



August 16, 2021

To Your Worship and Members of City Council,

Re: Application for the demolition and removal of 1863 Cornwall Street from the Heritage Property Register

This letter is in response to the request for demolition of 1863 Cornwall Street, current known as the Burns-Hanley Building.

To start, Heritage Regina is very concerned that there is a demolition request of a heritage building located in a Heritage Conservation District. It was hoped that the conservation district designation would have prevented buildings from demolition by neglect. A review of the condition report provided by the owners clearly indicate that a roof repair in the past could have prevented most of the damage listed to support demolition. How does this happen? The building owner's nominal investment to repair the roof likely would have prevented the deterioration of the structure to the point where it has now rendered the building inhabitable. This repair would have been significantly more cost effective than the current repair price tag of \$4,000,000.00 and perhaps even less than the demolition and removal of materials. Decisions like this must be questioned. What is the real commitment to the conservation district by property owners?

The city has assessed this building as a Grade 2 Heritage Site. Unfortunately, the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the site this building occupies has not been adequately reflected in the Statement of Significance (SOS). What is missing from the assessment, is the history of Louie Riel. The site of 1865 Cornwall Street was the original location of the St. Mary's Catholic Church. Built in 1883 and according <http://blessedsacramentregina.ca/history/> in 1885 following the funeral mass for Louie Riel, his body was temporarily interred in the church until it could be transported to its current burial site in St. Boniface, MB. Demolition of the current building removes the historic plaque that marks the site of the former St. Mary's Church. Reference of this site's connection to the church or to Louie Riel is at risk of being lost unless any new build is somehow required to recognize this heritage. Furthermore, consultation with Saskatchewan Metis Nation should be undertaken before any further changes occur to this site and to determine future recognition of historically significant events.

Heritage Regina wonders what is to become of this site if the current building is demolished? Typically, when demolition plans are submitted, owners submit details of the plans they have for the location. The Guidelines for the Victoria Park Municipal Heritage Conservation District indicate that: *Applications for total demolition shall include plans for the redevelopment of the site affected.* No information was submitted for this location. Are we to have yet another vacant lot in our downtown? Is there a plan for construction that the owner is not willing to share with the public? Understandably demolition is a separate process from construction, but this building has stood in its current state for

several years and without a plan for new construction, we are left with yet another gaping hole in the downtown streetscape? What is the urgency for demolition now? How will the history of this site be acknowledged and shared with the community?

Without a plan for rebuilding on the site, opportunities to incorporate heritage features of the current building will be lost. There are many advances in architecture that can support the inclusion of heritage features, such as the façade of a building, into new developments. Opportunities to maintain the character of downtown are lost with total demolition.

Upon reading this application for demolition, Heritage Regina is left with many questions that reflect the lack of strength behind the bylaw for this conservation district. What steps have been taken by the City of Regina or by the owners of heritage/potential heritage properties in this conservation zone to ensure the longevity of their properties? What requirements exist within the rules for this and other conservation districts to ensure historic buildings are maintained? What requirements are in place to ensure that the district maintains its character and that shiny new office towers do not overtake Regina's historic downtown? What enforcement opportunities exist or should exist?

As such and based on the SOS, reluctantly, we do not oppose the request for demolition. However, considering the implied intent of the conservation district bylaw and based on the lack of information on the plans for this site, we would be opposed. We implore City Council to ask questions, hold the current owner accountable for the degradation of this building and to insist that they share the future plans, before a decision is made on demolition. Regardless of the power and money behind this request, city councillors and administration should consider the best interests of the city, including the historic conservation district and the preservation of our shared history before approving this request. Furthermore, Heritage Regina feels that with the current emphasis on preservation, new incentives being explored and a heritage policy that incorporates a maintenance policy, inspections and enforcement, it is time to review and revise the current bylaw and guidelines of the Victoria Park Municipal Heritage Conservation District to ensure that this area of the city continues to reflect our past and future.

Respectfully, the Board of Heritage Regina



President
Heritage Regina