

HRA CASE STUDY

Resource VINSON HOUSE

General Information

Address: 1425 Gordon Avenue
Neighbourhood: Ambleside
Construction Date: 1913
HRA Completed: 2017
Municipally Designated: Yes
Site Area: 11,500 sq. ft. (1068.4 m²)
FAR: 0.59
Dwelling units: 4



Description of Heritage Resource and Site

The Vinson House, located at 1425 Gordon Avenue, was built in 1913 for the well-known photographer Valient Vivian Vinson, who was also an early Reeve of West Vancouver. This was the first house in the upper Ambleside area and originally stood on a two-hectare lot. Today it sits on a large 77' x 150' property and is a well preserved, excellent example of the Craftsman style. The historic place has heritage value for its architecture, its age, the development patterns it illustrates, and the significance of its original owner.

Project Description

The project involved relocation and conservation of the heritage house along with three infill units: a single level garden suite in the Vinson House; a garden cottage at the front of the property; and a laneway cottage along the lane. New garages were also added along the lane.

Incentives

In exchange for conservation and legal protection of the Vinson house, the following incentives were provided through the HRA:

- the FAR permitted for the site was increased from 0.35 to 0.59 plus basements (approximately 9,300 sq.ft. of floor area on the 11,500 sq.ft. lot).
- the site was permitted to be developed into four strata-titled units.
- variances to setbacks, building heights, highest building face and to the maximum permitted site coverage.



Architectural & Historical Character

A [Heritage Conservation Plan](#), including a Statement of Significance for the Vinson Residence was prepared by Donald Luxton & Associates. The SOS describes the heritage resource, includes a statement of heritage value, and outlines the “character defining” elements of the house and site.

Since the house was sited at the rear of the lot, the large front yard had become a neighbourhood feature that was retained as part of the HRA approval.

Wherever possible, interior and exterior features of the original house were retained and conserved.

The architectural character of the infill units was inspired by the Vinson House and features found in other early West Vancouver houses, including covered porches with open railings, various gable details; a mixture of horizontal and vertical siding, shakes and board and batten; and contemporary interpretation of traditional window detailing in the infill units.



The selection of exterior colours for the site was an important consideration. Each was chosen in consultation with the heritage consultant. The landscaping design was also inspired by Edwardian gardens that might have been popular at the time when the house was first built.

Challenges / Learnings

- To meet fire code related to separation spaces between buildings, wood shingles were required to be replaced with cementous Hardie shingles on some walls. While original single-glazed windows were retained in the living and dining rooms, other windows were replaced with custom-made double-glazed wood windows and doors.
- Retaining the distinctive front wooden picket railing was also a challenge since its height did not meet code, as was retaining the interior wooden detailing which was not desired by the market.

More Information

For the HRA application project page including architectural plans:

<https://www.westvancouver.ca/home-building-property/planning/major-applications/1425-gordon-avenue-vinson-house>