

Heritage Properties

If a home is more than 60 years old, home owners may refer to it as having character merit or as “heritage”, regardless of how well it has been preserved or how much it has been altered over the years. Heritage is not just about age, it’s about authenticity. The real value is in a property that’s retained its original character, as well as its importance in the history of a place.

Municipal Heritage inventories and registers

Most Greater Vancouver area municipalities have an:

- **official heritage inventory** – a list of buildings, properties, and sites with characteristics or qualities contributing to the city’s heritage. Being on an inventory doesn’t “designate” or protect homes, properties, or sites. The inventory encourages site retention and rehabilitation. Example: [Coquitlam’s heritage inventory](#).
- **official heritage register** – includes homes designated as heritage by a team of historians and city planners. The register lists buildings of special historical importance, along with homes that represent certain architectural styles. Some buildings on a heritage register are designed by a specific bylaw. In municipalities with an official heritage register, buildings may be categorized based on historical importance, such as [Vancouver’s A, B, and C classes](#), or North Vancouver’s [A and B categories](#) which designate the level of protection against future alteration or demolition.
- Homes in the highest heritage category can’t be altered without municipal approval, while homes in the lesser categories can be altered after the owners meet with municipal heritage planning staff to discuss ways of preserving the home’s exterior character. Owners of authentically restored older homes can apply to have them placed on the municipality’s Heritage Register, helping to preserve local history and, in some cases, enhancing their resale value.

Character merit

Homes built before 1940 may have “character merit” depending on the municipality, which may include the original massing and primary roof form, an original open front porch or veranda, original cladding, or replacement

cladding consistent with pre-1940, original windows. Some municipalities, such as Vancouver, require an official [character merit assessment](#) before deciding a home has character merit.

Heritage neighbourhoods and zones

Municipalities may also designate areas or neighbourhoods as “heritage zones”. For example:

- the City of Vancouver has designated the [First Shaughnessy Conservation area](#) (West 16th to King Edward, West 25th) and Arbutus Street to Oak Street;
- The City of Richmond has designated 17 heritage buildings and landscaping in the Steveston area under the [Steveston Village Conservation program](#); and
- The City of New Westminster has designated the [Queen’s Park Heritage Conservation area](#).

Heritage plan

Municipalities may have an official heritage plan which specifies future plans for heritage areas, for example, the [Maple Ridge Heritage Plan](#).

Incentives

Municipalities may have incentives for retaining character and heritage homes. Almost 1,000 homes [are slated for demolition in Vancouver](#) alone, each year. Incentives help keep heritage homes in neighbourhoods.

For example:

- Vancouver has [transferable heritage density bonuses](#) including increased density and height;
- Vancouver permits increased density in First Shaughnessy (West 16th to King Edward – West 25th and Arbutus Street to Oak Street) for homes listed on the [Vancouver Heritage Register](#). Property owners can develop multi-unit buildings with secondary suites or coach houses and infill buildings; and
- Burnaby has a range of [incentives](#), as does [Coquitlam](#), [New Westminster](#) and other municipalities. Some include [property tax relief](#).

Heritage revitalization agreements

Municipalities may offer legal, written agreements negotiated between a property owner and a municipality to provide non-financial incentives to help owners to conserve a heritage property. This agreement is registered on the property title. Here is an [example from West Vancouver](#).

Heritage alteration

Municipalities may require a heritage alteration permit to alter a heritage or character home.

Heritage demolition

Most municipalities want to retain houses with character merit or heritage value. For example, [Delta may withhold a demolition permit](#) if the property is on the heritage register.

Provincial Heritage Conservation

The [BC Heritage Conservation Act](#) protects archaeological sites on private land without requiring formal designation. This means that property owners who find evidence of an archaeological site on their property must pay for further investigation.

An archaeological site is a location with evidence of past human activity including stone carvings, remains of ancient houses, campsites, or middens (location of aboriginal artifacts).

The province keeps inventories of properties that have heritage value in its heritage registry. The heritage designation is a form of expropriation of property rights (like a statutory right of way) and imposes certain restrictions on property owners. Once the designation is made, it appears on title.

The province has more than 21,000 records of sites and objects in its heritage registry.

Federal Heritage Conservation

The Government of Canada owns more than 40,000 buildings. More than 20,000 have been evaluated and over 1,300, or three per cent, have been designated. These buildings are recorded in the Register of the Government of Canada Heritage Buildings which is maintained by the [Federal Heritage Buildings Review Office](#) (FHBRO).

The FHBRO assists federal government departments with protecting federal heritage buildings in keeping with the [Treasury Board Policy on the Management of Real Property](#). The policy applies to federal government departments which administer real property but not to Crown Corporations, which means post offices and railway stations aren't covered by the policy.

The FHBRO evaluates federal buildings 40 years old and older to determine heritage character. They then make recommendations to the Minister of the Environment, who is responsible for approving heritage designations for government of Canada buildings. Through this process, buildings are designated as Classified, the higher level of designation, or Recognized, the second level.

Examples of federal heritage designated buildings and sites include West Vancouver's [Point Atkinson Lighthouse](#), Vancouver's [CN Railway Station](#) and [Marpole Midden](#), and Steveston's [Gulf of Georgia Cannery](#).

Due diligence

When performing due diligence on a property title, remember what's not registered on title is often just as important as what is registered on title. It's important to determine if a property has a heritage designation or is an archaeological site. Check with the municipality where the property is located and with the [BC Archaeological Sites registry](#).

Resources

- [Heritage BC](#)
- [Heritage basics](#)
- Heritage homes tours in [Vancouver](#) and [New Westminster](#). Both locations offer summer and winter heritage homes tours when owners have information about restoration
- [Heritage Vancouver](#)
- [New life, old buildings](#) from the Vancouver Heritage Foundation.

Municipality	Bylaw / register	Fees – altering / demolishing	Fines / Penalties	Contact
Anmore	Official Community Plan Zoning bylaw	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Martin Greig, building inspector 604-469-9877 martin.greig@anmore.com
Belcarra	Official Community Plan Zoning bylaw	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Lorna Dysart, chief administrative officer 604-937-4101 ldysart@belcarra.ca
Burnaby	Zoning Bylaw Heritage information Heritage inventory	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Jim Wolf, heritage planner 604-294-7944
Coquitlam	Heritage information Various bylaws Heritage register	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Planning department 604-927-3000
Delta	Heritage overview Heritage strategy Heritage register Zoning bylaw	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Alex Cordero, heritage planner 604-946-4141
Lions Bay	Zoning & Development Bylaw	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Peter DeJong, chief administrative officer 604-921-9333 cao@lionsbay.ca
Maple Ridge	Heritage procedures bylaw Heritage maintenance bylaw Heritage register Heritage inventory	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Lisa Zosiak, community planner 604-463-5221 lzosiak@mapleridge.ca
New Westminster	Queen's Park heritage conservation area Heritage inventory Heritage register	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Britney Quail, heritage planner 604-521-3711
North Vancouver City	Heritage register Heritage register FAQs Official Community Plan	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Planning Department 604-985-7761
North Vancouver District	Heritage information Heritage Strategic Plan Heritage procedure bylaw Community heritage grants	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Planning Department 604-990-2311

Municipality	Bylaw / register	Fees – altering / demolishing	Fines / Penalties	Contact
Pitt Meadows	Heritage development Official Community Plan	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Planning Department 604-465-2465
Port Moody	Heritage strategic plan Heritage procedures bylaw Heritage register Heritage Maintenance Standards Bylaw Heritage Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Mary DePaoli, manager of planning 604-469-4500 mdepaoli@portmoody.ca
Richmond	Heritage overview Heritage procedures bylaw Heritage inventory Steveston Village conservation plan	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Minhee Park, heritage planner 604-276-4000 mpark@richmond.ca
Squamish	Official community plan Zoning bylaw	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Sarah McJannet, planner 604-815-5217 smcjannet@squamish.ca
Vancouver	Protecting Vancouver's heritage Heritage bylaws Vancouver heritage register (homes, buildings, trees sites) First Shaughnessy Design panel	No demolitions, if possible. No demolitions in Shaughnessy. Demolition permit fee	Vancouver has taken property owners to court for as much as \$100,000	Marco D'Agostini, heritage planner 604-873-7172 marco.dagostini@vancouver.ca
West Vancouver	Heritage conservation Heritage Register Various heritage designation bylaws	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Planning department 604-925-7000
Whistler	Whistler's heritage	No demolitions if possible. Demolition permit fee	Not applicable	Planning department 1-866-932-5535