



January 29, 2021

Members of Regina City Council

Response to Provincial Heritage Review Board- The Bagshaw Residence

Heritage Regina respectfully submits this letter in response to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation Review Board's recommendations for the property at 56 Angus Crescent, also known as The Bagshaw Residence.

Heritage Regina greatly appreciates the work of the Review Board and that of City Council and Administration in this matter. We stand by our assertion that the Bagshaw Residence should be assessed as a Level 1 property and thus designated. We take exception to the significant reliance on the assessment of the foundation and structure to determine that the building should not be designated. Further the suggestion that the property only meets Level 2 criteria is contradicted by the assertion that this house may be the only remaining example of Craftsman style in the city that was also designed by an internationally known architect. The recommendation of the board is disappointing to many and ultimately if Council agrees with the Review Board, this will be a loss for the community and for Regina's history. We do however support the suggestion of a Heritage Conservation District.

The process that the homeowner, the city, and the community has been through in relation to the Bagshaw Residence highlights ongoing concerns with the Heritage Policy and the plan for implementing this policy. Heritage Regina is concerned because although the current policy provides a foundation for effective heritage stewardship it falls short on good process for identifying, protecting, and commemorating our heritage inventory which then perpetuates this adversarial process we find ourselves in time and again.

There has been a list of potential heritage properties since the late 1980's. Every time a property on that list comes to city council for demolition, we end up in a months long process, pitting the community against the owner to try to save a historic building. Time and money are spent on arguments about financial feasibility, heritage significance, structural integrity, property owners' rights etc. If a designation is obtained, then the process ends, and the property is left to the devices of its owner. This can lead to demolition by neglect, where properties fall into further disrepair leading to a new request for demolition.

The recommendation by the Review Board to add yet another level of assessment to the current policy is troubling and potentially complicating. City Administration also suggested this idea to the community at the October 2020 Council meeting. In response to that suggestion, Heritage Regina sent a letter to City administration which includes these points:

We see the addition of structural integrity to be a highly subjective criterion in evaluating a property for designation. Evaluation of structural integrity inevitably leads to a conversation about the affordability of making necessary improvements to a building. If the City wants to include structural integrity in the evaluation of a property, would it not also then need to review an owner's financial situation to determine the ability to cover the expenses of repair and maintenance? This is a slippery slope. Instead, Heritage Regina recommends that the resources of the City be focused on escalating the assessment of properties for the Heritage Inventory using the themes currently in place and moving forward with the designation of Grade 1 properties as the policy allows. This then makes structural integrity irrelevant for those properties and ends the current cycle of pitting property owners against the community, with City Council and Administration focusing on items not considered part of the criteria for designation.

Furthermore, if the City wishes to include structural integrity in the evaluation of heritage properties, this could result in both Grade 1 and Grade 2 properties being demolished despite their significance. Without additional policy and resources that provide the ability to tell the stories of those properties, that history is lost forever.

We need our heritage inventory identified and evaluated sooner rather than later. There was a commitment to review a number of properties each year but that is not sufficient and seems to be behind schedule. The longer we wait the further into disrepair some of these properties become and the risk of a lower assessment and/or demolition increases. Identifying the Level 1 and Level 2 properties and subsequently designating the Level 1 properties means that homeowners are clear about the property's importance to the community, they have access to resources for repairs, they have the support of the city and any buyers of the property are fully informed. We also suggest that this will lead to more pride in ownership of heritage properties making them even more desirable. We implore the City to make the assessment of the properties currently on the list a priority.

The current Heritage Policy does not address what happens after designation. Owners are under obligation to keep the property in good repair, but there is no process in place for the City to ensure the inventory of heritage properties is maintained. Without periodic inspections, the Level 1 designated properties can fall into disrepair and result in a lost of heritage resources.

A recognition program for those properties, on the list, that cannot be sustained due to their condition should be undertaken, acknowledging that with a fulsome Heritage Policy in place the need for recognition diminishes over time as the policy itself will ensure that designated properties are maintained ongoing. In the case of the Bagshaw Residence, a commemorative plaque highlighting the significance of the structure, the architect and previous owners will ensure that this piece of history is not lost.

Finally, to complete the Heritage Policy we require a process for identifying and assessing properties going forward. As the city ages, new significant properties will emerge, and we should not wait 40+ years between inventories. A process to ensure that we are adding and when necessary removing locations from the list is critical to ensure we do not maintain the current adversarial process.

The bottom line is, that with a more robust Heritage Policy, we will not have another experience like we have had with the Bagshaw Residence. With all Grade 1 properties identified, the owners supported to continue maintenance, periodic inspections to ensure compliance with policy that the City stands behind and recognition of those properties that cannot be saved will ensure we have a vigorous and meaningful policy that will take us well into the future. Heritage Regina feels that the resources of the city are better used towards implementation of an effective policy with a full list of heritage sites identified and designated verse time and money spent on a knee-jerk reaction to a request for demolition.

Heritage Regina outlined these and other concerns along with suggestions for improvement to the Heritage Policy in a letter to Diana Hawryluk, Executive Director of City Planning on November 30, 2020. We have enclosed a copy of that letter for your information.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jackie Schmidt', written in a cursive style.

Jackie Schmidt
President

Encl. Heritage Inventory Evaluation Process, 30/11/2020