

# The Dorothies spared from destruction

Pair of heritage homes will be on the road to a new location and a new life on Monday

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The twin Tudor-style houses dubbed The Dorothies are getting a new lease on life.

Like many of Vancouver's original homes, the pair of heritage houses located on 2827 and 2837 W. 43rd Avenue were slated for demolition.

But thanks to a public outcry, heritage incentives from city hall, and a developer willing to think outside the box, the twin houses will be saved — moved to a new location two blocks away where they'll become the centrepiece of a new townhouse development by Trasolini Chetner.

"It was a pretty gargantuan effort," said Rob Chetner of the work, time and energy it took to make moving day on Monday become a reality.

"It'll culminate in an exciting spectacle," he said. "It's not something you see every day in Vancouver ... let alone with two twin homes."

Chetner, a partner in the residential development firm, did not know the Dorothies were on the heritage register when he purchased one of them. The 1931 home did not suit the needs of his family. The owner of its twin also planned to replace it with a new house.

When he was approached by a couple from Vancouver Island who wanted to buy the duo and transport them to Union Bay, Chetner agreed, offering to chip in \$15,000. But the plan did not work due to logistics and skyrocketing costs.

The Dorothies seemed doomed, until November when Chetner partnered with a group of businessmen who wanted to see if they could come up with a project to save both homes.

The Hail Mary pass worked.

Caroline Adderson, who catalogues demolished homes on the Facebook page Vancouver Vanishes, applauds the move, but noted "it's two houses out of over 1,000 last year" that were torn down in the face of relentless development.

"Very few are saved," she said.

The Dorothies avoided demolition because Chetner was willing to take a chance, she added, but more



**The Dorothies, twin heritage homes in Vancouver that were destined for destruction, are moving to a new location on Monday. Each of the homes will be divided into two units, a basement 'garden suite' and a two-level townhouse on the upper floors.** PHOTOS: JASON PAYNE/ PNG FILES



**The homes got their name from Dorothy MacMillan and Dorothy Smith, the wives of the original owners some 80 years ago.**

needs to be done.

An online petition by the Vancouver Character House Network aimed at saving the city's original homes has collected more than 2,500 signatures.

In December, city council passed a Heritage Action Plan that has 14 recommendations, including raising demolition fees for pre-1940s

homes, streamlining heritage retention applications and updating the Vancouver Heritage Register.

But critics say the timeline for the plan, which is at least a year away, is too long. There has been little to no action taken, said Adderson.

In the meantime, demolitions and new home construction continue, ramping up as spring approaches.

The Dorothies development is under a heritage revitalization agreement, which offers incentives such as density bonuses and an expedited process, in exchange for owners retaining the heritage.

That was the only way to justify the red tape and extra costs, said Chetner: "There has to be some sort of incentive."

The move will cost about \$300,000. Even with the Heritage Revitalization Agreement incentives, "it's not as if there's a huge win in this."

The move, overseen by Nickel Bros., will involve shutting down the roads and lowering trolley, telecom and hydro lines.

The houses will be hoisted off their foundations onto steel frames then attached to a truck, which will tow the structures along Macdonald to their new home at 2820 W. 41st Ave.

The buildings are expected to be on their new lot by midnight on Monday.

Interestingly, a rundown but original home, believed to date back more than 100 years, used to sit at the new site. It was demolished a

couple of weeks ago.

If the project passes public consultation, each of the Dorothies will be divided into two units, a basement "garden suite" and a two-level townhouse on the two upper floors. Two infill duplexes will be built on the back of the property, along with eight parking spots.

Chetner said the lot already allowed for six units, including laneway housing. An eight-unit townhouse is "not a huge change."

At least one neighbour disapproves of the proposed multi-family dwelling. Chetner has also received complaints about trees getting cut down and noise complaints, but overall, the project is lauded and supported by heritage conservationists.

"We're getting huge support," said Chetner. "People are excited to see this happen."

The developer hopes to complete the project by spring 2015.

It will be christened The Two Dorothies, after Dorothy MacMillan and Dorothy Smith, the wives of the original owners, who lived side by side in the homes some 80 years ago.