



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of February 27, 2020

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** February 13, 2020
From: Karen Hoese, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Subject: Heritage Designation Application No. 000187 for 2615-2629 Douglas Street

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the designation of the property located at 2615-2629 Douglas Street, specifically the original 1971 exterior of the historic building described in the attached Statement of Significance, in accordance with plans dated February 13, 2020, pursuant to Section 611 of the *Local Government Act*, as a Municipal Heritage Site, and that first and second reading of the Heritage Designation Bylaw 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 1971 exterior of the property located at 2615-2629 Douglas Street, also known as the Victoria Press Building. The Late Modern style commercial building was built in 1971 and contributes to the historic character of the Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood.

The designation of this building is generally consistent with Section 8: "Placemaking: Urban Design and Heritage" of the *Official Community Plan* (2012), with Section 8, "Heritage" of the *Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan* (2017) and with the *Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework*.

The application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its October 8, 2019 meeting and it recommended that Council consider approving the designation of the property.

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposal

The property located at 2615-2629 Douglas Street, also referred to as the Victoria Press Building, is a three-level Late Modern style office building built in 1971 and designed by

architecture firm Moody Moore Duncan Rattray Peters Searly Christie. The exterior façade of the building has maintained much of its original appearance since its construction. Its character-defining elements include its location on Douglas Street; continuous use by Victoria Press Ltd.; its commercial form, scale and massing expressed by a symmetrical, rectilinear form; its Late Modern style elements including pre-cast concrete panels, exposed aggregate stucco cladding, full height central entryway with rounded pre-cast concrete walls and smoked-glass recessed fixed-pane windows. The Statement of Significance also identifies the 1973 red and yellow cedar carvings in the lobby of the building as character-defining elements; however, the applicant does not own the sculptures. The applicant continues to negotiate with the owners to retain the sculptures in situ; however, there is a possibility they will be relocated in future. The building has heritage value as a symbol of 150 years of print journalism in Victoria and for its unique architectural expression. The building is occupied by the Times Colonist, established in 1980 through a merger of the British Colonist and the Victoria Daily Times.

The application for heritage designation is one of several related applications to facilitate the comprehensive \$26.5 million renovation of the 130,000 square foot Victoria Press Building into a campus-style “destination office complex”.

The site is subject to a rezoning application to permit the conversion of the print reel room and press hall at the southeast corner of the building into a brewpub and distillery. The applicant has also applied for a building permit (#055060) for the overall renovations, which includes a large seismic upgrade consisting of two large concrete cores connected to bedrock and new pile foundations and steel “drag struts” installed in the upper floors to connect the existing concrete structure to the new concrete cores. Concurrent with the application for heritage designation, the applicant has applied for a 10-year tax exemption to assist with the cost of seismic upgrading and make the overall project financially feasible.

Regulatory Considerations

The proposed heritage designation is consistent with surrounding land uses. The heritage designation, in conjunction with the proposed tax exemption, will facilitate a project that represents an important step towards realizing the City's planned vision for Humber Green. Humber Green is a district that includes all properties between Douglas Street, Hillside Avenue, Blanshard Street and Bay Street. The planned vision for Humber Green, as described in the *Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan*, is a complete transformation from the current pattern of car-oriented commercial land uses to a walkable, transit-oriented, high density, mixed commercial and residential community that will become the northern gateway to downtown.

Condition/Economic Viability

The building is in good physical condition according to the applicant's heritage consultant.

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* (OCP), which in the section entitled, "Placemaking: Urban Design and Heritage", states:

Goals

8 (B) *Victoria's cultural and natural heritage resources are protected and celebrated.*

Broad Objectives

8 (j) *That heritage property is conserved as resources with value for present and future generations.*

8 (l) *That heritage and cultural values are identified, celebrated, and retained through community engagement.*

City Form

8.6 *Conserve and enhance the heritage value, character and special features of areas, districts, streetscapes, cultural landscapes and individual properties throughout the city.*

8.11 *Determine the heritage value of areas, districts, streetscapes, cultural landscape and individual properties using the Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework as identified in Figure 12.*

Buildings and Sites

8.51 *Continue to give consideration to tools available under legislation to protect or conserve heritage property including, but not limited to: heritage designation bylaws; listing on the heritage register; temporary protection; heritage alteration permits; heritage revitalization agreements; design guidelines; and, the protection of views of heritage landmark buildings from public vantage points as identified in Map 8, and to be determined in future local area plans.*

8.54 *Continue to work with senior government, community and business partners to identify, protect and conserve property of heritage value.*

Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan

The designation of the building is consistent with Section 4.1, "General Policies for Land Management and Development", and Section 8, "Heritage", which state:

4.1.6. *Encourage the conservation of important heritage buildings: Burnside neighbourhood contains important heritage buildings and sites of the Coast Salish people, the neighbourhood's agricultural, residential, and industrial history, and the natural and recreational history of the Gorge Waterway.*

8.1.2. *Consider future additions to the City's Register of Heritage Properties in consultation with property owners...*

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.

Architectural Modernism in Victoria

Over a decade ago, heritage staff and a heritage consultant undertook a formal study of modernist architecture in Victoria, resulting in a Statement of Significance document (attached) entitled *Modernism in Victoria 1945-1975*. In 2008, City Council endorsed the expansion of the heritage program to recognize significant historic resources built from 1945-1975. As part of the Council motion, eleven modernist buildings were added to the City's Heritage Register, with one since being demolished (the Royal Bank Building at 1501 Douglas Street across from City Hall). Since 2008, only one modernist building has been heritage-designated: the Floral Chapel of the McCall's Funeral Home, located at 1400 Vancouver Street / 952 Johnson Street.

Modernist architecture originated towards the end of the 19th century in response to rapid technological change and a desire to create a purely functional, undecorated "International Style" of architecture. It did not become popular and widespread until after World War 2. Like many cities, Victoria was strongly affected by the demobilization of many thousands of troops returning from overseas. Its population more than doubled between 1946 and 1966. There was a corresponding demand for inexpensive housing and new buildings. The post-war era was an optimistic time in which many social changes occurred and traditional institutions and values were disrupted. Modernist architecture, with its emphasis on new technologies and building techniques, innovative design, function over form and efficient use of resources, was the ideal style to exploit the post war construction boom.

Modernist architecture in Victoria displayed the influence of international trends and trends from Vancouver, but differed from other cities in the way it respected historic buildings, either on the same site or in the surrounding area. Modernist architecture in Victoria was more contextually sensitive. Modernist buildings in Victoria, including the Victoria Press Building, achieved a balance between traditionalism and modernization that was ahead of its time. Character-defining elements of the modernist movement in Victoria include the following:

- the influence of the International Style, with the use of modern materials and a clean-line aesthetic displaying such features as exposed structural elements, curtain walls, flat roofs and ground floor podiums
- the use of materials such as: exposed concrete, stucco and metal sash windows in commercial and institutional applications, and the use of natural materials such as wood and stone in residential designs
- individual projects that display personalized influences such as Japanese design and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright
- a careful and integrated approach to the conservation of earlier buildings within an urban design context.

Resource Impacts

Heritage designation of 2615-2629 Douglas Street will enable the applicant's Tax Incentive Program Application (#00030) to proceed.

Heritage Advisory Panel

The application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its October 8, 2020 meeting and was recommended for approval. The Panel recommended that ownership of the lobby sculptures be clarified. The applicant has since confirmed that they do not own the sculptures.

Statement of Significance

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

CONCLUSIONS

This application for the heritage designation of the Victoria Press Building located at 2615-2629 Douglas Street as a Municipal Heritage Site is for a building that is a good example of Victoria's commercial development from the 20th century. Staff therefore recommend that Council consider approving the Heritage Designation Application for the building located at 2615-2629 Douglas Street.

ALTERNATE MOTION

That Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000187 for the property located at 2615-2629 Douglas Street.

Respectfully submitted,

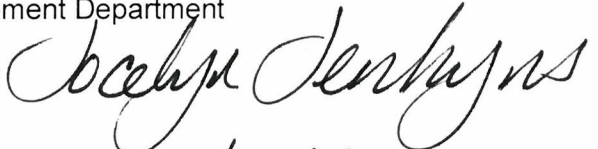


John O'Reilly
Senior Heritage Planner
Development Services Division



Karen Hoese, Director
Sustainable Planning and Community
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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date:

Feb 18, 2020

List of Attachments

- Attachment A: Subject Map
- Attachment B: Aerial Map
- Attachment C: Photographs
- Attachment D: Statement of Significance, dated February 2018
- Attachment E: Architectural Plans, dated February 13, 2020
- Attachment F: Letter from the applicant, date stamped September 16, 2019.
- Attachment G: Statement of Significance, Modernism in Victoria 1945-1975
- Attachment H: Council Motion dated 15 May 2008
- Attachment I: Heritage Advisory Panel Minutes, October 8, 2019.