



Heritage Vancouver

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January 21 2021

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

Re: 4. Employment Lands and Economy Review Quick Start Actions: Initial Zoning and Development By-law Amendments to Support Neighbourhood Grocery Stores

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are writing to express our support for item 4. Employment Lands and Economy Review Quick Start Actions: Initial Zoning and Development By-law Amendments to Support Neighbourhood Grocery Stores. In the detailed comments below we have a few suggestions to improve this policy as it moves forward.

Heritage Vancouver is an independent charitable non-profit, helping communities create and participate in sustaining the diverse heritage of the city. We advance a comprehensive understanding of heritage that captures the diverse ways people establish meaningful connections with the environment around them.

Neighbourhood Grocery stores and local serving retail in general are critical to creating complete neighbourhoods, which in turn enable community gathering, vibrancy and resilience. Neighbourhood grocery stores have been an important way for immigrants to make their way in Vancouver and as such serve as reminders of our collective past. The current policy of banning them unless “grandfathered” might be considered exclusionary as it prevents people from working and making a living from a low-barrier business on their own property.

Strathcona is an example where there are numerous local serving retail stores that are still community hubs as well as reminders of a diverse past. There are also examples of other types of businesses that are now long gone but the buildings remain - commercial bakeries, stables, and others. Nonetheless, it is the diversity of these business and residential spaces in the same blocks that helps to make Strathcona feel inhabited and alive. It is past time to allow these innocuous additions to our neighbourhoods to be included in new buildings, not just letting grandfathered examples remain in operation.

We suggest that this policy be further developed and implemented (particularly through the Vancouver Plan) to broaden allowable uses in residential zones. Why not extend the allowable uses for local serving retail in residential areas to beyond just neighbourhood groceries? Why can't we have small restaurants, boutiques and personal services included in our residential areas away from the high streets? Again

there are numerous examples of successful, low impact non-grocery retail and food service dotting our city in residential zones - notably Victoria Drive from Broadway to Hastings (Via Tevere pizza, a clothing store, an antique store to name a few). Perhaps this policy could also include a component where the history of our small grocerers is made more legible in our neighbourhoods.

We observe that this policy could lead to many positive benefits for community connection, local economy, more walkable neighbourhoods, and a diversity of more places that offer experiences with others. However, we also observe that the policy must be carefully crafted to avoid negative impacts on neighbourhood character and the quiet enjoyment of residential spaces - i.e. land value lift and potential difficulties with commercial property taxes, empty storefronts or too many non-locally owned chain stores, or businesses that have negative noise or emission impacts on their residential context. With careful work we are confident that a balance between allowable uses and negative impacts can be created to help Vancouver's residential neighbourhoods diversify and become more resilient over time.

Sincerely,

Heritage Vancouver