

3. **645-651 Johnson Street & 1314-1324 Douglas Street**
Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00227

645-651 Johnson Street
Heritage Designation Application No. 000177

1314-1324 Douglas Street
Heritage Designation Application No. 000178

Attendees: Colin Merriam and Shaun McIntyre, Merrick Architecture; Donald Luxton, Donald Luxton & Associates

Merinda Conley provided a brief summary of the applications.

Panel Questions and Comments

- There was an extensive discussion between the Panel and staff about the difference between a Development Permit Application and a Heritage Alteration Permit Application and when each is appropriate.
- What is the structure projecting to the right of the elevator shaft? Colin Merriam: It is a walkway from the elevator to the exterior circulation corridor on the upper floor.
- Will the brick on the raised parapet be the same as that on the lower one? Donald Luxton: The raised parapet facing Douglas Street will be an in-kind restoration, based on archival photos and physical evidence.
- Will the signage on the Watson & McGregor Building be restored? Donald Luxton: That is not part of the current application.
- Why is brick proposed for the elevator shaft, but not for the two-storey addition? Colin Merriam: It is felt that the elevator shaft should be a distinctive solid element. Shaun McIntyre: It was a purposeful choice to use a different material than brick on the addition. Panel: Compatibility can be achieved along with differentiation. The new brick will not look like the existing brick.
- The Morgan Block addition will block part of the historic Cross Building sign. How far would the building have to be stepped back from Douglas Street to expose the sign? Colin Merriam: The building would have to be stepped back substantially. It would be onerous to limit the development to completely expose the sign. Panel: The proposed setback is 2.4m. This is not a significant setback for a new addition in this area.
- The buildings are on the original site of the Fort Victoria Cemetery. Special care should be taken during excavation. Donald Luxton: The historic location is noted in the conservation plans, and this concern will be part of the investigation.
- Will the units be rental or condominiums? Shaun McIntyre: Condominiums.
- Is this a transient zone? Alison Meyer: No short term rentals are allowed, but a hotel could be built in the zone.
- The proposed steel lattices with cascading vines is not a good plan for the long term as the vines usually die within 4 years. This results in a non-sympathetic look to the building. Colin Merriam: If there are gaps in the growth or issues with the maintenance of the plants, the lattices will serve as a bespoke stand-alone architectural element.
- It is appreciated that the residential units are being added to preserve the buildings, but there is concern regarding context and compatibility.
- Concern was expressed about the impact and context of the elevator shaft. In particular, it will be extremely visible on Johnson Street. Its materiality, height and stand-alone nature impacts the context of the block as a whole. Its prominence and

height need to be reassessed in the context of the interventions proposed for the two buildings.

- The 1860s building at the corner of Douglas and Johnson Streets, which is not part of the application, is very old and should be respected physically during construction.
- Is it feasible to imbed all or part of the elevator shaft in the building? Shaun McIntyre: Possibly. It would require a redesign of the circulation system. Earlier plans continued the height and had walls on both sides of the elevator shaft, wrapping around at and under the allowable height on the party wall partition, back one building length from Johnson Street. It was determined that it was better to eliminate the wall to allow more light into the courtyard by having a stand-alone shaft.
- Could the cementitious material used on the addition also be used on the elevator shaft? Donald Luxton: This was considered; however, the shaft would be more noticeable as a contemporary element.
- Could the elevator be moved to the other end of the courtyard? Shaun McIntyre: This is not feasible due to access/egress and operational requirements.
- Will the elevator serve both the east and west portions of the building? Shaun McIntyre: Yes.
- Is a transparent elevator shaft (e.g. glass and steel) possible? Shaun McIntyre: That has been considered and can be reconsidered. Glass elevators are reflective and not transparent or invisible. Brick works better at night.
- The current Johnson Street elevation has a central store entrance that is recessed and two doors at 90 degrees to that. The proposed elevation does not have this recessed entrance. Colin Merriam: The right door will be the residential entrance, and the left will be the commercial entrance. Donald Luxton: The non-recessed entrance is closer to the original.
- There is a lot to like in the proposal. The revitalization of the two heritage buildings and the addition of residential units are positive aspects. The use of transparent glass and steel on the addition, while respecting the architectural rhythm of the existing, is positive. The proposed canopies over the sidewalks tie in with the vocabulary of the upper floors and the archival photos. The units are well laid out, with one frontage on Douglas Street and one on the courtyard. However, it would be better to have a 4-5m setback.
- The proposed height is allowed in Old Town, encouraging the retention of heritage façades. The proposed setback is acceptable. The lattices and green growth will mitigate the height. The Cross Building sign will not be obliterated.

Moved

Seconded

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend to Council that Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00227 for 645-651 Johnson Street and 1314-1324 Douglas Street be approved with the addition of the following provisions:

- That particular care be taken during construction to not disturb the building at the corner of Douglas and Johnson Streets
- Consideration be given to the redesign or relocation of the elevator shaft so that it is not a freestanding tower
- Increase the setback of the addition on both elevations to 3-4m.

Carried (unanimous)

Moved

Seconded

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council approve the designation of the Heritage-Registered property located at 645-651 Johnson Street, pursuant to Section 611 of the *Local Government Act*, as a Municipal Heritage Site.

Carried (unanimous)

Moved

Seconded

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council approve the designation of the Heritage-Registered property located at 1314-1324 Douglas Street, pursuant to Section 611 of the *Local Government Act*, as a Municipal Heritage Site.

Carried (unanimous)