

25 October 2019, updated 08 November 2019

Mayor and Council
CITY OF VICTORIA
1 Centennial Square
Victoria BC V8W 1P6

RE: PROPOSED RENOVATIONS TO THE ADELPHI BLOCK
578 Yates Street/1300-1306 Government Street, Victoria BC

HERITAGE ALTERATION PERMIT APPLICATION

Mayor and Council,

On behalf of GMC Projects Inc., we hereby submit a heritage alteration permit application for proposed exterior renovations to the Adelphi Block, located on the north-west corner of Government and Yates Streets. The Adelphi Block consists of three designated heritage buildings: the Adelphi Building, a three-storey commercial building built in 1891 by the CP Land & Mortgage Company, the adjacent two-storey building to the north along Government Street, originally known as the Palace Cigar Store, built in 1902, and the one-storey building to the west, located at 578 Yates Street, which also dates back to the early 1900s. While the Palace Cigar Store is now home to the Command Post of Militaria, the ground floor of the Adelphi Building saw a century of shoe sales, following the closing of the Palace Saloon, starting with Modern Shoes in 1917 followed by Field's Shoes in the mid-1960s.

After several decades, Field's Shoes closed its doors and the buildings were sold to an associated company of GMC Projects that wishes to re-invigorate this vital corner within Victoria's Old Town District. The historically significant Adelphi Block provides an exciting opportunity within the urban fabric of Victoria to create a vibrant landmark, while respecting and protecting the site's notable heritage through a conscientious approach to the building's exterior renovation and rehabilitation.

While the ground floor commercial units were continuously occupied, the upper floor levels saw a variety of office and residential uses over the years and most recently [last decade or two], have remained largely unoccupied. In addition to the heritage alteration permit, new plans call for the renovation of three existing suites in order to provide three rental apartments, one on each of the upper two floor levels of the Adelphi Building and another on the upper floor of the Palace Cigar Store.

The goal for the Adelphi Block is three-fold:

1. To replace the existing aluminium storefront glazing and re-instate the upper transom panels.
2. To refurbish the upper floor windows and the main entry doors to the upper suites.
3. To introduce a new exterior paint scheme.

STOREFRONT GLAZING

It appears as if during the early part of the 1940s, if not before, significant changes were made to the storefront of both heritage buildings: stone or stone clad columns and arched transoms above were removed, the decorative steel column at the corner was either covered up or removed and the beautiful single arched entry at the Palace Cigar Store was removed, with new storefront presumably installed to modernize the buildings. At a later date, the decorative balustrade and parapet at the top of the Adelphi building were removed and/or covered over, and transom windows were covered over as well.

In response to application review comments received from staff and subsequent discussions with the Heritage Advisory Panel, the new owners intend to re-instate the ground floor columns that were removed, which in turn, will permit the original proportions of storefront glazing and transom panels to be re-established. This will be done in keeping with the more modern interventions introduced in the 1940s.

The owners also intend to expose the original decorative column (metal) at the entry to the ground floor commercial space of the Adelphi Building, should it still exist.

Existing aluminium storefront glazing on the Adelphi Building and 578 Yates will be replaced with new black anodized aluminium glazing, including the reinstatement of upper transom windows which were covered over with a large stucco plaster sign band at some point in time [likely the same time as the upper parapet was irrecoverably altered].

There is no immediate need to replace the storefront glazing in front of the Command Post, which would be quite disruptive to the business; however, should the unit become vacant, similar upgrades to the storefront will be undertaken.

Pending approval of a number of grant applications, the owners will consider the option of wood-framed storefront glazing in order to further enhance the heritage revitalization of the buildings.

EXTERIOR WINDOWS

The exterior windows on the upper levels of both the Adelphi Building and Palace Cigar Store will be refurbished. Existing wood sashes will be replaced with new wood sashes and laminated glass units to match existing, including multi-paned transom panels above. The only exception will affect the two windows and door unit on the west side of the second floor level of the Adelphi Building, which are well set back from the street. These will be replaced with new black vinyl windows in the existing masonry openings and a new glazed black vinyl door unit to match, again within the existing masonry opening. This door, which currently provides access to the roof above 578 Yates Street, will lead to a modest roof top deck from one of the residential units and will serve as a second means of egress from that unit. A new roof top skylight will be installed above the main internal staircase to replace what was removed and subsequently boarded over years ago.

MAIN ENTRY DOOR TO UPPER APARTMENTS

The main entry door to the upper floor levels consists of a pair of narrow door leafs, which enclose what was an exterior stairway when the building was first built. Due to the location of the door and its proximity to the property line, the doors cannot be replaced with a new single leaf out-swinging door. New painted wood doors will replace the existing, with narrow glazed panels as well as a transom window above to bring natural light into the entry and improve safety for those exiting the building.

EXTERIOR PAINT SCHEME

It is very important that the refurbished buildings fit comfortably into the context of their surrounding built environment, with an exterior that is, not only, not too stark and heavy, but also, not too light and inconspicuous. A warm, light gray was chosen for the main field of the Adelphi Building, including the upper "hat" and columns, and west facing painted brick façade. This neutral backdrop for the larger components of the facades will be accentuated with traces of Wrought Iron, Comox Gold and Oxford White used to highlight the more unique and decorative architectural elements, most notable on the east and south facades.

By extending the paint scheme down to grade through existing and new columns, the perceived disconnect between the upper floor levels and the ground floor commercial level is minimized.

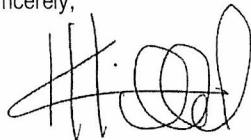
It is difficult to distinguish 578 Yates as a separate building due to architectural and structural elements which extend from the Adelphi Building across the facade of 578 Yates, with no natural or easily identifiable breaks. Rather than introduce an independent paint scheme that could appear superficial, it will be painted in keeping with the Adelphi Building.

Unlike 578 Yates, the Palace Cigar Store retains many of its distinguishing features. It can be set apart by removing exterior paint finishes and exposing the original brick masonry in an effort to restore a colour scheme in keeping with the original palette.

The new owners are seeking to revive buildings that have been locked in a bygone era for decades by celebrating their inherent character charm and unique qualities, despite the irreversible loss of some of their original features. In doing so, they hope to carry the integrity and beauty of their history forward.

We trust that the foregoing provides you with enough information to proceed with your review process. Should you require additional information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hillel', with a stylized, cursive flourish extending from the end.

Karen Hillel Architect AIBC