



P.O. Box 3336, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3Y3, (604) 254-9411

July 23, 2007

Mayor Sullivan and Council
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Re: 'Yaletown' Houses – Downtown South

We are writing to express alarm about the rapidly disappearing stock of turn-of-the-century vernacular frame houses in Downtown South – Vancouver's original Yaletown. Dotted along Howe, Homer, Seymour and Richards, they are among the last surviving single-family structures in the downtown peninsula, meriting retention as a record of the early residential development of the city. Most are not listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register. Many of these – now moved or demolished – had valuable historical or cultural values, such as the Leslie lane house, the Percy Linden house (noted for its bird-houses and applied homilies), and the one-time Iaci's restaurant, noted for its connection to the Phillipone family. Moreover, historical research has uncovered – often too late – that these modest vernacular structures are among the oldest in the city – dating in some cases to the late 1880s. Their value in the record of our city's early development cannot be underestimated.

In its 2006 Top Ten Endangered list, Heritage Vancouver raised the alarm about this rapidly dwindling stock, yet since then, the pace of demolition and redevelopment has accelerated and the obliteration is now nearly complete. Almost all of the remaining houses on Seymour and Richards have been demolished, including 909 and 1078 Richards and 1052 Seymour. The most recent to go were an identical pair of homes at 1083 and 1087 Richards. The homes were in good condition and retained much of their original architectural detail. The few remaining homes are at risk – including 335 Smithe, 1062 Richards, and 1080 Richards.

Unfortunately, most of the sites have 'flown under the radar' due to their omission from the Heritage Register. Urgent action must be taken if ANY of the remaining handful of homes is to survive. We are calling for the immediate documentation and evaluation of ALL remaining historic structures in Downtown South, and consideration of their inclusion, or eligibility for inclusion, in the Register. All of these houses should be flagged for consideration of possible heritage incentives when development inquiries are made.

Finally, the problem is not limited to Downtown South. The pace of development in Downtown has rendered all of the remaining historic single-family houses at risk. This includes some of the City's very oldest houses along East Cordova and Powell Streets. An in-depth comprehensive review and evaluation of all the remaining Downtown early housing stock is urgently required.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "don luxton".

Donald Luxton, President

cc. Gerry McGeough, Senior Heritage Planner
Vancouver Heritage Commission
Brent Toderian, Director of Planning
John Mackie, Vancouver Sun