



# First Shaughnessy Proposed Heritage Conservation Area

**First Shaughnessy District**, the area between West 16th Avenue & King Edward, Arbutus & Oak, was originally developed by the CPR in 1907, and was designed as the city's most exclusive residential enclave. It was an area of large lots where a building of \$6,000 minimum value was required. Pre-1940 houses and their lush landscaping with ninety-year old trees define this heritage character neighbourhood.

First Shaughnessy contains an array of heritage buildings with distinct North American styles such as neo-Tudor, Federal Colonial, and Arts & Crafts, designed by noted architects of the time.

**“..the general character of homes that combines to make Shaughnessy Heights one of the leading, if not the finest residential section in the Dominion”.**

The Vancouver Sun, 1919

# FSD HCA

## First Shaughnessy and the Proposed Heritage Conservation Area: The Public Hearing convenes for a third time on September 15, 2015

### Overview

On July 21, 2015 City Council held the first Public Hearing on the proposal to restructure the management of First Shaughnessy as a Heritage Conservation Area (HCA).

There has been significant concern over loss of heritage and character homes, as well as landscaping in the area, through increasing numbers of demolitions.

There are also issues with the design of new houses; in 1982, design guidelines were introduced as part of the Official Development Plan, but ambiguity in this plan has allowed property owners to circumvent guidelines and build homes that are out of character and scale with the neighbourhood.

Another practice called “demolition through neglect” has allowed homes to deteriorate to a point where owners feel they can argue for demolition, also causing worry.

A detailed summary of the issues First Shaughnessy is facing can be read from pages 7 and 8 in the First Shaughnessy Consultant Recommendations at:

<http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20150609/documents/rr1appendixl.pdf>

Due to the increasing number of demolitions, there was a one-year moratorium declared in June 2014 in First Shaughnessy. In the 18 months prior to the moratorium, there were inquiries to demolish 19 of the 317 pre-1940 homes that remain in the neighbourhood.

# Benefits of the HCA

Heritage Vancouver feels the proposed HCA has great potential for increasing the well-being of not only First Shaughnessy but also communities all over Vancouver.

Here are some of those benefits.

- 1.** It incentivizes retention of older homes.
- 2.** It limits demolitions.
- 3.** There is clear language that prevents people from exploiting the loopholes in the original Official Development Plan (ODP) of 1982 in order to build out-of-context McMansions and/or additions.
- 4.** It's much easier to administer than Heritage Revitalization Agreements.
- 5.** It allows for sensible densification in the form of infill and Multiple Conversion Dwellings. This is densification done well.
- 6.** It retains landscaping and it reduces building material waste which aligns with the Greenest City Initiative.
- 7.** It introduces maintenance standards to keep buildings and landscaping in good condition and prevent neglect.
- 8.** It allows for the area to maintain its unique character.
- 9.** It provides a framework for other areas that need protection.

- 10.** This is a precedent setting tool for heritage conservation in our city.
- 11.** HCAs exist in around 70 locations across BC, Victoria has 10 and is considering an 11th. We have yet to have one despite having key historic areas at risk.
- 12.** It aligns with a broad range of current values many Vancouverites hold: sensible density increase, affordability, environmental concern, neighbourhood character, community, and respect for the city's heritage.
- 13.** It is a move to create incentives for people who respect the above values and attract that type of buyer rather than speculators who want to make money off the real estate or those who want to game the system and exploit the existing ODP.
- 14.** It starts to set a stronger norm that heritage and neighbourhood character is important in our city and provides a clearer understanding of what is acceptable and what is not.
- 15.** It brings together people with a common interest in keeping special what makes the area special.
- 16.** There is recent research of these areas that have existed since as early as 1980 in Ontario that reports overwhelming resident satisfaction and success as a planning tool.

# The arguments that are made against the HCA

The Public Hearing was extended to give time for stakeholders to process the Coriolis Report which analyzes the effects on property value of the proposed HCA. The second Public Hearing took place on July 28, 2015.

Although there were more letters in support of the HCA than against, those who spoke in front of City Council outnumbered supporters at this hearing.

## Argument: Less gain in property value

**Our response:** The Coriolis Report<sup>1</sup> that examines the financial impact on the proposed Heritage Conservation Area concludes that:

*The downward pressure on price is not likely to translate into an immediate, significant, persistent drop in value, but in our view it does mean that lot values could see small short term decreases and experience smaller future increases than would otherwise have occurred, **if buyers do not choose to take advantage of the new benefits offered in the proposed new regulations and do not factor these benefits into the price they are willing to pay for a property with a pre-1940 house.***

Additionally, two reports<sup>2</sup> in 2008 and late 2012 on a two-phase study of 32 well established Heritage Conservation Districts in Ontario, many of which were designated in or before 1992 found that real estate values in these districts remain strong. Conducted by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario

with cooperation from the Heritage Resources Centre at the University of Waterloo, the studies conclude “real estate values in Heritage Conservation Districts generally rise more consistently than surrounding areas.”

Dallas Brodie of the First Shaughnessy Design Panel spoke to Council<sup>3</sup> at the first Public Hearing about restoring a \$2.88 million neglected and unmaintained home in Shaughnessy for \$500,000. The home was valued at nine million recently to which she says, “It’s impossible for me to believe people won’t make money on their homes in First Shaughnessy.” She even offered to give residents advice on how to do it.

Joanne Giesbrecht a Vancouver Realtor, stated at the first Public Hearing that the proposed changes create value for Vancouver’s property and that the market responds accordingly. She concludes with, “If anybody thinks their pre-1940 home is going to be of less value in a year than a post-1940 home, they need to get a better realtor.”<sup>4</sup>

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**Argument: Density in the form of infill, coach houses, basement suites etc. changes the makeup of First Shaughnessy as a premiere area for single families on a large lot. It was also feared that Shaughnessy will be turned into “Kitsilano Part Two”.**

**Our response:** Although in 1922 the Shaughnessy Heights Building Restriction Act forbade the subdivision of lots to ensure that one single family is on one large plot, there has been a long history of subdivision in the area because of the Depression and the Second World War. Some provisions for subdivision actually remain in the existing Official Development Plan from 1982.

According to the First Shaughnessy Consultant Recommendations Report<sup>5</sup>, during the Depression years, many single family houses were converted into multiple dwellings and with the outbreak of WWII, using the War Measures Act, City Council, between 1942 and 1955, allowed homes to be split into smaller units. It was estimated in 1957 that Multiple Dwelling Units were present in about 30% of the buildings.

Stanley Hashimoto has lived in his Shaughnessy house for 43 years and at the public hearing said “Shaughnessy has been a great place to live at some point, at one point. Initially when we moved in, Shaughnessy was filled with Multiple Dwelling Homes, nursing homes, various care homes on various sites, but many Multiple Dwelling Houses.”<sup>6</sup>

Linda Collins of the First Shaughnessy Design Panel points out two homes<sup>7</sup> that look like single family homes but are not — one is hers which has infill in the back with three units and the other is a rooming house for six priests. According to her, “the higher density with dividing the costs of these properties, it allows a lot more people with different incomes to live in the neighbourhood.”

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**Argument: Density in the form of infill, coach houses, basement suites etc. is undesirable for certain owners in First Shaughnessy, and so it is not an incentive. To offset loss in value, secondary suites and coach houses would lead to loss of use of a portion of the property and loss of privacy for the owner.**

**Our response:** Although some current property owners consider the incentives for infill and coach houses undesirable, they will matter when/if the current owners sell. Whether or not there is less gain in property value will depend on, among other factors, whether the future buyer wants a property where they can build infill, coach houses.

The ability to be able to put in infill is what increases the value; the current owner does not need to put in infill in order to benefit from the incentive because the incentive is meant to be used by the future purchaser of the property.

There are current owners who speak positively of the potential for more subdivided lots as a way to allow for more people to live in the neighbourhood as well as to help out with costs of maintaining such a large estate.

There have also been recommendations for additional incentives that promote retention proposed by a number of speakers at the public hearings such as removing the basement FSR exclusion for new builds (or other FSR advantages over new builds) and lower fees and faster turnaround times for retention applications.<sup>8</sup>



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**Argument: Old homes are of lower construction standards since construction is better today. There was one suggestion that old houses only have a 75 year lifespan. Renovation is costly- particularly for remediation of asbestos, mold which are safety issues.**

**Our response:** Many older homes in Shaughnessy were designed by many prominent BC architects of the time and had a very high level of craftsmanship using solid, high quality materials not often used or easily available today.

In fact, when the first lots in First Shaughnessy went on sale in around 1910, quality and architectural standards were so high that while standard houses were in the \$1,000 range, no house was allowed to be built for less than \$6,000 in First Shaughnessy. The garages and coach houses alone were in the \$2,000-\$2,500 range, costing more than a standard Vancouver house.

To ensure the strict requirements for quality were met, all designs needed to be examined in detail before approval, and construction monitored by the CPR.

There are excellent architects who work in the area such as Clinton Cuddington of Measured who have had great success in adapting and revitalizing these homes.

It's also very possible for a renovation to cost less than building new depending on the size and scope of work of the new build. Instead of spending money on double height ceilings and taking the houses to the curb which is a large concern in First Shaughnessy, a renovation of a home that is more proportional to the lot under the proposed guidelines may be less costly than an oversized new build.

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## **Argument: Prevention of demolition dashes hopes of building a “dream home”.**

**Our response:** Again, with a good architect, it’s very possible to design a wonderful, modernized home using the existing building.

Innovative design using the modern to complement heritage aspects is not elusive to skilled architects.

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## **Argument: Not all pre-1940s homes are meritorious.**

**Our response:** The estimate by the principal consultant has been that up to five percent of 317 homes are clearly non-meritorious based on visual review, after extensive review of all pre-1940 First Shaughnessy properties.<sup>9</sup>

There are a number of other houses that may be determined to be non-meritorious after further review through the City’s Development Permit process, as a number have already been significantly altered. Despite these qualifications, the vast majority of pre-1940 houses in FSD have heritage merit.

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## **Argument: 1940 is an arbitrary date to be using as a cutoff for homes to be protected from demolition in First Shaughnessy.**

**Our response:** Michael Kluckner explained at the first public hearing that during the Second World War, the National Resources Mobilization Act in 1940 halted construction.

With the exception of conversions into rooming houses and poor quality infill in First Shaughnessy, nothing significant was built there until the 1960s.<sup>10</sup>

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**Argument: Heritage alteration permits will be required in order to make any changes to these homes such as painting or changing a doorknob.**

**Our response:** Routine maintenance and repair such as painting of the house is exempted and no special permits will need to be applied for.

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The opinion below has also been expressed and we wanted to offer some points we feel are worth considering.

**Argument: The HCA being proposed for First Shaughnessy is elitist and favors one of the most wealthy segments of the city.**

**Our response:** It is extremely important to remember that Shaughnessy is important as a heritage area to the entire city, not just its residents. It has been managed as a special heritage area since 1982; this proposed HCA is just another step forward in continuing the existing heritage protection in the area.

In addition, transferring the management of the area to an HCA sets a long-term goal of stronger heritage conservation measures city-wide that could be applied to other areas of the city.

This HCA would be the first in the largest city of a province with 70 of these areas; Vancouver, however has not officially adopted an HCA and has over 1,000 homes demolished annually.

This HCA would send a strong message that heritage and neighbourhood character is valued throughout Vancouver, not just Shaughnessy.

If one supports heritage conservation across the city, support for the HCA would help continuing efforts for heritage conservation.

If, however, the HCA proposal is defeated in First Shaughnessy, it would be much more difficult to move forward with heritage conservation in other heritage areas.

# Notes

Links below are available at: <http://www.heritagevancouver.org/fsdlinks.html>

1. <http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20150721/documents/phea-YellowMemo-Appendix2.pdf>
2. See Heritage Districts Work! Heritage Conservation District Study Summary Report 2009 and Heritage Districts Work – More Stories of Success Heritage Conservation District Study Phase Two Summary Report available at <https://uwaterloo.ca/heritage-resources-centre/projects-research/recent-projects>
3. See 2:01:00 of the July 21, 2015 Public Hearing REZONING: First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area at <http://civic.neulion.com/cityofvancouver/index.php?clipid=3494201,000>
4. See 1:55:00 of the July 21, 2015 Public Hearing REZONING: First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area at <http://civic.neulion.com/cityofvancouver/index.php?clipid=3494201,000>
5. P. 37-41 of the First Shaughnessy Consultant Recommendations discuss the history of space being split into smaller units. <http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20150609/documents/rr1appendixl.pdf>
6. See 3:35:49 of the July 21, 2015 Public Hearing REZONING: First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area at <http://civic.neulion.com/cityofvancouver/index.php?clipid=3494201,000>
7. From 00:19:00 of the July 28, 2015 Public Hearing REZONING: First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area at <http://civic.neulion.com/cityofvancouver/index.php?clipid=3494482,000>
8. See Peter Kappel's comments to council at the 38 minute mark and Elizabeth Murphy's remarks at 3:31:40 of the July 28, 2015 Public Hearing REZONING: First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area. <http://civic.neulion.com/cityofvancouver/index.php?clipid=3494482,000>
9. The August 18, 2015 Memorandum to Mayor and Council addresses the percentage of non-meritorious homes on page 4. <http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20150721/documents/phea-QandA.pdf>
10. See 3:56:40 of the July 21, 2015 Public Hearing REZONING: First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area at <http://civic.neulion.com/cityofvancouver/index.php?clipid=3494201,000>

# Additional reading

## **City of Vancouver**

First Shaughnessy Heritage Conservation Area information

<http://former.vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20150721/phea20150721ag.htm>

## **News Articles**

### **Shaughnessy heritage homes moratorium debate gets heated**

Globe and Mail; by Kerry Gold; August 28, 2015

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/home-and-garden/real-estate/shaughnessy-heritage-homes-moratorium-debate-gets-heated/article26144887/>

### **Top 10 reasons why First Shaughnessy should be declared a heritage area**

Vancouver Observer; by Caroline Adderson; August 26, 2015

<http://www.vancouverobserver.com/opinion/top-10-reasons-why-first-shaughnessy-should-be-declared-heritage-area>

### **In Shaughnessy, New Heritage District to Halt Character Home Demolitions**

The Tyee; by Christopher Cheung; June 17, 2015

<http://thetyee.ca/News/2015/06/17/Shaugnessy-New-Heritage-District/>

### **Shaughnessy to become Heritage Conservation District**

Vancouver Sun; by John Mackie; June 4, 2015

<http://www.vancouversun.com/Shaugnessy+become+Heritage+Conservation+District/11110014/story.html>

# About Heritage Vancouver Society

We're an independent non-profit society, encouraging the community to preserve, restore, and appreciate Vancouver's heritage, and are dedicated to 'Creating a Future for Vancouver's Heritage'.

Since our inception in 1991, we carry out a wide range of activities to create greater appreciation for our rich historical legacy and work with the community to conserve Vancouver's heritage, including our yearly **Top10 Endangered Sites list**.

- Become a member to help support heritage initiatives in Vancouver
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Some of our past major public campaigns have been to preserve the **Stanley Theatre** (in 1992), **Victory Square** (in 1994), **Lions Gate Bridge** (in 1998) where we were the only voice towards its retention instead of demolition, **Woodwards, Firehall #15**, the Arthur Erickson designed **Evergreen Building**, ongoing efforts to preserve the art deco **Burrard Bridge**, and Vancouver's oldest remaining wooden schoolhouse **Carleton Hall** (1896) now in use by the Greenthumb Theatre Company.

Heritage Vancouver's advocacy work is both reactive and proactive. We act as the "Voice of Heritage", including letter-writing, media campaigns, participating in public consultation sessions, meeting with City of Vancouver Heritage Planning staff and making presentations to City Council.

# Support

Donations are tax deductible and help preserve Vancouver's heritage and support Heritage Vancouver Society's programs.

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