



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of April 1, 2021

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** March 18, 2021
From: Karen Hoes, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Subject: Heritage Designation Application No. 000196 for 1114-1126 Blanshard Street

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to prepare the Heritage Designation Bylaw for the property located at 1114-1126 Blanshard Street and bring it forward for introductory readings, and after giving notice and allowing an opportunity for public comment at a joint Public Hearing with Rezoning Application No. 00745 for 780-798 Fort Street and 1106-1126 Blanshard Street, if it is approved, consider the following motion:

1. "That Council approve the designation of the property located at 1114-1126 Blanshard Street, in accordance with the Conservation Plan prepared by Donald Luxton and Associates Inc. dated March 2021, pursuant to Section 611 of the *Local Government Act*, as a Municipal Heritage Site."

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 of the heritage-registered property located at 1114-1126 Blanshard Street. This request is connected to a Rezoning Application No. 00745 for 780-798 Fort Street and 1106-1126 Blanshard Street. The three-storey Edwardian-style mixed-use building, historically known as the Montrose Apartments, was built in 1912 and contributes to the historic character of the Downtown area.

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 application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its February 9, 2021 meeting and it recommended that Council consider approving the designation of the building subject to conditions.

BACKGROUND

Description

The property located at 1114-1126 Blanshard Street, also referred to as the Montrose Apartments, is a three-storey, Edwardian-style, mixed-use building constructed in 1912. Architect Charles Elwood Watkins designed the building as an apartment-hotel with ground floor commercial uses. Its owner, Andrew Sheret, named the building after his birthplace, Montrose, Scotland.

The exterior façade has many intact original building features. Its character-defining elements include its form, scale and massing; its Edwardian-style symmetrical design; metal cornice and arched window hoods with keystones; two-tone masonry construction; surviving storefront elements like transoms and bulkhead tiling and its original windows including 6-over-1 and 8-over-1 wood sash windows. Interior features like its original room configuration and central staircase are character-defining elements of the building, however they are not included in the designation. The building includes areaways under the sidewalk and glass sidewalk prisms, however, because these are located on City property they are also not included in the designation. The City, as stewards of the sidewalk, would explore the conservation of these elements in future sidewalk improvements.

In addition to its architectural character, the property is valued because of its connection with the surge of real estate development in Victoria prior to World War One. During this era, European immigration contributed to the rapid growth of the City. Buildings like the Montrose Apartments provided high-density housing for families who could not afford single detached homes. The building is also valued as an excellent example of the work of local architect Charles Elwood Watkins, who was the official architect of the Victoria and Saanich School Boards.

Rezoning Application No. 00745

The heritage designation of the Montrose Apartments accompanies Rezoning Application No. 00745 for the subject property and two other properties to the south (municipal addresses - 1106-1108 Blanshard Street and 780-798 Fort Street). The rezoning application proposes to distribute density away from the Montrose Apartments to the properties to the south, and the height of the Montrose Apartments would be restricted to 14.5 metres to prevent future additions or alterations to its scale and massing.

The proposal includes the following major components:

- retention and designation of the Montrose Apartments
- construction of a corresponding podium wrapping around Fort and Blanshard streets
- a 17-storey, slender tower with a 380m² floor plate above a new three-storey podium
- a 200m² three-storey, glass-enclosed, south-facing, open space, atrium
- 21 residential rental units within the Montrose Apartments building, which would be secured with a housing agreement with retained commercial units below.

Condition/Economic Viability

According to the heritage consultant, most character-defining elements of the Montrose Apartments are in good condition. As part of the proposal to redevelop the property, the Montrose Apartments will be designated and rehabilitated. Conservation measures include:

- rehabilitation of masonry, including selective repairs, repointing and replacement of masonry units, and removal of redundant metal inserts and services mounted to the exterior walls
- window repairs, including re-puttying and weather-stripping and selective in-kind replacement of irreparable windows
- restoration of missing metalwork
- rehabilitation of storefront assemblies to their original 1912 configuration, as retail tenancies turn over
- reinstatement of historic colour scheme.

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* (OCP), which in Section 8, "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.*

Downtown Core Area Plan

The designation of the building is consistent with Section 7: “*Heritage*” of the *Downtown Core Area Plan* (2011) which states:

Heritage - Objectives

- 1 *Retain, protect and improve real property with aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual value and heritage character as a benefit to the public.*

Areas and Districts - Policies and Actions

- 7.3. *Conserve heritage values of the Downtown Core Area and its character-defining elements, such as individual buildings, collections of buildings, streetscapes, structures and features.*

Buildings and Sites - Policies and Actions

- 7.20. *Continue to work with the private sector to identify, protect and conserve property and areas with heritage value in the Downtown Core Area.*
- 7.28. *Produce and update, as required, Statements of Significance for properties listed on the Heritage Register in 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 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.

Statement of Significance

A Statement of Significance describing the historic place, outlining its heritage value and identifying its character-defining elements, is attached to this report.

Resource Impacts

Heritage designation of 1114-1126 Blanshard Street will enable the property owner to apply for heritage grants from the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust and for a tax incentive from the City to assist with the cost of seismic upgrading.

Heritage Advisory Panel

The Heritage Advisory Panel (“HAPL”) reviewed the application at its February 9, 2021 meeting and recommended that Council approve the heritage designation of the Montrose Apartments, subject to the applicant completing a seismic upgrade and full restoration of all storefronts. (Minutes attached.)

According to the applicant, full seismic upgrading of the building was explored, but would involve displacing all tenants in the building, including long established commercial and residential tenants. Commercial rents would be increased following the renovations and the

applicant believes that the building would need to be converted to market condominium units to support the seismic upgrade, therefore, they are not pursuing this upgrade at this time

The applicant has revised the Conservation Plan to include restoration of the existing storefronts. The Plan now includes an elevation drawing depicting the future restoration of the original retail storefronts. The applicant advises that it is not possible to complete the storefront restoration immediately without disrupting commercial operations and because existing lease agreements would require the tenants to consent prior to commencing the work. Staff therefore propose to secure this work through a legal agreement with a condition requiring that the owner restore storefronts incrementally as retail tenancies turn over. The appropriate language is included in the concurrent Rezoning Application.

Given the competing objectives related to advancing a full building upgrade now, versus maintaining existing tenants and ensuring overall project financial viability, staff recommend that this compromise approach is acceptable.

CONCLUSIONS

This application for the heritage designation of the property located at 1114-1126 Blanshard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site is for a building that is an excellent example of Edwardian-era residential development. The recommendation is that that Council approve Heritage Designation Application No. 000196 for 1114-1126 Blanshard Street.

ALTERNATE MOTION

That Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000196 for the property located at 1114-1126 Blanshard Street.

Respectfully submitted,

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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.

List of Attachments

- Attachment 1 - Subject Map
- Attachment 2 - Aerial Map
- Attachment 3 - Photographs
- Attachment 4 - Statement of Significance
- Attachment 5 - Conservation Plan by Donald Luxton & Associates dated March 2021
- Attachment 6 - Letter from the applicant, date stamped February 18, 2021
- Attachment 7 - Heritage Advisory Panel Minutes dated February 9, 2021.