



Heritage Vancouver

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Mayor Robertson and Vancouver City Council
Vancouver City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5V 1V4

Dear Mayor and Council:

RE: CHARACTER HOME ZONING REVIEW

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the City of Vancouver's Character Home Zoning Review. Heritage Vancouver Society (HVS) supports the official recognition of houses as heritage through the tools available to the City (e.g. Heritage Register, designation bylaws, heritage conservation areas). We also support planning policies, zoning and design guidelines that will enable the evolution of place character and livability in neighbourhoods through retention of historic houses and new contemporary design that will be 'heritage for the future'.

Heritage Vancouver Society (HVS) is a long-standing, independent voice for heritage with a progressive, inclusive vision:

*We want to inspire people with an idea. The idea that significant and irreplaceable aspects of Vancouver's cultural heritage provide the community a social benefit, and are worth protecting for future generations. **Through a thoughtful layering of new and old we are creating a diverse and inspiring place to live.***

We believe in the conservation of historic places that matter to communities and support policies that connect heritage to community values around broader planning issues such as place making and livable, affordable cities.

Specifically, with respect to the Character House Zoning Review, we propose that historic houses be understood and considered as part of a vision for the future of Vancouver neighbourhoods within a framework of four principles:

1. The character of our neighbourhoods is ever evolving, diverse and unique to each place.
2. Pre-1940s - and post-1940s - houses are important to retain where their architectural quality, or uniqueness, is integral to place character.
3. Contemporary architectural expression is essential for place character in historic areas to evolve through the inclusion of 'heritage for the future'.

4. A diversity of housing types and tenures in older neighbourhoods enables more people to enjoy living in historic areas with cultural and built heritage.

Based on these principles, we support the following options as presented in the Open House material for the Character House Zoning Review:

- Expansion of the Heritage Conservation Area Official Development Plan (HCA ODP) to include schedules listing the pre-1940s - and post-war - houses in study areas to protect as heritage houses.
- Zoning that supports retention through bonus density and allowances for conversion of pre-1940s houses to multiple dwellings and for ancillary dwellings (e.g. secondary suites and laneway houses).
- Zoning that allows densities, site coverage and building heights that will ensure that single-family dwellings will blend into the scale of residential streetscapes, and that permits multiple dwellings (e.g. duplexes, triplexes and other multi-unit residential options).

We also support:

- Assessment of pre-1940s - and post-war - houses to identify those which should be added to the Heritage Register.
- Removal of all design guidelines from zoning regulations other than basic metrics for maximum density, floor area, building height and site coverage, and minimum building setbacks and permeable landscaping.
- Separate outcome-oriented (or 'performance-based') design guidelines that respect historic context, where a street has established place character, but enable and encourage contemporary architectural expression.

Recommended Actions

We urge the City to adopt forward-thinking policies for historic neighbourhoods that embrace diversity in place character and livability through a set of actions:

- In the upcoming consultation in early 2017, work with communities to assess the pre-1940s - and post-war - houses in each study area to identify those which are significant enough to be officially heritage houses, and then include them in new HCAs and additions to the Heritage Register.
- Allow modifications to pre-1940s houses that have original features but are not significant enough to be heritage houses. Non-heritage houses should be permitted to alter in appearance and features so that place character continues to evolve in our historic areas.

At the same time, encourage the retention of pre-1940s houses through:

- Continue to offer bonus density and allow conversion into multiple dwelling units, building additions for secondary suites and/or laneway houses, subject to retention of historic houses.

- Retain zoning entitlements for new construction that result in sizes and scale of new buildings that are compatible with the place character in older neighbourhoods.
- Encourage and support contemporary architectural expression – in the design of modifications, new additions and new buildings - in historic neighbourhoods, to ensure that we have culture from our own time to bring forward with us as heritage for the future.

On the last point, the Open House materials did not include the proposed design guidelines. For the next round of consultation, we strongly encourage the City to engage residents, homeowners, practitioners and citizens on the following topics:

- Which pre-1940s - and post-war - houses to recognize as heritage?
- What modifications to pre-1940s houses are desired and supported?
- Is there support for contemporary design, where it will respect the place character of neighbourhoods through the size and scale of new houses?

At present, and in the recent past, the City processes for building approvals and planning often lack clarity and are leading to undesirable 'fake history' in design which is contrary to National Standard #4 "do not create a false sense of history".

We believe that the ideal outcomes of the current process would be three-fold:

- Retention of pre-1940s - and post war houses - where these are important to the communities in historic neighbourhoods.
- Conservation of houses that should be officially recognized as heritage.
- Continual evolution of place character through the contemporary design of new building modifications, additions and houses: **heritage for the future.**

We look forward to further discussion and dialogue on the HVS vision: "to create a diverse and inspiring place to live through a thoughtful layering of new and old".

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Javier'.

Javier Campos
President, Heritage Vancouver Society