

Walter, Penny

Subject: FW: Email - Request to Speak - Norma Klassen - Attaching Revised Heritage Bylaw Amendment - File CK 710-49
Attachments: Feb 22, letter re Heritage Amendment 8235.pages

From: Norma Klassen <>
Sent: Monday, February 22, 2021 9:15 AM
To: Web E-mail - City Clerks <City.Clerks@Saskatoon.ca>
Subject: Email - Request to Speak - Norma Klassen - Attaching Revised Heritage Bylaw Amendment - File CK 710-49

Dear City Clerk:

I plan to speak at today's 6:00 meeting with respect to the Heritage Bylaw 8232 amendment. As per my call this morning, I am asking if you would replace the attached letter for the draft I inadvertently sent in on Friday. Thank you.
Norma Klassen

Dear Mayor and Council:

I strongly object to the amendment of Bylaw 8232 at this time.

Intro: A Tourist's Account - Saskatoon, the unexpected favourite!

Before I discuss my reasons, I would like to relate an account of Saskatoon from a visiting relative who was performing in a New York Broadway musical on tour over 30 years ago. He said that Saskatoon completely surprised the cast and crew, who raved about its "charming European ambiance" and "beautiful churches". Saskatoon became their unanimous choice for favourite city on tour. What had they seen of Saskatoon? Other than the airport and the old Centennial Auditorium where they performed, they had stayed in the Bessborough, skated for free at the rink on the riverbank, walked to the University Bridge, then circled along Saskatchewan Crescent to Broadway Bridge and back. That was it. Ask yourself, what makes this section so special? Why would New Yorkers, who had visited many impressive cities and historic churches, name Saskatoon as their favourite?

Concerns: Moving in a contrary direction

I understand that the Feb 21 evening meeting is strictly about the amendment of Bylaw 8232 and that the City has decided to approve this amendment to allow for the proposed Knox Tower to be built. After following the controversy and doing related research, it appears to me that **Saskatoon is moving in a direction contrary to current interpretation and practice with this decision.** In the long run, it could work against Saskatoon's goals for increased downtown permanent residency and tourism, and against Saskatoon's vision for being "a leader in Canada for quality of life and sustainable planning."

Please consider the following:

1. Current publications on historic preservation include adjacent development:

- The latest edition of **Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Buildings in Canada** has added a section on cultural landscape, stating, for example, that new development be subordinate to historic buildings and not become a focal points (1)
- **Other cities** across North America and the UK have revised their heritage policies and made decisions to reflect current thought concerning a unified cultural landscape with respect to adjacency and division of properties for the purpose of infill. (2)
- **Respected authority, Steven Semes**, whose work has influenced recent heritage policy across North America, says that new development design should be carefully curated, taking characteristics of adjacent buildings as cues. He uses the example, "You wouldn't put an Andy Warhol in a Dutch Masters' collection." He concludes that buildings may have different styles, need a unified approach "that reflects

the sense of the specific place and creates continuity over time rather than contrast and disruption. It is this continuity over time that gives the special character to areas people love. (3)

2. Commonalities of well-loved iconic places

- When people talk about cities they love to visit, they invariably refer to a specific area or street with a unique, consistent flavour and defining character. Consider Water Street in St. John's, Gastown in Vancouver, Barrington St in Halifax, Stephen Ave in Calgary, downtown Victoria, and Whyte Ave in Edmonton, to name a few. Likewise, areas that residents want to frequent and reside in have a consistency of character and a feeling of neighbourhood.
- Each city above has identified iconic elements and adopted specific plans to protect them. These identified iconic elements are leveraged to add elements of liveability and create a sense of neighbourhood.

3. This iconic section of Saskatoon needs special protection!

The section between the University and Broadway bridges, which has nine Spadina address listings in the Saskatoon Register of Historic Places, is thought by many people to be Saskatoon's most "iconic" street, photographed and loved by residents and tourists from many parts of the world. Yet it lacks special protection to retain its iconic qualities. In the long run, a lack of plan specifically for this section will set a precedent for ever taller and more incongruous buildings, each potentially vying to be the focal point, and will magnify problems already named in previous letters. It will lose that special charm that is so attractive to residents and tourists!

I appreciate that Saskatoon has already done extensive and auspicious planning and has made some very impressive developments along Spadina! I suggest what is needed now is a pause to allow for the creation of a specific plan to protect this section and to leverage its unique characteristics to enhance the qualities of a "desired neighbourhood". I recognize that this creates yet another delay, and that it would likely result in a less profitable outcome in the short term. In the long term, however, I think Saskatoon will benefit hugely by this pause. Perhaps these steps will ensure that Saskatoon doesn't make some of the mistakes regretted by other cities and that it "*continues to be a leader in Canada for quality of life and sustainable planning*".

I have attached an Addendum of references and notes.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinions.

Respectfully submitted,
Norma Klassen

ADDENDUM

References and Notes

1. **The Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada 2nd ed.** (The Standards); Canada's Historic Places, A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Collaboration, www.historicplaces.ca, has added specific section on cultural landscapes:
 - Visual Relationships (4.1.5) re additions or alterations to a cultural landscape (4.1.5) *Recommended: "Designing a new feature when required by a new use that respects the historic visual relationships in the cultural landscape. This can include matching established proportions and densities, such as maintaining the overall ration of open space to building mass in an urban district when designing an infill building." Not Recommended: "Introducing a new feature that alters or obscures the visual relationships in the cultural landscape, such as constructing a new building as a focal point, when a character-defining vista was traditionally terminated by the sky"*
 - Additional Standards: (11) "*Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place*"

(2) Other Interpretations of "the Standards"

- Toronto: **Toronto Official Plan** ; City of Toronto; www.toronto.ca 3-15 #26;
 - *"New construction on, or adjacent to, a property on the Heritage Register will be designed to conserve the cultural heritage values, attributes and character of that property and to mitigate visual and physical impact on it."*
- Ontario: **Heritage Places of Worship - A Guide to Conserving Heritage Places of Worship in Ontario Communities**; Ontario Heritage Tool Kit; Ont. Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Culture; mtc.gov.on.ca
 - *Subdivision of Property, p 29 . Key considerations for division of a heritage property for development purposes should include: "Visual impact of the proposed subdivision and development on the heritage place of worship (e.g., setbacks, size, height)" and "Impact on views and sight lines to the heritage place of worship from the street and neighbouring properties."*

• Ontario: **Adjacency and the OMB: New decision says the new must respect the old**, Dan Miller; Heritage Resource Centre; uwaterloo.ca; Feb/2016;

- A developer's plans for a 32-storey apartment tower in downtown Toronto were nixed. The OMB (Ontario Municipal Board) found that the proposed building *"functions in isolation of its surroundings without appropriate regard for its immediate context, especially for the immediate heritage context; and it overwhelms and subordinates the physical attributes of these much smaller buildings with little or no regard for the cultural heritage therein"*.
- *"suggests the crux of adjacency is the view or visual context of the heritage structure."* Notes change in revised in definition of heritage attributes to include *"not just the property's built or manufactured elements"* but also *"its visual setting" (including significant views or vistas to or from a protected heritage property)."*
- *"The main takeaway from this case? in adjacency situations heritage attributes of heritage properties are to be interpreted broadly and not necessarily limited to those listed in a designation by-law. The visual relationship between the old and new is key — where the new would visually overwhelm, diminish or degrade the old, these adverse impacts on the heritage attributes will doom the project."*
- *"Concern about "adjacency" can be seen as part of growing attention in the heritage movement to the context and surroundings of historic structures. ICOMOS's 2005 Xi'an Declaration On The Conservation Of The Setting Of Heritage Structures, Sites And Areas: <http://www.icomos.org/charters/xian-declaration.pdf>)"*

- Philadelphia:

Part 2: Design guidelines of Other Organizations: Philadelphia Historical Commission; Philadelphia's Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts, 2007 - www.preservationalliance.com ; p 12

- *"All new construction should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and the neighborhood. Taking cues from the surroundings is a good way to ensure sensitive new construction in the district."*
- *"Building height is one of the strongest design guidelines for new construction. ... The height of adjacent buildings will help dictate the height of new construction"*

Part 5 - Summary of Case Studies rates developments as to their adherence to Philadelphia Guidelines

- United Kingdom: **Building in Context: New Development in Historic Areas**, a report by the CABE (Commission on Architecture and the Built Environment) and English Heritage designcouncil.org.uk
- Contains case studies of modern building projects, discussing context, site problems, solutions, and lessons learned
- Written in response to the belief that there is widespread misunderstanding about how to determine what is appropriate for sensitive conservation sites.
- *"producing solutions that are lastingly satisfying does mean investing in time, effort and imagination. One of the heartening lessons... is that such an investment is, in the end, almost always thought to be worthwhile, even by those who started off as critics."*
- **Case Study 6-** Left Bank Village Restaurants, Hereford - A sensitive site; earlier proposed scheme was rejected - *a bulky building which obtruded into the skyline and began to threaten the dominance of the cathedral in certain views. The central problem...to find form of architectural expression which was*

appropriate to the site... river bank and broad views from the bridges...any tall building on the site would be prominent on the low sky-line of the city, which is still dominated by the cathedral. New plan: The scale and verticality of the new building relate... a single building with restaurant, a brasserie, conference facilities and a bar; three stories of terraces cut back; Strategy: a building which defers to the cathedral and the established sky line of Hereford because of the setting back of the terraces and the recessive colours of the materials:... :provides three open terraces with excellent views of the river...."

(3) Steven Semes, master architect and professor of architecture , has influenced and been quoted in heritage plans of cities across the U.S. and Canada.

- Semes, in **Differentiated and Compatible: Four Strategies for Addition to Historic Settings**, Part 1 Philadelphia Historical Commission; Philadelphia's Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts, 2007, www.preservationalliance.com; p 12
 1. *Literal Replication*
 2. *Invention within a style-"while not replicating the original design, adds new elements in either the same or a closely related style, sustaining a sense of continuity in architectural language. (what most architects have done)"*
 3. *Abstract Reference - "seeks to make reference to the historic setting while consciously avoid- ing literal resemblance or working in a historic style. This approach seeks to balance differentiation and compatibility, but with the balance tipped toward the former, ...difficult strategy to execute because it requires an artistry and skill that are not often available."*
 4. *Intentional Opposition..."one of conscious opposition to the context and the determination to change its character through conspicuous contrast, prioritizing differentiation at the expense of compatibility "...Such designs are inherently incompatible with adjacent traditional buildings and inevitably lead to the erosion of historic character as increasing numbers of intrusive and alien forms challenge the qualities that made our protected settings valuable in the first place.*
- Semes, **Rethinking Differentiation and Compatibility**, p 9 Philadelphia Historical Commission; Philadelphia's Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts, 2007
 - Districts with character often contain buildings with different styles, but the buildings have a unified approach to design that *"reflects the sense of the specific place and creates continuity over time rather than contrast and disruption. It is this continuity over time that is important to creating and maintaining the character."* *"All the places we love most have character, historically and architecturally, are exemplary and do not fight with what is already there."*
 - *"To insist on differentiation by means of a contrasting modernist style for new construction, as some authorities have in recent years, condemns historic buildings and districts to change in ways alien to their historic patterns and typologies. When consistently applied, this policy leads to the gradual erosion of historic character...an unacceptable contradiction in contemporary preservation practice."*
 - *"What makes buildings from different eras and styles compatible is that they share the same underlying principles of space, structure, elements, composition, proportion, ornament, and character. If these principles are consistent among the buildings along a street or around a square, they will be compatible, regardless of style."*
 - *"The decision about which of the four strategies... cannot be made lightly. It is a question of what is most respectful of the existing architectural and urban conditions or, if these are not suitable, what will produce the greatest degree of harmony and wholeness in the built environment. Such decisions cannot be made one building at a time, but must recognize the potentially exemplary nature of every architectural act. If we pay more attention to the historic urban setting than to the individual building and move beyond an obsessive concern with the chronology of construction, our choice of strategy can fulfill our obligation as citizens to make the city more beautiful, sustainable, and just. If we adopt this ethic, we will naturally seek not the architecture of our time but, more importantly, the architecture of our place."*
- **The New Criterion with Steven Semes**, interviewed by James Panao, re "architecture of place", from "Sense of Place: Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts" , Youtube
 - Architecture defined by place has character. All the places we love most have character, historically and architecturally, are exemplary and do not fight with what is already there.
 - Semes used example of curating: You wouldn't put a cactus in with your rainforest and you wouldn't put an Andy Warhol with a Dutch Masters collection.

4) Commonalities of Iconic Spaces

Water Street in St. John's, Gastown in Vancouver, Barrington St in Halifax, Stephen Ave in Calgary, downtown Victoria, and Whyte Ave in Edmonton, Broadway in Saskatoon

- Elements that make the area or street “iconic” are identified.
- Each has a specific development/redevelopment plan to protect and foster a unified identity and increase liveability based on these iconic elements.
- Historic buildings and their surroundings, whether or not having special “designation”, are seen to be very important to the character. Impact of new development on surrounding buildings with respect to height, sight lines, sunshine, and congruency are of vital importance.
- Plans, often initiated in response to conflicts of interest similar to what we are experiencing here, are the foundation to collaborate with future stakeholders.
- Note: Edmonton Strathcona Area Redevelopment Plan, consolidated Mar. 2020, has responded to some conflicts by dividing its iconic street, Whyte Ave., into three character areas, each with its own goals, form, and height restrictions - clustering tall buildings in one area, with height controls and gradual transitions down to four storey limits in its “historic” section.