



CALGARY  
HERITAGE  
INITIATIVE



ADVOCACY

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**March 5, 2018**

Councillor Peter Demong  
Ward 14,  
The City of Calgary  
800 Macleod Trail SE  
Calgary AB T2G 2M3

Dear Councillor Demong,

**RE: Does The City require three planners devoted to heritage during times of fiscal restraint?**

First, I would like to introduce the Calgary Heritage Initiative Society (CHI). We are a city-wide, grassroots heritage group founded in 2005 and granted society status in 2006. One of our main areas of focus is advocating for the preservation of buildings and sites of historic and architectural interest.

On behalf of CHI board, I am responding to your recent comments as a member of the Standing Policy Committee on Planning and Urban Development (PUD) regarding the attention The City gives to heritage. *"I do think it is incumbent upon the actual owners of the property to seek designation. I don't think it's something we should be actively doing. We shouldn't be going out there looking for locations. I encourage private ownership to come forward and do it, but I don't think we should be spending administration's time and efforts to do that . . . during these times of fiscal restraint."*

Questioning the value of promoting heritage designation is another demonstration of the lack of will to protect Calgary's heritage resources. Relying on owner-led designations has been ineffective in the past. Last year City Council maintained that de-designating of the Eau Claire Smokestack to allow private development was not precedent-setting. Recently PUD voted against designating the Nimmons Residence as its siting might interfere with a proposed development though an alternate designation bylaw may be revisited with a new planning application for a large project.

This is troubling as Calgary Heritage Authority executive director, Josh Traptow, highlighted that there is an enormous amount of historically significant property that has not yet been designated. There are 800

properties on The City's Inventory of Evaluated Historic Resources and only 100 or 12.5 per cent have been designated.

We support and collaborate with like-minded organizations such as The City's Heritage Planning business unit and the Calgary Heritage Authority. Heritage Planners are crucial in promoting and guiding heritage building owners through the municipal designation process. Their expertise and experience are key to the proper identification, protection and management of Calgary's historic resources. Calgary is already underserved in the number of Heritage Planners on staff when compared on a per capita basis with Edmonton, Vancouver and especially, Toronto.

Just like Community Recreation Coordinators, Traffic Planners, and Urban Foresters, The City has a number of experts on staff to work with citizens and ensure information is available to Calgarians in their area of need or interest. The Heritage Planners are three of The City's experts and they are vital to ensuring our built heritage is preserved given current policies for inner city densification and transportation reform that continues to put heritage resources and cultural streetscapes at risk. For example, one of Calgary's oldest communities, Hillhurst, experienced a radical change to its streetscape along Memorial Drive NW, west of 10 Street. when 13 century-old character homes were demolished in the fall of 2017 to make way for a five-storey, 93-unit residential condo complex. At least through the work of the Heritage Planning department, a heritage density transfer mechanism saw two small sites in the Kensington Business Improvement Area receive designations.

Built heritage belongs to all of us because it is a tangible connection to our historical roots and gives us a "sense of place." Each community's unique history is written in its buildings, streets and landscapes. As symbols of a shared past, historic places reinforce our sense of identity, build civic pride and help define the character of Calgary.

What is being left out of the heritage conversation are the many economic, social and environmental benefits. The following are some of the benefits that heritage keeps on giving, even in "*times of fiscal restraint.*"

**Economic Benefits:**

- The rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of a heritage building can be a profitable investment for the developer and enhances the municipal tax base along with preserving cultural values.
  - For example, the 1912 sandstone King Edward School has found a new life as a cultural and artistic hub for creativity, community and collaboration as cSPACE. In addition, flanking the

King Edward is a new build of 21 single-level residences in Calgary's inner city. Prices range from \$900,000 to \$2.6M. In addition to providing an increased residential tax base, those who either create or live at the King Edward School are likely to support the local shops and services in nearby Marda Loop.

- Documented higher property values, as shown in one Canadian study which compared the sale-price trends of designated and non-designated properties in 14 Ontario communities. It found 59% of the designated properties appreciated faster than the market average, while 15% appreciated at the average rate. Designated properties also held their value better in market downturns. Another study observed the "halo effect" where just being located in proximity to a heritage district raised the value of non-designated properties.
- According to the World Trade Organization, tourists are shifting away from active holidays and towards experiential vacations. Often referred to as Heritage Tourism Enthusiasts, they seek out heritage sites during their travels. Modern travelers prefer tourist attractions that provide educational opportunities. Destination options not only include museums and interpretive centres, but also heritage buildings and cultural landscapes.
  - Statistically, Heritage tourist enthusiasts tend to spend more money per day and stay longer, especially since the average income of heritage tourism enthusiasts is notably higher than other habitual tourists.
  - Although Americans make up the majority of self-identified heritage enthusiasts that travel to Canada, a significant amount of international tourists from Europe and Asia are interested in our historic places.
  - 2.6 million Canadians identify themselves as heritage enthusiasts and are attracted Canada's unique historic places. In fact, 55% of this group include Canada's historic places in their travel plans.
  - Calgary has impressive and unique historic places. Fort Calgary National Historic Site, the birthplace of the city of Calgary, is where the North West Mounted Police built a fort at the confluence of the Bow and Elbow Rivers in 1875. Lougheed House, the Beltline's hub of cultural happenings and programs, is a National and Provincial Historic Site, Museum and restaurant, all located on its original 2.8 acres. This 14,000 square-foot sandstone prairie mansion was built in 1891 by Senator James Lougheed and his wife Lady Isabella. It remains one of the finest residences in Canada's Northwest, and was the political and social hub of fast-growing Calgary until 1938.
- Growth of the local restoration industry in construction trades, professionals and product manufacturing are further contributors to the economic benefits of heritage preservation.

**Social Benefits:**

- Historic resources play a role in creating a livable and desirable city in which to live and work. They enhance our quality of life and contribute to community livability. When people and businesses are considering moving, they often seek out well-maintained historic neighbourhoods and business districts because of the “sense of place” versus the ubiquitous “anyplace” character of modern builds.
- Well maintained historic neighbourhoods feel intimate and people-friendly. Their distinctive character, human scale and familiarity create a strong, appealing sense of place for residents and visitors alike.
  - Heritage conservation also promotes civic engagement. Membership in heritage organization and participation in heritage activities stimulates interest in community issues and encourages people to become involved in community decision-making processes. For example, during an Inglewood Walkscape for Main Streets consultation, cSPACE CEO, Reid Henry, shared that when his family moved to Calgary they wanted to live in Inglewood because it was a well-maintained, historic neighbourhood with a distinctive character and an engaged community.

**Environmental Benefits:**

- Responsible stewardship such as managing valued resources in such a way that they are passed on unimpaired to succeeding generations enhances our urban and rural habitats and their livability.
- Restoration is often less expensive than new construction. It also reduces the amount of construction and demolition waste going into the landfill.
- Maintaining heritage buildings uses less energy than new construction.
- Easy retrofits can make heritage buildings as energy efficient as newer buildings.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss how we can all be part of the heritage conversation. Please let us know if we can provide you with additional information. On behalf of the Calgary Heritage Initiative, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Lindae Stokes,

Board Member -- Director, Advocacy

On behalf of the Calgary Heritage Initiative Society Board