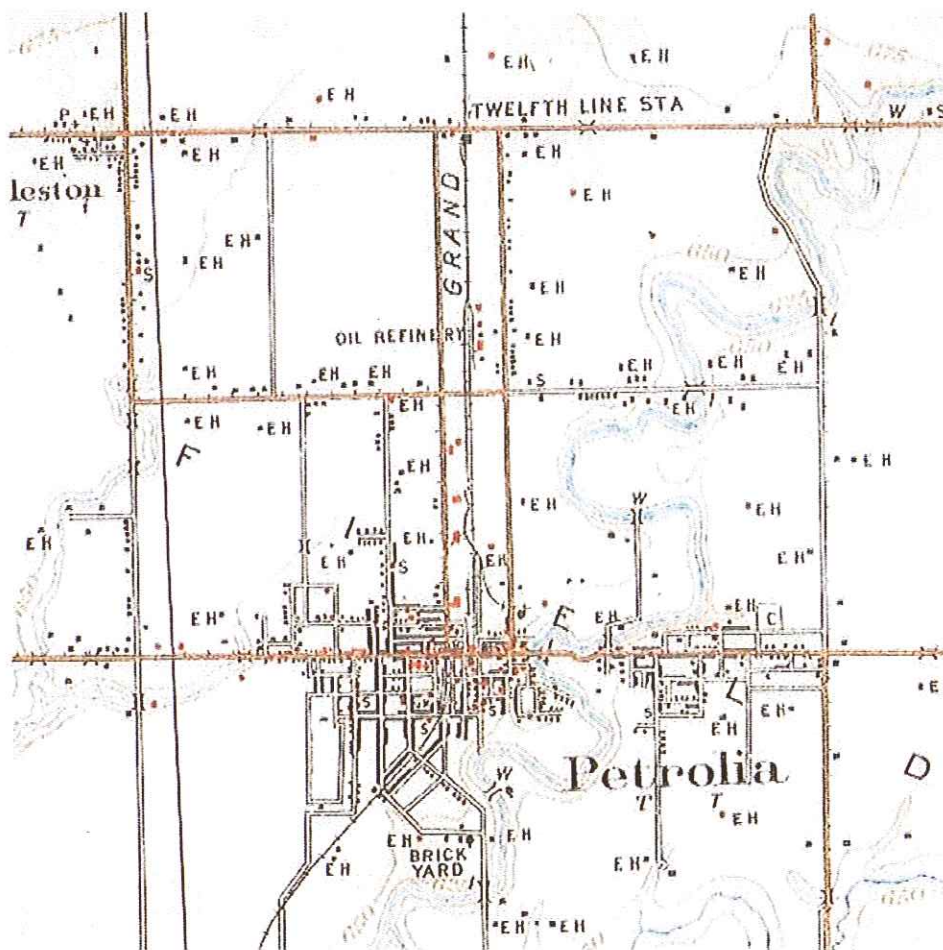


Rapid industrial growth, and the resultant prosperity, created a town with institutional and commercial buildings of a very high quality. Similarly, residential neighbourhoods developed along Petrolia Line west and in Crescent Park that demonstrate exemplary design from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Christina Burr, in her book *Canada's Victorian Oil Town*, states "discussions about conditions in the oil industry included all Petrolians, not just oil producers and refiners." She goes on to explain the interdependence and respect that the working class, middle class and upper middle class elite demonstrated toward each other. While the upper middle class elite may have lived in Crescent Park or Petrolia Line West, other distinct neighbourhoods developed for the working and middle classes.

## 5. Methodology

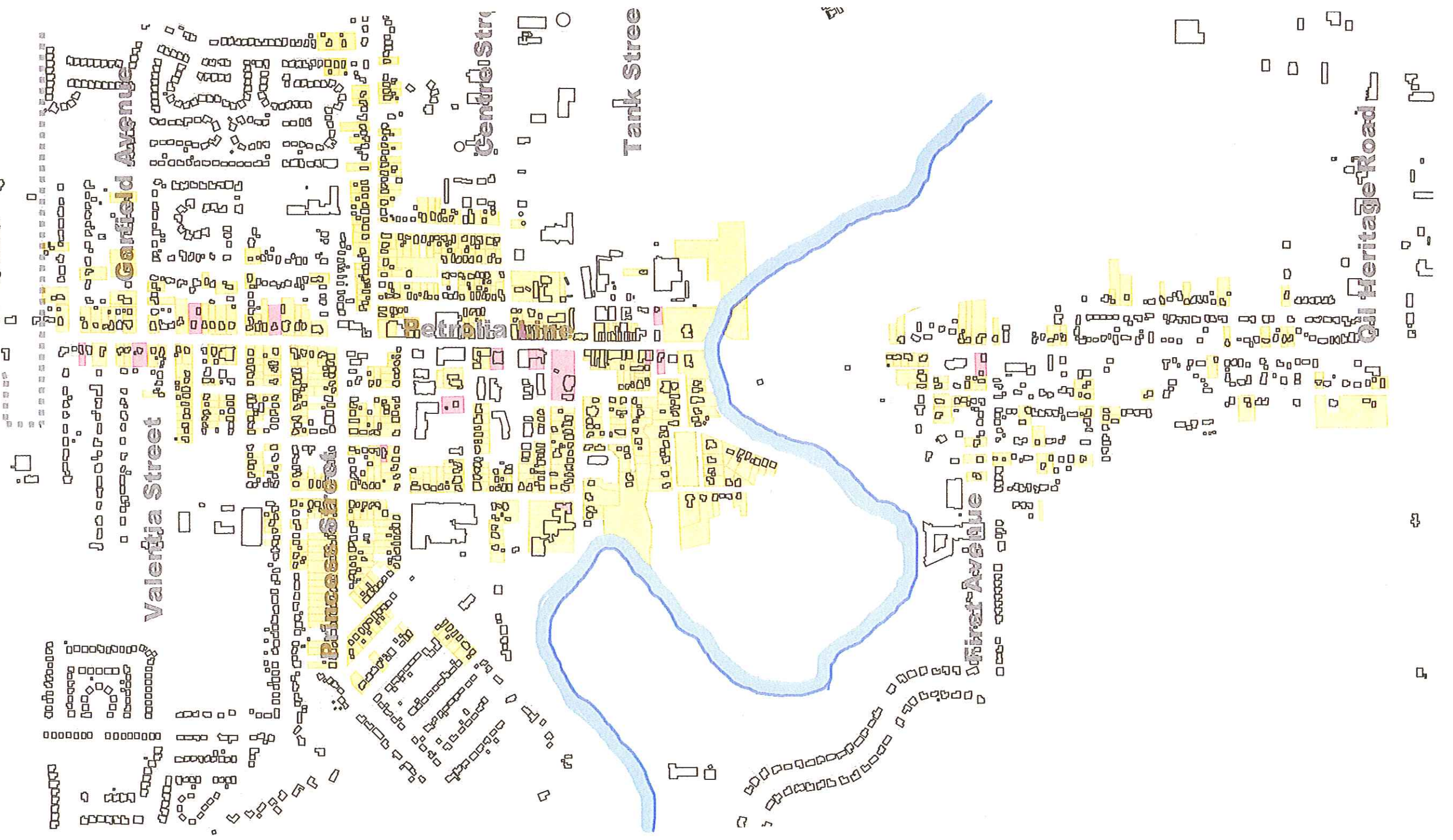
During the late winter and early spring of this year a visual survey was conducted of the streets of Petrolia to record the concentrations of remaining pre-1946 buildings. These findings were recorded and compared to the 1895 *Plan of the Town of Petrolia* in the County of Lambton (see accompanying maps). These concentration were also compared to the 1912 Topographical map and various early insurance maps.



1912 Topographical Map



HIP OF ENNISKILLEN  
N OF PETROLIA



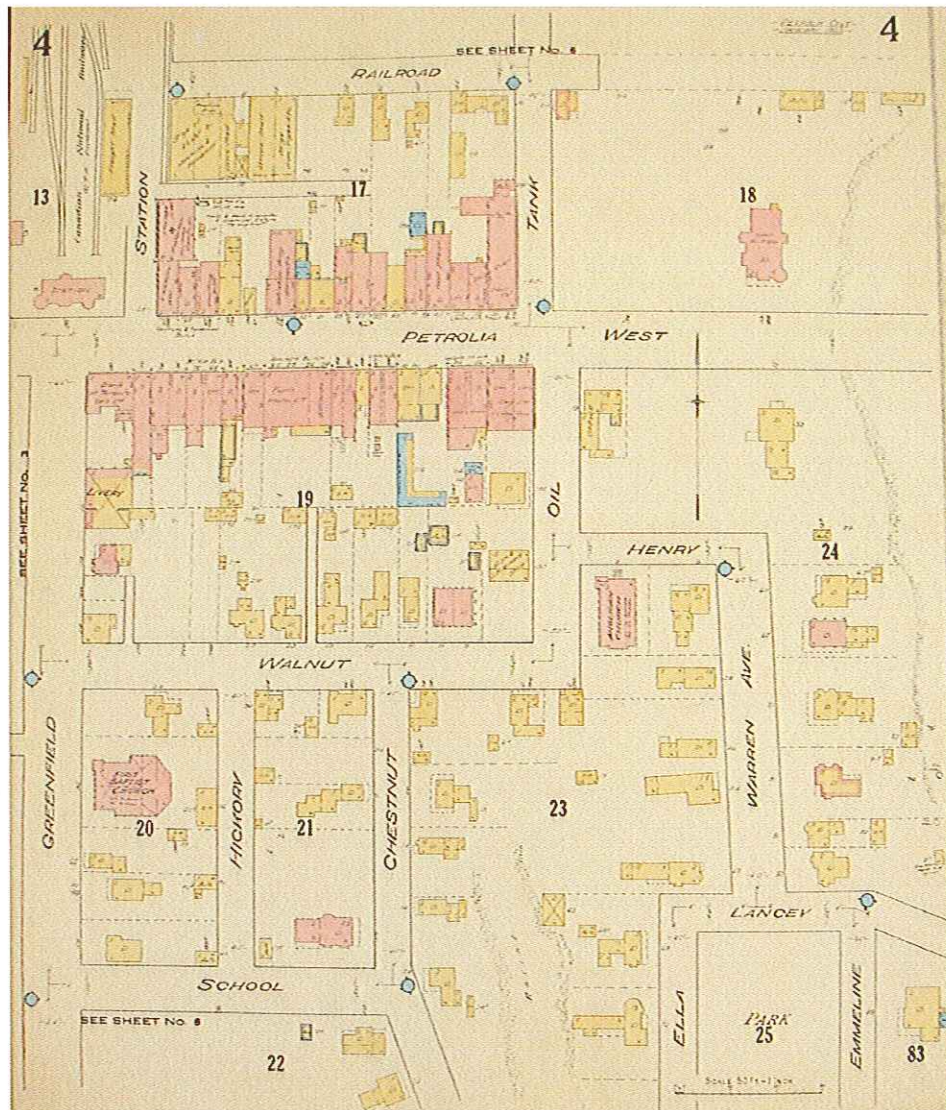
- CONCENTRATIONS OF PRE-1946 BUILDINGS IN DOWNTOWN PETROLIA
- HERITAGE PROPERTIES DESIGNATED UNDER PART IV OF THE ONTARIO HERITAGE ACT

Project Name: Oil Heritage Conservation District Study, County Of Lambton  
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 Date: 11 MAY, 2009





This topographical map shows, at small scale, the streets where development had occurred as of 1912 by means of black square. While interesting, a far more definitive picture can be obtained from Insurance Plans like the one below showing the commercial core and part of Crescent Park.

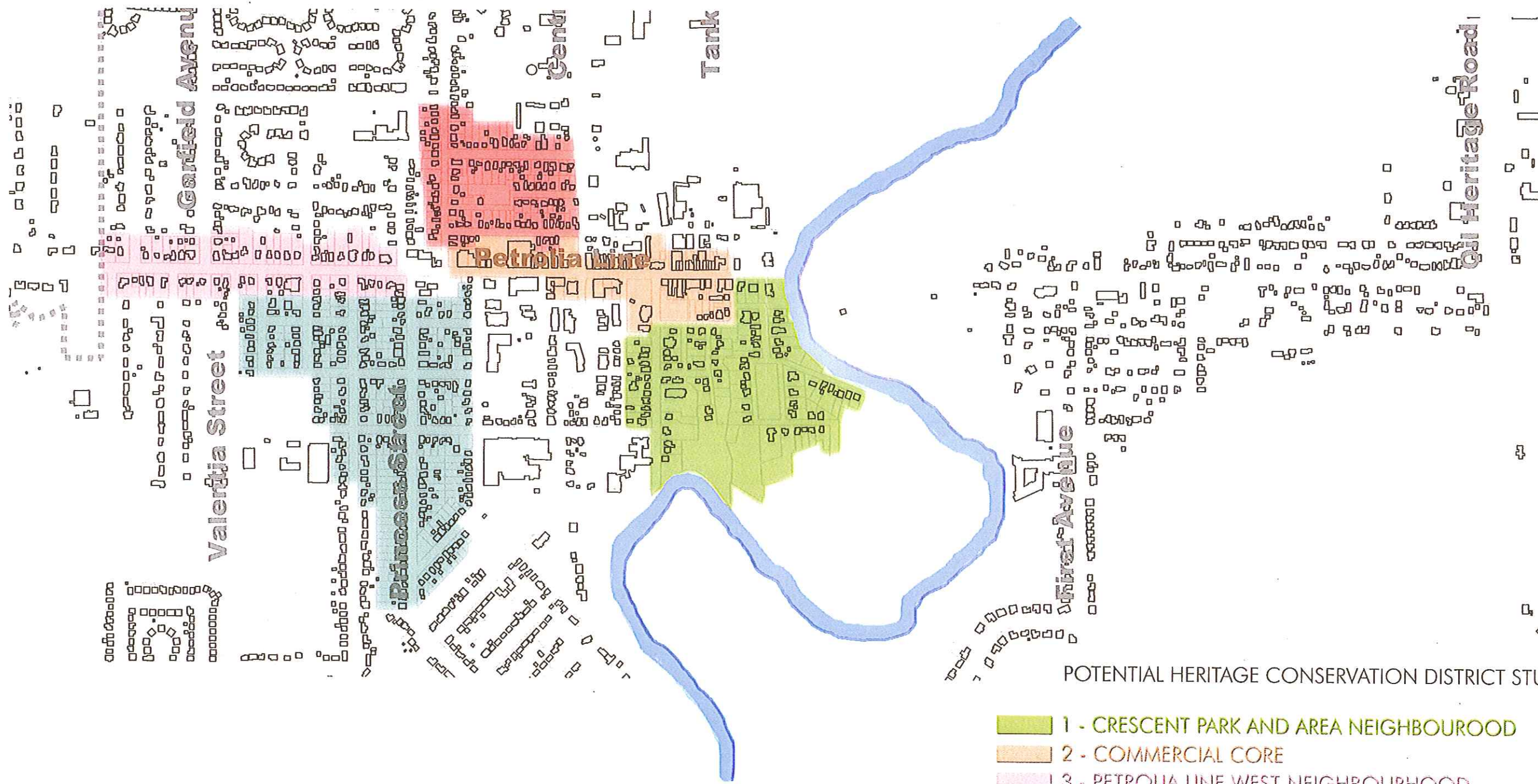


1925 Fire Insurance Plan showing the commercial core and part of Crescent Park

#### 6. Concentrations of Pre-1946 buildings in Petrolia

Five areas were determined to have significant concentrations of early building and therefore be considered to have potential as Heritage Conservation Districts. These five areas are indicated on the plan entitled "Potential Heritage conservation District Study Areas". While each has a different character, all demonstrate "grouping(s) of individual heritage features such as structures, spaces, archaeological sites and natural elements, which together form a significant type of heritage form, distinctive from that of its constituent elements or parts" and therefore are candidates for heritage conservation district designation.





POTENTIAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION DISTRICT STUDY AREAS

- 1 - CRESCENT PARK AND AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD
- 2 - COMMERCIAL CORE
- 3 - PETROLIA LINE WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD
- 4 - SOUTH WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD
- 5 - NORTH WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD

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The eastern portion of the Town, east of Bear Creek, was developed relatively early on, but replacement and infill has reduced the pre-1946 building stock and this neighbourhood is not included.

There are other notable individual architectural examples that fall outside of the proposed study areas, particularly on Garfield Avenue, and these are likely candidates to be protected under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act as individual properties.

### 6.1. Vernacular Buildings



This simple cottage is common throughout residential neighbourhoods, often altered

### 6.2. Landmarks



Victoria Hall, 1889



United Church

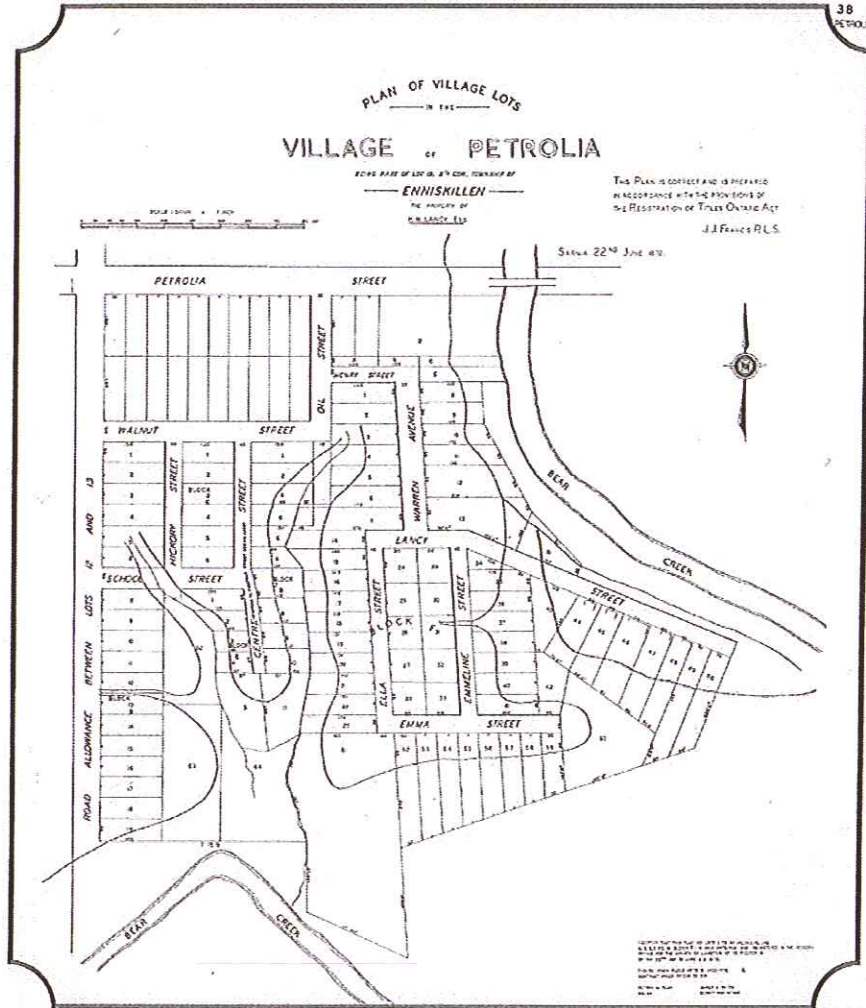


GTR Railway Station, 1903



Post Office

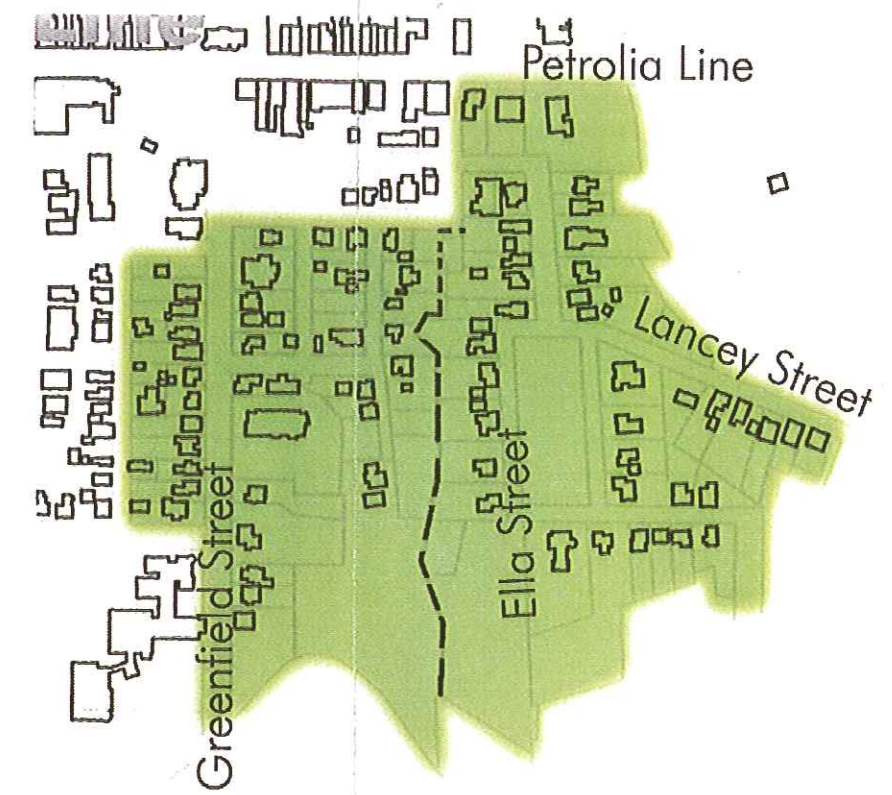
7. Prospective Heritage Conservation Districts Study Areas in Petrolia  
7.1. Crescent Park



Based on the 1872 registered plan of H.W. Lancy of the Crescent Petroleum Company, Crescent Park has become a landmark. The middle class elite neighbourhood was home to the upper echelon of Petrolia's of Petrolia's a late nineteenth century oil boom. Houses are exemplary of their individual styles. The adjacent properties on Greenfield Street enjoy most of the benefits of the Crescent Park plan except for the Exclusivity of "Quality Hill".



Based on the 1872 registered plan of H.W. Lancy of the Crescent Petroleum Company, Crescent Park has become a landmark. The middle class elite neighbourhood was home to the elite of the late nineteenth century oil boom. Houses are exemplary of their individual designs. The adjacent properties on Greenfield Street enjoy most of the benefits of the Crescent Park plan, except the exclusivity of "Quality Hill".



## 1- CRESCENT PARK AND AREA NEIGHBOURHOOD

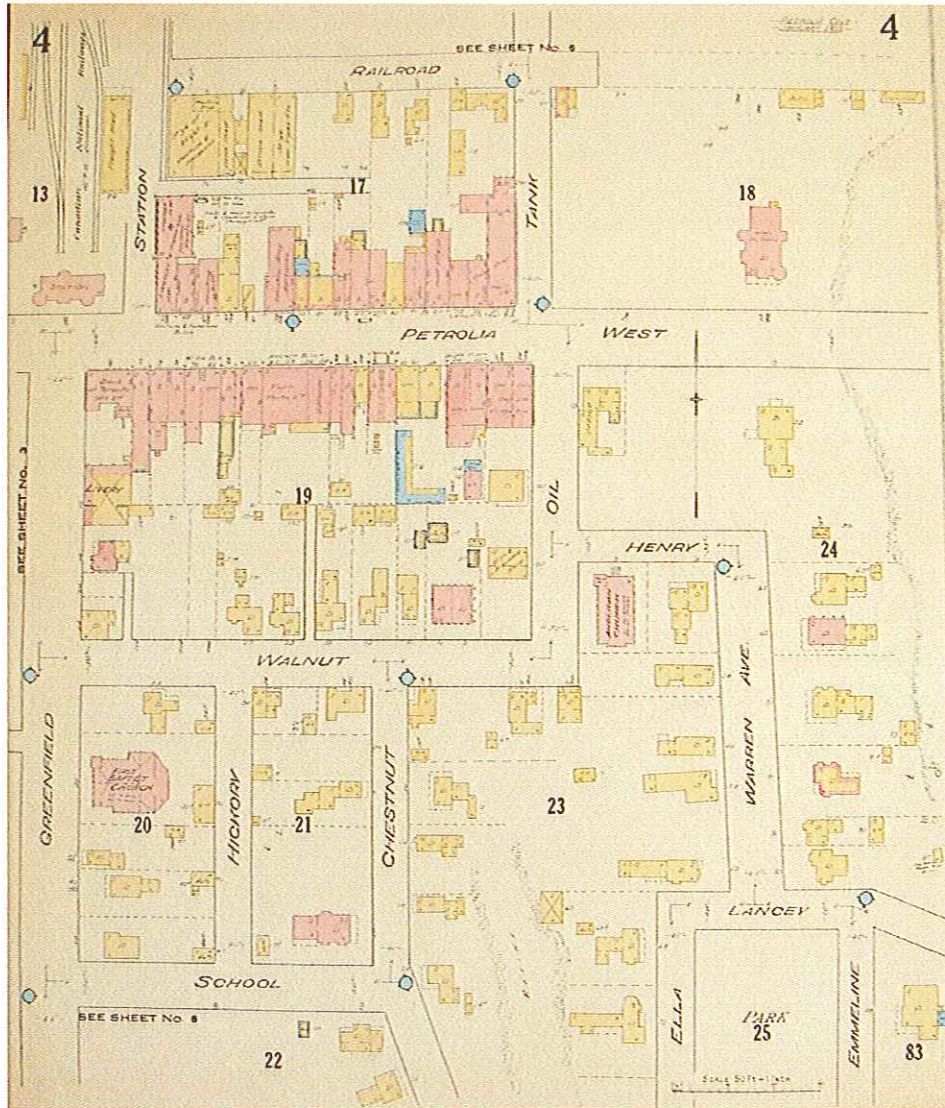


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7.2 Commercial Core

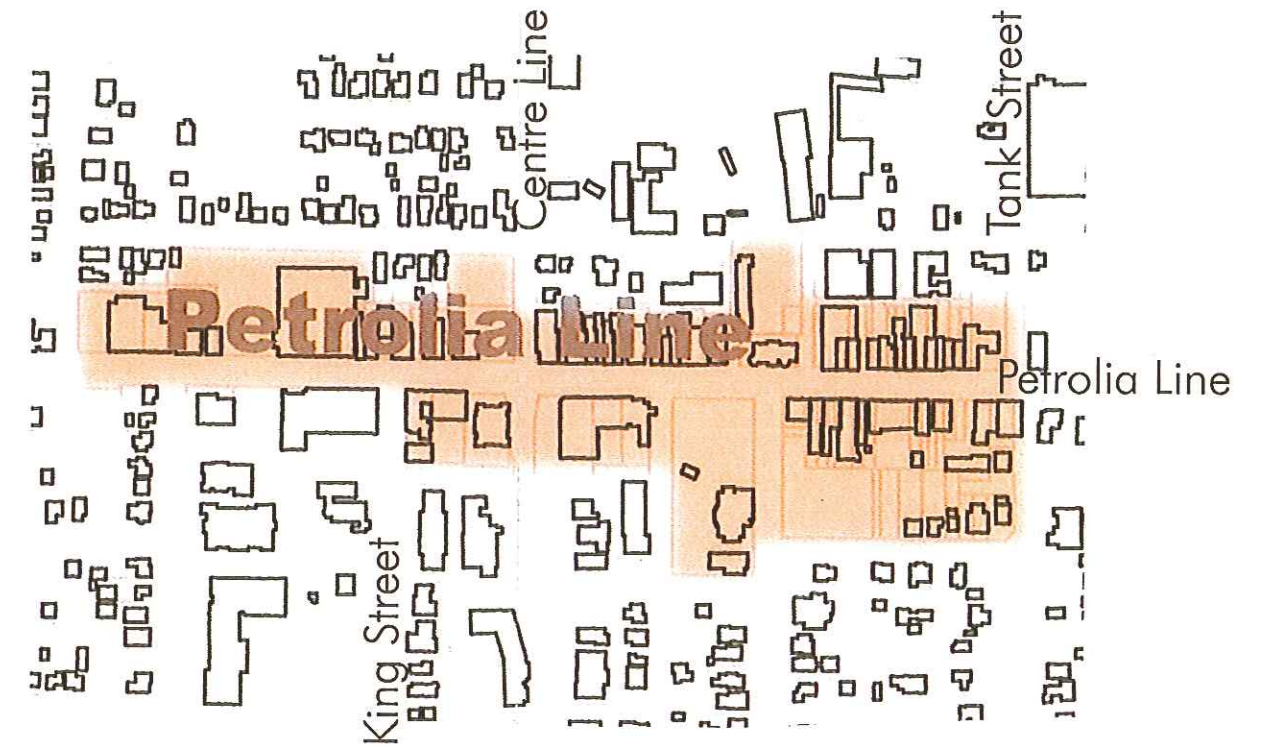




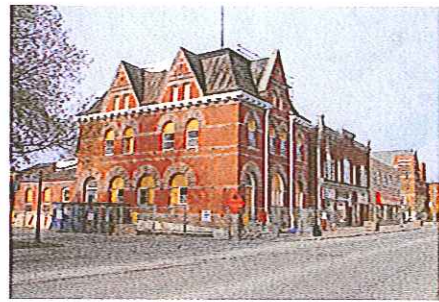
Very intact 19th century commercial core with characteristics including

- zero setback
- two storey
- horizontal and vertical rythm
- traditional storefronts

Magnificent set of public institutions speak to the wealth of the boom years. Open lots and unfortunate one storey infill reduce the impact of the streetscape.



## 2- COMMERCIAL CORE



Institutions



Commercial Blocks



Infill Opportunities



Project Name: Oil Heritage Conservation District Study, County Of Lambton

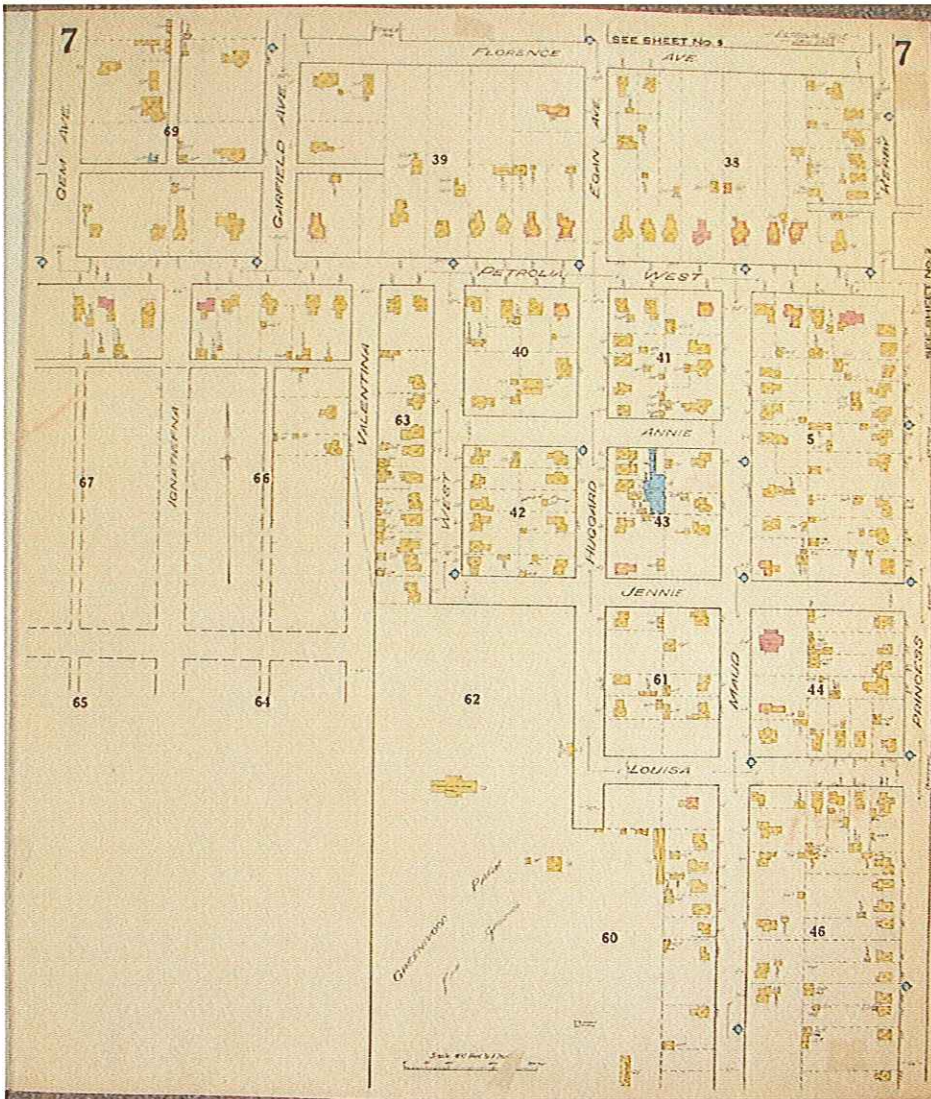
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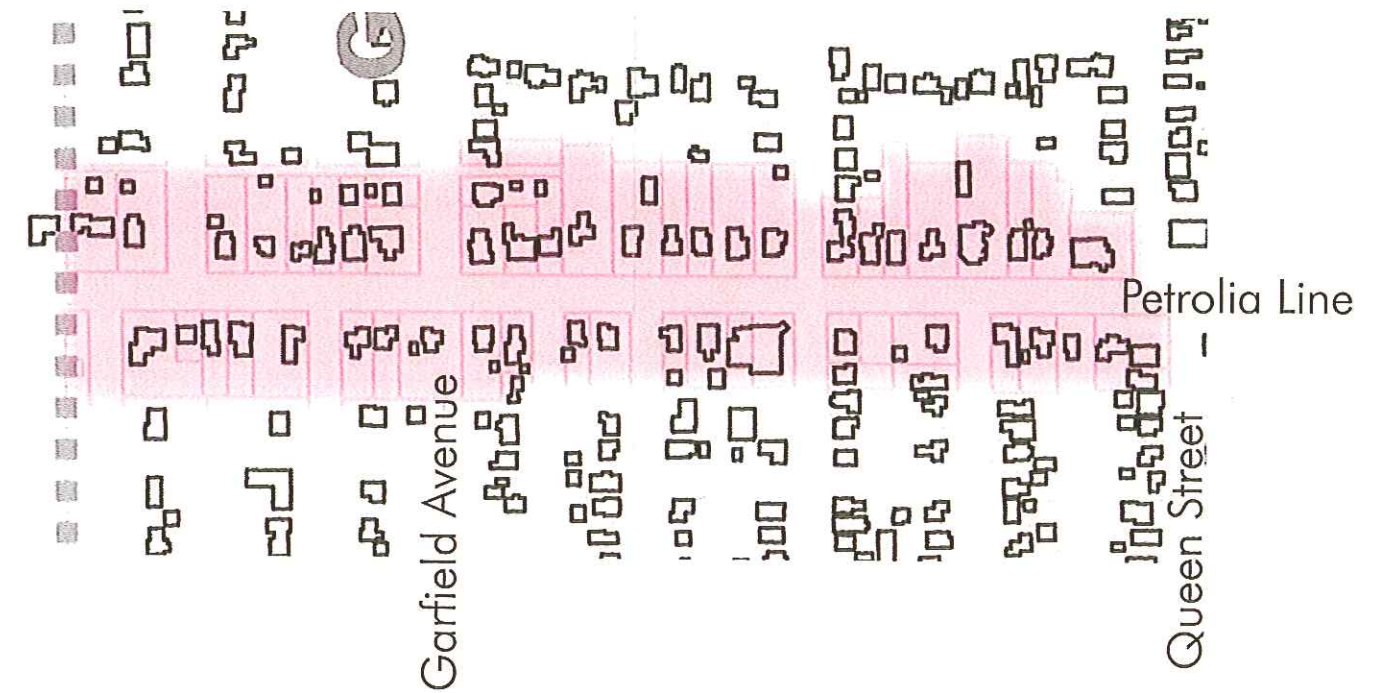


7.3 Petrolia Line West





Substantial single-detached houses from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries characterize the neighbourhood.  
Mature tree canopy defines Petrolia Line.



### 3- PETROLIA LINE WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD

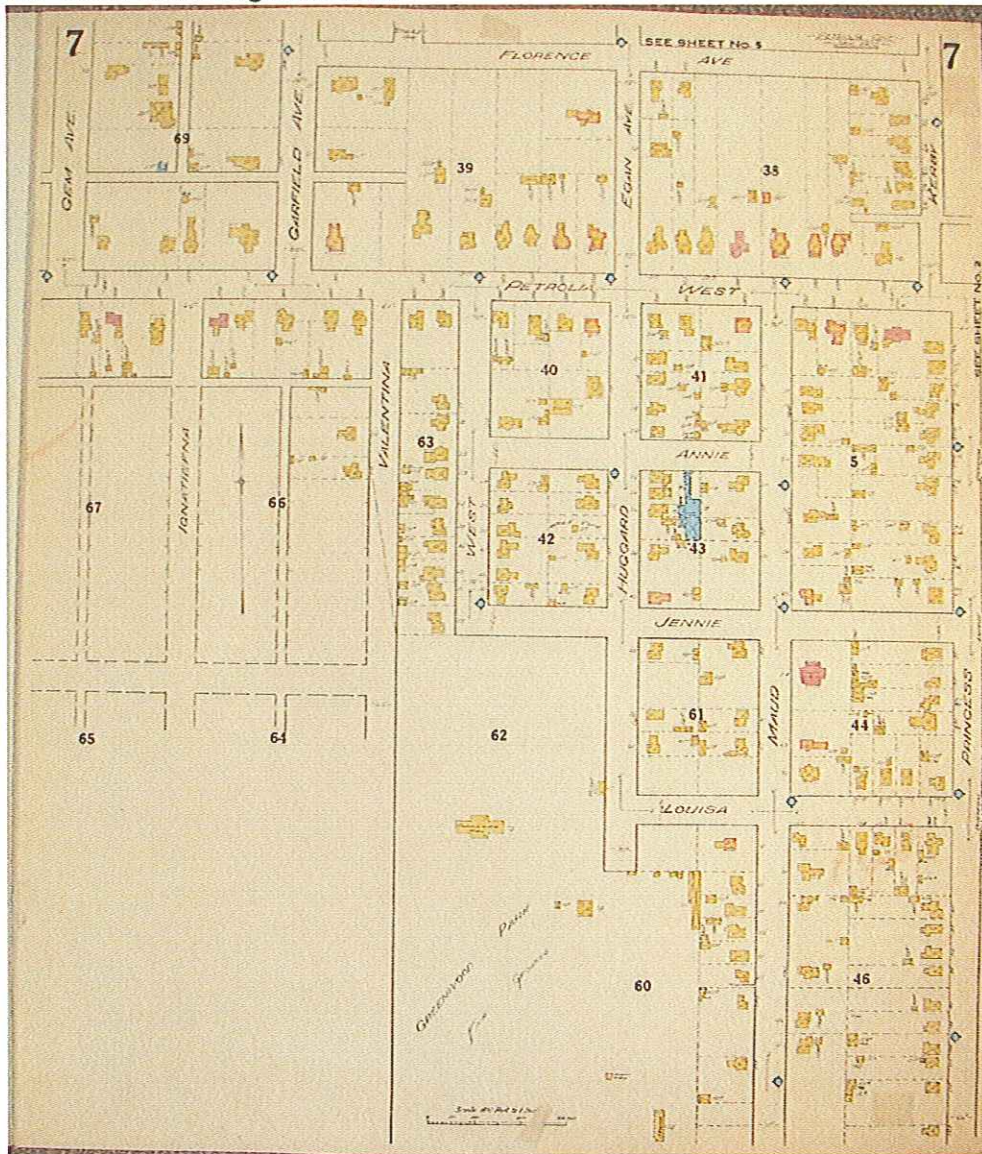


Project Name: Oil Heritage Conservation District Study, County Of Lambton  
Project Number: 0862  
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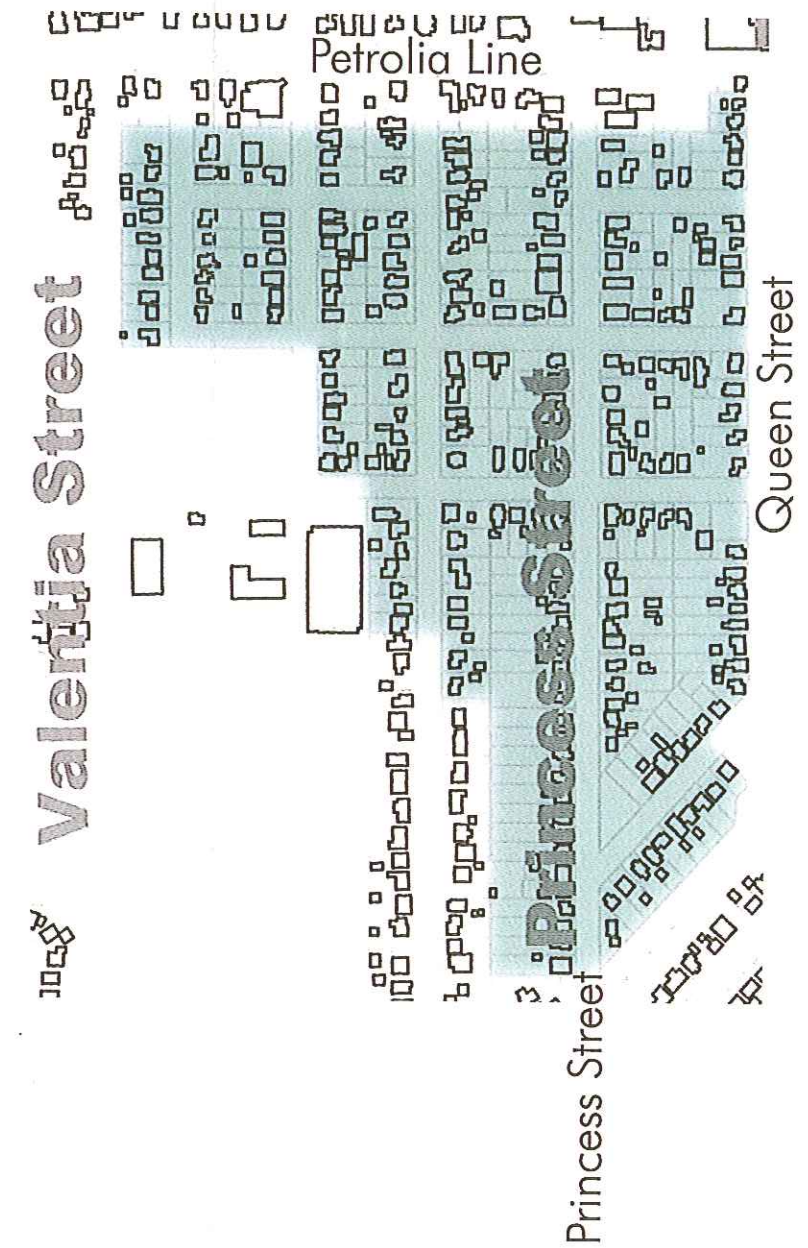
7.4 South West Neighbourhood





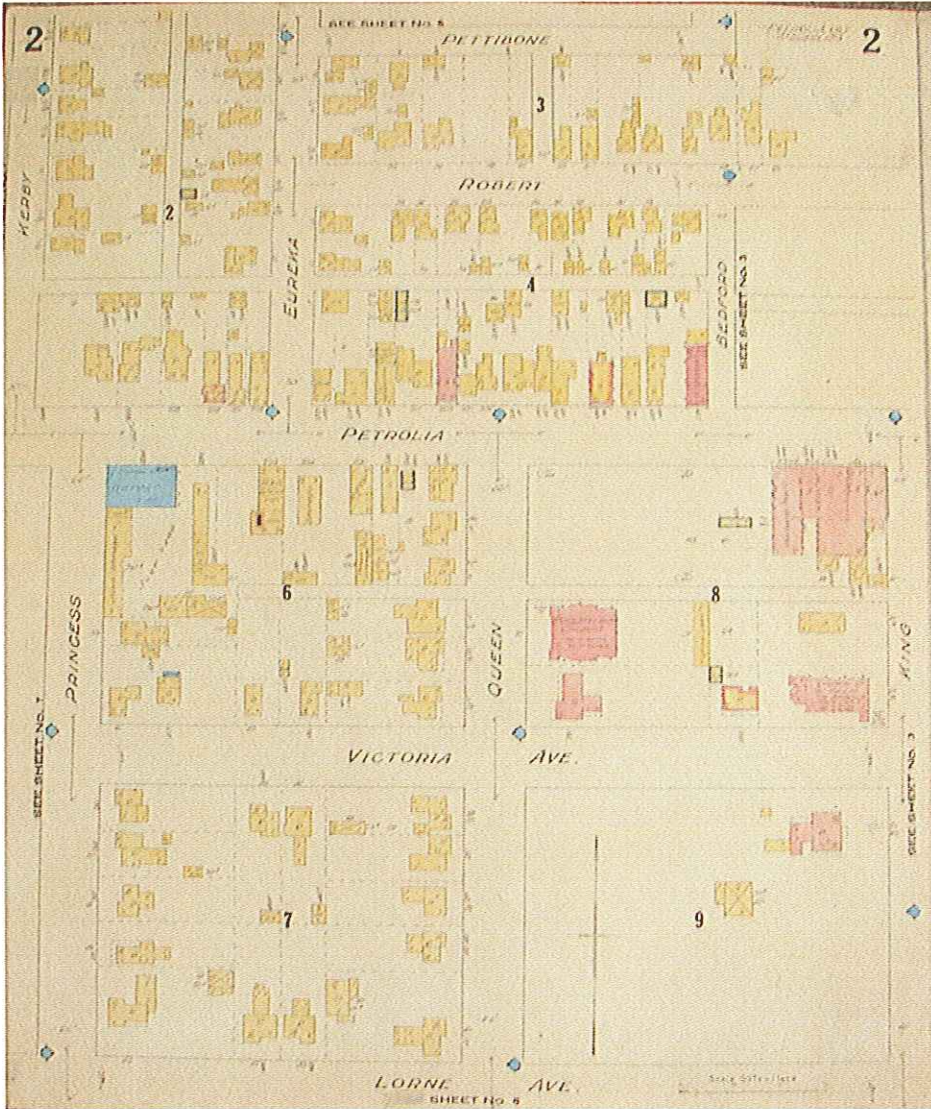
Vernacular single detached houses from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries characterize this middle class neighbourhood. Urban road cross sections have been created on many, but not all streets. Houses are typically frame with a few buff brick exceptions.

#### 4- SOUTH WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD



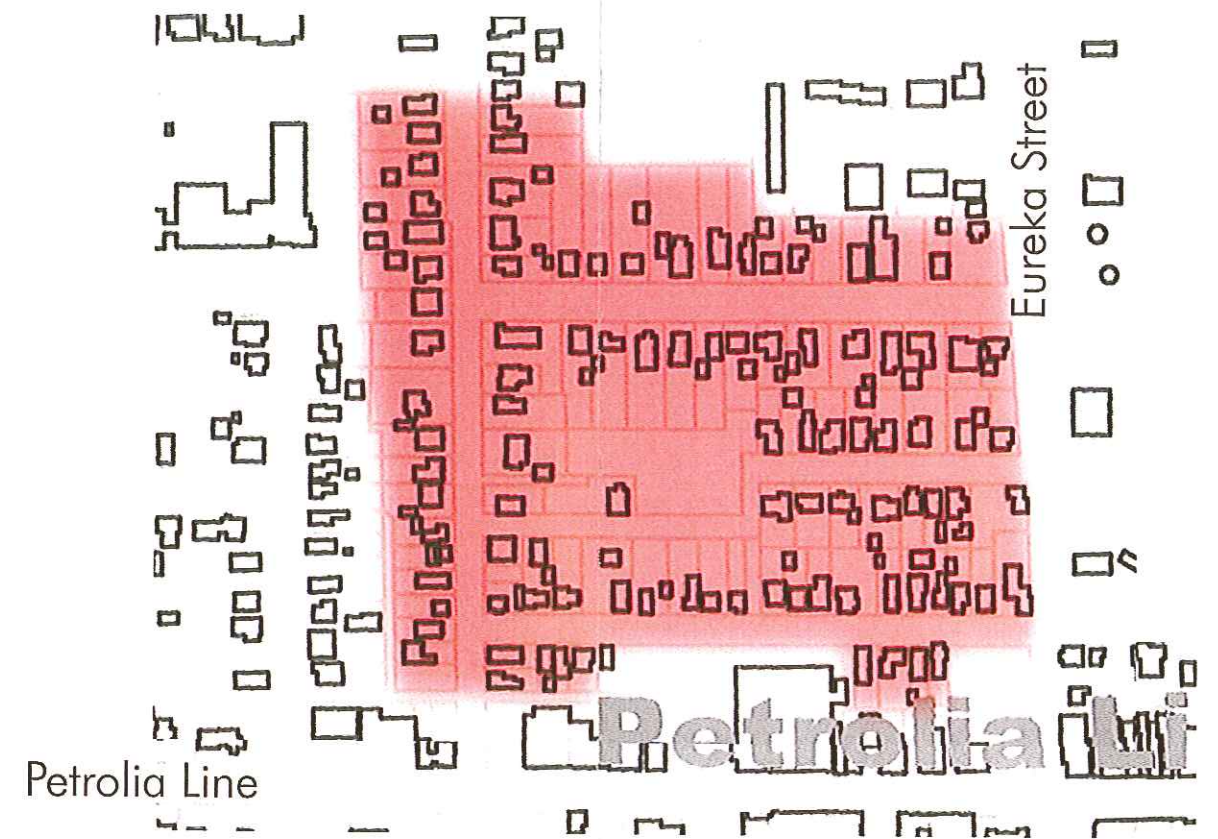


7.5 North West Neighbourhood





Small, mostly frame, single detached houses from the 19th and early twentieth centuries characterize the working class neighbourhood. The Baines Machine Shop, the Oil Well Supply Company and the early water tower are adjacent.



## 5- NORTH WEST NEIGHBOURHOOD



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## 8 Conclusions and Recommendations

Petrolia's boundaries are little changed from the 1895 consolidated map and population has only increased marginally from the turn of the last century. Street patterns and building stock in the proposed study area is intact from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While the more spectacular architectural examples attract more attention, the vernacular buildings of the south west and north west neighbourhoods are equally important in telling the story of the history of Petrolia.

All these potential districts are associated with the development of the oil industry in Petrolia. As Christina Burr has stated, "*discussions about conditions in the oil industry included all Petrolians, not just oil producers and refiners.*"

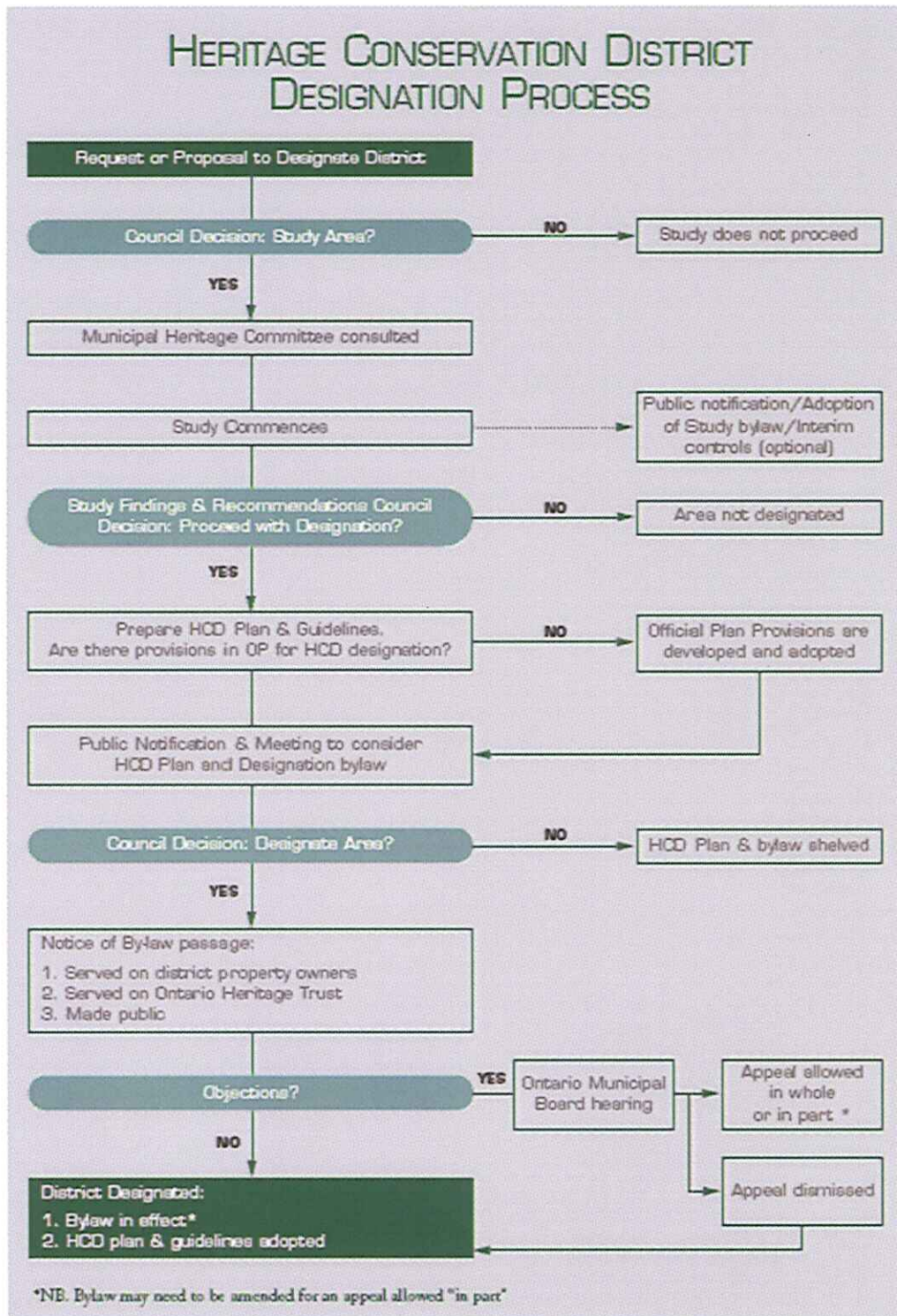
The Commercial Core and Crescent Park have contextual value as landmarks, as do many of the institutional buildings already designated by the Town under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The Ministry of Culture outlines the benefits of district designation as:

- *A unique planning framework...that respects a community's history and identity,*
  - *Enhanced quality of life and sense of place,*
  - *Cultural & economic vitality,*
  - *Cultural tourism. (3)*
1. It is recommended that the Corporation of the Town of Petrolia consider undertaking a study, in accord with OHA 40.(1), for the purpose of designating one or more heritage conservation districts.
  - 2.



Appendix – Designation Process





**Endnotes**

- (1) Christina Burr, *Canada's Victorian Oil Town*
- (2) Gary May, *Hard Oiler, The Story of Canadians' Quest for Oil at Home and Abroad*
- (3) Ontario Heritage Tool Kit, Heritage Conservation Districts, Ministry of Culture, 2006