

Heritage Conservation

What are Historic Resources?

“Historic resource” means any work of nature or of humans that is primarily of value for its palaeontological, archaeological, prehistoric, historic, cultural, natural, scientific or esthetic interest including, but not limited to, a palaeontological, archaeological, prehistoric, historic or natural site, structure or object”

(Alberta Historical Resources Act)

Historic Resources may take many forms, but in Calgary are typically buildings, landscapes or features that are valued for their role in telling the story of our place and culture. The multi-disciplinary task of retaining and enhancing historic resources is broadly referred to as **Heritage Conservation**.

Why Conserve?

Historic Resources can unlock triple bottom line benefits for municipalities. In addition to the aesthetic, social and educational value of heritage sites, the benefits of conservation include job growth in skilled trades, reduction in construction/demolition waste, economic resiliency during recession periods, positive contribution towards ‘sense of place’ and community identity, avoided environmental impact through reuse of structures, and promotion of a compact urban form.

The importance of heritage conservation is recognized Provincially (Alberta Culture and Tourism), Nationally (Parks Canada), and Internationally (International Council on Monuments and Sites), and thousands of municipalities worldwide have policies or programs designed to help conserve their historic resources.

Calgary City Council has acknowledged the value of heritage conservation through approval of the *Calgary Heritage Strategy* and other city-wide policies:

Municipal Development Plan

“Historic preservation is part of good city building and community identity. Heritage buildings and historic districts serve to enhance our perspective, understanding and awareness of our past and help to build a sense of identity and pride in our local communities...Historic preservation also provides tremendous economic and environmental benefits.”

(2.3.3 Heritage and public art)

Cultural Plan for Calgary

“Calgarians support the conservation of built heritage which brings character and a sense of place to streets and public spaces. “

(6.0 A Collective Vision for the Future)

One Calgary 2019-2022 Service Plans and Budgets

“Culture, identity and heritage are key aspects of inspiring neighbourhoods”

(Plan Highlights: A City of Safe and Inspiring Neighbourhoods)

“Canada’s historic places are a living legacy for all Canadians. Ensuring a future for these treasures will allow the next generations to use

The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

Alan Latourelle
Former CEO, Parks Canada—



National Hotel

Circa. 1910 [Glenbow NA-1075 -9]

Select benefits of heritage conservation on next page

Heritage Conservation

Select Benefits: Economic

- Jobs**

The restoration or rehabilitation of historic resources requires the labour-intensive involvement of skilled trades. A PlaceEconomics study (*Good News in Tough Times: Historic Preservation and the Georgia Economy*) found 21% more jobs were created for the same economic activity (cost) in conservation projects vs. new construction.
- Tourism**

Statistics Canada reports that 24% of overnight visitors to the Calgary area participate in a cultural activity, with a majority visiting a historic site. Since 2012, spending by 'culture' visitors in Calgary has increased by \$51.9 million (Calgary Heritage Authority, *Economics of Heritage Preservation for Calgary*).
- Competitive Advantage**

Calgary Economic Development's *Calgary in the New Economy* strategy identifies 'Place' as a focus area, including a challenge with migration: "Many Canadians do not believe Calgary offers arts and culture comparable to their current home city." All of Calgary's identified 'peer cities' (including Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver) have significant heritage conservation strategies.
- Adaptive Re-use**

The size, design, and lower rents typical to historic buildings makes them highly flexible for entrepreneurs and start-up business. "Neighborhoods that include older, smaller buildings house significantly greater concentrations of jobs in the 'innovation economy' than do areas with only larger, newer construction." (Stephanie Meeks, National Trust for Historic Preservation)



McHugh House
Circa. 1903 [Glenbow LIB-10-114]

Select Benefits: Environmental

- Avoided Impact**

The re-use of existing buildings presents significant carbon savings over the total cost of replacing a city's entire building stock. Historic buildings are said to have "Inherent Sustainability" through their long life-cycle, reparability, and traditional building design (*Building Resilience: Practical Guidelines for the Sustainable Rehabilitation of Buildings in Canada*).
- Diverted Waste**

Demolition of buildings in Canada generates approximately 25% of all landfill waste (Canada Green Building Council). Conserving and rehabilitating historic fabric presents a significant opportunity to reduce unnecessary landfill usage and material loss.

Select Benefits: Social/Cultural

- Appreciation & Enjoyment**

In a telephone survey of 600 Calgarians during development of the *Cultural Plan for Calgary*, respondents rated preserving heritage buildings and spaces as their second highest priority for cultural investment in the next 10 years. The plan concludes: "It is now recognized that historic resources are integral to the cultural viability of a city as an affordable and desirable place to live/work".
- Education & Identity**

Historic resources are places of learning and understanding, and are integral to community identity. "Historic places are a source of pride for Canadians. They are part of our collective history and a legacy that we pass on from generation to generation" (*Preserving Canada's Heritage*, Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development).

"The 'greenest' building is the one that is

Carl Elefante
President
American Institute of Architects