

“ORAL HISTORIES” Project in London’s Downtown



DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

This research project aims to talk to Londoners about their stories and legends, shared beliefs, customs and rituals associated with a number of designated buildings (thirty in all) in London downtown. The buildings chosen reflect the eight architectural styles of the Downtown as specified by the Downtown London Heritage Conservation District Plan (2011). They are also located in, or close to, the area earmarked for the proposed Dundas street project, as described in Downtown London (LDN): Our Move Forward (2013).

Participants will be asked to look at current as well as old photographs of these 30 buildings. They will be asked to talk about their memories of stories and traditions associated with these buildings and to make suggestions about what could be revived of these past practices. As such, the aim of this research is to map out layers of lived experience of the city with relation to its built heritage in the historic core, layers which are interwoven with more recent and contemporary experiences but which need to be brought back to the fore in order to perhaps better value the present and more-judiciously plan the future. It is expected that the outcome of this research will be a digital map that sheds light on aspects of the intangible cultural heritage of the downtown, adding to the wealth of information we have on London’s downtown heritage. The information about the buildings will also be published on www.buildingstories.co, an interactive site operated by the Heritage Resource Centre of the University of Waterloo encouraging Canadians to take an active part in heritage conservation. The project aspires to make a contribution to a revitalized downtown that bases its new identity by reviving its old one – emphasizing its authentic heritage and its traditional pedestrian appeal as a means of achieving a distinctive sense of place (and a unique identity) and a distinctive commercial AND cultural character.