



Heritage Vancouver

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Re: DP-2018-00817 – 439 Powell Street

We are dismayed over the proposed demolition of yet another piece of Vancouver's architectural and social heritage – the former *Russ House Hotel*, built in 1890, that became the *Uchida Building* in the heart of the Vancouver's historic Japantown, and later the *Ming Sung Benevolent Society Building*. The building has a long history within the Japanese-Canadian community from 1906 until the 1940s when the Uchida family were forced to sell their property to the Federal Government as part of the imposed Japanese internment and relocation program of the Second World War.

We are also very disappointed that although the building **was recommended as a Priority Site for the Vancouver Heritage Register Upgrade**, it has gone unnoticed by the City and not even referenced within the current development application for the existing structure.

The Heritage Register recommendation of 2017 was made after the damage to the building in 2013 that resulted in the brickwork facade being removed. Even in its present condition the original 1890s building form still exists. The loss of the brickwork should not be viewed as a detriment to retention but rather as an opportunity to re-establish a stable, **historic facade** that meets current safety codes and standards.

The Board of Directors and Members of Heritage Vancouver Society request that:

- At a minimum, the **retention and reconstruction of the 1890 historic facade be incorporated into the new development** as a key mid-block form that is a critical part of the historic Japantown streetscape,
- an updated **Statement of Significance** to current National Heritage Standards be immediately undertaken as part of the terms of any development approval(s),
- a **Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA)** based on retention in whole or part of the existing structure be investigated which would offer incentives for the new development that otherwise would not be available, and
- that the **City immediately process the Priority Sites** as identified and submitted in late 2017 for the long-delayed Vancouver Heritage Register Upgrade that is part of the City's Heritage Action Plan.

Respectfully submitted,
Heritage Vancouver Society

cc Vancouver Heritage Commission