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October 22, 2020

Your Worship and Members of City Council,

Re: Bagshaw Residence – Municipal Heritage Property Designation Bylaw

Heritage Regina fully supports the Bylaw to designate the Bagshaw Residence at 56 Angus Crescent. We see the designation of this property as an important element in sustaining our city's cultural heritage for present and future generations.

As we noted in our August 19, 2020 letter to City Council, the Bagshaw home is significant for its long association with Frederick and Esther Bagshaw. Both Mr. and Mrs. Bagshaw were highly regarded members of the community who actively contributed to the development of Regina, the province and Canada.

Constructed in 1913, the property is one of the few remaining homes of its era in the neighbourhood. Character-defining elements, including its location on the property site and its architectural form and façade, mark the home as a key part of the historical and architectural character of the Crescents area.

The interpretation of the Craftsman style in the home's exterior design makes the property uncommon in the neighbourhood. Notable elements of the style include the large dormer, covered front porch and multiple-pane double-hung windows. Some of the building's materials, such as the external red brick chimney, remain original to the house and provide insight into the craftsmanship in use at the time of construction.

Frederick Chapman Clemesha's connection to the home is also noteworthy. A prominent architect in the city during the early decades of the last century, his design of the Bagshaw Residence illustrates the range of his residential work, and his sculptural design of "The Brooding Soldier" continues to be regarded as an iconic memorial to Canada's war veterans locally, throughout the province, nationally and internationally.

For more than one hundred years, the Bagshaw Residence has contributed to our collective history. When the City established its Heritage Holding Bylaw (now Heritage Inventory) in 1989, the Bagshaw Residence was among the first properties added to the list.

Lately, however, we are noticing a new trend emerging with respect to properties on that list. It is becoming more common, for example, for a heritage home in Regina to be purchased by

home buyers/developers who know the property is listed on the City's Heritage Inventory. They are not seeking a residence for themselves, but rather a redevelopment opportunity. They "roll the dice" and purchase the property, hoping that it will never be designated. They decline the City's offer of financial incentives to conserve the heritage home and apply for a demolition permit so they can tear down the building, redevelop the site and then resell the property. When the demolition application is paused to let the City consider a heritage designation for the property, the owners argue that the home they willingly purchased is unsafe, uninhabitable, too expensive to conserve and cannot be resold.

We see this pattern playing out with the Bagshaw Residence. This is a troubling development for a number of reasons:

1. It disregards the history and architecture of heritage homes and the continuing influence these properties have on the character of older neighbourhoods. When heritage homes, like the Bagshaw Residence, are purchased only for the redevelopment potential of their lots, the community loses its tangible connections to Regina's history, along with the distinctiveness of its streetscapes. You simply cannot replace heritage properties built in the early 1900s with new, modern homes and continue to regard the neighbourhood as one of the oldest communities in the city.

2. It tries to shift the focus from the character-defining elements of the property's exterior to the state of its interior spaces. It is important to remember that, in Regina, a heritage designation is limited to a building's exterior. This means that while the heritage value of the exterior of a designated home must be maintained, there are no restrictions placed on the redesign and renovation of the interior of the home.

Additionally, it is also important to note that—although the exterior of the Bagshaw Residence needs the care and attention that any other 107-year-old home in Regina would require—the City's current property assessment rates the building's quality as "very good."

3. It positions demolition as the only financial option. When the new owners of a historically significant property apply for a permit to demolish that property, the City cannot allow the demolition to proceed based on whether the new owners consider the cost of conserving the property to be too expensive for themselves. What one person deems to be financially unaffordable may be considered by another person to be very reasonable.

If the new owners of a property have determined that the cost of conserving that property is beyond their level of financial comfort, they have the option to sell the property to someone who would find the costs of conservation to be acceptable.

4. It overlooks the many opportunities and benefits created through heritage conservation. From an economic perspective, conserving heritage properties creates jobs in a variety of areas, including construction, engineering, interior design and landscaping.

Conservation opens up opportunities for heritage tourism, a growing industry. Visitors want to experience the historically, architecturally and culturally significant areas of our city. If we do not conserve and promote our heritage sites, we lose out on the economic benefits enjoyed by other municipalities across Canada. Imagine St. John's without its iconic "Jelly Bean" rowhouses, for example. Or Quebec City without the 400-year-old architecture of its Old Quebec district. Or

Vancouver without the late 19th- and early 20th-century architecture of its Gastown neighbourhood.

Conserving heritage properties helps to protect the environment. By choosing conservation over demolition, greenhouse gas emissions and the volume of materials that end up in our landfills are substantially reduced.

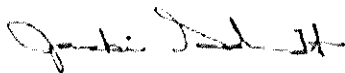
Retaining the heritage elements of our neighbourhoods enables citizens to feel connected to their community and to each other. According to a Heritage Resources Branch brochure, "Each community's unique history is written in its buildings, streets and landscapes. As symbols of a shared past, historic places reinforce our sense of identity, build civic pride and help define the character of our cities, towns and rural districts." (source: Heritage Resources Branch, Saskatchewan Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. "Social Benefits of Heritage Conservation.")

5. Finally, it also suggests that, for home buyers/developers, the potential for a strong return on investment outweighs the possibility that the property might receive a heritage designation. As long as home buyers/developers see this as a financial risk worth taking, City Council will continue to have to deal with demolition applications for properties on the Heritage Inventory.

By granting a heritage designation to the Bagshaw Residence, the City is recognizing and preserving an important historical property that continues to contribute to the rich cultural heritage of one of our oldest neighbourhoods and to our city's development as a vibrant community.

On behalf of the Heritage Regina Board of Directors, I am pleased to support a Municipal Heritage Property Designation for the Bagshaw Residence.

Sincerely,



Jackie Schmidt
President