



## Planning and Land Use Committee Report

For the Meeting of December 10, 2015

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**To:** Planning and Land Use Committee                      **Date:** November 26, 2015

**From:** Jonathan Tinney, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development

**Subject:** **Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00209 for 737 Fort Street  
(British American Trust Company Building)**

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### RECOMMENDATION

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

"That Council authorize the issuance of Heritage Alteration Permit (HAP) Application No. 00209 for the property at 737 Fort Street, in accordance with:

1. Plans, date stamped October 20, 2015
2. Development meeting all *Zoning Regulation Bylaw* requirements
3. That Council authorize City of Victoria staff to execute an Encroachment Agreement in a form satisfactory to City staff.
4. Final plans to be generally in accordance with the plans identified above to the satisfaction of the Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development."

### LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

In accordance with Sections 972 and 973 of the *Local Government Act*, Council may issue a Heritage Alteration Permit which may be subject to terms consistent with the purpose of the heritage protection of the property, including: (i) conditions respecting the sequencing and timing of construction, (ii) conditions respecting the character of the alteration or action to be authorized, including landscaping and the siting, form, exterior design and finish of buildings and structures and (iii) security. Council may refuse to issue a Heritage Alteration Permit for an action that, in the opinion of Council, would not be consistent with the purpose of the heritage protection of the property.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present Council with information, analysis and recommendations for a Heritage Alteration Permit Application regarding the property located at 737 Fort Street. The proposal is to construct a removable steel-frame ramp to make the building accessible.

The following points were considered in assessing this application:

- general consistency with the *Official Community Plan* (OCP)
- consistency with the relevant guidelines of DPA 2 (HC): Core Business
- general consistency with the relevant policies in the *Downtown Core Area Plan* (DCAP)
- Statement of Significance.

The proposed work is generally consistent with relevant City policies except with regard to the recommended minimum sidewalk width that would result from the placement of the proposed ramp. Since the property boundary essentially aligns with the outside edge of the existing steps, the placement of the ramp would rest upon the public right-of-way. The alternatives for providing access to the building are limited and the options that were considered would have an adverse effect on the details of the heritage façade of the building. One option for providing an accessible entrance included the removal of the front stairs and newel posts for a ramp and landings. Another option included the installation of a mechanical lift set into the façade of the building. These options were deemed by staff to be detrimental to the heritage characteristics of the building's façade. Staff therefore recommend that Council authorize the Heritage Alteration Permit for 737 Fort Street.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Description of Proposal**

The proposal is to construct a temporary steel-frame ramp with granite facing to make the building accessible.

### **Heritage Advisory Panel Recommendation**

The application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its November 10, 2015 meeting and the Panel recommended that Council consider authorizing the Heritage Alteration Permit with the following motion:

"That the Heritage Advisory Panel commends the applicant for the careful consideration involved in the designing of a removable ramp, the use of compatible materials, the retention of all existing building materials, and the reversibility of the solution, and recommends that Council consider authorizing the issuance of Heritage Alteration Permit (HAP) Application No. 00209 for the property at 737 Fort Street, in accordance with plans, date stamped October 20, 2015; and

That the handrail detail be reviewed at the Building Permit stage by the Senior Heritage Planner."

## **ANALYSIS**

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

### **Official Community Plan**

From a heritage standpoint, the proposal is generally consistent with the OCP because it conserves the heritage value and special features of the British American Trust Company Building. However, the installation of an accessible ramp at this location could potentially compromise the unimpeded footpath area between the building and the sidewalk's edge.



Maintaining an unimpeded and obstruction-free pedestrian walking path on all sidewalks is a policy objective of the OCP (7.17.1). In this circumstance there are competing policy goals. The addition of a ramp does assist in meeting the heritage conservation objectives of the OCP and supporting accessible access into the building, but this comes at the cost of hampering pedestrian transportation and sidewalk design objectives adjacent to the building.

### **Development Permit Area (DPA 2 (HC): Core Business)**

The OCP identifies this property within DPA 2 (HC): Core Business, which includes a requirement to consider the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* (Standards and Guidelines) and the *Downtown Core Area Plan* (DCAP). In relation to the Standards and Guidelines, the following guidelines have been considered:

### **Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada**

#### **General Standards for Preservation, Rehabilitation and Restoration**

*Conserve heritage value by adopting an approach calling for minimum intervention.*

#### **Additional Standards Relating to Rehabilitation**

*Create any new additions so that the essential form and integrity of an historic building will not be impaired if the new work is removed in the future.*

#### **Guidelines for Buildings**

**Exterior Form - Accessibility Considerations**

*Finding solutions to meet accessibility requirements that are compatible with the exterior form of the historic building.*

**Entrances, Porches and Balconies - Accessibility Considerations**

*Respecting the location of existing entrances, and porches when providing new accessibility-related features, such as a ramp.*

The proposal to construct the steel-frame ramp to make the building accessible is considered the minimum intervention, given the physical constraints of the site. The proposed work would amount to new construction that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the British American Trust Company Building would not be impaired. This solution has evolved as a result of the exploration of options that would meet accessibility requirements. It should be noted, that in the case of this building staff have determined an accessible ramp is not a requirement of the British Columbia Building Code (BCBC). This construction is owner-initiated.

While the ramp will have a visual impact on the entrance and the narrow frontage of the building, including the front steps, the physical impact on the historic fabric will be minor. The design of the ramp and the use of compatible finishes respects the exterior form of the British American Trust Company Building to the greatest extent practical by ensuring that the Edwardian era Temple Bank design, with its giant order Corinthian columns, granite base blocks and symmetrical form, are conserved. The design of the ramp also respects the exterior form of the historic place where it safeguards the multi-coloured tile inset with Greek key border at the front entry, retains the historic granite steps in situ, and proposes the minimum required construction for meeting accessibility requirements.

### **Downtown Core Area Plan**

The proposal is generally consistent with relevant Policies and Actions outlined in the DCAP where it conserves the form and features of the British American Trust Company Building;

however, the available space to construct a ramp would reduce the recommended sidewalk width at an area that is close to a bus stop on a high volume pedestrian sidewalk. There is also a trade-off occurring between accessibility improvements for wheelchair accessibility and accessibility for the visually impaired. The potential ramp would improve wheelchair accessibility into the building, but may negatively affect accessibility for the visually impaired passing in front of the building by reducing the width of the unimpeded pedestrian area.

The portion of Fort Street that the subject property abuts is classified as a primary commercial street, where the recommended minimum sidewalk width is 4m - 6m. The existing sidewalk width at this location is 3.76m. The effective dimension of the sidewalk is further reduced to 1.3m when the locations of the nearest street lamp standard and cluster light post are taken into account. The proposed construction would result in separation distances between obstacles with the following dimensions:

- a. 2.77m between the west newel post and the existing cluster light post; and
- b. 2.87m between the east newel post and the existing street lamp standard.

The option of relocating the cluster lamp post was considered by the applicant; however, this would not address other encumbrances on the sidewalk along the building frontage at this location. The removal or relocation of all or some of the sidewalk encumbrances in front of the building, e.g. the cluster lamp post, parking meter, and street light standard, at the cost of the property owner, are potential options for improving the unimpeded footpath area around a potential ramp installation. Relocating or removing these lighting features on the sidewalk would have an impact on night time illumination levels and visibility.

The ramp would also require an encroachment agreement between the City and the property owner. The agreement could be structured as a fixed term agreement, e.g. five years in length, or may require annual renewal. A condition of the agreement would include immediate removal of the ramp, provided a notice period, if Council were to decide in the future that it was not effectively meeting City policy objectives.

## CONCLUSIONS

The proposed work to construct a steel-frame ramp with granite facing to make the building accessible, depicted in drawings prepared by Zeidler Partnership, is generally consistent with relevant City policies and guidelines except with regard to the recommended minimum sidewalk width that would result from the placement of the proposed ramp. The alternatives for providing access to the building are limited and the options that were considered would have an adverse effect on the heritage characteristics of the building. Staff, therefore, recommend that Council authorize the Heritage Alteration Permit for 737 Fort Street.

## ALTERNATE MOTIONS

1. That Council refer the Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00209 for the property located at 737 Fort Street, to the Accessibility Working Group for comment.
2. That Council decline Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00209 for the property located at 737 Fort Street.

Respectfully submitted,



for

Murray G. Miller  
Senior Heritage Planner  
Community Planning

Alt.



Jonathan Tinney  
Director  
Sustainable Planning and Community  
Development

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:



Date: December 3, 2015

## List of Attachments

- Subject Map
- Statement of Significance
- Letter from applicant, date stamped September 21, 2015
- Plans, date stamped October 20, 2015.



Registered





**BRITISH AMERICAN TRUST COMPANY BUILDING  
737 FORT STREET**

**Owner:** British American Trust Company Ltd.

**Architect:** A. Arthur Cox

**Date:** 1912

**Description of Historic Place**

The British American Trust Company Building is a two-storey, Edwardian-era *Beaux-Arts* commercial building located mid-block on the south side of Fort Street in downtown Victoria. Designed in the manner of a Temple Bank, it is distinguished by its stone cladding, giant order Corinthian columns, narrow façade, and symmetrical massing.

**Heritage Value of Historic Place**

The British American Trust Company Building, constructed in 1912, is a superior example of a Temple Bank design. During the Edwardian era, it was typical of financial institutions to draw from Classical styles in order to project an image of security and permanence, particularly desirable characteristics for a financial institution. This structure displays an academically-correct version of the Classical Revival style, displaying two giant order Corinthian columns enclosed within recessed porch walls, surmounted by a pediment. This gives a strong vertical emphasis to its relatively-narrow street frontage. It was designed by Vancouver-based architect Alfred Arthur Cox (1860-1944), an English-trained architect who brought a refined aesthetic to a series of landmark structures built in Vancouver and Victoria before the outbreak of the First World War. Cox was a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and immigrated to Montreal in 1892. Following the opportunities offered by the western boom, he moved to Vancouver in 1908 and met with considerable success over the next few years. In 1912, Cox designed both the Union Bank, 1205 Government Street/612-618 View Street and this building in downtown Victoria, illustrating his command of the *Beaux Arts* tradition.

Further value is attained through its affiliation with the British American Trust Company Limited, illustrating the presence of United States and British investors in Victoria at the pinnacle of the Edwardian-era boom; this overseas investment drove the city's burgeoning gateway economy. It is additionally valued as a tangible reminder of Fort Street's importance as a commercial corridor, reflecting a prominent period of the street's history when it was the financial, commercial and retail centre of downtown. This building served as the company's local office in Victoria and was later used as a branch of Yorkshire Trust.

**Character-Defining Elements**

Key elements that define the heritage character of the British American Trust Company Building include its:

- mid-block location on the south side of Fort Street
- continuous commercial use
- formal, monumental and symmetrical form, scale and massing as expressed by its narrow frontage, two-storey height, flat roof and stepped side parapets, built to the property lines with no setbacks
- Edwardian era Temple Bank design as expressed in its: two giant order Corinthian columns flanking the entry between framing pilasters; triangular pediment with carved shield; projecting cornice with block modillions; multi-coloured mosaic tile inset with Greek key border at front entry; recessed arched

## CITY OF VICTORIA DOWNTOWN STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE 2009

entry flanked by engaged pilasters with keystone and multi-paned transom; double-hung wooden sash windows with Roman cross motif in the upper sash; and cast iron light standards flanking the entry - masonry construction, including granite base blocks and front steps, andesite block cladding on the front façade, and board-formed concrete side walls



Yorkshire & Canadian Trust, 1947 [BC Archives I-01869]



392975 B.C. Ltd.

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t: 250-656-0497 f: 250-656-0483 e: [holmesrns@shaw.ca](mailto:holmesrns@shaw.ca)

**Mayor & Councilors**

City of Victoria,

Re: Wheelchair Accessible Ramp proposed for 737 Fort St.

**Your Worship, Members of Council,**

We recently purchased 737 Fort St. and are in the process of improving it in order to bring it back to being a productive commercial building in the 700 Block Fort St.

Amongst the design challenges we are facing is the essential need to protect and respect the important heritage aspect of the Fort St. façade which also serves as the single entrance, whilst at the same time making the building accessible, safe and closer to modern code standards. With respect to wheelchair accessibility we have considered several options in detail and finally come to the attached solution that we respectfully request you support and approve.

In the process of approaching this design issue we have recognized that no person should be prevented from having access to a building due to inaccessible design. In this case three granite steps at the entrance present an obstacle to access.

To remove the granite steps is not an option.

Instead our design is based on using the City sidewalk in a manner similar to City of Victoria Sidewalk Café's which are designed as temporary structures on City property. In our case we propose to erect a steel frame ramp with granite facing, approachable from either end. The structure would be modular so that if necessary it could be removable.

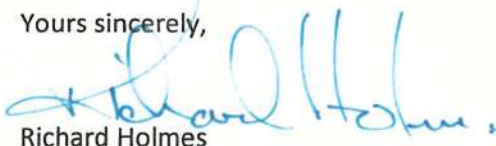
At the same time, we do not wish to make any irreversible alteration to the valuable century old classical design and so, out of respect for the existing Heritage granite steps leading to the entrance, we plan to leave the existing stone in place and to place large granite blocks on top of the steps to complete the flat surface required to allow for wheel chair maneuverability. We intend the visual impact to blend into the heritage façade.

This is all detailed more specifically on the attached plans.

This is the first step to provide accessibility to the entire building for the long term. With your approval we will next plan to provide a fully accessible washroom in the vault area on the main floor thus bringing the entire main floor up to accessible standards.

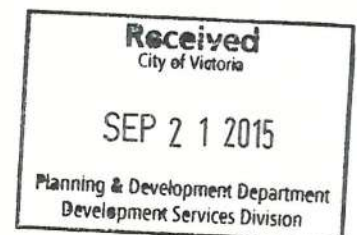
We respectfully request your attention to this plan and will be pleased to provide any further information, or site visits if you wish.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Holmes

Director: 392975 B.C.Ltd.



City of Victoria

OCT 20 2015

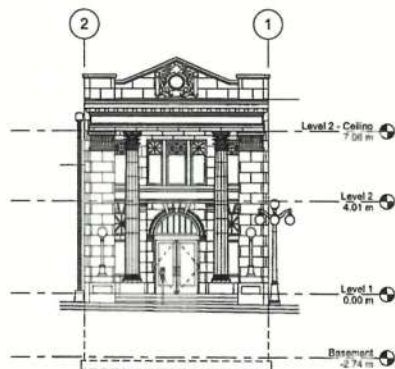
Planning & Development Department  
Development Services Division



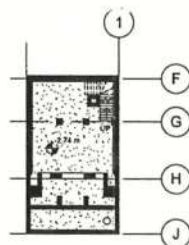
1 SURVEY PLAN  
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2 KEY PLAN  
NOT TO SCALE



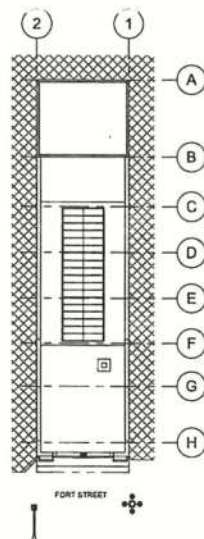
3 FORT STREET ELEVATION - EXISTING  
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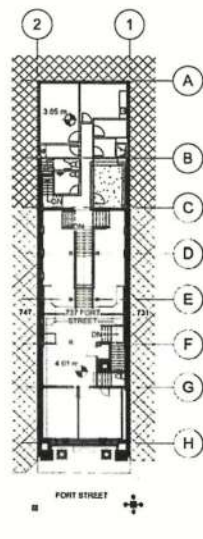
4 BASEMENT - EXISTING  
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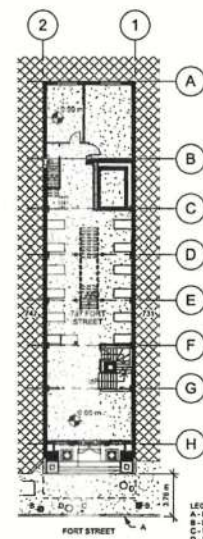
5 BUILDING SECTION - EXISTING  
1:200



6 ROOF PLAN - EXISTING  
1:200



7 LEVEL 2 - EXISTING  
1:200



8 LEVEL 1 - EXISTING  
1:200

LEGEND:  
A - EDGE OF SIDEWALK  
B - LIGHT POLE  
C - PARKING METER  
D - MANHOLE COVER

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:  
CANT. ADDRESS:  
ZONE:  
APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:  
OCCUPANCY (ON RECORD):  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREA:  
BUILDING ORIGINAL NAME:  
CONSTRUCTION DATE:  
HERITAGE DESIGNATION ID:

LOT 53, EXCEPT PLAN 30593 11002 11002 001-043-600  
737 FORT STREET, VICTORIA, BC  
CA-4 ZONE - CENTRAL AREA COMMERCIAL OFFICE DISTRICT  
STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE CONSERVATION  
OF HISTORIC PLACES IN CANADA  
DOWNTOWN CORE AREA PLAN  
COMMERCIAL - BUSINESS/OFFICE  
DPA 2 (H2) CORP. BUSINESS  
THE BRITISH AMERICAN TRUST COMPANY BUILDING  
1912  
DCH-501

CHARACTER-DEFINING ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS:  
1. FORMAL, MONUMENTAL AND SYMMETRICAL FORM, SCALE AND MASSING AS EXPRESSED BY ITS NARROW  
FRONTAGE, TWO-STORY HEIGHT, FLAT ROOF AND STEPPED SIDE PARAPETS, BUILT TO THE PROPERTY  
LINES WITH NO SETBACKS  
2. CONSERVATION FOR TRIPLE BANK DESIGN AS EXPRESSED IN ITS TWO GIANT ORDER CORINTHIAN COLUMNS  
FLANKING THE ENTRY BETWEEN FRAMED PLASTERS, TRIANGULAR PEDIMENT WITH CARVED SHIELD  
3. TWO-LEVEL CORNICE WITH BLOCK AND LOUVER MULTI-COLOURED MOSAIC TILE INSET WITH GREEN KEY  
BOARDER AT FRONT ENTRY, RECESSED ARCHED ENTRY FLANKED BY ENGAGED PLASTERS WITH KEYSTONE  
AND MULTI-PANED TRANSPARENT DOUBLE-GLAZED WINDOWS WITH ROMAN CROSS MUFF IN THE  
UPPER SASH, AND CAST IRON LIGHT STANDARDS FLANKING THE ENTRY  
4. MASONRY CONSTRUCTION, INCLUDING GRANITE BASE BLOCKS AND FRONT STEPS, ANDERITE BLOCK  
CLADDING ON THE FRONT FACADE, AND FORMED CONCRETE SIDE WALLS

1 PROJECT DATA  
1:1

SHEET LIST		
Sheet Number	Sheet Name	Current Revision Date
A1.00	PROJECT DATA	SEP. 19/2015
A1.01	BUILDING ENTRANCE - PROPOSED	SEP. 19/2015
A1.02	BUILDING ENTRANCE - EXISTING	SEP. 19/2015
A1.03	DETAILS	SEP. 19/2015
Grand total: 4		

north

PROJECT TEAM

Zeidler Group  
1000 Burrard Street, Suite 1000, Vancouver, BC V6Z 1G6  
Tel: 604.681.1000  
Fax: 604.681.1001  
www.zeidlergroup.com  
Zeidler Group  
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Tel: 604.681.1000  
Fax: 604.681.1001  
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UNIT SYSTEM: METRIC

NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
2	RE-DESIGNED FOR "A1" PERMIT	SEP. 19/2015
1	ISSUED FOR "A1" PERMIT	SEP. 17/2015



zeidler

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PROVISION OF BARRIER FREE  
ENTRANCE - REMOVABLE RAMP  
737 FORT STREET  
VICTORIA, BC

PROJECT DATA

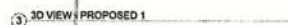
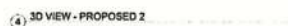
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Date	SEP. 17, 2015
Drawn by	MP
Checked by	MV

A1.00

Scale As indicated

10/20/2015, 11:46:36 AM

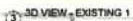
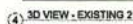




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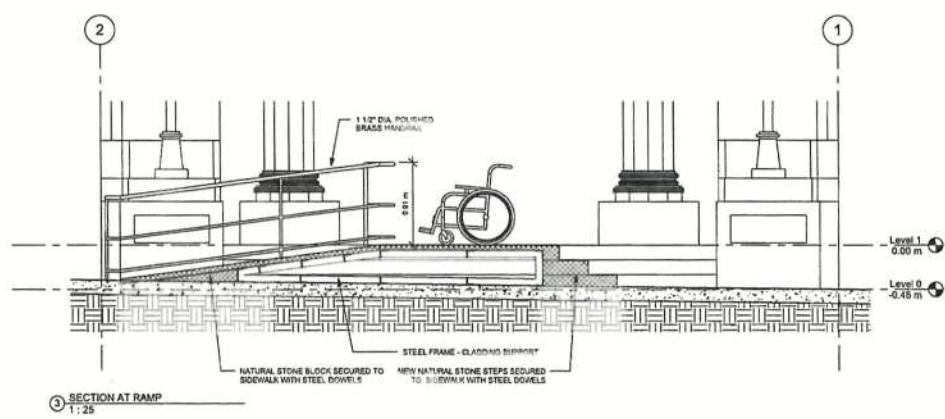
Planning & Development Department  
Development Services Division



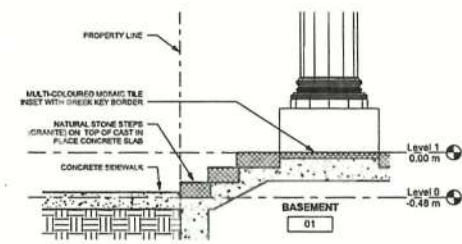


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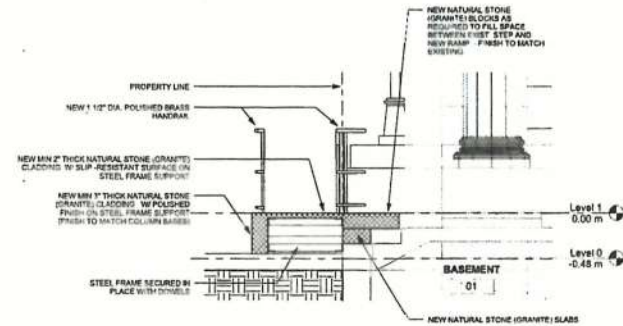
RECORDS  
City of Victoria  
OCT 20 2014  
Planning & Development  
Development Services Division



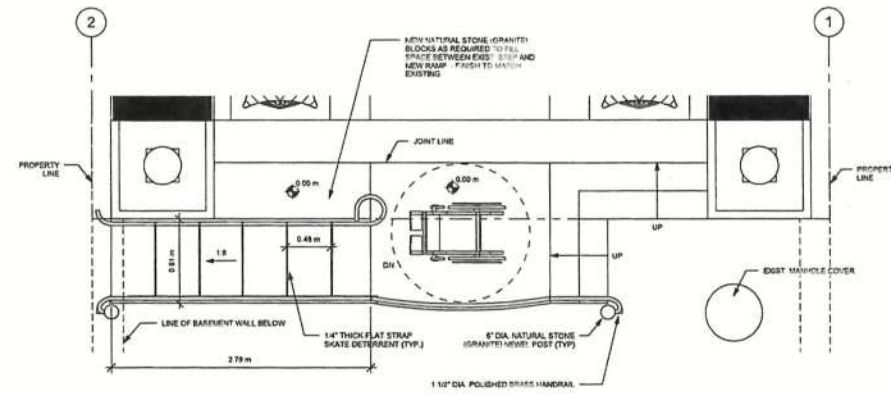
SECTION AT RAMP  
1:25



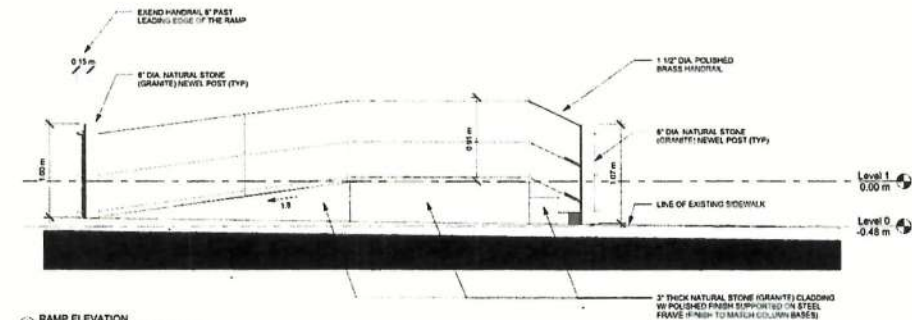
PARTIAL SECTION - EXISTING  
1:25



PARTIAL SECTION - PROPOSED  
1:25



RAMP PLAN  
1:25



RAMP ELEVATION  
1:25



**PROJECT TEAM**  
Building Owner:  
10075 B.C. Ltd.  
10075 B.C. Avenue Road, Suite 101, V6L 5A6  
Architectural, Engineering and Planning:  
Baker Partnership  
2nd Floor, 100 Broughton Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1C6  
Phone: 250.383.3333  
Web: www.bakerpartnership.com  
Structural:  
RAC Consulting Engineers  
Suite 200, 1001 Time Road, Victoria, B.C. V8V 2T2  
Phone: 250.383.3333

UNIT SYSTEM - METRIC

NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	RE-ISSUED FOR "V.A." PERMIT	SEP 17, 2015
2	RE-ISSUED FOR "V.A." PERMIT	SEP 17, 2015



**zeidler**  
Architects & Planners  
737 FORT STREET  
VICTORIA, BC

PROVISION OF BARRIER FREE  
ENTRANCE - REMOVABLE RAMP  
737 FORT STREET  
VICTORIA, BC

DETAILS

Project number	14-3-514
Date	SEP. 17, 2015
Drawn by	MP
Checked by	MV

**A1.03**

Scale 1:25

SUSPENSE 11-17-15 AM