

September 20, 2017

Mayor Robertson and Members of Council
City of Vancouver
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver BC V5Y 1V4



s.22(1) Personal and Confidential

Dear Mayor Robertson and Members of Council,

Re: Vancouver Heritage Foundation support for the introduction of Character Home Retention Incentives

The Board of Directors of Vancouver Heritage Foundation supports the introduction of incentives including new housing choices, as proposed in the Policy Report, *Introducing Character Home Retention Incentives and New Housing Choices in RS Zones (Single-family) – Proposed Amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law.*

The proposed incentives offer some useful tools to encourage more retention of well-built older homes and the distinct character and streetscapes of historic Vancouver neighbourhoods. These incentives include additional floor area, additional infill and multiple conversion dwelling options, and regulation relaxation provisions when a character home is retained.

However, we have points of concern that we hope will be addressed if these incentives are implemented:

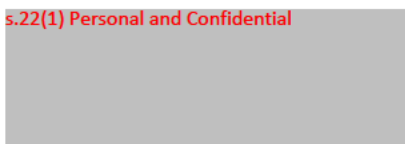
To be successful, it will be essential that these incentives are provided in conjunction with a significantly improved approval process and timeline for retention projects to encourage projects large and small to proceed. They also need to be supported by a thoughtful application of building by-law requirements and relevant relaxations to enable high levels of retention of the historic character and fabric of a home. This is important from both a sustainability and a heritage standpoint. Historic construction can be sensitively updated including greatly improved energy-efficiency performance with non-destructive approaches as we have seen in homes participating in the Heritage Energy Retrofit Grant program. Support will be needed from all parties involved in the permit process to prioritize and expedite projects, and ensure retention goals are achieved.

Further, we are concerned about the implications for a retained character home in terms of the building by-law and invasive upgrade requirements, particularly with strata-title or conversion to multiple dwellings. We hope this can be further examined to assist in retaining heritage value and character and avoid adding prohibitive cost.

We support the introduction of these incentives but urge you to ensure there is also the framework in place that can help projects be successful, including providing a faster process and more encouraging environment to accommodate retention efforts.

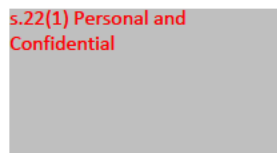
Sincerely,

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Judith Mosley
Executive Director

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Chair of the Board of Directors

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Judith Mosley

Isfeld, Lori

From: Stuart Smith s.22(1) Personal and Confidential
Sent: Thursday, September 21, 2017 5:36 PM
To: Public Hearing
Subject: Fwd: Qualified Support for Character Home Retention Incentives

Hi there, I sent this in on Tuesday but have yet to see it in the correspondence, is it possible it was missed?

I was writing in support of

8. TEXT AMENDMENT: Introducing Character Home Retention Incentives and New Housing Choices in RS Zones (Single-family) – Proposed Amendments to the Zoning and Development By-law

thank you

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Stuart Smith** s.22(1) Personal and Confidential
Date: Tue, Sep 19, 2017 at 4:43 PM
Subject: Qualified Support for Character Home Retention Incentives
To: publichearing@vancouver.ca

Qualified Support for Character Home Retention Incentives

Dear mayor and council, this is short note to express qualified support for the Character Home Retention Incentives.

This policy will allow marginally more places for people to live than were permitted previously, so I support it as part of my support for more housing in Vancouver. A better policy would allow apartment buildings on every lot currently zoned RS, with an allowance to designate no more than 0.1% of those lots as worthy of some form of heritage protection.

Ultimately I do not believe council, city bylaws, or the Vancouver charter should be policing land use aesthetics at all. RS1 and other districts which require residents to purchase a minimum quantity of land should be abolished to ensure that new and existing residents of Vancouver can chose to live in any neighborhood and not be stratified by income as the current suite of zoning requires.

Preserving Heritage or Preserving Exclusivity?

The best way we could to ensure fewer old buildings are redeveloped is to ensure that so many millions of square feet of floor space get built nearby that the market is saturated and there is less incentive to demolish.

By building far more floor space on the lots that are developed, we slow the consumption of land and reduce the pressure on remaining lots.

Whose Homes? Our Homes!

A common way to speak about this issue is to talk about "our" character homes. This is sleight of hand - these homes are not "ours" - they belong to specific people and the benefits and costs of those homes

accrue to those specific people. If we are going to talk about community benefits and costs of a building then we must also put "it's ability to provide housing for all income levels" on the scales as well.

The debate over housing as housing vs housing as investment is well worn, but talking about "our" character homes ignores the inherent conflict between housing as housing and housing as scenery.

If character homes are "ours" then so are Vancouver specials, monster homes, apartments, and condos and SRO's. That we are only talking about preserving one of the things that is "ours" should illustrate vividly that this is an exercise in cultural judgement, not housing policy.

My permit process gets 4 soffits to the hogshead and that's the way I like it!

While almost everyone understands Vancouver is in a housing crisis, it's tragic that thousands of staff hours will be devoted to policing fascia, window casing, window trim, soffits, and decorative shingling. If the planning department feels these details are more important than the raw total of sqft available, and units available, to live in, then I would question why we need a planning department at all.

Does the planning dept exist to serve citizens who need floorspace to live in or does it exist to enforce the aesthetic judgements of newspaper columnists who require soffits to gaze upon?

A (very tiny) First Step

People do not dream of living in Vancouver because they dream of being able to gaze upon an attractive soffit. They dream of living in Vancouver for it's people, it's culture, and natural setting that surrounds it. But to enable that dream, they need floor space to live in.

The best way to preserve the natural setting around Vancouver is to ensure we are providing enough floor space in Vancouver so that people have less incentive to build floor space out of Vancouver.

This policy is a very small step and council should go forward with it, but council should not stop there. We need a 10x increase in buildable square feet across the city and the region, to reduce spatial inequity, reduce the scarcity premium of land, and ultimately make Vancouver affordable to all. Thank you for taking a small step but do not stop here.

Sincerely

Stuart Smith

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