



Heritage Vancouver

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Canada

February 6, 2017

Michael Naylor, Senior Rezoning Planner
Vancouver City Hall
453 West 12th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5V 1V4

Dear Mr. Naylor,

Heritage Vancouver is in support of the proposed retention strategy for the Post Office Building at 349 West Georgia.

Heritage Vancouver views the Main Post Office building at 349 West Georgia Street as a clearly significant and currently fully intact example of the city's Modern architectural heritage and as a potential anchor for the City's urban and cultural development. To this end, Heritage Vancouver promotes the twin goals of preserving the overall integrity and most significant architectural features of this grand landmark, and incorporating civic and cultural uses/spaces that Vancouver currently lacks.

The opening of the Main Post Office (1953-58) marked the beginning of Vancouver's development as a regional centre in the postwar era. At the time, it was one of the largest Federal Government buildings in Western Canada. It is a significant building for its monumental International Style architecture, its civic presence, its connections to the Federal Government, and its landmark status.

Heritage Vancouver supports the proposed retention strategy as it addresses the broad defining principals of International Style used in this building. These include architecture as volume, the use of architectural expression of the building's exterior as an unbroken skin stretched tightly over the building's skeletal frame through the use of smooth planar materials, large banks of aluminum framed windows, and the avoidance of applied decoration.

In this building, sculpture and painting were seen as complementary elements that could add to a building and several works of art were in fact created specifically for both the exterior and interior of the Main Post Office and currently remain in situ. Heritage Vancouver sees these as essential to the integrity, history and legacy of the building and supports a strategy that will retain these elements in the proposed development.

We support the stated goal for the site as “a sustainable mixed-use development that will leverage the great transit and nearby amenities that the site offers.” The site is in fact located at the centre of what could eventually become the cultural heart of Vancouver. Within the immediate vicinity are the new CBC complex, the main branch of the Vancouver Public Library, and the recently renovated Queen Elizabeth Theatre. Additionally, the adjacent and City owned Larwill Park block remains under discussion as the potential site for a relocated and expanded Vancouver Art Gallery. Therefore Heritage Vancouver encourages further development of the program at the lower level so that it may contribute to the potential of this area.

Heritage Vancouver recognizes that some of the starting parameters that have driven this project, including density, view cones, and program, have brought urban design challenges. In particular, the two view cones at this site largely shape the design and massing of the towers that are proposed thus limiting the design options for them.

We support the proposed strategies of textural facades, alternating geometries and encourage the refinement of these proposed responses to the urban design and massing of the building as well as the separation of the new towers with the existing building.

In conclusion Heritage Vancouver supports the retention strategy proposed in this proposal and commends the development team in their efforts to preserve the essence of the building while addressing some of the issues that arise due to its changing program and new demand along the street.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Javier', with a vertical line to its left.

Javier Campos
President, Heritage Vancouver Society