

City of Nanaimo, British Columbia

Over the past 30 years, this small city of just over 80,000 people has been working to create a robust heritage conservation program. Nanaimo is one of British Columbia's oldest settlements and boasts a rich history in the coal mining and resource industry.

Examples of community based heritage conservation efforts date back to the early 1900s when Nanaimo's iconic Bastion (an octagonal shaped log fortification built by the Hudson's Bay Company between 1853 and 1855 to defend its coal mining operations) was preserved by the Native Sons of Nanaimo. It was not until the early 1970s, however, that groups like the Nanaimo Historical Society and the Nanaimo Heritage Advisory Committee were created, formalizing advocacy work in the city. Conservation efforts accelerated in the 1980s with financial assistance from two initiatives of the B.C. Provincial Government: *Heritage Area Revitalization* and *Project Pride*.

The foundation for conservation practice was laid during this period and initiatives were formalized in 1994 when the City's Heritage Strategy was completed. The Strategy outlined heritage issues and opportunities, goals, objectives and priorities and recommended actions to be completed under the City's newly formed Heritage Conservation Program. Nanaimo took one more important step in 1998 by integrating heritage planning within the larger municipal planning framework. That same year the Heritage Action Plan was completed, which would later facilitate revitalization and rehabilitation of the city's historic resources through appropriate management and incentives.



Bastion



Gusola Block

When the Heritage Action Plan was adopted by Council in 2001, many key actions were identified and later completed. They include the adoption of an official Community Heritage Register in 2002, which now includes 156 buildings, 6 cemeteries and 9 structures; the creation of a downtown Heritage Conservation Area; implementation of a Heritage Procedures Bylaw, which formalizes terms and conditions for heritage revitalization agreements and alteration permits; and the creation of

financial incentive programs to encourage heritage conservation. These include the Downtown Residential Conversion Tax Incentive Program, the Heritage Facade Improvement Grant Program, and a Heritage Home Grant Program.

Nanaimo has completed several rehabilitation projects in recent years including the Gusola Block, which was adapted for commercial and residential use; Ranger's Shoes Building, part of the historic Fitzwilliam Street streetscape; and St. Andrew's located in the Downtown Heritage Conservation Area. The most recent project is the conservation of the E&N Railway Station. Located in one of Nanaimo's oldest neighbourhoods, it is part of a larger downtown renewal plan. The building will still operate as a railway station, but several new commercial spaces will now be leased.

Nanaimo has promoted heritage in the community through self-guided heritage walk brochures, heritage interpretive signs and plaques, and online information related to the city's heritage. The City has made a consistent commitment to maintaining and preserving its heritage resources to contribute to the municipality's prosperity and quality of life for its citizens.

The City of Nanaimo was nominated by Debbie Trueman, the General Manager of the Nanaimo Museum.