

#### **4. LAND USE MATTERS**

##### **4.5 Heritage Designation Application No. 000159 for 539-545½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley**

Committee received a report dated June 17, 2016 from the Director of Sustainable Planning and Community Development regarding an application to designate the heritage-registered property.

**Motion:** It was moved by Councillor Madoff, seconded by Councillor Thornton-Joe, that Council consider the designation of the property located at 539-545½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley, pursuant to Section 967 of the *Local Government Act*, as a Municipal Heritage Site.

Committee discussed:

- Desire for the owners to consider designating the skylight.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 16/COTW



## **Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of July 7, 2016**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 17, 2016  
**From:** Jonathan Tinney, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development  
**Subject:** **Heritage Designation Application No. 000159 for 539-545½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council consider the designation of the property located at 539-545½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley, pursuant to Section 967 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 heritage-registered property located at 539-545½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley.

The Application is consistent with the *Official Community Plan* (OCP) and the Statement of Significance supports its designation.

The Application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its June 14, 2016 meeting and was recommended for approval.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Description of Proposal**

An Application to designate the property at 539-545½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley was received on June 2, 2016.

#### **Zoning/Land Use**

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

## **Condition/Economic Viability**

The interior and exterior of the building appear in sound condition; however, the parapet requires seismic strengthening and the exterior fabric requires conservation.

## **ANALYSIS**

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

### **Official Community Plan**

This Application to designate the Sheam & Lee Building is consistent with the OCP because it contributes to the identification of the heritage value of districts and individual properties using the Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework. The Application also 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.

### **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**

The applicant has indicated their interest in rehabilitating the exterior of the property and has made enquiries to the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust in relation to its Building Incentive Program.

### **Heritage Advisory Panel**

The Application was reviewed by the Heritage Advisory Panel at its June 14, 2016 meeting and was recommended for approval.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Sheam & Lee 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. The building is further valued as a representation of the dominant role Chinese merchants played in Victoria's Chinatown. The building also links to the interior of the block via Fan Tan Alley, which in the early 1900s housed gambling and opium dens shielded from the non-Chinese community by a series of heavy wooden doors.

This Application for designation of the property as a Municipal Heritage Site is consistent with relevant City policies that seek to maintain and enhance the heritage character of the Urban Core and supports key strategic directions for the Downtown regarding the conservation of the historic character of Old Town and Chinatown. Staff therefore recommend that Council consider the designation of the heritage-registered property located at 539-545 ½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley.

That Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 000159 for the property located at 539-545½ Fisgard Street and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley.  
Respectfully submitted,

  
Jonathan Tinney  
Director  
Sustainable Planning and Community  
Development Department

Development Department  
 Manager: Jocelyn Jenkins  
 Date: June 29, 2016

- Subject map
- Aerial map
- Photographs
- Statement of Significance
- Letter from the owner, date stamped June 2, 2016.





539 - 545 1/2 Fisgard Street  
and 16 - 20 Fan Tan Alley  
Heritage Designation #000159





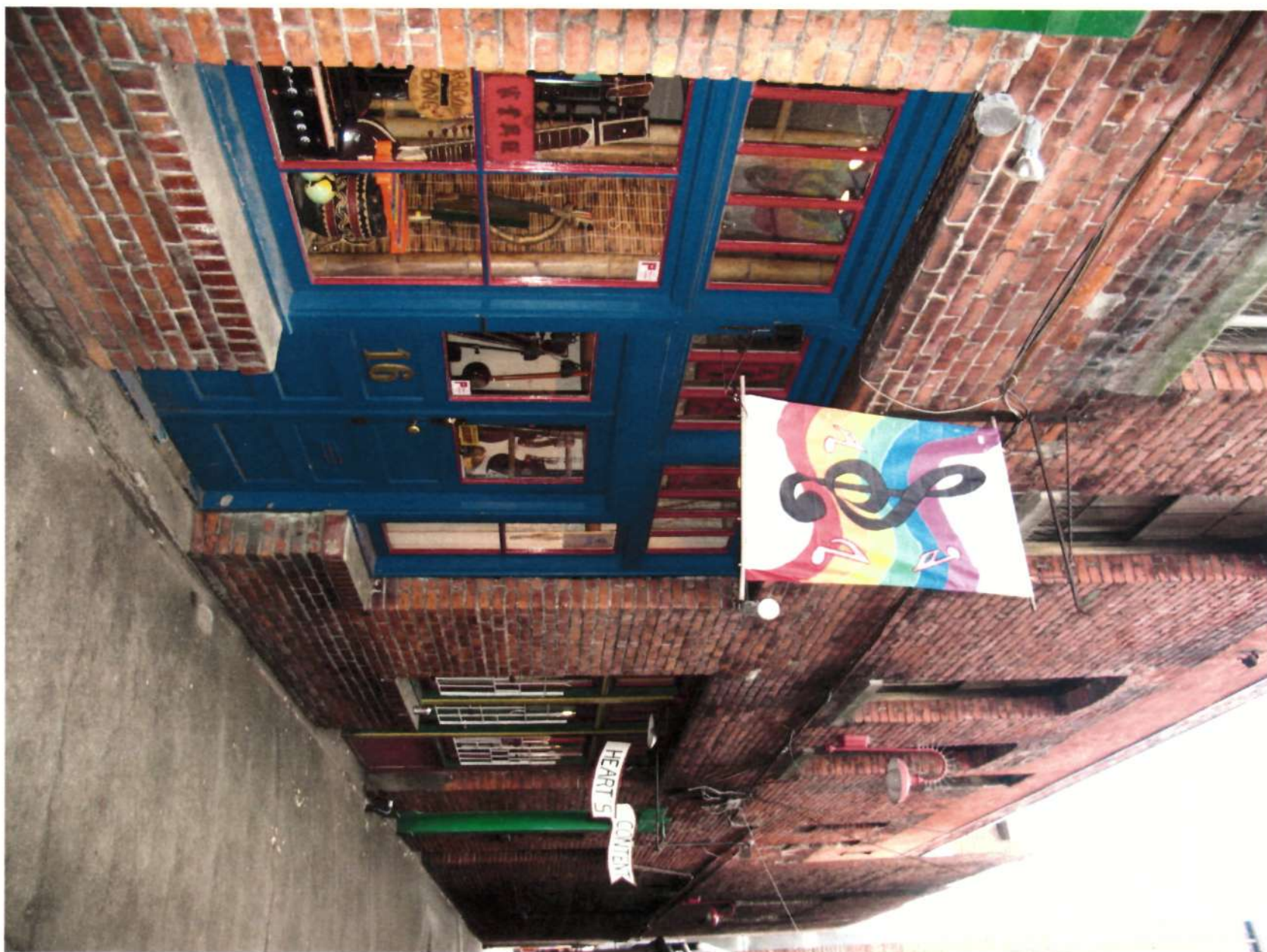
539-545 1/2 Fisgard Street / 16-20 Fan Tan Alley



539-545 1/2 Fisgard Street / 16-20 Fan Tan Alley



539-545 1/2 Fisgard Street / 16-20 Fan Tan Alley



539-545 1/2 Fisgard Street / 16-20 Fan Tan Alley

## **SHEAM & LEE BUILDING, 539-545½ FISGARD STREET/ 16-20 FAN TAN ALLEY**

**Owners:** Sheam Tim and Low Yan San

**Architect:** Fisher & Wilson, 1888; 191, 1901; 1912

**Date:** 1888 (eastern portion) / 1901(western portion) / 1912(rear portion)

### **Description of Historic Place**

The Sheam & Lee Building is a two-storey, brick-clad commercial and residential building located on the south side of Fisgard Street in the heart of Victoria's Chinatown National Historic Site. The building also extends south and marks the northern entry to Fan Tan Alley. The building is distinguished by its symmetrical segmental-arched windows on the upper floor and distinctive storefronts.

### **Heritage Value of Historic Place**

The Sheam & Lee 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.

The building is further valued as a representation of the dominant role Chinese merchants played in Victoria's Chinatown. Chinese merchants, already established in San Francisco, moved to Victoria and purchased lots as early as 1858, opening stores backed by funding from San Francisco headquarters. A second wave of merchants immigrated into Victoria's Chinatown in the 1890s to 1910s. These smaller proprietors consisted of groups of individuals or clans who pooled their resources to purchase land to build their businesses. Loo Chew Fan and his brother Loo Chuck Fan, who owned Kwong Lee & Co., purchased Lot 445 from Roderick Finlayson and the western six meters of Lot 444 from William J. Macdonald in 1881. Sheam Tim and Low Yan San purchased the remainder of Lot 444 in 1887 and built the first portion of the building in 1888; a structure at the rear of the building housed the Shon Yuen Opium Factory. The property was sold to Laurent Guichon, in 1890, who sold it to Jules Boucherat the same year. Boucherat died in 1900, leaving the property to his wife, Marie. Lee Mong Kow, a figurehead in Victoria's Chinatown who leased the building, added the western section in 1901. In 1912, Marie Boucherat rebuilt the rear of building, facing Fan Tan Alley, for tenement housing.

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 Sheam & Lee building is consistent with such a duality. The commercial façade displays a design typical to Victoria at the time with its Italianate influences such as segmental-arched windows and pressed metal cornices. Typical features include narrow doorways in the front façade lead to the upper floor and a 'cheater' mezzanine. The building also links to the interior of the block via Fan Tan Alley, which in the early 1900s housed gambling and opium dens shielded from the non-Chinese community by a series of heavy wooden doors.

The building is also valued as an example of the short-lived yet successful partnership between Elmer H. Fisher (ca. 1844-ca.1905) and William Ridgway-Wilson (1862-1857). Fisher & Wilson designed the eastern portion of the building in 1888. In 1901, Thomas Hooper (1857-1935), one of the province's most prolific architects, designed the western portion in matching style.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

- Key elements that define the heritage character of the Sheam & Lee Building include its:
- location on the south side of Fisgard Street, at the northern entry point to Fan Tan Alley, 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 and side property lines, with no setbacks
  - commercial form, scale and massing as expressed by its two-storey height, with 'cheater' mezzanines, rectangular plan, flat roof, four storefronts facing Fisgard Street, lower rear addition facing Fan Tan Alley, and passageway at rear leading west from the Alley
  - red-brick walls on main building and on the rear tenement
  - Italianate features such as pressed-metal brackets and cornice, and brick pilasters dividing the building into four bays
  - Chinese features such as second storey wood panelled doors with segmental-arched transoms above opening to later balconies, and narrow doorways leading to upper floor tenements
  - additional features on the Fan Tan Alley elevation including two wooden storefronts, segmental-arched window openings and 6-over-6 double-hung wooden sash windows
  - original 4-over-4 double-hung wooden sash windows with horns, arched at the top and set into segmental-arched symmetrical openings and parged sills; decorative transoms in 1901 storefronts
  - original interior elements such as 'cheater' mezzanines



June 1, 2016

To the Honorable Mayor and Council

I am applying for Heritage Designation for the property located at 539-545 ½ Fisgard St and 16-20 Fan Tan Alley. These 2 buildings have significant history in Chinatown, with our Chinatown being the oldest in Canada. I am interested in protecting it's exterior looks and would like to take advantage of the Heritage Incentive Programs to help maintain the buildings.

Please review my application and I hope you agree with our application.

Please find enclosed the current title and some photos.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Larry Joe", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Larry Joe  
Owner and President,  
**Kin Wah Company Limited**  
854 Maltwood Terrace  
Victoria BC V8X 5C7

PS: I am not related to **Charlayne Thornton-Joe** nor does she have any interests in the above properties.