

DATE OF MEETING October 7, 2019

AUTHORED BY BILL CORSAN, DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT 580 FITZWILLIAM STREET – FUTURE USE OF PROPERTY

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with background information on a City-owned property at 580 Fitzwilliam Street and a recommendation on its future use.

Recommendation

That Council defer any decision with respect to the future use of 580 Fitzwilliam Street until completion of the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Facilities Master Plan and a full assessment of the RCMP/City needs in the precinct area is undertaken.

BACKGROUND

The City-owned building located at 580 Fitzwilliam Street (the “Property”, Attachment A) was originally constructed in 1961 as the Vancouver Island Regional Library and is currently listed on the City’s Heritage Register. The two-storey wood-frame and concrete building has approximately 6,800 sq. ft. of useable floor area.

Serving as an ancillary office space for the RCMP for many years, the building was upgraded in 2009 as office space for the Fire Rescue Department, with additional upgrades being completed in the ensuing years. The building continues to be used by Nanaimo Fire & Rescue as the administration building.

The City is in the process of constructing a new firehall at Station One, which will include the firehall, dispatch, the Emergency Operations Centre and Fire & Rescue administration. The building is scheduled to be open in September 2021. At that point in time, the Property will be vacated and could be repurposed for another City function, leased to the private sector, or allocated to local non-profits.

At the 2019-JAN-28 Committee of the Whole meeting, Dennis McMahon spoke regarding the need for suitable and affordable space for the Nanaimo Arts Community, and the proposed designation of the Property as the location for a future Nanaimo Centre for the Creative Arts. Mr. McMahon requested Council and the Nanaimo Arts Community work together to provide artists with a studio space in which they can create and sell art and hold workshops for the arts community.

At the meeting it was moved and seconded that:

"Council direct Staff to prepare a report that provides information and outlines the feasibility of 580 Fitzwilliam Street being designated as a community arts centre with options for other community groups to use the facility as well."

DISCUSSION

The Cultural Plan for a Creative Nanaimo (2014) sets out a framework for both the current and future needs of the cultural sector within the community. In 2017, a Cultural Gathering was held to review the performance of the plan. Through that process, the need for shared community administration space, artist studios, and a gallery/small performance space was noted and the Plan was amended.

In 2020, the City will be undertaking a review of the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Facilities Master Plan. One of the key outcomes of the plan will be a review of existing arts and cultural facilities in the community and the opportunities to address identified gaps in service provision.

In addition, Staff are undertaking a space needs assessment for the RCMP to better understand the current and long-term requirement for office space. In addition to RCMP space needs, there may be other City Staff space needs that could be fulfilled with the use of this building in 2021, once the Fire Administration Staff move to the new fire hall.

CONCLUSION

It is premature to reallocate any space at 580 Fitzwilliam Street to the Nanaimo Arts Community until the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Facilities Master Plan review and RCMP space needs assessment are complete.

OPTIONS

1. That Council defer any decision with respect to the future use of 580 Fitzwilliam Street until completion of the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Facilities Master Plan and a full assessment of the RCMP/City needs in the precinct area is undertaken.
 - Advantages: 580 Fitzwilliam Street will be in active use by the Fire Administration team for the next two years. Waiting for the results of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan is a prudent approach given Council is not in a rush to repurpose the building.
 - Disadvantages: There is an identified need for a multi-use cultural space in the downtown core. Deferring the decision means the need will not be met in the short term.
 - Financial Implications: Reuse of the building by the RCMP or for other City Staff will reduce the need to purchase land, construct a new building, or lease office space in the future.
2. That Council provide alternative direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City-owned building located at 580 Fitzwilliam Street is currently occupied by the City's Fire Rescue Department.
- The construction of the new fire hall will enable the existing Fire & Rescue Administration functions to be relocated. The building at 580 Fitzwilliam Street can then be repurposed for another City function, leased to the private sector, or allocated to local non-profits.
- At the 2019-JAN-28 Committee of the Whole meeting, Council directed Staff to prepare a report that provides information and outlines the feasibility of 580 Fitzwilliam Street being designated as a community arts centre with options for other community groups to use the facility as well.
- Work is currently underway to update the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Facilities Master Plan, which will examine future facility needs.
- Staff are undertaking a space needs assessment for the RCMP to better understand the current and long-term requirement for office space. In addition to RCMP space needs, there may be other City Staff space needs that could be fulfilled with the use of this building in 2021, once the Fire Administration Staff move to the new fire hall.
- It is premature to reallocate any space in this building to Nanaimo Arts Community at this point time.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Location Plan

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

Lisa Bhopalsingh
Manager, Community Planning

Dale Lindsay
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