



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of April 17, 2025

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** April 4, 2025

From: Karen Hoese, Director, Planning and Development

Subject: Heritage Designation Application No. 000212 for 646 Fisgard Street

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. That Council approve the heritage statement of significance for 646 Fisgard Street.
2. That Council instruct the Director of Planning and Development to prepare the necessary Heritage Designation Bylaw that would designate the property as a Municipal Heritage Site, as outlined in the staff report dated November 14, 2024 for 646 Fisgard Street.
3. That first and second reading of the Heritage Designation Bylaw for 646 Fisgard Street be considered by Council and a public hearing date be set.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

In accordance with Section 611 of the *Local Government Act*, Council may designate real property, in whole or in part, as protected property.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present Council with information, analysis and recommendations regarding an owner request to designate the exterior and a portion of the interior, specifically the second-floor meeting hall, of the heritage-registered property located at 646 Fisgard Street (also known as the Masonic Temple). The two and a half-storey institutional and commercial building built in 1878 with an addition in 1909 contributes to the historic character of Victoria's Old Town District.

The designation of this building is generally consistent with Section 8: "Placemaking (Urban Design and Heritage)" of the *Official Community Plan (2012)*, with Section 7, "Heritage" of the *Downtown Core Area Plan*, and with the *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework*.

The Heritage Advisory Panel reviewed the application at its December 10, 2024 meeting and recommended that Council consider approving the designation of the heritage-registered property located at 646 Fisgard Street.

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposal

The property located at 646 Fisgard Street, also referred to as the Masonic Temple, is a two and a half-storey commercial and institutional building built in 1878 with a 1909 addition. The exterior façade of 646 Fisgard Street has maintained much of its original appearance. Its character-defining elements include:

- Its prominent corner location is at the northern end of the Old Town District, accentuated by the beveled corner, and arcuated facades along Douglas and Fisgard Streets.
- The contribution it makes to the historic streetscapes of Douglas and Fisgard streets through such elements as a lack of setbacks, solid composition, and commercial storefronts.
- Its two and a half-storey massing.
- Elements of the Second Empire Style include the mansard roof, corner tower, and elaborate brick masonry and stonework.
- The Fisgard Street entrance, including the arched entranceway flanked by engaged composite columns surmounted by brick arches, and capped by a classical pediment framing the Masonic symbol.
- Identification of the building with the Order of Freemasons, seen in such exterior elements as Masonic emblems.
- The continuous use of the building by the Order of Freemasons since its consecration in 1878.
- The character of interior spaces relevant to the original design and function of the building.
- The second floor meeting hall, with such preserved features as the large, open domed space with the painted ceiling, original balcony and railing, arched alcoves with decorative surrounds, and the wood entry surrounds and moldings.
- Authentic interior furniture and fittings which support the use of the place by the Order of Freemasons.

ANALYSIS

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

Official Community Plan

The designation of this building is consistent with the *Official Community Plan* (2012), which in the section entitled, "Placemaking (Urban Design and Heritage)", supports the protection and celebration of Victoria's cultural and natural heritage resources, including the designation of buildings with heritage merit.

Downtown Core Area Plan

The designation of the building is consistent with Section 7: “Heritage” of the *Downtown Core Area Plan 2011* which supports the preservation and protection of buildings with heritage value as a public benefit that contributes to the character defining elements of 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 attached Statement of Significance for 646 Fisgard Street, which describes the historic place, its attributes and history.

Heritage Advisory Panel

The application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its December 10, 2024 meeting and was recommended for approval. The meeting minutes are attached to this report.

Condition, Economic Viability and Resource Impacts

The building is in good condition; however, with designation, 646 Fisgard Street will become eligible for grants from the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust.

CONCLUSIONS

This application for the heritage designation of the property located at 646 Fisgard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site is for a building that is a good example of Victoria’s institutional and commercial development from the 19th century. It is therefore recommended that Council consider approving the Heritage Designation Application for the heritage-registered building located at 646 Fisgard Street.

ALTERNATE MOTION

That Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000212 for the property located at 646 Fisgard Street.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Saretsky
Heritage Planner
Citywide Planning Division

Karen Hoese, Director
Planning and Development Department

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

- Attachment A: Subject Map
- Attachment B: Aerial Map
- Attachment C: Photographs
- Attachment D: Statement of Significance
- Attachment E: Letter from the applicant, date stamped February 22, 2025
- Attachment F: Minutes from the December 10, 2024 Heritage Advisory Panel meeting.