

A GUIDE TO HERITAGE PLANNING

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This guide is not a bylaw. It is a guide prepared to assist you in understanding the heritage conservation practices in the City of Pitt Meadows. For details and legal documents, you must consult relevant bylaws and provincial legislation.

What is Heritage & Why Does it Matter?

We can see examples of our local heritage and history all around us. Our heritage includes the traditions and sacred places of First Nations people along the banks of the mighty Fraser River and other streams, the dyking system that opened-up vast areas for farming, roads and settlements in the highlands forming our community, elements of the natural environment, and the ways that people express culture and traditions on the landscape. Together, these examples paint a unique image all can identify as being Pitt Meadows.

Maintaining our heritage is important. There is value in keeping memories of the past alive. It allows us to teach our children and grandchildren, in exciting and hands-on ways, about the ways of life of First Nations people and Pitt Meadows' pioneers. People also like to travel and learn about places away from their own communities. There is value in pointing out heritage places in Pitt Meadows to visitors, and in celebrating the heritage of our City on Pitt Meadows Day and throughout the entire year. We can all feel the economic benefits from tourism.

The task for residents, businesses, developers and the local government is to find better and unique ways to preserve and to maintain our best examples of heritage places – whether they are buildings, physical features, or natural and cultural landscapes. Cooperation is essential to save our heritage places for future generations to use and enjoy.

What are the Main Tools for Heritage Planning?

The tools that municipalities can use to help keep local heritage alive are contained in Provincial legislation. Some of these include:

- Maintaining an **inventory of sites** that will be reviewed to determine whether they have heritage value or not;
- Keeping a list of sites that have been assessed as having heritage value or heritage character. This list is called the **Pitt Meadows Heritage Register**. Currently, 12 heritage sites are included;
- Protecting significant heritage places with agreements between owners and the City through passing a **heritage designation bylaw**;
- Protecting heritage buildings in need of alterations through a **heritage alteration permit** that encourages renovations to be made in a way that respects the character of building; and
- Saving heritage buildings threatened by destruction through **temporary protection**, to give owners and the City time to discuss alternatives that might allow a heritage building to be saved.

What is a Heritage Register?

A Heritage Register is a list of buildings, structures and other features with qualities or characteristics that are recognized as significant and contribute to the city's heritage. City staff evaluates the buildings, structures and features of historic value prior to recommending them to Council that they be added to the Heritage Register.

The City practice is to seek the consent of the owners before Council passes the necessary resolution to add sites to the Heritage Register.

Effects of being on the Heritage Register

Properties on the Heritage Register are listed on the City website allowing everyone to learn more about our community's heritage buildings and history. Personal information is not included, and individuals are not permitted to enter property or disturb occupants.

When an owner submits an application for a building permit to renovate or alter the exterior of a heritage building, the applicant will be asked to be respectful of the main elements defining the heritage character of the building. Although not binding on the owner, such comments are to provide guidance on the type of changes that would be complementary to the style of the building. Interior renovations or alterations are not affected by the Heritage Register, unless otherwise specified.

If the City receives a development application which includes property on the Heritage Register, the City seeks to have the heritage building or feature incorporated into the development or moved to another site where it can be preserved. Often, a developer may be able to secure variances and other bonuses to make retention of heritage buildings possible. A report to Council regarding the development proposal will describe how the heritage building or feature will be preserved.

If an owner of a building or structure on the Heritage Register applies for a demolition permit, the City will issue the permit once Council decides to pass a resolution to remove the house or the feature from the Heritage Register. Before Council decides, staff will discuss alternatives to demolition with the property owner. As well, more information may be collected, including an inspection of the heritage building and a heritage assessment.

Owners may choose to have their houses recognized by a plaque or to have their properties designated. Owners may be able to benefit from grants, City tax reductions and relaxation (called equivalencies) of Building Code requirements.

How Are Sites on the Register Identified?

When a site is added to the Heritage Register, the owner(s) on title registered at the Land Title Office are informed of Council's action of being added to the Heritage Register. The City also informs the Provincial Heritage Branch that maintains the BC Register of Historical Places. The provincial register is simply a consolidation of local heritage registers and does not have an effect on property owners.

How is the Community Involved?

A few residents created the Pitt Meadows Heritage and Museum Society (PMHMS) in 1977. Its members are strong advocates of preserving our community's heritage. The society is involved in assisting the City to evaluate heritage sites for the Heritage Register, marking heritage days, operating the local museum, and many other activities.

Provincial/ National Heritage Recognition

Sites on the BC Register considered to be of national significance, may be nominated through the Province to be placed on a newly established Canadian Register of Historical Places. The Province has measures in place to protect personal privacy and stipulates what information is made available to the public in describing heritage sites placed on the Provincial or National Registers.

Sites on the national register are assessed using Statements of Significance. These describe the heritage value that a building or feature possesses, and the character elements that express the value. This will assist an owner in maintaining the character of their heritage building or feature.

More Information?

Visit the following websites for more information.

City of Pitt Meadows www.pittmeadows.bc.ca
(under Business, → Planning & Development, → Heritage)

PMHMS www.pittmeadowsmuseum.com

BC Heritage Branch www.tca.gov.bc.ca/heritage/

Canadian Register of Historic Places
www.historicplaces.ca