

DATE OF MEETING MAY 2, 2022

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SUBJECT TOWNSITE ROAD CHINESE CEMETERY GATEWAY AND PAGODA

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To update Council on the Townsite Road Chinese Cemetery gateway and pagoda, and the new project to restore it, and to advise of a change to the approved Provisional Budget.

BACKGROUND

As early as the 1860's, Chinese workers came to Nanaimo to work in the mines or to open businesses. Initially, they settled in what is now downtown Nanaimo, but in the 1880's, they were removed by the coal company to the outskirts of town. By 1908, a new Chinatown, one of the largest in North America at the time, was established near the western edge of the City. This last Chinatown was destroyed by fire in 1960, although much of its population had already dispersed.

Built in 1924, the Chinese Cemetery is a very good example of an ethnic cultural landscape and provides an important link to Nanaimo's heritage. In addition to grave markers with Chinese inscriptions, the cemetery features traditional Chinese elements including ornate, brightly painted entry gates, a pagoda structure, an altar and a shrine. Although the cemetery is no longer exclusively Chinese, it retains, through the presence of these elements, a distinct Chinese character. The Chinese Cemetery's striking entrance gates and its location on a main thoroughfare make it a highly visible neighbourhood landmark.

DISCUSSION

In 2021, through routine inspection, Staff observed that the concrete gateway and pagoda at the cemetery is in need of repair and restoration.

Herold Engineering were hired to perform a condition assessment of the structure (Attachment A).

It was determined that intervention is required to repair the damaged concrete and to extend the life of the structures.

Given the important cultural significance of the structures, City Staff invited the known Chinese community to provide feedback on the restoration plan and met with them on site. They are supportive of the plan to restore the structure to its original state with minimal changes. As part of the financial carry forward process from 2021, a project was added to perform the repairs, and \$60,000 was allocated to it.

CONCLUSION

Staff will be undertaking repairs to the Townsite Road Chinese Cemetery gateway and pagoda to restore the structures and ensure they continue to reflect the history and heritage of the community. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The Townsite Road Chinese Cemetery gateway and pagoda are important heritage cultural markers for the City.
- The concrete gateway and pagoda are in need to restoration work.
- A project to complete the restoration work was added to 2022 of the 2022 – 2026 Financial Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Townsite Road Chinese Cemetery Gateway and Pagoda Condition Assessment – Herold Engineering |

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