



Conserving Heritage Buildings

in a Green and Growing Vancouver

2012
VANCOUVER
HERITAGE
FOUNDATION



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CONTRIBUTORS

VHF would like to thank everyone who worked on the completion of this report. For a complete list of interviewees and survey distribution list please see pages 23 through 25.



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Heritage building conservation today is less about preserving precious places as museums, and more about preserving the sense of character, unique identity and history of communities where people live, work and recreate.

After more than 25 years of heritage conservation programs and policies in BC, Vancouver Heritage Foundation, through this research paper, asked the public whether heritage building conservation matters, and if it does matter probed why and how we integrate building conservation with current civic priorities of affordability, density and energy efficiency. The author surveyed the public and spoke to people connected to urban issues. The ideas and opinions contained in this paper come from the public and from key informant interviews. Many of the ideas and suggestions offer a creative twist to or a new look at initiatives already in place in Vancouver.

We found there is strong public support for the conservation of heritage buildings. The public does believe heritage buildings are important to retaining the character of their communities and that 50% of Vancouverites would prefer to live in retrofitted older buildings rather than new buildings. They also want less demolition of heritage buildings in their neighbourhoods.

There is work to be done to ensure heritage and character buildings in the city are part of the solution to the challenges of affordability, density and energy efficiency. This can be done through soft measures such as education and public awareness activities offered by groups such as the Vancouver Heritage Foundation, and as our interviewees pointed out it also can be done through innovative programs such as grants, tax breaks, accelerated permit processes and enhancing the city's Heritage Register.

Heritage buildings have an important role to play in helping the city achieve its affordability, energy efficiency and density goals. This research paper demonstrates that there is public support for including heritage buildings in solutions to these important challenges. We welcome your comments or questions about information found in this report. Please contact us by email at mail@vancouverheritagefoundation.org



Diane Switzer
Executive Director



Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them.... for really new ideas of any kind—no matter how ultimately profitable or otherwise successful some of them might prove to be—there is no leeway for such chancy trial, error and experimentation in the high-overhead economy of new construction. Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings.”

-Jane Jacobs

SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This report has been commissioned by Vancouver Heritage Foundation (VHF). It describes the importance (Value, Significance, Meaning) of heritage to both the public and professionals, gives an overview of past and present municipal heritage conservation programs and policies, and suggests strategies to ensure that heritage remains an integral part of the urban built environment. The study is focused on the city of Vancouver rather than the metro area of Vancouver, and recommendations are intended for Vancouver Heritage Foundation, and other Vancouver organizations, professionals and government. For the purpose of this report, heritage buildings are determined as 20 years or older and are not limited to buildings on the Heritage Register.

PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

A mixed methodology approach was employed in writing this report. A public survey was developed and distributed through email lists and social media to a wide range of groups with a variety of perspectives on heritage conservation (see Appendix A). Over a period of three weeks it garnered 320 responses. Key informant interviews of 14 academics, heritage professionals, planners, developers and architects who have worked on heritage conservation were carried out over August and September, 2012. The purpose of the key informant interviews was to obtain an understanding of current and past heritage conservation programs and policies, as well as recommendations for improving the status quo. For the interview guide see Appendix B.

There was a relatively small sampling size for the public survey (n=320), however all statistics are reported with confidence intervals at the 95% level. The demographic distribution of the sample was generally reflective of the population of Vancouver as a whole, although gender and educational attainment were not typical and are discussed in detail in Appendix A. Some potentially important demographic variables such as income and ethnic background were not probed but could be probed in a future survey. The sample distribution of age, and years lived in the city were determined to be representative of the City's population (see Appendix A for details).

WHAT HERITAGE MEANS TO VANCOUVER

From the public survey and interviews with 14 key informants it is clear that heritage has different meanings for different people. From the questionnaire, a number of questions probed the importance of heritage to Vancouver residents. For heritage conservation advocates, the results are encouraging.

Do you think we need to preserve heritage buildings in Vancouver?

Vancouver is clearly a city that appreciates its heritage. Results from the survey suggest that many people would like to see more preservation of buildings with high historical, cultural, aesthetic, scientific or educational value.

When asked whether they think we need to preserve heritage buildings in our city, 96.6% of Vancouver residents agreed (+2%, 19 times out of 20). This result is impressive and consistent across demographic groups in the sample. When the data from **young people (ages 19-34)** is separated out, the results show that **96% of them responded "Yes"** to the question as to whether **we need to preserve heritage buildings**, the same result as the rest of the population.¹

Do heritage buildings contribute to our sense of place in Vancouver?

A sense of place is the special meaning or character that a geographic location has that gives a community its identity. **Ninety-six per cent of Vancouver residents strongly agree or agree that heritage buildings contribute to our sense of place** (+2%, 19 times out of 20). In a city such as Vancouver, with twenty-two neighbourhoods each with their own distinct flavour, a sense of place is what distinguishes, for example, the area around Commercial Drive from the West End, Mount Pleasant, or Chinatown. Heritage buildings contribute to the physical and social fabric of the city; they have great value not only as landmarks and icons, but as places that people identify and interact with.

Heritage buildings have great value not only as landmarks and icons, but as places that people identify and interact with

"Whether it be multicultural or social, whether it be the gay community or an ethno-cultural community, heritage is understanding of the roots going back.

It is the experience of people who have preceded us and a manifestation of that in the built environment."

-Interviewee

1. Only one individual of 77 in the sample responded "No" and the other two "Don't Know".

SENSE OF PLACE

"Those things that add up to a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else."

– **National Trust for Historic Preservation (US)**

"It is place, permanent position in both the social and topographical sense, that gives us our identity."

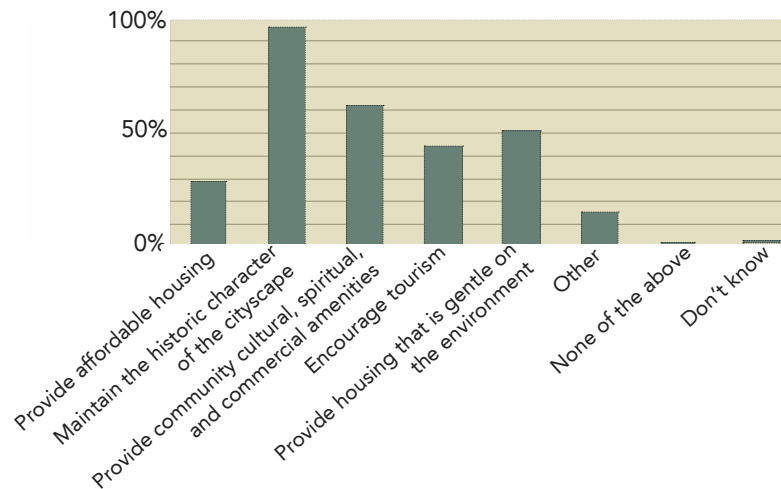
– **J. B. Jackson (1909-1996), landscape design artist**

"A sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing history within its confines."

– **Kent Ryden, professor and author of "Mapping the Invisible Landscape"**

WHY ARE HERITAGE BUILDINGS IMPORTANT TO VANCOUVER?

Heritage buildings play a role in a community's daily life as amenities, housing and places to visit for entertainment, community events or tourism. Figure 1.1 shows the reasons why survey respondents believe heritage buildings are important to Vancouver. **95% responded that heritage buildings maintain the historic character of the landscape, while 59% were of the opinion that they provide cultural, spiritual, and commercial amenities.** Fifty per cent of those surveyed responded that heritage buildings provide housing that is 'gentle' on the environment (see also page 11 of this report). A significant percentage of respondents also asserted that heritage buildings encourage tourism (43%) and provide affordable housing (28%).



Graph Figure 1.1:
Why are heritage
buildings important
to Vancouver?

HERITAGE BUILDINGS AND THEIR USE

Respondents were asked to identify the purpose of heritage buildings in their neighbourhood. Most responded that the heritage or historical buildings in their neighbourhood are used for housing (apartments and houses), but churches or places of worship, restaurants/pubs/cafes, retail/office space and cultural centres or halls were also significant uses (Figure 1.2). From these results it is apparent that a significant number of neighbourhoods have a large stock of apartment buildings, houses and community amenities that are historical or heritage buildings. Vancouver's heritage resources are being used for a range of commercial and social purposes.

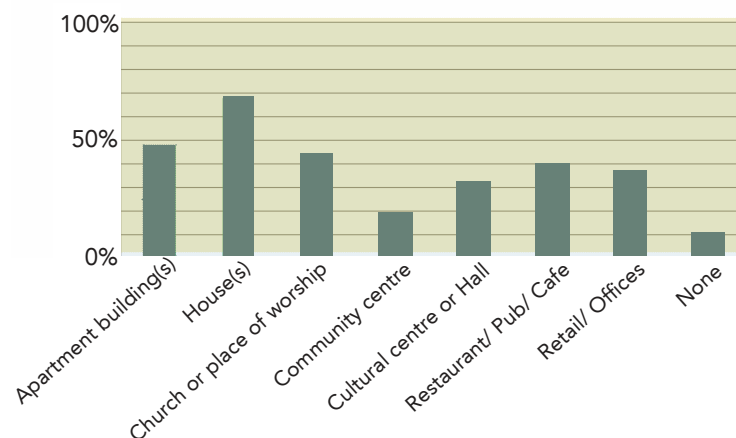
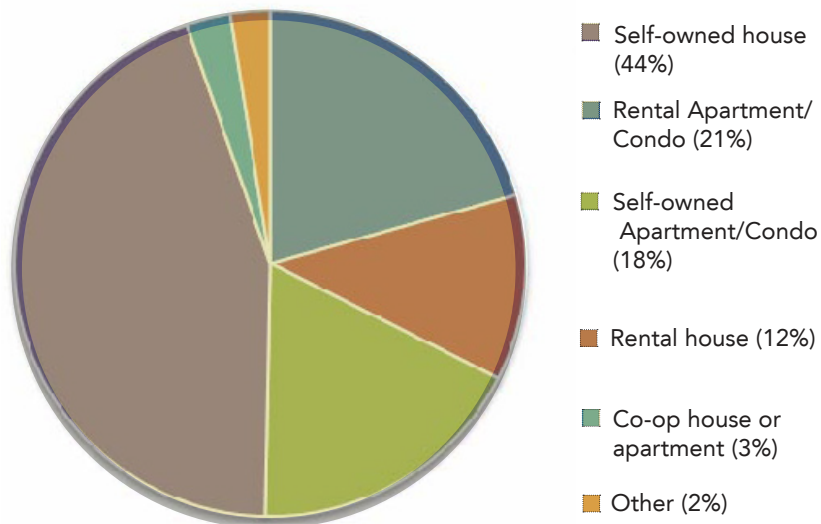


Figure 1.2: Does your
neighbourhood have
heritage/historical
buildings? If so, what are
they used for?

HOUSING TYPE PREFERENCE AND AWARENESS OF THE VANCOUVER HERITAGE REGISTER

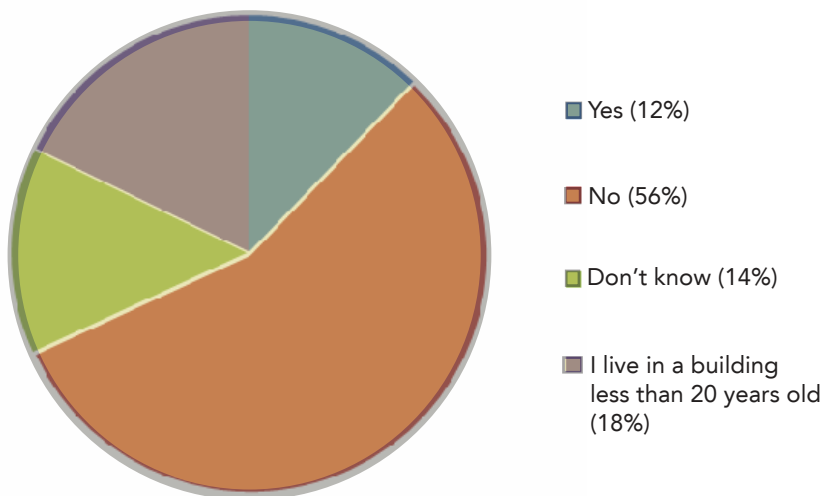
Respondents were asked about their residence type, awareness of the Vancouver Heritage Register and their preferences for housing

Figure 1.3:
Respondents
by Residence
Type



Most respondents reported they live in a self-owned house (44%), while a significant portion reside in rental apartments or condos (21%) and self-owned apartments or condos (18%).

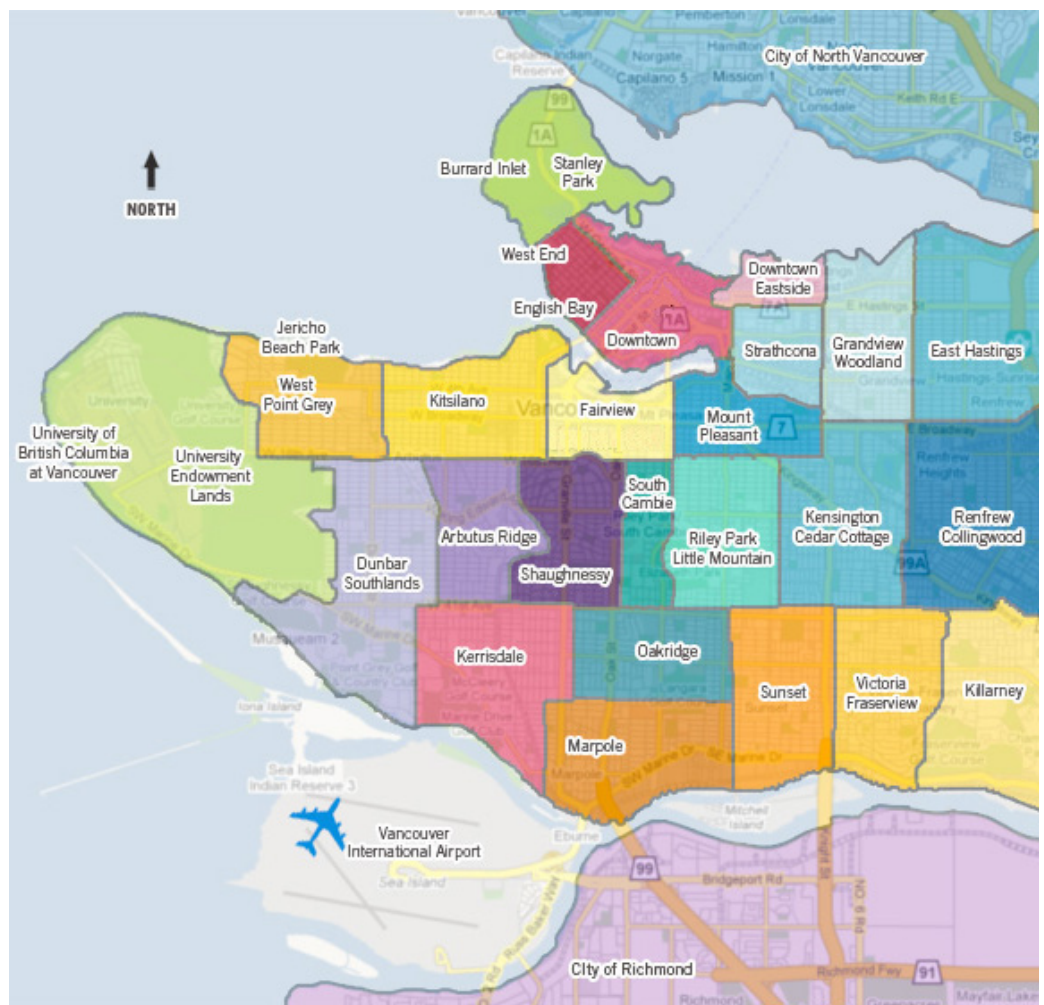
Figure 1.4:
Awareness of
the Vancouver
Heritage
Register and
Housing
Status



Most respondents (56%) reported they do not live in a building on the Vancouver Heritage Register, while 12% do live in a heritage property. **14% of respondents do not know if their house or apartment is on the heritage register which could indicate a potential awareness gap about the heritage register.**

VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOODS WITH THE MOST HERITAGE CHARACTER

Vancouver has a variety of neighbourhoods each with significant heritage resources that contribute to their individual and unique identities. When asked which three Vancouver neighbourhoods have the most heritage character, respondents identified Strathcona (60%), the Downtown Eastside (46%), Mount Pleasant (27%), Grandview-Woodland (26%), and the West End (22.5%) within their top choices. Arbutus Ridge-Shaughnessy and Kitsilano were a close 6th and 7th respectively. This information may be important for heritage professionals and city planners when considering development in neighbourhoods with high heritage value.



SECTION TWO

HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND OTHER MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES



MoleHill Neighbourhood Photo Credit: Martin Knowles Photo/Media

One objective of this report is to determine how heritage conservation can support and be integrated with other current civic priorities including energy efficiency, densification and improving affordability. The priorities are outlined in the most recent municipal plans. The Greenest City Action Plan outlines a strategy to make Vancouver an international leader in urban sustainability, particularly within the areas of Carbon, Waste and Ecosystems. The Final Report from the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability establishes the City's plans to promote densification and implement programs to reduce housing costs in Vancouver. The linkages between heritage conservation and current municipal priorities have not been made clear. The following section makes connections between the reuse and rehabilitation of our cultural and historical assets, and the important goals of energy efficiency, affordability and density.

"I'm personally not precious about heritage – it doesn't have to be preserved without change. An appreciation of what was there, what was good about it, an appreciation of the people who used it, if it had quality how that quality can be adapted for the next group of users. In Europe they don't seem to mind putting a really modern storefront into a 300 yr old building if that is what is needed for the new uses coming into it. It's really the meaning of the cultural connection that we have to the past and as we move to the future.

What something was historically is no longer an appropriate use but there is something about what is there that can be adapted for the present."

-Interviewee

"What we're doing well now, which is a tangible outcome of the ecological sustainability, is a more pedestrian, bike-focused city which has to do with building stronger local lives, and communities which have a sense of place that includes heritage. Sustainability has the ability to reinforce the place-making that heritage is."

-Interviewee

"UBC is the only Canadian university creating state-of-the-art facilities on a large scale by renewing deteriorating buildings rather than demolishing them. It is setting the standard of renovating and retaining heritage facilities on campus for the continued success of academic programs while minimizing the environmental impact caused by demolishing and constructing new buildings all at less cost than building new. Refurbishing the buildings instead of demolishing and building new has saved BC taxpayers and UBC millions of dollars."

-UBC Project Services website

ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

According to the Greenest City Action Plan, 24% of GHG emissions reductions by 2020 are to come from green buildings ². However, as the key informant interviewees pointed out, there are a number of potential sources of GHG emissions that are not included in the plan. The first is the demolition of buildings and their contribution to landfills which are a chief source of municipal GHGs. The second is the GHG emissions from the carbon-intensive materials such as concrete and steel used to construct many of the current building forms. A closer look at the full environmental cost of demolition and construction is needed to determine whether the carbon and ecological footprints of each new "green" buildings is, in fact, smaller than modernizing and retrofitting older buildings to ensure that they are energy efficient. A recent study by National Trust for Historic Preservation concludes that building reuse almost always offers environmental savings over demolition and new construction. ³

33% of Metro Vancouver waste is demolition, construction, and renovation waste ⁴

50%+ of construction and demolition waste are recyclable ⁵

Demolition projects produce 20 -30 times more waste material per square meter than renovation or construction projects ⁶

A number of interviewees who work in the planning and architecture fields echoed this finding, stating that there is a strong argument for retrofitting older, structurally sound buildings rather than investing in green building construction. Demolition waste and new construction waste are eliminated, and resources do not have to be extracted for building materials. The various environmental impacts of demolition and reconstruction include loss of embodied energy, release of GHGs, pollutants to the air, pollutants to water, and natural resource use. The University of BC Renew Project, a partnership with the BC Government, is an example of how heritage buildings can be renovated and retrofitted at a lower cost than building new. The project will save taxpayers millions of dollars, retain the heritage character of the campus and have significantly less environmental impact than new construction.

2. 4 Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. City of Vancouver (2012).

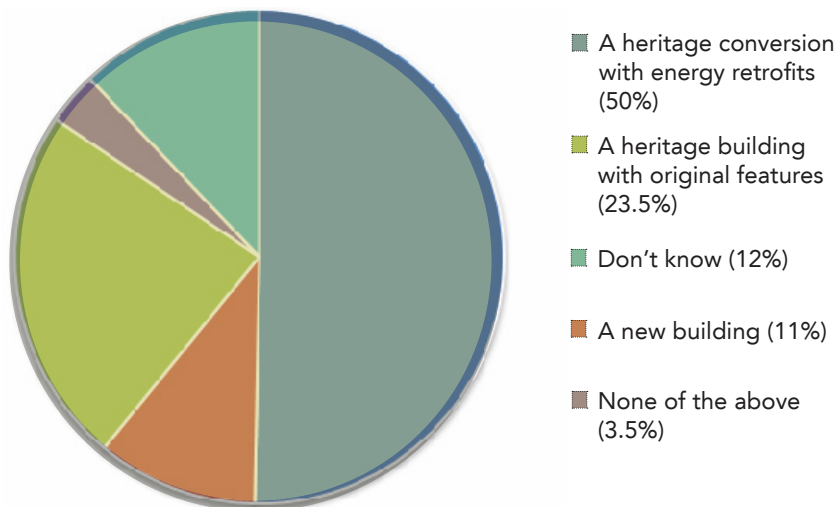
3. Preservation Green Lab. The Greenest Building: Quantifying the Environmental Value of Building Reuse, 2011.

4. and 5. DLC Waste Management Toolkit: A guide for the Building Construction Industry. Metro Vancouver BuildSmart, 2008.

6. Construction and Demolition Waste Recycling: A Literature Review. Dalhousie University Office of Sustainability, 2011.

The public has a positive perception of the intersection between heritage resources and the goals of sustainability. **Seventy-two per cent of Vancouver residents strongly agree or agree that Heritage buildings contribute to an environmentally sustainable city (+5%, 19 times out of 20).** In addition, Vancouverites have a preference for heritage conversions or buildings that have been retrofitted. 50% of Vancouver residents would prefer to live in a heritage conversion with energy retrofits over a heritage building with original features or a new building (+5.5%, 19 times out of 20).

Figure 1.5:
Housing Type
Preference



The integration of heritage conservation and sustainability is key to ensuring that we reach our GHG reduction targets. The Greenest City Action Plan includes the target of reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in existing buildings by 20% over 2007 levels⁸. This will require the implementation of new energy systems in historic and heritage properties. While it sometimes might be financially more feasible to demolish an older property and build a new, carbon-neutral structure, there is evidence there are social and environmental costs of not maintaining older building stock. It may be that additional incentive programs need to be developed to better encourage property owners and developers to retrofit existing buildings rather than building new.

Heritage buildings can contribute to an environmentally sustainable city.

50% of Vancouver residents would prefer to live in a heritage conversion with energy retrofits.

"UBC is the only Canadian university creating state-of-the-art facilities on a large scale by renewing deteriorating buildings rather than demolishing them. It is setting the standard of renovating and retaining heritage facilities on campus for the continued success of academic programs while minimizing the environmental impact caused by demolishing and constructing new buildings all at less cost than building new. Refurbishing the buildings instead of demolishing and building new has saved BC taxpayers and UBC millions of dollars."

– From UBC Project Services website

8. Greenest City 2020 Action Plan. City of Vancouver (2012).

"The level of character that is in these old places, I wish that more people thought I could fit myself into this, I could live here, I could make this work."

-Interviewee

DENSITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Density has been a newsworthy topic in Vancouver over the past decade. The pressures of population growth from international immigration and domestic in-migration have necessitated the densification of numerous city neighbourhoods. While Vancouver residents are generally used to the constant transformation of the built environment, new development at the neighbourhood level is often met with local opposition. **Our results show that 88% of Vancouver residents would like to see less demolition of heritage or historic buildings in their neighbourhood (+3.5%, 19 times out of 20).** This is a strong statistic that indicates a high level of concern among communities about the loss of neighbourhood character and amenities when a heritage or historic building is demolished. Increasing the supply of housing in the market and building more vertical units as land values remain high is a necessity. However, the risk of losing a sense of place and what makes Vancouver unique is a major concern. Continued dialogue and creative solutions are needed to ensure that heritage resources and neighbourhood character are maintained while achieving city-wide growth.

88% of Vancouver residents support **less** demolition of heritage buildings in their neighbourhood

Densification is a means to improve the affordability of housing in Vancouver. The Vancouver-area market is the least affordable in Canada ⁹. Housing poverty is a serious issue. **Forty-two per cent of Vancouver residents strongly agree or agree that heritage buildings offer affordable rental stock in the city (+5%, 19 times out of 20)** ¹⁰. There are numerous examples of affordable rental options in older apartment buildings dating back to the early 20th century. However vacant affordable rental units and purchasing options for low and middle-income earners are in short supply. Proposals to increase the supply of affordable housing through a number of initiatives outlined in the Final Report from the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability are a good start. Heritage Advocates applaud the inclusion of a recommendation to, "protect existing social and affordable rental and explore opportunities to renew and expand the stock."

The actions outlined to achieve this goal include increasing the supply of additional secondary rental units, promoting the development of more co-housing projects, and evaluating rental protection regulations. All of these proposed actions have relevance to heritage conservation; significant heritage resources and older building stock could be leveraged to support the plan.

9. Housing Trends and Affordability. Royal Bank of Canada (August, 2012).

10. It is important to note that 38% of the survey respondents were neutral on the matter. The fact that such a large percentage of survey respondents were not sure about this statement indicates that more information and awareness is needed about the affordability of heritage and historical housing.

Heritage resources and older buildings such as large single-family dwellings can contribute to the supply of secondary rental units. Heritage properties are often larger than newer developments and many of them are located in the neighbourhoods of the city with lower density. Through suites, the construction of laneway houses and additional ground oriented housing types (duplexes and rowhouses), some of the land value on heritage properties could be accessed while maintaining heritage resources, and increasing density. In some neighbourhoods flexibility with rezoning will allow for increased affordability, not only for the tenants, but for the single family homeowner as well. Creative solutions to increasing the units on heritage property including incentives for homeowners who are willing to construct laneway houses or other ground oriented housing types while retaining the original residence should be considered. Maintaining the design and scale of the original residence retains the character of the neighbourhood.



Vancouver lane home with retained principal residence. Photo Credit: VHF

Co-housing opportunities exist in residential neighbourhoods with heritage and older single family homes, as well as in aging apartment buildings such as those found in the West End. Promoting the use of older housing stock for alternative housing arrangements by allowing renovations that would repurpose building facilities for communal use is one such opportunity. A good example of an affordable rental housing project which has successfully been integrated into a heritage property is Mole Hill in the West End. Similar properties could be used for co-housing, perhaps with the addition of units that maintain the heritage scale. This would provide a range of benefits for the local community including retaining a sense of place. "Vancouver Specials" are particularly well suited to co-housing options.



A row of Vancouver Specials Credit: VHF

Rental protection regulations improve the affordability of the rental housing supply, much of which is older housing stock. It is encouraging to see that the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability report references the need to preserve and upgrade the existing rental housing stock. Financial tools such as a revolving loan fund will go a long way to maintaining, renovating and retrofitting older buildings for energy efficiency, and safety. This is a clear policy which will lead to sustainable, liveable, and affordable communities that retain their cultural and historic fabric.

While many heritage and older buildings are relatively affordable in comparison with new builds, some **Vancouverites would pay a premium to live in a property with historical or cultural significance. In fact, 49% of Vancouver residents would pay more to live in an updated heritage building (+5.5%, 19 times out of 20).** This does not suggest that heritage housing rents should be higher than newer builds, but there is clearly a segment of the population that values living in a building with unique features. This is important to consider when renovating or repurposing older properties for affordable housing; the willingness-to-pay for heritage characteristics should be factored into the equation.

49% of Vancouver residents
would pay more to live in an
updated heritage building

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HERITAGE CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

A number of recommendations were put forward by the key informant interviewees for VHF, heritage professionals, the City of Vancouver, and developers. They are summarized below:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VANCOUVER HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Key informants interviewed for this report were unanimous in their support of VHF and its work on increasing awareness of heritage conservation in Vancouver. While some interviewees expressed their hopes that VHF would take on more of an advocacy role in the years to come, others considered the educational mandate as being the core of the organization's work. Some potential programs and projects were put forward as possible initiatives to pursue in the future. They include:

School Curriculum

A number of key informants mentioned the idea of collaborating with the Vancouver School Board on creating a living curriculum, interactive timelines and tours that showcase Vancouver's heritage assets. Primary and secondary school classes could learn about the history of the region through visiting heritage properties, such as the Joy Kogawa House, and complete modules about heritage planning, conservation, and design.

A Heritage Conversion Project

One particularly creative suggestion was the idea of a pilot project to rehabilitate a heritage property for either the future offices of VHF, or for generating revenue for other programs. VHF staff would experience firsthand the hurdles that heritage homeowners have to overcome in order to renovate their properties and the project could produce recommendations and best practices. In addition, VHF would be able to showcase a successfully restored heritage property.

Promote Energy Performance for Heritage Buildings

VHF has a role to play in promoting energy retrofits for heritage buildings in order to ensure that their environmental impact is minimized. The foundation is already carrying out awareness and education programs such as sustainability workshops.

A Dialogue Initiative

Some key informants noted that VHF could play a larger role in bringing together members of different sectors to discuss heritage conservation in the city. Through dialogue, planners, architects, developers, and advocates could address the regulatory and financial barriers to heritage conservation and establish best practices. Hosting dialogues and forums for city building departments and heritage professionals would also allow for the discussion on the intent of the building code as it relates to heritage and ensure that all of the participants on both sides of a project are very clear on what is required for building improvements. Preliminary dialogues could focus on heritage conservation and its integration with current municipal priorities including sustainability, affordability and densification.

Social Media Campaign and Targeting Young People

A repeated recommendation from the interviews was the implementation of a strategy to engage young people in heritage conservation through social media campaigns and events for young professionals and students. The creative class is an important part of Vancouver's cultural fabric and consists of a large portion of Vancouver's young population. Hosting youth-friendly musical, artistic and cultural events with a heritage component would go a long way to developing support for conservation efforts from a younger demographic.

Advocacy

A few interviewees thought that VHF should be actively involved in every planning decision that affects heritage property. While this might not come down to advocating for specific properties, it would include having a representative from the organization participate on all major committees and in public consultation processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR **HERITAGE PROFESSIONALS**

Many of the heritage professionals interviewed had recommendations for other planners, architects and developers involved in restoration and renovation efforts. Their comments included:

- Broaden the understanding of heritage beyond buildings of a certain age to streetscapes, parks, boulevards, transit lines, and other elements which make a city unique.
- Continue support for heritage planning in key heritage neighbourhoods such as Gastown and Chinatown and stay involved in consultation processes.
- Consider heritage conservation as part of a suite of environmental sustainability and affordability policies.
- Gain knowledge in energy retrofitting for heritage properties and learn more about the environmental benefits of maintaining heritage building stock.



Photo Credit: "Heritage Homes Hover Over Strathcona" Vancouver Sun, Aug 7, 2012. Photo by Les Bazso, PNG

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR **THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY**

Heritage conservation cannot be successful without support from the development community. The interviewees had a number of recommendations for developers including:

- Value older buildings for their contribution of character to neighbourhoods that may not themselves merit being on the heritage register but where some of what they contribute to the neighbourhood could be retained in redevelopment.
- Save materials when demolishing older buildings to integrate some heritage features into new builds such as floors, stained glass windows, tiling, etc. This will avoid unnecessary landfill and allow for some maintenance of heritage on properties that would otherwise see the destruction of potentially high quality, reusable materials.
- Continue to support heritage conservation in recognition of the premium that many property buyers and businesses are willing to pay for historically or culturally significant buildings.
- Adhere to best practices when carrying out heritage conversions or renovations.

"I would say that there was a time when people dreaded the thought that they were having to deal with a heritage property – but now an increasing number of developers, although it's still a relatively small number, actually seek out opportunities that include heritage buildings."

-Interviewee

"Heritage has captured the imagination of even the development and business community as an essential ingredient for successful projects, communities and cities. People see it as an integral layer for a successful project. Developers, instead of being resistant, there is an openness to integrating the layers of history in a site on a project, although they are still a bit guarded due to challenges."

-Interviewee

"If one were to do research into where the truly affordable housing is in the city, it would be in older buildings – basement suites in houses, old apartment buildings, old buildings from the 1910s that have been broken up into suites. As those buildings are being torn down and redeveloped or gentrified; a lot of the truly affordable housing is disappearing."

-Interviewee

"There are too many horror stories of people who set out quite honestly with an old home, optimistically. People go ahead and quietly and responsibly renovate their houses – but they are scared of triggering a nightmare scenario of City inspections. There is a disconnect between the City's intent with its heritage program and the reality of the way it inspects renovations and safety codes."

-Interviewee

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A number of ideas for achieving current municipal goals and retaining heritage resources were identified by the key informant interviewees.

To best use heritage resources to achieve municipal sustainability goals suggestions included:

- Recognize the lower ecological and carbon footprint of retaining and retrofitting older building stock over new green construction and integrate this within planning decisions.
- Improve the energy performance of existing buildings through innovative financing such as the loan fund proposed in the Final Report from the Mayor's Task Force on Housing Affordability. Another example is the Home Energy Loan Fund.
- Consider grants and tax holidays, as well as less parking space requirements for expanding older buildings.

To help use heritage resources to achieve affordability and density goals Heritage Revitalization agreements and other similar tools can be expanded to achieve the objectives noted in this paper. For example:

- Expand Transferable Heritage Density Bonus program to achieve the density goals for expected population growth in the coming decades.
- Provide incentives or fast-tracking lanehouse applications that commit to retaining the original residence.
- Consider selling square footage from the density bank to single family homeowners who want to add suites or additional laneway house capacity to their properties.
- Make it easier to adapt heritage buildings for multiple uses including social housing (e.g., co-housing).

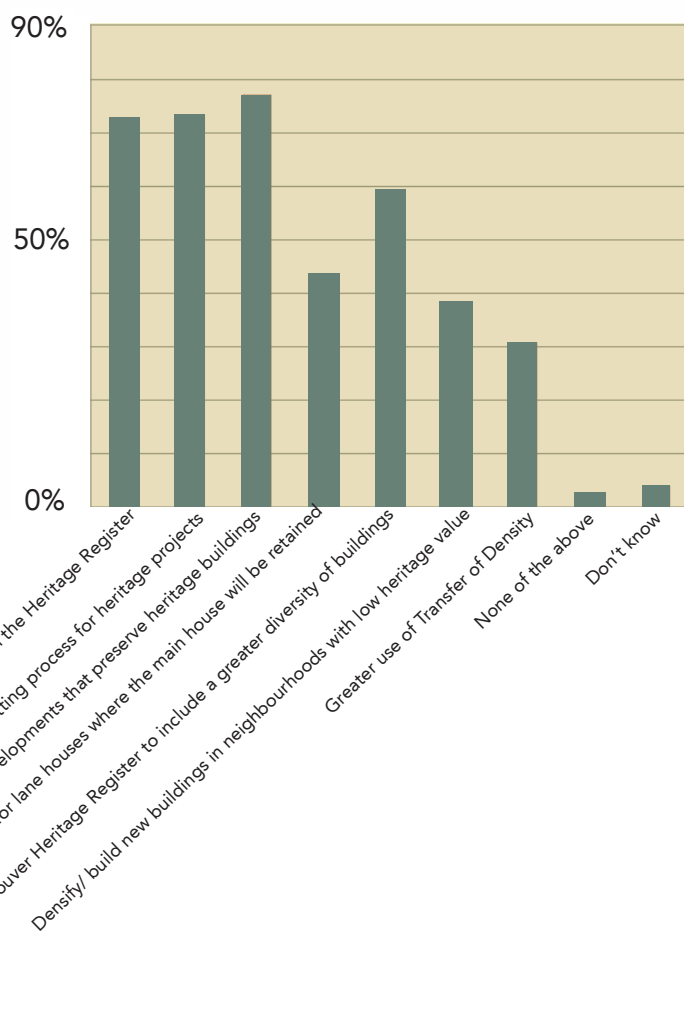
To better conserve heritage resources for historic, cultural and commercial use suggestions include:

- Update the heritage register to reflect values-based heritage conservation ¹¹ and consider broadening the definition of heritage to include newer architectural forms.
- Leverage greater investment from the private sector by expanding partnerships to retain heritage resources.
- Relax some of the seismic and fire safety requirements for heritage buildings. Sometimes the costs are so high to reach the standards required that developers and property owners are discouraged from renovating. It may be that doing a partial safety upgrade is better than not doing it at all.
- Coordinate the efforts of the heritage program staff and building inspectors to ensure that heritage projects are not delayed and burdened by extra costs for renovations. The disconnect between the street inspectors dealing with heritage alteration permits and the goals of the heritage program should be addressed. Conduct more training for building inspectors on best practices for alternative compliance for building codes.

11. Values-based heritage conservation is the practice of maintaining historic buildings and landscapes for their values to the community, rather than just their age or uniqueness.

- Holding The heritage awards more regularly would raise the profile of and communicate best practices in heritage conservation. Celebrate innovative projects that encourage the integration of heritage with sustainability, affordability and densification. The awards encourage developers and architects to strive for excellence in heritage conservation.
- Update the city website to include project profiles and case studies with photos of before and after, and the economic value and environmental benefits of heritage award winners.
- Encourage the development of good technical training in heritage conservation within the planning departments and also externally in university planning programs within the province.
- Advocate for more funding at the provincial and federal level for heritage projects. Encourage local developers and groups to access green building, energy efficiency and housing affordability funds for older building stock.
- Expedite the process for property owners willing to put their properties on the heritage registry.

Figure 1.6: Public Recommendations for Encouraging Conservation of Heritage Buildings



"If we could take every building we have built and give it new economic life rather than tearing it down that would be a pretty sustainable world we would live in."

-Interviewee

“With globalization, there is a risk that we are losing our connectedness – the risk is that we lose local identity. A lot of people are trying to be sustainable through signature architecture – the smartest cities are thinking about who they are, and where they are going.

We’ve always been guarded and cautious and that is part of our identity. If we take that bigger lens about what is our heritage – we have an incredible pioneering spirit, we are the left coast, draft dodgers, we’ve been in the backwaters, and we have a sense of having figured out ourselves. Our current [municipal] administration is furthering this idea – but we haven’t embraced this in our register and in how we use heritage.”

-Interviewee

THE FUTURE OF HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN VANCOUVER

From the interviews, a vision for retaining heritage resources to 2030 emerged. Interviewees spoke variously about their hopes to retain the historic and cultural fabric of the city, the move to values-based conservation, repurposing and reuse of heritage assets and collaborative initiatives over the next couple of decades. Some key parts of the vision included:

- Improved partnerships between heritage professional, developers, architects, residents and city officials.
- More dialogue between these groups will allow for identification of barriers to conserving heritage assets and integrated planning of neighbourhoods with historical and cultural resources.
- Strong incentives for reuse, rehabilitation and retrofit (the 3 R’s of historic buildings).
- Mixed use of heritage resources, including affordable and social housing projects.

The public survey also probed the question of how Vancouverites would like to see heritage resources incorporated into their urban environment over the next 20 years; Figure 1.7 shows the results.

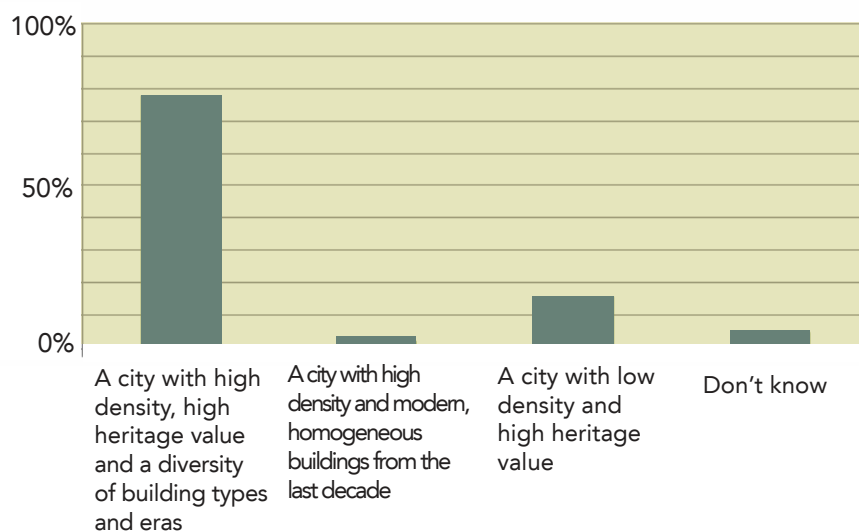


Figure 1.7:
A Vision for
Vancouver's
Built Environment

A city with high density, high heritage value and a diversity of building types and eras is by far the preferred vision the public has for Vancouver's built environment (78% + 4.5%, 19 times out of 20). This is an indication that cultural and historic built resources have a role to play, not only in the aesthetic environment of the future, but the practical achievement of densification of the city's neighbourhoods as well.

KEY LEARNINGS

Conserving heritage building retains not only bricks and mortar but also the history, character and identity of communities where people live, work and recreate. Many professionals in the creative and technology industries choose to locate their offices in historic Gastown; the culinary and fashion communities are also flourishing in older buildings in that neighbourhood. The West End continues to provide reasonably priced and spacious rental housing a mere ten minute bus ride or cycle from downtown offices. Chinatown draws visitors from around the world who marvel at the history of Vancouver's prominent immigrant population, and Mount Pleasant is a new hub of commercial activity with trendy cafes and restaurants tucked into older building stock. Many other neighbourhoods in Vancouver cherish their heritage resources, whether they be historic housing stock, commercial buildings or community amenities. Heritage is what defines each and every neighbourhood in Vancouver and allows for creativity and innovation through repurposing.

Urban revitalization spurs economic growth, particularly in the artistic and creative industries ¹². When coupled with arts and culture initiatives, heritage and historic asset conservation promotes cultural tourism. The Global Tourism Watch estimates the potential market size for tourism focused on Canadian historical and cultural attractions at 11,192,000 out-of-region pleasure travellers ¹³. Built heritage is "the heart of cultural and heritage tourism," and investment in maintaining these assets retains the sense of place and authenticity that is a key part of any tourism product ¹⁴.

There is not only a direct economic link, but a connection between heritage and quality of life; traditional communities are typically walkable, bikeable, have plenty of green space and are well-served by transit. In Vancouver's case, many neighbourhood "villages" grew out of streetcar line stops during the first half of the twentieth century; this model of urban planning is being revisited in recent transportation plans which prioritize active transportation and access to commercial and cultural amenities as key features of city life. As the region faces rapid population growth, densification will be a necessary path to increasing the supply of housing; however, without the conservation of the cultural and historic fabric of this city, the risk is that a few decades hence many parts of our urban environment will be unrecognizable. A more socially and environmentally sustainable approach is to integrate heritage conservation with other municipal priorities. Heritage conservation is an important part of ensuring that Vancouver achieves its affordability and greenest city goals, while retaining the character of its unique neighbourhoods.

12. Urban Renewal and Revitalization. Creative City Network of Canada (2005).

13. Canada Report 2011. Prepared for the Canadian Tourism Commission by Global Tourism Watch (2011).

14. Pp. i. Built Heritage: Assessing a Tourism Resource. Heritage Canada Foundation (2002).

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Urban Renewal and Revitalization. Creative City Network of Canada (2005).

Distribution of Survey and Sample Representativeness

The sample is fairly representative of the population, but the methodology employed is not entirely without limitations. Bias could have been introduced into the survey sample for a variety of reasons including voluntary response bias as those with an interest in heritage conservation would be more likely to take the survey, the distribution techniques employed (social media, list-serves) and demographic distribution. While it is prohibitively expensive and time consuming to conduct random sampling for a project of this size, an effort was made to ensure that the survey was distributed to a wide range of groups with a variety of potential perspectives on heritage conservation (Table 2.1). The survey link was sent out the first and second week of September.

Table 2.1:
Survey Distribution,
Organizations and
Distribution Methods

| Organization | Distribution Method |
|---|------------------------|
| All 22 Business Improvement Associations | Email |
| All 22 Neighbourhood Houses | Email |
| Vancouver UDI | Email |
| BC Real Estate Foundation | Email |
| Cooperative Housing Federation of Canada | Email |
| Cooperative Housing Federation of BC | Email |
| BC Housing | Email |
| Covenant House | Email |
| Union Gospel Mission | Email |
| W2 | Email |
| Select planning and developing firms | Twitter |
| Vancouver Heritage Foundation members | Email/Facebook/Twitter |
| UBC SCARP/SCALA/SFU Urban Studies and other university programs | Email |

Each of the potential demographic biases are addressed in Table 2.2 and the section below.

| | Population | Age | Gender | Educational Attainment | Years lived in Vancouver |
|-----------|--------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Vancouver | 668,690 (BC Stats, 2011) | 39.0 years (Median, Statistics Canada, 2009) | Males: 49.6%, Females: 50.3% (BC Stats, 2011) | 68.4% (Mainland/Southwest BC labour force Age 25 to 54 with a post-secondary certificate/diploma or higher, Statistics Canada, 2011) | Most respondents have lived 16-20 years in the city (10%) or 50+ years (11%) |
| Sample | 320 | 35-44 years (Median) | Males: 39%, Females: 61% | 93% | Metropolitan Vancouver growth rate: 9.3% (Statistics Canada, 2011) |

Table 2.2: Demographic statistics for Vancouver (population) and VHF survey (sample)

POPULATION AND SAMPLE SIZE

According to the most recent census (2011) the population of Vancouver is 668,690. The sample population was 320. As only 0.6% of survey respondents indicated that they were not residents of Vancouver, their responses were left in the sample as they were deemed to be statistically insignificant.

Age

The median age of Vancouver residents was 39.0 in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2009). The median age range of the sample was 35-44. The sample had a normal distribution and is representative of the population with respect to age.

Gender

Vancouver had a population made up of 49.6% males and 50.3% females in 2011 (BC Statistics, 2011). The sample respondents are 61% females and 39% males. This could be due to the online nature of the survey which relied on social media; women make up 64% of Facebook users, and 58% of Twitter users ¹⁵ and thus may be more likely to fill out online surveys. As gender is not expected to have an impact on perspectives on heritage conservation the results were not weighted.

Educational Attainment

The percentage of the Mainland/Southwest BC labour force Age 25 to 54 with a post-secondary certificate/diploma or higher is 68.4% (Statistics Canada, 2011 Census Data); this is likely a slight underestimate for Vancouver which generally has higher educational attainment than surrounding areas. The survey sample found 93% of respondents had obtained post-secondary certificate/diploma or a university degree, indicating that the sample is not entirely representative of the city's population as a whole. This could be due to the distribution technique and online nature of the survey as internet users are generally more affluent and well-educated than those who are not reachable through social media, industry and organizational list-serves. The results were not weighted but when respondents with only a highschool diploma are separated out 15 of the 16 respondents (94%) were in favour of preserving heritage buildings in Vancouver and one responded 'Don't Know'. Though the sample is small, this indicates that education may not be a predictor of views on heritage conservation.

Years lived in Vancouver

While the census data does not probe the number of years lived in each Canadian city, it does track the population growth of urban centres. Greater Vancouver had a growth rate of 9.3% in 2011, with Port Moody and Surrey growing the fastest. The City of Vancouver likely has a slower rate of growth. The survey sample shows that many of the survey respondents are newcomers to Vancouver, which may affect their attachment to the history of the city. The distribution is fairly normal, however, with the largest groups being those who have lived 16-20 years in the city or 50+ years.

15. Digital Flash NYC, 2012.

Table 2.3 Key Informant Interviewees

| Interviewees (14) | Position/Affiliation |
|------------------------|---|
| Donald Luxton | Heritage Consultant & President of Heritage Vancouver Society |
| Gerry McGeough | Architect for UBC Campus |
| Gordon Price | Director of The City Program at Simon Fraser University |
| Jacquie Forbes-Roberts | Retired City of Vancouver General Manager, Community Services |
| Jennifer Iredale | Director, BC Government Heritage Branch |
| Judy Oberlander | Heritage Consultant, Founder of The City Program |
| Malcolm Elliot | Principal, Endall Elliot Architects |
| Marta Farevaag | Partner, Phillips Farevaag Smallemberg |
| Michael Geller | President, The Geller Group |
| Michael Kluckner | Writer, Artist |
| Paul Nursey | Canadian Tourism Commission and VHF Director |
| Penny Gurstein | Director, School of Community and Regional Planning |
| Richard Keate | Chair, City of Vancouver Heritage Commission |
| Robert Fung | President, Salient Developments |

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Questions

1. What does heritage mean to you? Why do you work/have you worked on heritage policy or in the heritage conservation field?
2. What gains in heritage conservation have been made in the last 25 years?
3. What do you think the City of Vancouver is doing well with respect to heritage conservation?
4. What are others (developers, architects, planners) doing well with respect to heritage conservation?
5. What does the City need to work on with respect to heritage conservation?
6. What do others (developers, architects, planners) need to work on with respect to heritage conservation?
7. How do you see the goal of heritage conservation fitting in with other municipal priorities such as affordability, densification and sustainability?
8. Do you have any recommendations as to how the City and other heritage stakeholders could more effectively conserve our heritage stock?
9. What do you think the role of Vancouver Heritage Foundation should be?
10. What is VHF doing well? What can VHF do more effectively?
11. What is your vision for Vancouver's heritage assets/resources in 10 years? 20 years?

APPENDIX C

ADVANCEMENTS IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION

There have been numerous advancements made in the field of heritage conservation over the past 25 years in Vancouver. Some of these were identified by the interviewees. They include:

- A broader understanding and definition of heritage to include landscapes and whole neighbourhoods or areas with high heritage value.
- A partial shift from object-based (monuments, tourist attractions, landmarks) to meaning-based conservation which places emphasis on rehabilitating historic neighbourhoods and cultural landscapes.
- The Heritage Register, the Heritage Revitalization Agreements and Transferable Heritage Density Bonuses Program, as well as other aspects of the heritage management program.
- The integration of a heritage consultant as one of the key professionals on a team in some architectural, planning and development firms.
- The establishment of Historic Planning Area committees in 1973 such as those for Gastown and Chinatown.

APPENDIX D

AN OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION

CITY OF VANCOUVER PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

The City of Vancouver has a range of tools at its disposal to protect and conserve heritage resources. These include incentive programs, permit fast-tracking, legislative tools, zoning, subdivision, parking bylaw relaxations, and revitalization agreements. Each major program or policy is outlined below. For more information and specifics see the City of Vancouver website.¹⁶

Heritage Management Plan

The Vancouver Charter allows Council to protect heritage resources from demolition or alteration. Voluntary arrangements with property owners are part of the Heritage Management Plan to encourage individual homeowners and developers to rehabilitate and conserve heritage buildings and landscapes.

16. City of Vancouver Heritage Program. [www://http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/heritage-conservation.aspx](http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/heritage-conservation.aspx)

Heritage Register

The Vancouver Heritage Register, established in 1986 as the Vancouver Heritage Inventory, lists the City's buildings and structures, streetscapes, landscape resources and archaeological sites that have historical, cultural, aesthetic, scientific, or educational worth. In 2012, there are 2,150 buildings listed on the register in all three categories (A – Primary Significance, B – Significant, C – Contextual Character). Of the buildings listed on the register 510 (24%) are legally designated and thus protected from demolition. The remaining 1640 buildings are not protected from demolition or significant alteration.

Heritage Bylaw

This bylaw allows for legal designation of heritage buildings and landscapes to “maintain a legacy for the future.” There are two types of designations: Schedule “A” designations fully protect the exterior of buildings from alteration while Schedule “B” designations protect specific features or portions of a building. After a building has been designated the property owner cannot alter the exterior, interior, or landscape without obtaining a heritage alteration permit.

Transferable Heritage Density Bonuses

In order to provide incentives to developers willing to rehabilitate and legally protect heritage buildings, the density bonus program allows for increased density on a site where heritage resources are maintained. On sites where increasing the density is not possible, the Council or the development permit board may permit the developer to transfer the density from the “donor” site to a “receiver” site. Currently receiver sites include the Downtown District, portions of the West End and Central Broadway. All or a portion of the density from a donor site can be sold to another property owner or developer hoping to build on a receiver site. The City of Vancouver maintains a Transferable Heritage Density inventory that lists all of the donor sites with density for sale. As of September 2012, there is 1.2 million square feet that has been approved for heritage projects. Due to rising land and construction values, and the lack of heritage incentives from the Federal and Provincial government, the density bank has grown to an unprecedented size and it is expected that it will take several years to transfer the current density to receiver sites. In July 2009, Council approved measures to rebalance the density bank which included freezing density creation and establishing a target annual absorption rate of at least 200,000 sq. ft. per year.

Heritage Revitalization Agreements

In order to protect unique heritage properties the City can enter into a legally binding agreement with the owner of heritage property. The agreement is mutually beneficial in that it allows for adaptation or modernization of a heritage property in exchange for the restoration and protection of the heritage features. An HRA may require the approval of a bylaw by Council that supplements or varies existing bylaws.

Vancouver's Heritage Areas

In an effort to protect areas with high heritage value, the City has established regulations and design guidelines for Chinatown, Gastown, Shaughnessy, and Yaletown. These measures are intended to ensure that development in these areas is compatible with their unique character. Chinatown and Gastown are also National Historic Sites giving them further protection. A number of the city's historic neighbourhoods such as Mount Pleasant, Strathcona, Kitsilano and Grandview-Woodland have zoning in place which encourages the retention of heritage and character buildings.

Public Education Efforts

The City of Vancouver carries out a number of public education initiatives including the heritage plaque program and the heritage awards which take place approximately every two years.

HERITAGE ADVISORY GROUPS TO VANCOUVER CITY COUNCILLORS

The City of Vancouver has volunteer heritage advisory groups that work to maintain the heritage resources of the city. Their role is described below.

Heritage Commission

The Vancouver Heritage Commission advises City Council on the heritage resources of the city, the costs and benefits of preservation, the compatibility of heritage projects with proposed uses, and provides recommendations for designation of heritage buildings, structures, and lands. The commission consists of 11 voting members, appointed by City Council, and a City Council liaison who serves as a non-voting member.

Chinatown and Gastown Historic Area Planning Committees

These committees advise the Director of Planning on the preservation and protection of the heritage and character of the Chinatown and Gastown areas. They also collaborate with all City departments on policies and programs that affect the two neighbourhoods. Each committee consists of members appointed by City Council from a variety of local stakeholder groups including residents, businesspeople, community groups, and architects.

First Shaughnessy Advisory Design Panel

The First Shaughnessy Advisory Design Panel advises City Council, the Development Permit Board, and the Director of Planning on development and design issues in First Shaughnessy, with a focus on preserving the area's special character. The advisory design panel also advises the City's Director of Planning concerning the implementation and effectiveness of the approved planning policies, regulations, and design guidelines for the First Shaughnessy District.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

The following groups work in the community to advocate, educate and raise awareness about heritage conservation.

Vancouver Heritage Foundation

Vancouver Heritage Foundation is a registered charity that is dedicated to supporting the conservation of the city's heritage buildings through education, public awareness and granting activities. Foundation activities are open to everyone with a special emphasis on members of the public with an interest in the city's history, building owners, related professionals and related organizations. Activities include workshops, lectures, tours, publications, and granting programs to paint, restore and maintain heritage properties listed on the Heritage Register.

Heritage Vancouver Society

In 1992, Heritage Vancouver was established as a non-profit society and became the first independent heritage advocacy group in the city. The organization promotes the conservation of Vancouver's built, cultural and natural heritage.

Neighbourhood Heritage Groups

There are numerous groups working to promote heritage conservation at the neighbourhood level in Vancouver including Grandview Heritage, and Marpole Historical Society.

"It's important not to define heritage as buildings and old buildings – it's the whole fabric of the city – landscapes, pattern of streets, form of the neighbourhood... Things like little shopping streets that people have appreciated and used for 100 yrs can change very quickly – it isn't that they shouldn't change, but people should think carefully about what it is that they value about them and what they can retain as characteristics and qualities as change happens... I think that a lot of the time people don't explore options with any sophistication – this involves skilled designers. Change can happen with values being retained."

-Interviewee





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