

Designating Grain Elevators

Protecting a legacy for future generations



Paradise Valley



Andrew

What is designation?

Visiting a grain elevator is an experience like no other. At a distance, the structure stands like a lone sentinel against the horizon while, from below, it dominates the sky and seems almost to sweep upward through the clouds. Inside, floors worn by generations of boots and the heavy scent of grain dust recall decades of harvests past.

Elevators are disappearing at an alarming rate. Between 1951, when there were 1,651 elevators in the province, and 1997, nearly eighty percent of Alberta's elevators were demolished. As of 2005, there were only 156 wood elevators still standing in the province.

Historic resource designation protects places such as these for the appreciation and enjoyment of present and future generations. Under the Alberta Historical Resources Act, both the Province and municipalities can designate and protect places of historic significance in the public interest. Provincial Historic Resource designation

is registered on a property's Certificate of Land Title and is transferred with the sale of the property to subsequent owners. Municipal Historic Resource Designation registers a protective bylaw passed by Council on the land title of the heritage property.

To be eligible for designation, sites must have both historical significance and integrity. Grain elevators are significant not only as a unique –and increasingly rare– building type, but as an image of community and regional identity and as relics of a rapidly changing, agricultural way of life. The more complete the elevator complex and the more accurately it represents the period and qualities of its significance, the greater its integrity. Designation helps communities preserve significant historic places as a legacy that future generations can experience firsthand.

Why designate?

Designation is an established and effective means of protecting historic places. Many heritage property owners, whether individuals, businesses or historical



St. Albert

societies, have a substantial financial investment and personal commitment to the preservation of their historic building. Designation is the best means available under provincial legislation of safeguarding this investment. As of March 2006, eleven elevators across Alberta have been protected as Provincial Historic Resources, with several other elevators managed through the efforts of local preservation groups. Designation is a proven tool for ensuring that elevators continue to stand as landmarks, symbols of community, and reminders of a building type and way of farming vital to provincial history.

- ✦ **Designation qualifies heritage property owners to apply for preservation incentive programs.** Historic places protected as Provincial or Municipal Historic Resources that are also listed on the Alberta Register of Historic Places are eligible for preservation funding from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation's Heritage Preservation Partnership Program. This program offers up to \$75,000 on a matching basis within a five year period toward such conservation-related work as stabilization, repair and repainting of historic windows and siding, and the restoration of cedar roofs. Other levels of government may offer additional incentive programs.
- ✦ **Designation and is an honor and distinction of which heritage property owners can be proud.** Designated sites that are formally recognized by the province or a municipality may, with the appropriate documentation and owners' consent, be placed on the Canadian Register of Historic Places. The Register is a comprehensive listing of significant historic places across Canada that is publicly accessible through the Internet.

- ✦ **Designated sites attract tourists and contribute to the local economy.** Tourism in Alberta is a four billion dollar industry (source: Travel Alberta). Designated historic places that are promoted through programs such as Doors Open Alberta and other provincial and local tourism initiatives play an increasingly important role in tourism. Recognizing this, many historic grain elevators preserved by local organizations are now used as community museums and visitor centers.
- ✦ **Historic resource designation typically boosts, rather than reduces, property values.** Designated sites may enjoy market values that exceed their non-designated counterparts. This premium reflects the fact that designated places have nearly always benefitted from ongoing investment and maintenance which, in turn, has contributed to their integrity as historic places. Eligibility for ongoing financial and other assistance through preservation programs adds further value to designated properties.

What designation isn't

Designation is almost never imposed against heritage property owners' wishes. In fact, most designations are initiated by owners themselves through a designation application process. Experience has shown, too, that historic places are best protected and managed with owners' full support and enthusiastic involvement. Designation is rarely intended to "freeze" a site in time. While designation is a legal instrument that applies to land titles, the intent is to protect certain features or "character-defining elements" that embody the significance



Big Valley

of the place rather than the entire site. Furthermore, the best means of preservation is some form of compatible, ongoing use and, to this end, certain changes may in fact be helpful and necessary to its long-term preservation. Examples of this might be the installation of grain elevator security and fire suppression systems, or site improvements aimed at enhancing accessibility and revenue generation through heritage interpretation or other activities. Rather than preventing change, designation helps ensure that proposed changes to a protected site are sensitive to its historic character and are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Designation does not require that sites always be open to the public. Many of Alberta's historic places are residences and places of business, where providing regular public access would be neither reasonable nor feasible.

Owners of designated historic resources are, however, encouraged to offer the public opportunities to experience a piece of the province's history through occasional tours that may be organized by local historical societies or initiatives such as Doors Open Alberta.

Related programs and initiatives

Provincial Designation Program

Alberta Community Development

www.cd.gov.ab.ca/preserving/heritage/pands/designation/index.asp

Tel 780-431-2318

Municipal Heritage Partnership Program

Alberta Community Development

www.mhpp.ab.ca

Tel 780-431-2334

Heritage Preservation Partnership Program

Alberta Historical Resources Foundation

www.cd.gov.ab.ca/ahrf

Tel 780-431-2305

Canadian Register of Historic Places

www.historicplaces.ca

Alberta Grain Elevator Society (AGES)

www.grainelevators-alberta.ca

Doors Open Alberta

www.doorsopenalberta.com

For more information

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