

November 27, 2017

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



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Dear Mayor Robertson and Members of Council,

Re: Report Back on Energy Efficiency Updates to Vancouver's Building By-Law for Low-Rise Multi-family Residential Buildings (RTS 11921)

Vancouver Heritage Foundation (VHF) is supportive of amendments to the Vancouver Building By-Law and associated processes that will enhance the retention and conservation of heritage and character homes and buildings.

Reducing carbon emissions from existing buildings is an important goal while also enabling retention of the heritage character of Vancouver's historic buildings and neighbourhoods. Retention and reuse of older buildings directly contributes to achieving sustainability goals including through the smart use of resources, avoiding waste and the need for new energy-intensive materials, and retaining repairable elements.

Through our experience in managing the Heritage Energy Retrofit Grant program, we have seen a variety of older homes achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (20% - 60%) through non-destructive retrofits. Effective retrofits have included increasing attic insulation, adding blown-in insulation in the existing wall cavity, reducing air leakage and installing more efficient space and water heating devices. Conversely, thickening walls for insulation is particularly difficult to accommodate without detrimental effect on the exterior appearance of a building, loss of exterior and/or interior features and fabric, and reduced interior floor space.

VHF supports a performance-based approach where a professional evaluation in the early stages of a project will inform appropriate retrofits to include when alterations are being made to an older home or residential building. Greater flexibility in retrofits and taking account of improvements already made can enable retention of historic fabric, heritage and character features, and occupiable floor space.

Increased clarity of the requirements for owners and practitioners is essential. Respondents to a VHF survey conducted August-September 2017 indicated that requirements were unclear and were inconsistently applied, adding uncertainty, complexity and cost to projects. The application of the requirements is equally important, with a need to be able to give priority to conservation.

VHF is ready to assist with development and communication of requirements and processes that make easier and encourage the retention and conservation of heritage and character homes and buildings.

Sincerely,

"s.22(1) Personal and Confidential"

Judith Mosley
Executive Director

"s.22(1) Personal and Confidential"

David Dove
Chair of the Board of Directors

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