



Heritage Vancouver

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May 16, 2017

Mayor Robertson and Vancouver City Council
453 W.12th Ave.
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

Dear Mayor and Council,

Re: False Creek Flats Plan

On behalf of the Heritage Vancouver Society, we are responding to the “Policy Report”, dated March 28, 2017 for The Standing Committee on Finance and Services, for the May 17, 2017 Meeting. The Policy Report is from the General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability.

We are pleased to see that important heritage assets such as the “Heritage Rail Hub” have been identified in the proposed plan, however it appears a critical heritage and character area covered by the planning area has been overlooked: the cluster of heritage buildings at the corner of Main and Terminal.

This area is proposed to become an “Innovation Hub” as a catalyst for economic innovation, as well as a key element of public life and activity within the Flats. The report states that staff will report back on an Urban Design and Development Framework for these blocks in the Innovation Hub.

This corner area contains some of the last original industrial heritage buildings remaining in the Eastern Core of the city. Together, this ensemble represents a wonderful microcosm of Vancouver’s industrial growth after eastern False Creek was filled in, with a corresponding change to railway-oriented industry to reflect the times. Almost none of these buildings have been recognized on the Heritage Register and many are in a rundown state. This is an excellent time to take a closer look at these buildings and their potential importance to the development of the Innovation Hub in the Flats.

The three buildings on the south side of Terminal Avenue, between Western Avenue and Station Street, form an imposing grouping:

- The Massey-Harris Building at 242 Terminal was designed by Gardiner & Mercer Architects and constructed in 1923 as a warehouse and showroom for Massey-Harris agricultural implements and tractors.
- Adjacent at 250 Terminal is the BC Valve Company, built in 1924 as a factory, office and laboratory. In 1930, the building was home to Rennie Seeds, and an

original sign for Rennie Seeds painted onto the brick remains visible at the second level on the west side.

- 260 Terminal was home to Neon Products, founded in 1924 by George Sweeney with other investors to provide neon signs to Western Canada. At this location, many of Vancouver's famous neon signs were designed and created including the beloved "Only Seafoods" sign located at 20 East Hastings.

While city staff are creating the Urban Design and Development Framework for the "Innovation Hub", as described on page ten of the Policy Report, we encourage them to determine how these industrial heritage buildings can be restored and integrated with new buildings to create a unique new environment. The repurposed Salt Building in the Olympic Village and Opsal Steel (now the Steel Toad Pub) on 2nd Avenue at Quebec Street are both unique additions to their contemporary surroundings and are examples of adaptive reuse that might be applied to this cluster.

The retention of rugged industrial structures can add texture and diversity by telling the story of the area's evolution. This would support two of the five key actions of the plan for the Flats, as described on page seven of the Policy Report. These are: 1) creating flexible work spaces to meet the needs of current and future businesses, and 2) developing a network of animated public spaces for employees to meet, collaborate and share ideas.

We have raised this issue in the past including during engagement sessions, advisory discussion groups and in our 2015 Top Ten list of threatened assets. We are disappointed to see that these important assets are not protected or acknowledged and trust that the City will review this aspect of the area plan and include additional protection and revitalization efforts for the enjoyment of future generations.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

George Challies

Board of Directors, Heritage Vancouver Society

Cc:

Cory Dobson, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

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Marco D'Agostini, Senior Heritage Planner