



Planning and Land Use Committee Report

For the Meeting of January 14, 2016

To: Planning and Land Use Committee **Date:** December 18, 2015
From: Jonathan Tinney, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Subject: Heritage Designation Application No. 000156 533-537 Fisgard Street

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that Committee forward this report to Council and that Council consider the following motion:

"That Council consider the designation of the property located at 533-537 Fisgard Street pursuant to Section 967 of the *Local Government Act* as a Municipal Heritage Site."

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

In accordance with section 967 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 533-537 Fisgard Street.

The following points were considered in assessing this Application:

- general consistency with the *Official Community Plan (OCP)*
- Statement of Significance.

The Application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its December 8, 2015 meeting and was recommended for approval.

This report fulfills the requirements of Section 968(5) of the *Local Government Act*.

BACKGROUND

Description of Proposal

533-537 Fisgard Street, also referred to as the Lee Cheong Building is a brick building built in 1901. An Application to designate the exterior of 533-537 Fisgard Street as a Municipal

Heritage Site was received from the property owner, Christopher Le Fevre, on November 26, 2015.

Zoning/Land Use

The proposed designation is consistent with the CA-3C: Old Town District zoning and surrounding land uses.

Condition/Economic Viability

The exterior fabric appears to be in sound condition. The viability of the property will be strengthened by the owner's intention to seismically upgrade and rehabilitate the exterior of the building.

Heritage Advisory Panel

The Heritage Advisory Panel considered the applicant's request for heritage designation at its regular meeting on December 8, 2015, and recommended the following:

"That Council consider the designation of the property located at 533-537 Fisgard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site."

ANALYSIS

The following sections provide a summary of the Application's consistency with the relevant City policies and guidelines.

Official Community Plan

This Application is consistent with the OCP because it contributes to the identification of the heritage value of districts and individual properties; it contributes to the goal of protecting and celebrating Victoria's cultural and natural heritage resources; and in accordance with a key strategic direction of the Downtown, aims to conserve the historic character of Old Town and Chinatown.

The OCP encourages the consideration of tools available under legislation to protect heritage property such as heritage designation. The Application is consistent with the OCP where it considers the heritage value of individual properties.

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.

CONCLUSIONS

This Application for the heritage designation of the property located at 533-537 Fisgard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site is for a building that is a good example of the type of modest commercial building erected by members of the Chinese-Canadian community from the early twentieth century. The building illustrates a transition period during the early 1900s toward plainer building styles for commercial buildings composed of brick, stone and wood. The building exemplifies the character of Chinatown at the turn of the twentieth century, making it a significant contributor to the integrity of the historic streetscape in this area.

Staff therefore recommend that Council consider the designation of the property located at 533-537 Fisgard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site.

ALTERNATE MOTION

That Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000156 for the property located at 533-537 Fisgard Street.

Respectfully submitted,



Adrian Brett
Heritage Planner
Community Planning



Jonathan Tinney, Director
Sustainable Planning and Community
Development Department

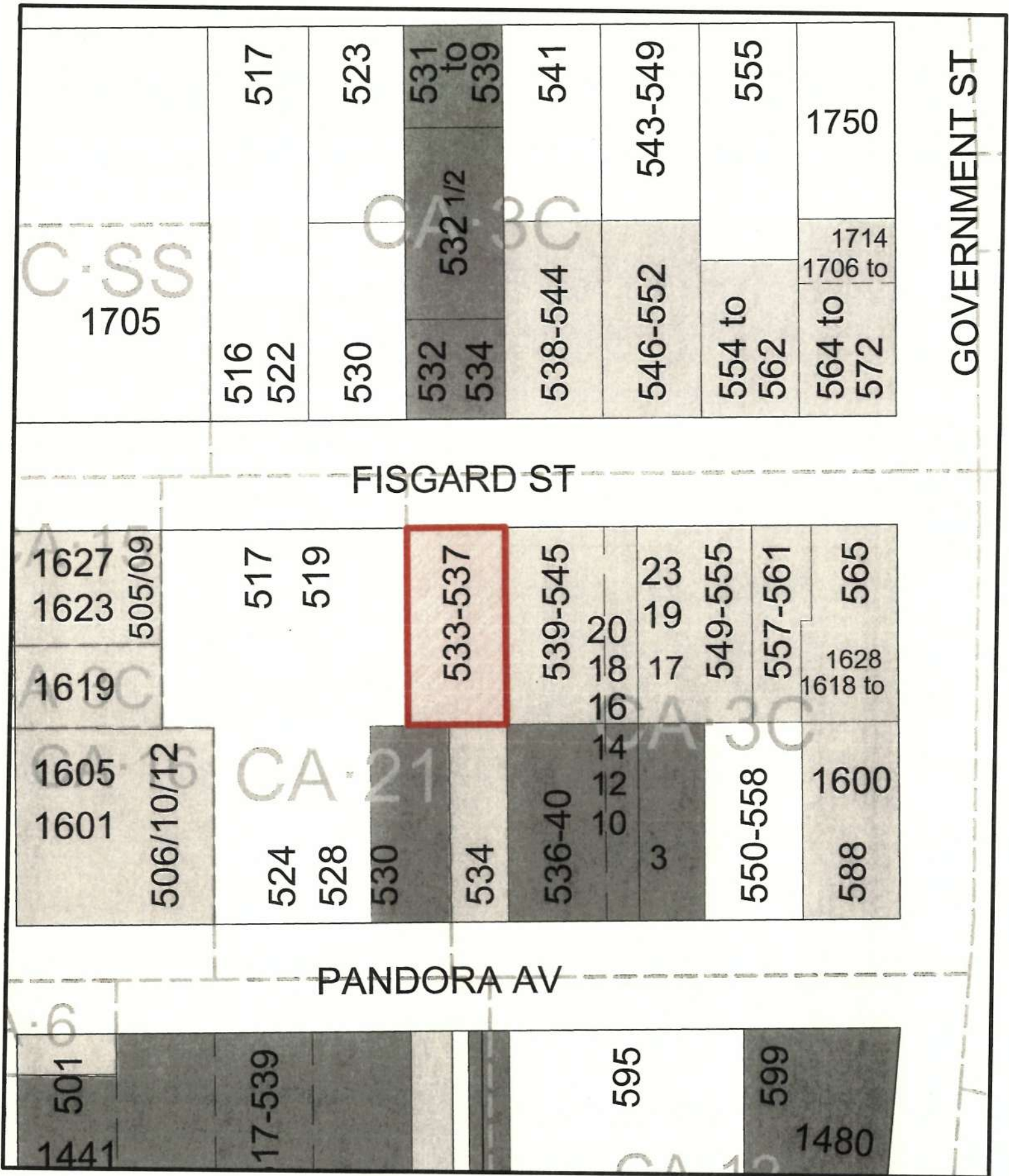
Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date: December 29, 2015

List of Attachments

- Subject map
- Aerial map
- Photograph
- Statement of Significance
- Letter from the applicant, date stamped November 26, 2015.



533 - 537 Fisgard Street

Heritage Designation Permit #000156

Designated
 Registered





533 - 537 Fisgard Street

Heritage Designation Permit #000156





533-537 FISGARD STREET

LEE CHEONG BUILDING, 533-537½ FISGARD STREET

Owners: Lee Cheong and Lee Woy

Date: 1901

Description of Historic Place

The Lee Cheong Building is a two-storey, brick-clad commercial and residential building located in the heart of Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site. The front façade retains original storefront elements, including 'cheater' mezzanines. The upper storey is residential, and features segmental-arched window openings, brick corbelling, second floor doors and a central coloured glass door surround. A narrow passageway located between two of the storefronts connects to an internal courtyard and a brick tenement building behind.

Heritage Value of Historic Place

The Lee Cheong Building is valued as part of a grouping of early buildings that contribute to the historic character and urban pattern of Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site, the oldest and most intact Chinatown in Canada. In the 1850s, exacerbated by political and social turmoil in China, thousands of Chinese migrated from a small region in the southern province of Guangdong to frontier gold rush sites in California, setting up a permanent base in San Francisco. In 1858, the Fraser Gold Rush spurred the growth of Victoria as a significant port town, and prompted the movement of many Chinese into the province. Victoria was the primary point of entry for Chinese into Canada until the early twentieth century.

Victoria's Chinatown is expressive of a duality in architecture and cultural landscape. On each block, street façades link together, forming a wall that shields interior spaces and narrow alleyways between and through buildings are linked to central courtyards which were the hidden location of tenements, opium dens, theatres and gambling houses. This configuration allowed the Chinese community to adhere to follow traditional religion, kinship and economic practices while projecting the image of assimilation to Western society. The Lee Cheong building is consistent with such a duality. Externally, the building has a brick-clad commercial façade in a design that would not have been considered exotic at the time. A narrow passageway between two storefronts leads to an interior courtyard and simple tenement also clad in brick.

The Lee Cheong building is further valued as representative of the dominant role Chinese merchants played in Victoria's Chinatown. The first wave of powerful business owners had a monopoly until the early 1880s. Built in 1901, the Lee Cheong Building was the product of the second wave of merchants who immigrated to Victoria's Chinatown in the 1890s to 1910s, and included smaller clan or family proprietors who pooled their resources to purchase land to build their businesses. These merchants set up north of Pandora Avenue, bringing much-needed smaller shops such as laundries, grocery stores, medicinal shops and restaurants into the area. The original owners of the building, Lee Cheong and Lee Woy, purchased Lot 446 and built this structure in 1901. Built as 'stores and cabins', the building contained retail storefronts on the main floor, and residential

uses on the second storey, with a passageway to a separate tenement building to the rear. Lee Cheong was one of the earliest Chinese settlers, and soon became known as a leading businessman. The building was Chinese owned until 1933, when the City acquired it due to tax arrears.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Lee Cheong Building include its:

- location on Fiskard Street, part of a grouping of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century historic masonry buildings in Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site
- continuous commercial and residential use
- siting on the front property line, with no setbacks
- commercial form, scale and massing as expressed by its two-storey height with 'cheater' mezzanines, flat roof, and three storefronts facing Fiskard Street; rear tenement connected through a narrow passageway between two storefronts
- masonry construction, including red-brick walls with dark-grey mortar, brick corbelling and pilasters, granite thresholds and wood-frame interior structure
- exterior features such as segmental-arched window openings, brick corbelling, and second floor glazed, panelled wooden doors
- Chinese features such as a tall, narrow passageway that provides access to an internal courtyard and a rear tenement, and half-width wooden storefront doors leading to second floor entries
- original windows such as 4-over-4 double-hung wooden sash windows, and a central second-floor door surround with decorative coloured and textured glass in sidelights and arched transom
- interior features such as tongue-and-groove cladding, 'cheater' mezzanines, and wooden floors

NOV 26 2015

Planning & Development De
Development Services De

November 20, 2015

Mayor and Council
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Re: 533 - 537 Fisgard Street - Heritage Designation



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Your Worship and Members of Council,

We are making this application to the City of Victoria for formal heritage degeneration of this building on behalf of Le Fevre and Company who have recently purchased the above noted property, known as the 'Lee Chong' Building. It is connected through a series of courtyards and alleyways to 535 Pandora Avenue, known the 'Lum Sam' Building. These two buildings were purchased at the same time and the intention is to redevelop both lots simultaneously.

The 'Lee Chong Building' site consists of a 2 storey brick heritage building that was constructed in 1901, as well as a later 2 storey residential building located in the courtyard on the south side. The building is on the heritage registry and is designated as a National Historic Site within a Heritage Conservation area. Although the building is 114 years old, it is in remarkably good condition and has been maintained and actively used to the present day. The owners wish to seismically upgrade and refurbish the exterior of both buildings as part of a conversion into 17 strata units: 14 residential condominiums as well as the 3 existing retail units.

The proposed upgrading and conversion of these historic properties will make a significant contribution to the vibrancy and economic vitality of the Chinatown precinct.

We trust the forgoing is acceptable.

Sincerely yours,

Peter de Hoog Architect AIBC MRAIC
de Hoog & Kierulf architects