



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: June 19, 2009
Contact: James Boldt
Contact No.: 604.873.7449
RTS No.: 07779
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: July 21, 2009

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: The Director of Planning in consultation with the Director of Legal Services

SUBJECT: Designation and Heritage Revitalization Agreement - 3589 Commercial Street, 'The Gow Block'

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the building located at 3589 Commercial Street, listed in the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'B' evaluation category, be designated as protected heritage property.
- B. THAT Council authorize the Director of Legal Services to prepare and sign on the City's behalf a Heritage Revitalization Agreement for the building located at 3589 Commercial Street to:
 - secure the protection and long term preservation of the building; and
 - grant variances in excess of that permitted in the Zoning and Development By-law.
- C. THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward for enactment a by-law to authorize the Heritage Revitalization Agreement and a by-law to designate the building located at 3589 Commercial Street as protected heritage property.
- D. THAT the Heritage Revitalization Agreement shall be prepared, completed, registered, and given priority, to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services and the Director of Planning.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of A, B, C, and D.

COUNCIL POLICY

- *Heritage Policies and Guidelines*
- *Ecodensity Policy Action A-1 "Rezoning Policy for Greener Buildings"*
- *Cedar Cottage MC-1/ Welwyn Street Planning Policies*

Council's Heritage Policies and Guidelines state that buildings "*identified on the Vancouver Heritage Register have heritage significance*" and that "*the City's long term goal is to protect through voluntary designation as many resources on the Vancouver Heritage Register as possible.*"

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to designate the existing building at 3589 Commercial Street, listed in the 'B' evaluation category on the Vancouver Heritage Register, as protected heritage property, and to approve a Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) to secure the long term preservation of the building. The proposed HRA will result in variances of the Zoning and Development By-law to permit the heritage building to be retained within a new parcel and to permit construction of a new five unit townhouse building (multiple dwelling) on a new parcel, as set forth in Development Applications DE412682 and DE412639. The recommended HRA will provide incentive to the property owner to designate and conserve the heritage building.

BACKGROUND

The site is located on the north-west corner of the intersection of Commercial Street and East 20th Avenue in an MC-1 zoned district of the Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood (see the site map in Appendix 'A'). The MC-1 zoning permits a wide range of commercial, industrial, and residential uses. Until recently, redevelopment in the area has been modest. Most of the buildings constructed prior to the First World War on the west side of the 3500 Block of Commercial Street still exist, although some have been highly modified (see photos in Appendix 'A'). In 2002 the guidelines for the area were amended to permit Multiple Dwellings (i.e. all residential buildings) in certain areas of the Cedar Cottage MC-1 zoning district, which has resulted in the recent construction of a number of large townhouse developments, particularly in the 3600 and 3700 blocks of Commercial Street.

The site is approximately 8,061 sq. ft. in area and has a lane at the rear. The existing building, which is located at the front of the property on Commercial Street, contains four ground floor commercial units and four rental dwelling units on the second floor. The rear of the site is open. Until recently, some of ground floor units were vacant or used for non-commercial purposes. The owner has engaged in recent renovations under permit to rehabilitate and upgrade the building, including the reintroduction of commercial uses on the ground floor. The heritage building is not proposed to be strata-titled and the dwellings units will continue to provide rental residential accommodation. Council added the building to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'B' evaluation category on June 16th, 2009.

DISCUSSION

Heritage Value

'The Gow Block', is a two storey, wood frame structure completed in 1911 by realtor Walter Gow in an area associated with the early commercial development of the independent village which grew around the Interurban stop at East 18th Avenue and Commercial Street (see photographs in Appendix 'A'). The building is valued for its historic importance to the neighbourhood and its continued use as a mixed use building serving the Cedar Cottage community, including the ground floor corner unit which has been a corner grocery store since 1934, most notably as "Ernie's Grocery" which operated from 1960 to 1996. It is also valued for its association with The Bank of Hamilton (which later merged with the Canadian Bank of Commerce) which initially occupied a portion of the ground floor of the building, and which was one of the first banks to be located outside of the downtown peninsula. The building is also valued for its aesthetic features as well as being part of a surviving group of buildings constructed prior to the First World War on the 3500 Block of Commercial Street, and is an excellent example of a wood frame, mixed-use building constructed during the Edwardian period.

The heritage features of 'The Gow Block' include its projecting bays, raised parapets, continuous storefronts, narrow double-lapped wooden siding, chamfered corner storefront entry, wood transom windows, and trim details. Also of note are the residential street entrances incorporated into the storefronts and the large wooden covered verandah at the rear, as well as small skylights and light wells providing daylight access to the dwelling units on the upper floor.

Incentive Approach

In early reviews, staff concluded that the most viable option to retain and conserve the heritage building is to permit development of the rear portion of the site and retain the heritage building at the front of the site. A subdivision is proposed to allow separate ownership of the 'The Gow Block', and to reduce building by-law upgrades which would be required if the building were to be located on a site with the proposed new building. Modest variances are proposed (see Appendix 'C'). The permitted density is equal to a floor space ratio (FSR) of 2.5 provided the residential density does not exceed 1.5 FSR. The proposed residential density on the rear parcel for the proposed townhouse building is 1.83 FSR (7,132 sq. ft.), which requires a density variance (the overall proposed density on the new parcels together is less than that permitted in the zoning for the existing parcel). A relaxation of parking is also proposed (a total of sixteen parking spaces are required and five are to be provided). Staff conclude that the proposed variances, in exchange for the rehabilitation, designation, and long term protection of the heritage building, are supported.

Condition of the Property and Conservation Approach

The heritage building has recently been rehabilitated. Stucco cladding installed in the past has been removed and the original clapboard siding underneath it retained and restored (see photos in Appendix 'A'). New wood windows replicating the original windows have been installed in most of the existing openings (few original windows have survived). Where necessary, new wood trims and details were added which replicate the original elements. While no complete documentation of the south façade exists, the existing openings are likely original and have been retained and no new openings have been introduced. The corner

storefront fenestration has survived at the ground level, but the other storefronts were removed in the past and have been replicated to match the original storefronts based on photographs and on-site assessment. The roof and parapet have been repaired, as have wood walls and plates at the foundations which have experienced water damage over the years. The current colours match the original paint colours as determined from on-site investigation. Staff support the rehabilitation work and conclude that it is consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

Compatibility with Existing Zoning, and Land Use Regulations and Zoning Variances

The intent of the MC-1 and MC-2 district schedule is to:

".... reinforce the mixed use nature of this area, with residential, commercial and light industrial uses permitted. Emphasis is placed on building design that furthers compatibility among uses, and contributes to area character and pedestrian interest. The MC-2 District differs from the MC-1 District in limiting dwelling uses in areas adjacent to a heavy impact industrial zone."

The proposed uses are permitted in the MC-1 zoning and that the proposal is in compliance with the 'Residential Compatibility Matrix' in the MC-1 and MC-2 Guidelines. The 'Cedar Cottage MC-1/ Welwyn Street Planning Policies' note that the blend of uses and the mix of old and contemporary structures contribute to the area's unique character. Staff conclude that the design of the new building and the conservation of the heritage building contribute to the character of the neighbourhood and that the proposal is compatible with the zoning and is supported.

Results of Neighbourhood Notification

Two hundred and fifty-one surrounding property owners were notified of the proposal and a site sign was erected. Two responses were received. Although no objections were expressed, one letter noted that the approval will likely increase traffic and parking impacts in the area. The other letter stated that the proposal, including the proposed variances, should be consistent with heritage policies. The proposed parking variances for the proposed heritage building will create some localized street parking impacts, but the variances are required as off-street parking cannot be provided on the heritage parcel. A nominal increase in traffic impacts will likely occur, as would be the case if the site was redeveloped without the proposed heritage building. Staff conclude that the proposal and the requested variances are consistent with the City's Heritage Policies and Guidelines, as well as the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, and are supported.

Comments from the Vancouver Heritage Commission

On April 28th, 2008, the Vancouver Heritage Commission reviewed the Statement of Significance (SOS) for 'The Gow Block' and supported the addition of the building to the Vancouver Heritage Register. On February 23rd, 2009, The Vancouver Heritage Commission unanimously supported the proposed designation and conservation of the building, and the proposed new townhouse development and subdivision (see Appendix 'D' for the full comments of the Vancouver Heritage Commission).

Financial Proforma Evaluation

Real Estate Services staff reviewed the applicant's proforma evaluation in accordance with Council's approved policies. The Director of Real Estate Services advises that the proposed variances requested by the applicant as compensation for the heritage encumbrance on land value are supportable and provide no undue profit.

Ecodensity Policies

Ecodensity policy A-1 "Rezoning Policy for Greener Buildings" applies to the application and requires developments of this scale to achieve BuiltGreen BC™ Gold with a score of EnerGuide 80, or an equivalent achievement in green design. The applicant proposes features for the new building which are consistent with the BuiltGreen BC Gold™ standard established in the policy. The policy allows for exemptions for heritage components provided reasonable design efforts are made to improve green performance where appropriate, while respecting heritage aspirations and promoting heritage retention. Staff encourage owners for applications such as this to seek registration and certification with BuiltGreen BC™. Conditions of the development application approval require that the drawings for the new building incorporate the proposed sustainable features, noting as well that the buildings will meet the Vancouver Building By-law with respect to related requirements.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The approval of the report recommendations will have no financial implications with respect to the City's operating expenditures, fees, or staffing.

CONCLUSION

The recommended approval of the designation of 'The Gow Block' at 3589 Commercial Street, listed in the 'B' evaluation category on the Vancouver Heritage Register, and the proposed Heritage Revitalization Agreement, will enable construction of a new townhouse building at the rear of the site on a newly created parcel and will secure the long term preservation of the heritage building. The proposed variances provide an incentive which makes this conservation scheme viable. The owners have agreed to the heritage designation of the heritage building and are prepared to waive future demands for compensation. Therefore it is recommended that Council approve the proposed designation of 'The Gow Block' at 3589 Commercial Street, and the proposed Heritage Revitalization Agreement.

* * * * *

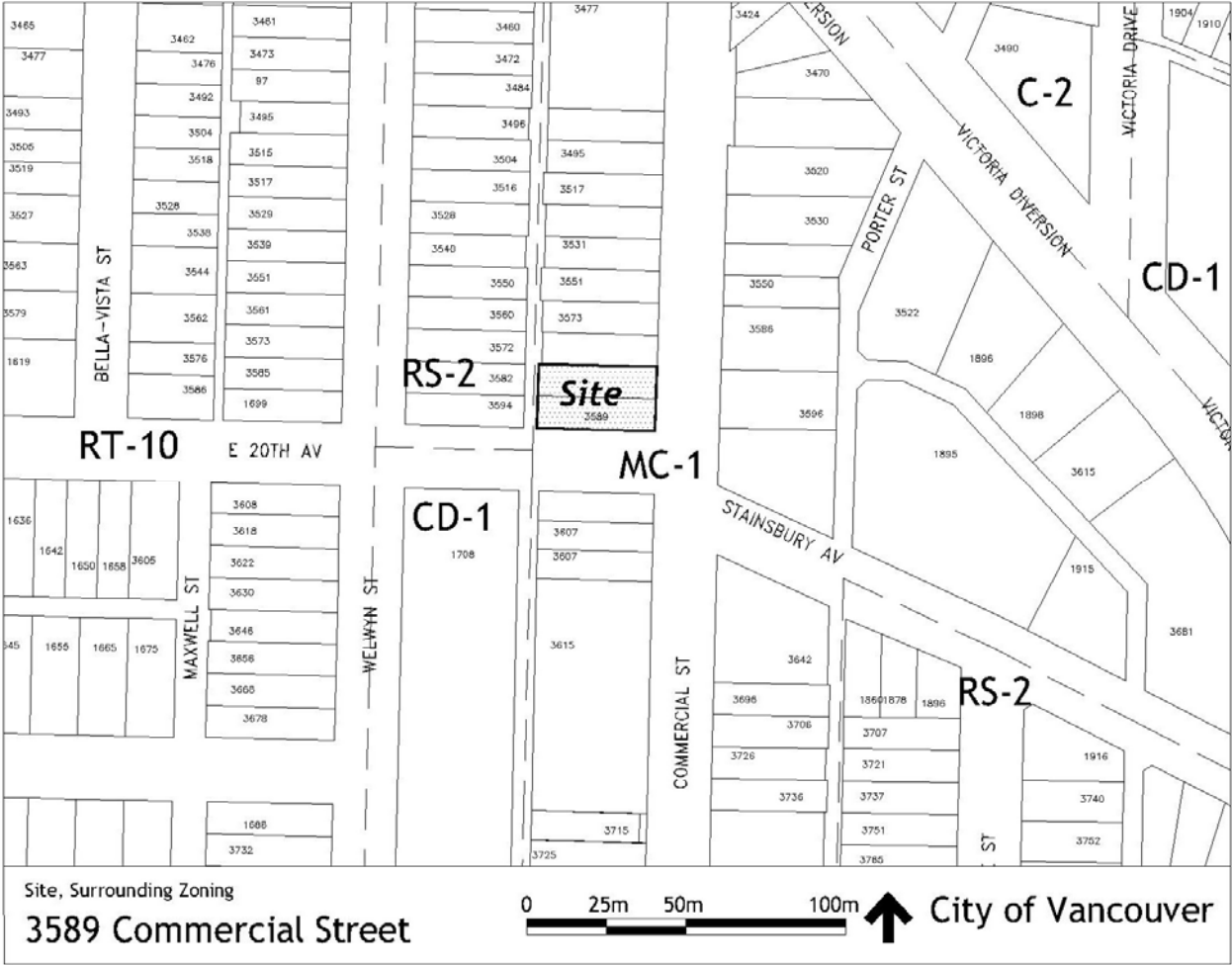




Photo 1: 3500 Block Commercial Street looking North from 20th Avenue circa 1912-1913

'The Gow Block' is on the far left in the foreground. The Bank of Hamilton (later The Bank of Commerce) occupied a portion of the building until 1934, after which the corner unit became a neighbourhood grocery store until recent times (most notably 'Ernie's Grocery' from 1960 to 1996).



Photo 2: 'The Gow Block' Under Construction, November 1911, Looking North-West

The words "Gow Block" are visible on the raised parapet detail (since removed) beside the telephone pole. Most of the buildings on the west side of Commercial Street shown in this photograph still exist, including a building similar to 'The Gow Block' at 3495 Commercial Street, located in the centre of the photograph.



Photo 3: Close up of The Commercial Frontages of 'The Gow Block'

Visible are the Bank of Hamilton and Post Office signage and the original commercial frontages, as well as original windows, materials, and details.



Photo 4: 'The Gow Block' Prior To Recent Renovations and Rehabilitation

The original wood cladding had been stuccoed over. Three of the four commercial frontages had been removed as long ago as the 1940's.



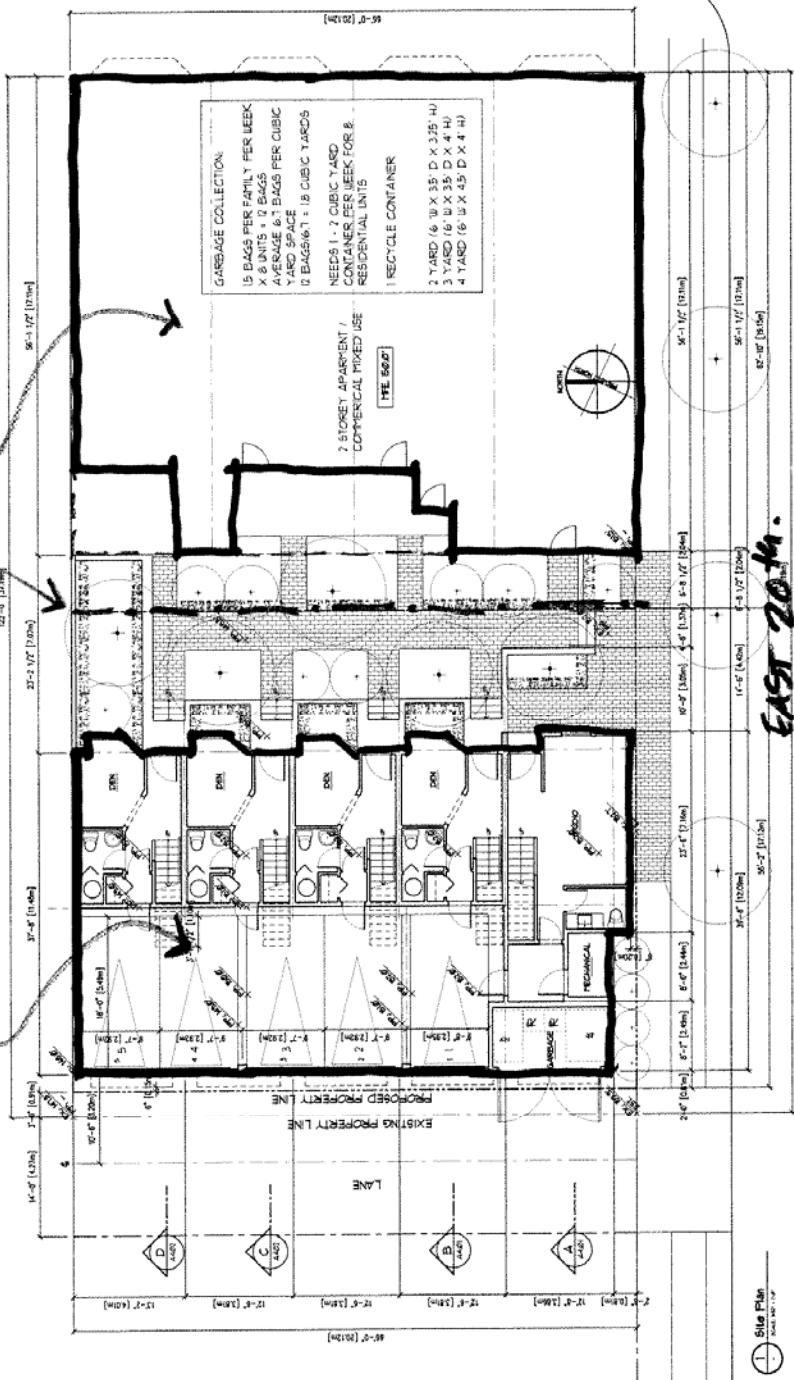
Photos 5 and 6: 'The Gow Block Today

The corner ground floor corner unit continues to serve the community- now as a popular coffee shop. The lower photo shows the rear of the building, including the large residential verandah.

**PROPOSED SUBDIVISION
'THE GOW BLOCK'
@ 3559 COMMERCIAL ST.**

**PROPOSED
NEW TOWNHOUSE
BUILDING**

COMMERCIAL ST.



A1.02

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**RAMSAY
WORDEN
ARCHITECTS**
1000 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-462-1100

Jerry Prussin
3047 W. 20th Ave.
Denver, CO 80211

Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.
Site Plan

Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.

Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.

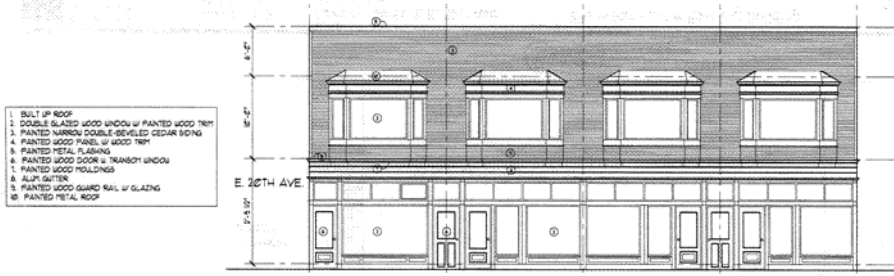
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Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.

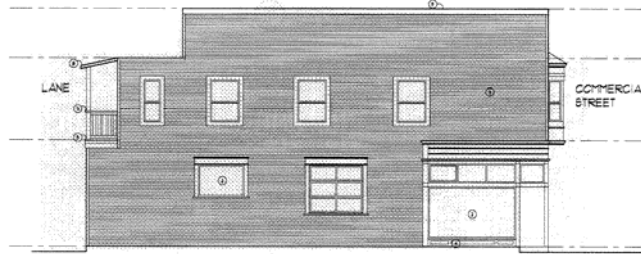
Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.

Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.

SITE PLAN



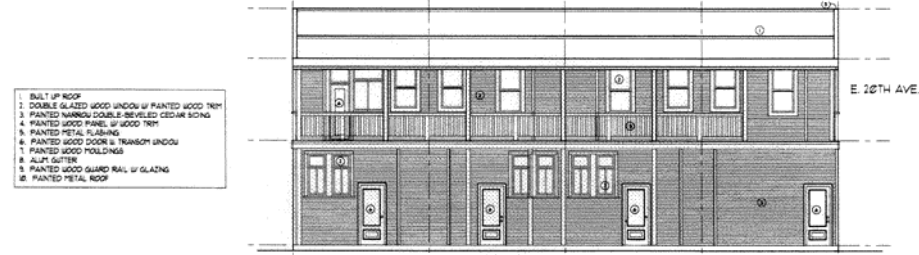
1 EAST ELEVATION - EXISTING (FRONT)
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



2 SOUTH ELEVATION - EXISTING
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

RAMSAY WOODEN ARCHITECTURE
JERRY PRUSSIN
NORAH JOHNSON
Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.
Dartmouth Housing Project
Elevation - Lot A Existing Building
A3.05

'THE GOW BLOCK' - SOUTH & EAST ELEVATIONS



1 WEST ELEVATION - EXISTING (REAR)
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

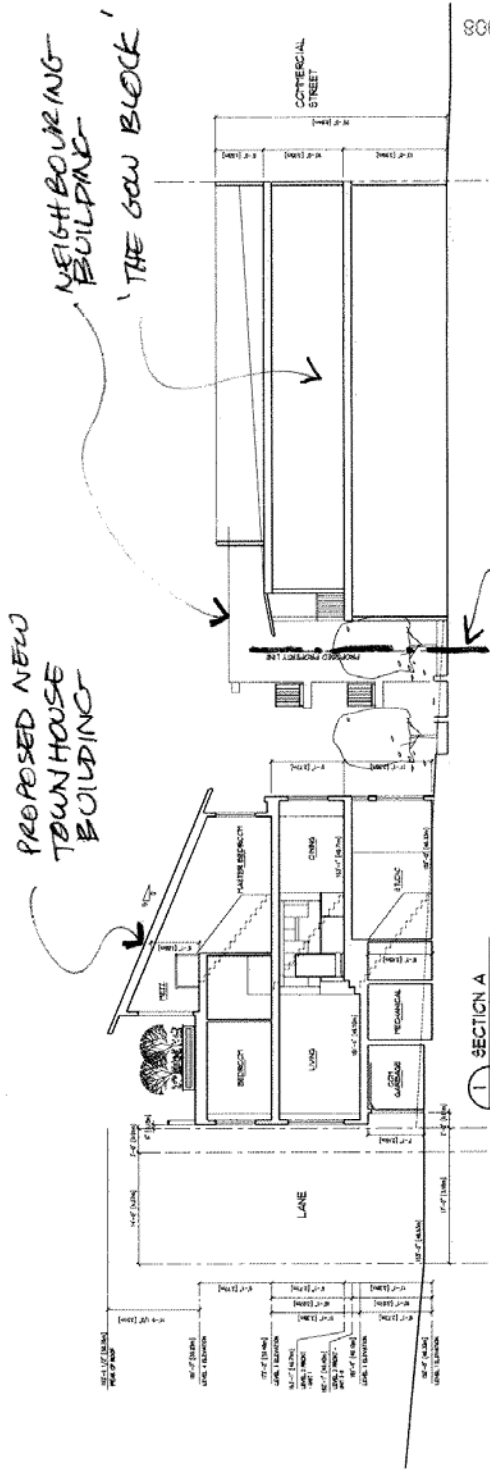


2 NORTH ELEVATION - EXISTING
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

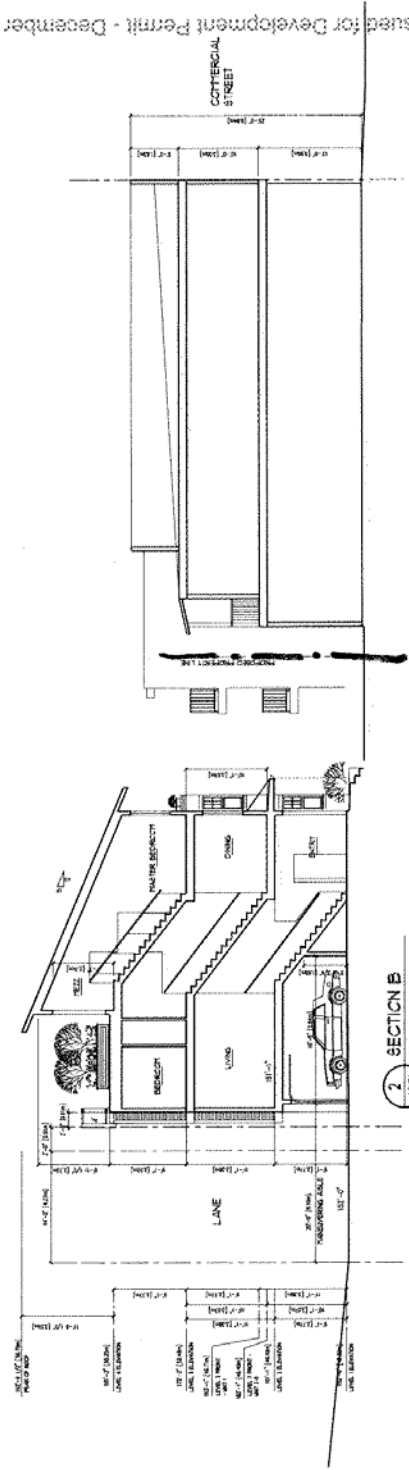
RAMSAY WOODEN ARCHITECTURE
JERRY PRUSSIN
NORAH JOHNSON
Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.
Dartmouth Housing Project
Elevation - Lot A Existing Building
A3.06

'THE GOW BLOCK' - NORTH & WEST ELEVATIONS

Issued for Development Permit - December 10th, 2008



PROPOSED SUBDIVISION



Issued for Development Permit - December 10th, 2008

RANSAY WARDEN ARCHITECTS
1100 - 10th Avenue SW
Calgary, Alberta T2C 1P5
Tel: 403.243.1100
Fax: 403.243.1101
www.ransaywarden.com

Client: Jerry Prussin, Norah Johnson
3001 W. 20th Ave. SW, Calgary, AB T2C 1C2

Project Title: Commercial Housing Proposal
Commercial St. & E. 20th Ave.

Sections

Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Date: Dec. 10, 2008

Drawn by: J.P.

Checked by: J.P.

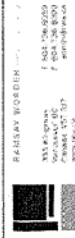
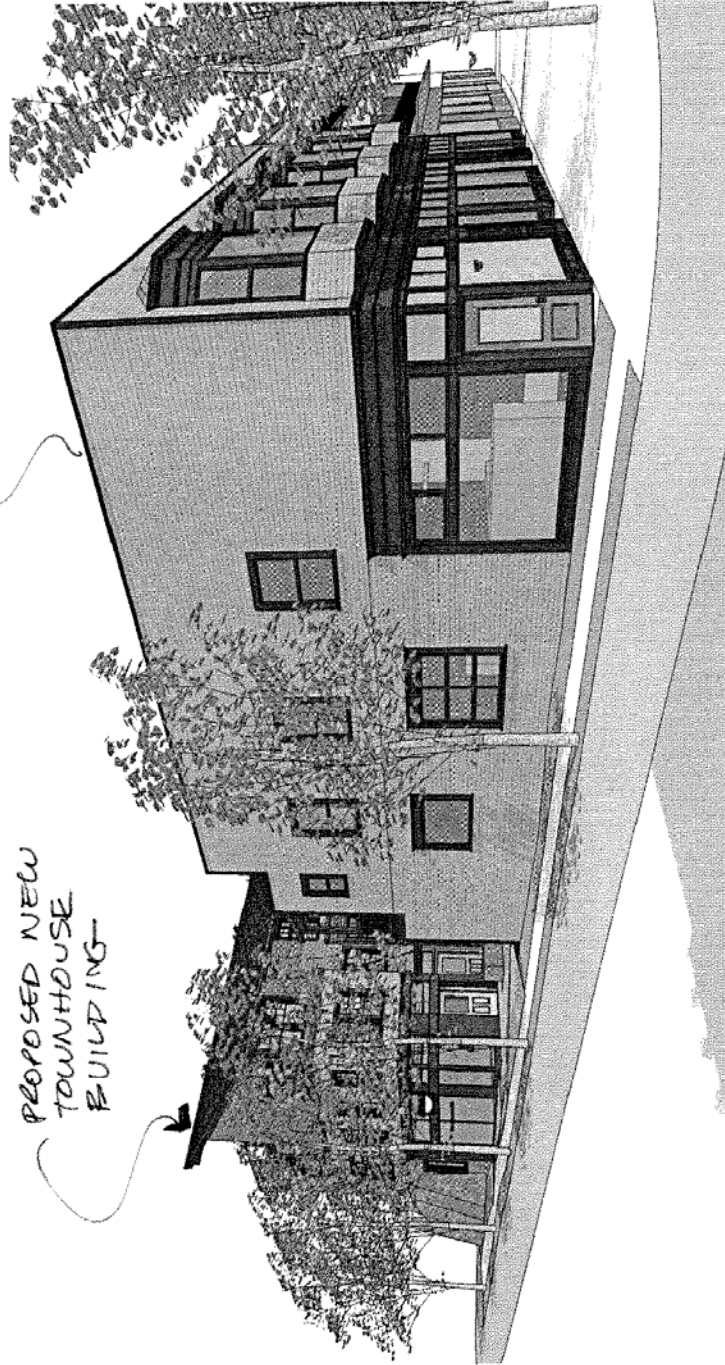
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SECTIONS *LOOKING-NORTH*

THE LOW BLOCK @
3585 COMMERCIAL ST.

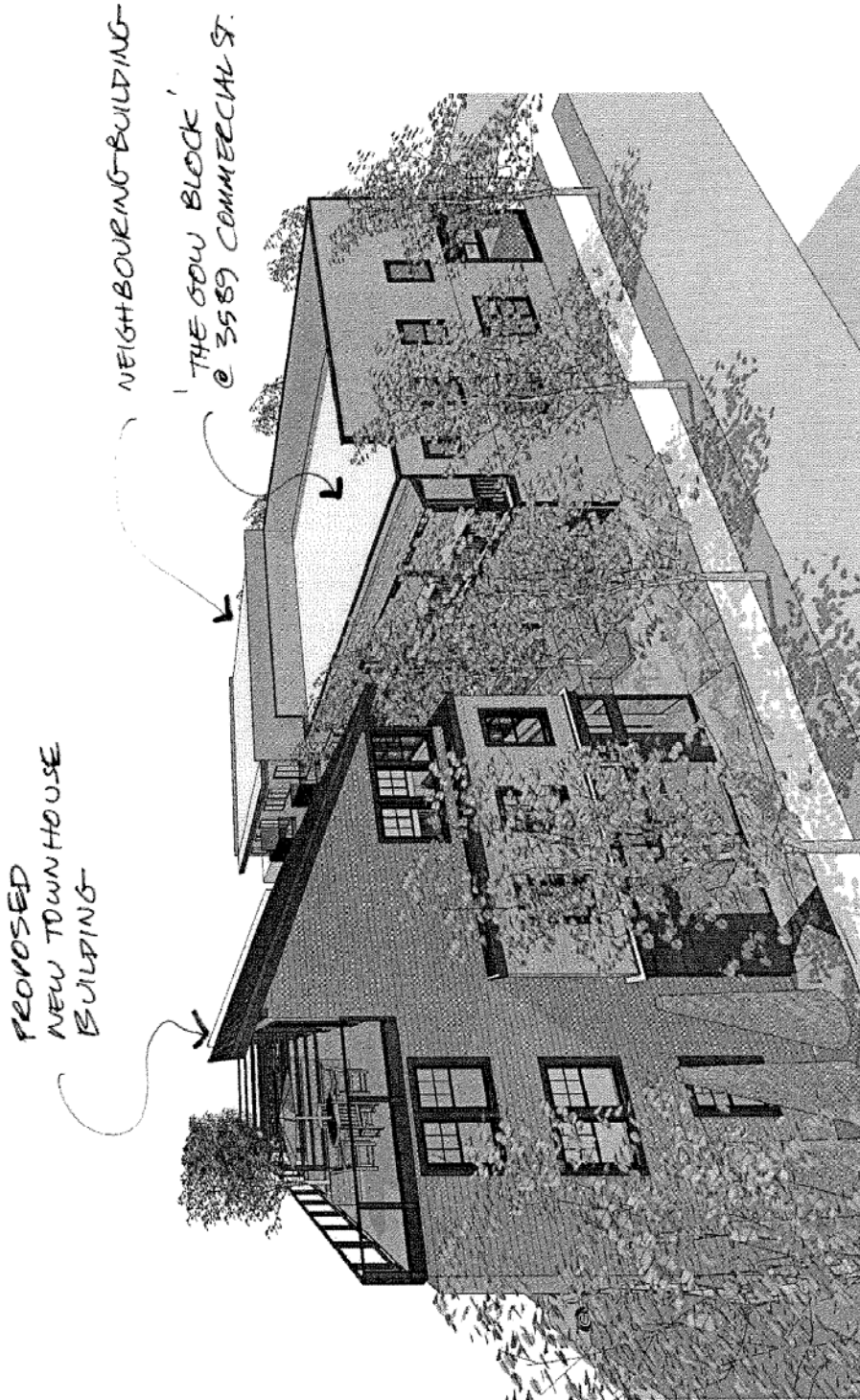
PROPOSED NEW
TOWNHOUSE
BUILDING



RAINBOW WOODEN ARCHITECTURE
1000 10th Street
Portland, OR 97209
Phone: 503.231.1234
www.rainbowwooden.com

Character Study

**PROPOSAL FROM THE CORNER OF
EAST 20th AV. & COMMERCIAL ST. - LOOKING NORTHWEST**



FAVSBY WOODER ARCHITECTURE
365 W. 8TH ST.
VANCOUVER, BC V6C 1K6
CANADA TEL: 604.681.8779
WWW.FAVSBYWOODER.COM



Character Study

PROPOSAL FROM EAST 20TH AV. - LOOKING NORTH - EAST

Summary of Proposed Density and Parking Variances

Table 1: Proposed and Permitted Density

Uses	Max. Permitted	Existing Site (8,061 sq. ft.)	Proposed Heritage Site* (4,145 sq. ft.)	Proposed Townhouse Site* (3,916 sq. ft.)	Total Proposed based on existing site area of 8,061 sq. ft.**
Dwelling Units	12,090 sq. ft. (1.5 FSR)	3,240 sq. ft. (0.40 FSR)	3,240 sq. ft. (0.78 FSR)	7,132sq. ft. (1.82 FSR)**	10,372 sq. ft. (1.29 FSR)**
Commercial	20,150 sq. ft. (2.50 FSR)	3,215 sq. ft. (0.40 FSR)	3,215 sq. ft. (0.78 FSR)	None	3,215 sq. ft. (0.40 FSR)**
All uses combined	20,150 sq. ft. (2.50 FSR)	6,455 sq. ft. (0.80 FSR)	6,455 sq. ft. (1.56 FSR)	7,132 sq. ft. (1.82 FSR)**	13,587 sq. ft. (1.69 FSR)**

*the proposed HRA allows for flexibility in the final location of the proposed new property boundary in order to address any building by-law requirements which may be identified during the review of the final subdivision approval

** variance required

*** values provided for comparative purposes

Table 2: Proposed Off Street Parking and Loading Variances

Use	By-law Requirement	Proposed
Heritage Building- Residential (4 dwelling units)	4 parking spaces	none
Heritage Building- Commercial	3 parking spaces plus one Class B loading space	none
New Townhouse Building (5 dwelling units)	9 parking spaces	5 parking spaces (one per dwelling unit)

Zoning Variances contained with the Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA)

The following is an excerpt from the proposed HRA listing the variances to be granted ("Heritage Lands" refers to the proposed parcel containing 'The Gow Block', "Non- Heritage Lands" refers to the proposed parcel containing the new townhouse building):

1.1 Pursuant to Section 592 of the *Charter*, the MC-1 District Schedule to the City's *Zoning and Development By-Law No. 3575* is hereby varied in respect of the Heritage Lands and the Non-Heritage Lands as follows:

Heritage Lands

<u>Item</u>	<u>Applicable bylaw provision</u>	<u>With variances</u>
Rear Yard & Setback	Section 4.6 of MC-1 District Schedule	exempt
Horizontal Angle of Daylight	Section 4.10 MC-1 District Schedule	exempt
Acoustics	Section 4.15 of MC-1 District Schedule	exempt

Non-Heritage Lands

<u>Item</u>	<u>Applicable bylaw provision</u>	<u>With variances</u>
Front Yard & Setback	Section 4.4 of MC-1 District Schedule	exempt
Side Yard & Setback	Section 4.5 of MC-1 District Schedule	exempt
Rear Yard & Setback	Section 4.6 of MC-1 District Schedule	exempt
Floor Space (square footage)	Section 4.7.1 of MC-1 District Schedule	7,132 sq. ft.
Horizontal Angle of Daylight	Section 4.10 of MC-1 District Schedule	exempt
Conditional Approval Uses	Section 3 of MC-1 District Schedule	Includes Accessory Uses customarily ancillary to principal uses on the Heritage Lands, for so long as the Non-Heritage Lands remain undeveloped

1.2 The by-law variations effected by and the other benefits granted to the Owner in relation to this agreement are full and fair compensation for the obligations and restrictions placed upon the Owner by this agreement and any heritage designation made of the Heritage Buildings under the *Charter*, and the Owner hereby waives and renounces all claims for further or other compensation by reason of this agreement.

Minutes of the February 23rd meeting of the Vancouver Heritage Commission and Staff
Comments

On February 2, 2009, the regular meeting of the Vancouver Heritage Commission was cancelled due to lack of quorum. Applicants, who were present, agreed to have their applications heard by the members present, who formulated Motions for approval at the February 23, 2009, meeting. Accordingly, the following Motions were brought forward for consideration:

(a) 3589 Commercial Street (The Gow Block)

RESOLVED

THAT the Vancouver Heritage Commission (VHC) supports the subdivision of the property at 3589 Commercial Street (The Gow Block) as presented on February 2, 2009, specifically noting the following:

- 1. Support for the requested parking exemptions of the parking requirements for the heritage building;*
- 2. Support for three key aspects of the form of the new townhouse development, and supports those aspects being written into the HRA document: a) minimum 22' separation from the heritage building balcony edges; b) the elevation of the roof at the east wall line be at datum 56m; c) the storefront character element integrated into the 20th Avenue façade; and d) the following of the Standards and Guidelines provisions that recommend the drawing of a clear distinction between what is new and what is restored;*
- 3. That the HRA allows for the varying of the sign bylaw to allow contemporary pedestrian signage in a manner originally found on the heritage building; and*
- 4. That the VHC requests to see any future development permit proposal for the new townhouse development.*

FURTHER THAT the Vancouver Heritage Commission recommends that City staff re-evaluate the heritage building, taking more into account its landmark status.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

The Director of Planning supports the key aspects noted in (2) above but has not required them to be included in the HRA. Instead, they will become comments or conditions included as part of the final approval development permit for the new building. As no signage is currently proposed, no variance of the Sign By-law is included in the HRA. New signage may be considered through a Heritage Alteration Permit at a later date once the building is designated. Staff will consider the request under (4) above should the new townhouse building not be constructed at this time and a new application by a different applicant be received in the future.