

THE IMPLICATIONS OF DEMOLITIONS ON HERITAGE GRANTS

EXAMPLES FROM MOUNT ST. ANGELA AND OLD TOWN

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ESSENTIAL ISSUES

- **Mount St. Angela**, a notable heritage site, is facing the possibility of partial demolition. The proposed part had conservation work done with the aid of a provincial conservation grant.
- **Old Town** where 10-year tax-exemption grants are common, along with project grants, is also facing a possible demolition.
- **Conservation grants** of any kind are worth far more than their cost, since the conservation measures prevent future losses.
- ***The Local Government Act*** provides a process for recovery of tax exemptions: "If eligible heritage property is destroyed or damaged whether with or without authorization," recovery may be the original sum plus compound interest. (810.1 (a) + (b) + (c).)
- **The LGA** is silent about grants; however, they should not be ignored. Since designated sites receive heritage grants, the underlying assumption is retention. It is also the best solution.
- **Public investment**, whether giving what the city has collected (grant) or not collected (tax-exemption), brings inherent fiduciary accountability.
- **Cultural and fiscal obligations** come with a grant.
- **Ignoring grants** incentivizes demolitions. Such demolitions could well open the floodgates into Old Town. The loss of so many publically supported buildings, would greatly increase the loss of public financial and cultural investments

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MOUNT ST. ANGELA BACKGROUND

Recent History

Mt. St. Angela has had a varied history, initially designed by John Wright (the first Victoria architect) in 1865 as an Anglican girls school. Later it became a hotel. In 1912 the porte cochere was added along with a large addition at the back. It remained a hotel until the Sisters of St. Ann bought it in 1959. The three additions (1876-1912) are all connected together.

heritage; c) view Old Town as a large carbon sink; and d) assist tourism, an important revenue source, In 1991-92, the provincial "Landmark Program" made three grants: Building Needs Study, Maximum and Conservation Needs grants totalling \$75,000 (\$110, 958 in 2017 currency), part

of \$120,000 spent at the time (source Heritage Branch staff). At this point we do not know whether there were any grant conditions. Conservation work included the old tower, 1912 side porch cedar roof of the Back Hotel and the porte cochere plus general stabilization of the whole. In 1992 all four parts were designated.

Development Proposals

Since 2006, six proposals have been presented. The 2011 one was accepted by the City but not built. At that time the Back Hotel, which is large and long, was to be removed; it lost heritage designation through the Heritage Revitalization Agreement and Heritage Alteration Permit. The present plan demolishes the Back Hotel, side porch and porte cochere, all of which had grant enabled conservation work done on them.

Lack of Acknowledgement

Since 2009, I have been explaining to city officials about the grants. As well as the problem inherent in removing, for private profit, what had been sustained by public funds. I requested in letters, Mayor's Drop Ins, and meetings that the City acknowledge and deal with the grant issue prior to the [final] hearing. Various officials at City Hall (Mayor, Councillors, planners) say a version of "Bring it up at the hearing." That is too late. Since removals are key to the whole plan, that plan is responsible for public fiscal and cultural loss.

REQUESTS TO COUNCIL

Please:

- 1 a) Acknowledge and respect the existence of grants; b) respect the many constituents who value heritage; c) view Old Town as a large carbon sink; and d) assist tourism, an important revenue source, by maintaining the heritage character of Old Town.
2. Vote to discuss action needed with the City lawyer, heritage planner and head planner.
3. Consider if the City should consult the Province, the original grant source, about the issue.

Copies: This information is to be forwarded to City of Victoria departments, three provincial ministries, as well as organizations and individuals interested in or dealing with heritage.