

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the property owner applied for a Zoning Bylaw Amendment (REZ00502) and a Development Permit (DP000453) in order to construct a two-storey addition to the existing office building and convert it to a mixed-use building featuring ground floor commercial uses and residential above. The property owner also applied to designate the exterior of the building. At the time, the front facade featured numerous alterations that made it unrecognizable as historic.

The application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its August 11, 2015 meeting and it was recommended that Council consider Heritage Designation Application No. 000153 for the property located at 727 Johnson Street and consider the following comments:

- That Council urge the applicant to restore the property consistent with the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* and the original design, and
- That said restoration would strengthen the existing historical architecture of the south side of this block on Johnson Street, carrying on the rhythm of the three existing character buildings.

Staff recommended that Council decline the designation of the building in its unrestored condition. On May 26, 2016, City Council voted to approve the rezoning and development permit subject to registration of a legal agreement securing the restoration of the building.

The owner entered into a Section 219 Agreement securing the restoration of the building based on a Heritage Conservation Plan by Donald Luxton and Associates Inc. on October 3, 2016 and the agreement was since registered on title.

Since 2016, the owner has completed the restoration of the building in accordance with the Heritage Conservation Plan. The heritage consultant who completed the plan reviewed the work, confirmed its compliance with the plan, and prepared the attached updated Statement of Significance.

Description of Proposal

The building located at 727-729 Johnson Street, also referred to as the Garesché Stables & Offices, is a three-storey commercial building built in 1910 and altered in 2018 with a two-storey rooftop addition. The exterior three-storey façade of 727-729 Johnson Street has been rehabilitated to its 1910 appearance based on historic plans and photos. Its character-defining elements include its continuous commercial use; form, scale and massing; construction materials; red brick side walls; Edwardian-era design features like its tripartite articulation and banked upper floor windows; and its restored fenestration including wooden storefronts, stable doors and double-hung two over two wooden sash windows. The building contains ground floor commercial uses and upper storey residential uses. The building is also valued for its association with prolific architect and contractor George Charles Mesher and its original owner, Dr. Arthur John Garesché.

Condition/Economic Viability

The subject building has been extensively restored and is in excellent condition.

ANALYSIS

The following sections provide a summary of the application's consistency with the relevant City policies and guidelines.

Official Community Plan

The OCP encourages the consideration of tools available under legislation to protect heritage property. The application is consistent with the OCP since it is consistent with the Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework and meets the threshold of heritage value under the *Local Government Act*.

The building has heritage value because it was built during a surge of development that took place during Victoria's economic expansion in the early 1900's. It is one of the earliest local examples of the use of reinforced concrete as a façade material, and is associated with historically significant persons. The façade of the building has undergone an extensive rehabilitation in accordance with the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. With the rehabilitation complete, the building now completes a row of three historic character buildings on the south side of Johnson Street.

Statement of Significance

The applicant prepared a Statement of Significance for the purpose of this application, describing the historic place, outlining its heritage value and identifying its character-defining elements, which is attached to this report.

Downtown Core Area Plan

The designation of the building is consistent with Section 7: "Heritage" of the *Downtown Core Area Plan 2011* which states:

Heritage - Objectives

- 1 *Retain, protect and improve real property with aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual value and heritage character as a benefit to the public.*

Areas and Districts - Policies and Actions

- 7.3. *Conserve heritage values of the Downtown Core Area and its character-defining elements, such as individual buildings, collections of buildings, streetscapes, structures and features.*

Buildings and Sites - Policies and Actions

- 7.20. *Continue to work with the private sector to identify, protect and conserve property and areas with heritage value in the Downtown Core Area.*
- 7.28. *Produce and update, as required, Statements of Significance for properties listed on the Heritage Register in the Downtown Core Area.*

Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework

A key policy of the OCP includes the determination of heritage value using a values-based approach. In this regard, a City-wide thematic framework (OCP Fig. 12) was developed and incorporated into the OCP to identify the key civic historic themes. The *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework* functions as a means to organize and define historical events, to identify representative historic places, and to place sites, persons and events in an overall context. The thematic framework recognizes a broad range of values under which City-wide themes can be articulated. A Heritage Value assessment with consideration of the *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework* is incorporated into the Statement of Significance.

Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance describing the historic place, its attributes, and history is attached to this report.

Heritage Advisory Panel

The application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel meeting at its August 11, 2015 meeting and it made the following motion:

“That Council consider Heritage Designation Application No. 000153 for the property located at 727-729 Johnson Street pursuant to Section 967 of the Local Government Act as a Municipal Heritage Site and consider the following comments:

- *That Council urge the applicant to restore the property consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada and the original design, and*
- *That said restoration would strengthen the existing historical architecture of the south side of this block on Johnson Street, carrying on the rhythm of the three existing character buildings.”*

Resource Impacts

The applicant has indicated their intention to seek financial assistance through the Tax Incentive Program to rehabilitate the exterior.

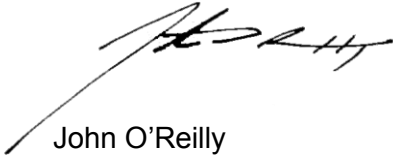
CONCLUSIONS

This application for the designation of the property at 727-729 Johnson Street as a Municipal Heritage Site involves a building that has heritage value as a surviving symbol of a surge in development during the Edwardian era, when Victoria’s resource-based economy was rapidly expanding. It is one of the earliest local examples of the use of reinforced concrete structure and is associated with significant local historical figures. The applicant has undertaken an extensive rehabilitation of the building based on historic plans and photographs and submitted an updated statement of significance. Based on the restored heritage character of the building and its heritage value, staff recommend that Council consider designating the property as a Municipal Heritage Site.

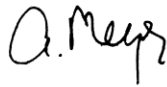
ALTERNATE MOTION

That Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000153 for the property located at 727-729 Johnson Street.

Respectfully submitted,



John O'Reilly
Senior Heritage Planner
Development Services Division



Karen Hoese, Director
Sustainable Planning and Community
Development Department

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date: May 7, 2020

List of Attachments

- Attachment A - Subject Map
- Attachment B - Aerial Map
- Attachment C - Photographs
- Attachment D - Updated Statement of Significance
- Attachment E - Letter from the applicant, date stamped November 30, 2015
- Attachment F - Minutes from the Heritage Advisory Panel dated August 11, 2015