



Heritage and Municipal Elections: Heritage and the Economy

“Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them.” – Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Beyond the preservation of heritage resources as significant representations of the past for present and future generations to enjoy, why else should heritage be an issue for municipal candidates? Heritage conservation is linked to several other important issues for local governments and communities:

Heritage and Tourism:

Heritage and Cultural Tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market. Heritage Tourism Enthusiasts make up a large portion of American and Canadian tourists visiting Canada, and on average spend more time and money during their visits than other types of tourists. Visiting heritage and historic sites is the number one activity of heritage tourism enthusiasts. In 2012 heritage tourists spent over \$200 million in British Columbia, and the heritage tourism industry employs over three thousand people in the province.¹

Heritage Tourism Enthusiasts desire unique, meaningful and learning experiences, and communities that have retained their built heritage fabric attract these visitors.² Conserving your community's heritage is a significant way to build tourism in your area.

Heritage and Downtown Revitalization:

The adaptive reuse of heritage buildings stimulates downtown revitalization by providing unique and authentic retail experiences, and affordable space for smaller businesses and new start-ups. Older, smaller buildings house significantly greater concentrations of jobs per square foot of commercial space.³ The adaptive reuse of heritage buildings in urban cores is a strong tool in creating affordable housing and a diversity of housing options. Heritage conservation improves neighbourhood livability, and triggers positive socio-economic change.

Heritage and the Economy:

Heritage conservation generates a diverse variety of jobs, including working in heritage institutions, governments, professionals, heritage crafts & heritage trades, as well as engineers, architects, consultants, and contractors. Heritage conservation work is labour intensive and provides many employment opportunities compared to equivalent new construction.⁴ Because of the type of construction of heritage buildings, many of the materials for conservation projects can be locally sourced and stimulates the local economy. Over \$39 million was spent in the Province of British Columbia in 2012 on heritage rehabilitation activities.⁵

¹ *Heritage Conservation in BC Fact Sheet*, BC Heritage Branch

² *Built Heritage: Assessing a Tourism Resource*, Heritage Canada Foundation, 2002

³ *Older, Smaller, Better: Measuring how the character of buildings and blocks influences urban vitality*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, May 2014

⁴ *Heritage Conservation Briefs: Job Creation*, University of Waterloo Heritage Resource Centre

⁵ *Heritage Conservation In BC Fact Sheet*, BC Heritage Branch