



November 13, 2020

RE: mid-cycle budget request for a \$2 million increase to the City-wide Historic Resource Conservation Grant for Non-Residential Buildings, Nov 23-27, 2020

THE CALGARY HERITAGE INITIATIVE GIVES CONSENT TO THE CITY OF CALGARY TO PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION OF THIS LETTER AND ATTACHMENTS BY ANY METHOD.

Via Email [publicsubmissions@calgary.ca](mailto:publicsubmissions@calgary.ca)

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Dear Mayor Nenshi and City Councillors:

The Calgary Heritage Initiative Society (CHI) encourages you to approve the budget request for the \$2 million increase to the heritage grant program for non-residential buildings.

So often heritage advocacy and action groups in Calgary concentrate on the monumental and classic examples of Calgary's post-contact history and very often they are the residences of early pioneers, community leaders and businessmen. We know the cultural contribution and sense of place buildings like Lougheed House and the Rouleau Residence bring to communities in Calgary but we often take for granted the stores, factories, offices and warehouses that make up a large part of the historic fabric of Calgary. In many cases they are considered placeholders until a new shiny building becomes economic. Our current economic situation suggests that demolition and new construction will not be the driver of city building it once was, in the near term at least, as centralized corridor densification and adaptive building use take a larger role.

The purpose of the Historic Resource Conservation Grant is to aid and incentivise property owners in the conservation, rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of historic commercial properties that contribute to the resiliency of the new urban economy. Built urban heritage plays a vital role in modern urban planning, whether it is adaptive re-use of built form in the Warehouse District along the proposed Green line or the creation of destination cultural, entertainment and arts hubs along our high streets. The talent and imagination of the property owners to adapt their old buildings to new uses must be realized and incentivised. These buildings and streetscapes attract economic investment and job creation and contribute to the liveability and sense of place of a community. This is an integral part of city building. Too often heritage planning advocates rely on out of context quotes from Jane Jacobs but she was on the money (literally) when she wrote of the high-overhead economy of new construction: “Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings.”

And we will need new ideas to aid in Calgary’s economic recovery over the next decade. Funding this type of grant mechanism is especially beneficial because these heritage commercial sites have had and will have uses that will vitalize small scale local economic growth and job creation, a powerful driver of economic recovery. They can provide small business locations (ground floor retail, upper floor office or shared space), employment hubs such as affordable shared work or live work applications, tech and gaming start-ups, and cultural and arts incubators (King Edward School being a successful example). Of course there are also the popular tourism and restaurant industry uses and ‘loft living’ that are so evident in inner city Calgary. Old commercial buildings have historically been the place where young energetic entrepreneurs and job creators want to be. This heritage conservation grant program will incentivise property owners to preserve these spaces and create these places while preserving historic community context in some cases or commercial or industrial legacy in others.

Lastly an appropriately funded granting mechanism allows the City to follow Triple Bottom Line Policy that was adopted by Council in 2005 and aligns with ongoing Sustainability Direction and policy. The social, economic and environmental benefits of the adaptive re-use of existing buildings are well documented but especially relevant to commercial sites. The greenest economic hub and job creator is the one already built. The matching grant aspect of the program assures participant commitment to a return on investment, and historic designation secures stability of the site, a high standard of long term maintenance, and continuing contribution to community well-being.

Thank you for consideration in this matter

Rick Williams

President, Calgary Heritage Initiative



*[The Calgary Heritage Initiative Society \(CHI\)](#) advocates to preserve and promote the productive use of buildings and areas of historic significance.*