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December 13, 2012

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

Rezoning: The Shaughnessy Military Hospital, 4500 Oak Street

On behalf of the membership of Heritage Vancouver, I would like to express our support for the proposed rezoning application for 4500 Oak Street (Women's and Children's Hospital). We regret the loss of the veterans' hospital, but at the same time we support the long-range intent to retain and preserve the J. Matheson Pavilion and the Steam Plant.

We strongly support the retention of the Shaughnessy Hospital entrance façade, bronze grilled screens and the Beatrice Lennie bas-relief panels. Shaughnessy Hospital was built in 1940 for the Department of National Defense. Also known as Shaughnessy Military Hospital, it served as an important point of care for servicemen injured in the line of duty, and functioned as a residence for many veterans as well as a workplace for nurses, doctors, and other medical professionals. The hospital was also the site of a royal visit in 1951 by Princess Elizabeth and Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Designed by Mercer & Mercer architects, the building is also one of Vancouver's last surviving examples of mid-20th century hospital architecture, featuring a grand symmetrical entranceway with ornate metalwork. Of particular interest are two relief panels by the Canadian artist Beatrice Lennie framing the former main entrance of the hospital. The panel to the left of the doors depicts a nurse helping an injured soldier, while the panel to the right of the doors shows a doctor holding a wounded serviceman. These significant artworks are an integral part of the sophisticated, Streamline Moderne façade of the hospital. The building is also a very significant example of reinforced concrete construction, with concrete used as the cladding as well as the structure. This may be our last opportunity to preserve part of a significant example of a wartime hospital in Vancouver. As has already occurred on this site, we urge a creative exploration of ways to retain the significant heritage elements of the Shaughnessy Hospital within the context of new development.

In addition we encourage the update of the Statement of Significance for the Shaughnessy Hospital, the Steam Plant, the Acute Care Wing, and the J. Matheson Pavilion with particular attention being paid to the significant military history of the site.

We encourage you to support the retention of the significant heritage features of the site that we have outlined above. Thank you in advance for your consideration. In these significant heritage issues, we fully support the position taken by the Vancouver Heritage Commission.

Yours truly,

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

Donald Luxton, President
Heritage Vancouver

cc. Penny Ballem, City Manager
Brian Jackson, General Manager, Planning and Development Services
Marco D'Agostini, Senior Planner, Heritage Group
Yardley McNeil, Planner
Members of the Heritage Commission