



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: September 29, 2015
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RTS No.: 11114
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: November 17, 2015

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Planning and Development Services
SUBJECT: 139 East Pender Street - Heritage Façade Grant - DE419214

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve a façade grant of up to \$50,000 to the Mah Society of Canada (the "Applicant") for the rehabilitation of the principal façade of a building (the "Building") on lands having a civic address of 139 East Pender Street (PID: 015-670-554; Lot 15, Block 12, District Lot 196, Plan 184) (the "Property") as contemplated by Development Application Number DE 419214 (the "Application"); source of funds is the 2015 Capital Budget for the Heritage Façade Rehabilitation Program.
- B. THAT as a condition of approval of the façade grant, the Applicant be required to enter into an agreement with the City of Vancouver, to be registered against title to the Property as a covenant under section 219 of the Land Title Act, which agreement will require the rehabilitation to be overseen by a qualified Heritage Consultant and will require the owner of the Property to maintain the principal façade of the Building in good appearance and good repair for a minimum of fifteen years.
- C. THAT agreement described above shall be prepared, registered and given priority to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal Services in consultation with the General Manager of Planning and Development Services.

Approval of the grant in Recommendation A requires an affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the votes cast.

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval for a façade grant for the Vancouver Heritage Register "C" listed and municipally designated Property at 139 East Pender Street (the Mah Society of Canada Building). The Application proposes to preserve, restore and rehabilitate the principal façade of the Building in addition to other improvements to its interior and exterior. When completed, the rehabilitation of the principal façade will significantly contribute to the restoration of the Building's 1928 appearance as well as improve living conditions for the tenants of 36 Single Room Accommodation (SRA) units. The Applicant has requested a façade grant through the Heritage Façade Rehabilitation Program. The proposal is consistent with applicable City policy, HA-1 Design Guidelines for Chinatown, Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, and it is eligible for the façade grant. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval for a façade grant.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Relevant Council policies for this matter include:

- Heritage Façade Rehabilitation Program (HFRP), Policies and Procedures for Gastown, Chinatown, Hastings Street Corridor and Victory Square (2003)
- The Heritage Action Plan approved by Council on December 4, 2013 included an extension of the existing heritage incentive programs in the DTES (HBRP and HFRP) to the end of 2015
- The Downtown Eastside (DTES) Plan (2014)
- On December 17, 2014 and May 13, 2015, Council approved Chinese Society Buildings Matching Grant Allocations (RTS No.:10746 and RTS No.:10941) to strategically advance the revitalization of these important cultural, social and heritage resources in Vancouver's Chinatown and across the Downtown Eastside.
- On July 21st, 2015, Council approved a grant of \$180,000 to the Mah Society to be put towards the renovation of 36 SRA designated rooms at 137 East Pender Street, subject to: (1) all required development and building permits having been issued by the City; and (2) a Housing Agreement securing affordability of the renovated rooms being registered on title (RTS No.:11044).

Section 206(2) of the Vancouver Charter provides that Council may, by a vote of at least two thirds of the votes cast, and subject to any terms and conditions it considers appropriate, provide financial assistance for the conservation of protected heritage property or property subject to a covenant under Section 219 of the Land Title Act that relates to the conservation of heritage property.

CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Planning and Development Services RECOMMENDS approval of the foregoing recommendations.

REPORT

Background

In July 2003, City Council approved both the Heritage Building Rehabilitation Program (HBRP) and the Heritage Façade Rehabilitation Program (HFRP) to facilitate conservation and economic revitalization of heritage buildings in Gastown, Chinatown, Hastings Street corridor and Victory Square. The HFRP is available to assist owners and tenants with 50% of the cost to rehabilitate heritage building façades up to a maximum of \$50,000 per principal façade. In 2013, the Heritage Action Plan included its extension to the end of 2015. The Downtown Eastside (DTES) Plan which was adopted in 2014 reconfirmed the program's importance for both, heritage conservation as well as economic revitalization of DTES.

Strategic Analysis

Site and Context

The historic place at 139 East Pender Street in Chinatown (the Mah Society of Canada Building) is a substantial five-storey brick building with commercial use at street level, three-storey of SRA units and the society meeting hall on the top storey. The Building was constructed in 1913, designed by Henry Barton Watson as a typical four-storey speculative mixed use rooming house with a commercial ground floor. The 5th floor addition, designed by architect E.J. Boughen, was added in 1921 for the exclusive use of the new owner, Mah Gim Do Hung Society, now the Mah Society of Canada. With the additional top floor, it is the highest building on the north side of 100 block East Pender Street making it one of the most prominent Chinatown buildings (see Figure 1). The Building, together with other Society buildings, is an important component of Chinatown's historic character and it is a major contributor to Chinatown's recognition as a national historic site (2011).

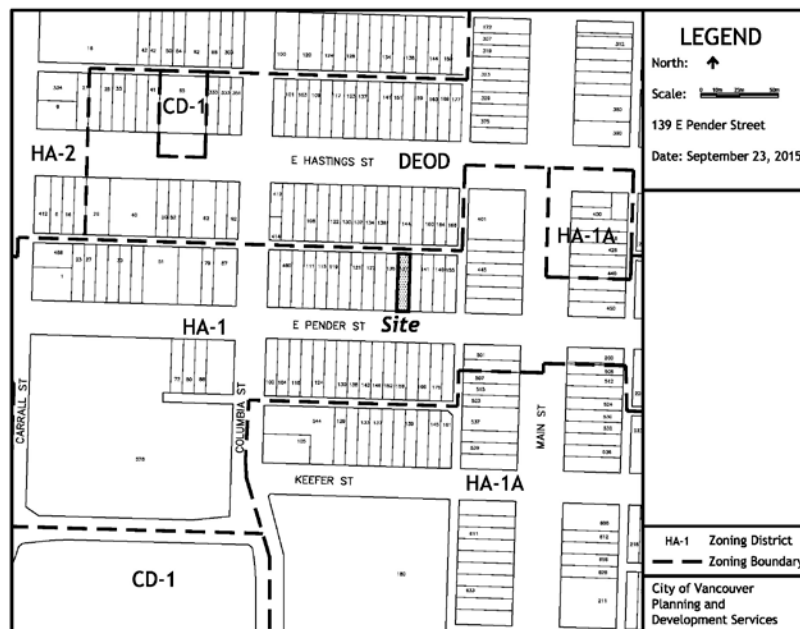


Figure 1. 139 East Pender Street - Site Plan showing location and surrounding zoning

Heritage Value

The heritage value of the Building lies in its unique “balcony style” architecture that blends aspects of Chinese regional architecture (Guangdong and Fujian Provinces) with western styles and building methods. This value is materialized in Building’s distinct architectural features including a deeply recessed balcony, wrought iron railings, abundant fenestration and brick piers. Major character defining elements including the heavy cornice, pediment wall, illuminated lanterns and the storefront that were removed from the Building in the past, will be restored.

Another important heritage value is the Building’s historic use, in particular, of welcoming and supporting new immigrants, in this case with the surname Mah, to Vancouver. Notably, this is one of the few Chinese Societies that also rent rooms to non-Chinese. The way the Building changed from the original construction through subsequent alterations reflects key periods in the establishment of the Chinese-Canadian community in Vancouver. The continuing use of the space by the Mah Society adds to the Building’s value.

Much of the interior character of the upper floors has survived and of particular note is the 5th floor society meeting hall. This area of the Building was a hub for the Mah society communal life and a place where numerous social activities were, and still are maintained. Surviving interior features on the lower floors include the original wood stair balustrade, original wood baseboard, casing, and corridor transom lights, and the transom lights over doors. The original cast iron steam radiators have also survived and are still in use.

In addition, the Building is a good example of the mixed-use rooming house building constructed to the City of Vancouver’s 1910 Lodging House Bylaw, which stipulated requirements for all residential rooms and bathrooms/toilet rooms to have access to daylight and ventilation, for metal window construction in internal light courts with spatial exposure to adjacent buildings, and for the provision of exterior fire escapes to allow a second means of emergency exit for all floors. The bylaw also required sinks in each lodging room, and these still exist as well.

The Building is currently listed on the Vancouver Heritage Register in the ‘C’ evaluation category and is municipally designated (legally protected). It is located within the National Historic District of Vancouver Chinatown - (for the Statement of Significance see Appendix A).

Conservation Approach

The proposed conservation approach for the principal façade of 139 East Pender Street will blend aspects of restoration, preservation and rehabilitation (see Figure 2). Although the majority of work is planned for the principal façade, all other building facades will also undergo conservation. The major components of the proposed conservation plan are:

- Rehabilitation of the existing aluminum storefront to a wood frame, butt-glazed storefront, as existed in 1928
- Restoration of the original unique main cornice, pediment and lanterns
- Restoration of the original missing window sash on levels 2, 3 and 4
- Restoration of the original surviving wood window frames

- Restoration of the deteriorated intermediate sheet metal cornice
- Restoration of damaged rendered header panels
- Selective repointing and cleaning of the front façade brick
- Preparation and painting of the sheet metal windows at the light court
- Selective repointing and repairs of the masonry on all elevations
- Preservation of the original balcony wood frame glazed wall
- Rehabilitation of the rear wood double hung windows, including in-kind replacement, preparation and painting
- Roof surface replacement at the 4th floor rear roof
- Flashing /penetration improvements on the 5th floor
- Security improvements and painting to rear fire escape.

The proposed conservation procedures are consistent with the Gastown Design Guidelines and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (for more information on the Conservation Plan see Appendix B).



Figure 2. 139 East Pender Street - The principal façade before and after rehabilitation

Estimates for Proposed Conservation Work

The applicant has submitted three competitive cost estimates for the eligible façade rehabilitation work ranging from \$281,100 to \$306,000. Only the costs related to the heritage conservation of the principal façade (139 East Pender Street) is considered eligible for the façade grant.

Proposed Incentives

A heritage façade grant of up to \$50,000 per principal façade is proposed to financially assist the owner in conducting the conservation work. Since this building has one principal façade, a single façade grant has been requested.

Comments of Advisory Bodies

The application was reviewed and supported by the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee on July 14, 2015 (see Appendix C).

Financial

Staff recommend an allocation of up to \$50,000 from the 2015 Capital Budget for the Heritage Façade Rehabilitation Program for the rehabilitation of the principal façade at 139 East Pender Street. The grant funds will be available to the applicant in accordance with the HFRP Policies and Procedures.

Legal

Should Council approve Recommendation A, the Applicant will be required to enter into an agreement with the City to ensure the continued maintenance of the restored/rehabilitated façade. This agreement will be prepared by Legal Services and once finalized with the Applicant, will be registered against title to the Property as a covenant under Section 219 of the Land Title Act. The agreement will require that the rehabilitation work be supervised by a qualified Heritage Consultant, will contain the terms and conditions upon which the façade grant is to be paid to the Applicant once the rehabilitation work is complete and will require the owner of the Property to keep the heritage façade in good appearance and good repair for a minimum of fifteen years after completion of the rehabilitation.

The façade grant will be issued only after the agreement is registered on title to the Property, the rehabilitation of the façade has been satisfactorily completed and the conservation plan satisfactorily implemented and the owner has delivered to the City satisfactory proof of payment of the costs incurred in carrying out the façade rehabilitation work.

CONCLUSION

The Building at 139 East Pender Street is listed in the "C" evaluation category on the Vancouver Heritage Register and has been designated as a protected heritage property. The proposed heritage façade rehabilitation will improve the overall condition of the Building, preserve its character-defining elements, contribute to the economic revitalization of Chinatown and support the renovation of 36 SRA rooms. The General Manager of Planning and Development Services recommends approval of up to \$50,000 for the rehabilitation of the principal façade of 139 East Pender Street.

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Mah Society Building – Statement of Significance - Excerpt

137 East Pender Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6A, Canada

Formally Recognized: 2003/01/14



Front facade

OTHER NAME(S)

Mah Society

Mah Society Building

LINKS AND DOCUMENTS: n/a

CONSTRUCTION DATE(S): 1913/01/01

LISTED ON THE CANADIAN REGISTER: 2007/07/25

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DESCRIPTION OF HISTORIC PLACE

The Mah Society Building at 137 East Pender Street in Vancouver's Chinatown is a substantial five-storey brick building with a store at street level, a three-storey rooming house above, and a tong meeting hall on the top storey.

HERITAGE VALUE

The heritage value of the Mah Society Building lies in the way its original construction and subsequent alteration reflect key periods in the establishment of the Chinese-Canadian community in Vancouver.

The construction in 1913 of the original building to the designs of Henry Barton Watson, which housed the Kwong Fong grocery at street level with a rooming house - the Minglee Rooms - above, speaks to the importance of this part of East Pender Street as the Chinese-Canadian retail hub and to the continuing need for rooms for Chinese immigrants. Watson's design was of particular note for being the earliest identified example of the use of Chinese architectural motifs (now sadly lost) in the form a pagoda-roofed cornice, and Chinese temple-shaped finials.

The addition of the top storey in 1921, by architect E.J. Boughen, for meeting rooms for the Mah Gim Do Hung Society (later the Mah Society of North America) is representative of the trend in early twentieth-century Chinatown for building tong meeting rooms atop existing buildings, thereby imbuing them with status through height. The continuing use of the space by the Mah Society consolidates the building's value.

The integration of function of tong meeting space and a rooming house within the building is of value for illustrating the role that surname associations had in welcoming and supporting new immigrants, in this case with the surname Mah, to Vancouver.

Source: City of Vancouver Heritage Conservation Program

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

The character-defining elements of the Mah Society Building include:

- Mid-block location on Pender Street, in the heart of Vancouver's Chinatown
- Commanding height over adjacent buildings
- Imposing street frontage achieved by the articulation of brick surfaces and window openings.
- Elements signaling pride, for example, the flagstaff, and the tong name signage in both Chinese and Roman characters
- Decorative architectural elements, including sheet metal pilaster capitals, hood mould over arch, transom panels below windows, and string course on dentils over awning box.

RECOGNITION

*CONSERVATION PLAN - MAH SOCIETY OF CANADA BUILDING REHABILITATION
137/139 EAST PENDER STREET (by McGinn Engineering and Preservation Ltd.) - Excerpt*

BACKGROUND

Constructed in 1913 as a fairly typical Edwardian Style four-storey residential mixed use building, the building was purchased by the Mah Society of North America in 1921, and in 1922 they added the fifth floor to accommodate society uses and needs. The society uses this addition opportunity to imbue the building with 'Chinese' architectural character, reminiscent of South Chinese architectural character and similar to other Tong buildings in Chinatown. The principal exterior features to do this included a fifth floor inset balcony with an extensively glazed balcony back wall, a large projecting bracketed sheet metal cornice with side returns and tiled surface, a large central sheet metal clad ornamental pediment flanked by large sheet metal clad hexagonal lanterns on the roof, and a central flagpole. The original 'Mah Society of North America' metal letter sign has survived along the top of the shallow balcony arch. A wrought iron balcony rail and rendered masonry detailing provided final ornamental detail.

The fifth floor addition provided for a principal sixty-foot-long society meeting hall, backed by office and society support rooms. The 1922 fifth floor addition did not include any changes to the lower façade or storefront. The original 1913 wood storefront was altered in about 1928; the storefront above the wood paneled base and below the wood clearestorey windows was replaced with a pressed copper storefront system popular at this time. The storefront was entirely changed out in the late 1960s to an aluminum storefront with a ceramic tile covering over the clearestorey area, which was subsequently replaced in the 1980s with the current aluminum storefront. The upper sheet metal cornice, lanterns and pediment were removed sometime after the late 1960s.

REHABILITATION APPROACH

The proposed rehabilitation approach will blend aspects of restoration, rehabilitation and preservation.

Restoration

- Restoration of original distinct and unique roof-top sheet metal elements – cornice, pediment, lanterns,
- Restoration of the original missing wood sash on levels 2, 3 and 4, and the original surviving wood frames,
- Restoration of the surviving but deteriorated storefront bracketed sheet metal cornice
- Restoration of damaged rendered header panels, and extensive work to the fourth floor header panel by replacing the corroded window lintels,

Rehabilitation

- Rehabilitation of the existing aluminum storefront to a wood frame and butt-glazed storefront characteristic of the 1928 storefront, including a new wood frame paneled storefront base with tiled entry alcoves, butt-glazed storefront glazing with wood $\frac{3}{4}$ light doors, new wood clearstorey glazing modeled on the original, new sheet metal sign panel with a sheet metal upper belt course and decorative end scrolls and restored brick end piers. The alcove configuration has been slightly adjusted to accommodate the current and continuing restaurant use. The decorative tile border and colour scheme will reflect Chinese cultural notions.

Preservation

- Selective repointing and cleaning of the front façade brick and rendered masonry,
- Preparation and painting of the west elevation sheet metal windows at the light court,
- Select repairs to damaged rendering and select repointing/cleaning of brick and rendered masonry on the east, rear and west elevation
- Rehabilitation of the rear wood double hung windows, including existing wood frame refurbishment, select wood sash replacement in kind and profile for deteriorated sash, preparation and painting,
- Roof surface replacement at the fourth floor rear roof and flashing/penetration improvements at the fifth floor
- Security improvements and painting to rear fire escape

Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee - Minutes - July 14, 2015 - Excerpt

2) 137-139 E. Pender Street - Mah Society of Canada - VHR "C", "M"; DE 419214

THAT the Chinatown Historic Area Planning Committee generally supports the project at 137-139 E. Pender St (Mah Society of Canada) and related Heritage Façade Grant application; and commends the applicant for the excellent conservation plan presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY