



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: August 19, 2009
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VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: September 8, 2009

TO: Vancouver City Council

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

SUBJECT: Addition to the Vancouver Heritage Register, Designation, and Heritage Revitalization Agreements - 431 and 439 Helmcken Street

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the buildings currently located at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street be added to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category, and that the buildings be designated as protected heritage properties.
- B. THAT Council authorize the Director of Legal Services to prepare and sign on the City's behalf two Heritage Revitalization Agreements for the properties located at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street to:
 - secure the protection and long-term preservation of the proposed heritage buildings; and
 - grant a density bonus of 1,231 square feet to each property available for transfer off-site, and other zoning variances.
- C. THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to bring forward for enactment by-laws to authorize the Heritage Revitalization Agreements and by-laws to designate the buildings located at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street as protected heritage properties.
- D. THAT the Heritage Revitalization Agreements 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

- *Transfer of Density Policy, adopted January 25th, 1983*
- *Heritage Policies and Guidelines, adopted on May 13th and September 23rd, 1986*

Council's Heritage Policies and Guidelines state that the 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.*"

On July 28th, 2009, Council approved a hold on the creation of transferable density to allow the density bank to go through a re-balancing period. At the same time Council also supported bringing the Helmcken Street houses forward to Public Hearing given previous commitments and the modest amount of proposed transferable density being created (1,231 sq. ft. on each of the three properties for a total of 3,693 sq. ft.).

PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This report seeks Council's approval to add to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category the houses at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street, to designate the buildings as protected heritage properties, and for the City to enter into two Heritage Revitalization Agreements (HRAs) to secure the rehabilitation and long term preservation of the proposed heritage buildings in exchange for the creation of 1,231 sq. ft. of transferable density for each property (2,462 sq. ft. total). The HRAs also vary the maximum permitted square footage ratio for office, institutional, cultural, and recreational uses on the properties to allow the existing buildings to be converted from residential uses to these commercial uses, and vice versa. Staff support the creation of a total of 2,462 sq. ft. of transferable density and the proposed zoning variance.

BACKGROUND

The houses at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street are located in the Downtown South neighbourhood west of Yaletown in an area zoned 'Downtown District' (see the map in Appendix 'A'). The zoning (area 'L1') permits densities up to 5.0 FSR (floor space ratio). However, the properties at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street, even if consolidated into one site with 435 Helmcken Street, would qualify for at most 3.0 FSR due to their small sizes. Residential uses and various commercial uses are permitted, with some restrictions on retail and services uses.

The Helmcken Street houses are adjacent to the approved redevelopment of a large site at 1098 Richards Street which permits construction of a residential building and the relocation of two heritage houses at 1062 and 1080 Richards Street to the corner of Helmcken and Richards street to create, along with the Helmcken Street houses, a representation of an historic residential end-of-block development once common in the area (see the map on page 2 of Appendix 'A' and the drawings in Appendix 'B'). On October 28th, 2008, Council approved the addition of the houses located at 1062 and 1080 Richards Street to the Register and designated them as part of the development application for 1098 Richards Street. At that

time, the report to Council clarified that staff are pursuing the designation of all five houses, but were unable to bring forward the Helmcken Street houses. The owners of 431 and 439 Helmcken Street are now prepared to proceed with the proposed HRAs and the designation of their houses. The owner of 435 Helmcken Street is not able to proceed at this time, but staff anticipate bringing forward this house in the near future.

Downtown South Houses

The three houses located at 431, 435, and 439 Helmcken Street are part of seventeen remaining houses reviewed by heritage staff as a part of a Council approved study to assess the value of the remaining pre-second world war houses in the Downtown South area west of Yaletown. Of the seventeen houses, eight are currently listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register and of these seven are designated as protected heritage properties (including the two recently designated Richards Street houses). The remaining nine houses (including the Helmcken Street houses) currently have no heritage status. However, the Vancouver Heritage Commission has concluded that all seventeen houses are valued as increasingly rare examples of the downtown south area's early development and that all of the remaining houses are supported for addition to the Vancouver Heritage Register (see Comments of the Vancouver Heritage Commission on page 5).

One of the seventeen houses at 1237 Howe Street will be demolished as part of an application to redevelop the site for non-market housing. Therefore, if Council approves the recommended additions to the Register and designations of the houses at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street, nine of the remaining sixteen Downtown South houses will be protected as designated heritage properties.

DISCUSSION

Heritage Value

The Helmcken Street houses, were built between 1907 and 1909 and are good examples of modest 1½ storey, middle class, Edwardian-era housing once common in the area (see the historic map and photos in Appendix 'A'). Over time (but particularly after the 1960s) almost all of the housing in the Downtown South neighbourhood was demolished to make way for other development. The remaining houses therefore are valued as rare examples of the area's early residential development, as well as for their sheer endurance in their original form, character, and sometimes even use.

The Helmcken Street houses also reflect the early development of the original Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) lands including typical "end-of-block" development which involved the construction of small houses or commercial buildings oriented to face the flanking street at the end of a block (see the historic map on page 2 of Appendix 'A' for a number of examples). The Helmcken Street houses are the only surviving set of end-of-block houses in their original locations in the entire Downtown South neighbourhood, and are valued for this.

The adaptability of these small houses is one of the themes identified in the assessment of their values, and their compact, efficient plans may also reflect why some of these buildings have survived over the years. Together with the houses currently located at 1062 and 1080 Richards, which will be relocated to the corner of Helmcken and Richards Street, the proposed heritage buildings will form a striking and rare representation of an historic

development pattern, and will also contribute to the diversity of form and character in a neighbourhood which has seen extensive redevelopment in recent years.

Condition of the Properties

All of the Helmcken Street houses are in excellent condition and were renovated in the last couple of decades. The Vancouver Heritage Commission and staff conclude that the renovations do not detract from the heritage value of the houses, and therefore no changes or improvements are being sought (see the drawing in Appendix 'C'). While the two relocated houses (1062 and 1080 Richards Street) will be rehabilitated to their original character, including historic colours, the Helmcken Street houses will be maintained in their current condition, which will speak to the theme of adaptability during different periods of the neighbourhood's evolution. Once designated, Heritage Alteration Permits would be required to alter the exteriors of the houses in the future.

Incentive Approach and Zoning Variance

Early on in review of the development application of the adjacent property at 1098 Richards Street, heritage staff pursued securing the designation of the Helmcken Street houses in parallel with the relocation and designation of the two houses at 1062 and 1080 Richards Street. Initial discussions with the owners of the Helmcken Street houses indicated that the provision of off-street parking in the development at 1098 Richards Street is a valuable incentive in the consideration of compensation for the designation and long term preservation of their respective houses (none of the Helmcken Street properties currently have off-street parking). A condition of the development application approval for 1098 Richards Street requires that two off-street parking spaces for each of the Helmcken Street houses are to be provided in the underground parking garage of the new building at 1098 Richards Street once constructed. The costs associated with providing these six parking spaces were credited to the financial proforma associated with 1098 Richards Street in order to compensate the owner for the construction of these spaces. This arrangement was approved by Council on October 28th, 2008 as part of the consideration of the HRAs and designation of the Richards Street Houses. The agreements securing the parking spaces were completed in April, 2009.

Further financial analysis by Real Estate Services staff indicated that additional incentive is required to sufficiently compensate the owners for the designation and long term protection of the Helmcken Street houses. On-site bonus density cannot be accommodated on the small properties, and as no additions or new development are proposed, DCLs are not required and therefore DCL relief is not applicable. Staff conclude that, other than the provision of the parking spaces described above, the creation of transferable density is the only other viable incentive in this case.

On July 28th, 2009, as part of Council's approval of a hold on the creation of transferable density, Council supported bringing the Helmcken Street house forward to Public Hearing. Staff support the creation of the very small amount of proposed transferable density (1,231 sq. ft. for each of the Helmcken Street houses) as compensation to the owners for the designation and long term protection of the houses.

The HRAs also propose to vary the permitted density for office, institutional, cultural, and recreational uses on each property. The Downtown District (DD) zoning for the area limits the density for such uses to 1.0 FSR (floor space ratio) whereas the existing floor area of each

building is approximately 1.8 FSR (1,960 sq. ft.). The proposed variance, which is supported by staff, would allow the buildings to be converted to office, institutional, cultural, and recreational uses, which are permitted in the zoning, without being limited by the 1.0 FSR provision.

Compatibility with Existing Zoning and Land Use Regulations

The intent of DD zoning is, in part, to *"...improve the general environment of the Downtown District as an attractive place in which to live, work, shop, and visit... to ensure that all buildings and developments in the Downtown District meet the highest standards of design and amenity for the benefit of all users..."* and *"...to create a distinctive public realm and a unique and pleasing streetscape in the Downtown District."*

The streetscape created by the Helmcken Street houses and the two Richards Street houses (see Appendix 'B') will not only form a striking and unique representation of an historic development pattern, but will also contribute to the diversity of form and character in the neighbourhood. As well, the 400 Block of Helmcken Street is located along a bike route and a future Greenway leading from the historic Yaletown area. The distinctive streetscape created by these houses will be a benefit to residents, commuters, and visitors alike. The proposed zoning variance allows these small houses to be converted from residential uses to commercial uses and vice versa, which assists in providing jobs and residential uses in the downtown core. As well, the houses are located at the end of the block, which is consistent with the zoning which permits a greater variety and density of commercial uses on corner sites in areas where such uses are restricted.

Comments of the Vancouver Heritage Commission

The Vancouver Heritage Commission reviewed the Statements of Significance for 431, 435, and 439 Helmcken Street, as well as 1062 and 1080 Richards Street, on November 19th, 2008 and unanimously voted to support the addition of the five houses to the Vancouver Heritage Register (see Appendix 'D' for the complete resolution). On February 25th, 2008, The Vancouver Heritage Commission unanimously supported the proposed historic end-of-block representation comprising the Helmcken Street houses as part of the review of the development application at 1098 Richards Street.

Financial Proforma Evaluation

The Director of Real Estate Services advises that proposed incentives requested as compensation for the designation and long term preservation of 431 and 439 Helmcken Street, are supportable and provide no undue profit.

Public Consultation and Notification

As no work is proposed or required on the Helmcken Street houses, no development applications are required. However, as part of the review of the development application for 1098 Richards Street, a site sign was erected and 2,439 letters were sent to surrounding property owners notifying them of the application and requesting feedback. Seven letters of response were received, six of them supporting the protection of the proposed heritage buildings, and one which did not mention any heritage concerns. At the public hearing on October 28th, 2008, which approved the designation and HRAs of 1062 and 1080 Richards

Street, there were no speakers opposed to the application and no correspondence was received after referral to public hearing.

Ecodensity Policies

Ecodensity Policy A-1 "Rezoning Policy for Greener Buildings" applies to development applications involving HRAs submitted after May 13th, 2008. As staff reviewed the designation and HRAs of the Helmcken Street houses in conjunction with the development application for 1098 Richards Street, which was received in advance of the May 13th, 2008 deadline, staff conclude that the policy will not apply to the Helmcken Street houses. In consideration of this staff note that all the Helmcken Street houses have been thermally upgraded in recent years and that the overall open green space of the houses' yards (which are extremely small) is adequate.

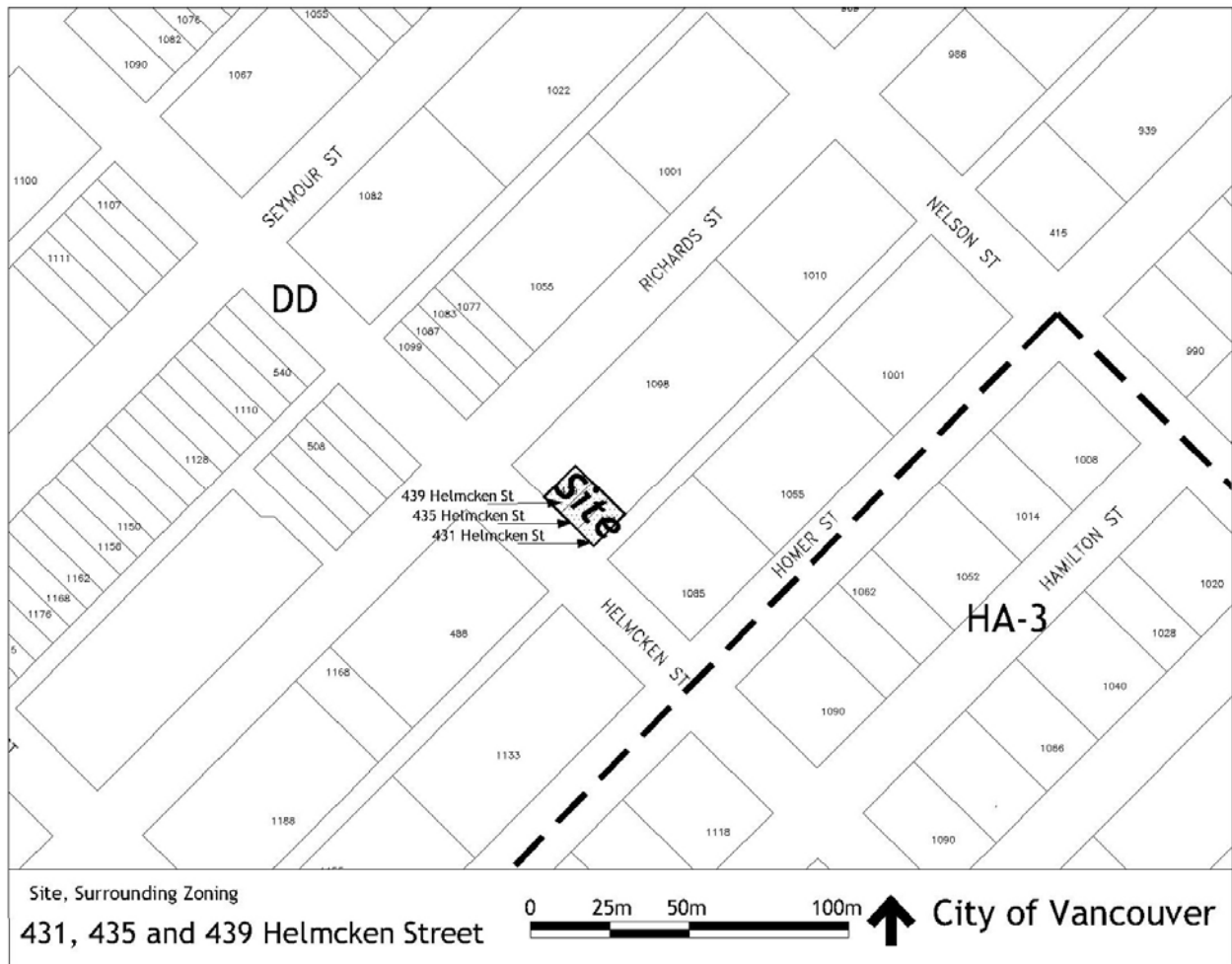
FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

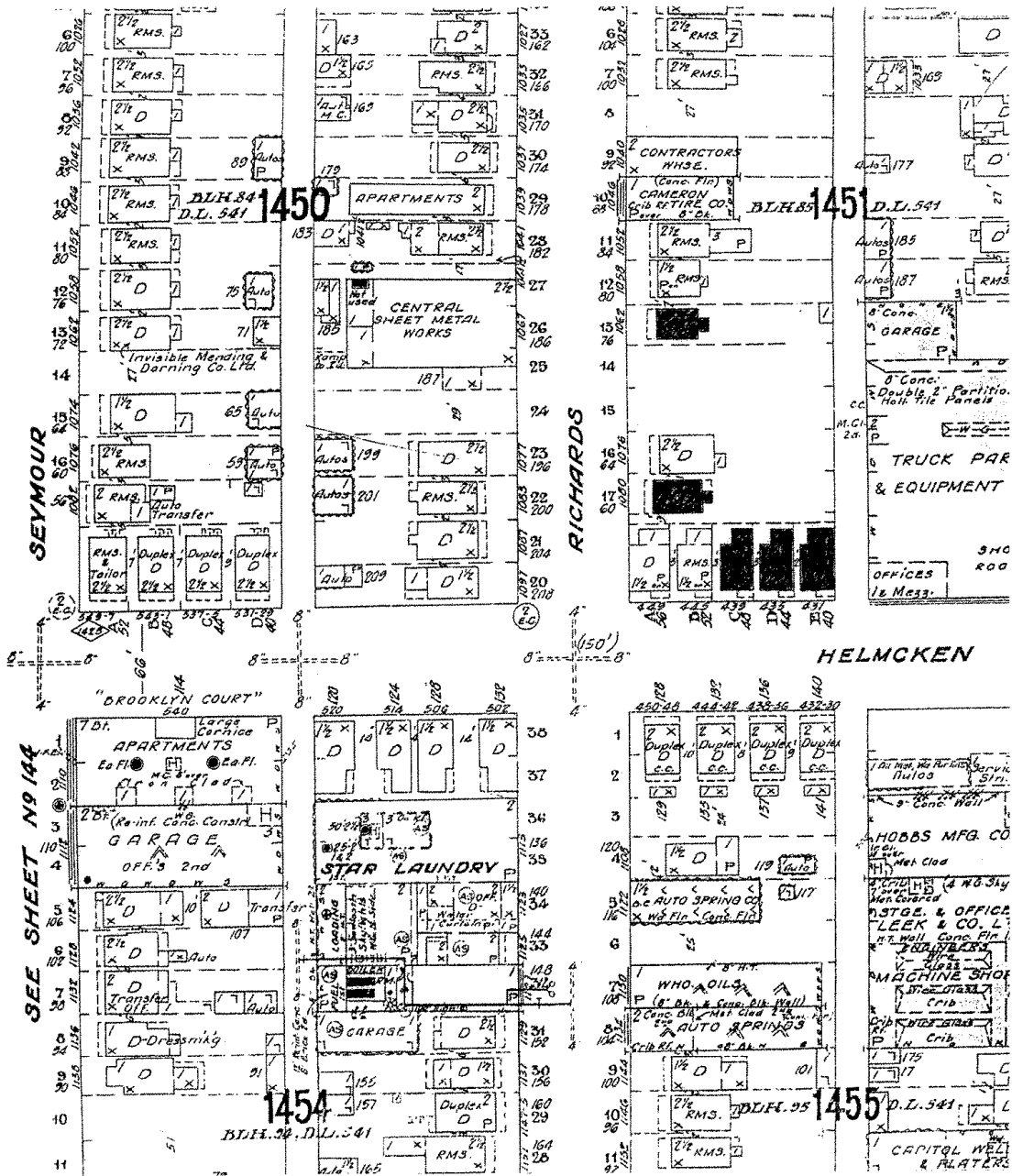
The approval of the report's recommendations will have no financial implications with respect to the City's operating expenditures, fees, or staffing.

CONCLUSION

This report recommends a number of actions which would result in the designation and long term preservation of the houses at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street as part of a unique representation of an historic end-of-block configuration symbolizing early development patterns in the Downtown South neighbourhood. Approval of the creation of 1,231 sq. ft. of transferable density for each of the two properties (2,462 sq. ft. in total) will provide an incentive for the owners to designate and preserve the proposed heritage buildings. The owners have agreed to the heritage designation of the houses and are prepared to waive future demands for compensation. Therefore it is recommended that Council approve the addition of the houses at 431 and 439 Helmcken Street to the Vancouver Heritage Register in the 'C' evaluation category, their designation, and the proposed Heritage Revitalization Agreements.

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Early map showing the existing houses at 431, 435, and 439 Helmcken Street (shaded). Also indicated are the designated houses at 1062 and 1080 Richards Street which are to be relocated to the corner of Helmcken Street and Richards Street as part of the approved development of the site at 1098 Richards Street (see Appendix 'B'). None of the other houses shown in this map now exist. Of the hundreds of houses which once occupied the Downtown South neighbourhood, only seventeen have survived.



Photo 1: The Helmcken Street Houses Looking North

439 Helmcken Street is on the left, 435 Helmcken Street is in the middle, and 431 Helmcken Street is on the right.



Photo 2: The Helmcken Street Houses Looking North-West

439 Helmcken Street is on the left, 435 Helmcken Street is in the middle, and 431 Helmcken Street is on the right.

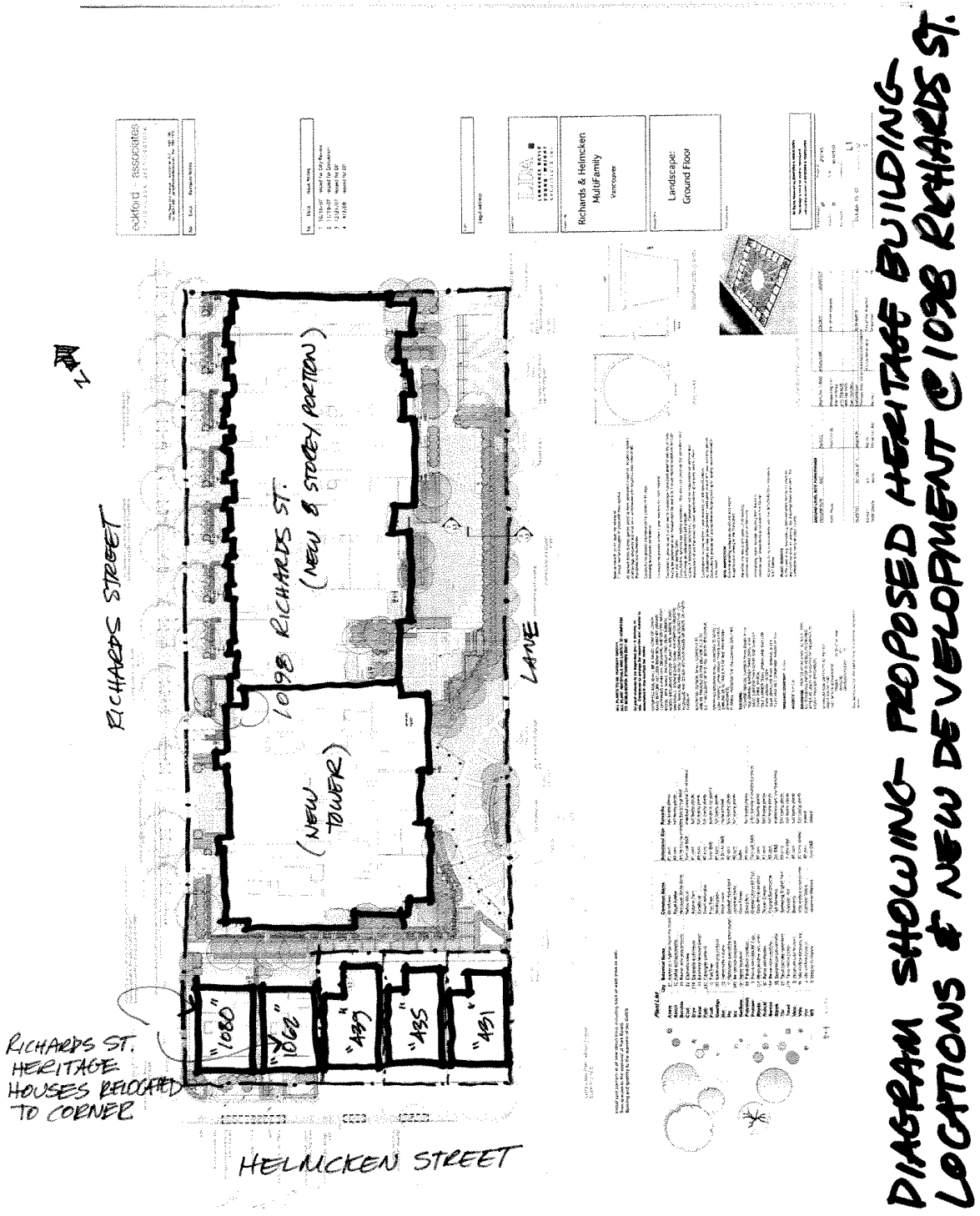
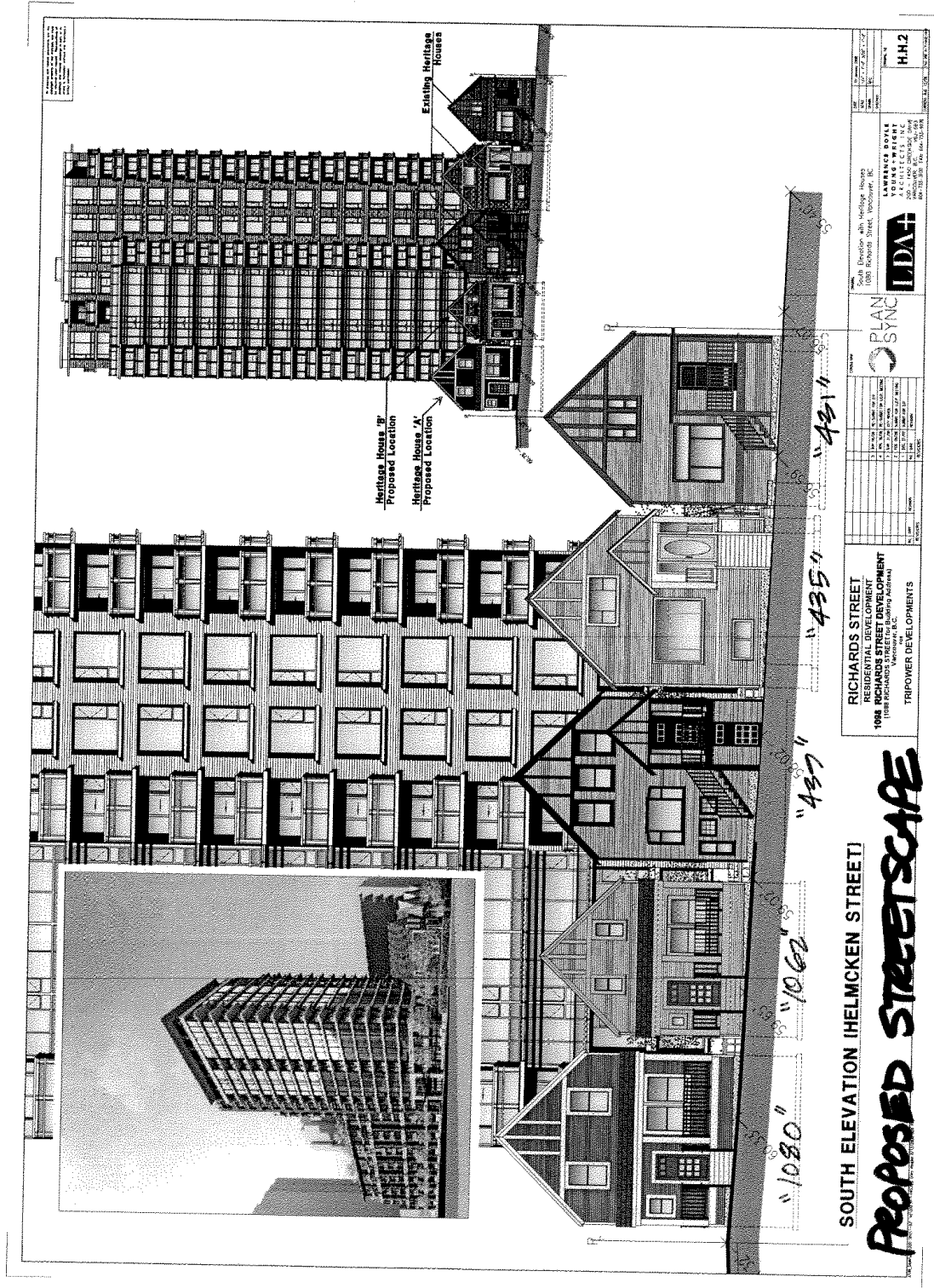
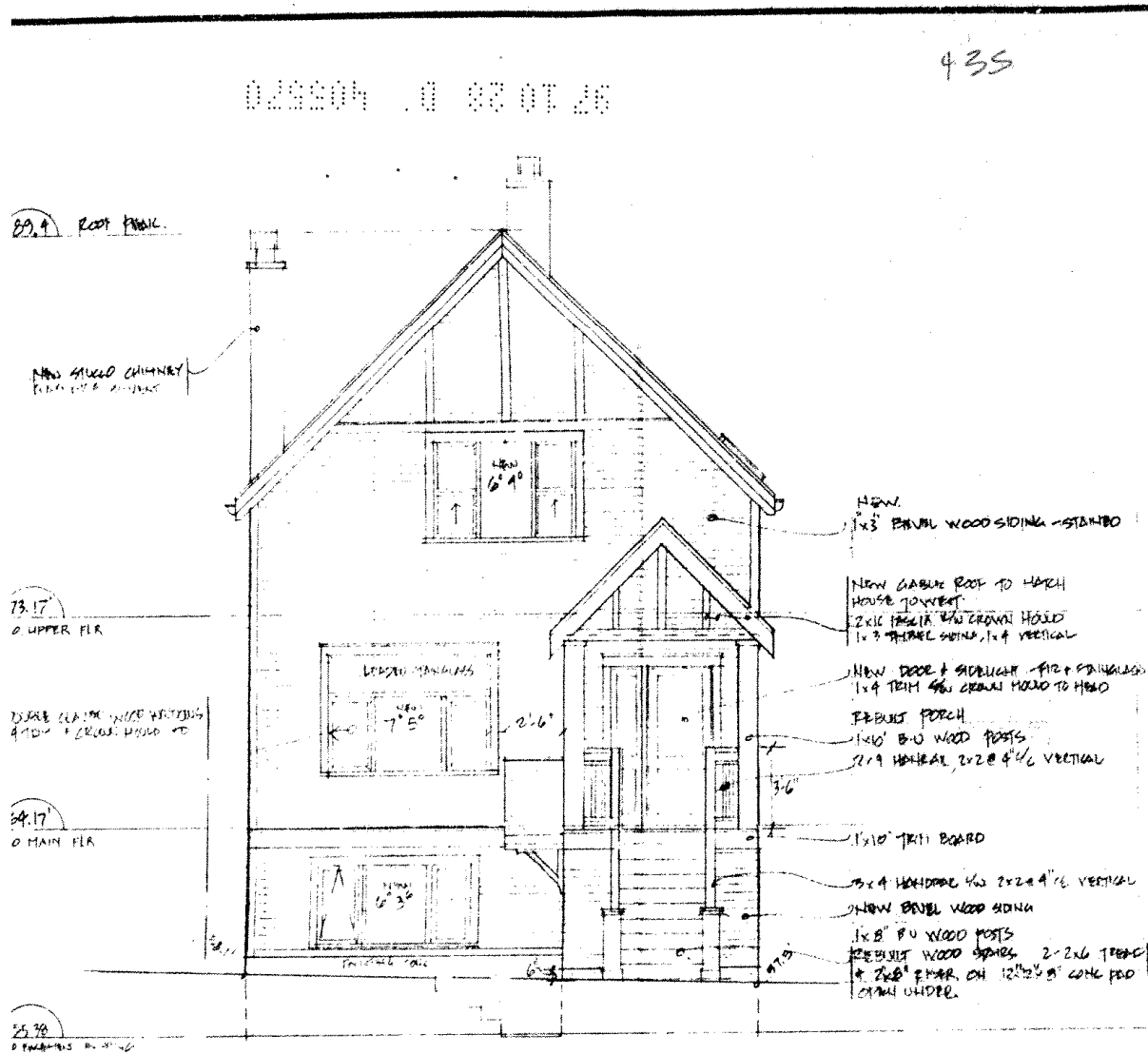


DIAGRAM SHOWING PROPOSED HERITAGE BUILDING LOCATIONS & NEW DEVELOPMENT @ 1098 RICHARDS ST.





435 Helmcken Street
Elevation showing rehabilitation work as approved in 1997.
The other two Helmcken Street houses were similarly upgraded
and renovated in the last couple of decades

Comments of the Vancouver Heritage Commission

The Vancouver Heritage Commission reviewed the Statement of Significances for all five houses on November 19th, 2008 and unanimously voted to support the addition of the five houses to the Vancouver Heritage Register with the following motion:

RESOLVED

THAT, regarding the heritage value of the Downtown South Houses, specifically 439, 435, and 431 Helmcken Street, 1062 Richards Street, and 1080 Richards Street, as presented at its November 19th, 2007 meeting, the Vancouver Heritage Commission supports the following:

- Statements of Significances for the five afore-mentioned house; and
- Adding the afore-mentioned houses to the Vancouver Heritage Register.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY