



1020 Denman St., PO Box 47036 Denman Pl., Vancouver, BC V6G 3E1 | (604) 254-9411 www.heritagevancouver.org

December 3, 2013

Mayor Gregor Robertson and Vancouver City Council
Vancouver City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC
V5Y 1V4

**RE: Support for the Heritage Action Plan to Update Vancouver's
Heritage Conservation Program**

Dear Mayor Robertson and Council Members;

On behalf of the membership of the Heritage Vancouver Society, I am writing **to express our strongest support for the recommendations that are being brought forward as part of the Heritage Action Plan**. We urge Council to pass these measures, including the immediate "Quick Start Actions" as well as the "Medium to Longer-term" components. We also strongly support the extension of the Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program for the Downtown Eastside until the end of 2015.

The conservation of Vancouver's heritage resources is a challenging, but extremely significant activity, supported by 96.6% of our citizens. All too often, a potentially successful heritage project has been mired in red tape, or knocked off course due to conflicting civic policies. There have been all too many comments from participants, including owners and developers, that the City's heritage process is just too difficult, requiring onerous efforts to undertake even the simplest of projects. Endless delays are a major disincentive, and a streamlined heritage approvals process is a welcome, and overdue, step in the right direction.

It is also critical that the City finally proceed with the often promised, but long delayed, update of the Vancouver Heritage Register. The key tool for flagging and protecting heritage resources, the Heritage Register has remained relatively static since 1986. Many times, important heritage resources have been lost before they can be assessed and considered, due to lack of recognition on the Heritage Register. Our understanding of our heritage resources has broadened and deepened since 1986, and it is now timely to proceed with this Update, the importance of which has been recognized by all civic heritage groups that participate in the Heritage Alliance. Stalled more than once, it is now time to proceed with this important heritage planning initiative.



1020 Denman St., PO Box 47036 Denman Pl., Vancouver, BC V6G 3E1 | (604) 254-9411 www.heritagevancouver.org

The review and revision of RS District Schedules, based on the RT 3/6/8 models, would be a crucial component in preserving the character of our historic neighbourhoods, which are being badly eroded under current zoning. The potential development of a Heritage Conservation Area framework for First Shaughnessy is also a bold and progressive step in protecting significant neighbourhood heritage character.

While we support all of these proposed measures, it remains essential that Council allocate the budget necessary to make these recommendations work. While it is critical that the Heritage Register finally be updated, it is also important to understand that there are sites currently on the Heritage Register that remain threatened and may be lost due to weak policies and lack of incentives. We continue to suffer from the ongoing freeze on the Heritage Amenity Bank, and there are few financial incentives that can be offered to owners to ensure that conservation outcomes can be achieved. It would also be prudent to consider what future issues may arise if these recommendations are not implemented, and how the City can continue to engage with the ongoing issues of heritage conservation in the future through the development of a more proactive approach to heritage planning.

In addition to what is proposed in the Heritage Action Plan, we urge further consideration of measures that would unlock the Heritage Amenity Bank, and return one of our main heritage incentives to active use. In addition to the use of tax incentives in the Downtown Eastside, we would also strongly urge their extension, where applicable, to heritage resources anywhere in the city, particularly for the protection of our rapidly diminishing stock of significant cultural resources.

The adoption of these recommendations, and the allocation of sufficient resources to implement them, is a critical step in providing an expanded toolkit for the City and for those seeking to preserve our significant heritage resources. The Heritage Action Plan is a highly significant initiative, and we applaud Council and Staff in moving it forward.

We thank you sincerely in advance for your consideration in this most important matter.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Luce", with a stylized flourish at the end.

President, Heritage Vancouver

cc: Penny Ballem, City Manager
Brian Jackson, Director of Planning
Marco D'Agostini, Senior Heritage Planner
Vancouver Heritage Commission