

Open Letter, September 9, 2022

The Ring House Coalition, a broad group of concerned citizens and heritage professionals, deplores the current demolition of the Ring Houses and supports recent statements made by the Edmonton Heritage Council. The Coalition views the demolition to be both a deviation from best practices in heritage conservation and sustainability as well as a significant legacy taken from future generations. The loss of these heritage buildings is a loss to all Albertans and to Canadian heritage.

Alberta's architectural heritage is worth saving and tells the story of our Province. This is eminently the case with the historic Ring Houses, built in 1911 to 1914, at the University of Alberta on early River Lot No. 5 along the North Saskatchewan River. The sale and current demolition of the four Ring Houses on the original campus demonstrates that sound heritage policies and practices have been disregarded at the expense of destroying unique cultural landmarks.

The Coalition is profoundly disappointed that the University of Alberta's executive and Board of Governors did not respond to community-driven requests for meaningful dialogue or to a forward-looking conceptual [proposal](#) integrating the historic Ring Houses and University Club buildings in renewal and redevelopment. We greatly appreciate extensive community efforts and hundreds of volunteer hours invested in calls to retain these heritage sites on the University campus, including an open letter with 2,600 signatures, Op-Eds, letters, [artwork](#), [research](#), [blogs](#), online education, guided walks, [videos](#), a redesign charrette, expressions of interest from donors, town hall meetings, and a prominent listing on the [National Trust of Canada Endangered Places](#). The broad community has demonstrated collaborative and sustained support in advocacy for higher standards of heritage preservation at the University.

The University of Alberta [Student's Union](#) expressed the desire of students to keep the historic Ring Houses on campus and its VP-Student Life contributed as its representative in the Coalition. Hundreds of students from across the University signed an Open Letter to keep the houses on campus, and a graduate student group of the Department of History, Classics, and Religion sent a formal letter to the Chancellor calling for a moratorium on demolition and removal of the buildings.

A broad community made clear its commitment to heritage buildings at the University of Alberta and offered abundant support since early 2020. The intergenerational impact of campus demolitions is taking a serious toll on cultural landmarks and place identity. It is regrettable that the University chose to forsake the Ring Houses rather than pass them forward to the next generation, and that it did not request the Province of Alberta to support these heritage buildings by designating a Provincial Historic Site in the manner of Rutherford House. We urge policy and legislative measures to ensure the University of Alberta lives up to its own [preservation policy](#) and obligations as a public steward of historic places of local, provincial, and national significance. **The irreversible loss of the Ring Houses, and the University's 1930 Dairy Barn, to demolitions in 2022 is a serious call to recognize the value of historic places and to protect Alberta culture.**

The Ring House Coalition