



Heritage Advisory Panel Report

For the Meeting of December 10, 2024

To: Heritage Advisory Panel **Date:** November 28, 2024

From: Laura Saretsky, Heritage Planner, Citywide Planning

Subject: Heritage Designation Application No. 00212 for 646 Fisgard Street

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the Heritage Advisory Panel with information, analysis and recommendations regarding an owner request to designate the exterior of the heritage-registered property located at 646 Fisgard Street. The commercial and institutional building was built in 1878 with an addition in 1909 and contributes to the historic character of Victoria's Old Town District.

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*.

BACKGROUND

Project Details

Owner: Masonic Temple Association of Victoria BC

Applicant: Masonic Temple Association of Victoria BC

Development Permit Area: DP 1 (HC)- Historic Core

Heritage Status: Heritage Registered

Architect: John Teague

Built: 1878, addition 1909

Description of Proposal

The property located at 646 Fisgard Street, also referred to as the Masonic Temple, is a two and a half storey commercial and institutional building built in 1878 with an addition in 1909. The exterior

façade of the building has maintained much of its original appearance. Its character-defining elements include:

- Its prominent corner location is at the northern end of the Old Town District, accentuated by the beveled corner, and arcuated facades along Douglas and Fisgard Streets.
- The contribution it makes to the historic streetscapes of Douglas and Fisgard Streets through such elements as a lack of setbacks, solid composition, and commercial storefronts.
- Its two and a half storey massing.
- Elements of the Second Empire Style include the mansard roof, corner tower, and elaborate brick masonry and stonework.
- The Fisgard Street entrance, including the arched entranceway flanked by engaged composite columns surmounted by brick arches, and capped by a classical pediment framing the Masonic symbol.
- Identification of the building with the Order of Freemasons, seen in such exterior elements as Masonic emblems.
- The continuous use of the building by the Order of Freemasons since its consecration in 1878.
- The character of interior spaces relevant to the original design and function of the building.
- The second floor meeting hall, with such preserved features as the large, open domed space with the painted ceiling, original balcony and railing, arched alcoves with decorative surrounds, and the wood entry surrounds and moldings.
- Authentic interior furniture and fittings which support the use of the place by the Order of Freemasons.

The property is also valued for its continuous association with the Order of Freemasons, and the continuous commercial use of the ground floor.

Regulatory Considerations

The proposed heritage designation of the building is compatible with the *Official Community Plan*, 2012 (OCP), and is consistent with the *Zoning Regulation Bylaw*.

Condition/Economic Viability

The building is in good condition.

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), 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 thematic 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, its attributes, and history is attached to this report.

Resource Impacts

Heritage Designation will enable the applicant to be eligible for heritage grants and incentives for the ongoing maintenance and conservation.

CONCLUSIONS

This application for the heritage designation of the property located at 646 Fisgard Street as a Municipal Heritage Site is for a building that is a good example of Victoria's commercial and institutional development from the 19th century. Staff therefore recommend that the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council approve Heritage Designation Application No. 00212 for 646 Fisgard Street.

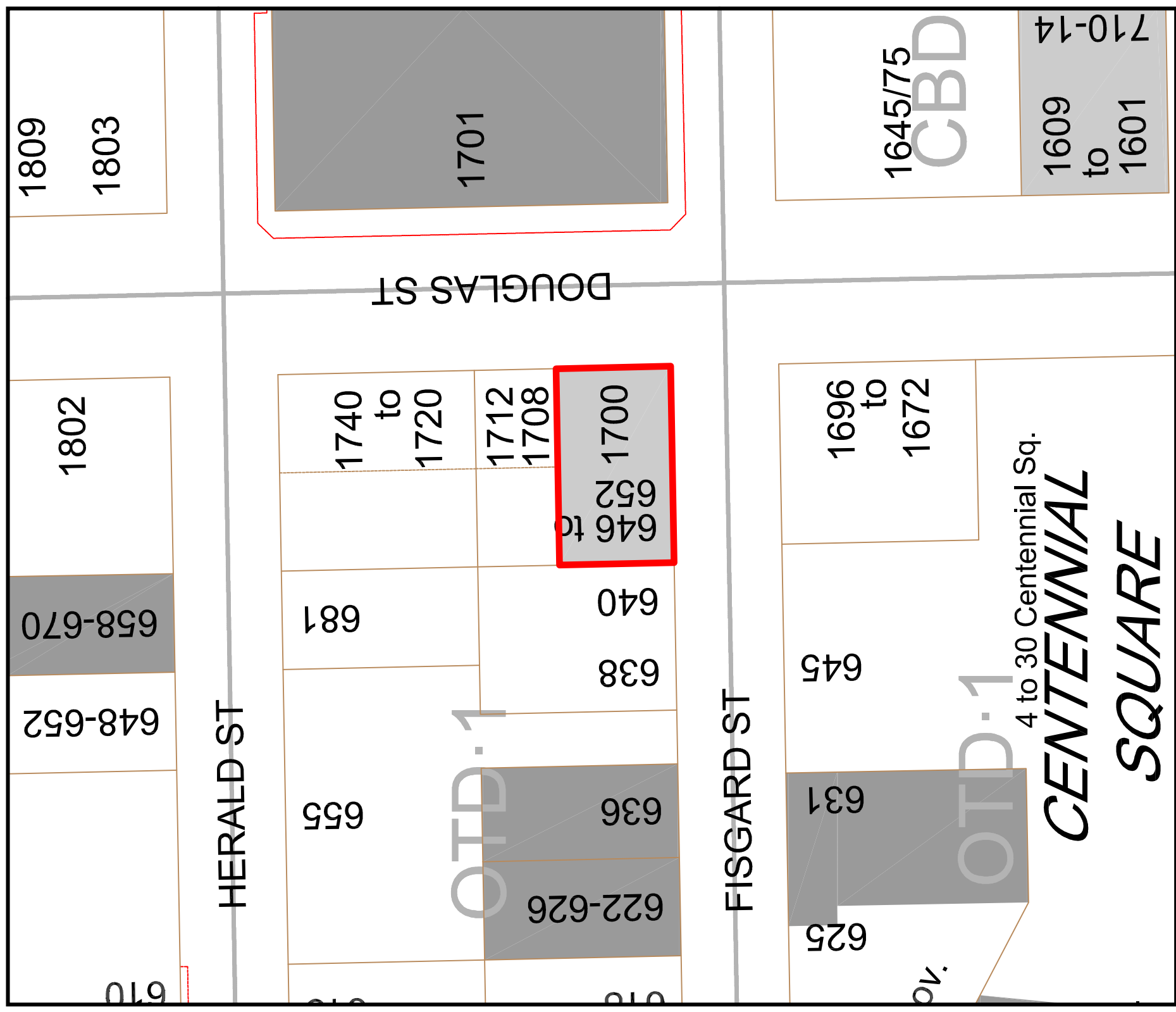
ALTERNATE MOTION

That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend that Council decline Heritage Designation Application No. 00212 for the property located at 646 Fisgard Street.

ATTACHMENTS

- Subject Map
- Aerial Map
- Photographs
- Statement of Significance
- Letter from the applicant, dated November 25, 2024.

cc: Masonic Temple Association of Victoria BC



646 to 652 Fisgard Street and 1700 Douglas Street

Heritage Designation #000212



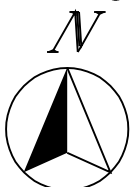


DesignatedRegistered



646 to 652 Fisgard Street and 1700 Douglas Street

Heritage Designation #000212



Designated



Registered



646 Fisgard Street Photographs



Southeast corner, Douglas and Fisgard Streets



Fisgard Street (South) façade



Douglas Street (East) façade



Rear (North) façade



Side (West) façade

Statement of Significance

646-654 Fisgard Street, 1700 Douglas Street
Masonic Temple



Description of Historic Place

The Masonic Temple is a two and a half storey mansard-roofed building built in 1878 with a 1909 addition situated at the northwest corner of the intersection of Douglas and Fisgard Streets in Victoria, British Columbia.

Heritage Value

The Masonic Temple has architectural value as an emblematic example of the form of the Second Empire Style favoured by the architect, John Teague, and common among institutional buildings from this era in the city, many of which Teague also designed. Common features include the mansard roof, corner tower and decorative stonework.

As the first chapter of the Order of Freemasons in British Columbia, founded in 1859, the Masonic Temple has historic value. This value is also derived from the association of early prominent Victorians with the Order, and the influence of the Order on the early social and political spheres in the city.

The Temple also has social and cultural value through its continuous use by the Order of Freemasons and the continuous commercial use of the ground floor. A commercial ground floor with ceremonial functions on the second floor was common for Masonic buildings throughout British Columbia and Western Canada in the 19th century, of which this a good surviving example. The commercial storefronts also contribute to the broader historic commercial streetscape of Old Town.

Character-Defining Elements

The character-defining elements of the Masonic Temple include:

- Its prominent corner location at the northern end of the Old Town District, accentuated by the beveled corner, and arcuated facades along Douglas and Fisgard Streets.
- The contribution it makes to the historic streetscapes of Douglas and Fisgard Streets through such elements as a lack of setbacks, solid composition, and commercial storefronts.
- Its two and a half storey massing.
- Elements of the Second Empire Style including the mansard roof, corner tower, and elaborate brick masonry and stonework.
- The Fisgard Street entrance, including the arched entranceway flanked by engaged composite columns surmounted by brick arches, and capped by a classical pediment framing the Masonic symbol.
- Identification of the building with the Order of Freemasons, seen in such exterior elements as Masonic emblems.
- The continuous use of the building by the Order of Freemasons since its consecration in 1878.
- The character of interior spaces relevant to the original design and function of the building.
- The second floor meeting hall, with such preserved features as the large, open domed space with the painted ceiling, original balcony and railing, arched alcoves with decorative surrounds, and the wood entry surrounds and mouldings.
- Authentic interior furniture and fittings which support the use of the place by the Order of Freemasons.

Victoria Heritage Thematic Framework

The Masonic Temple contributes to Theme 5.1 Architectural Expression as an example of the Second Empire Style. It also contributes to Theme 4.1 Spiritual Lift and Theme 4.2 Associations and Organizations through its continued use by the Order of Freemasons. The continuous commercial use falls under Theme 2 Gateway Economy. Association of the building and Order with prominent early Victorians also falls under this theme, as well as Theme 3 Capital City.

November 25, 2024

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W1P6

RE: Application for Registered Heritage Designation

Mayor Marianne Alto and Council,

The Masonic Temple Association of Victoria has recently applied to have the Masonic building designated and registered on the list of recognized heritage buildings in Victoria. This building, a great example of the Second Empire architectural style, was designed by John Teague and completed in 1878. Teague is the same architect who designed the Victoria City Hall as well as Customs House on Wharf St and many other prominent buildings in Victoria. He was a Councilor and two term mayor of Victoria. Our building, the Masonic Temple Building at 650 Fisgard St. has been registered on the registry of Canadian Historic Places. The Masonic Temple is valued for its association with the Masonic Order, which was established to provide mutual benefit, enrich community life and assist those in need. Since this building was opened in 1878 it has been the continuous home to the oldest Masonic Lodge in BC, Victoria Columbia Lodge No. 1 founded on March 19, 1859. One of the key elements that define its heritage character is the prominent location at the corner of Fisgard St. and Douglas St. and nearby Victoria City Hall, visibly one block away.

This landmark building has a very historic background and is located in the Victoria designated heritage area, and as such, we wish to complete and preserve the important history and designate the building as a heritage building on the Heritage Building Registry of Victoria. There has been much thought and discussion on this topic within the Order and wish to preserve this history with the designation of being formally registered.

Thank you very much for accepting our application and we await your decision to accept our request.

Respectfully,

Jeff Woodburn
Secretary
The Masonic Temple Association of Victoria
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