

DATE OF MEETING September 14, 2020

AUTHORED BY CHRIS SHOLBERG, HERITAGE PLANNER

**SUBJECT HERITAGE ALTERATION PERMIT NO. HAP00030 –
421 FRANKLYN STREET**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present for Council's consideration, a heritage alteration permit to allow demolition of the Franklyn Street Gymnasium at 421 Franklyn Street. |

Recommendation

That Council issue Heritage Alteration Permit No. HAP00030 for the demolition of the Franklyn Street Gymnasium at 421 Franklyn Street.

BACKGROUND

The subject property is zoned DT-7 Quennell Square and is located in the Downtown Heritage Conservation Area No. 1, where it is listed as having heritage significance in the Official Community Plan (see Attachments A: Location Plan and B: Building Façade Condition Photos). Due to the building's Heritage Conservation Area No. 1 listing, a heritage alteration permit must be issued by Council prior to issuance of a demolition permit.

Heritage Value Statement:

Built in 1922, the Franklyn Street Gymnasium and Auditorium are good examples of a utilitarian, institutional building with some Classical Revival elements. The building is symmetrically arranged with a central entry. Rows of multi-paned windows on the front façade relieve its otherwise boxy appearance. In spite of renovations and additions over the years, this imposing building is substantially intact.

The Franklyn Street Gymnasium caps the vista up Wesley Street and is part of a continuous line of historic buildings on the south side of a full city block.

The Franklyn Street Gymnasium is significant because of its association with the prolific Vancouver architectural firm of Gardiner and Mercer, which operated from 1912 to 1940. The firm's surviving buildings include the Trapp Block, Westminster Trust Building, the Nelson House (all in New Westminster) and the Jewish Community Centre, Pacific Athletic Club, and the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital (all in Vancouver). The Franklyn Street Gymnasium is representative of the firm's generally conservative design aesthetic.

The building's character-defining features include:

- All of the elements of the utilitarian style with Classical Revival elements, including the simple form and massing, symmetrical façade, portico over the front entry door, double-hung casement windows, prominent cornice, and a flat roof at front.
- The building is located in one of Nanaimo's oldest neighbourhoods and is part of a continuous line of historic buildings on this city block.
- Until recent fire damage, the ongoing use for the building was a gymnasium and community centre.

DISCUSSION

The Franklyn Street Gymnasium was badly damaged by fire and the resulting fire suppression action, which occurred on 2018-OCT-18. Rehabilitation of the building was considered by the owner (School District #68), but based on the repair cost and extensive hazardous materials (e.g., asbestos) contained in the building, was not deemed cost effective to complete for continued use as a gymnasium. Consequently, the owner has applied for a heritage alteration permit to allow demolition of the building to proceed.

Staff recommend a heritage alteration permit be issued by Council to allow demolition of this building. This position is based on the following observations:

- 1) The building's condition and age, extensive level of hazardous materials, and the corresponding cost for its rehabilitation identified by the owner's restoration consultant.
- 2) While listed in the Downtown Heritage Conservation Area, the building's heritage value is in the medium range in relation to other listed historical buildings. From the evaluative perspective, the building is not highly rated with respect to overall heritage value.

The building exterior has been photo-documented as per Council's Heritage Building Documentation Policy.

OPTIONS

1. That Council issue Heritage Alteration Permit No. HAP00030 for the demolition of the Franklyn Street Gymnasium at 421 Franklyn Street.
 - Advantages: Allows the owner to remove a building that will otherwise remain unoccupied and derelict in this area of downtown. Removal of the building will open up site lines along Wesley Street. Removal of the building will enable future development opportunities for the site and support neighbourhood revitalization.
 - Disadvantages: Results in removal of a building that formed part of the history of Nanaimo's school system, and more specifically, Nanaimo's earliest high school "Central School" (later John Shaw High School) located nearby (existing parking lot area to west of subject property).
 - Financial Implications: There are no financial implications for the City, as demolition and clean up of the site will be paid for by the owner. Security and maintenance of the building would be removed as a cost for the owner.

2. That Council deny issuance of Heritage Alteration Permit No. HAP00030 for the demolition of the Franklyn Street Gymnasium at 421 Franklyn Street.
 - Advantages: A piece of Nanaimo’s school system history would be retained and permit the opportunity for possible rehabilitation and reuse of the building in the future.
 - Disadvantages: The property would continue in its unoccupied state, and as a result, has the potential to become more derelict and a greater security and maintenance issue as time goes on.
 - Financial Implications: Section 613 of the *Local Government Act* states if a heritage designation causes a reduction in the market value of the property, the local government must compensate the owner of the property.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Franklyn Street Gymnasium, located at 421 Franklyn Street, is within the Downtown Heritage Conservation Area No. 1, where it is listed as having heritage significance in the Official Community Plan.
- The Franklyn Street Gymnasium was badly damaged by fire and the resulting fire suppression action on 2018-OCT-18.
- While listed in the Downtown Heritage Conservation Area, the building’s heritage value is in the medium range in relation to other listed historical buildings. From the evaluative perspective, the building is not highly rated with respect to overall heritage value.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Location Plan

ATTACHMENT B: Building Façade Condition Photos

Submitted by:

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