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Economic Benefits of Architectural Conservation for the Tourism and Film and Television Industries in Ontario

by

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for

Architectural Conservancy Ontario

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Economic Benefits of Architectural Conservation for the Tourism Industry

Tourism is a source of substantial economic benefits in Ontario and one of its most potent attractions, is architectural heritage. According to Statistics Canada, historic sites in Ontario had approximately 3,750,800 person visits in 2011, placing built heritage in the top five most popular tourist attractions in the Province. Toronto, one of the most popular tourist destinations, also uses built heritage as a pull factor. In Trip Advisor, approximately 20% of the city's attractions are architecture-related (ranging from the traditional, such as Fort York, Casa Loma and Maple Leaf Gardens to the more recent, such as Ontario Place (when it is open) and the CN Tower). Knowing this, appreciation of the value of heritage, it is clear that the conservation of it has the potential to boost the economies of communities which possess it.

Jane's Walks, launched in Toronto in 2007, in memory of urban planner Jane Jacobs, are an example of architectural tourism's gaining popularity. In 2014, there were 150 Jane's Walks in Toronto, and more in 25 other Ontario cities. Volunteers lead tours of urban neighbourhoods, focussing on their architecture, their planning and their cultural heritage. Jane's Walks are now worldwide, proof of the universal attraction and economic potential of architectural tourism.



Jane's Walk Ottawa group touring Byward Market. Photograph by Kristen Gagnon, 2014. For more images and information on the event see

<http://spacing.ca/ottawa/2014/05/06/byward-markets-historical-urban-fabric-courtyards-janes-walk/>



Doors Open is another extremely popular “architourism” event. 49 centres in Ontario participated in 2014 - up from just one the year Doors Open was introduced to Canada, in Toronto, in 2000. In 2013, there were almost half a million Doors Open site visits across the Province when more than 100,000 people visited 1291 sites (which means each visitor visited an average of five sites over the weekend). These figures show that there is enormous interest in the built environment and that it is a powerful magnet for tourism. It is also a magnet that attracts great economic benefits. During Doors Open events in Ontario in 2013, 76,688 local visitors spent an average of \$28.39 each, while 32,773 visitors from elsewhere spent an average of \$86.16 each. This means that, in 2013, Doors Open injected a total of \$5,000,866.72 into the provincial economy, all from weekend events run by unpaid volunteers who charge nothing, for visits to historic buildings and neighbourhoods (as well as to newer architecture that might become “heritage” in future.)

Apart from Jane’s Walks and Doors Open, many municipalities stage their own heritage events. In a survey conducted on the economic benefits of tourism, all participants (including the Senior Planner of the City of Windsor and the Tourism Manager of Lanark County) stated that their towns’ historic architecture has economic value. In Lanark County, \$50 million is infused into the local economy each year by tourism, much of it dependent on the county’s 146 designated heritage properties, some of which are national historic sites. Other examples are Southampton, Port Elgin, Port Hope - and Perth, a town whose heritage core earned it the title of “Prettiest little town in Ontario”, in addition to its status as one of Ontario’s most popular tourist destinations.

This information provides a glimpse into how architectural conservation is economically beneficial to Ontario tourism. To maintain and grow this value, the conservation and adaptive re-use of heritage buildings needs the support of individuals, communities, municipalities, the provincial government *and* businesses – in all parts of the province. Groups like Architectural Conservancy Ontario can encourage and warn but they cannot save the province’s heritage, alone.



City Sightseeing bus in Toronto brings tourists to Casa Loma

<http://www.rgiondocom/city-sight-seeingtoronto-hop-on-hop-off-city-tour>

Economic Benefits of Architectural Conservation for the Film Industry

According to the Ontario Media Development Corporation, the film industry in Ontario broke production worth more than \$1 billion in 2011, and it continues to grow. Knowing the economic importance of this industry, it is important to understand that filmmakers rely heavily on *location*, which can include architecture of all kinds. While some films are shot in places that the tourism industry would consider to be “heritage” (Casa Loma, again!) more are shot in such places as bars, pool halls, businesses, schools, airports, industrial buildings, corner stores, private homes and gas stations. Movies and television are also shot in suburbs, back lanes and neighbourhoods that might not be considered “heritage” at all – until they become tourist- and realtor-attracting “celebrities” on screen. For this reason, it is no wonder that film and television producers consider themselves to be *creators* as well as appreciators of heritage. This expansion of the “heritage envelope” is an enormous boon to conservationists whose appreciation of the built environment is broader than those whose affection for it is more conventionally aesthetic, historical and sentimental. It is this need for architectural and cultural *diversity* which explains why the OMDC’s Location Data Base - which lists as many as 12,000 filming locations throughout Ontario - is one of the most extensive in the world.

An example of how the most unlikely location can acquire esteem of a kind of that is practically indistinguishable from the esteem that is normally associated with “heritage”: the graffiti alley in Toronto, where Rick Mercer performs his rants for CBC Television:



An example of how a single production creates economic benefits is the filming of *Crimson Peak* in Kingston, Ontario. According to that city’s Media Relations Officer, Cindie Ashton, an estimated \$300,000 was brought into the local economy as a direct result of filming, with potential for more in future, as locations scouts became more aware of Kingston’s extensive architectural value (in a city that contains more than 1,200 protected heritage properties.)



Crimson Peak (2015, Director Guillermo del Toro) I filmed in Kingston's Market Square. For more information on the filming and local economic benefits see <http://www.station14.ca/video.html?id=302>

Another example is Perth, where an episode of CBC's *Best Laid Plans* was filmed over a total of three days. During that time a significant amount of money poured into the community. 50 local paid extras were hired at \$20/hr., Coumts Coffee Shop was hired to cater lunch, and five locations were rented for approximately \$500 each, while downtown retailers benefitted from the presence of approximately 100 CBC staff. In addition to these benefits, local media coverage, drew even more attention to the town and showed off the value of Perth as a quality filming location.

The economic importance of the film industry is especially obvious in Toronto, a location so popular, there have been as many as 35 productions in progress simultaneously.





Still from *Scott Pilgrim vs the World* (2014) in front of Ramona's house on Carlton Street in Cabbagetown (which became a Heritage Conservation District in 2004.).

In *Scott Pilgrim vs the World* (2010) Director Edgar Wright took "some pride in having captured the original Lee's Palace mural before it was torn down to make way for a burrito joint, and then replaced by a new painting." *Scott Pilgrim vs the World* depicts Toronto landmarks which include Casa Loma and Baldwin Steps, Cabbagetown, Hillcrest Park, Bloor Street, Manning Avenue, a local school, library, coffee shop, record shop, Wychwood Barns, the Distillery District, the CN Tower, a back alley and inside a bus. The result: a movie Tour Guide of Toronto sites famous and not so famous so lavish, it was considered worthy of a photo-spread in *The Torontoist*.

http://torontoist.com/2010/11/reel_toronto_edgar_wright_talks_scott_pilgrim_vs_the_world/



**Hotel Waverly (1917)
Silver Dollar Room (1958),
484 Spadina Avenue,
Toronto
still from *The Silent
Partner*, 1978**

**(director: Daryl Duke,
starring Elliott Gould,
Christopher Plummer,
Susannah York)**

The Silver Dollar Room is designated heritage, the Hotel Waverly is not. At the Ontario Municipal Board in 2014, ACO sought conservation of the broad fore part of the Hotel Waverly and reduction of the height of the proposed 22-storey residential tower. The Hotel Waverly will be demolished, the Silver Dollar Room will be conserved and the height of the tower will be reduced to 15 storeys.

An Asset at Risk

Though its film industry is growing, Ontario is at risk of losing its production potential as buildings are demolished and replaced with buildings, which are, to filmmakers, far less interesting. According to Will Hoddinott, a location manager for CBC Television's *Murdoch Mysteries* the variety and availability of locations is decreasing every year. Architectural diversity is diminishing, to a point where, in his words: *"If a building has columns it's conserved, all others are demolished for new glass and steel condos, so that's what Toronto has become"*.



Crew setting up to film for *Murdoch Mysteries* in Cambridge .

<http://www.cambridge.ca/gallery-internal.php?gid=49&pg=2>

Murdoch Mysteries is set around the turn of the last century in Toronto, where suitable locations are increasingly hard to find. Consequences of this problem include a boon for municipalities like Cambridge and Guelph where suitable locations do exist and, among Ontario heritage buffs, a popular and challenging game of "spot the location".



Filming *Murdoch Mysteries* on Douglas Street in Guelph, Ontario .

<https://avowles.wordpress.com/2013/11/16/genius-loci-sense-of-place-draws-my-footsteps-and-a-murdoch-mysteries-film-crew/>

Sources for the Tourism Industry

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Dawson Bridger. Community Programs Officer, Ontario Heritage Trust, Program Manager for Doors Open Ontario.

Julie Mulligan. Marketing Management, Ontario's Highland Tourism Organization

Denise Pinto. Global Director, Jane's Walks.

Karren Rennie. Heritage Tourism Manager/Curator, Town of Perth

Kathyn Russell. Tourism Development Coordinator, County of Elgin.

Marie White. Tourism Manager, Lanark County.

Sources for the Film Industry

Cindie Ashton. Media Relations Officer, City of Kingston.

Harvey Crossland, Director, CBC TV *Murdoch Mysteries*.

Will Hoddinott, Location Manager, CBC TV *Murdoch Mysteries*.

Sandra Kybartas, Production Manager, CBC TV *Murdoch Mysteries*

Ontario Media Development Corporation.

"Year in Review 2011-2012: Creative Industries – Driving Ontario's Economy".

List of Films Set in Toronto

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_films_set_in_Toronto

Top 25 Toronto Films

<https://nowtoronto.com/movies/cover-story/top-25-toronto-films/>

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