

University of Alberta Ring Houses Fact Sheet



Historical Significance

-The Ring Houses are among the oldest buildings on the University of Alberta campus, having been built between 1911 and 1914. Ring House 1 was the home of Henry Marshall Tory and his wife Annie, and to five subsequent University Presidents. This particular house is the oldest President's residence anywhere in Canada. Tory was an important early leader at the University of Alberta, and emphasized not just excellency in research, but also that the University should be an institution for the people. Annie Tory was famous for her "little verandah teas" on Fridays, and the Tory family often entertained faculty, staff, and students.

-The other remaining Ring Houses have been home to University leaders such as Maury Van Vliet (for whom the Van Vliet Centre is named) and Muir Edwards (the U of A's first Professor of Engineering, and son of feminist Henrietta Muir Edwards). Cecil Scott Burgess, who oversaw the design of the U of A's Pembina Hall and the Dentistry/Pharmacy building, lived in now-demolished Ring House 9.

-Over the years, the Ring Houses have also been used for Museum and Collections Service, UAlberta North, and the University of Alberta Press. Ring House 3 functioned as a daycare from 1969 to 2010.

Architecture and Location

-The houses are stellar examples of Craftsman two-story architecture.

-The location of the houses on the U of A campus links them directly to the institution's history, and remains suggestive of the original "ring."

-The architects of the remaining houses were Wilson and Herald, who also designed Rutherford House, the Strathcona Public Library, and the Princess Theatre. Cecil Scott Burgess, the U of A's first and only Professor of Architecture, designed some of the now-demolished Ring Houses, and lived in Ring House 9.





Sustainability

-The Ring Houses, like other heritage structures, are large stores of embodied carbon, durable construction materials, as well as old-growth timber. These are irreplaceable raw materials.

-The Houses were built for long term use.

-Noting the sustainable development principles of heritage conservation, *The Canadian Register of Historic Places* writes: “The sturdy construction and quality materials of historic places make for lasting buildings. They are adaptable and durable, and their conservation reduces waste and energy.”

Proposed Demolition

-There were originally ten ring houses, and only four remain (Ring Houses 1–4). The other houses, which once stood near where the Windsor Car Park is currently, were demolished in 1970.

-As of April 2021, the four Ring Houses are scheduled to be demolished in May, 2021. Many of their contents have already been sold off, but the heritage value of the structures themselves and the site still remains. The buildings, given their location on the University of Alberta campus, retain these links to the institution’s history.

-While public updates were issued by the University regarding the proposed demolition, no public consultation was done prior to the Ring Houses being announced for demolition.

-Thousands of community members have called for a one-year moratorium on demolition to explore other options.



If you are concerned about the demolition of the Ring Houses, letters can be sent to the University of Alberta’s President, Chancellor, and the Board of Governors Chair.

You can also sign the Open Letter calling for a moratorium on demolition by clicking [here](#).

The Ring Houses reside within Treaty 6 territory, and on traditional Papaschase Cree and Métis land. This area was also once known as River Lot 5.

These lands have long been, and continue to be, a gathering place for diverse First Nations peoples.