

Mayor Lisa Helps and Victoria City Council

Re: Northern Junk Project/Caire and Grancini & Fraser Warehouses

Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00236

Dear Mayor Helps and Members of City Council,

Please **do not support this application** which would severely damage the character of Old Town!

The application would radically alter two of the most historically significant heritage buildings on Victoria's Inner Harbour. These warehouses, dating to 1860, are two of the oldest historic commercial buildings in downtown Victoria. The heritage value of these buildings lies in their modest scale, their vernacular construction, and their appearance as freestanding structures which contribute to the diversity of the City's historic shoreline as viewed from the Inner Harbour.

This proposal **does not** meet the City's recently adopted *Old Town Design Guidelines for New Buildings and Additions to Existing Buildings* **nor does it comply** with the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. Specifically, the *Old Town Design Guidelines* state:

- *A new rooftop addition should not compete with a historic building in size, scale or design, and should maintain the visual significance of the historic building within the streetscape. **An addition that radically exceeds the size and scale of a historic building, or has a visually dominant design undermines the heritage value of the building and district.** Old Town has a uniquely cohesive historic character that new additions should respect. In a heritage conservation area, the success of an addition will be measured by its compatibility both with the building itself and the district as a whole. A rooftop addition that is subordinate to an individual historic building will be subordinate to the district by extension.*

This proposal also violates the following principles of the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* which **recommends against**:

- *Constructing a new addition that obscures damages or destroys character defining features of the building.*
- *Designing a new addition that has a negative impact on the heritage value of the building.*

Other heritage buildings on the harbor have been successfully rehabilitated without resorting to oversized additions. Examples include the Canoe Club restaurant and pub, Capital Iron, Hartwig Court, and the recent rehabilitation for Phillips Brewery (a modest rooftop addition to

the former BC Electric Railway Car Depot buildings at Discovery and Store Streets, (former Sportstrader's store).

The City of Victoria has a long, distinguished history of leadership in the heritage conservation of its historic downtown core. This was recognized in 2001 by the Heritage Canada Foundation, when it awarded the Prince of Wales Prize for "the long record of achievement by the City of Victoria in preserving its heritage buildings and historic districts." The past 25 years have seen a huge investment by the private sector in sensitive rehabilitation of its commercial heritage buildings. This proposal, on the other hand, would set a dangerous precedent which will undermine future efforts to conserve the scale and character of one of the finest heritage districts in Canada.

I strongly recommend that you decline this application.

Yours truly,

Steve Barber

Senior Heritage Planner, City of Victoria (1986 – 2014)