



## Heritage Vancouver

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December 13, 2016

Mayor Robertson and Vancouver City Council  
Vancouver City Hall  
453 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver BC V5V 1V4

### **Re: Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainability**

On behalf of the Heritage Vancouver Society, we wish to support the motion to request staff investigate the inclusion of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability that would guide City policies, programs and decision-making.

Over the last two decades, cities around the world have expanded the initial focus of *Agenda 21* on the environment and poverty alleviation to embrace the importance of culture for community well-being. In 2004 more than 100 cities and organizations joined forces to develop and commit to *Local Agenda 21 for Culture* which states that safeguarding our “cultural ecosystems” is just as important for the future of humanity as biodiversity.

UNESCO, leading thinkers on the creative city, and progressive countries like Australia and New Zealand have long-recognized that the protection of the diversity of human values and customs and creative expression and its products – including built and cultural heritage – is a human right. Communities therefore have a crucial role in deciding what constitutes heritage based on their values and relationship with place. This may take the form of intangible features such as collective ideas, social activities, community traditions and spiritual values. Here in Vancouver, in the past several years, the Heritage Action Plan and planning documents such as the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Plan, which covers a diverse range of cultural groups, have acknowledged and include community values about intangible features as well as the historic environment. Adoption of culture as a fourth pillar would build on this direction.

Heritage Vancouver strongly values both our built heritage as well as the intangible aspects of heritage that sustain a community’s ongoing relationship between culture and place. It is this relationship that deeply enriches and humanizes our urban environments, presents Vancouverites with the opportunity to experience a variety of lifestyles, and promotes respect for equality, diversity and meaningful participation in democratic processes. Heritage is deeply embedded in culture and as housing and general affordability continue to pose serious challenges to access to the city and our quality of life, we see the effective integration of culture into urban planning and related areas of policy (e.g. social planning) as having a pivotal role in solving these

problems and shaping Vancouver as a global leader in sustainability and social justice.

It is with this in mind that we state our support for the motion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Yuen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bill Yuen  
Manager, Heritage Vancouver Society