



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 20, 2022**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 14, 2022
From: Mayor Helps and Councillor Loveday
Subject: Arts Hub and Daycare at 926-930 Pandora

BACKGROUND

The City purchased 926-930 Pandora for the purposes of creating affordable housing and new city owned space for community activities. Council's strategic plan identifies the creation of a community centre for the Downtown and North Park neighbourhoods. In August 2021, Council directed staff to work with the Downtown Residents Association (DRA) and the North Park Neighbourhood Association (NPNA) to undertake a planning process to determine the feasibility of delivering community centre services at that site.

Through work with both associations it became clear that this site was not favoured by either association as a location for a community centre. Council remains committed to its strategic plan objectives of creating community centres for the Downtown and North Park Neighbourhoods given their lack of community centres and growing populations. Future redevelopment of City-owned or privately owned land can likely accommodate these commitments.

In the meantime, there is time sensitivity to developing a plan for the City-owned space on the ground floor of 926-930 Pandora. BC Housing has preliminarily confirmed significant funding for 50 units of supportive housing and 170 units of affordable housing at this site and needs to submit a rezoning process for Council's consideration. Determination of what will be operated out of the ground floor of the building is key to submitting the rezoning application in a timely manner, securing funding for the housing, and – subject to Council's approval of the rezoning – getting the housing under construction.

In a closed Council meeting in December closed under Section 90(2)(b) and Section 90(1)(e) of the Community Charter, intergovernmental relations and the acquisition or disposition of land, respectively Council directed staff to bring back for Council's consideration plans for the ground floor of 930 Pandora that makes room for some or all of: community use space, a gymnasium, a community kitchen, childcare, and space to achieve some of the aims in the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan.

Council rose and reported on this direction publicly in December by way of letter to the DRA and the NPNA thanking them for their engagement to date.

Another key city objective identified in the City's strategic plan as well as Create Victoria – the City's Arts and Culture Masterplan – is the establishment of an arts hub and community space for artists and makers and related community activities. The need for this hub and affordable space

for artists and makers is becoming even more pronounced with artists being priced out of existing studio spaces because of the high cost of rent and/or the redevelopment of older spaces into new housing.

A few years ago, the City and partners undertook an extensive engagement process and business case development for the operation of an arts hub and community space at 28 Bastion Square. This detailed work included the study of potential operating models as well as a charette with the arts and culture community and user groups about the types of spaces, services and community activities that could be provided. Although that work was done for a different site, many of the elements could be likely be relatively easily repurposed for an arts and community hub at 926-930 Pandora Street.

The general direction given to staff in the December meeting was to develop a plan for community use space, a gymnasium, a community kitchen, childcare, and space to achieve some of the aims in the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan.

This report recommends giving staff clearer direction to simplify the uses at 926-930 Pandora to dedicate the ground floor of the building as an arts hub to provide affordable space to artists in perpetuity as well as a daycare. This redevelopment is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to establish such a hub and to provide secure, long-term, publicly-owned affordable space for artists, musicians, makers and creatives of all sorts and space for the public to participate in the arts and other community activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council direct staff to:

1. Include in the rezoning application for 926-930 Pandora an Arts Hub and daycare on the ground floor
2. Develop an operating model for the community space to ensure the provision of affordable space for artists in perpetuity, as well as an operator for the childcare, without delaying funding applications.

Respectfully submitted,



Mayor Helps



Councillor Loveday