March 9, 2023

City of Winnipeg
Executive Policy Committee
Council Building, 510 Main St.
Winnipeg Manitoba

Re: Crescentwood Heritage Conservation District Plan

Mayor Gillingham, Councillors Orlikow, Rollins, Mayes, Lukes and Browaty

Today I am presenting as a voice of support for the Crescentwood Heritage Conservation District Plan that has been presented to you. As a neighbourhood, we have worked long and hard to get the protection that this designation will give us. My Husband Nick Logan and I have lived in his boyhood home at 53 Kingsway since 1991. Within that first year we were enlisted by the neighbours to consider Hartley Richardsons request to convert 484 Wellington to allow for 3 condos. We have been working non stop since then to try to preserve our built heritage.

In September of 2011, at the end of a City Centre Community Committee meeting that didn't go our way, I stopped to talk to Councillor Gerbasi about my frustration with the way that rezoning was eating away at my neighbourhood when there was clearly opposition to that move. She told me to keep track of what was starting to happen in Armstrongs Point, she said we probably needed a Heritage Conservation District Designation. And with that suggestion, our journey started. We have been working on this for almost 12 years!

We kept track of the progress and the setbacks across the river, we attended the open houses and we talked to anyone who would listen about our interest in a similar designation. Always we were told we had to wait until their process was complete before we could apply.

While we waited and watched, unbeknownst to our neighbourhood, 514 Wellington was quietly removed from the protected list of Heritage Buildings. The value of this change would prove to be beneficial to a developer when in 2016, Mr. Jeff Thompson bought 514 Wellington and started his move to demolish this key building. It took this threat of demolition of 514 Wellington Crescent for the Planning Department to realize that catastrophic loss of our built heritage was a reality and we were nominated for a Heritage Conservation District. Although the loss of 514 Wellington Crescent was a catalyst for the planning department, the neighbourhood had been exploring the possibility of an HCD since 2011.

In the time that this designation has taken to come to the current stage, we have lost four homes and seen insensitive renos on others.

So why do we feel that a Heritage Conservation District Designation is needed in this part of Crescentwood? We need the extra layer of protection that this would give us. As of now, anyone can get a demolition permit if they present a set of drawings for a new building. Our experience tells us that the new build never preserves the finer features that our current built heritage exhibits.

We have the opportunity to preserve a nearly intact neighbourhood where over 80% of the homes are older than 1920. Our home at 53 Kingsway, one of the early builds, was completed in 1908. Our home is solid, well built with wonderful architectural features that showcase the skills of the crafts people over a century ago.

Our recent experience with the new Infill Guidelines, at best a blunt instrument, makes it even more urgent that we have a designation that helps us deal with development in our neighbourhood.

I would like to draw your attention to a letter, in the submission package you have received, written by Bob Eastwood, Retired Architect formerly of Number 10 Architects

He states, ”All neighbourhoods deserve attention to their scale, character, density and urban street scape. While the new City Urban Infill Design Guidelines are a good general basis of design for some areas they do not speak to character, scale, materials, urban quality, preservation and green space with the same clarity and strength that the HCD District Guidelines set. City Council and its committees have also been overriding the infill Design Guidelines in a manner which could eventually gut the intent and positive aspects of these guidelines”. At 514 Wellington, we now see a building approved that exceeds the height restriction not only of the zoning that was requested and granted for this building but also the Infill Design Guidelines! It will be too big!

The Crescentwood Heritage Conservation District Plan gives us a means to protect not only the exteriors of our heritage homes, but also the green spaces, the trees, the set backs and the boulevards. A recent addition to Harvard Street with its flat roof and lot filling profile, caused the demise of all the trees along both lot lines and presented neighbours on both sides with flat black walls as their view. The previous heritage home on that site, had room for side gardens, shrubs and gracious elm trees.

Heritage is a city-wide interest. In 2016, faced with the demolition of 514 Wellington, we created an on-line petition and received over 5200 signatures from not only all over the city, but around the world. Two weeks ago, after an interview with CTV, I thanked the interviewer for his interest and coverage. He said, articles on our neighbourhood and saving heritage, get the biggest response of anything they cover. That article on 514 Wellington, got over 20,000 responses!!

Heritage is important and the granting of a Heritage Conservation District Designation for Crescentwood will mean that each of us will be relieved of the work to apply for an individual designation for each of our homes. It makes sense to protect the whole neighbourhood.

I thank you for your attention and consideration of this important matter.

Christine Skene