

**CITY OF VICTORIA
HERITAGE ADVISORY PANEL
MEETING MINUTES
March 11th, 2024**

Present: Nathalie Picard
Katie McEvoy
Steve Barber
Deondre Smiles
Ben Clinton-Baker
Rosemary Sleigh
Liberty Brears
Valerie Lindholm
Veronica (Niki) Strong-Boag
Alissa Wrean

Regrets:

Guests: **Heritage Alteration Permit Application No.00267, Concurrent with Rezoning Application No. 00884 & Development Permit Application No. 000647.**
Heather Spinney (Architect Studio PA), Julia Kurpilova (Intern Architect Studio PA), Katie Cummer (Heritage Consultant), Alec Rossa (President, St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church), Father Yuriy Vyshnevskyy (Priest, St. Nicholas Ukrainian Catholic Church), Less Bjola (Development Advisor to the Church)

Staff: Kristal Stevenot, Senior Heritage Planner
Laura Saretsky, Heritage Planner
Kamryn Allen, Heritage Secretary
Geordie Gordan, Senior Planner
Himashri Heerekar, Planning Assistant

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

Moved: Valerie Lindholm

Seconded: Steve Barber

Motion: That the March 11th, 2025, Heritage Advisory Panel Meeting Agenda be approved.

Carried Unanimously

2. Adoption of the Minutes of the February 11th, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Moved: Steve Barber

Seconded: Valerie Lindholm

Motion: That the February 11th, 2025, Heritage Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes be approved.

Carried Unanimously

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

4. Announcements

None

5. Heritage Alteration Permit Application No. 00267, Concurrent with Rezoning Application No. 00884 & Development Permit Application No. 000647 for 1112 Caledonia Avenue.

Staff provided a brief introduction to the Panel with a presentation.

Panel Question comments

- Chair created a list of questions to keep conversation on track:
 1. impact of the removal of the heritage designated building and alternatives to demolition.
 2. the new development's fit into the context of the HCA and historic streetscape
 3. the proposed interpretation panel
 4. any other commentary, feedback or recommendations the Heritage Advisory Panel chooses to make.
- Could the applicant clarify whether the owner has sought insurance coverage for the damage to the designated building?
 - Yes, we've been in contact with the insurance company about this, but they haven't provided anything so far. We're still in a dispute with them. We explored this option, but the company showed no interest or response, and the amount they offered was minimal.
- How much was it?
 - It was around \$600,000 but I don't have it in front of me so I can't confirm.
- Could you provide some context on the cost of restoration and moving compared to the cost of the new units, to help with the cost comparison?
- I'm unable to speak directly on this, as I'm not a cost consultant myself, but rebuilding the structure, if necessary, would be quite expensive, especially when considering the cost of constructing new accommodation as well. The group did reach out to Nickel Brothers about moving the building, but there was little interest due to the damage to the roof structure.
- Ball Park cost of the new units and parking lot?
 - Happy to follow up on that. I just want to clarify that without the lot line issue, the restoration would be much more straightforward. The additional cost of addressing it makes the restoration unfeasible. The idea of rehabilitating the house is complicated, especially since it currently only accommodates one family. This situation sparked the opportunity to provide more housing, which is a major part of the conversation given the high demand for housing.
- Surprised there wasn't more effort to protect the building after the initial arson. It seems the windows were damaged later, and now they appear to be beyond repair. There doesn't seem to be any protection in place for the building.
 - Shortly after the arson, They had a break-in in the basement, followed by someone throwing objects through the windows. In response, we fenced the area and boarded

- up the doors and windows. This was done quickly, as no one anticipated someone would break into the basement to steal copper pipes. It all happened within weeks of the arson; we secured what we thought was the likely point of entry. However, someone removed the basement window frame and placed it back, so we didn't realize anything had been tampered with. As far as I can tell, we did everything we could. Over the last winter, on two separate occasions, someone managed to get over the fence, broke into the side panels, and started a fire to keep warm. This happened after we believed we had done all we could. People are resourceful, and they find clever ways to break in.
- Was the owner of the adjacent property ever approached to see if they would consider a legal agreement between the two property owners to allow that encroachment to continue?
 - Initially she agreed years ago, but then she changed her mind. We approached her after the fire and the answer was no.
 - Does the insurance amount come with any conditions? Does it have to be spent on that specific building or are you able to apply it to the new development?
 - I'm not the right person to answer, but I don't think so. I don't recall any specific conditions that would restrict it to just that location.
 - So presumably you will accept that amount and it'll benefit somehow?
 - Yes.
 - Saw some photos of the fire damaged area in the report, wondering if there are any parts at the back of the building that have heritage materials or features that were considered for retention or possible reuse?
 - Yes, there have been more changes made to the rear of the building, with extensions added to both the back and the side. The side that is most intact is also the one that has been altered the most. A big reason the building was designated in 1977 while its neighbor was not due to the original elements at the front, like the beautiful porch and intricate detailing. These features extend all the way to the back. However, even beyond the front, there has been damage. It may seem like the front is the most affected, there was still significant damage further inside.
 - I walked around the building, and on the side with the second set of bay windows that faces the church, there are still some architectural details intact, including four signature brackets. I agree that the back of the building doesn't hold much historical value. Is there any way these elements could be salvaged and reused in a reassembly?
 - The intention is for the house to be disassembled, with as much as possible salvaged for reuse. There may be an opportunity to incorporate some of these elements into an interpretive panel. In general, whatever can be salvaged will be. This is one of the reasons they are in agreement with the plan—they don't view the building as being demolished, but rather dismantled and integrated into the new construction.
 - It's important to note that according to the BC Register of Historic Places, the neighboring building is actually designated, and one of its heritage values is its connection to the adjacent building. Therefore, the dismantling will also impact its heritage status. I think it's a great idea, especially to use the materials in an interpretive way. However, having a clear plan for the salvaged materials before proceeding is crucial. Salvaging materials only to let them sit in a basement for another 50 years and continue to degrade would not, in my opinion, count as proper salvage.
 - No plan yet, but I agree with you that it's a great idea and it will be part of our process. I'm planning to create a schedule for this. I just wanted to mention that the neighboring property was only designated in 2012, not in 1977 when our house was.

- Fully support the preservation plan; however, I'm concerned that any marking or signage commemorating the building that's been lost might be placed near or in front of a parking lot. I would like to see some assurance that the two parking spaces will be removed, as I don't think it would be appropriate for them to remain.
 - Yes, we had to dedicate 0.3 meters of road, which now becomes our property line, and from there, we require a 1-meter buffer for landscaping. This effectively pushes the parking back, as it won't fit in its current proposed location anyway. We heard this from the ADP, and we hear you now. We're going to create a nice green space between the areas. I see this more as a panel rather than a plaque, and I believe it's important to be able to stand on the street and see where the building once stood. It's more of an intervention than just a panel, meant to honor and highlight that space with the respect and significance it deserves.
- Have you looked at alternatives to provide parking off site? Like an agreement with an owner in the area, possibly a shared parking agreement with a church or another site that could provide the parking lot spaces required on Sundays.
 - My understanding is that much of the parking is currently happening at the health services location to the north of the building, and we are already requesting a variance for the parking. It's a matter of balancing the owner's needs for both the townhouse and the church. There will definitely be less parking than what Schedule C is requesting. While it would be ideal to have more green space, parking is necessary for the building to function, which is where we currently stand. We don't have any agreements with health services, and we typically only need extra parking on weekends, specifically Sundays. Street parking meets our needs for all days except Sunday. Our parking lot is often full, but we prioritize street parking and our own lot, not the health services lot. In the future, we are exploring options to increase parking for Sundays.
- Concern that this new development will run as a rental income for the Ukrainian church, I was wondering if there was any attention to the housing being devoted to folks with lower income or disability?
- Would like to stay focused on the heritage piece for the new development
 - Yes, the goal is to provide low-income rental housing not only for the Ukrainian community and parish members but for everyone
- Thank you for acknowledging the lack of detail in the current housing. We understand this increases the costs, but we are losing such a beautiful piece of heritage. It would be great to see more attention to detail in the new builds, so they better fit in with the charming heritage homes in Fernwood.
 - Yes, we heard that from ADP too.
- New buildings look practical but not as much Heritage focused.
 - I like the idea to use the materials on the interpretive panel and focus it in one place to have a more powerful impact.
- I'm curious if there has been any thought given to the design of the panel. Would it be possible to recreate the original entrance and use the same materials? It would be larger and more costly than just a simple panel, but I believe it would create a pleasant space for people to sit and read the information.
- When I worked with historic sites and monuments, we included alternate languages alongside English and French. Given the growing historical connection of this area with the Ukrainian church, I wonder if the Ukrainian language could be incorporated into the commemorative plaque to honor that connection.
 - Yes, for sure, once we get the green light, we would consider this feedback.
- I don't believe the case for demolition is justifiable. It seems like a decision that was made without thorough consideration. When reviewing the materials provided to the HAPL,

there was no mention of other fire-damaged houses that were significantly impacted but still repaired and restored. Additionally, there was no reference to the potential \$600,000 in insurance funding, which could go a long way in stabilizing the house. What could be explored is the possibility of structural reinforcement to at least allow the house to be moved and placed on a new foundation. While it may not support full rehabilitation at this stage, this could open the door for future fundraising efforts. Looking at the engineering report, it's clear that the building is not beyond repair; it does need repairs, but it's largely a matter of cost. To me, there's been inadequate exploration of repair options.

- Another option to consider would be converting a repaired house into office space, which could generate additional income. I do not support demolishing the house, as I believe there are alternative solutions that have not been properly explored.
- Converting a refurbished building into office space is one potential alternative. While I'm open to not preserving the historic house in its current form, I would like reassurance that the Ukrainian church's plans include creating affordable housing. There are trade-offs to consider, whether we turn it into office space or affordable housing, but I would need to see more details in the proposal to make an informed decision.
- I agree that the house can still be conserved, though only minimal effort has been made so far. I would be willing to support this application, provided there is a clear plan for interpretation, and I would need to see documentation for that before approval. I'm also concerned that if the approval doesn't include the necessary interpretation conditions, we may miss an opportunity to do what the community is willing to support. Given the emotional connection to this property, seeing it continues to deteriorate could be difficult, so I just want to ensure we're being sensitive to that.
- I walked around the building over the weekend and saw the photos shown today, highlighting how badly the interior has been charred and damaged. We're dealing with a church that doesn't have much income and doesn't pay taxes, so I struggle to see how the parish could raise the necessary funds in time to prevent further deterioration of the building. I checked the foundation, and it seems solid, but the rest of the building is so badly damaged. As for the building next door, my focus would be on protecting that one—it's heartbreaking to see this one fall into such disrepair, even before the fire. It's incredibly difficult to protect vacant buildings from vandalism and further damage, so we should prioritize safeguarding the house next door. The property line encroachment should be adjusted to better benefit the existing designated house. The landscaping in between isn't substantial enough to prevent people from coming and going. Protecting the existing designated home should be a priority. This will require skilled contractors to restore it before it deteriorates further. I'm sorry to say that I do support the application to remove the building. My family has lost buildings to fire, and it's a tragic, irreversible loss. Given that, I support the decision to remove the building.
- Structural engineer did say it could be repaired.
- I think I would lean towards option 2 in supporting the application, but with the condition that a plan is provided for both any salvaged materials and the proposed interpretation. I also believe that the options discussed were promising.
- So that would be and potentially putting in a recommendation for, you know, something like a barricade for parking to protect the adjacent building.
- So, option 2 with a couple recommendations for the applicant.
- Developers are not wanting to go ahead with projects, this would require the right contractors and skills, so I do support the application to remove it.
- Honestly believe the church would be trying to support their neighborhood. I don't think we need to put too much time into designing the panel. The money would be better spent in creating new housing for people.

- We have not seen any cost estimates. I don't believe there has been sufficient investigations.

Liberty Brears left the meeting at 1:18pm

Moved: Katie McEvoy

Seconded: Rosemary Sleigh

Motion: That the Heritage Advisory Panel recommend to Council that Heritage Alteration Permit Application No.00267 for 1112 Caledonia Avenue be approved with the following changes:

- Have a documented plan for salvaged materials and interpretation
- Require the design team to create a better solution to the exterior appearance of the proposed town homes to have more similarity to the other parts of the nearby streets and existing houses

Opposed: Steve Barber

Carried

6. Adjournment

Moved: Valerie Lindholm

Seconded: Steve Barber

Motion: That the Heritage Advisory Panel on March 11th, 2025, Meeting Agenda be adjourned at 1:29pm.

Carried Unanimously