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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Victoria's Oldest Downtown Buildings  
Should be Celebrated, not Diminished**

The Hallmark Heritage Society is deeply concerned at plans to surround the City's oldest waterfront buildings, the Gold Rush Warehouses, with a five-storey monolith, virtually hiding them from view.

1314 and 1316/18 Wharf St were designed as commercial buildings by two of Victoria's most important early architects in 1860-64. They are unique survivors from the Gold Rush period, and have long anchored the Waterfront/Downtown/Chinatown nexus. Though they have been allowed to deteriorate somewhat and have been demeaned by being referred to as "the Northern Junk" buildings, they have the potential to be restored as an important gateway to the neighbourhood, beside the proposed new Johnson Street Bridge.

Plans to wrap tall, modern, unsympathetic towers around the buildings would minimize their importance. The current proposal would effectively hide the buildings from all views except from VicWest and would seriously damage the appeal of the area to tourism....

Ideally, the buildings would be restored together with their surrounding green space as a useable public resource, such as a Public Market or an Art Gallery, or even for residential use. However, the Hallmark Heritage Society is not rejecting development of the site out-of-hand: We endorsed a different proposal several years ago which would have been sympathetic to the buildings and the environs. We do not oppose development of this site--just this development that is inappropriate in size, ambience and context.

The developers cannot argue that the Heritage status of these buildings in any way ties their hands, as they knew precisely what they were getting when they acquired the property. Nor, therefore, can they argue that to justify restoration of the buildings they must also acquire a substantial piece of public property beside and in front of it: What they saw is what they got, and the City must resist such arguments. If the developers cannot work with the property without getting a side deal for the City property, they should walk away, and allow some other entrepreneur --or the City itself-- to tackle this exciting challenge.

For more information:  
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*Dedicated to Preserving Historic and Architectural Landmarks in the Capital Regional District*