

83-25

Vancouver, British Columbia
R.V. Winch Building
739 West Hastings Street

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The R.V. Winch Building was built in 1909, using a design from prominent B.C. architect Thomas Hooper to provide office and commercial accommodation for R.V. Winch and other companies. Public Works and Government Services Canada has been the custodian department since 1925. See FHBRO Building Report 83-25.

Reasons for Designation

The Winch Building was designated Recognized for its architectural design and environmental significance.

Built in the Beaux-Arts Classical style, the building is the most ornate and sophisticated of Hooper's commercial designs. It also has engineering significance as Vancouver's first building of steel cage construction.

The Winch Building is an integral component of a commercial/warehouse block of buildings in downtown Vancouver known as Block 15. Together with the Post Office, it is part of a cohesive architectural group without parallel in the province, and forms the Sinclair Centre.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of the Winch Building resides in its massing, proportions, construction materials, classically-inspired details, and in its relationship with its site.

The Winch Building is a five-storey structure characteristic of Beaux Arts classically-inspired architecture in its form and scale. The design is symmetrical about a central axis. Overall, the building boundaries are defined by full height rusticated corner pilasters that surround the first windows on each corner. The corner pilasters project above the cornice to a parapet above.

Classically inspired features include oversized columns, a decorative cornice, an ornate cut stone pediment at the main entrance, and the deep cornice. These features are integral to the character of the building, and should be retained and repaired using appropriate conservation techniques.

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R.V. Winch Building (Continued)

The rhythm of the window openings is also integral to the character of the building. Arched ground floor windows create the effect of an arcade. The upper windows are paired and framed by engaged columns that are surrounded with an alternating pattern of decorative arches and stone lintels. These patterns, and the form and materials of the windows themselves, must be respected. Because of the close integration of materials and composition with the adjacent Post Office, and the resulting visual harmony created, any future interventions should be assessed in terms of their impact on both the building and the overall block.

This was the first building in Vancouver constructed with a steel cage structural system. The steel framework is encased in concrete and rests on granite piers. Concrete floors are supported by steel beams, again encased in concrete and connected to the steel columns embedded in the masonry walls. The brick masonry walls are covered in granite on the exterior. The integrity of the structural system should be respected, as should any surviving interior materials and features.

Site development should respect the commercial/warehouse scale of the structure and of the surrounding structures in the district.

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