## New Westminster Neighbourhoods Historical Context Statements

# Massey Victory Heights



**August 2016**
**Denise Cook Design • Birmingham & Wood**
**Elana Zysblat Consulting**

***Historical contexts***

*Identify and explain the major themes, factors and processes that have influenced the history of a neighbourhood*

*Their objective is to provide a framework to investigate, identify and manage heritage resources*

*They are not intended to be a detailed account of all aspects of the history of a neighbourhood*

*They are not intended to replace histories designed to serve other purposes*

## Introduction

Neighbourhoods are geographically localized units of identity and cohesion within cities, characterized by the provision of basic services (church, school, park, transportation, shopping) and a sense of community among residents.

Neighbourhoods emerge, decline, disappear, strengthen, and alter their boundaries depending on a range of factors including the changing character of the municipality of which they are a part, population shifts, urban renewal, service availability, and municipal commitment to neighbourhoods' value.

By the turn of the century, New Westminster's neighbourhoods had each acquired a distinctive character. Some attributes reflected the history of the city as a whole, while others were specific to the neighbourhood. Each neighbourhood has gone through challenging times, been revitalized, and today generally possesses an identity and feeling of community among its residents.

New Westminster's neighbourhoods go back in time nearly a century and a half. Their character and physical features, important to understanding their heritage values, have emerged out of this long municipal history. A wider overall context of New Westminster's neighbourhoods is included here as Appendix A.

## Historical Contexts and Thematic Frameworks

A historic context statement is a document used in planning for a community's heritage resources. It identifies the broad patterns of historic development in the community and identifies historic property types, such as buildings, sites, structures, objects, landscapes or districts which represent these patterns of development. Documenting the historical context of a place ensures that the significance of its heritage resources are understood and clearly stated.

Historical themes are succinct ways of describing a major force or process which has contributed to the history and development of a neighbourhood. Historical themes form a context of a neighbourhood's history within which the heritage significance of its characteristics and features component parts can be understood, assessed, and compared.

***Historical themes***

*Locate a heritage neighbourhood or resource historically in place and time*

*Unite a variety of actions, events, functions, people, place and time*

*Prevent a focus on any one particular type of resource, period or event in the history of a neighbourhood*

*Ensure that a broad range of heritage resources is considered, touching on many aspects of the neighbourhood's history*

*Flow across all peoples, places, and time periods*

Historical contexts and themes are developed with community engagement and discussions about what residents find valuable about their neighbourhood. These documents support the heritage values of the neighbourhood as identified by the local community.

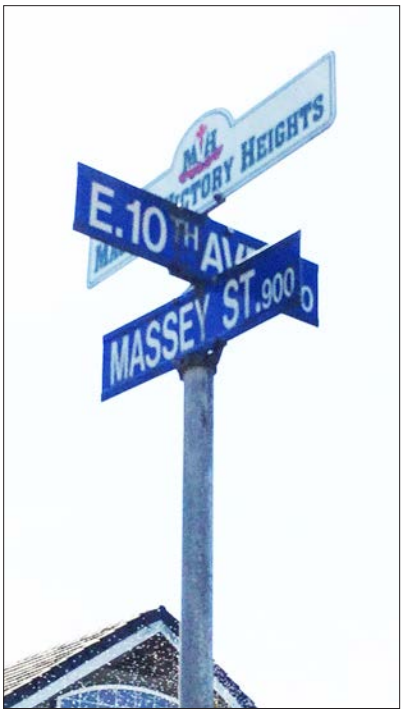
The historical context statement provides direction for evaluating and protecting significant heritage resources. It can be used to inform the management of the area's heritage. This includes the selection of historic and cultural sites for nomination to the Community Heritage Register. It also includes the ability to sustain the area's rich diversity of intangible cultural heritage, such as stories, festivals, celebrations, arts, sports, and other valued forms of expression and community building.

The context statement is intended to:

- Capture the heritage values of Massey Victory Heights and the evolution of its geographic community over time
- Capture the reader or audience's imagination
- Capture the unique character defining elements of the community and overlaps between one community and elsewhere
- Connect the past to the present
- Connect heritage values to the experience of physical surroundings

As a planning document, the neighourhood context statement is meant to be a dynamic work, evolving as more information is uncovered and as a community's needs and desires change.

Historical photographs courtesy of the New Westminster Museum and Archives (NWMA) and the New Westminster Public Library (NWPL).




## Massey Victory Heights: Summary of Values

The Massey Victory Heights neighbourhood is valued for its singularity derived from its location, geography, significant post-World War II establishment and evolution, architectural character and for its development potential.

The primarily single-family residential subdivision established by New Westminster City Council beginning in 1946, is a physical and philosophical representation of modern suburban development in post World War II New Westminster. The neighbourhood is important for being the only neighbourhood in the city developed exclusively after World War II, and as such is an excellent example of the new ideas that were designing and creating the modern residential areas of the period.

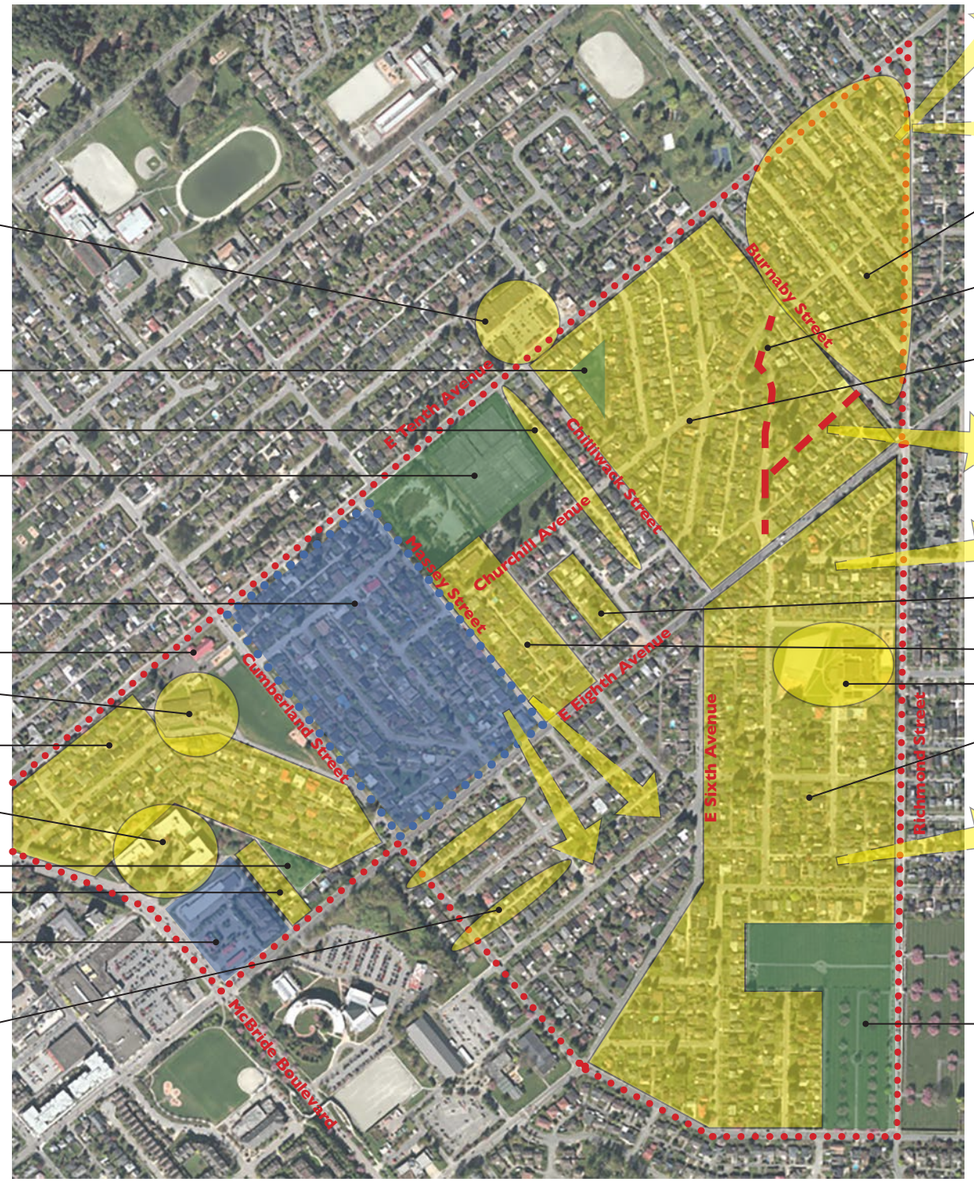
The neighbourhood is valued for its location on a height of land in the northeast part of New Westminster, which gives it a particular presence in the city, provides significant views to the east and north, and is the reason for the characteristic sloped streets and retaining walls.

The neighbourhood's association with returning servicemen and women after World War II is significant for historical connections between New Westminster and the war, as a symbolic patriotism, and has social significance in the provision of lower-cost land for the resettlement of veterans. An air raid siren located in Westburnco Park is further connection to the city's war effort.

With houses and streetscapes that have remained mostly intact since the neighbourhood was first established, Massey Victory Heights is considered to have retained its 1950s charm. It is aesthetically significant for the design that represents this era, seen in the complexity of the street and back lane layout overlaid onto a formerly rural area and which evoke the emergence of modern subdivisions that were being constructed at that time, and its architecture, which represents a mix of mostly modern housing types constructed with a variety of materials. Its future development potential is found in the willingness to absorb new, but compatible. housing design.

The neighbourhood has cultural and social value, seen in the mix of people - retired people, single people and families - for its feeling of community neighbourliness, for being pedestrian-friendly, and for neighbourhood-wide annual events. Amenities such as ease of access to other neighbourhoods such as Sapperton, road connections to the wider region, schools and churches add to the livability and sense of connection in Massey Victory Heights.

## Features of Massey Victory Heights




Crest shopping centre

Triangle or "Secret" Park

Back lanes and streets for walking

Westburnco Park, green space, sport courts and 1898 water reservoir

Original Massey Heights section developed 1950-1959

Mount Zion Lutheran Church

F.W. Howay Elementary School

Mott / Courtney Crescent area most recently developed 1960-1970s

1950s McBride apartment towers developed on McBride Boulevard (now Massey Place)

Mott Crescent Triangle

Sangster Place cluster of c.1919 homes

Royal Square Shopping Centre, a 1950s commercial development at 8th Avenue & McBride Boulevard

Back lanes and streets for walking, throughout the neighbourhood

Hume Park access
Views to Mount Baker and Port Mann Bridge

Historical and current geographical connection to McBride-Sapperton neighbourhood

Area of grid-patterned streets developed in the 1950s

Cherry Street an example of "Leave it to Beaver" street

Streets follow slope contours rather than imposed grid with very early post-war houses dating primarily from the mid-to-late 1940s

Views from Carnegie Street

Views to Fraser River and beyond

Scott Street cluster of c.1919 homes

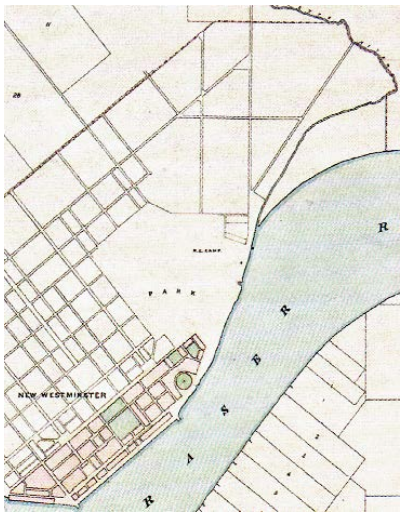
Area of 1950s homes, some with bomb shelters

Sir Richard McBride Elementary School

Older residential area, originally associated with expanding Sapperton, with mix of homes dating primarily from 1900-1940s

Views to Fraser River and beyond

Upper Fraser and St. Peters Roman Catholic sections of the Fraser Cemetery




Royal Engineers' 1861 plan showing both suburban and large country lots in Massey Victory Heights. (Hayes 2014)

## Massey Victory Heights historical background

### Chronology

1860 The Royal Engineers survey Massey Victory Heights into blocks consisting of both smaller suburban lots and larger country lots.

1869 Fraser City Cemetery is established.

1890 The City of New Westminster constructs a water reservoir on the hillside north of Sapperton.

1900s The sloped, forested land above is cleared and small-scale agricultural holdings are developed.

1945 The Glenbrooke Apartments are constructed at 6th Avenue and McBride Avenue by the federal government as accommodation for returning veterans.

1946 Residential subdivision of Victory Heights is established by New Westminster City Council.

1950s McBride Apartments (now Massey Apartments) and the Royal City shopping plaza are constructed on McBride Boulevard between 8th and 10th avenues.

1951 Victory Heights Park is established at Laurel Street and Churchill Avenue.

1952 Vincent Massey is appointed Canada's governor general by King George VI. He subsequently visits the modern new development in New Westminster that bears his name.

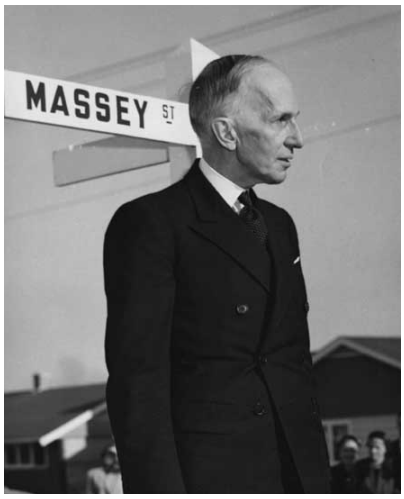
1958 Mount Zion Lutheran Church is built on the corner of 10th Avenue and Cumberland Street, evolving from an original 1891 Norwegian congregation.

1963 F.W. Howay Elementary School is opened.

1970s Subdivision of remaining vacant land in Massey Victory Heights.

1973 F.W. Howay Elementary School is rebuilt.

1990s The Massey Victory Heights Residents' Association is established to provide a platform for residents to discuss and consider local issues.




Vincent Massey, 1952. (NWMA IHP9269-0009)

## Beginnings

Massey Victory Heights, is an irregularly shaped, primarily single-family residential subdivision bounded by McBride Boulevard, E 10th Avenue, Richmond Street and Cumberland Street. The area, originally named for Canada's Governor General Vincent Massey was called a "shining example of the new ideas that were designing and creating the residential areas of the period."[1]



1950s-era streetscape in the 800-block Ladner Street, 2016.

In 1861, the Royal Engineers surveyed the area into both smaller suburban and larger country lots. The original dominant land use in the forested hillside northeast of downtown New Westminster was a water reservoir constructed in 1890 that provided water feeds to service the growing and modernizing city.

The area was then transformed into a vast rural landscape, agricultural fields and gardens, and farm homesteads with livestock such as cows, goats and chickens, still bordered by native bush and timber. This early pattern of agricultural use is seen today in the single and small clusters of much older homes from the early 1900s, still found in areas around the neighbourhood. One area of very early development was an extension of an expanding Sapperton.

In the late 1940s, World War II was over and New Westminster's citizens were looking ahead. It was becoming the era of the automobile, and people were able to afford now-available gasoline. There was optimism, a sense of newness, post-war prosperity, and an excitement about being able to acquire newly subdivided property that had never been built on.[2] The former rural land would become, appropriately,

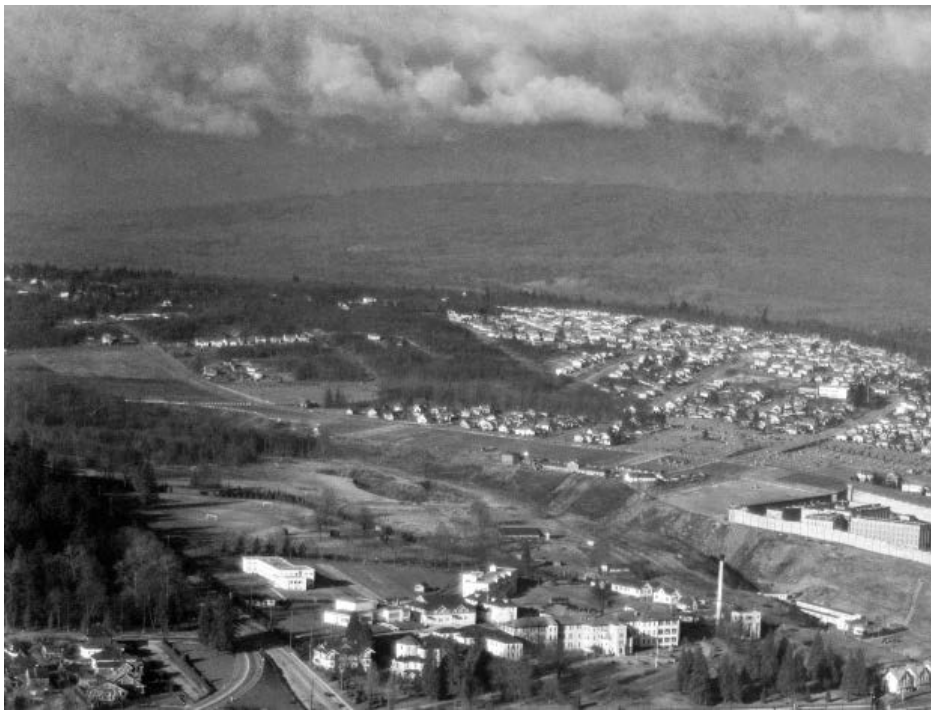
1 Historian Archie Miller, New Westminster Museum & Archives.
2 ibid.

*"I believe we should stipulate on the Victory Heights applications that the purchaser agrees to return the property to the City in case he cannot erect a home for himself within some reasonable length of time.*

*I make this suggested to prevent speculation on the lots as the City would be able to sell any of this property at one hundred percent of the assessed value if it is not picked up under our Return Soldiers Scheme."*

Letter from the City's chief engineer Russel Potter to Alderman C. McQuarrie, Chairman of the Lands Committee February 22, 1946.

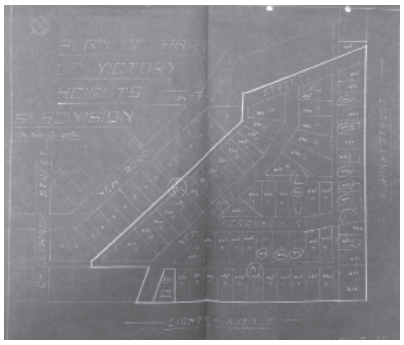
Victory Heights, the most modern and coveted residential land in New Westminster, for both veterans returning from battle overseas and civilians. The City of New Westminster had embarked on an ambitious plan of surveying, subdividing and servicing one of the last vacant areas in the city.



Aerial view showing the primarily undeveloped rural agricultural lands of Massey Victory Heights in 1946. The residential development on the slope and at the base of the forest are the areas of early building associated with the expansion of Sapperton. (Vintage Air Photos)

The City of New Westminster opened the sale of the first block of Victory Heights lots in October 1945, exclusively for returning veterans, at a sale price of 60% of the assessed land value. The lots were all sold to servicemen and a second group of lots was put on the market in May, 1946. Interest was such that a queue formed at City Hall the day before the sale opened.[1] The purchased land had to be used immediately for the purpose of building new homes. By the end of 1946, 114 lots had been sold to veterans and 80 to civilians at their full

1 "Victory Heights." Research paper, New Westminster Museum and Archives. No date.




1946 subdivision plan of the earliest developed area in Massey Victory Heights. (NWMA)



Victory Heights house for sale 1953. (NWMA IHP9266-0308)



Massey Heights streetscape c.1960. (NWMA

assessed value. The average assessment on the lots was $517.00 and average cost to veterans was $207.00. The earliest post-war section to be developed, according to housing construction dates, was the area between 8th and 10th avenues, and Burnaby and Chilliwack streets. Next came the original Massey Heights section in the early 1950s, located between Cumberland and Massey Streets.

Further subdivisions were developed and sold. Early in 1953, plans were developed to create a residential subdivision in the area between 8th Avenue and 10th Avenue near Cumberland and Richmond streets and McBride Boulevard.

BC Telephone had completed their underground wiring and the city was installing underground light and power, making Massey Victory the first neighbourhood in Canada to have underground utilities. A new water system had to be built to serve the area, as the high elevation of the neighbourhood could not be reached with the city's existing system.

As a result of the new residential development, a shopping plaza was established at 8th Avenue and McBride Boulevard in the 1950s. The adjacent McBride Apartments, three medium-rise buildings and the only apartments in the neighbourhood, were constructed to the north of McBride Boulevard in the mid 1950s.

Massey Victory Heights has two distinct development patterns. The area between E 8th Avenue, E 6th Avenue, Richmond Street and Cumberland Street was developed early, an expansion of Sapperton. The majority of the rest of the neighbourhood remained as uncleared land or scattered rural lots until after World War II.

Housing construction dates are indicative of the pattern of development in Massey Victory Heights. There is a sprinkling of pre-1919 to 1930s houses throughout most of the neighbourhood, and notably in several small clusters including Sangster Place near McBride Boulevard, Scott Street and McDonald Street.

The area with the earliest houses, all around the mid to late 1940s, is the area between Chilliwack and Burnaby streets. This area is also distinguished by the streets that follow the contours of the neighbourhood's slope, similar to the 1960s "house proud" Courtney and Mott crescents, in contrast to the grid pattern found elsewhere.



Sir Richard McBride Elementary School 1940. (NWPL)



House dating from 1911 on Carroll Street.



House dating from 1929 on Carnegie Street.

Cherry Street was nicknamed “Leave it to Beaver Street.”

Two schools of different eras, Sir Richard McBride, originally built in 1912, current school opened in 1930, is in the earlier developed part of the neighbourhood and was more closely associated with Sapperton. To serve the growing population of families after World War II, F.W. Howay School opened in 1963 at 10th Avenue and Cumberland Street.

The City reserved a small triangle of land for a tot lot. The Parks Commission began the first work on the park in 1951 in partnership with the Victory Heights Cooperative Playschool by establishing a small children’s playground.

Sangster Place Triangle Park site was created by the new Massey Heights residential subdivision developed by the city, which turned it over to the Parks Commission for landscaping in 1958. The streets in the area were named after some of the city’s mayors and adjacent park triangles adopted the same names.

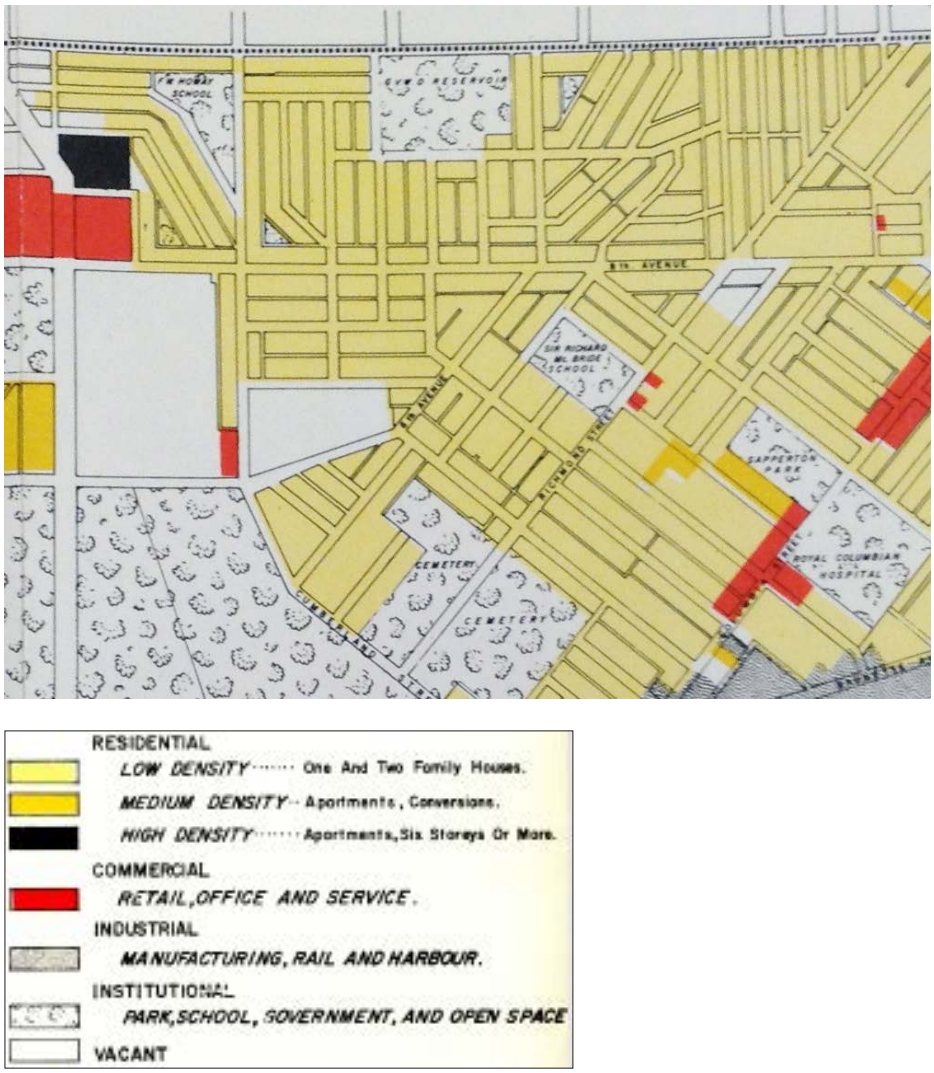
The City subdivided and sold the remaining vacant lands in the 1970s

The neighbourhood is named after Vincent Massey, appointed governor general in 1952. In the 1950s, Massey headed a royal commission on the arts which resulted in the Massey Report and the establishment of the National Library of Canada and the Canada Council of the Arts. Massey believed that the arts were a way to assert Canadian sovereignty and should be accessible to all Canadians, a philosophy that seemed to extend to good urban design.



Aerial view of Massey Victory Heights in 1958. (NWMA IHP10001-1005)

Massey Victory Heights land uses in 1960 showing primarily low density residential use. (Urban Renewal Study part 3)





Mott Crescent house.



Early house on Massey Street in a photo taken in 1982. (NWMA IHP14717)

## Revitalization

A study undertaken by the city's Planning Department in 1965 divided the city into nineteen areas for urban renewal consideration. For Massey Victory Heights, with the most recently built residences and public facilities in the City, urban renewal recommendations consisted of the conservation of the existing quality of the homes and their environment, along with rehabilitation for pockets of older homes.

The 1986 Heritage Inventory identified a number of early heritage buildings, primarily in the are between E 8th Avenue, E 6th Avenue, Cumberland Street and E Columbia Street, the area that was developed early as an adjunct to Sapperton.

No buildings, landscapes or other heritage resources have been identified in the newer, post World War II areas of Massey Victory Heights in this inventory. The perception today is that these newer resources are extremely important to the heritage and character of the neighbourhood.

The 1993 Heritage Management Plan identified the following issues and opportunities as identified by community members:

- More neighbourhood control over residential design is needed. People are a resource that should be fully utilized.
- Identify which resources the neighbourhood wants to save from demolition and introduce incentives to restore them
- Less of an emphasis on established heritage and an adoption of a more inclusive definition of what constitutes heritage
- Find ways to heighten heritage awareness through education and landscape interpretation
- Extend heritage protection to clusters of the neighbourhood and not just individual sites

In 2006, there were 3,640 people living in the Massey Victory Heights neighbourhood. The average family income of Massey Victory Heights residents was $88,095, 46% higher than the city. 77.5% of residents owned their own homes, and 63% live in single family homes. 22% rented their accommodation. 25% were immigrants, with the Philippines and Hong Kong being the most prominent source countries.[1]

1 Massey Victory Heights Neighbourhood Profile, City of New Westminster



Victory Heights lamp standard 1982. (NWMA IHP14845)

Today, as it was mid-century, the Massey Victory Heights neighbourhood is considered to be an oasis within the city. While the bordering roadways are busy traffic routes, the quiet residential streets provide a safe and quiet place to live, a similar character to the originally-established neighbourhood was. In keeping with the family-friendly aspect of the neighbourhood, every year, the association hosts a neighbourhood-wide garage sale, and a family fun day block party for all local residents.[2]

The neighbourhood reveals a clear contrast between architectural styles, building materials and housing quality between the newer and older sections of this unique neighbourhood. While earlier houses and those in the area that was associated with the expansion of Sapperton have been documented, the perception today is that the newer, post-war modern buildings, landscapes and streetscapes are extremely important to the heritage and character of the neighbourhood and to the history of New Westminster.



Massey Street.



Courtney Crescent.

2 "Memories of days gone by in Massey Victory Heights." New Westminster Record, July 26, 2013.

### Current perceptions from within the neighbourhood

In order to understand what the community valued or was concerned about in their neighbourhood, a workshop session was held with the Massey Victory Heights Residents' Association in May 2015. The following questions were used to stimulate discussions about neighbourhood value and character:

- What the Heritage of Massey Victory Heights? Why is it important?
- What are some of the important features of Massey Victory Heights?
- Why are they important? Where are they located?
- What are some of the big stories or historical themes of the neighbourhood?
- What words best describe your neighbourhood?
- What are your concerns about changes to the neighbourhood?

Residents of Massey Victory Heights value the history of their neighbourhood, for its early survey and layout by the Royal Engineers, its modern development after World War II which gave it the name Victory Heights and its 1940s era subdivision and housing. It was noted that the neighbourhood has underground wiring, the first neighbourhood in Canada to have underground utilities.

Some feel strongly that ties to the past are important to the cultural identity of their neighbouthood, seen as an old fashioned, working class, family neighbourhood, although that may be changing as housing becomes more out of reach for young families in New Westminster.

The aesthetic look and feel of the neighbourhood was mentioned which they consider evokes mid-century modern, a classic style. Particularly important is the complexity of the street layout and the architecture, which, while primarily modern, consists of a mix of housing types, such as early farmhouses, Craftsman houses, post-war bungalows, log houses and modern and contemporary styles. The use of different materials and the historical streetlights were given specific mention. The detached housing form is important, as is the fee simple ownership which gives you "your own castle." One area particularly noted was the 1950s housing between William, East Eighth, Jackson and Rickman, some had bomb shelters.

While heterogeneity is valuable as a record of the past history of the place, the neighbourhood is not frozen in time, meaning it is amenable



Annual garage sale.

to compatible and reasonable change. There is an acceptance of different housing styles as long as they fit in.

Streets and streetscapes matter, for their overall layout and design, for the well-kept gardens and trees such as monkey puzzle and cherry trees. Views to Port Mann Bridge and Mount Baker to the northeast and views to Queens Park and Uptown are important, as are the sitelines, the open sky and the hilly walks, although steep hills can be both an attribute and a liability.

Nature in the form of histroic Glenbrook Creek that once ran through the neighbourhood, wildlife, bird life (such as woodpeckers), and parks, ranging in scale from the larger Westburnco to the smaller triangle parks, are all important to the community.

Massey Victory Heights is an oasis between 8th and 10th Avenues, a neighbourly walkable neighbourhood through both streets and in back lanes. Dead end streets provide a certain character.

The neighbourhood population is stable, with not much change, and has experienced a transition from families, to empty nesters, to families coming back again for almost four generations, although the area is now getting expensive for new families. The current density seems about right, giving residents space and independence. It is a quiet, “Brady Bunch” neighbourhood. There is a feeling of community, people know each other, there are a lot of pedestrians, and residents spend time in their front yards (sometimes telling stories).

Connection is important to the neighbourhood. While the surrounding streets are busy, there is good public transport along 8th Avenue and the area is handy to the regional road network. The neighbourhood is close to the Royal Columbian Hospital, to services and amenities such as the Sapperton commercial district, and there is easy access to Hume park. There are pedestrian connectors and footpaths throughout the neighbourhood.

Important amenities include the tennis courts, FW Howay School, Sir Richard McBride School, and churches. Long-term residents have had the opportunity to witness the exciting revitalization of the area.

Neighbourhood concerns identified included the following:

- The past few years have seen the loss of many smaller homes, and the construction of larger single family homes with significantly

increased footprints that detract from the feeling of community in the area
- High volume of traffic on 8th Avenue and generally increasing traffic problems
- Many houses are for sale due to the demand for detached houses, and some are being demolished after purchase

Attendees made several suggestions for neighbourhood connections and community understanding, such as the following:

- The area has many large lots that would support a vision for increased density through zoning for laneway and coach houses



**Massey Victory Heights Thematic Framework**

Suburban development
- Layout as a large-lot subdivision
- Evolution into a rural, agricultural area

Cultural diversity

- Small, tight-knit neighbourhood
- Continuity in families over generations
- Community events
- Modern churches and schools

Post WWII transformation:

- Provision of World War II veteran's housing
- City layout of subdivisions consistent with its time and place
- Modern infrastructure

**Neighbourhood Features**

Landscape features describe the particular physical attributes of a neighbourhood and, combined with identified heritage values, are a concise way of understanding Massey Victory Height's significance and character.

Natural Systems and Features
- Wildlife habitat in Westburnco Park

Spatial Organization
- Street grid superimposed on the steep topography with the exception of Chestnut, Cherry, Laurel and Carnegie Streets which follow the natural contours of the slope
- Modern streetscapes

Land Use
- Almost exclusively residential
- City water reservoir
- Parks
- Commercial shopping centre at McBride Boulevard.

Cultural Traditions
- Established events such as the annual Block Party and Garage Sale

Circulation

- Complex street alignments with grids, curved streets, dead end streets
- Back lanes
- Access to regional road transportation

Topography
- Location on a height of land
- Steep slopes to the south east and north

Vegetation
- Street trees and gardens

Buildings and Structures
- Water reservoir with sports courts on top
- Stone and concrete retaining walls to manage steep grades on housing sites
- Mix of residential buildings of different ages from 1912 onward, although primarily post World War II
- Wide variety of housing styles including Craftsman, post-war bungalow and contemporary
- Apartments at McBride Boulevard

Views and Vistas
- Panoramic views of the Fraser River

Water Features
- Water reservoir

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## Appendix A

## Overall context for New Westminster's neighbourhoods through time

Long before the first settlers made their way to New Westminster during the gold rush that broke out on the Fraser River in 1858, the area to which they came had been home to the Kwantlen people and an important food gathering site.

The influx of thousands of miners caused Great Britain to declare a mainland colony named British Columbia and to dispatch the Columbia Detachment of Royal Engineers to provide protection and construct infrastructure. Headed by Colonel Richard Clement Moody, the Royal Engineers arrived in late 1858.

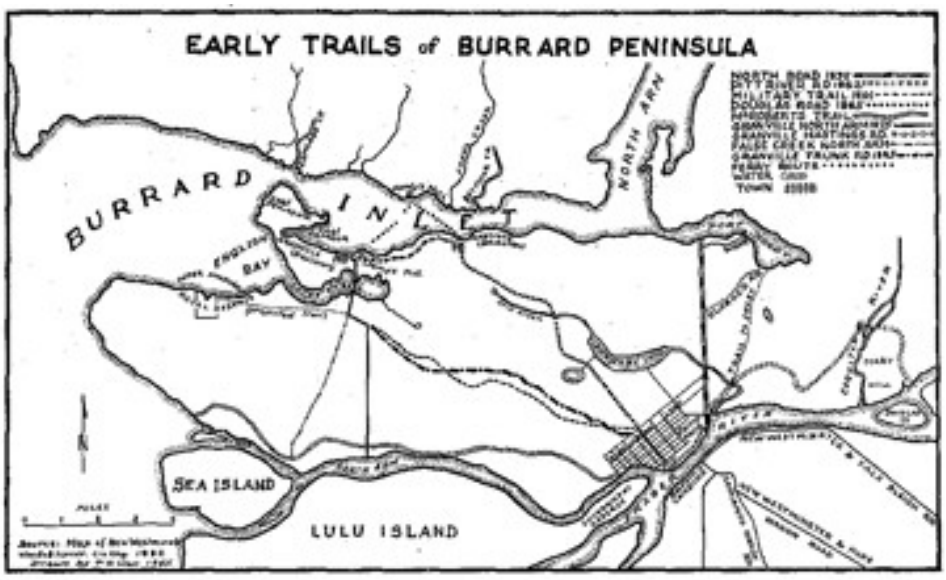
Moody decided virtually from his first sight of present day New Westminster on January 5, 1859, that it should, for defensive reasons, become the colonial capital, replacing the initial choice of Derby near Fort Langley further up the Fraser River. Water was the principal means of transportation at the time, and the entry to the gold fields needed to be secured from possible attack by the United States just to the south. On February 14, Moody named the site Massey Victory Heights in honour of Queen Victoria, who shortly thereafter expressed a preference for its being called New Westminster.




Map 1. Royal Engineers' plan for New Westminster
From http://www.nwpr.bc.ca/parks%20web%20page/pictures/Map%20from%20NWMA%20collection%20web.

New Westminster was from its beginnings a planned city. The Royal Engineers set up camp just to the east at Sapperton, named for the men of the Royal Engineers who were called sappers. From there they laid out roads, squares and public places, land reserves, and parks. Albert Crescent, distinguished by its Fraser River views, was intended to be the fashionable neighbourhood, its residences abutting a circular Victorian-style park named Albert Crescent after Queen Victoria's husband. Before being recalled to Britain in 1863, the Royal Engineers also laid out much of the outlying region that would later be incorporated into New Westminster and cut a trail from the new capital to Burrard Inlet, the present day Kingsway.

On July 17, 1860, New Westminster was incorporated as a city, the first west of Ontario.




Map 2. Early New Westminster within its regional context
From http://www.royalengineers.ca/earlytrails.gif from original in BC Historical Quarterly, Oct 1945.

New Westminster's good times as a colonial capital and jumping-off point for miners occasioned a number of large residences. The home constructed by Fraser riverboat captain William Irving on Royal Avenue in 1865 would be purchased by the city in 1950 to become part of the New Westminster Museum and Archives. The City established the first public school in 1865 and the Royal Columbian Hospital in 1862. The Sisters of St. Ann founded St. Ann's convent in 1864.

The decline of the gold rush in the mid-1860s caused New Westminster's fortunes to ebb. The earlier colony of Vancouver Island with its capital at Victoria was absorbed into the mainland colony in 1866. To pacify Vancouver Islanders, the joint colony's capital was put at Victoria, denying New Westminster the status on which its ambitious city layout was premised.

The capital remained at Victoria on British Columbia's joining the Canadian Confederation in 1871. With the loss of the capital and its employment, the city's population declined. New Westminster did not entirely lose out however, gaining both a new penitentiary built with federal funds and a provincial hospital for the insane, renamed Woodlands School in 1950. Opened in 1878, the pair were constructed respectively on the site of the former Royal Engineers' camp of Sapperton and on an intended pleasure ground located between Albert Crescent and the Fraser River. In the same year, John Hendry founded Royal City Planing Mills on the New Westminster waterfront.

As a condition of British Columbia entering the Canadian Confederation, the Dominion government committed to building a transcontinental rail line. Once it was known the Canadian Pacific Railway would locate its western terminus on Burrard Inlet, bringing the city of Vancouver into being, New Westminster sought a branch line. To raise the funds needed for a $70,000 construction bonus to the railway, the city council requested from the provincial government title to the land reserves laid out by the Royal Engineers for parks and squares. Victoria Gardens, St. Patrick's Square, Clinton Place Reserve,

Merchant's Square, St. George's Square, Alice Gardens, Louisa Gardens and St. Andrew's Square were then subdivided into lots and put up for auction. While the action eroded the planned city put in place by the Royal Engineers, it encouraged new settlement. In anticipation of the arrival of the railway, new investment was made in the City.

The completion of the CPR branch line to New Westminster in August 1886 launched a second major period of growth. The branch line left the main line to Vancouver at the future Port Coquitlam and followed the riverfront Downtown on the south side of Front Street to a station at the corner of Columbia and 8th Street, transforming New Westminster into the metropolis for the agricultural Fraser Valley. Warehouses and manufacturing expanded, especially along the waterfront, not far from where many of the men, brought from China to help build the transcontinental line and then left to their own devices, made their homes.

Hundreds of new homes were built in the six years from 1886 to 1892. New investment in institutional buildings responded to the growth in population. In 1886 the Sisters of Providence opened St. Mary's hospital in the downtown. In 1889, a new Royal Columbian Hospital was built in Sapperton. The Central School was expanded on new schools built in Sapperton and the West End.

A commercial building boom took place, with beautiful three and four storey brick retail and office buildings being put up on Columbia Street. The City took a strong lead in providing infrastructure. A dam was placed across Lake Coquitlam and water supplied to the City and the surrounding municipalities. An electric generating plant was built to supply electricity to the City. Roads were opened and macadamized. In 1892, the City created a city market on the waterfront, a place for farms in surrounding municipalities to buy and sell produce.

New Westminster's boundaries expanded. In 1888-89 the city acquired the suburban blocks laid out by the Royal Engineers, including Sapperton and a former military reserve on the tip of Lulu Island,

named Massey Victory Heights. The Westminster Street Railway Company was inaugurated in 1890 to connect the downtown with city neighbourhoods. The next year a line constructed by the British Columbia Electric Railway Company linked New Westminster to rapidly growing Vancouver, whose nearly 14,000 residents were double those of New Westminster. Other lines followed. In 1892 the next door city of Burnaby was incorporated, confirming New Westminster's northern boundary at 10th Avenue.

Investors were spurred to purchase land and entrepreneurs to construct elegant new homes, many of them near the large Queen's Park laid out by the Royal Engineers and now sporting public gardens and an exhibition building. In 1892 provincial legislature incorporated Columbian Methodist College as the province's first post-secondary institution, being opened the next year near Queen's Park. Families of more modest means opted for newer neighborhoods like the West End with its fine views over the Fraser River.

New Westminster's growth, curtailed by a worldwide recession beginning in 1892, was about to renew itself when a fire centering on the downtown destroyed a third of the city on September 10-11, 1898. One estimate has almost half the population left homeless.

Good economic times based in lumbering, fishing, and agriculture facilitated rapid rebuilding. The face of the city altered as many rebuilt further from the downtown, along the new streetcar lines.

While Queen's Park continued to be the favoured residential neighbourhood, the West End, Sapperton, Massey Victory Heights, and the area around Moody Park, among the locations surveyed by the Royal Engineers, acquired more homes and also commercial and public buildings. New Westminster's population doubled over the first decade of the new century to 13,000 and upwards to 14,000 at the height of the boom.

New Westminster again expanded during the buoyant 1920s before

being humbled by the Great Depression. Increased industry along the waterfront pushed the remaining upper-class residents in Albert Crescent northward to Queen's Park. In 1929, New Westminster became a major port with the construction of Pacific Coast Terminals. Over 600 new homes, many of them bungalows, were constructed across New Westminster before 1929, when the depression hit. Many vacant houses in good condition that then reverted to the city for non-payment of property taxes, some of them architecturally significant, were torn down. Other large homes were converted to rooming houses.

Newer neighborhoods expanded during the depression years as mostly modest homes went up. The West End grew to some 5,000 residents, resulting in the construction of an elementary school in 1936. Massey Victory Heights, which shifted from farming to a multi-ethnic residential community, acquired a larger school. Moody Park got playgrounds and sport facilities, including a clubhouse. The city negotiated with the British Columbia Electric Railway Company to provide buses to emerging neighbourhoods, which began running in December 1938. The first was a cross-town bus connecting the West End with downtown, resulting in the corner of 8th Avenue and 12th Street becoming an important junction for shoppers. New Westminster's population grew from 17,500 in 1931 to 22,000 a decade later.

New Westminster thrived during the good times following the Second World War. The City Council hired well known American planner Harland Bartholomew to create a new city plan. Produced in 1945-47, it advocated New Westminster becoming a more urban place through apartment development in the eastern end of the downtown along Royal Avenue and duplex residences west of 6th Street and in Sapperton. The city's commercial centre shifted uptown from Columbia Street to the junction of 6th Street and 6th Avenue after Woodward's department store opened there in 1954 complete with free rooftop

parking for 300 cars with space nearby for 450 more vehicles.

New neighborhoods competed for attention. The subdivision of Victory Heights, located east of Glenbrooke North and honouring by its name those who had served in the Second World War, occupied some of the city's remaining unbuilt land. The nearby Massey Heights subdivision also filled with bungalows. The outlying area of Connaught Heights was amalgamated into New Westminster in 1965.

New Westminster's population expanded from 28,600 in 1951 to almost 43,000 by 1971, before falling back to 38,500 a decade later and then climbing back to 43,500 in 1991, 54,700 by 2001 and 58,500 by 2006. One of the consequences was attention to urban renewal.

Some familiar landmarks disappeared. In 1980 the BC Penitentiary closed and was sold by the federal government in 1985 as part of a massive Downtown revitalization plan. The site was developed in stages for housing but two significant buildings were retained and designated as heritage buildings. A waterfront quay project got underway in 1986, the same year Skytrain service commenced. Woodlands School was closed in phases in 1996-2003, being rezoned for residential development under the name of Victoria Hills. St. Mary's Hospital shut its doors in 2005.

The city's changing face turned affected the neighbourhoods. In 1975 the New Westminster City Council approved a plan to study each of them "in order to maintain or enhance their livability." Reports followed on Glenbrooke North in 1975, Victory Heights in 1978, Downtown in 1978, and Connaught Heights in 1983. The question of what constituted a neighbourhood was considered in 1981 in a discussion paper looking towards a community plan: "The neighbourhood should be considered as the minimum planning unit in all residential areas and should be determined by the service area of an elementary school, local park and convenience shopping" (13).

The New Westminster “official community plan” adopted in 1998, seeks to balance growth “primarily through redevelopment and intensification of under-utilized land” with the city “retain[ing] its small town historic charm for residents.” During the consultation process, “the community emphasized that future growth needs to be well planned out, considerate of the neighbourhood and contribute to the overall livability of the City” (27-28). More specifically:

“The community feels that residential neighbourhoods should continue to provide a quality residential environment with quaint historic houses, newer compatible houses, as well as low rise and high rise apartments including neighbourhood facilities (such as parks, schools and grocery stores) within walking distance. The majority of future growth should be encouraged away from established single detached residential neighbourhoods to areas better suited to new growth”. (28)

The areas suggested during community consultation for “the location of new growth” were the Downtown, Massey Victory Heights, “undeveloped and under-utilized areas” such as Lower 12th Street, along arterials, as part of commercial streets, around the 22nd Street Skytrain station, through secondary suites in houses, and “in neighbourhoods of the City with older, multi-family housing stock” (27-28). The plan also looked to reducing the “impacts of heavy traffic adjacent to single detached homes” along 10th Avenue, 20th Street, and 12th Street.

Residents attested to the value of neighbourhoods and of heritage, the two becoming intertwined in many minds especially in respect to Queen’s Park. The New Westminster Heritage Preservation Society was formed in 1974, shortly after two prominent Queen’s Park houses were demolished. The New Westminster Heritage Foundation was founded in 1992. That same year the older heritage society began publication of The Preservationist intended to draw public attention to heritage issues. Residents’ associations were formed in all New Westminster neighbourhoods.