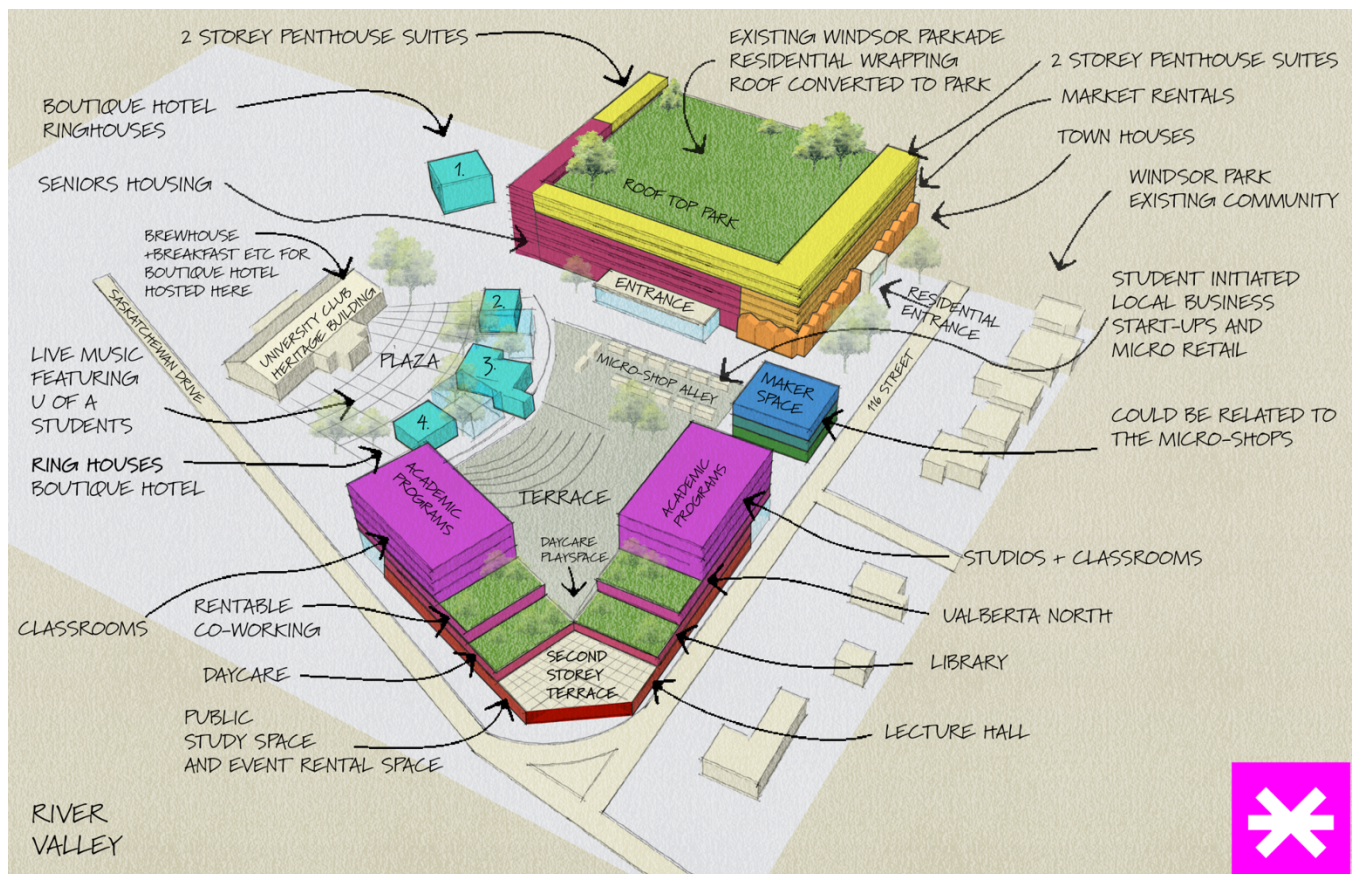


**Reimagine the Ring Houses**  
**Conceptual Proposal for Adaptive Reuse**  
**University of Alberta Ring Houses Coalition (RHC)**  
**June 2021**

- Some possibilities for the Ring Houses in the future—the results of the creative thinking of Edmonton architects, artists, designers, developers, entrepreneurs, academics, community residents (Windsor Park) and Ring House coalition members, facilitated by architect Shafraaz Kaba of Ask\* for a Better World.
- The conclusion: The Ring Houses are valuable to any redevelopment planned for the NW quadrant of North campus—the historic anchors in under-utilized space, providing a friendly connection to the community and the river valley.
- This is a starting point for discussion (not as the final word) to for a once-in-a-generation shift suited to the University of Alberta for Tomorrow vision.



**Benefits of this Proposal for the University of Alberta**

- **Mission:** Supports the University’s mission to discover and apply “new knowledge for the benefit of society through teaching and learning, research and creative activity, community involvement, and partnerships.”

- **Environmental Leadership and Sustainability:** Demonstrates environmental leadership by restoring the Ring Houses-- better to reuse an existing building than to tear it down and build new. *The greenest building is the one that already exists.*
- Demolition and construction debris generate about 35 percent of Canada's landfill waste. According to the National Trust for Canada a new 'green' building takes 10 to 80 years, depending on its size, to overcome the carbon impacts of construction.
- The Ring Houses are made with local red brick and old-growth timber; reuse is the sustainable option.

#### **A Few Possible University-Community Partnerships (not yet confirmed)**

- Use by artists- residencies, exhibitions, performances through the Faculty of Arts collaborate with Arts Habitat Edmonton.
- Boutique hotel, microbrewery, café-- University Club, Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental Sciences (ALES), the Culinary Arts Program at NAIT, and others could collaborate on the development of a revenue generating boutique hotel and microbrewery integrated with academic programs.
- A living lab for sustainability initiatives- Faculty of Engineering, ALES, and the School of Urban and Regional Planning with the Edmonton Heritage Council and (e.g., energy retrofit and environmental leadership, economic impact)



Ring House 4. Courtesy: Marlena Wyman

## Governance/Operational Options for the Ring Houses

Governance/ Operations Implications	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Option I</b>		
<b>University-owned, restored and operated by one or more not-for-profit/registered charities on a long-term lease (99 years, \$1/year)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>University maintains ownership, and staff and students would maintain access under the agreed upon conditions</li> <li>Revenue neutral</li> <li>Funding available depends on how the houses are restored and their future; if they are to be Green and Inclusive buildings they would be eligible for federal funding of under \$3 million  <a href="https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/gicb-bcvi/index-eng.html">https://www.infrastructure.gc.ca/gicb-bcvi/index-eng.html</a>; if the future use is considered cultural, could apply to the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund for a large grant <a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/cultural-spaces-fund.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/cultural-spaces-fund.html</a></li> <li>Sources in the National Trust database could be accessed for other uses, e.g., environmental, international development, start-up, economic regeneration,  <a href="https://regenerationworks.ca/resources/find-funding/">https://regenerationworks.ca/resources/find-funding/</a></li> <li>The following are examples of possible uses – and more can be explored: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could collaborate with DOC Alberta to develop a documentary film centre of excellence  <a href="https://www.docorg.ca/doc_alberta">https://www.docorg.ca/doc_alberta</a></li> <li>Could collaborate with an organization like Passive House Alberta that is committed to energy efficient housing  <a href="https://www.passivehousealberta.com/">https://www.passivehousealberta.com/</a></li> <li>Could develop an incubator for small international development organizations and student training opportunities</li> <li>A professional association with links to the university might undertake the renovation as offices, for example, APEGA</li> </ul> </li> <li>Strong university/ community collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would need to identify partner(s) through consultation or possibly an RFP process</li> </ul>



Option II		
<p><b>University-owned, could be restored by the University and/or for-profit corporation or social enterprise; operated on a long-term lease (99 years, x amount/year)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University maintains ownership</li> <li>• Revenue generator</li> <li>• Could consider the entire area, from the University Club to the Windsor Car Park, as one project, with new construction around the Car Park and restoration of the Ring Houses as amenities for the new development and the University Club</li> <li>• Possibilities of a commercial venture such as a boutique hotel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The University Club could be asked to assume the managerial role for the hotel, and be the hotel lobby, with guests given access to the club for meals as well as to the University's fitness and recreation facilities</li> <li>○ University could establish special rates for visiting speakers, scholars and artists-in-residence, alumni, Varsity teams/fans, and Homecoming Weekend guests, etc. (see The Swan Hotel and Brewery owned by the University of Victoria as one example <a href="http://www.SwansHotel.com">www.SwansHotel.com</a>; the Hotel Alma at University of Calgary <a href="https://www.ucalgary.ca/ancillary/accommodations-and-events">https://www.ucalgary.ca/ancillary/accommodations-and-events</a>; and Olds College Brewery <a href="https://www.oldscollege.ca/shopoc/brewery/index.html">https://www.oldscollege.ca/shopoc/brewery/index.html</a>);</li> <li>○ Possible interface with UAlberta North and academic programs (e.g., ALES – brewing; School of Business – hotel operations and marketing; Arts – music, visual artists, writers; Education and KSR – early childhood daycare, play programs, sport camps);</li> <li>○ Students, faculty, and staff access would be reoriented toward commercial function and possibly teaching/research</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Alumni could benefit with more access than currently available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be a social enterprise for the University OR</li> <li>• Could identify for-profit partner(s), possibly through an RFP process</li> <li>• More grants/donations would be possible if the University and/or a social enterprise or not-for-profit organization renovated the houses, rather than a commercial for-profit</li> </ul>



**Potential Government Funding Opportunities:**

- Federal funding may be available for restoration costs depending upon how the project aligns with federal funding priorities (e.g. funding is available for green buildings and cultural spaces). could be designated municipally, provincially, and/or nationally.
- The Ring Houses could be designated at various levels. Associated funding:
  - Municipal designation- up to 50% of restoration costs for rehabilitation; one third of restoration costs to a maximum of \$50,000 for maintenance every three years.
  - Provincial designation - up to \$100,000 for a study to outline their conservation costs.

**Sense of Place:** Renown urbanist Jane Jacobs wrote, "Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings."

- The University, a place germinating new ideas, must use old buildings.
- Jacobs pointed to the value of maintaining older, small buildings among medium and large buildings. The University is a city within a city, and the NW quadrant is currently underutilized and could be renewed by this small-scale development.
- Moving a heritage resource destroys the relationship with its surroundings and the loss of historic features such as landscaping or foundations. Ring House relocation is not preservation.

**Legacy:** A tangible link to the rich history and importance of the University of Alberta—reuse and development would incorporate exhibitions (e.g., archival photographs, artifacts, artwork) for greater understanding of the role of the University in the larger community and its stories, inclusive of Indigenous perspectives and land relations.

**Appendices:**

- 1. Importance and Heritage Value**
- 2. About the Ring Houses Coalition**

**1. Importance and Heritage Value**

The importance of the Ring Houses goes far beyond the University campus to the making of modern Edmonton and Alberta. Built between 1911 and 1914, inspired by the ideas of the City Beautiful movement in urban planning and a practical need for faculty housing, the original ten houses were home to professors who were newcomers from far and wide; they created a significant new academic community and varsity neighbourhood. University Architect Cecil Scott Burgess designed Ring Houses 5 to 10 which, unfortunately, were demolished in 1970. Of the remaining houses:

- Ring House 1 is Canada's oldest surviving residence of a university president, and was home to the University's founding President Henry Marshall Tory;

- Ring House 2 was home to the first Professor of Engineering Muir Edwards, son of Henrietta Muir Edwards, one of the 'Famous Five' who fought to have women declared persons, and later to national leader Maury Van Vliet, who led the School of Physical Education from 1945 and was the first Dean of Physical Education and Recreation from 1964-75;
- Ring House 3 was home to Professor of Chemistry Adolph Lehmann, who collaborated with Karl Clark to develop the first successful process for separating oil from sand in northern Alberta; and
- Ring House 4 was home to the first Professor of Modern Languages William Kerr, who became first Dean of Arts and was President from 1936-41 and later H.G. Glyde, who taught community art classes in the Department of Extension from 1937 and established the Division of Fine Art where he taught from 1946 to 1966.

President Tory's legacy includes the Alberta Research Council, the National Research Council, the Faculty of Medicine, and University Hospital. In 1949, Tory was designated a National Historic Person through the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act*. Ring Houses 1 to 4 were designed by Gordon Wilson and David Easton Herralld, who had a joint practice and were the architects of landmark public buildings in Strathcona, including Rutherford House. Strong cases can be made for the designation of all four remaining Craftsman-style homes as Provincial Historic Resources and for Ring House 1 to be designated as a National Historic Site.

## **2. University of Alberta Ring Houses Coalition**

- A community-driven coalition comprised of community members, professors, students, alumni, heritage architects, consultants, and activists formed a volunteer Coalition in February 2021.
- It has met weekly for the past four months to discuss the Ring Houses, their value to the University and broader community, and their future.
- In addition to writing to the Chancellor and President to request a moratorium on their demolition, and meeting with the Chancellor, the Coalition posted a public petition which now has more than 2,500 signatures; established the Facebook page Friends of the U of A Ring Houses; created a Fact Sheet to support the petition and designation initiatives; placed the Ring Houses on the National Trust for Canada's List of Endangered Places; created videos to raise public awareness during the annual Jane's Walk with over 1,400 views so far; and conducted original research on the architects, past residents and occupants of these historic sites as well as heritage policy concerns.
- Ken Chapman filed a FOIP request, in collaboration with the Edmonton Heritage Council, for the University's planning documents related to the Ring Houses, and Architect Darrel Babuk organized a virtual symposium featuring key architects who have preserved historic structures on university campuses in many North America cities.





