



Heritage Vancouver

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June 11, 2019

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

Re: Motion B.4 Punjabi Market at Fifty: Celebrating the Past and Planning for the Future

Dear Mayor and Council,

We are writing in support of Motion B.4: Punjabi Market at Fifty: Celebrating the Past and Planning for the Future.

As many look towards a City Wide Plan with hope for a city that better provides for its citizens, we note the importance of the variety of distinct, identifiable places across the city which still remain for everyone to experience. Punjabi Market is certainly one of these places which is deserving of much more planning attention in order to contextually revitalize the area. It is an invaluable part of the city and its significance spans from being a historic place elemental to the identity of the South Asian community, to the first and largest South Asian Market outside South Asia with its unique commercial identity, to a location for the important Vaisakhi celebration.

In contrast to common opinions that heritage is focused on nostalgia and freezing a past that is no longer there, we would like to emphasize that the heritage of Punjabi Market is very much *living*. Heritage in this context is very compatible with development so long as the Punjabi Market community and those who wish to be a part of Punjabi Market are able to participate in imagining and shaping something new based upon what is valued about it. This includes but is not limited to the history of the market, the relationships between the younger generations and “aunties and uncles” of Punjabi Market, the types of small neighbourhood businesses, and activities that celebrate South Asian cultures.

We will conclude with reference to point 9 in the Motion regarding an Area Management Plan and the creation of an area Statement of Significance. While we are encouraged by the prospect of this as it is an integral part of the process of heritage planning, we feel the need to emphasize the words “local working groups” and “actions” in the motion. As mentioned above, because Punjabi Market represents a type of heritage that is very much alive and present today, when arriving at the characteristics that define Punjabi Market, it is crucial that local community and users of this area’s heritage be given a large role in arriving at those character defining elements. This is because many of Punjabi Market’s characteristics relate to an experience rather than to just a particular aesthetic. Further to that, we wish to emphasize that credible actions will need to be tied to protecting, enhancing and monitoring any change in those character defining elements once they are defined.

Punjabi Market is a distinct and important part of the city and its history. Together with other areas in the city, it contributes to a diverse range of human experiences for the people of Vancouver.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Yuen', with a stylized, cursive script.

Bill Yuen
Executive Director, Heritage Vancouver