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PRESERVE

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A Future for Old Town

Is there a future for Old Town Victoria? Will the new Official Community Plan proposed for 2025 respect and implement the Old Town Design Guidelines for New Buildings and Additions to New Buildings, or will this document be tossed out?

These questions remain unanswered until the OCP review process is completed later this Spring, but, in the meantime, it is evident that someone in the City Planning Department, along with some developers with properties in Old Town, seem to feel the Guidelines no longer exist.

With the current atmosphere within City Council to approve anything that comes along, developers are pushing projects forward that do not comply with the Old Town Design Guidelines in the hope that, because they meet some aspect of a perceived or real need, they will be approved.

One example is the development of 603 Pandora Street, the former site of the Plaza Hotel, which was destroyed by fire in 2019, is for a 12 storey hotel of about 200 rooms. The property is currently zoned for a 7-storey building, which is greater than the surrounding, but this zoning was granted on the basis that the owners would retain and restore the historic facade of the Westholme Hotel (later the Plaza Hotel) along Government Street. Even though the old hotel is gone, the zoning remains.



603 Pandora - View from Government Street



603 Pandora - View From Pandora Street

interest rate escalation and onerous financing conditions. Under current economic and financing conditions, a modern, mid-priced downtown hotel requires approximately 200 rooms to be viable”. The first problem, that of costs, applies to all new buildings no matter the height. We are still building 5 and 6- storey structures. As for the number of rooms needed, existing hotels in Old Town range from 43 rooms to 108 rooms. The design and size of the proposed structure does not meet the Old Town Design Guidelines for New Buildings and Additions to New Buildings and should not advance in its present form.

This new building will be 125 feet high. The Duck’s Block at 1344 Broad Street, now being converted to a 137 room hotel, is 61 feet high. the Carlton Plaza Hotel with 108 rooms on Johnson Street is about 62 feet high.

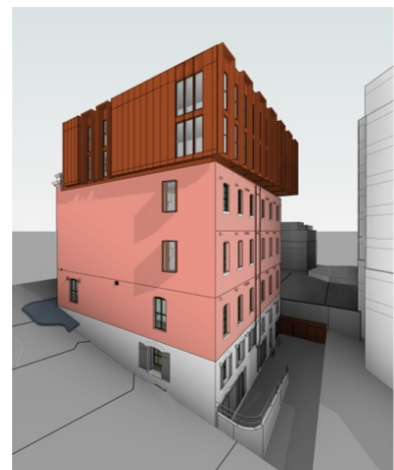
A second example is the proposal for the Yates Block at 1244 Wharf Street. This building has been vacant for the past two years under new ownership. The building came before the City Heritage Advisory Panel in the past, requesting approval for changes that would allow the building to be used for hotel purposes. These were approved but nothing moved forward. Now the owner wishes to add two storeys to the top to create additional residential/hotel units (whatever that may be). This is a major intrusion as these will be visible from all sides. Not in keeping with the Old Town Design Guidelines for New Buildings and Additions to New Buildings. Again, this should not advance in its present form.

Why do development applications like these come before the Council? Because they feel there is a good chance of approval in the present atmosphere.



FRONT VIEW FROM YATES & WHARF

1244 Wharf Street from the front



REAR VIEW FROM HARBOUR TOWARDS PATIO

1244 Wharf Street - North and West side image

and integrity of Old Town Victoria must be protected.

SPEAK UP !

EVENTS

LOTS OF EVENTS IN THIS ISSUE

HALLMARK HERITAGE WEEK MEETING

At 7:30pm on Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at the Wentworth Villa, 1156 Fort Street, the Hallmark Heritage Society will host Ben Clinton-Baker who will speak about Carpenter Gothic architecture and its manifestations in Victoria in the context of the recently opened exhibit Gothic Victoria: The Origins of Carpenter Gothic.” This is a free event. Ensure your spot by clicking the button below.

Introductory talks by Pam Madoff and John Dam on the current situation of heritage preservation in Victoria.

[I will be at the Hallmark Lecture](#)

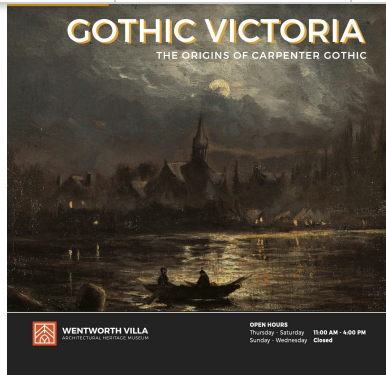
OAK BAY HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Please join us for the first of the Marion Cumming Lectures this year as the Oak Bay Heritage Foundation presents “So, you thought you knew Rattenbury!”

Oak Bay Heritage’s Robert Taylor travels a fantastic journey through three centuries (1851–2021) of larger-than-life characters, history, architecture, world events, tragedies, business schemes, and Oak Bay life.

The lecture will be held at the Windsor Park Pavilion on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 7 p.m.

Q & A and refreshments to follow. Everyone is welcome. Donations accepted.



This new feature exhibit explores the origins and local expressions of Carpenter Gothic architecture. With roots in the medieval period of almost 1000 years ago, this is a truly historic architectural style! Learn about the innovations in church design and construction that allowed for buildings of unprecedented scale and grandeur, and how these innovations were embraced and revived around the world in more recent times. Finally, see how these building techniques were applied to small scale wooden structures in the cities and on the frontiers of European settlement in North America, including right here in Victoria. The result is a legacy of built heritage that is one of the most recognizable and widespread styles in the world today. Drop in at 1156 Fort Street

Western Front Association Seminars

From Friday March 1 to Sunday March 3 the Pacific Coast Branch of the Western Front Association will hold its annual seminar in the Currie Room of the Victoria Armoury at the junction of Douglas and Bay streets. As with your own organization, historical exploration is the raison d'être of the WFAPCB. Branch seminars bring to light aspects of The Great War of 1914-18, with a particular focus on Canada's part in the war. Participants routinely compliment the quality of these seminars and their success at both entertaining and edifying participants. For copies of the March 1 – 3 program guide and registration form, or for answers to particular questions you might have, contact the Branch at wfapcb1999@gmail.com.



Bay Street Armoury from Field Street

The Royal B.C. Museum is seeking public input as it carries on the work of re-imagining what a museum should look like. They

Take the
Museum
Survey

Win a trip to Victoria for taking the survey.

Click
here for
the
OCP
Update

Watch in early March as the City of Victoria seeks public input regarding the updating of the Official Community Plan.

At the recent meeting of the Union of B.C. Municipalities a special session titled “Housing the Next Million British Columbians,”, Victoria Mayor Marianne Alto talked about how accommodating vigorous population growth means her city “can only go up, up, and only go in-fill.” Quote from Vancouver Sun



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