

What is Heritage?

“Heritage” includes traditions, values and features of life that are passed on from one generation to another. Buildings and their surroundings are key reminders of our heritage.

Heritage is often thought of as the very old or only the best and the greatest - the “homes of the rich and famous.” This is not the case. Heritage conservation is concerned with preserving the history of all walks of life, all human activities, all peoples. A house need not be the design of a noted architect or the birthplace of a prominent citizen to merit saving. There is also a growing awareness that even fairly recent structures, such as those built in the post-war era of the 1950s and 1960s, are vulnerable to unsympathetic alterations or even demolition.

Heritage is, simply, what we agree is worth keeping for the future.

The City of Victoria Heritage Program

The City of Victoria has demonstrated leadership in heritage conservation in Canada for over 50 years. The City has several successful incentive programs to assist heritage property owners.

Designated commercial, institutional, industrial & apartment buildings are eligible for financial assistance through the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust.

Designated houses may apply for grants through the Victoria Heritage Foundation.

The City of Victoria is responsible for the Heritage Register and the Heritage Designation process. Their website includes a list of all buildings and landscape features on the Register.

If you would like more information about the Heritage Program, adding your house to the Heritage Register or altering your heritage house, contact the City of Victoria.



photo: VHF/C. Fennell

The Heritage Register

The purpose of the Heritage Register is to educate and increase the awareness of a community’s history, culture and heritage. While not exhaustive, the Register is a record of the architectural and cultural history of the community. It also helps City staff and Council in decision-making for future development.

Some buildings on the Register are referred to as “Designated”. However, the Heritage Register and Heritage Designation are separate classifications. The Heritage Register is a list of resources, while Heritage Designation is a legal means of heritage protection. Designation is noted on the property title; the Heritage Register is not.

Designation is generally limited to the exterior, although authentic interiors, outbuildings and landscape features may also be included.

Changes to a Designated site require a Heritage Alteration Permit (HAP) while changes to a Heritage Register building usually do not require one. (If a Heritage Register property is within a Development Permit or Heritage Conservation Area, an HAP is required.)



postcard: Valentine & Sons, 1900

collection: J. Veillette



Heritage builds community

What is the Role of the Victoria Heritage Foundation?

The Victoria Heritage Foundation (VHF) works to promote the conservation of the City’s buildings which were originally intended as single-family houses or duplexes and to support owners of Heritage Designated houses.

The City of Victoria established VHF in 1983 as a not-for-profit volunteer organization to administer grants for owners of Heritage Designated houses. Since then, the City and VHF have awarded over 1,000 grants to more than 350 houses.

By offering incentives, homeowners are encouraged to invest significant amounts of their own resources. As houses and historic streetscapes are conserved, our sense of community is reinforced.

Want More Details?

The Victoria Heritage Foundation’s website contains more information on the House Grants Program and how to apply.

You’ll also find useful resources including a chronological history of Victoria and indexes of building dates, architects and builders.

Additionally, there are fascinating histories of each of Victoria’s neighbourhoods, illustrated with many archival photographs.

Contact VHF:

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Why Victorians Love Their Heritage Houses



photo: L. Alexander

Ask people why Victoria is a great place to live, and they will offer many answers, but a recurring theme will be the city’s wonderful buildings and streetscapes.

The community is blessed with a wealth of handsome homes, ranging from tiny Victorian cottages through cutting-edge modern homes..... to several castles!

The result is many exciting buildings and entire streets that are a pleasure to live in and to walk through. (And a great attraction to visitors!)

Many owners have agreed to their homes being listed on Victoria’s Heritage Register. And over half of those are Heritage Designated. Demolition wastes resources, clogs the landfill, diminishes the streetscape, and reverses all the loving care that many owners have invested in the properties.

So, what does it really mean, being Designated or on the Register?

Heritage Designation

Most Designations are at the request of the homeowner. Heritage Designation means that the owner and the City are committed to retain and maintain those qualities and features that are important to the community. Benefits include:

- recognition of the building's heritage significance
- future conservation of the building
- funding assistance for rehabilitation & maintenance through the Victoria Heritage Foundation
- a distinctive oval brass plaque



Some quick notes:

- Heritage Designation remains with the property, even if sold
- Heritage Designated buildings can be sold or bought without special approval
- Owners retain all rights of ownership and enjoyment of their property
- Activities in the building or on the property are not affected by Designation
- Normal maintenance and repairs (e.g. painting, gutters) are carried out at the owner's discretion
- Homeowners can make alterations to the exterior of their Heritage Designated homes, but may require a Heritage Alteration Permit and consent of City Council
- The house may not be demolished without the consent of City Council



Altering a Heritage Designated House

Changes to heritage houses are inevitable. Maintenance and repairs are essential as buildings age. There are ways to maintain and adapt heritage buildings that respect their original form and materials. Heritage Alteration Permits may be required by the City of Victoria when an owner wishes to alter the exterior of a Designated building. Changes may be made with approval from City Council.



How Does Heritage Designation Affect the Real Estate Value of the Building?

In a study done by the University of Waterloo it was found that in the Province of Ontario "the majority of Designated properties, approximately 59%, performed better than average in their value history trend when compared to the average property value trend in their communities."¹ The Victoria Heritage Foundation tracked market values and assessments of 142 Heritage Designated houses between 1988 and 1999, and found that they had increased 26% faster than the average for the City.

Just as there is a market for every price range there is also a market of people who desire to own character homes, many of which may be Heritage Designated houses. In general, Designation actually provides stability and helps protect property values during downturns in the market.

¹ Robert Shipley, University of Waterloo, Heritage Designation and Property Values: Is there an Effect? 2000.

Victoria Heritage Foundation House Grants Program

Owners of Heritage Designated houses are eligible to apply for grants once a year in March. Grants are a percentage of project costs and are subject to VHF priorities and availability of funds. House Grants Committee members with experience in the heritage and building fields, oversee the program. Grants are awarded for structural work and seismic upgrading as well as for the rehabilitation and maintenance of the building's exterior including:

- re-roofing
- chimneys
- painting
- gutters & drainage
- woodwork
- doors & windows
- storm windows

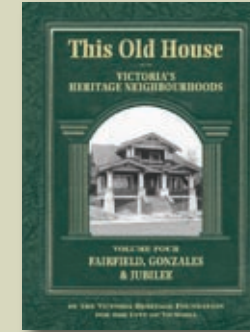


Victoria Heritage Foundation Education Program

The Education Committee works to:

- promote public awareness of the large number of architecturally and historically significant houses in Victoria's neighbourhoods, spanning the eras from Victorian and Edwardian through to the Modern
- foster retention of Victoria's irreplaceable historic homes
- support building, renovation and conservation trades and crafts
- provide information and support to homeowners who want to preserve these special houses

This Old House: Victoria's Heritage Neighbourhoods



VHF staff and volunteers have researched and written the four-volume series *This Old House: Victoria's Heritage Neighbourhoods*. These award-winning books include detailed architectural information on the buildings listed on the City of Victoria's Heritage Register, a great

deal of social history, many photographs, old and new and neighbourhood histories. All four volumes are available at Victoria City Hall, local independent book sellers and through VHF.

Neighbourhood Heritage Walking Tour Brochures

In partnership with the City of Victoria, VHF has produced several Heritage Walking Tour brochures for parts of Victoria's historic neighbourhoods. These self-guided walks provide a history of the areas and describe a variety of properties, including many not on the City's Heritage Register. They are available from Victoria City Hall, the Tourism Victoria Visitor Centre on the Inner Harbour and elsewhere. Interactive versions of the walking tours, including photos of all the buildings, are found on our website.



Your Old House Technical Pamphlets

Your Old House pamphlets provide practical information to help the homeowner maintain, restore and appreciate their older home. Titles include: *Wood Windows*, *Wood Siding*, *Masonry*, *Paint* and *True Colours*. Available at Victoria City Hall or through VHF.

