



Heritage Building Restoration Principles and Guidelines for Alterations

Corporation of the City of New Westminster

Development Services Department

The 1998 British Columbia Building Code identifies a heritage building as being:

- protected as a local government heritage property under the Municipal Act;
- protected by the province as a heritage property under the Heritage Conservation Act;
- subject to heritage protection through the provisions of a covenant and registered against the property in the Land Title Office;
- listed as a heritage building in an inventory that has been adopted by Council as its official heritage registry; or
- listed in an inventory of heritage buildings maintained by the province, such as the Provincial Heritage Registry.

Restoration Principles

Here are some general principles for owners to follow when restoring heritage properties.

- All restoration work should be preceded by historical research, site investigation and analysis of the neighbourhood context to identify the heritage values to be conserved.
- It may be useful for the owner to prepare a restoration plan, which would outline the scope and timing of proposed work for extensive renovation works.

- The sequencing of proposed work should be considered (e.g. drainage work with, or before, foundations, roofing before gutters, woodwork before painting).
- While the restoration work is in progress, measures should be taken to protect adjoining historical properties.
- Ongoing maintenance will minimize the need for extensive repairs and is therefore preferred.
- All buildings are recognized as products of their history. Changes, which may have taken place over time, are evidence of a site's historical evolution. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right and contributions from all time periods should be respected.
- Alterations should have a historical basis. Alterations, which seek to create an earlier appearance, or which use different architectural elements from other buildings should be discouraged.
- The original distinguishing characteristics of the building or site should be maintained and, if possible, enhanced. Alterations should be designed to respect the integrity of the historic design. The removal or alterations of historic materials or features should be avoided.
- Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship, which characterize a building, should be treated sensitively.
- It is preferred to repair instead of replacing deteriorated architectural features. If replacement is necessary, the new material should be compatible with the material being

replaced in composition, design, colour and texture. Replacements should be based on accurate duplications rather than conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings.

- Surface cleaning should be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Processes, which would damage the building materials (e.g. sandblasting), are not appropriate.
- Long term protection of the designated resource should be balanced with user requirements.
- A building maintenance program would maintain the integrity of designated properties.

The two main purposes of these principles are to:

- 1) retain the architectural features which were the original reason for designation; and
- 2) ensure the ongoing economic viability and structural stability of the building.

Alterations to buildings identified in the Downtown volume of the Heritage Resource Inventory may follow code equivalencies set out in the 1998 B.C. Building Code.

References: B.C. Heritage Trust, "Principles of Rehabilitation: General Conservation Principles" Technical Paper Series #9, (1989), Victoria Heritage Foundation, "Philosophy for Rehabilitation and Restoration of Designated Heritage Building, Victoria (no date).

Guidelines for Alterations

The following guidelines have been prepared to inform owners of heritage designated sites how to proceed with alterations to buildings and properties.

The guidelines outline the City's policy for actions that owners can take to properties that have been designated as municipal heritage sites.

Actions to property that do not change the way the property appears do not require City Council approval (e.g., repair or maintenance).

Alterations that change the property's appearance since designation do require Council approval.

Activities Not Requiring Council Approval

Owners of municipal heritage sites may maintain and make minor alterations to designated buildings without prior authorization from Council.

If the activities are minor in nature, owners should consult with the Development Services Department to determine whether the approval is required from City Council.

The use of original building materials and techniques is encouraged, including the replacement of non-original features or materials, which have been added by subsequent owners over time. If owners are using original or natural materials, the need for a heritage review would be waived at the discretion of the Director of Development Services.

Normal maintenance and repairs can be carried out at the owner's discretion without Council approval, providing that aspects of the building or property as identified in the designating bylaw are not altered.

These activities may include:

- painting the exterior in the same colour or a sympathetic colour, as decided in consultation with the Development Services Department;
- re-roofing using cedar shakes or shingles;
- replacing electrical and wiring;
- upgrading the plumbing; and
- repairing the building exterior with original materials (e.g., wooden siding).

Alterations Requiring Council Approval

An owner may not alter the exterior, make a structural change, or move a building unless authorized to do so by City Council.

Approval from Council is required for:

- re-roofing in a non-original material;
- changing the paint colour of the exterior;
- repairing the exterior of the building in a non-original building materials;
- adding to or demolishing a portion of the home; or
- changing windows and doors.

If approval is required, the owner is required to apply in writing to Council, outlining in detail the proposed alterations to the designated building.

Council then refers the inquiry to the Community Heritage Commission (CHC).

Commission members inspect and evaluate the site, then prepare a report for Council's consideration commenting on the merits of the proposed alteration.

Council has the authority to issue a heritage alteration permit to authorize the proposed works.

If the building had been altered prior to designation using unsympathetic materials or techniques and the owner proposes to restore the building using sympathetic materials or techniques, the owner would still have to apply to Council and provide details of the proposed project.

Proposals to alter a designated heritage building in ways that enhance the heritage character of the property would be encouraged and supported by Council and the CHC.

The local government may refuse to approve alterations to a designated property if the proposed construction would diminish the heritage value of the site.

Owners have the right to appeal to elected officials if their application to alter a heritage property is rejected.

The Heritage Trust publication "Rehabilitation Principles and Guidelines"¹ outlines appropriate design approaches and procedures in detail to ensure that changes are sensitive and preserve the integrity of the property.

This book could be used as a reference for homeowners when contemplating alterations to designated properties.

¹ Copies of this publication are available at the City Library, Museum, Development Services Department, Engineering Department, and Clerk's Office.



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