



Lexicon >> *Defining Heritage Conservation Terms*

Introduction

Over the years, the heritage conservation field has developed a unique vocabulary in order to describe the different approaches used to conserve older buildings, historic places and cultural resources. The Vancouver Heritage Foundation has published this lexicon based on current Canadian heritage conservation practice in the hope that it will facilitate the discussion of these approaches used to conserve a wide range of heritage resources including residential, commercial and institutional buildings, urban neighbourhoods, historic sites, as well as places of cultural, social, and environmental significance.

Key terms in Heritage Conservation

Adaptive re-use*:** The recycling of an older structure often for a new function. Extensive restoration or rehabilitation for both the interior and exterior is usually involved.

Character-defining elements*: the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the *heritage value* of a *historic place*, which must be retained in order to preserve its *heritage value*.

Conservation*: all actions or processes that are aimed at safeguarding the *character-defining elements* of a cultural resource so as to retain its *heritage value* and extend its physical life. This may involve “*Preservation*,” “*Rehabilitation*,” “*Restoration*,” or a combination of these actions or processes.

Guidelines*: statements that provide practical guidance in applying the *Standards for the Conservation of Historic Places*.

Heritage value*: the aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual importance or significance for past, present or future generations. The *heritage value of a historic place* is embodied in its character-defining materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings.

Historic place*: a structure, building, group of buildings, district, landscape, archaeological site or other place in Canada that has been formally recognized for its *heritage value*.

Intervention*: any action, other than demolition or destruction that results in a physical change to an element of a *historic place*.

Maintenance*: routine, cyclical, non-destructive actions necessary to slow the deterioration of a *historic place*. It entails periodic inspection; routine, cyclical, non-destructive cleaning; minor repair and refinishing operations; replacement of damaged or deteriorated materials that are impractical to save.

Minimal intervention*: the approach which allows functional goals to be met with the least physical intervention.

Preservation*: the action or process of protecting, maintaining, and/or stabilizing the existing materials, form, and integrity of a *historic place* or of an individual component, while protecting its *heritage value*.

Reassembly**: an historic building, structure or artefact is carefully dismantled and reassembled. Reassembly is sometimes called reconstitution or anastylosis.

Reclaim****: to rescue from an undesirable state; to restore to a previous natural state.

Reconstruction**: A building, site feature or artefact that no longer exists is reproduced with new construction that exhibits the shape, material and detailing (and often construction methods) of the resource as it once appeared.

Reconstitute****: to constitute again or anew; to restore to a former condition.

Rehabilitation*: the action or process of making possible a continuing or compatible contemporary use of a *historic place* or an individual component, through repair, alterations, and/or additions, while protecting its *heritage value*.

Renovation**: Extensive changes and/or additions are made to an existing building internally and externally in order to "renew" or renovate the structure. These changes, particularly as they affect private residences, are often made in response to the need for more space, repair, general improvements or lifestyle considerations.

Repair****: to restore by replacing a part or putting together what is torn or broken.

Replication**: The making of an exact copy of an existing structure, feature or artefact. The purpose of a replication is usually to replace a missing or decayed component in order to maintain aesthetic unity and harmony.

Restoration*: the action or process of accurately revealing, recovering or representing the state of a *historic place*, or of an individual component, as it appeared at a particular period in its history, while protecting its *heritage value*.

Retrofitting***: Involves the upgrading of an existing building to meet code requirements (i.e. fire or emergency exits). This process often includes the installation of new insulation as a means of energy conservation. The installation of storm windows, smoke detectors, new insulation, new heating and electrical systems are examples of retrofitting.

Salvage****: The act of saving or rescuing property; something extracted as valuable or useful.

The terms marked (*) are definitions from the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, published in Ottawa by Parks Canada in 2003.
www.pc.gc.ca/docs/pc/guide/nldclpc-sgchpc/index_e.asp

The terms marked (**) are from, Oberlander, Judy, Harold Kalman and Robert Lemon, *Principles of Heritage Conservation*. Edited by Mary McKinnon. Technical Paper Series No. 9. Victoria: British Columbia Heritage Trust, 1989. ISBN 077188768X.

The terms marked (***) are extracted from the Heritage Canada Foundation's Technical Dossier No. 3, 1982.

The terms marked (****) are from the Merriam Webster Dictionary at: www.merriam-webster.com

The Vancouver Heritage Foundation

The Vancouver Heritage Foundation is a registered charity supporting the conservation of heritage buildings and structures in recognition of their contribution to the city's economy, sustainability and culture. For more information visit: www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org to see how the Foundation's programs work in:

- Developing practical tools, information and incentives to help in the successful conservation of heritage buildings and structures.
- Creating opportunities to access and learn about Vancouver's heritage buildings.
- Fundraising in the public and private sectors to build an endowment that will protect our built heritage into the future.
- Promoting relationships that support heritage conservation.

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