

## **BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)**

### **Project Proposal – Project B3 (2007-2008)**

#### **Sustainability, Heritage Conservation & Sheltering the Social Economy**

**A. Title of project:** Sustainability, Heritage Conservation and Sheltering the Social Economy

**B. With which BALTA SERC is this project associated?** SERC 2

**C. Lead researcher, organization name and contact information:**

Dr. Mike Gismondi, Athabasca University  
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[mikeg@athabascau.ca](mailto:mikeg@athabascau.ca)

**D. Names of other researchers and organizations involved:**

Student Research Assistant, Erin Swift – See Section G

**E. Description of project, including objectives, outputs and intended outcomes:**

The project will take place in 2008-2009.

This research started with the simple observation that many social economy organizations either operate out of, or own and manage, heritage buildings in urban and rural places. These heritage buildings provide a variety of functions from the provision of affordable housing and safe-houses to artist co-operatives and studio space for cultural groups. Others house social and human services organizations, treatment centres, retail co-operatives and office space for the non-profit sector. In the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia the stories of these buildings reveal existing or potential alliances between social economy activists and social and heritage preservation entrepreneurs.

#### **Project Objectives:**

- To critically assess the relationship between heritage conservation (ideational and built) and social economy organizations' needs for shelter; and
- To critically assess the concept of sustainability as it relates to heritage buildings, including the concepts of a 'built heritage' of social democracy and an architecture of the social commons.

#### **Project Outcomes:**

- A clearer understanding of the relationship between heritage conservation, community sustainability and the role of the social economy;
- A clearer understanding of how heritage conservation can serve as a vehicle for supporting and strengthening the social economy.

**Project Outputs:**

- Literature review and bibliography;
- Two online interviews with heritage preservation activists;
- Academic paper for heritage journals;
- Paper for a national heritage conference.

**F. Purpose and significance of the research, including congruence with the strategic research objectives identified for the SERC and BALTA. Why should this project be approved, given BALTA's limited resources? [Refer to the project criteria in the BALTA Workplans and Project Proposals Policy.]**

As Canada moves towards a national municipal heritage program, we analyze the dialogue around heritage, social economy and the built environment – that is, the innovative and well-considered use or adaptive re-use of heritage architecture not only in terms of SE assets or the sustainability benefits of reuse and embedded energy, but also in terms of conserving a ‘built heritage’ of social democracy in the contemporary urban fabric, an architecture of the social commons and social solidarity.

We want to explore links between heritage preservation policy and the funding and operations of the social economy sector. On the adaptive re-use of buildings more generally, we might also look at the way SE activists use heritage tax credits from the US National Trust Non-Profit Centres Network or in the Common Ground Social Housing projects in NY City. Heritage Canada also has some examples of municipal and provincial activities across Canada and Quebec that link building conservation to the SE sector. This area of investigation speaks to the aims of BALTA to explore financing, resourcing and strengthening of the SE sector, as well as to explore the current scope and best practices within the SE.

While this project is located within SERC 2, it will examine heritage preservation both within rural and urban contexts. We plan to co-ordinate this work on heritage conservation and the redeemability of the old with the work of SERC 1 by examining co-ops and affordable housing, the Arts/Cultural sector, and other aspects of the SE such as social service delivery.

We want to explore the literature in terms of what makes a community/city sustainable and how do heritage buildings relate to that. For example, Victoria and Edmonton, but also many other places, approach building conservation and even cultural landscape preservation as part of community identity building and sustainability. Re Victoria, see Steve Barber's presentation:

[http://www.heritagecanada.org/conf/2007/pdf/Steve\\_Barber\\_c.pdf](http://www.heritagecanada.org/conf/2007/pdf/Steve_Barber_c.pdf)

**G. Will the project involve student researchers in a paid or unpaid capacity? If yes, will they need to be recruited or have they already been identified? Briefly describe the roles and responsibilities of students involved in the research project, the skills/experience they will acquire, and how this will complement their academic training. Explain as well how adequate supervision and support of the student will be ensured.**

One student, based in the University of Calgary's Faculty of Environmental Design (Architecture program), is being paid with Athabasca University funds to do research for this project. The student will be supervised by the project lead. BALTA is requested to provide support for the student to participate in BALTA meetings during the course of the project.

**H. Research activities, plan of work and timetable:**

Research	January 2008- September 2008
Paper development and conferences	2008-2009

Phase One of the research will be a literature review and collection of heritage conservation policy and programs that support the preservation and repurposing of heritage buildings for the social economy sector. We then hope to explore a few case studies of national or municipal heritage preservation programs that support the recovery of character buildings for community economic development reasons, such as affordable housing, as well as housing of artist co-ops and cultural groups, social services and human services or other non-profit organizations, halfway houses, treatment centres, retail coops, and offices for the activist/ngo sector, etc.

**I. Describe plans for communicating research results within the academic community. Indicate audience and specific output(s) i.e., refereed journal articles, conference presentations or other appropriate channels.**

A paper is planned for submission to heritage journals. Another paper is planned for a national heritage related conference.

**J. Describe plans for communicating research results outside the academic community to practitioners, policy makers, and other people for whom the research results could be significant. Indicate audience and specific output(s).**

The paper planned for a national heritage related conference will also reach an audience of practitioners and policy makers.

**K. Describe your plans for monitoring and evaluating your research project. Feel free to consult with BALTA's Coordinator on designing possible approaches. (Note that monitoring and evaluation are extremely important both for ensuring the success of the project as well as satisfying reporting to SSHRC.)**

The project will follow BALTA procedures for student and project evaluation and reporting.

**L. What are the research tools you propose to use in your project?**

**NOTE:** If your research involves human subjects, you **MUST** provide copies of your proposed research tools (as well as your research plan) prior to commencing research. Please see the document "*BALTA Ethical Review Process – Simplified*" for information about ethical review requirements.

No information provided.

## M. Budget and Contributions

Information can be both dollar figures and anecdotal, including in-kind contributions and requests for BALTA support (eg. staff support for dissemination).

<b>Category</b>	<b>Requested of BALTA</b>	<b>Other Contributions</b>
Student salaries & benefits		\$5,100
Researcher Release Time		\$7,700 - In-kind time contributed by the lead researcher
Research Support Costs (e.g. supplies, communication costs)		
Knowledge Dissemination		
Travel	\$1,000 for student travel to BALTA meetings	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$1,000</b>	<b>\$12,800</b>

### Budget explanation

Student salaries & benefits – Student Erin Swift is being paid with Athabasca University research funds.