



Heritage Vancouver

www.heritagevancouver.org
info@heritagevancouver.org
604 254 9411

309 - 268 Keefer Street
Vancouver BC V6A 1X5
Canada

March 12, 2019

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

RE: Heritage Incentive Program

Dear Mayor and Council,

On behalf of the Heritage Vancouver Society, I am writing to express our qualified support for the proposed Heritage Incentive Program (HIP) as an essential first step in the renewal of heritage policies and procedures at the City of Vancouver.

The preservation of tangible assets is a crucial component of any heritage strategy and given the challenges heritage sites face in our city, there needs to be some form of support so that key built heritage can provide citizens a sense of place for the benefit of current and future generations.

We note that there will be forthcoming parallel policies (a report to council is scheduled for April 2019) which focus more on the social and cultural aspects of heritage including an update of the heritage register and integration of heritage with community planning to form a foundation of the City-Wide Plan. The introduction of these parallel policies as an update to the **City's heritage program will affect how** heritage is defined and under a values based system, how differing values are weighted. This will in turn have implications for the Heritage Incentives Program. The Heritage Incentive Program will need to be updated to reflect this forthcoming work.

In the interim, this proposed program will provide much-needed support to the upgrading and retention of tangible heritage assets, particularly unreinforced masonry.

With respect to the proposed recommendations in this administrative report we have the following specific comments:

1. We strongly support the reactivation of the transfer of density program as noted in Recommendation A. This program has demonstrated itself to be a robust low-cost method to retain important physical heritage assets by leveraging residual density in order to **both keep the "feel" and provide necessary upgrades to areas** that have used the program in the past, such as Gastown.
2. We conditionally support the provision of direct financial incentives to built heritage projects through the previously approved CAC heritage fund, with the following notes for areas of potential improvements as heritage planning continues:

- a. Update the HIP to reflect forthcoming social, cultural and heritage planning work. The current HIP proposal is a “work in progress” departure point for a granting system that will in the near future be reformulated as current work on the heritage program renewal and heritage register update become available and is approved by Council. At a minimum there should be a review of and adaptations made to the program after the first cycle of intake; should there be significant update work on the heritage program renewal and as the HIP relates to the forthcoming City-Wide Plan, review and adaptations should be made prior to the first intake.
 - b. Broaden the definition of projects eligible for incentives. Because of the forthcoming update to align Vancouver’s heritage program with current best practices in heritage, the incentive program should be used to help achieve the city’s other social, affordability, and cultural goals once that update starts. One example could be improving affordability through the retention of wood frame apartment buildings such as low rise walk ups.
 - c. Remove masonry requirements, or any specific building material related requirements. While there are many historic masonry buildings that require retention and seismic upgrades, there are far more historic buildings not constructed with masonry that require similar structural intervention. This is especially pertinent given that the proposed HIP will govern heritage policy throughout the city.
 - d. Reconsider the requirement for heritage designation. In keeping with points raised above it may be challenging to impose a requirement for designation if the HIP is used to support cultural/social heritage, urban landscapes, affordability and other broader understandings of heritage that require financial support.
3. We support the Heritage House Conservation program. This program complements the HIP by providing vital support to the retention of assets not addressed in the HIP.

We look forward to continued dialogue and consultation with city staff and Council as we work together to develop and implement further heritage retention policies and embed heritage thinking into the forthcoming City-Wide Plan.

Sincerely,



Javier Campos, President
Heritage Vancouver Society