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December 13, 2010

Mayor Gregor Robertson and Council
C/o Vancouver City Hall
453 W. 12th Ave.
Vancouver, BC, V5Y 1V4

RE: 7101-7201 Granville Street: Shannon Estate Proposed Rezoning

Dear Mayor Robertson and Council Members;

A rezoning proposal regarding the original Shannon Estate property has been submitted to the City of Vancouver. Busby, Perkins + Will has applied to the City of Vancouver to rezone the 4 hectare site from RS-6 (Residential) to CD-1 (Comprehensive Development) District and redevelop it with residential buildings, which would increase the overall floor space ratio over the entire site to 2.08 FSR.

The Shannon Estate is a very historic site with great heritage significance. Originally built for sugar magnate, Benjamin Tingley Rogers, the palatial estate was the grandest residential project designed by prominent Edwardian-era architects, Somervell & Putnam. Although it was designed in 1913, it was not started until 1915. Called *Shannon*, it was built far from the city's centre on what was then a remote ten-acre site at Granville Street and 57th Avenue. This ambitious forty-room mansion was the largest residence west of Toronto. The outbreak of war, and Rogers's death in 1918, delayed completion until 1925. Financier Austin C. Taylor bought this estate in 1936, and lived here until his death in 1965. There are a number of remaining features from the original estate development, including the Mansion, Gate House, Coach House, a perimeter wall and many remnants of the original garden design and landscaping. In the 1970s, a townhouse development by Erickson Massey Architects saw the insertion of a number of residential rental units through a substantial redesign of the site, while retaining the major heritage features. The Shannon Estate is listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register (Category A) and the Mansion and the perimeter wall are municipally designated.

Heritage Vancouver has been reviewing the heritage aspects of the possible rezoning proposed for the Shannon Estate property. The development consultant team has provided a briefing on the proposed rezoning. Overall, Heritage Vancouver supports the heritage aspects of the project, as follows:

- The existing designation of the Mansion and the perimeter wall would be maintained. These aspects of the site would be upgraded as per heritage conservation Standards and Guidelines.
- The Gate House and Coach House would be upgraded and designated as heritage structures.
- Many aspects of the original garden design and landscaping would be rehabilitated to provide a more appropriate setting for the main estate house, including axial views.

We would like to address the following concerns and propose alternate options.

It is recognized that Designation of the Mansion and of perimeter wall operates as a significant and important regulator of future development, a status that should be maintained. It is of central importance that the massing of any new buildings should not overwhelm the site, with

consequent adverse impact on the surviving heritage elements, notably the Mansion as the centerpiece.

As proposed, the current heights, massing and densities compromise the historic context of the site. The Mansion would predominantly be seen only between much higher structures. Although the retention of the formal gardens, the Gate House and the Coach House mitigate this impact on the context, the complete replacement of the Erickson townhouses does impact the overall setting. This is especially notable in the area between the Gate House and the Coach House, where a large structure is proposed for insertion.


The Statement of Significance for the site contains only a passing mention of the Erickson Massey contribution to the site. There may, however, be the potential for the retention and rehabilitation of a small portion of the 1970s development to illustrate the evolution of the site over time. The block of townhouses inserted between the Gate House and the Coach House appear to be in comparatively good condition, and they are sited where they contribute positively to the village-like setting of that portion of the site in its relationship to the Mansion and former rose garden. The possibility of retaining this townhouse block has apparently been in play for some time, and should be given serious consideration. The proposed Block A which replaces this set of townhouses is out of scale, and isolates the Gate House behind 4 to 9 storey walls. Potentially, the retention of this row of Erickson Massey townhouses between the two retained historic structures would help to maintain the overall atmosphere of the setting in which the Mansion sits, a setting which must be respected.

Finally, we are concerned at the proposed strata conversion of the Mansion's fine formal reception rooms. Since the 1970s, these significant features, identified in the City Heritage Interiors Inventory, have been used as shared amenity space for the residents. These interior features should be safeguarded if at all possible. The loss of their character that would result through conversion to individual strata units should be avoided if at all possible.

Heritage Vancouver appreciates the concerted efforts of the developer and the consultant team to protect the heritage character and values of this very significant site. We hope that with some modifications, the proposed rezoning will be able to provide an even better response to heritage considerations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Yours truly,

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

Donald Luxton, President
Heritage Vancouver Society

Cc. Penny Ballem, City Manager
Marco D'Agostini, Senior Planner, Heritage Group
Brent Toderian, Director of Planning
Members of the Heritage Commission