Evaluation Methodology

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Vancouver Heritage Inventory Phase II
Prepared for the City of Vancouver by Allen Parker and Associates and Funded by B.C. Heritage Trust

The purpose of building evaluation in Phase II is to rank buildings in categories or groups of relative significance that co-relate with the conservation program being formulated by the City at the time of Phase II completion. To accomplish the evaluation task, the following were required:

- a detailed set of evaluation criteria formulated specifically for Vancouver
- an evaluation process that could systematically assess information and assign a numerical score to each building
- a record of each building's evaluation and the reasons determining the evaluation
- a method of modifying the overall scoring so that future changes in the relative importance of the criteria can be accommodated.

Evaluation Criteria

The criteria were formulated after a review of existing evaluation systems used in other North American cities; after considerable testing of applicability to Vancouver's building conservation needs; and after a review of draft proposals by the Vancouver Heritage Advisory Committee, Planning Department staff, and their advisors. Existing evaluation systems and inventories that were reviewed include those for Minneapolis, San Diego, San Francisco, Calgary and Prince Rupert. The latter and several others, feature an evaluation system that is described in Harold Kalman's The Evaluation of Historic Buildings (1979). This system is known to most professionals involved in inventory and conservation work in Canada and has been used, at least in modified form, for many inventory evaluations. It was decided to use a modified version of this - one that would provide continuity with Phase I (which was directed by Dr. Kalman); one that would relate to the anticipated results of research and site investigation during Phase II; and one that reflected the City's requirement for a city-wide inventory that recognizes local area history and architecture.

The criteria developed for Vancouver consider a building's merit in 4 sets of criteria:

A. Architectural History
B. Cultural History
C. Context
D. Integrity

Each criterion is scored by considering one of four grades: excellent, very good, good, and fair/poor.

Following are the evaluation criteria with definitions and explanatory text.

A. Architectural History

1. Style and/or Type
A building's style representative of a local area's significant development periods; or a building type associated with a significant industrial, commercial or transport activity.

E	An excellent example of a style or type in Vancouver or one of few surviving and very good examples of a style or type in Vancouver, or one of the earliest, very good examples of a style or type in Vancouver.
VG	A very good example of a style or type in Vancouver or a local area, or a good example of a style or type that is notably early or rare in Vancouver or in a local area.
G	A good example of a style or type that is common in Vancouver or in a local area.
F/P	An average example of style or type that remains common in Vancouver.

The description of a building's style is a means of describing visual elements such as form, materials and ornamentation that are characteristic of a particular age or development period. A building which displays typical features of a particular style can be said to be of that style. Whether the building is a good, very good, or excellent example of a style depends on the following:

- an understanding of the style's origins and characteristics,
- an understanding of the historical role of building styles in the development history of the local area and city,
- an appreciation and judgement of the relative merit of a building's stylistic elements in comparison to buildings of similar style in the local area or city.

A building which was constructed for a particular industrial, commercial, transport or community activity can be said to be of that type, i.e. brewery, warehouse, grain elevator, laundry, sugar refinery, community hall, etc. Whether the building is a good, very good or excellent example of a type depends on the following:

- an understanding of the process or activity for which the building was built,
- an understanding or the functional elements of the activity for which the building was built or historically utilized,
- an appreciation and judgement of the relative merit or rarity of a building type.

2. Design
A building's notable or special attributes of an aesthetic and/or functional nature including massing, proportion, scale, layout, materials, detailing, colour, texture, fenestration, ornamentation or artwork.

E	A design which is outstanding in comparison with other examples in the city.
VG	A design which is equal to several other examples of recognizable superior or special quality.
G	A design which incorporates several special aesthetic or functional attributes.
F/P	A design of no special significance or quality.

3. Construction

A building's unique or uncommon building materials, or its historically early or innovative method of construction.

E	One of the earliest known uses of an important or special material or method in the city, or now rare and out-of-use material or method.
VG	One of the earliest known surviving uses of an important or special material or method, or a notable or out-of-use material or method of which several examples survive.
G	An out-of-use material or method which is typical of a period and still commonly found in the city's buildings.
F/P	An example of no particular significance.

4. Designer / Builder

A building's architect, designer, engineer and/or builder who has made a significant architectural contribution to the city, province or nation.

E	An architect, designer, engineer and/or builder who was responsible for establishing or advancing a style, design or construction method that was significant and influential in the city, province or nation.
VG	An architect, designer, engineer and/or builder whose works are of considerable importance to building and development in the city, province or nation.
G	An architect, designer, engineer and/or builder of some importance to building and development in the city, province or nation.
F/P	An architect, designer, engineer and/or builder, unknown or of no known significance.

B. Cultural History

1. Historical Association

A building's association with a person, group, institution, event or activity that is of historical significance to the local area, city, province or nation.

E	Closely connected with a person, group, institution, event or activity that is of considerable importance to the city, province or nation.
VG	Closely connected with a person, group, institution, event or activity that is of considerable importance to a local area, or moderate importance to the city, province or nation.
G	Connected with a person, group, institution, event or activity that is of moderate importance to the local area.
F/P	Little or no known historical association.

Examples of a person, group, or event that could be considered significant to the history of a local area, the city or province, include a well-known pioneer, an organization important to the community's identity, a distinct ethnic group, or an event that had an influence on the community. An activity such as industry, farming, recreation or labour organization would be considered significant if it was a major influence on the local area or city. The distinction between considerable and moderate importance can be made by considering the relative influence of historical persons, groups, institutions, events or activities on the local area or city.

2. Historical Pattern
A building's association with broad patterns of local area or civic history including ecological, social, political, economic or geographic change.

E	A building that can be directly linked to the establishment of an historical pattern of civic importance.
VG	A building that can be directly linked to the establishment of an historical pattern of local area importance, or one of earliest surviving examples in a local area.
G	A building that provides strong evidence of an historical pattern of local area or civic importance.
F/P	A building of little known association with a recognizable historical pattern.

Examples of broad patterns of local area or civic history include the clearing of forest land for farm land, the formation of distinct ethnic communities, the establishment of exclusive suburbs, or the movement of the city's commercial center westward.

C. Context

1. Landscape / Site
An intact historical landscape or landscape features associated with an existing building, or a particularly notable historical relationship between a building's site and its immediate urban environment.

E	Landscape comprised of numerous, significant landscape features which are directly related to the building's style, design and history, or a notable and intact historical relationship between a building's site and the street, railway, waterfront, view or other geographic features which were part of the building's original function or traditional urban environment
VG	A landscape which includes several dominant features which are directly related to the building's style, design and history or an altered but still strongly apparent historical relationship between a building's site and its immediate urban environment or related geographic features.
G	A landscape which includes one or two important features which are directly related to the building's style, design and history or an altered but recognizable historical relationship between a building's site and its immediate urban environment or related geographic features.
F/P	No significant and recognizable landscape features or building /site relationship.

2. Neighbourhood
A building's continuity and compatibility with adjacent buildings and visual contribution to a group of similar buildings.

E	A building that is an important part of a visually prominent and notable group of buildings of similar style, type or age, in an area of compatible use.
VG	A building which forms part of a contiguous group of similar style, type or age in an area of compatible use.
G	A building which is part of a contiguous group of similar style, type or age in an area of incompatible use, or a building which is not part of a contiguous group of similar style, type or age, but is in an area of compatible use.
F/P	A building which is not part of a group of buildings of similar style, type or age and is in an area of incompatible use.

3. Visual / Symbolic Importance
A building's importance as a civic or local area landmark; a building's symbolic value to a neighbourhood, local area or the city.

E	A landmark building of civic importance; a building of significant symbolic value to the city.
VG	A major landmark within a local area; a building of symbolic importance to a local area.
G	A neighbourhood landmark or building of symbolic importance to a neighbourhood.
F/P	A building of no landmark or symbolic significance.

D. Integrity

A measure of the impact of changes to the building on the appreciation of its style, design and construction.

E	A building with no alterations that detract from its style, design or construction.
VG	A building with one or more alterations, the effect of which is recognizable but does not significantly detract from the style, design or construction.
G	A building with a major alteration and/or a combination of several minor alterations, the effect of which detracts from the style, design or construction.
F/P	A building with alterations which greatly detract from the style, design or construction.

The alterations to be considered in this evaluation are those additions or modifications to the building's exterior that have an effect on style, design and construction. Generally, an evaluation of this effect is made by comparing the altered with the original. However, because buildings evolve over time, many buildings may have alterations that are of architectural or historical significance. Some of these later alterations may be of equal or greater importance than features of the original building. In this case the evaluation must be made with full recognition of the building's periods of development. An understanding and appreciation of the architectural and cultural history of the building will determine the single dominant period, or the several most significant periods for evaluation purposes.

The above criteria recognize the importance of evaluating Vancouver's buildings on both a city-wide and local area basis. The goal of Phase I was to select buildings with obvious or potential heritage significance in each of the 22 local areas that have been established by the Planning Department. The evaluation process of Phase II recognizes the need to select, research and evaluate on the same basis in order to provide continuity, and to build on a workable framework for local area planning. The evaluation criteria provide emphasis to local area significance by the following means:

- a building's merit as an example of a style is measured on a local area basis as well as a city-wide basis, i.e. a good example of a style that is notably early or rare within a local area receives a score of very good
- the historical importance of a building to local area is recognized by its historical association to the local area, by its role in establishing a pattern, or its evidence of an historical pattern of local area importance
- the visual or symbolic importance of a building is recognized on a local area basis (as well as a city basis)

However, the score of excellent is in all cases reserved for qualities of civic importance, i.e. excellence is determined by comparing the particular quality to other examples in the city.

The Scoring System
During development of the criteria, many buildings were evaluated to test their relative significance and to experiment with a range of numerical scores for excellent, very good, good and fair/poor values. The final numerical scores that were used during formal evaluation sessions are:

A. Architectural History	E	VG	G	F/P
[Maximum category score of 40]				
1. Style/Type	35	18	12	0
2. Design	30	15	10	0
3. Construction	15	8	5	0
4. Designer/Builder	15	8	5	0

B. Cultural History				
[Maximum category score of 35]				
1.Historical Association	35	18	12	0
2.Historical Pattern	30	15	10	0

C. Context				
[Maximum category score of 25]				
1. Landscape / Site	15	8	5	0
2. Neighbourhood	20	10	6	0
3. Visual/Symbolic Importance	25	13	8	0

D. Integrity	0	- 5	- 8	-15

Total Possible Score:	100			

It should be noted that the scoring system shows maximum subtotals for each set of criteria, in order to maintain a balanced assessment of each building's significant attributes.

The Evaluation Process

The actual process of evaluation was formalized by the following means:

- four members of the consultant team formed a review panel; 2 members were present at all the evaluation sessions with the other 2 members alternating as the third person on the review panel
- a set procedure was followed at the beginning Of the evaluation session by including a review of the local area history and other data pertaining to the area

- the procedure for evaluating each building was to show the several slides, view the photos, summarize the building's attributes, then read out the range of possible scores and their definitions before establishing a score for each criterion; the person who had inspected the site was the one responsible for presentation of the information
- the individual scores were recorded on a form, along with a reason in summary format; accuracy and arithmetic were checked before filing for entry in the computer database
- buildings with attributes which could not be scored by consensus were summarily reviewed at the next session, after more information had been researched or the attributes had been re-considered.

Of the 425 buildings selected as preliminary 'A' buildings, 325 were evaluated in this manner.

Keeping in mind the purpose of evaluation as a means of establishing three categories or groups of buildings which would relate to a conservation program with three possible levels of action, discussions were held with the Heritage Advisory Committee and the Heritage Conservation Officer to establish the numerical boundaries for the final A, B. and C groups. An important consideration in this regard was that evaluation results showed that the same boundaries should not apply to buildings of different uses. During the evaluation proceedings, it became clear that a lack of historical information on many houses and apartments would mean that many examples of these that scored the maximum in architecture, with lesser scores in history and context, would not be in the final A group. These buildings could not be compared to ones with great significance in historical association such as schools, churches and large commercial structures. Consequently the numerical boundaries for houses and apartments are of a lower range than those of institutions, churches, etc. The following group boundaries were considered appropriate to the anticipated conservation program:

Building Type	Range of Scores	Group
Houses and Apartments	60 - 100	A
	40 - 59	B
	20 - 39	C
Institutions, Churches, Schools, Commercial, and Industrial Buildings	70 - 100	A
	55 - 74	B
	30 - 54	C